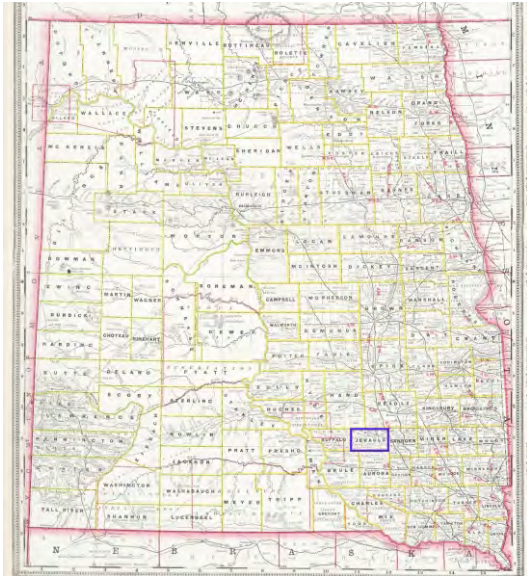


Guy Cook's Dakota

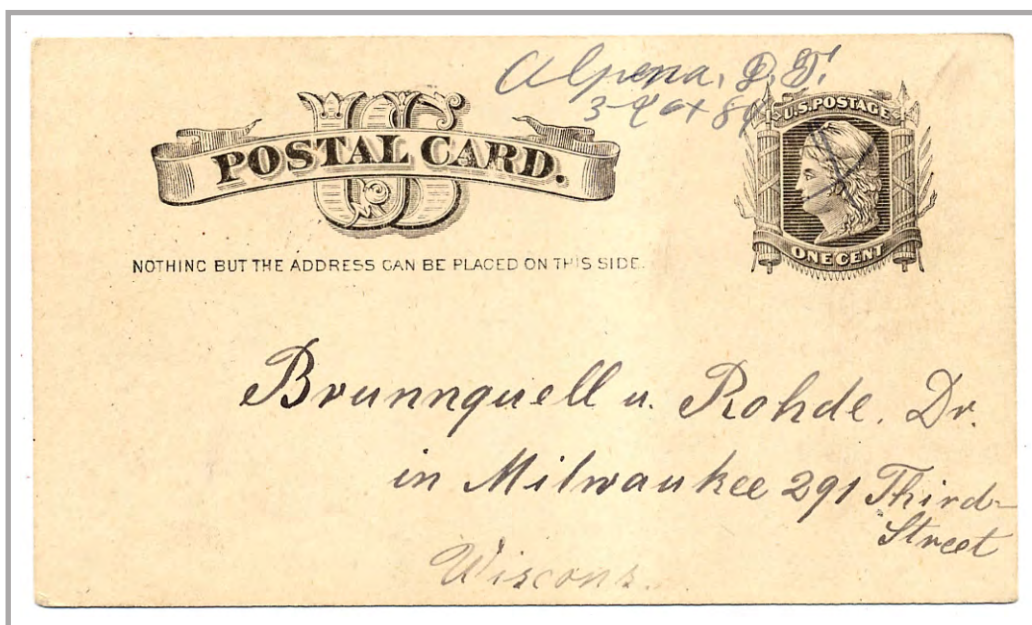
Arthur "Guy" Cook was born in England in 1880. In 1882 he was brought to Dakota Territory to what is now Jerauld County, South Dakota, and became a "sod house" homesteader. This exhibit is based on his account of life in Dakota Territory as written in 1949 and edited by his daughter. The full account was published by the South Dakota State Historical Society in their Summer 1976 *South Dakota History Journal*. A PDF file of full article is link [_____](#)

Coming to Jerauld County



Jerauld County outlined on map of the Dakota Territory

In the fall of 1881 my father arrived in Minnesota with a friend who had come across with him. They worked in the woods for a while that winter and, walking most of the way, landed in Huron, Dakota Territory, early the next spring. There a locator picked them up and showed them land open for settlement near what is now Alpena, South Dakota. To land-hungry men it looked good and they decided to stay. Father immediately wrote to England of his intentions and made plans that the three of us, my Mother, my three-year-old brother, and myself, eighteen months old, were to come later in 1882.



