

The Postal History of Yankton, Dakota Territory

Yankton was one of the earliest settlements in Dakota Territory, with immigrants crossing the Missouri River from Nebraska Territory shortly after the Indians accepted and ratified the “Treaty of 1858” on July 10, 1859. The town was named for the Yankton tribe of the Sioux, or Dakota, Indians.

The post office at Yankton (spelled “Yancton” and “Yanckton” in 1860’s postmarks) was established April 17, 1860 at a time when the office was actually in the unorganized “Minnesota Residual Territory”. Dakota Territory was officially organized Mar 2, 1861 when President Buchanan signed the Organic Act. South and North Dakota later became the 39th and 40th states on November 2, 1889.

Yankton was perhaps the most important settlement in Dakota Territory in its early years. It served as the Territorial Capital from 1861 until 1883, when the government offices were moved to Bismarck. Yankton was adjacent to the Yankton Indian Agency, acted as one of many jumping off points for gold seekers to the Black Hills in the late 1870’s gold rush, and was the terminus of the Dakota Southern Railway when it came into Dakota from Sioux City, Iowa in 1873.

This exhibit encompasses the postal history of Yankton, Dakota Territory (1860 to 1889).



Yancton, D.T. Aug 14th 1860. Earliest known usage from Yankton. Dated four months after the post office was established. Pre-dates the official formation of Dakota Territory by more than eight months. The “Yancton” spelling was prevalent in the early to mid-1860’s. Mail service was twice monthly at this time on the route from Sioux Falls City, Dakota to Fort Randall. *Only two manuscript cancels known (August 14, 1860 and December 14, 1860).*

Yankton, Dakota Territory
- The Indian Wars Period



Yankton, D.T. Dec 14 1861. Earliest known example of the “Yankton” handstamp. Mail service twice monthly on the Sioux Falls City to Fort Randall route. **Postmark type known used from December 14, 1861 to April 20, 1865.** The enclosed letter tells of preparations for the expected Indian problems.

Brownsville Dec the 12th/61 DT

*Mr George Shober Dear Sir As I have beem wating along time to rec a few lines from you and have rec none I thought I would address you. we are all wel. hope these lines wil find you enjoying the same blessing. we have warm weather no snow. we have three hundred recruites to ft Randle. they pasd my place last week so if the Indians should be trouble soon we wil have protection. Louis Yong and 3 of the Irish boys here joined the recruites at ft Randle. the goverment is recruiting for 2 companies in dakota. corn is worth 80 cts per bushel at my place and above me one dollar. times are hard here. money scarce on the account of the Indians getting no pay this year. I suppose they will get two payments. if so money will be plenty here. the agent has now gon for the money. nomore. yours truly
Jonathan Brown*

Yankton, Dakota Territory
- The Indian Wars Period



Yankton, D.T. Sep 17 1862. Weekly mail service began December 31, 1861 on the Sioux Falls City to Fort Randall route, which was changed to twice weekly from Sioux City, Iowa beginning July 1, 1862 (likely as a result of the Indian troubles). The enclosed letter is from John H. Shober, an early Dakota politician, to his father and tells of the Indian excitement in the Territory.

*Yankton
Sept 15th 1862*

Dear Father,

I embrace this opportunity to inform you that I am well and hope this will find you also well.

We have had a great Indian excitement prevailing here for the past month, with very little prospects at abating. There has, as yet, been no one killed on the Missouri slope, but the Dakota Cavalry had a skirmish with them just below James River, but both parties were so fearful of the other that they did not approach in killing distance.

The excitement has already more than half depopulated the Territory. I should have started for Minnesota ere this time had it not been for the Indian raid in this Territory.

The women became so frightened that the young men had to remain and afford them what protection they could. I may not be able to leave before spring. I think the present excitement sufficient to ruin the Territory. I never witnessed such a panic as we have had. Many person fled leaving every thing behind them - bedding household furniture & all. I have not been very fearful of losing my scalp, yet there may be more danger than I apprehend. We have dreadful accounts of the Minnesota Massacre - which help increase the fears of the people here.

I would rather risk myself here than in the Army fighting the south. If, I must fight either I prefer to fight the red skins.

Give my respects to all enquiring friends and accept the same yourself.

Respectfully Yours,

J. H. Shober

Yankton, Dakota Territory
- The Indian Wars Period



Yankton, D.T. Oct 15 1862. Twice weekly mail service on the Sioux City, Iowa to Fort Randall route. The enclosed letter notes that the Indian troubles were waning.

Bon Homme Oct 13th 1862

Dear Father,

I am this day in receipt of a letter written by you to the Post Master at Sioux City - enquiring of my whereabouts.

