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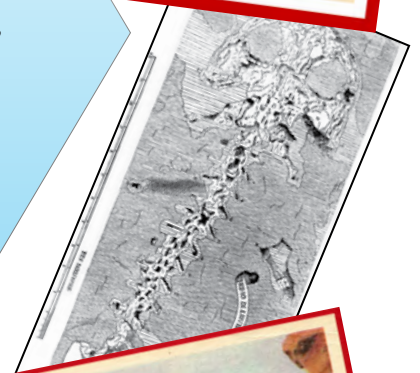
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pre-historians

Mysterious secrets in our mail 'revealed' for armchair postal conspiracy theorists!

Exposed: Paleo-Related U.S. Town Names

Many towns have names, or include references to, paleontological subjects based on the local terrain or history of an area. Naturally, post offices within these towns carry their town names in hand or machine postmarks, precancels, etc. and these are all quite collectible for the prehistory philatelist.

One problem facing collectors is finding examples of these town names, but perhaps the greater problem is in knowing which town names to look for. So, which United States towns have Paleo-related names?



Fossil, Wyoming
Four Bar Town Hand Cancel

This list of names, reflects mainly animals, but of course could be expanded to include scientists like 'Darwin, California'. There are also many foreign places like 'Devon, England' for example.

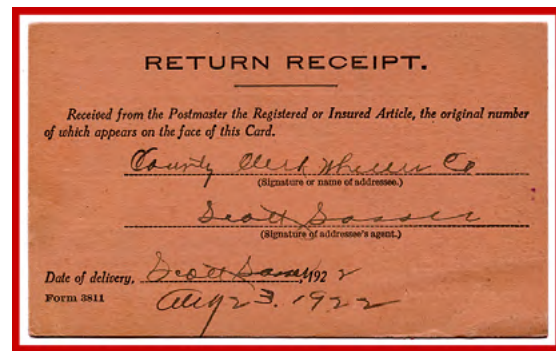
I hope the following information may be of assistance in starting your search for paleo-related items as you're looking through dealer stocks and that you might even find one not on the list!

City/Post Office Name, County, State	Years of Operation
Dinosaur, Moffat, Colorado	1966 – Open
Fossil, Wheeler, Oregon	1876 – Open
Fossil, Roane, Tennessee	1887 – 1904
Fossil, Tarrant, Texas	1880 – 1884
Fossil, Lincoln, Wyoming	1886 – 1887
Fossil, Lincoln, Wyoming	1888 – 1945
Fossilville, Bedford, Pennsylvania	1874 – 1936
Mammoth, Pinal, Arizona	1887 – Open
Mammoth, Mono, California	1879 – 1898
Mammoth, Shasta, California	1907 – 1921
Mammoth, Shasta, California	1923 – 1925
Mammoth, Edmonson, Kentucky	1881 – 1881
Mammoth, Ozark, Missouri	1902 – 1955
Mammoth, Madison, Montana	1877 – 1931
Mammoth, Westmoreland, Pennsylvania	1885 – Open
Mammoth, Lipscomb, Texas	1890 – 1894
Mammoth, Juab, Utah	1890 – 1973
Mammoth, Kanawha, West Virginia	1894 – Open
Mammoth, Natrona, Wyoming	1923 – 1924
Mammoth Cave, Calaveras, California	1883 – 1887
Mammoth Cave, Edmonson, Kentucky	1842 – Open
Mammoth Spring, Fulton, Arkansas	1879 – Open