18 March 1884 Alpena, Dakota Territory (Jerauld County) manuscript postmark

Guy Cook's Dakota

Sod Homestead



Prairie Homestead as re-created at the Badlands National Park

Our first home was a sod shanty, not much for looks, but warm and comfortable. First a framework was built out of lumber. Then a piece of land was plowed with a breaker bottom plow that turned over the virgin sod in long strips about fourteen inches wide and three inches thick. These strips were cut into short lengths and laid in rows outside the wooden framework like bricks. No mortar was used. The cracks were carefully packed with loose dirt to make the whole tight; windows and a door completed the sides. The roof was made of boards laid lengthwise and covered with tar paper held down by nailed laths. The floor was natural dirt so scrubbing was unnecessary. It was not such a bad looking structure when it was completed, either inside or outside, and we really enjoyed it when the wintry winds and drifting snow made it almost unbearable outdoors.

At that time it was permissible for each settler to take up 480 acres of land: 160 acres as a homestead, 160 as a preemption, and a like amount as a tree claim. Father filed for all three. The settler was required to live on the land for a stated number of months and to make some improvements in order to get title to his homestead and to plant a certain acreage of trees to prove up on his tree claim. I do not know the requirements for him to get title to his preemption. Later that first year, and for a few following, settlers moved in in large numbers and the prairie was dotted with their shanties. A few came with the idea of selling their rights to others and then going back where they came from; more came with the intention of making this new country their future home.*

*under the 1862 Homestead Act, \$18 per tract

Guy Cook's Dakota

The Railroad Comes to Alpena

The land Father had selected was in what is now Jerauld County and he was the first homesteader in the eastern part of that county. Our first home was a sod shanty, not much for looks, but warm and comfortable.

Not long after we arrived, a railroad was built through that part of the state and the town of Alpena started. This made it much easier for us to get food and other supplies. We did not have much money to buy luxuries but somehow Mother always managed to have a few pennies for candy for us boys. How good that candy was! Since then I have eaten some of the very best chocolates, but they have never given me the pleasure I got out of that early candy. We did not chew it because that would make it disappear too quickly; we munched or sucked it very slowly so that it would last longer.



1908 Jerauld County map. Cook tracts outlined in red. Chicago, Milwaukee, & St. Paul R.R. route and town of Alpena noted in blue.



1886 Sioux City & Yankton Railway Post Office postmark on cover from Yankton

Guy Cook's Dakota

The Circus Comes to Woonsocket

One of the greatest disappointments of my life occurred about this time (ca. 1890). Glaring posters announced the coming of a circus to the nearby town of Woonsocket. I had never seen one. I longed to go, but Father gave me little encouragement as money was scarce. Mother, however, brought out fifteen cents she had put aside for postage and that saved the day for me. Mother liked to write letters and I shall never know what a sacrifice that was for her. Father finally agreed that if I would make the trip alone on Old Ned, as we called our white horse, he would let me go. The night before the eventful day I got out the wash tub and scrubbed myself from head to toe. I did not sleep well that night, but got up early anyway and brushed and curried Old Ned until he fairly shone. After helping with the chores, I dressed in my best clothes. Then I threw a blanket on the horse for a saddle, put on the bridle and, with a kiss from Mother and a wave from Father, started off for Woonsocket and the circus.

I was the happiest boy in the world. When I reached the show grounds, they were getting ready for the parade. The highly decorated wagons, gay costumes, and fine horses were grander than my highest imagination. I had already taken the bridle off Ned, hobbled him, and turned him out to graze. Then I, with many other boys, followed the clown's cart through the town. The show was a small affair, but it was immense to me. After what seemed ages, the opening of the circus was announced and I started for the ticket wagon with my fifteen cents clutched firmly in my hand. I handed it up to the ticket seller and my world fell about me. He asked for ten cents more. Sadly, but holding back my tears, I put the money in my pocket. I found Old Ned, put on the blanket and bridle, and slowly made my way back home. No one could ever have blacker day than that one seemed to me. I have seen many large circuses since then, but none have given me the thrill that I believe that unseen circus of my youth would have given.