I wrote to you immediately after the Indian excitement commenced informing you of the condition of affairs in this Territory. The citizens here about the 10th of Sept became very much alarmed, and the fear of a general Indian war was universally prevalent throughout the Territory. People became wild with excitement and fear. They were running in all directions expecting the tomahawk and scalping knife close upon them. The women and children and many of the men were so much alarmed as to be unable to render any protection to themselves or others. I thought under the circumstances it was my duty to remain and afford them what protection I could. Had it not been for the probabilities of an Indian outbreak here I would have been in Minnesota ere this time. I felt it my duty to remain here and aid in the defense of the defenseless.

The prospect of peace is now better than heretofore and many think we will not be troubled any more by hostile Indians. I will not be able to return until after the first of January. If the excitement is allayed by that time I will endeavor to go to Minnesota.

There has been but two persons killed in Dakota Territory by the Indians, and those were killed at Sioux Falls.

I have nothing of any special interest to nite you further at present. Give my respects to all enquiring friends and inform them that my scalp is all right yet. Write to me as soon as you receive this, and give me what information you can concerning the Indian depredations in Minnesota.

Respectfully Yours,

J. H. Shober

Yankton, Dakota Territory
- The Indian Wars Period



Yankton, D.T. Jan 14 1863. Twice weekly mail service on the Sioux City, Iowa to Fort Randall route. The enclosed letter mentions the organization of a military force to go after the Indians in the spring.

*Yankton D.T.
Jan 12th 1863*

Dear Father,

I am in due receipt of your letter of Dec 20th. It found me in the enjoyment of good health and I was pleased to hear you and the rest of my relatives were enjoying the same great blessing. I trust it may please An All-Wise Providence for this to find you and yours enjoying the same inestimable blessing.

Our Legislature is closed, and I am making preparations to return to Minnesota. I think I will be ready to start in two or three weeks. I am quite anxious and will get ready as soon as I can.

The Indian excitement has pretty much died away in this portion of the Territory. Extensive preparations are making, however, to move up the Missouri River early in the spring with a large military force.

I have thought some of returning in time to go along.

You can look for me about the first of March (no preventing providence).

I received a letter from W.D. Stayer a few days since, which I promptly answered, his brothers are well, and doing well.

All of your acquaintances in this portion of the Territory are well.

I have forwarded to you papers during the Session of the Legislature, from which I trust you were able to get some information, in relation to the Legislative proceedings of our Territory.

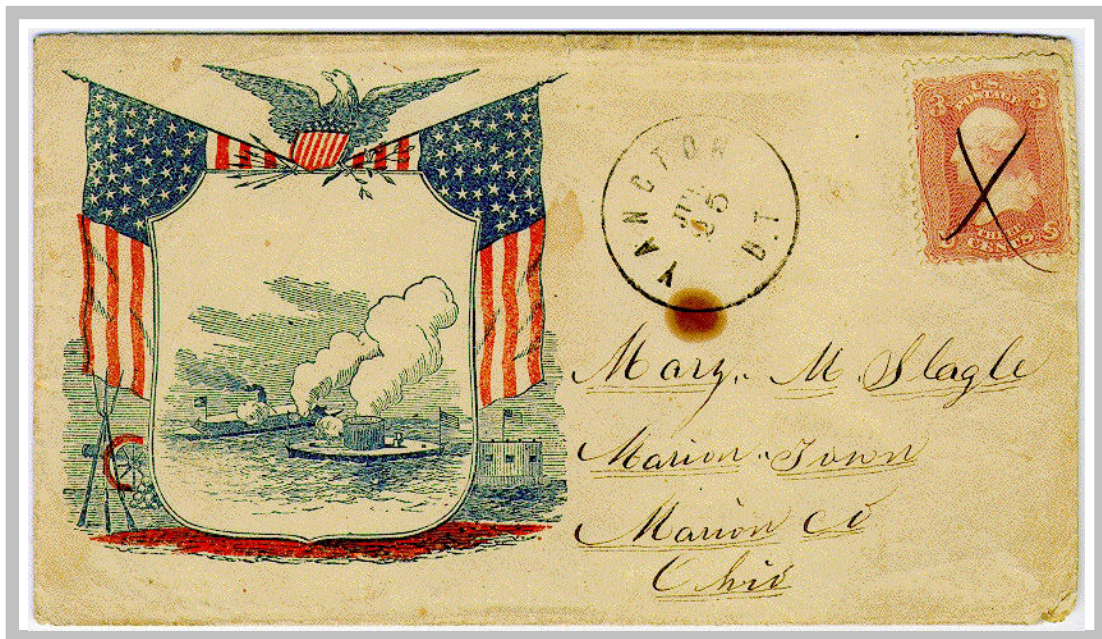
Give my respects to all enquiring friends and accept the same yourself.

