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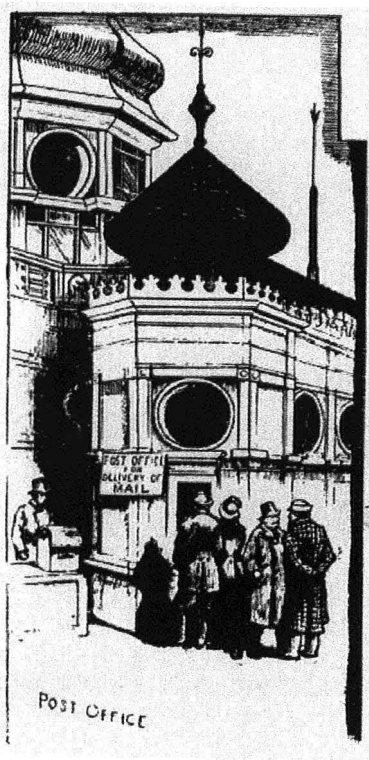
**TAKE ME TO THE FAIR:
POSTAL MARKINGS ON MAIL ADDRESSED TO PERSONS AT THE
WORLD'S INDUSTRIAL AND COTTON CENTENNIAL EXPOSITION, NEW
ORLEANS, LOUISIANA 1884-1885**

DAVID C. HUFFORD

The World's Industrial and Cotton Centennial Exposition, December 16, 1884 to June 1, 1885 was an extravaganza organized by Major Edward A. Burke, Louisiana state treasurer, lottery agent for Louisiana, and editor of the New Orleans *Times Democrat*. He convinced Congress to grant a loan of \$1 million to the Fair and to give a gift of \$300,000 for government exhibits. The city government donated \$100,000 and the rest of the capital was provided by the sale of private stock.

The display covered 249 acres in a rural area between the edge of Uptown and the then recently annexed city of Carrollton (DPO, 1844-1882). This area today is known as Audubon Park. It was about two miles long, extending from the river to the back swamp. The Exposition was a financial failure, losing a half-million dollars. The walkways for tourists became seas of gumbo in the New Orleans rain.

An Exposition Postal Station was located in the main administrative building (Fig. 1), where those working at the Fair or visiting could post and receive delivery of their mail. Note the sign to the left of the walk-up window saying **"Post Office for Delivery of Mail."**



The exterior of the building was copied after a Tunisian Mosque. The interior was fitted up as a model post office with separate divisions for money order, registry and stamp sale business. It contained a postmaster's office and private room, and a large room for the use of the carriers, of which there were ten. One side of the building contained the latest model Yale lockboxes. The working force of the "Exposition Station," as it was called, consisted of a Superintendent, Major F. M. Clarke, assistant postmaster, cashier, stamping clerk, general delivery clerk, two postal clerks and the carriers.

From December 16, 1884, until June 30, 1885, a free delivery service was extended to the 6,475 exhibitors and attendants at the exposition. During this time over one million four hundred thousand pieces of mail matter were handled. In addition to the actual service, there was an exhibit of various issues of postage stamps, envelopes and postal cards and of specimens of mail equipment, such as bags, trunks, locks, labels, marking and rating stamps.

A large glass case containing an interesting exhibit of articles received at the dead letter office was on display. Included were false teeth and old

Figure 1. Post Office at Cotton Centennial Exposition, New Orleans, in main administration building