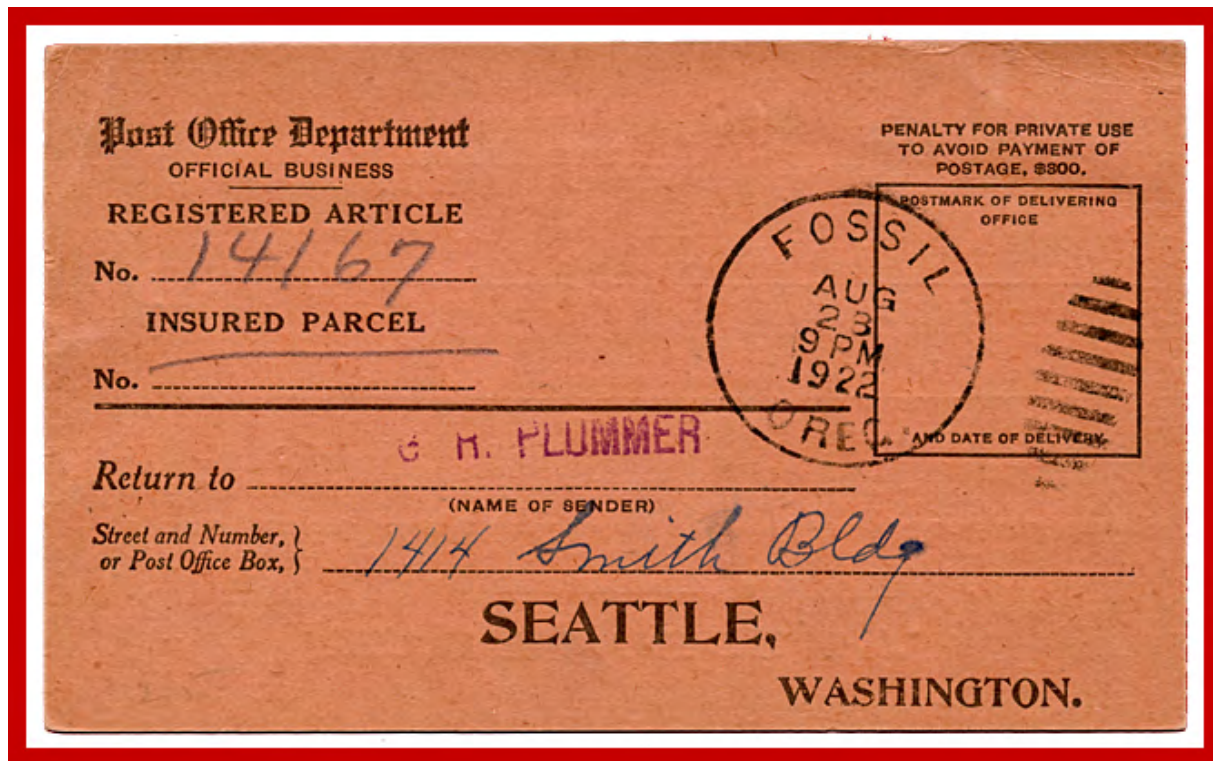
A Fossilized Return Receipt

I've heard that finding a fossilized piece of philatelic material is difficult so thought this example might be as close as some of us will ever get without actually digging.

The 'Return Receipt' Service provides verification to senders that articles they mailed were delivered. The service began in 1863 and until 1925, no service fee was required. The penalty clause on the card paid the return postage fee. Delivery was acknowledged by postal form which notes to whom the item was delivered and the date and later included the date of mailing. On receiving an item, the recipient signs and dates the return receipt and hands it back to the postal clerk, acknowledging receipt. This service is available to the public, but also for 'Official Business' mail between government offices which is scarcer than commercial use. More interesting however is the opposite side as the card was sent to the Wheeler County Clerk in Fossil, Oregon where the card was officially 'fossilized'!



Return Receipt Form 3811



Fossil, Oregon, 9 bar killer handstamp, 23 August 1922 at 9PM

The postal clerk validated receipt of registered article number 14167. The instruction to do this is contained in the square box "Postmark of Delivering Office and Date of Delivery." (It's interesting that a postal employee would be working that late in a small town.) This form was then re-mailed, postage paid, under the authority of the "Post Office Department - Official Business" corner card text and penalty clause text in the upper right corner. The form was returned to the original sender in Seattle, Washington.

Mastodon Thigh Bone Pays Penn Academy Dues

North American mammoths and mastodons, often called ‘woolly mammoths’, are either a *Mammuthus columbi*, *jeffersonii* or a *Mammuth americanum*. They lived during the ice age and appear on U.S. postage stamps like the 1955 Penn Academy issue showing a mastodon thigh bone. The fossil remains are found in many U.S. states and displayed in local museums.

Regular and commemorative U.S. postage stamps are also found paying missing postage and are nice items in and of themselves, especially for a paleo-thematic collector. When combined with other factors like official mail, they become ever more interesting or unusual.



Penn Academy Commemorative Issue Paid Postage Due of 3 Cents

This cover from Carthage to Golden City, Missouri is dated 18 February, 1955. The envelope has a 1.5 cent imprinted indicia (postal stationery) with an overprinted penalty clause for official business. This was done by the Post Office Department and the envelopes could only be used by them.

Legally, the person using this cover to avoid postage could be fined \$300.00. Fortunately for the sender (no sender's address is on the rear), the fine was ignored and a 3¢ postage due fee assessed instead using a single copy of the 150th Anniversary of the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts (Philadelphia) commemorative issue depicting Charles Wilson Peale (1741-1827 – painter and naturalist).

A mastodon thigh bone is visible in the stamp's lower right corner.



O.C. Marsh, Chief Red Cloud and the 'Thunder Horses'



Fossil, Oregon
Precancel Overprint

The American west was a fertile landscape for fossil hunters of the late 1800s. Remains of plants, fish, large shells and giant bones were recognized as fossils by geologists and surveyors preparing the untamed land for the transcontinental railroad in the 1860s.



Transcontinental Railroad
1st Class Rate as of 6 July 1932

Explorers reported their findings to scientific journals and sold articles describing their experiences to newspapers in the east. These were very enticing new discoveries but subject to life-threatening hazards as the American Indians living in the area were un-welcoming hosts to these pale-faced newcomers.



American Indian
Woodcut Typograph Essay



American Indian
Fancy Hand Cancel

The American Indians were protecting their hunting grounds and the tribal territory of their forefathers on which their culture depended. It was not easily given up as the white man encroached and ever more gold prospectors and settlers claimed vast areas for their own.



Hunting Buffalo



Gold Prospector



Settlers

1998 Bi-Color Reprints of the 1898 Trans-Mississippi Commemorative Issue



Petrified (Fossil) Wood
1st Class Rate as of 2 May 1974
Cover

A rush to uncover western fossil riches began in 1871, the same year the Grand Canyon and Yellowstone were being explored. Reports of undocumented fossil types by these new expeditions lured major scientists into the great outdoors regardless of the hardships.



Grand Canyon
Commemorative Issue

One of the most renowned of these new explorers was Othniel Charles Marsh, a professor of paleontology at Yale College in New Haven, Connecticut. Marsh explored many western sites with mixed results after receiving various geologic reports and maps.



Othniel Charles Marsh, Professor at Yale College, New Haven, Connecticut
 Illustrated Commemorative Cancel, People's Republic of China

On hearing of interesting samples found in the Dakotas, he decided to explore the area in November of 1874. His move into the Wyoming Territory badlands was accompanied by a full entourage of wagons and a number of hired hands to do the heavy lifting and digging.