*Truly Yours,
J. H. Shober*

Yankton, Dakota Territory
- During the Civil War



Butler, O. Jun 3 (circa 1863) to a soldier at Fort Randall, forwarded to Yankton Agency with receiving postmark from **Yancton, D.T. Jun 13**. Yankton Agency (also known as the Greenwood Agency) was the Indian Reservation near Yankton.



Yancton, D.T. Jun 25 (circa 1865). Mail service from the Sioux City, Iowa to Fort Randall route was changed to three times per week beginning January, 1864. One of only about a dozen known Civil War Patriotic usages from what is now South Dakota.

PF Certificate 0150134

TERRITORY OF DAKOTA.

BY THE GOVERNOR.

A Proclamation for a Day of Fasting, Humiliation and Prayer.

The hand of a hired assassin has struck down the head of the Nation. President ABRAHAM LINCOLN, the Patriot and Statesman, is no more. Treason, through the hand of an assassin, has carried him to the grave in the midst of his usefulness ; and our whole country is in mourning.

In view of this great bereavement and affliction, brought so suddenly upon us as a Nation, I, NEWTON EDMUNDS, Governor of Dakota Territory, do hereby appoint

THURSDAY, THE 27th INSTANT,

As a day of fasting, humiliation and prayer ; and earnestly invite the people of this Territory, on that day, to abstain from all secular employments, resort to their respective places of public worship, and earnestly beseech the Great Ruler of the Universe to interpose His protecting arm to shield our Government and people from the hands of traitors and assassins ; and that He will, in an especial manner, extend His protection over our new president, Andrew Johnson, aid him in the discharge of the duties thus suddenly and unexpectedly thrust upon him, and give him wisdom and strength from on high, in this great emergency, to save our Country and Government, and preserve our FREE institutions from destruction, in this our great National Affliction.

{ L S. }

In testimony whereof, I have hereunto set my hand, and caused the Great Seal of Dakota Territory to be affixed, this 21st day of April, A. D. 1865.

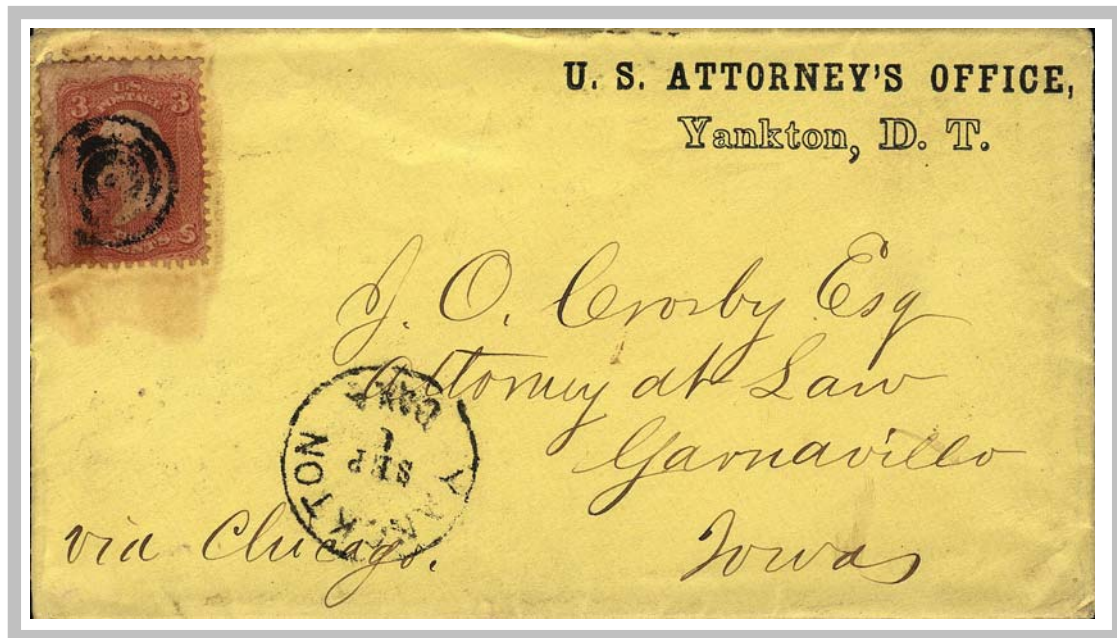
NEWTON EDMUNDS,
Governor.

Lincoln Mourning Proclamation by Governor Newton Edmunds (Apr 21, 1865), issued from Yankton, the Territorial capital. Edmunds was the second governor of Dakota and had been appointed to the office by Lincoln.