1884 Woonsocket, Dakota Territory postmark on card to Roscoe

Guy Cook's Dakota

Indians Join in Fourth of July Celebration at Wessington Springs

I recall vividly one of my experiences with Indians. It was on the Fourth of July in 1888. Wessington Springs was putting on a celebration and had invited a number of Indians to attend. They were to give some of their many dances; for pay, the citizens gave them a cow for meat. They were to kill it in their own fashion before the crowd and, as you may guess, this was in a very crude manner. However, we were very much interested in the procedure.

We children were looking on with wide open mouths while the animal was being killed and partially skinned. We were edging nearer to them, amazed to see them cutting off pieces of liver and other meat, dipping them into the blood, and eating them raw. We got much closer than the Indians thought we should. One of the braves cupped his hand and, with a scooping motion scattered blood over all of us. I had a new print suit for the occasion, the first I could remember having had, and it seemed to me that it was ruined. My heart was broken and I disliked Indians for some years afterward.



1885 Wessington Springs, Dakota Territory use, corner card shows former name of Elmer

Guy Cook's Dakota

Indians Pass on their way to Devil's Lake near Ft. Totten

There were no Indians living nearby, but in the summer they were continually passing our house while going from a reservation southwest of us to one near Devils Lake. We could always tell they were coming even when they were still some distance away. They drove ponies and noisy wagons and had numerous skinny dogs, which ranged in every direction looking for rabbits for food. The man sat on the seat and drove; the squaw and papooses sat in the bed on the wagon behind. How they ever stood the jolting in the springless vehicle I never knew.

They often camped for the night near us and this was always especially interesting to us children. When they stopped the old buck would get out his pipe and light up while the squaw unhitched the ponies and turned them out to graze. Then she would haul some poles from the wagon, tie them together at one end, set them in a circle with the tied end on the top, stretch a canvas around the poles and there was the tepee. A hole was left at the top to let the smoke out, but most of the cooking was done out of doors. They often picked up the entrails from slaughtered animals along the way, hung them on strings to sun cure and ate them later. It did not look like very appetizing food, but they seemed to like it, and they were the ones to be satisfied.

The Indians were very friendly and seemed to enjoy us as much as we did them. They were great beggars, however, and were always asking for bread or some other food; none of which they intended to pay for. We had no screens on our doors and they would come in quietly in their moccasins without any thought of knocking. Mother would hear a grunt, look up, and there would be an Indian waiting and smiling. Doubtless it was Mother's liberality with her bread that caused them never to pass us by.

