

Expo Philatelists - John R. Clements and Everett Erle



John Ralston Clements (1868 – 1946) was the first collector to recognize the importance of, and collect exposition postal history. Covers and cards created by Clements are among the most desirable of any expo postal history items, even though by all definitions they were completely philatelic inspired.

Born in Ireland, Clements was just two years old when his parents arrived in America, the family eventually settling in Liberty, New York. A self educated and deeply religious man, John Clements composed over 5000 hymns. When his close personal friend Dr. John A. Davis organized the Practical Bible Training School in 1900 at Lestershire [now Johnson City] New York near Binghamton, Clements was chosen the first president of the school. He served as president until 1914. The school today is named Davis College in honor of its founder.

Clements earned his living to support his wife and family as a commercial printer. He also sold stationery and post cards in Binghamton. His service as school president and as hymn writer were more 'labors of love and devotion' as opposed to primary means of producing income.

Davis College has its own United States Post Office: Bible School Park, New York 13737. Clements served as the first postmaster of Bible School Park, starting in October 1906 when the post office opened.. The post office at Bible School Park had been established because of the large volume of correspondence courses published and distributed by the school, the course material most probably printed by Clements in his shop. Being postmaster was a secondary job that he felt naturally obligated to do as part of his school presidency.

Davis College honors Clements today through a residential housing complex of 12 one-to-three bedroom student apartments, named Clements Hall. The present Bible School Park post office facility is also located within this building, a most appropriate tribute to this pioneer educator and philatelist.



(courtesy Davis College)

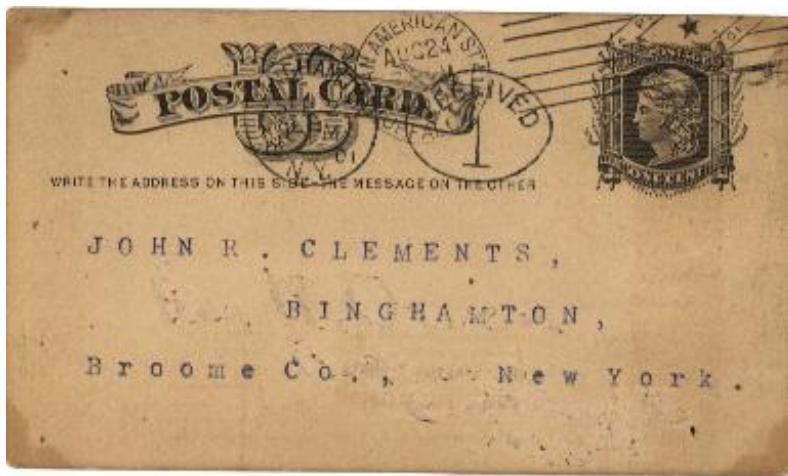


1914 Bible School Park duplex

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February 1894 cover from John R. Clements to his mother, with incorporated signature embedded as part of the address. Clements preprinted his Binghamton PO Box as the corner card.



B01-10 dated 24 August 1901 on postal card prepared by Clements.

(ex Bomar)