Yankton, Dakota Territory
- Blackjack Usage and Yanckton Spelling



Yankton, D.T. Nov 25 (circa 1864). Only known solo usage of the 2c Blackjack stamp from Dakota Territory on drop rate letter.

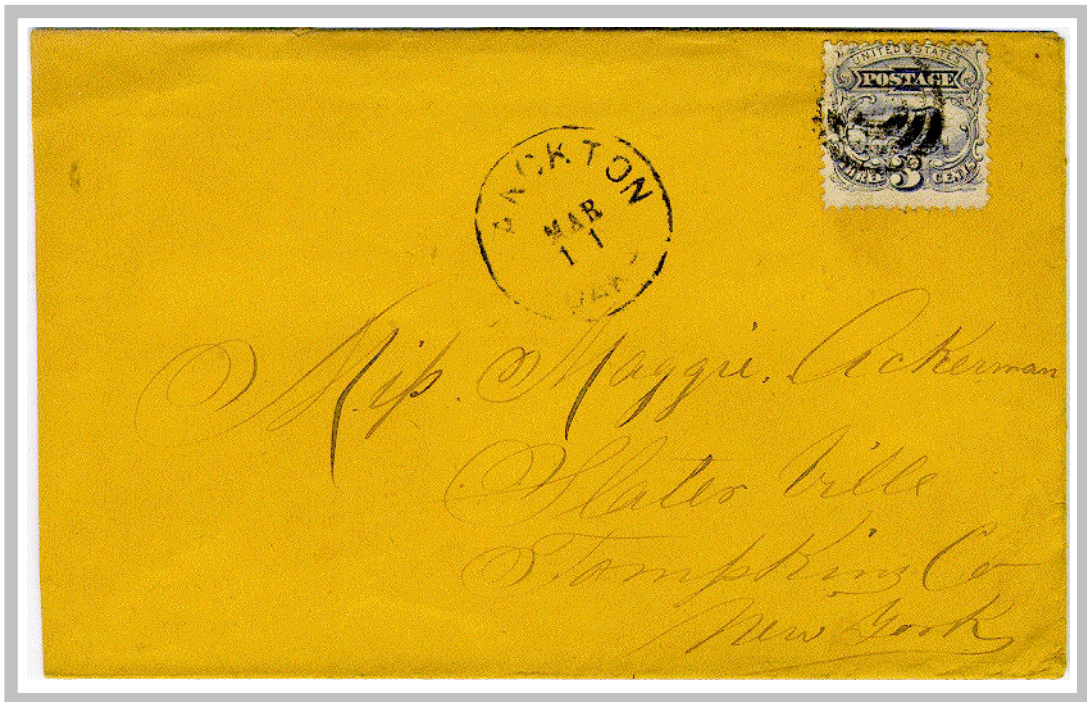


Yanckton, Daka Sep 5 1868. US Attorney's Office envelope with "Yankton" spelling. Dated from enclosure. Mail service on the Sioux City, Iowa to Fort Randall route was changed to six times weekly beginning March, 1868. *The "Yanckton" postmark is known used from May 23, 1867 to May 13, 1871.*

Yankton, Dakota Territory
- Official & 1869 Issue Usages



Yanckton, Daka. Feb 7 (circa 1869). Official business usage (front only) to Commissioner of Indian Affairs in Washington DC.

