

A Letter from Santa Claus, Ind.

by Charles A. Fricke

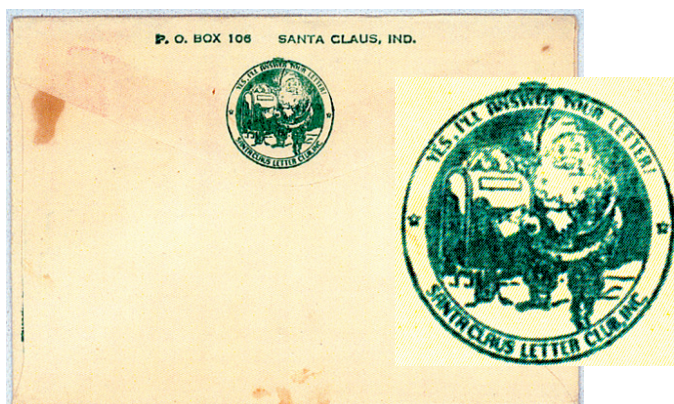


Figure 1

As a child you couldn't wait for Christmas, for then your earnest desire was to send a letter to Santa Claus with your wantlist of toys.

With so many letters being sent and all kinds of forms of addressing, nonetheless each one reached the town of Santa Claus, Indiana, which was literally inundated with the letters mailed to Santa.

But how did the name of Santa Claus come into being? It all began in the 1850s when the town of Santa Fe, Indiana wanted a post office but the post office department informed them that there was already a Santa Fe, Indiana and they had to choose a different name.

Without indicating how the name came about, in the end the name approved by the post office was Santa Claus, Indiana. So in 1856 the town and the post office claimed Santa Claus, Ind. as its official name.

The relationship of the town and the public was not really taken to heart until Robert Ripley in 1929 featured a 3' x 5' wooden postcard to get the postmark of Santa Claus, Ind.

To account for so many letters received in the name of Santa, local organizations formed to respond to the desires of the youngsters to receive a letter from Santa. One of these organizations was the "SANTA CLAUS LETTER CLUB, INC.," which is imprinted on the back of an envelope together with a logo "YES I'LL ANSWER YOUR LETTER!" all within a circle with a picture in the center of Santa Claus with a letter in his hand and a mail box next to him. At the top there is "P.O. BOX 106, SANTA CLAUS, IND." Figure 1.

On the address side of the envelope shown in figure 2 and printed in red and green there is a picture of Santa saying "Merry Christmas" and at the top left "A Letter from Santa Claus." At the top right there is a boxed permit stamp in red "Sec. 562 P.L.&R./U.S. POSTAGE/PAID/PERMIT No.2" with a double circle postmark inscribed SANTA CLAUS/IND. This would indicate the letter was

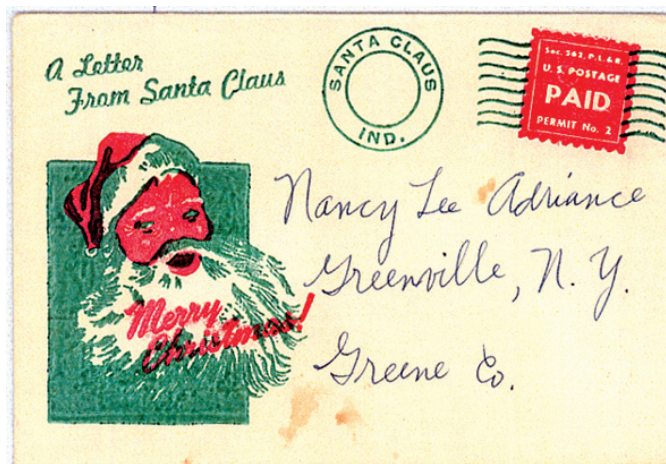


Figure 2

mailed during the period of 1932 to 1948.

This attractive envelope had enclosed a full color letter with a heading showing Santa Claus at a writing desk with several elves nearby working at all kinds of endeavors, with a Christmas tree in the offing.

The letter shown in Figure 3 expresses the wishes of Santa to his little friends.

Can you imagine how little Nancy felt upon receiving a personal letter from Santa Claus even though it was a promise for next Christmas.

