

## **A San Francisco Earthquake Postal History Item**

### **By Jerry Johnson**

A friend asked me to look over a small accumulation of stamps and philatelic material. One item in his collection really caught my eye. He said it was from one of his relatives in Ohio. The item was sent shortly after the April 18, 1906 earthquake in San Francisco. It is shown in Figures 1 and 2. What interested me was that there were no stamps and it was written on a piece of cardboard.

I searched the internet for information and found a postmaster's report of the event (Reference 1). This report noted that "a large number of people, estimated at 300,000, fled the city...and sought refuge in the cities of Oakland, Alameda and Berkley. The congestion in Oakland was so great that it was found necessary to transfer twelve clerks to the Oakland office, together with four collectors".

An item from the U.S. Postal Museum (Reference 2) noted that "As an emergency measure, mail without stamps was accepted until the sale of stamps was possible at the main post office on April 25.

Figure 1 shows the front side of the item that was sent to Ohio. It was cancelled in Oakland on April 21 and received in Logan, Ohio on April 25, 1906.

The backside is shown in Figure 2. The writing is somewhat difficult to read, but here is my best guess:

"This is the last stroke - all gone - good god - what to do I can't say - My folks are lost as well as (?) all Black".

Certainly this is was a very depressing note to the relatives in Ohio.

This is the first time that this item has been reported. The fact that it was written on cardboard and sent without postage illustrates the dire situation in the San Francisco area right after the earthquake.

La Posta issued a monograph in 2010 that reprinted a series of articles written by Randy Stehle about the mail and markings of the San Francisco earthquake and fire (Reference 3). These in-depth articles provide many details and I highly recommend it.

#### References:

1. 1906 Post Office Report. <http://www.sfgenealogy.com/sf/history/1906/06postoffice.htm>
2. San Francisco Earthquake Mail. <http://postalmuseum.si.edu/collections/object-spotlight/earthquake-mail.html>
3. Postal History of the 1906 San Francisco Earthquake and Fire, Randy Stehle, La Posta Publications, 2010.

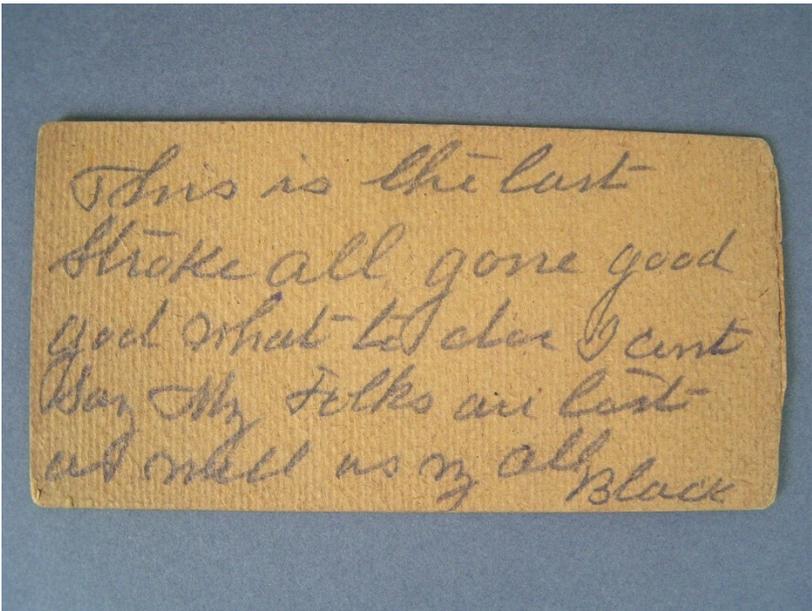


Figure 1: Message

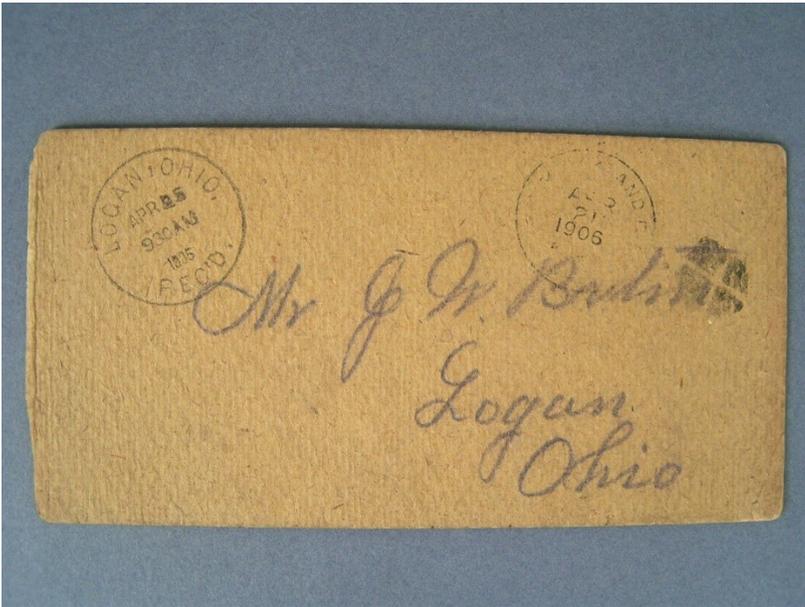


Figure 2: Address