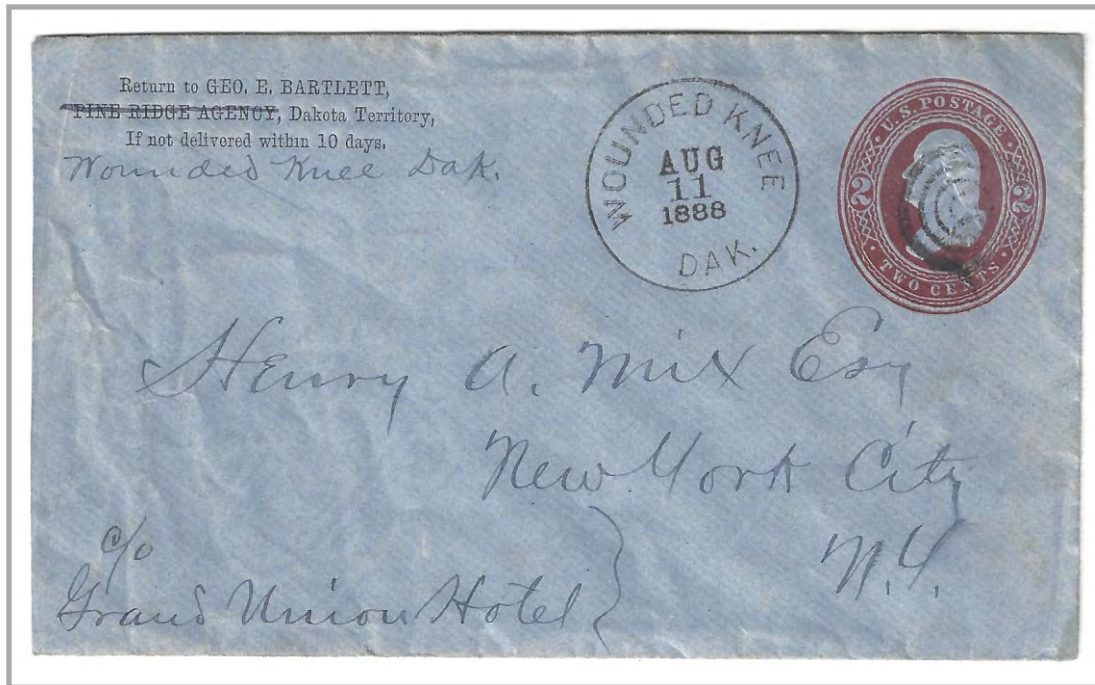


1888 Fort Totten, Dakota Territory postmark on cover to Delaware

Guy Cook's Dakota

Wounded Knee & George Bartlett

Post Office established on 22 December 1886 at the trading post of George E. Bartlett on Wounded Knee Creek, in present day South Dakota. It was the site of the massacre of the Big Foot band of Sioux Indians by the 7th Cavalry on 29 December 1890.



11 August 1888 Wounded Knee, Dakota Territory cover to New York City
George E. Bartlett printed corner card with "Pine Ridge Agency" corrected to "Wounded Knee"



Image of Bartlett (seated at center) taken several days after the Wounded Knee Massacre in his office behind the post office.

George E. Bartlett was the original store owner at Wounded Knee. As it happens, he was known to the Indians as "Wounded Knee," the result of having received a knife wound to the knee in a fight with thieves in Montana.

He served as deputy U. S. Marshal in Dakota Territory (1879-1893), postmaster and as a special agent for the Department of Justice.

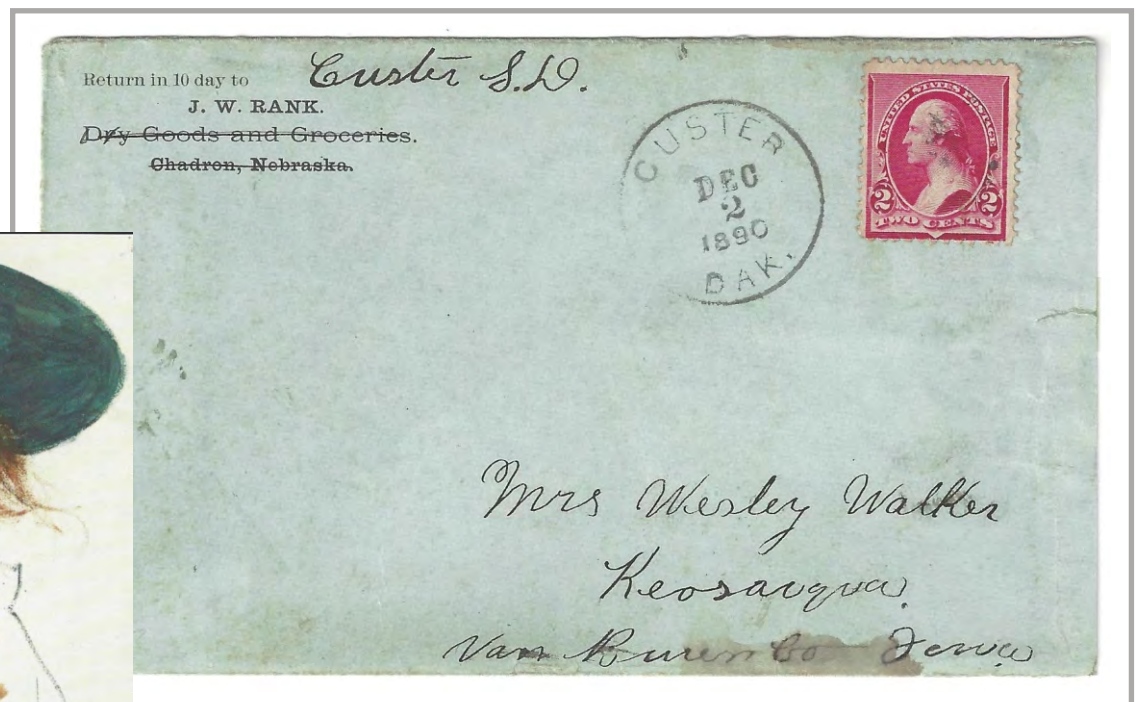
Guy Cook's Dakota

False Indian Scare in the Winter of 1890 - 1891 after Wounded Knee

Out at the Pine Ridge Indian Agency there was trouble with the Indians. Sitting Bull had worked them into a frenzy with his ghost dances and trouble was brewing. We were a long way from this agency, but because the winter was mild and free of snow, it would not be a long trip for them to make with their ponies. Neighbors got together and decided what they would do in case the Indians went on the war path and came our way. Mother and I would go often to a nearby hill and look off in the direction of Pine Ridge to see if we could notice any dust. The battle of Wounded Knee did take place with our troops at this agency, but the Indians did not leave the reservation.