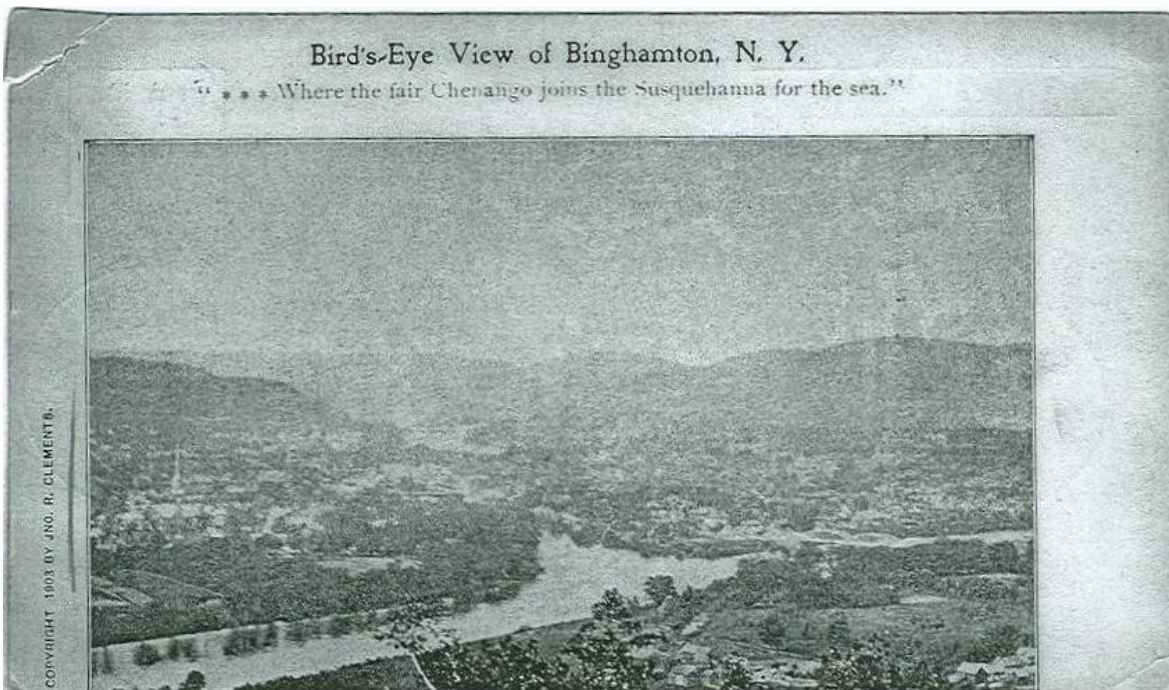
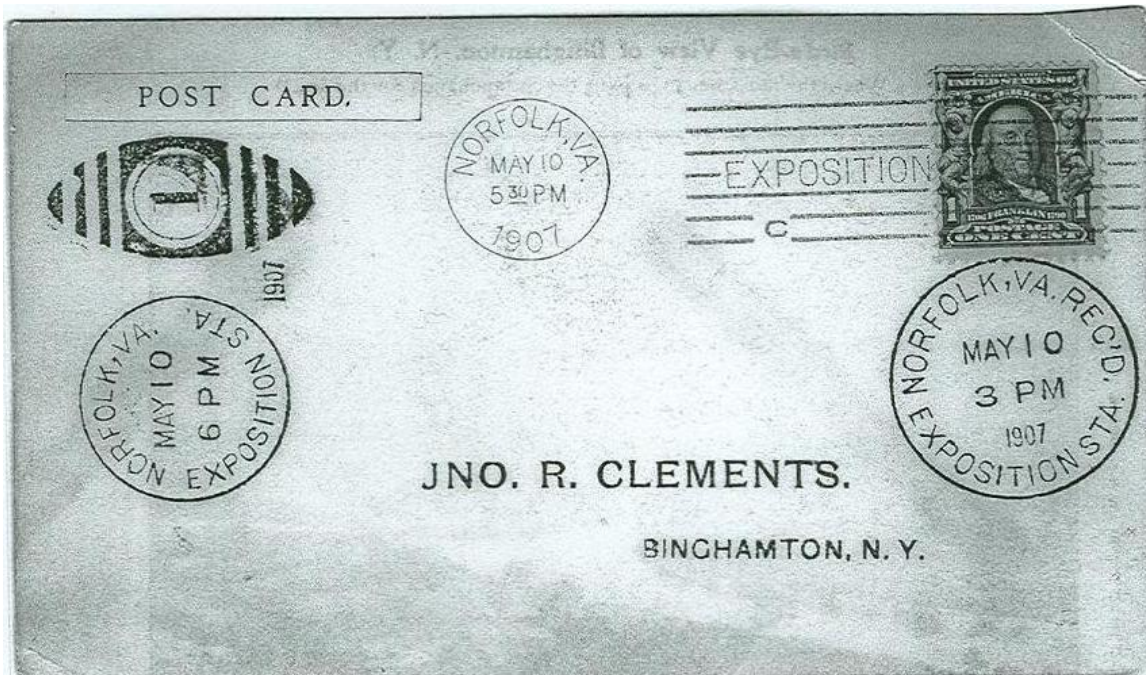


Multiple Portland expo postal markings dated 1 August 1905 on post card prepared and printed by Clements in his shop.