Wyoming Badlands
 Anniversary Issue



Chief Red Cloud of the Oglala Sioux
 Zip Code Slogan Corner Block of Four

The expedition originated from an Indian agency near a Northern Pacific Railroad railhead. The agency was named for Chief Red Cloud, the local Oglala Sioux chief and war leader who led the resistance in the Indian wars at the Powder River hunting grounds where the U.S. Army was soundly defeated.



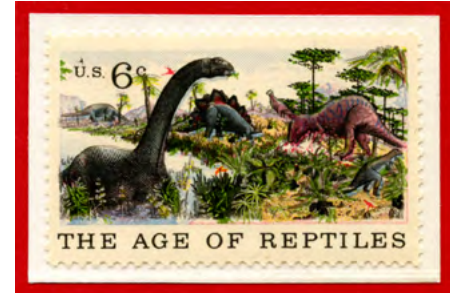
U.S. Army Troops
 Specimen Hand Overprint



Gold Rush Fever
Statehood Centennial Issue

Evidence of gold quartz had been found in earlier expeditions in the area and that news brought more unwelcome fortune hunters onto Sioux lands. Marsh arrived white skinned and a stranger to the area. To the Sioux, these two traits marked him as another gold seeker. Some were so upset by his presence, especially by the number of wagons and men he brought with him, that they demanded the local Indian agent tell him and his party to return to the train and leave the area.

Marsh, a stubborn man by nature, refused to leave and insisted on meeting Red Cloud to discuss the purpose of his expedition. On hearing of this white man's refusal to leave, even after being told to do so by the Indian agent, Red Cloud's curiosity outweighed his distaste and he agreed to talk. The meeting resulted in Marsh obtaining Red Cloud's permission to look for fossils on Sioux lands. The Sioux were also familiar with fossils and called the remains 'Thunder Horses' in recognition of their size.



'Thunder Horses'
1st Class Rate as of 7 Jan 1968



Digging for 'Thunder Horses'
Polish Commemorative Issue

Using his survey maps and following Red Cloud's instructions, Marsh found several wagon loads of fossils and returned to the agency so the Indians could examine the rocks and fossils. After seeing that no gold was secretly hidden and Marsh had kept his promise, Red Cloud was impressed with his honesty and invited him to visit the nearby Sioux encampment.

While in the Sioux encampment, Marsh viewed food and supplies provided by the U.S. government's Bureau (Office) of Indian Affairs and became outraged after seeing spoiled foodstuffs and poor quality goods in terrible condition. He listened to accounts of general corruption among U.S. government officers and Bureau agents. Returning east, Marsh reported on 'our vile bureaucrats' as he called them, to anyone who would listen, but few did.

The matter did not end there as Red Cloud sent further information to Marsh in the Spring of 1875 indicating no supplies had been provided to the Sioux after Marsh left the agency.

Public reaction was immediate when Marsh reported these further activities to the New York Herald, resulting in a series of articles outlining the misdeeds of the Interior Department's Bureau of Indian Affairs. Shortly thereafter, President Ulysses S. Grant "regretfully accepted" the resignation of Christopher Delano, U.S. Secretary of the Interior. A full investigation of the Bureau of Indian Affairs followed and Red Cloud's Oglala Sioux finally received the subsistence aid they were promised.



President U.S. Grant
Definitive Issue



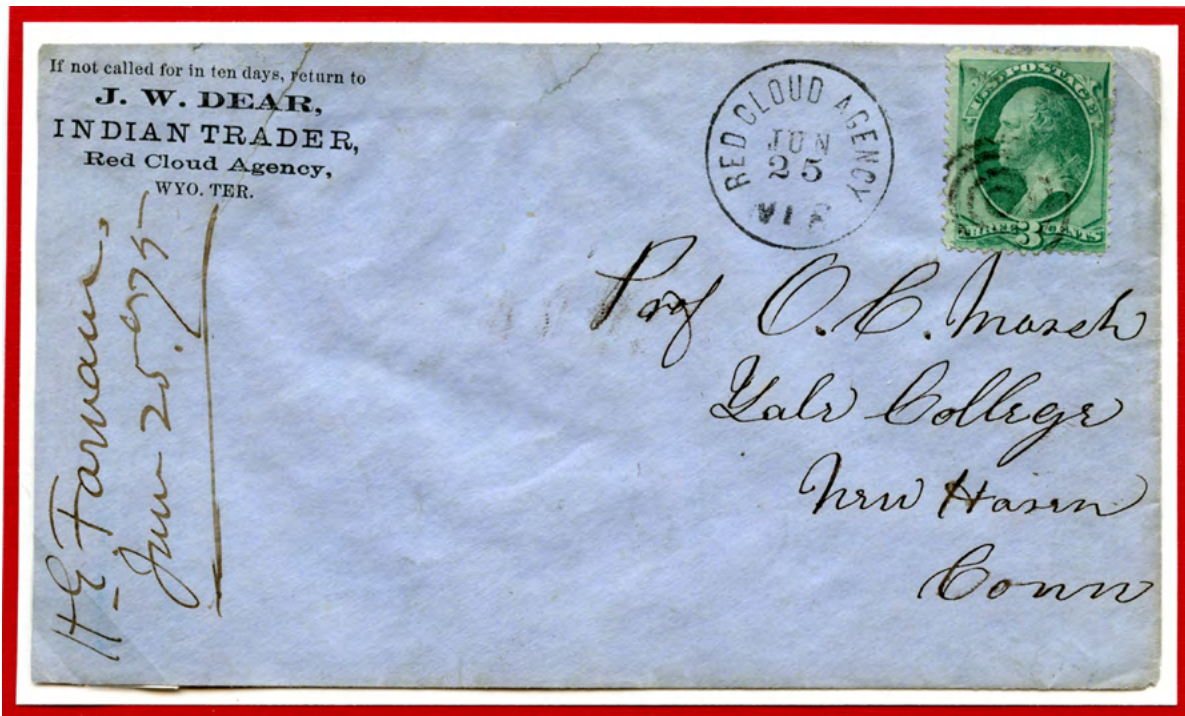
Chief Red Cloud of Oglala
in U.S. Cents Denomination