Mother did have one adventure that winter, however. She had gone to take care of a sick neighbor that day and expected to be back early. However, she did not get home until late that evening. When I came home from school, I found no one there; so I went ahead and did all of the chores. By this time it began to get dark and I had visions of the Indians coming our way. For some time I kept back the tears, but finally I broke down and climbed up into the high, homemade bunk I used for a bed. In spite of rolling and tossing, I must have gone to sleep because I fell out of the bunk, struck my head, and bled profusely.

I wandered about the house trying to stop the bleeding and leaving a trail of blood. When Mother finally came home and lit the lamp, she saw those blood tracks and was sure that I must have been scalped by the Indians. But she soon learned the cause of it all and hugged me for a long time. With the coming of spring there came new hopes and our troubles of the winter were forgotten.



2 December 1890 Custer, South Dakota use

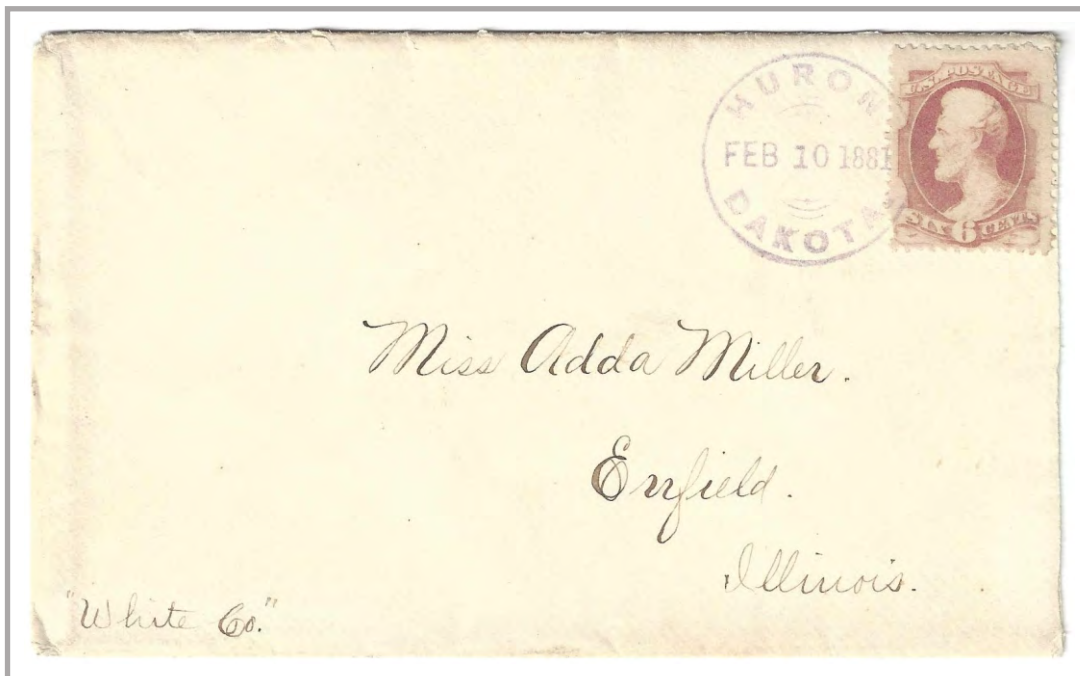
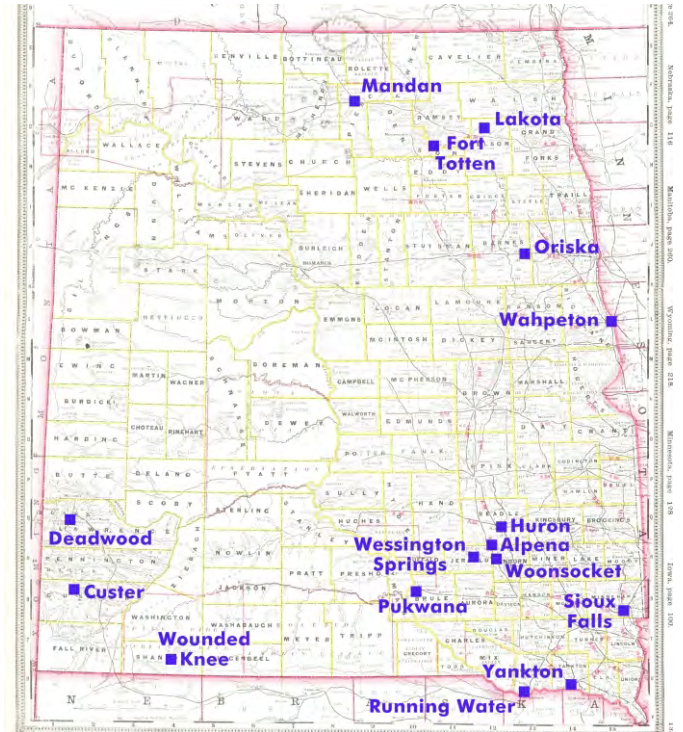
Custer (Baskin)