(ex Bomar)

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Multiple Jamestown expo postal markings dated 10 May 1907 on post card prepared and printed by Clements in his shop. The card's picture side indicates Clements copyrighted these cards.



(card courtesy Albert Aldham)

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(photo courtesy APS)

Everett Erle (1906 – 1990) was a lifelong collector, exhibitor, writer, and editor who took an active part in international, national, and San Francisco area philately. His earliest interests were in aero philately; he was editor of the West Coast Air Mail Society Journal. By the 1930's, he was a frequent contributor to the philatelic journals of the time on various aspects of postal history.

Erle dabbled in just about all areas of philately, for example he wrote an article for the 1944 American Philatelic Congress book on the subject of Basutoland. He served as the editor of the Western Cover Society journal for 12 years.

Erle, along with his close friend and colleague Perham C. Nahl (son of Perham W. Nahl, designer of the 13th Labor of Hercules poster for the Panama Pacific Exposition) loved to play philatelic 'games' with the post office, sending cards and covers to fictitious names and addresses, with the intent of having the items returned to them smothered in foreign postal markings showing attempts to deliver the piece.

Living and working in the Bay Area, Erle frequently visited the Golden Gate International Exposition on Treasure Island in San Francisco Bay during 1939 and 1940. Some of his best creations involved postal markings from this fair. Erle worked for the California and Hawaiian Sugar Refining Corporation, located at 215 Market Street in San Francisco. He had access to all their incoming mail, and saved many covers for his collection.

Following Erle's death, the majority of his exposition collection was acquired intact by another collector living in the Northern California area, who still retains ownership.