Red Cloud was impressed with Marsh's continued efforts on behalf of the Sioux and named him "the best white man I've ever seen". Further explorations by Marsh's workers were always accompanied by Sioux braves to protect and guide the diggers. In 1880, Red Cloud visited Marsh in New Haven and the two men became fast friends.



Sioux Brave
1st Class Rate as of 1 Jan 1995

The cover below was posted from the Red Cloud Agency No.2 (1873-1877), Nebraska on 25 June 1875 (two digit year date in manuscript) and is addressed to Prof O.C. Marsh, Yale College, New Haven, Conn (Connecticut). Script docketing on the envelope's left side indicates the letter was posted by an H.E. Farnam using an imprinted envelope of J.W. Dear, an Indian trader at the agency with a return address in Wyoming, the location of the Red Cloud Agency before being moved to Nebraska. This most likely indicates the letter's content was not trader or agency business, but an envelope used on behalf of a third party.



Letter addressed to Professor O.C. Marsh from the Red Cloud Indian Agency No.2, 25 June 1875

As the contents are no longer with the cover, the following is speculation based on research to date from available historical information. Very little mail was sent from the Red Cloud Agency addressed to Marsh. This cover correlates with the reported springtime message sent by Red Cloud to Marsh and may well have been the one asking for assistance with his continuing problems with the Bureau of Indian Affairs. It's also a testimony to Marsh's presence and activity seeking fossils in the Dakotas, Wyoming and Nebraskan badlands of the wild, wild west.

Sinclair Dinosaurs Invade the 'Century of Progress'

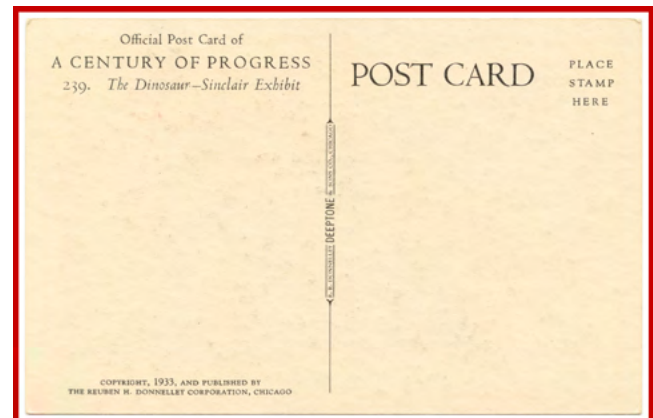
The 'Century of Progress International Exposition' was held during 1933-1934 in celebration of the Chicago centennial. Also known as the 'Chicago World's Fair', the most advanced technology available at the time was on public display for the pleasure and wonder of the attendees.

One of the more popular pavilions was Sinclair Refining Company's 2 ton, animated exhibit of 'Dinosaurs'. The intent was to associate the origin of the product's raw materials with vast age, insinuating it was better quality. People could not fathom how large these animals really were until they stood near these giants and even then, it was difficult to believe. The dinosaur's popularity resulted in the company's use of its image on mail advertising beginning in 1934.



Top text on card rear:

**Official Post Card of
A CENTURY OF PROGRESS
239. The Dinosaur - Sinclair Exhibit**



Bottom text on card rear:

**COPYRIGHT, 1933, AND PUBLISHED BY
THE REUBEN H. DONNELLEY CORPORATION, CHICAGO**

Official post card produced for the Sinclair Oil Company Exhibit at the 'Century of Progress' World's Fair in 1933

Fair organizers also produced souvenir post cards for visitors and two depicted the Sinclair dinosaur reproductions, card numbers 147 and 239. Card 239 depicts a Tyrannosaurus rex, the most dangerous carnivorous land predator of all time. These cards proved very popular and were often mailed from the Century of Progress postal station.