Guy Cook's Dakota

To Huron for an Education

A few years later I was to live in Huron, or rather on a farm one and one half miles north of town. Dick Clark owned the place and, as he had come over from England with Father, it did not seem at all lonesome. He had offered me the chance to work for my board and room and go to school in town. I recall that I went to the Utah Street school and was in the eighth grade. It was a long way to walk night and morning, but I did not mind it because I wanted an education.

However, when he said that I would work for my board and room, he meant just that. It was my job to take care of the cattle and hogs. To do that I had to get up long before daybreak; but in spite of storms and cold weather, I never missed a school day all winter. At Christmas Mr. Clark gave me a new overcoat with a small velvet collar. How I admired it-the first new overcoat that I had ever owned. When I wore it to school, I could not understand why no one said anything about my new coat. Now I know that they, unlike me, were accustomed to new clothes.



1881 Huron, Dakota Territory postmark on double weight cover to Illinois

Native American Town Names in Dakota

Sitting Bull, Lakota Sioux

Sitting Bull was a Hunkpapa Lakota holy man and Supreme Chief of the Sioux Nation. His leadership in 1876 inspired his people to the major victory over Lt. Co. Custer and the 7th Cavalry. He was killed on 15 December 1890 at Standing Rock Indian Reservation during an attempt to arrest him. It was feared that he would join the Ghost Dance movement.



Sitting Bull (Baskin)

24 January 1890, Lakota, North Dakota



1882 Sioux Falls, Dakota Territory use

Native American Town Names in Dakota

Mandan / Oriska

Mandan was founded in 1879 on the west side of the upper Missouri River. The city was named after the historic indigenous Mandan of the area.



1885 Mandan, Dakota Territory

Oriska was originally called Fourth Siding after the railroad siding. It was renamed Oriska in 1881 was for a Native American character in a poem by Lydia Sigourney.