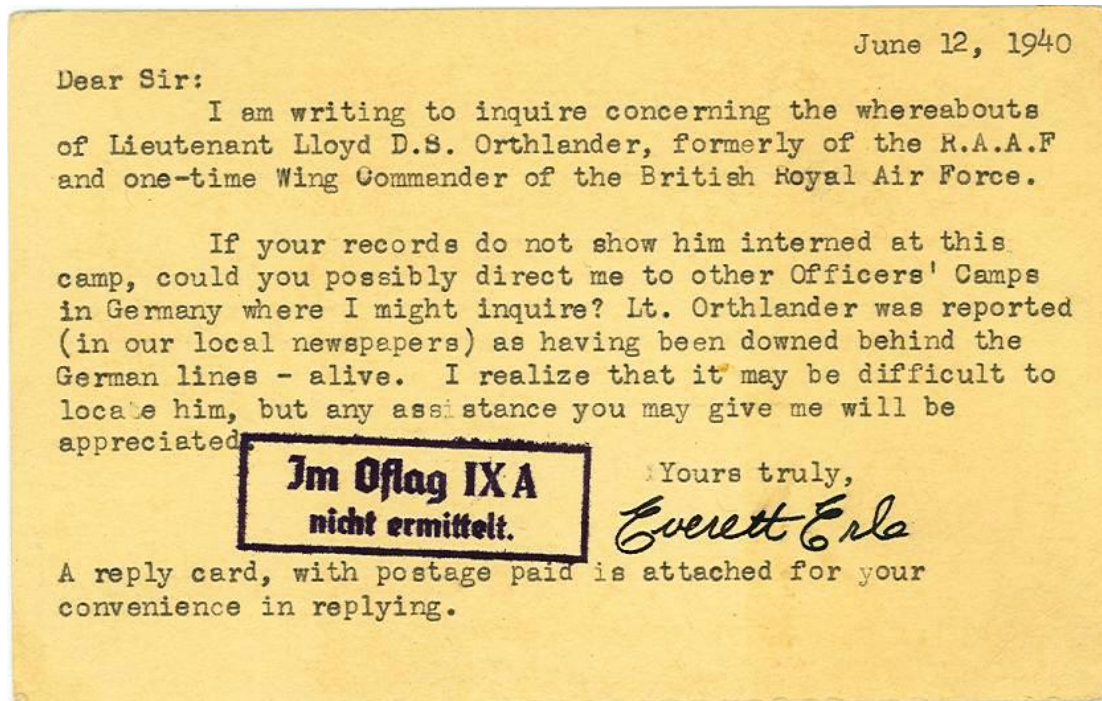
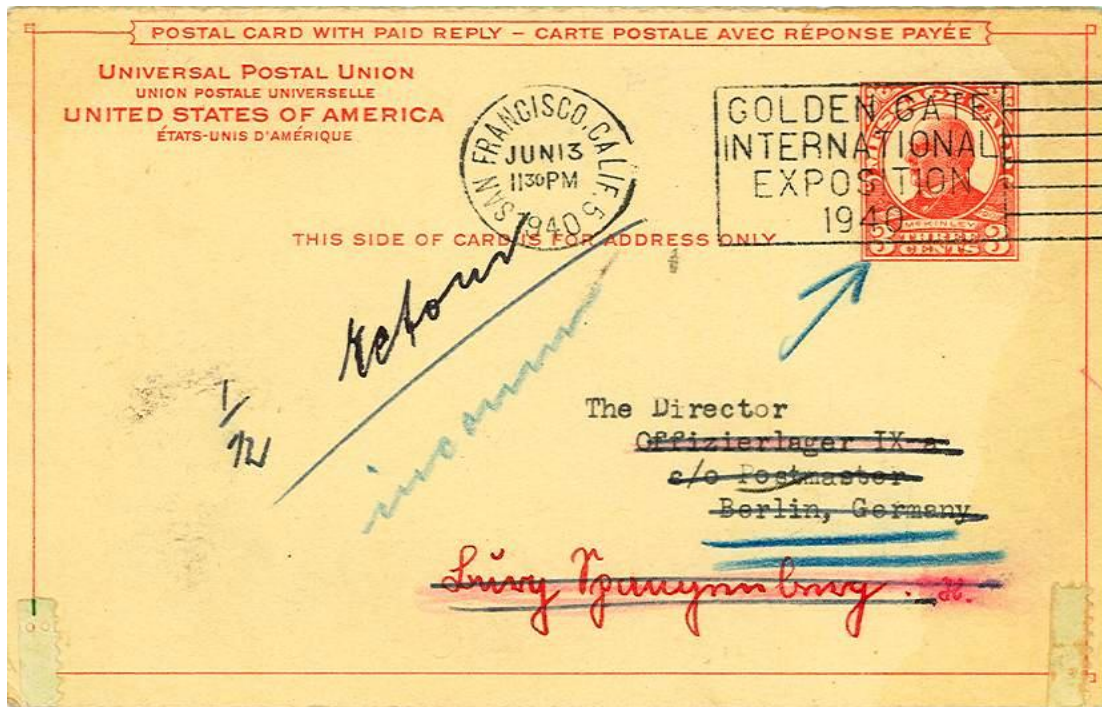
Of course the Royal Australian Air Force "cannot trace" this Lieutenant. He did not exist.

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Erle's attempt on 25 June 1940 to contact a fictitious civilian interned on the Isle of Man.
Returned to him 8 months later.

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Erle's 1940 request for info on an imprisoned English pilot. The reply portion of the card has long been detached. No information can be found on Lieutenant Orthlander, he may or may not have existed. Either way, this was another one of Erle's attempts to gather unusual foreign markings.