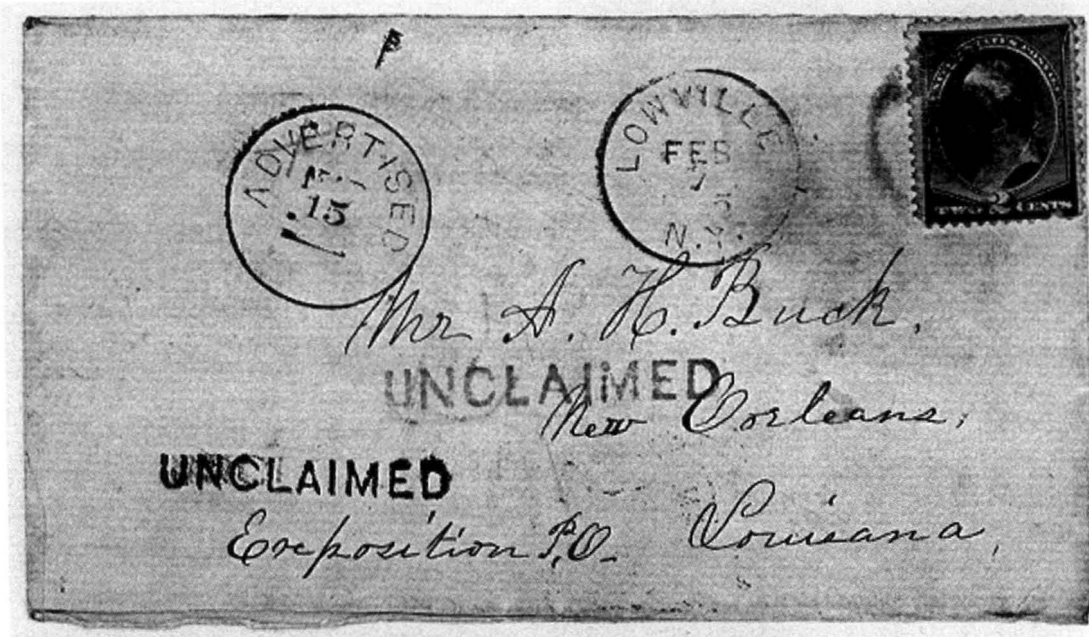


Figure 2. Unclaimed and Advertised Cover addressed to the Cotton Centennial Exposition, New Orleans