While the letters to Santa compounded the work at the local post office, they also had to contend with the request of those collectors who wanted a cover with the postmark of Santa Claus, Ind.

While in this day and age there may be a lot fewer letters to Santa, the element of trust in Santa Claus to deliver the presents at Christmas time still exists.

The letter from Santa Claus is now a philatelic item going back more than 60 years, and a remembrance of the past.

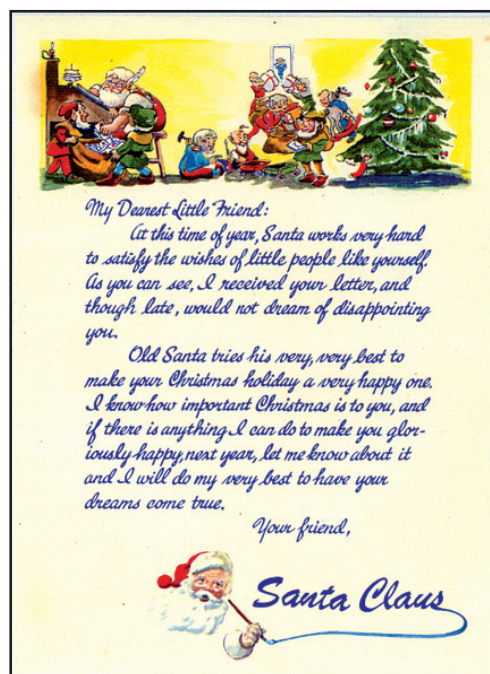


Figure 3

The Last Word

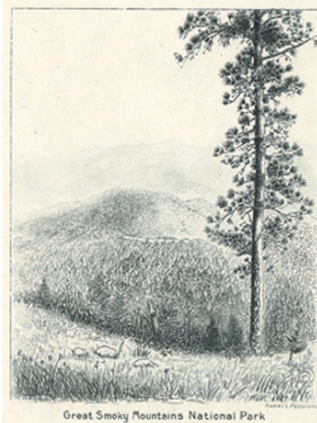
John F. Dunn



Holiday Greetings

Editor John Hotchner was nice enough to send me for use here the etching and folder that you see at the right. It was part of a brief series of which I was totally unaware and about which I could not find much information.

This was the second folder in the series, which apparently would have been sent as gifts by Harry Lindquist, who was the founder of *STAMPS Magazine*, a predecessor to our sister publication, *Mekeel's & STAMPS*. The etching was done by Harry Peckmore, who also created a set of National Parks engravings—based on the 1934 stamp designs—and which Lindquist used as a subscription premium at that time. This Christmas folder was created in 1949. (Peckmore's Parks etchings were done in the stamp colors; shown here is the gray Great Smokey Mountains design, Sc. 749.)



The first etching in the series was described in the letter as the Sub-Treasury steps on Wall Street—better known as the Federal Building with the familiar statue of George Washington (and where he took the oath of office as our first President). A subsequent etching featured Trinity Church.

The whole piece was a high quality production. The folder was cut out in the center, the etching was lightly attached inside, the letter was on parchment paper, with a Christmas Greetings stamp affixed to the parchment.

The letter reads in part, "A few paces down the block from the Sub-Treasury steps on Wall Street, where we said 'Merry Christmas' to you last year, we come to Broad Street and the main building of the internationally famous Stock Exchange, with its 52-feet high Corinthian columns dramatically calling attention to this charming replica of Greek architecture...."

"Broad Street—where a canal once ran through its middle...runs south from Wall Street, and going north is Nassau Street, New York's greatest stamp mart, where window after window and doorway upon doorway displays the offerings of various dealers. A narrow street, it once was called 'Pie Woman's Lane', and at noon-time one walks in the road if time is of any importance, for this is also a center of all downtown business, and the strolling clerks on their lunch hour line the sidewalks in leisurely foursomes, chatting idly as they lick ice cream cones or munch on a variety of tidbits...."

"And so we leave you at the corner of Wall and Broad, hoping to return next year to take you on a further journey of Our Town."

"With Every Good Wish for the Holiday Season."
"Marion and Harry Lindquist."

And, may I add, from Elaine and myself, and, of course from John Hotchner, who brought this wonderful etching to our attention.

John F. Dunn