1887 Oriska, Dakota Territory use

Native American Town Names in Dakota

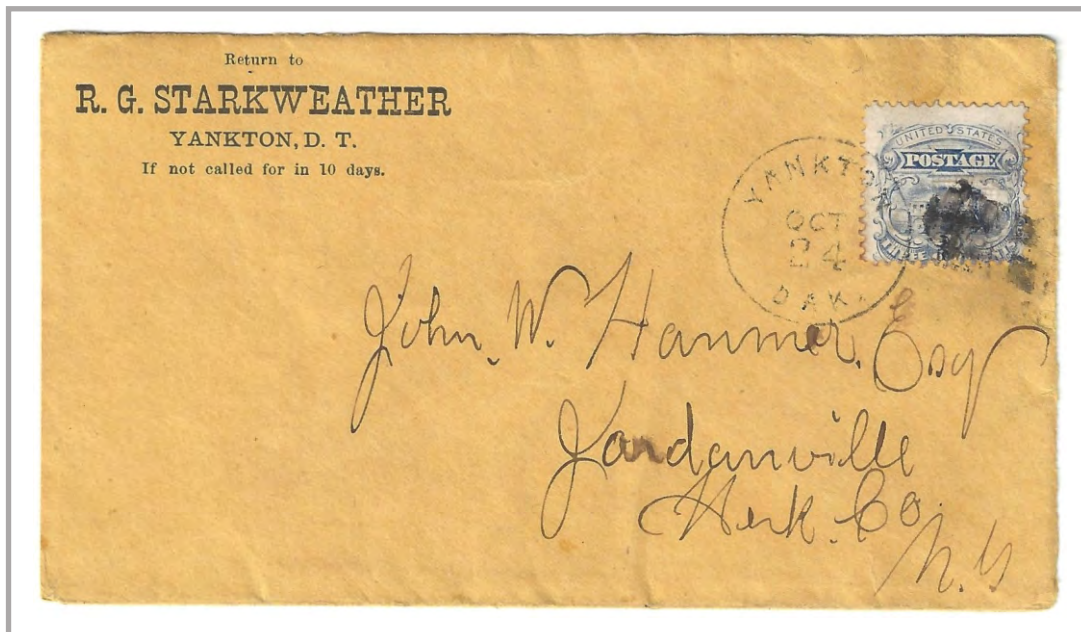
Yankton

(Wikipedia) Yankton was the first capital of Dakota Territory. It is named for the Yankton tribe of Nakota (Sioux) Native Americans. The name Yankton is derived from the Nakota word I-hank-ton-wan ("the end village").

Yankton enjoyed a natural advantage as a steamboat landing along the Missouri River. The first steamboat to reach Yankton from St. Louis arrived in 1859, providing goods and supplies to settlers and fur-traders. By 1880, Yankton had become an established riverboat port on the Missouri River, but the city's status as an important port was literally crushed on March 27, 1881 when an ice dam on the Missouri River burst, sending flood waters and giant blocks of ice flowing towards the town. By March 29, the town's riverfront and downtown were covered in water, ice and rock. The railroad reached Yankton in 1872 and the city's role as a prominent stopping point on the way west dwindled over the next several years.



Yankton-Nakota-Sioux Chief
Hollow Horn, 1905



1869 Yankton, Dakota Territory postmark on corner card cover

Native American Town Names in Dakota

Pukwana

(From an article in the *Moose Lake Star Gazette*): The small burgh of Pukwana, South Dakota, got its name from Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's poem "The Song of Hiawatha." The last stanza reads, "in the smoke that rolled around him, the pukwana of the peace pipe."

The Ojibwa word "pukwana" translates literally as "the curling smoke of the peace pipe" or "Smoke of the Pipe of the Great Spirit."

Frank Kimball was the man who gave Pukwana its name. Ironically he is also the namesake of the next town to the east, Kimball, South Dakota. Frank was the head honcho for the Milwaukee railroad in the 1880s and at the time they were laying the tracks as far as my home town of Chamberlain, which was located on the east bank of the Missouri River.

Today, the small town of Pukwana is famous for its lawnmower races. Basically, the contestants take a riding lawnmower, soup up the engine, re-fit the tires and speed to the end of an approximately one-sixteenth of a mile track; the track might be a little longer or shorter, but knowing Pukwana, there are probably very few rules, if any. If there are, rule number one would be drinking in public is allowed on race day (if not required). Rule number two would be to have as much fun as possible by adhering to rule number one.



1885 Pukwana, Dakota Territory use

Native American Town Names in Dakota

(Chief) Running Water

(Stan Freberg "Presents The United States of America") video link [_____](#)

Scene Six: The Sale of Manhattan

Narrator: As the white man's foothold increases, the red man's land diminishes. Seldom has history recorded such a phenomenal land transaction as that which took place on a little island in the Hudson River in 1626.

Dark Cloud: Too many moons we live here, White Cloud. Time to unload this crummy island. You listen to me: sell Manhattan to white man. Get me plenty junk jewelry, alright?

White Cloud: Alright. I list with real estate agent. He find live one, okay?

Tishman: Well, I seen your listing in the paper here: For Sale: Island (exclamation point) Ideal for summer festival. Gorgeous view, running water...