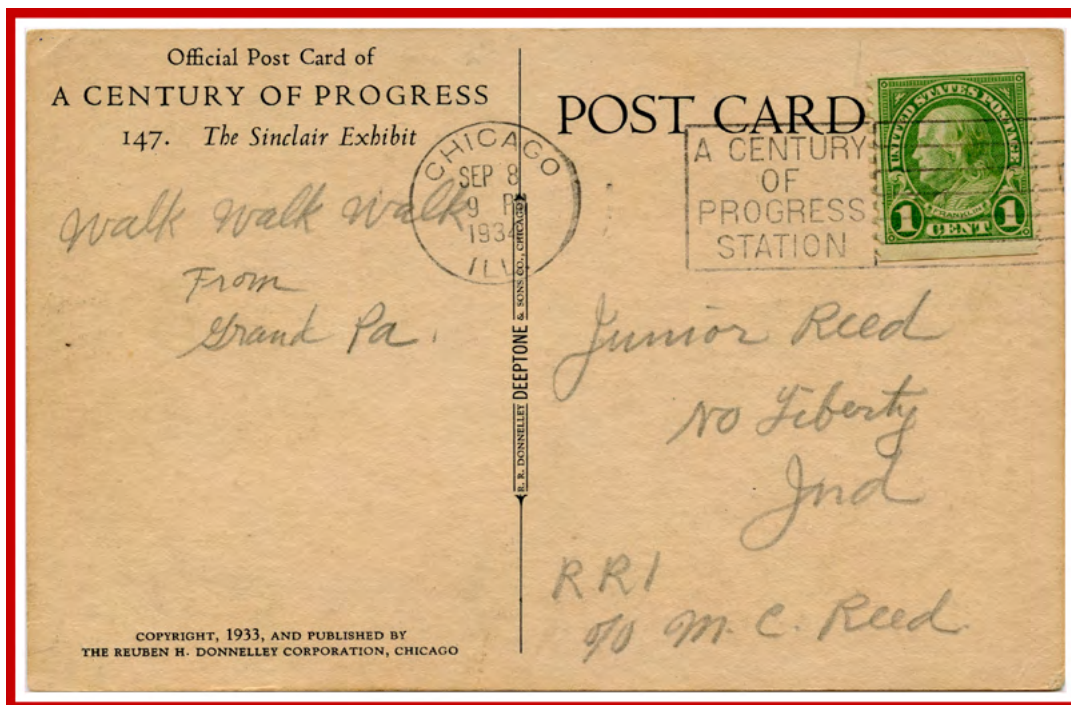
In addition to the post card showing a Tyrannosaurus rex, perhaps the more well-known card is that depicting the Apatosaurus. The animal was known at the time as a Brontosaurus. It was a greatly popular card among visitors as it's in full color and also included a human for a size comparison even though the dinosaur was only a scale replica of the animal's actual size.



Official post card produced for the Sinclair Oil Company Exhibit at the Century of Progress World's Fair in 1933

Top text on card rear:

**Official Post Card of
A CENTURY OF PROGRESS
147. The Sinclair Exhibit**

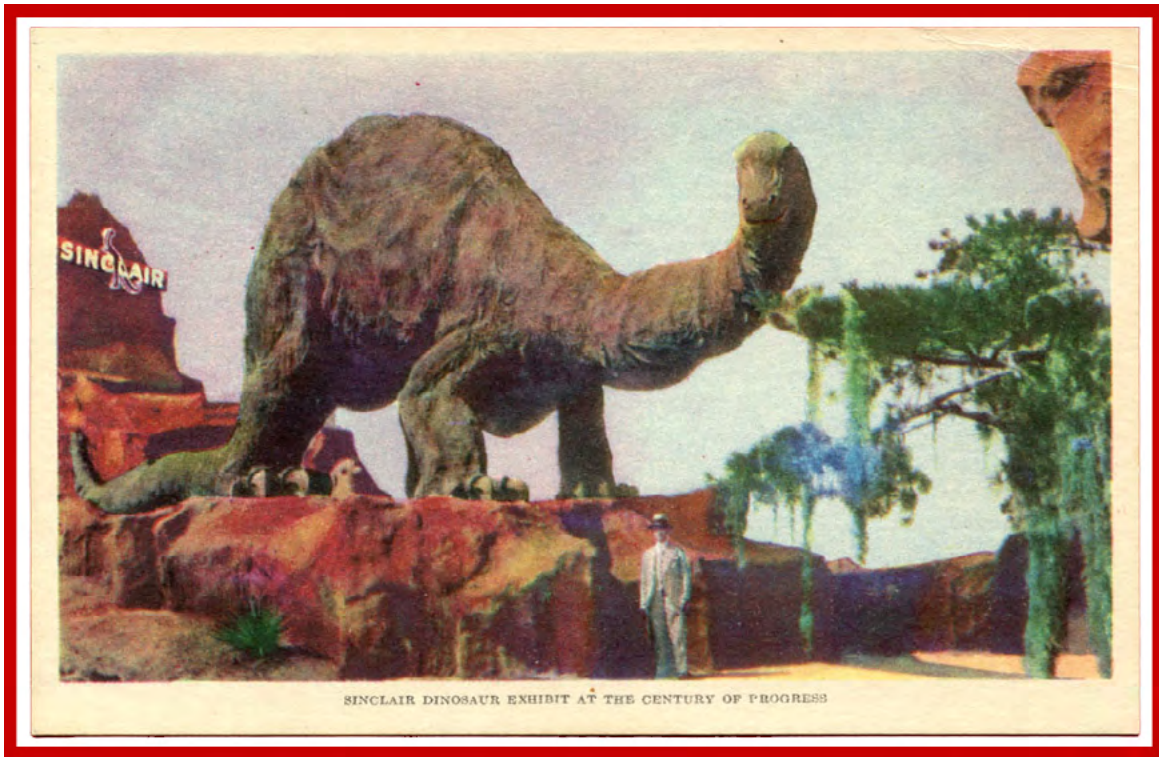


Used card with 'A Century of Progress Station' postmark, 8 September 1934

Bottom text on card rear:

**COPYRIGHT, 1933, AND PUBLISHED BY
THE REUBEN H. DONNELLEY CORPORATION, CHICAGO**

The identical image was also used by the Sinclair Oil Company, licensed from R.R. Donnelly, when they printed their own post card. The text on the front and the rear however was changed to reflect it was not an 'official fair' card.