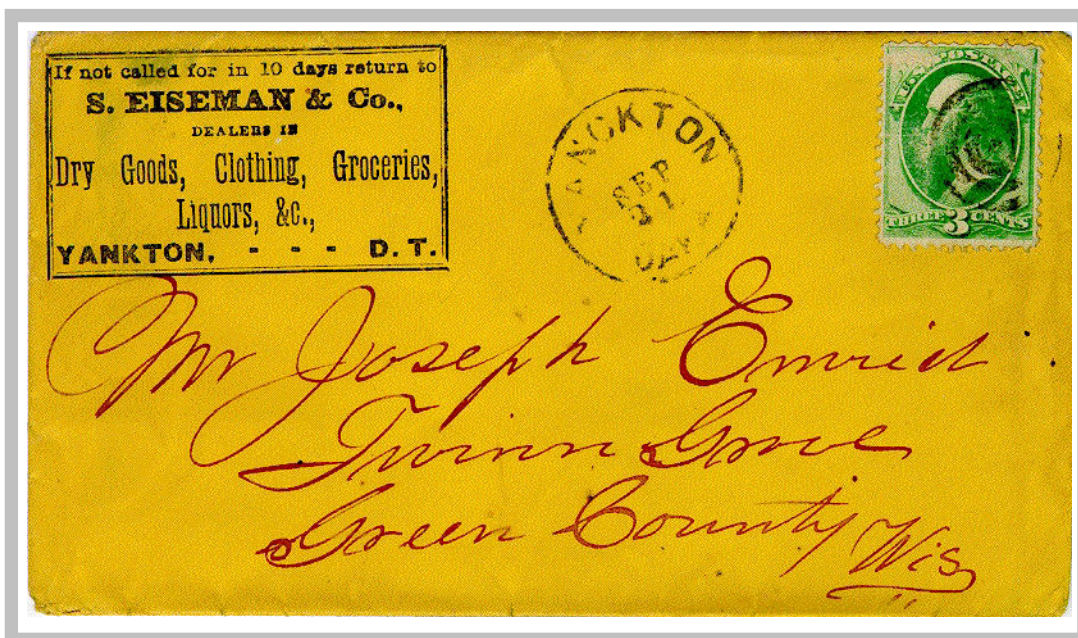


Yanckton, Daka. Mar 11 (circa 1870). Only a handful of 1869 issue usages are known from Dakota Territory.

Yankton, Dakota Territory
- North German Union Usage & Late Yanckton Postmark



Yanckton, Daka. Mar 30 1870, with manuscript routing note “via Hamburg”. 15c “F” grill adhesive pays the North German Union closed mail rate (in effect from January, 1868 to June, 1870). Sent in sealed pouch to New York with “New York Paid All Direct Apr 5” in red on verso, then aboard the HAPAG steamer *Hammonia II* which arrived in Plymouth on April 15. Three day transit where “Hamburg Franco” marking was applied on April 18, 1870 (front), and finally delivered in Flensburg on April 19 in the second distribution of the day per “Ausg. No. 2 19 4” marking on verso. Only known usage of the 15c grilled Lincoln stamp from Dakota.



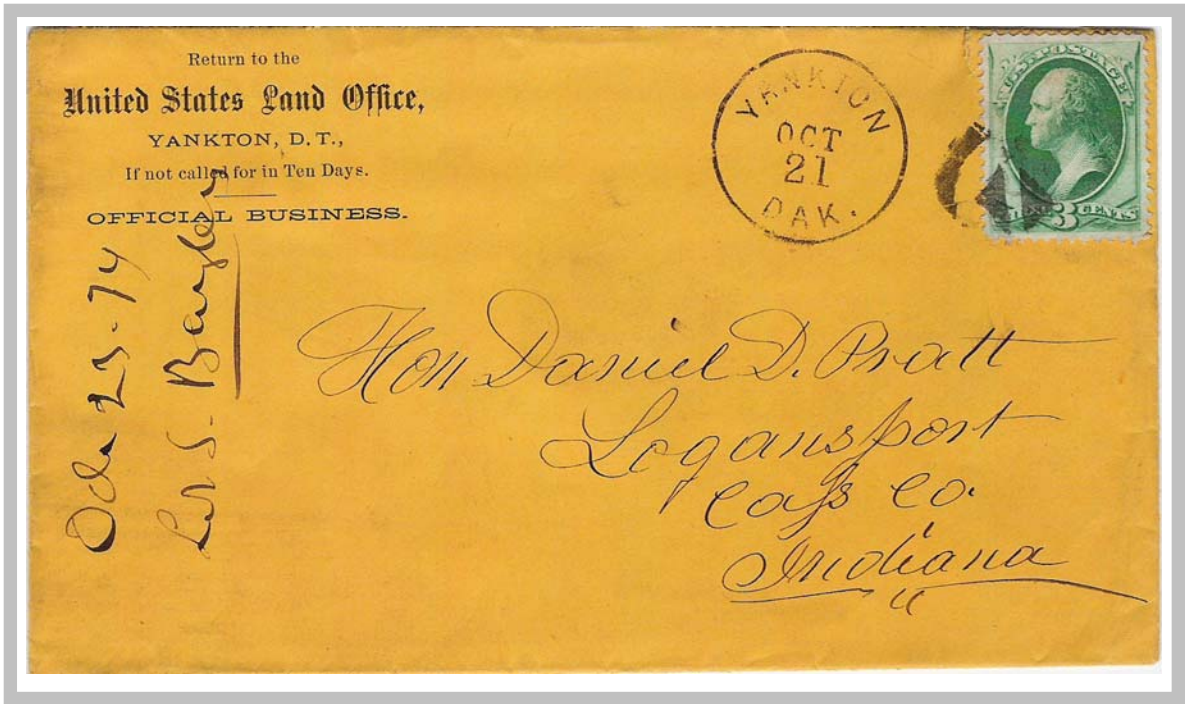
Yanckton, Daka. Sep 21 (circa 1870). One of the later usages of this postmark, showing the degraded state of the dial and lettering.