Salesman: Oh, whoa---wait a minute. What is that "running water" bit?

White Cloud: That my wife's brother. He go with island.

Salesman: Oh, yeah.



1887 Running Water, Dakota Territory use

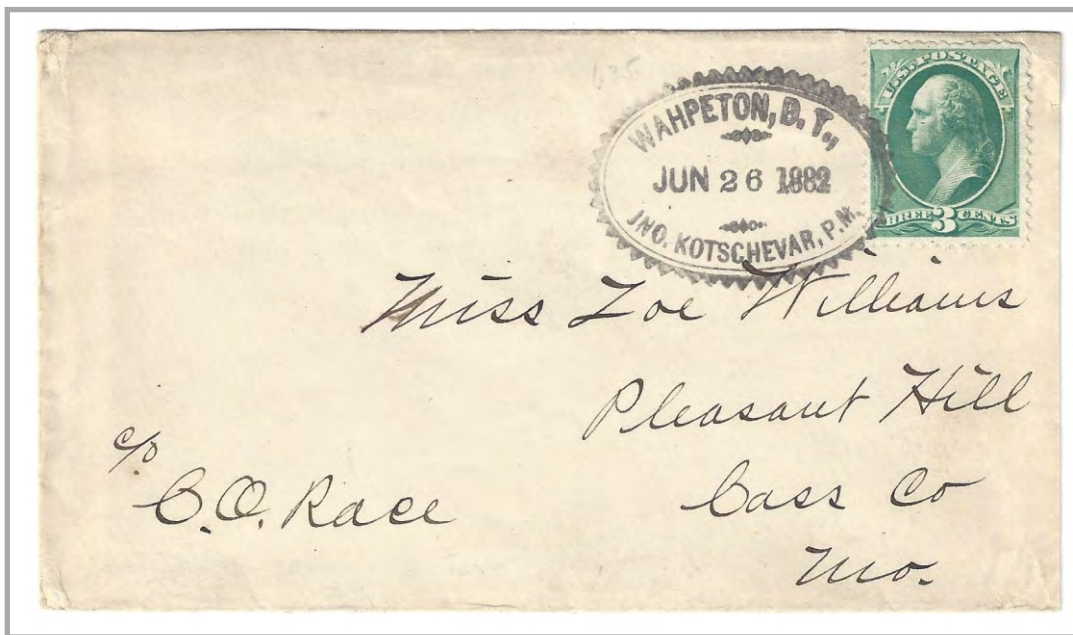
Native American Town Names in Dakota

Wahpeton

(Wikipedia) The first settler in Wahpeton was Morgan T. Rich. His plow turned the first furrow of rich black bottomland in 1869. When other settlers arrived, they formed a tiny community and named it Richville, commemorating both its founder and the fertile quality of the soil.

In 1871, a US post office was opened. At the same time, the town's name was changed to Chahinkapa, a Lakota Sioux word meaning "the end of the woods". Two years later, the county was organized and named Chahinkapa County.

Later that year the county was renamed as Richland County and the town of Chahinkapa renamed as Wahpeton, an adaptation of the Dakota name of the local band of Dakota Indians, the Wakhpetonwan. The name in Dakota means "leaf dwellers." They adopted this name at an earlier time when they lived in the vicinity of Lake Mille Lacs, before they were displaced by the Ojibwa and pushed to the west.



1882 Wahpeton, Dakota Territory postmark with Jno. Kotschevar Postmaster name

(Urban Dictionary) "Wop" or "Wahp" - a racial slur for an Italian or person of Italian heritage. It is often said that this term comes from "With Out Papers" or "Working On Pavement," but it actually comes from the Italian word "guappo", meaning a swaggerer, pimp, or ruffian.

A Son-in-Law of Umbria

Wahpeton and Gualdo Tadino

In closing, Guy Cook's only daughter who edited the narrative used in this exhibit, married an Italian from Umbria, Italy in 1939.



Sardinia 1863 issue 10c pair tied to cover to Rome by Papal States grill cancel, Gualdo Tadino origin postmark and Foligno transit backstamp, prepaid 20c rate from Umbria to the border plus 3 bajocchi due for carriage within Papal States
a late use of old Papal States grill cancel from Umbria