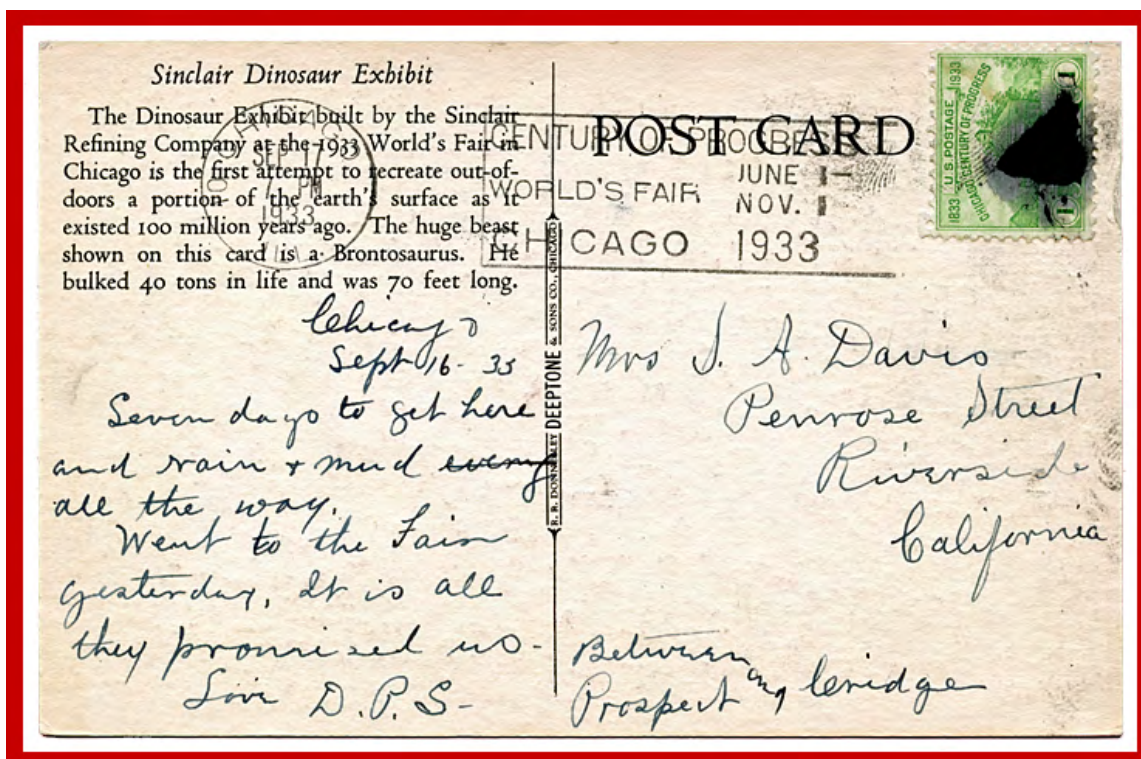
Text revised and centered without copyright information

Text on card rear:

Sinclair Dinosaur Exhibit

The Dinosaur Exhibit built by the Sinclair Refining Company at the 1933 World's Fair in Chicago is the first attempt to recreate out-of-doors a portion of the earth's surface as it existed 100 million years ago. The huge beast shown on the card is a Brontosaurus. He bulked 40 tons in life and was 70 feet long.

- R.R. Donnelly DEEPTONE & Sons Co., Chicago -



Used card with 'Century of Progress World's Fair Chicago' postmark, 17 September 1933

One final addition to the Sinclair dinosaur post card collection is another card produced only by the Sinclair Oil Company. It depicts the Apatosaurus from a different angle but includes a crowd of people near the entrance to the Sinclair exhibit hall.



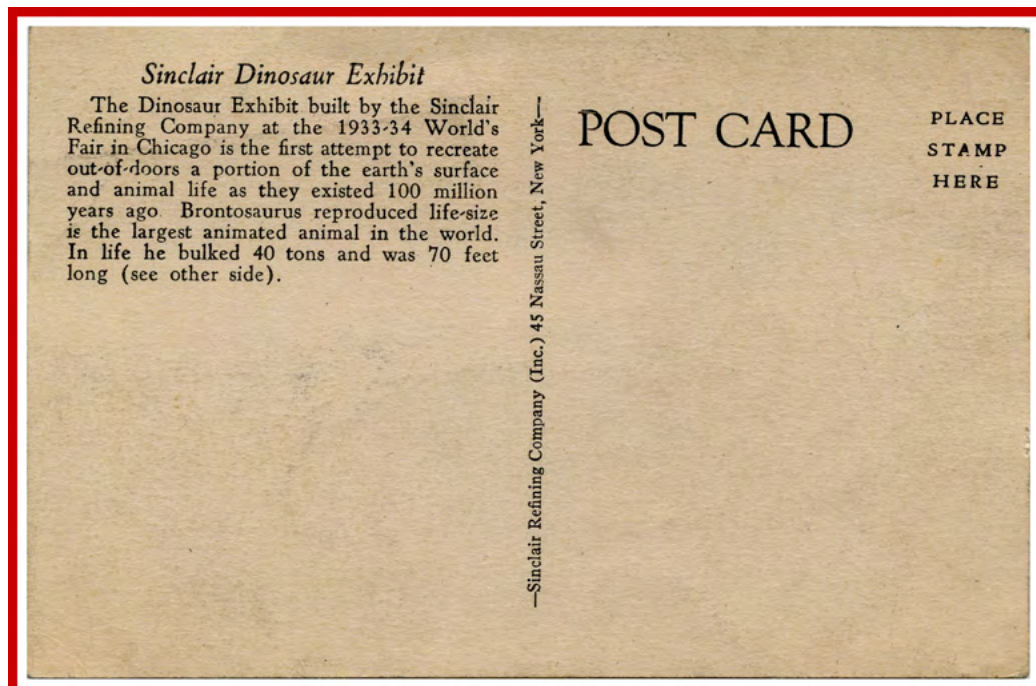
Text revised and centered with view of exhibit hall entry point