Yankton, Dakota Territory
- Usage with Official Adhesive



Yankton, Dak Apr 7 (circa 1874). Usage on 12c Department of Interior stamp on US Land Office penalty envelope.

Yankton, Dakota Territory
- US Land Office & Unusual Cancel



Yankton, Dak. Oct 21 1874. US Land Office corner card. *Postmark used from October 21, 1871 to May 24, 1878.*



Yankton, Dak. May 17 1875. Negative "K" cancel. Asa W. Howard was postmaster at this time. Perhaps the "K" was in honor of someone he knew.

Yankton, Dakota Territory
- Executive Office & Usage to Italy

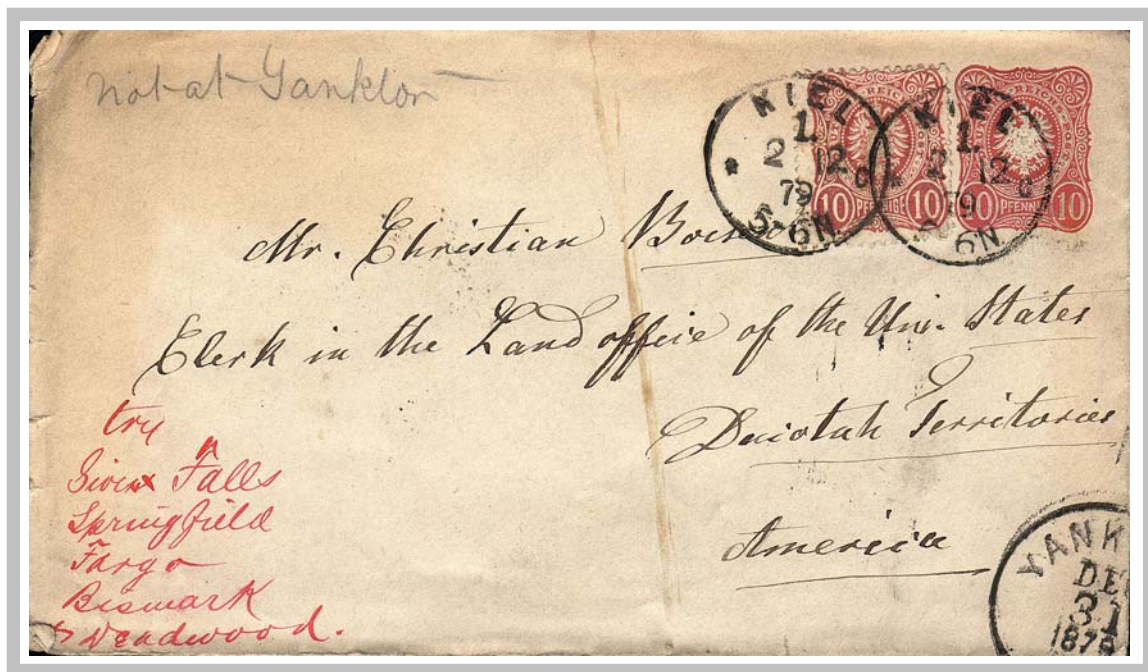


Yankton, Dak. Nov 15 (circa 1877). Executive Office corner card. Manuscript notation “R.R.” probably indicates carriage via the Dakota Southern Railway which ran from Yankton to Sioux City, Iowa. November 20 Grand Rapids received marking on verso.



Yankton, Dak. Apr 12, 1878. 5c rate to Bologna Italy with April 30, 1878 Bologna received marking. Standard 5c UPU rate paid with one 3c and two 1c banknotes.