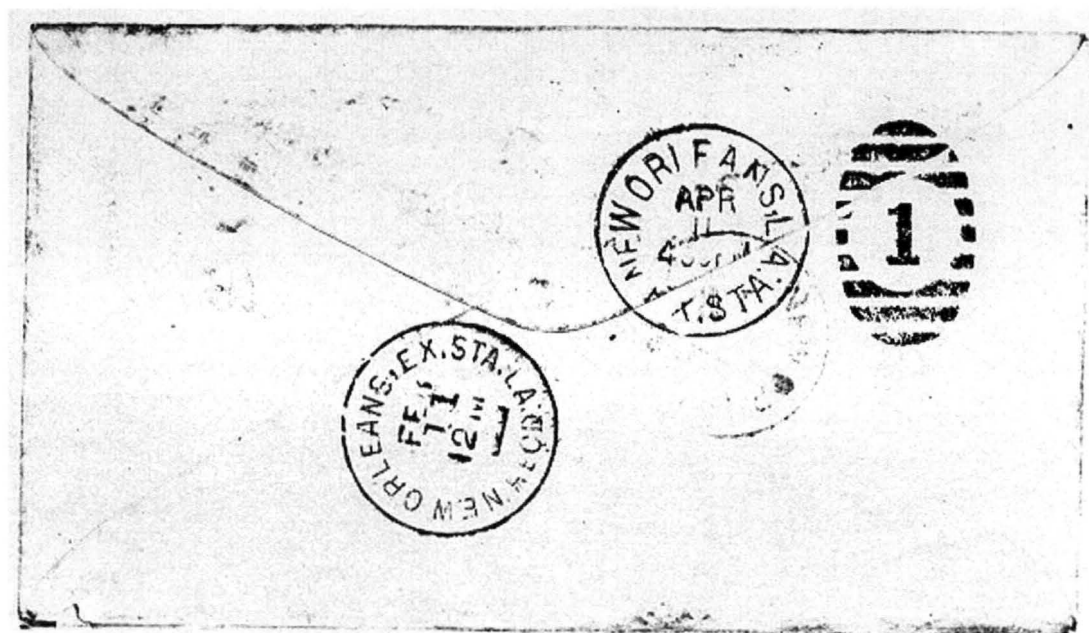


Figure 3. Back of Fig. 2 cover with two types of Exposition Station markings

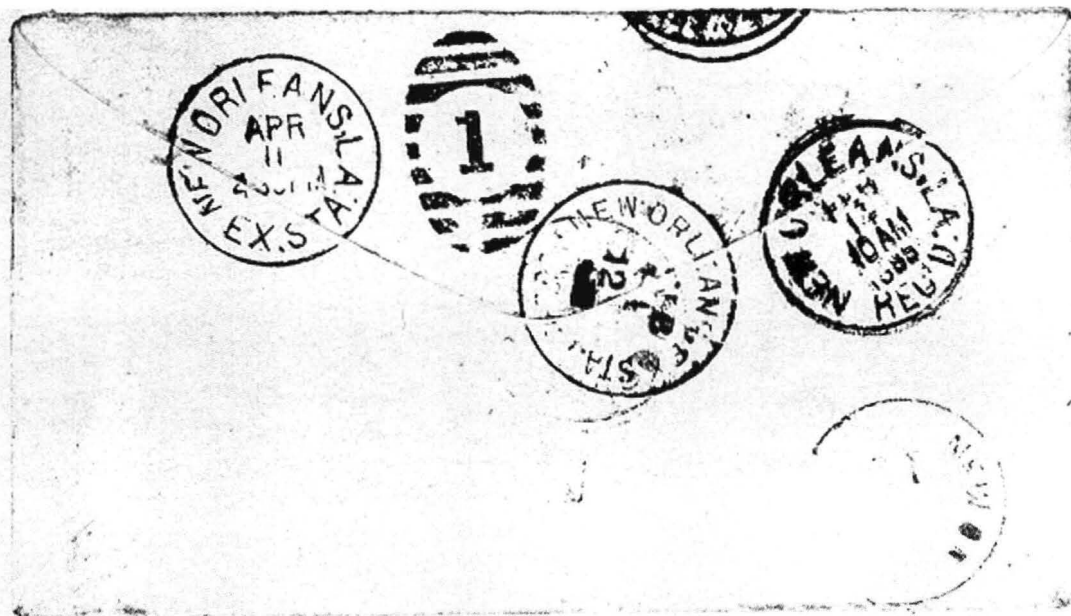


Figure 4. Back of other cover with two types of Exposition Station markings

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shoes, gold bracelets and a Chinese love letter, a loaded revolver and a bundle of sermons, "all showing the want of a little care on the part of the sender to properly address the envelope or wrapping containing the articles."¹

William Bomar, in his *Postal Markings of United States Expositions*,² listed four types of postal markings used at the New Orleans Exposition. This article describes two of these listed markings on a pair of covers recently discovered by the author and adds three new ancillary markings used at the Exposition Station. Both covers used the American Bank Note Co. 2¢ red brown issue of 1883. The typical philatelic articles on the New Orleans Cotton Centennial Exposition have featured the beautifully illustrated covers used to advertise the event, most bearing the **NEW ORLEANS, La./ EX. STA.** cds. The two new covers are addressed to a Mr. A.H. Buck at the Exposition.

Figure 2 shows the front of a cover mailed from Lowville, N.Y. on Feb. 7, 1885. The cover has three auxiliary postal markings: a large straightline **UNCLAIMED**, another similar but smaller marking, and an **ADVERTISED/ MAR/ 15** in a circle. It also has a small manuscript "X" in pencil. Figure 3 shows two Bomar-listed Exposition postal markings on the back of this cover; an Exposition Station receipt handstamp **NEW ORLEANS, EX. STA. LA./ RECD. /FEB 11/ 12M** (Bomar # NO 84/85-02) and **NEW ORLEANS, LA. / EX. STA./ APR 11/ 4:30 PM** duplexed with "1" in an elliptical killer (Bomar # NO 84/85-01).

Figure 4 shows the back of a very similar unclaimed and advertised cover mailed from Lowville, N.Y. on February 10, 1885, only three days after the cover illustrated in Figures 2 and 3. It has four circular postal markings, two of which are Bomar-listed Exposition postal markings. The first is a common **NEW ORLEANS, LA./ REC'D./ FEB 14/ 10 AM**. The next is another handstamp receipt **NEW ORLEANS, EX. STA./ RECD/ FEB 14/ 12 M** (Bomar # NO 84/85-02). The third is a duplex "1", **NEW ORLEANS, LA/ EX. STA./ APR 11/ 4:30 PM** (Bomar # 84/85/01). The fourth is a very faint strike of a New Orleans cds, in magenta, which under strong magnification is April 13. This indicates that both covers were advertised from the Exposition Station post office on March 15 and after remaining unclaimed for nearly 30 days they were sent back to the main New Orleans Post Office. Since there was no return address, the covers would have been treated as dead letters under the postal regulations.

These two covers significantly add three ancillary types of marking for the Exposition Station—two straightline "Unclaimed" and one "Advertised" with Month and Day in a circle—and they also increase the number of examples of NO84/85-02 (RECD) from three to five known. Indeed, with over 1,400,000 pieces of mail matter handled, it is surprising that counting the two covers here reported and those listed in Bomar, only 38 items survive with any types of Exposition Station markings.

[The author, David C. Hufford is a collector of Exposition postal history, flown German Zeppelin covers, watercraft on stamps, and United States stamps. He was raised in Jacksonville, FL and graduated from the University of Florida with a B.S. in Electrical Engineering. Mr. Hufford retired from AT&T as an electronics instructor and moved to Metairie, LA to live near his family.] □

¹Leonard V. Huber and Clarence W. Wagner, *The Great Mail, A Postal History of New Orleans* (State College, Pa.: American Philatelic Society, 1949), pp. 186-87.

²William J. Bomar, *Postal Markings of United States Expositions*, First Edition (North Miami, FL.: David G. Phillips Publishing Co., Inc., 1986), pp. 22-25.