Text on card rear

Sinclair Dinosaur Exhibit

The Dinosaur Exhibit built by the Sinclair Refining Company at the 1933 World's Fair in Chicago is the first attempt to recreate out-of-doors a portion of the earth's surface as it existed 100 million years ago. The huge beast shown on the card is a Brontosaurus. He bulked 40 tons in life and was 70 feet long.

- Sinclair Refining Company (Inc.) 45 Nassau Street, New York -



Postcard produced for the Sinclair Oil Company Exhibit at the Century of Progress World's Fair in 1933

Ammonite Sits on U.S. Fancy Killer

Ammonites are extinct marine molluscs related to squid and octopus and they look quite similar to the modern nautilus. The name derives from the spiral shape of the shell as it looks like a coiled ram's horn and was originally given the name by Pliny the Elder (23 AD - 79 AD). He called them *ammonis coruna* after the Egyptian god Ammon's ram's horns.

Our interest lies in one fancy killer design with an image quite similar to an ammonite worked into the center of an 8 petaled flower. One story I've heard on the origin of the design is that it was used in those cities and towns where ammonite fossils had been found. In the case of at least one city, it's plausible to think this theory may have originated there, although a bit stretched when one considers the other cities where the design was used.

Fancy killers (also known as 'cancels') were used from the 1850s through the 1900s to render U.S. postage stamps invalid for reuse. They were often made by postmasters of third class offices as they had to pay for their own supplies. They used locally obtainable materials such as corks or wood blocks and cut designs into them, or in many instances, bought ready-made devices, commercially produced using vulcanized rubber. These devices incorporated various geometric designs of crosses or stars, objects such as shields, more elaborate designs like a skull and crossbones or even images of people and animals.



Ammonite
Fancy Hand Cancel



Cross Section of Ammonite
and External View of Shell



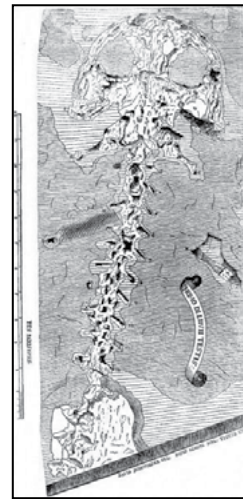
Pliny the Elder
Roman Naturalist

Fancy killers are found mainly on banknote issues of the United States up until approximately 1900 even though the U.S. post office department issued regulations on the standardization of cancellations in 1890 which should have eliminated use of such devices.

Although the killer appears on many U.S. banknote issues of the period, the more interesting and scarcer examples of use appear on U.S. official stamps of the various departments of the federal government. These governmental departments had field offices which used official stamps to pay the postage fees and sent their mail through the normal local post office channels. For instance, in the case of the Department of Agriculture, pre-stamped return envelopes were provided to farmers so they might report issues concerning seed orders and other agricultural issues. Although covers bearing the design exist where the city of use can be verified, no cover has been reported on official mail bearing this design.

Man Witnesses the Great Flood

Mistakes are often as strange as prehistoric life. Fossil remains of giant salamander *Andrias scheuchzeri* were found by Swiss naturalist Johann Jakob Scheuchzer (1672-1733). The interpretation was that they were a human who drowned in the Great Flood of the bible - a guy who really missed the boat! He named the specimen *Homo diluvii testis* ("man who witnessed the flood"). Looking at Scheuchzer's illustration, you can see how this mistake might be made by naturalists only beginning to understand the origins and progression of life with the scientific instruments of the day. The father of paleontology, French naturalist Georges Cuvier, corrected Scheuchzer's mis-classification after studying the illustrations of this proposed human ancestor.



Scheuchzer Illustration



Father of Paleontology



Zürich, Switzerland to Los Altos, CA, 19 October 1959, registered

Four copies of the 40+10c value and one of the 30+10c value from the 1959 Swiss Pro Patria issue (10c surcharges went to charity). This stamp combination paid the airmail rate of 1 Franc 40c (50c for the first 20 grams plus 3 x 30c for an additional 60 grams) from Zürich (Hottingen), Switzerland (Oct 19) to the Los Altos, CA as well as the registration fee (50c) shown by the 'R' label attached with tracking number 069. The letter may have contained something of low value as it cleared customs inspection without charges, indicated by the San Francisco #32 US Customs Inspector marking (Nov. 4).

Thomas Jefferson Fakes It!

Thomas Jefferson was not only a president and a statesman, he was also a naturalist. He had a keen interest in prehistoric life (fossils) as well as archaeological objects found throughout the U.S. His support for expeditions to map the country and find historical artifacts or fossils is unparalleled by any other president.