Yankton, Dakota Territory
- Inbound from Germany & Outbound to England

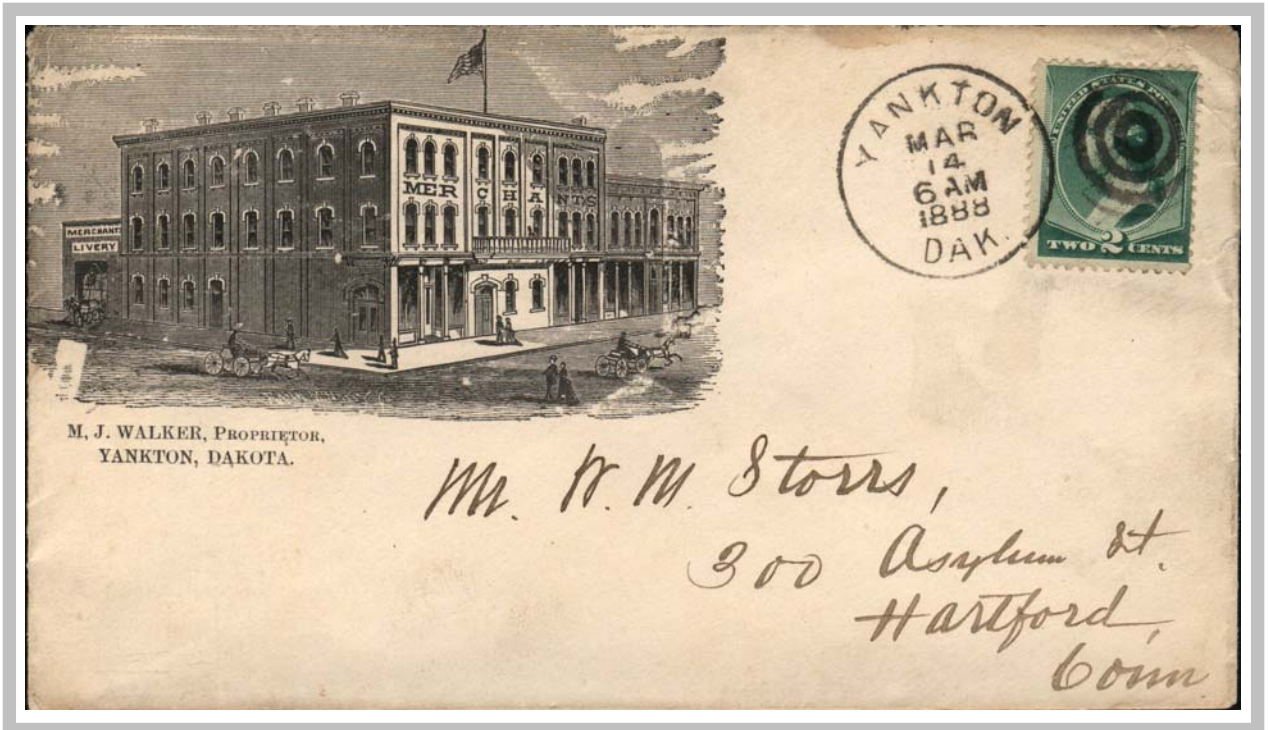


Kiel (Germany) Dec 2, 1879 to Yankton, Dak. Dec 31 1879, forwarded to various other towns in Dakota looking for Mr. Boesen. Backstamps from New York (Dec 17), Omaha Neb. (Dec 19), Sioux Falls (Dec 22), and Springfield (Dec 31). *Postmark type known used from December 31, 1879 to August 5, 1882.*

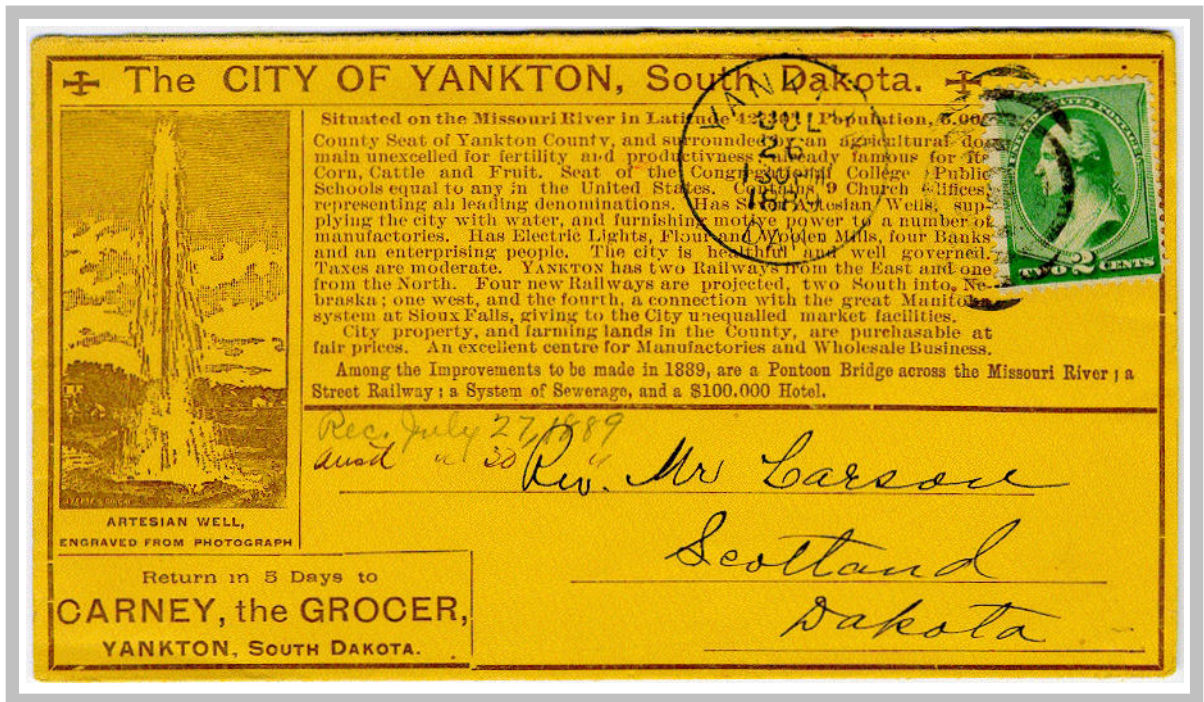


Yankton, Dak. May 10, 1883. Standard 5c UPU rate to Danbury, Chelmsford, England paid with one 3c and two 1c banknotes. Backstamps from Danbury (May 24) and Chelmsford (May 24, 1883). *Postmark type known used from May 10, 1883 to February 9, 1885.*

Yankton, Dakota Territory
- Advertising Usages



Yankton, Dak. Mar 14, 1888. Merchant's Hotel illustrated cover. *Postmark type used from August 15, 1885 to May 8, 1890* (past statehood of November 2, 1889).

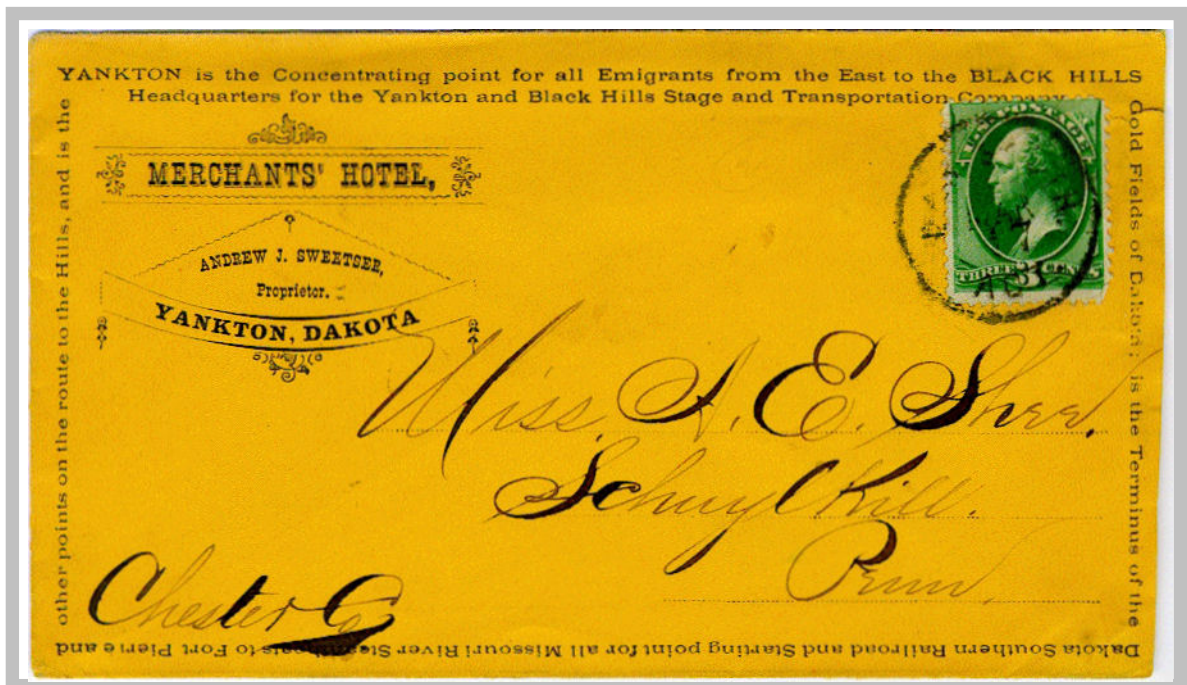


Yankton, Dak. Jul 26, 1889. Overall "chamber of commerce" type ad for The City of Yankton, South Dakota (in anticipation of statehood a few months later). Backstamped "Scotland, Dak. Jul 27, 1889"

Yankton, Dakota Territory
- Dakota Southern Railway Usages



Dakota Southern RPO Mar 23, 1874. US Land Office corner card from Yankton, D.T. The 62 miles of the Dakota Southern Railway were completed from Sioux City, Iowa to Yankton, Dakota Territory on January 25, 1873.



Dak South Agt. Mar 17 (circa 1877). A different variety postmark from the Dakota Southern Railway. Merchant's Hotel advertising cover citing Yankton as the "concentrating point" for all emigrants to the Black Hills gold fields.