Dashed area cut out to paste on envelope

Normal use of Jefferson 2¢ card

(size reduced)

Postal card indicia are valid for postal cards they are printed on. When the indicia on a card is mistakenly not canceled, the indicia could be cut out and pasted onto a mailable item, usually a first class letter. This practice is not sanctioned, however many examples can be found as frugal users of the postal system used whatever postage they had to mail letters.



Jefferson card cut-out used on first class letter

This local rate letter mailed within the city of Buffalo, New York on 4 June, 1928 used a 2¢ Thomas Jefferson postal card indicia cutout to pay the postage. In this case, postal system personnel caught the attempt and assessed the letter 2¢ postage due as indicated by the manuscript notation. A precanceled postage due stamp of Buffalo, N.Y. was applied to indicate the missing postage was paid.

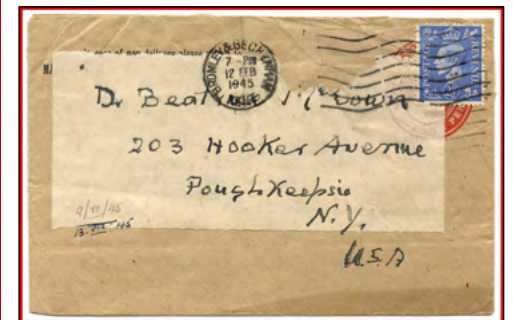
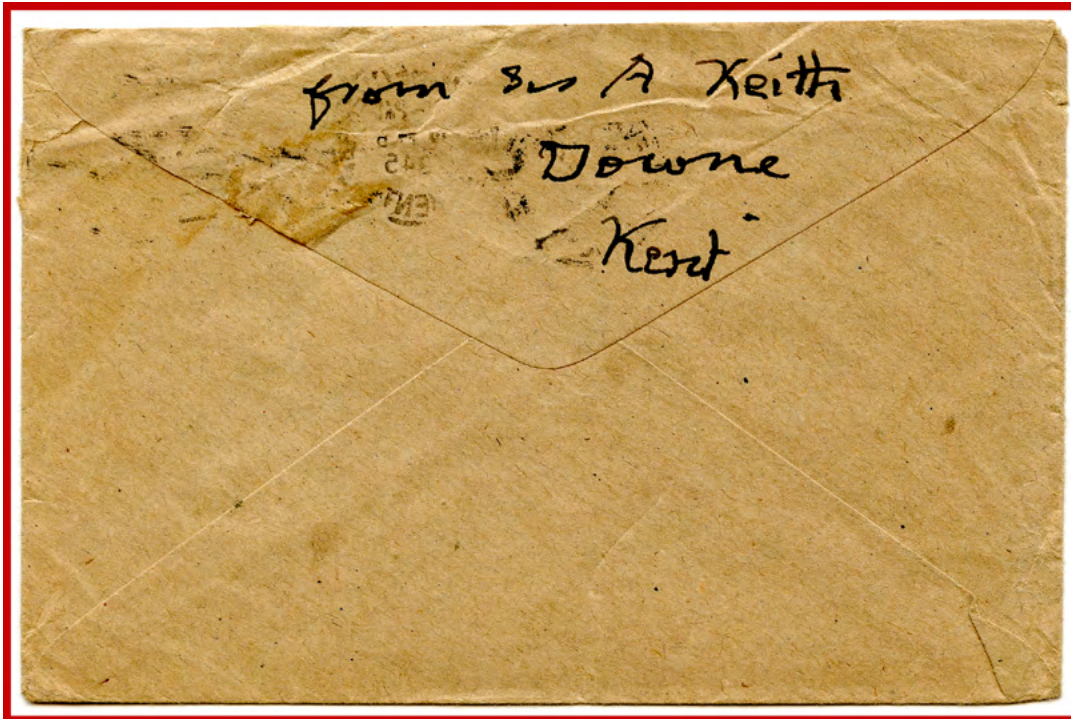
Sir Arthur Keith - Perpetrator or Victim?

Sir Arthur Keith (Scottish anatomist 1866-1955) was a member of the Geological Society of London. In 1912 the Society was presented unusual remains found by amateur archaeologist Charles Dawson in a roadside gravel pit at Barkham Manor near the village of Piltdown, East Sussex.



Sir Arthur Keith examining Piltdown skull

Sir Arthur Keith (address in his hand)
Bromley and Beckenham, (Downe) Kent
to Poughkepsie, New York
12 February 1945



Scan of cover front

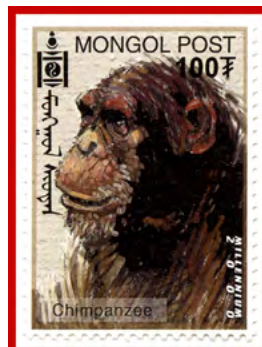
Reconstruction of Piltdown Man



Piltdown Skull ???
Fancy Hand Cancel

Keith was a proponent of Piltdown man, naming the find *Eoanthropus dawsoni* ("Dawson's dawn-man") and securing his revered placement in the human family tree. He reconstructed fragments into a skull with archaic and modern traits and it was believed to be the 'Missing Link', older and more prestigious than the Neandertal.

Forty years later the 'remains' were exposed as a hoax! They were artificially stained fragments from a human skull, an orangutan jaw and a chimpanzee tooth. Keith is often named as the person most capable of preparing fakes. Far from proven, he may have been duped by Dawson or his own lab technician. The mystery remains as to "Who 'really' done it?"



Can you find the philatelic problem on this page?

