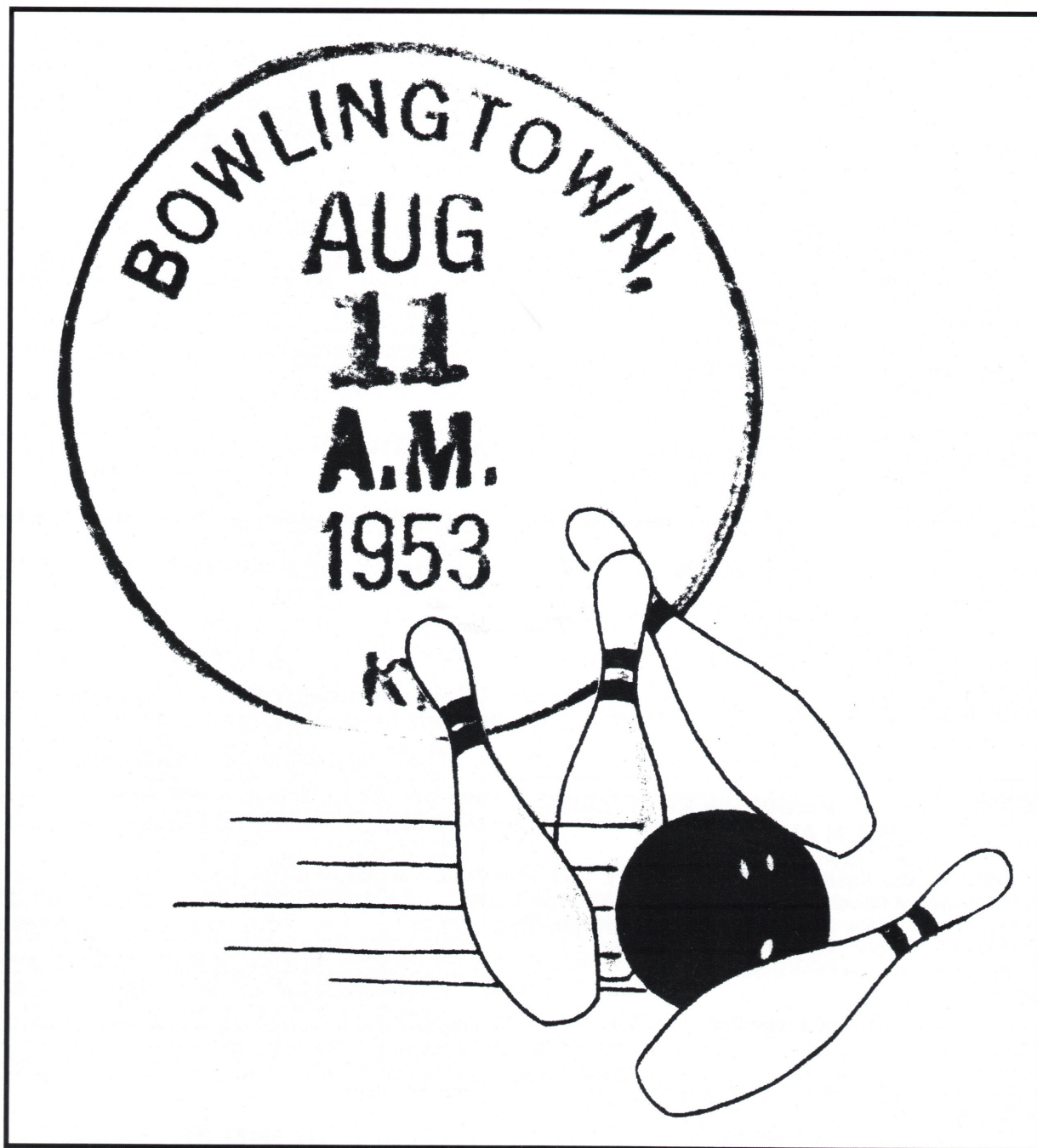


PMCC BULLETIN

Post Mark Collectors Club

February 2026



MUSEUM NEWS

By Kelvin Kindahl, #4131

It is never too late to respond to a Museum News column. I am thrilled to report that Claire Kluskens, #6253, recently responded to my July, 2024 column, in which I sought help in deciphering a manuscript postmark from 1897, which I surmised could have been Leif, Lewis or Leeper. Claire retired last year as the designated subject matter expert in

confess to not remembering as much of it as I would like. I did manage to unearth the several handouts she gave us, and hope to have reread them by time this column appears in print.

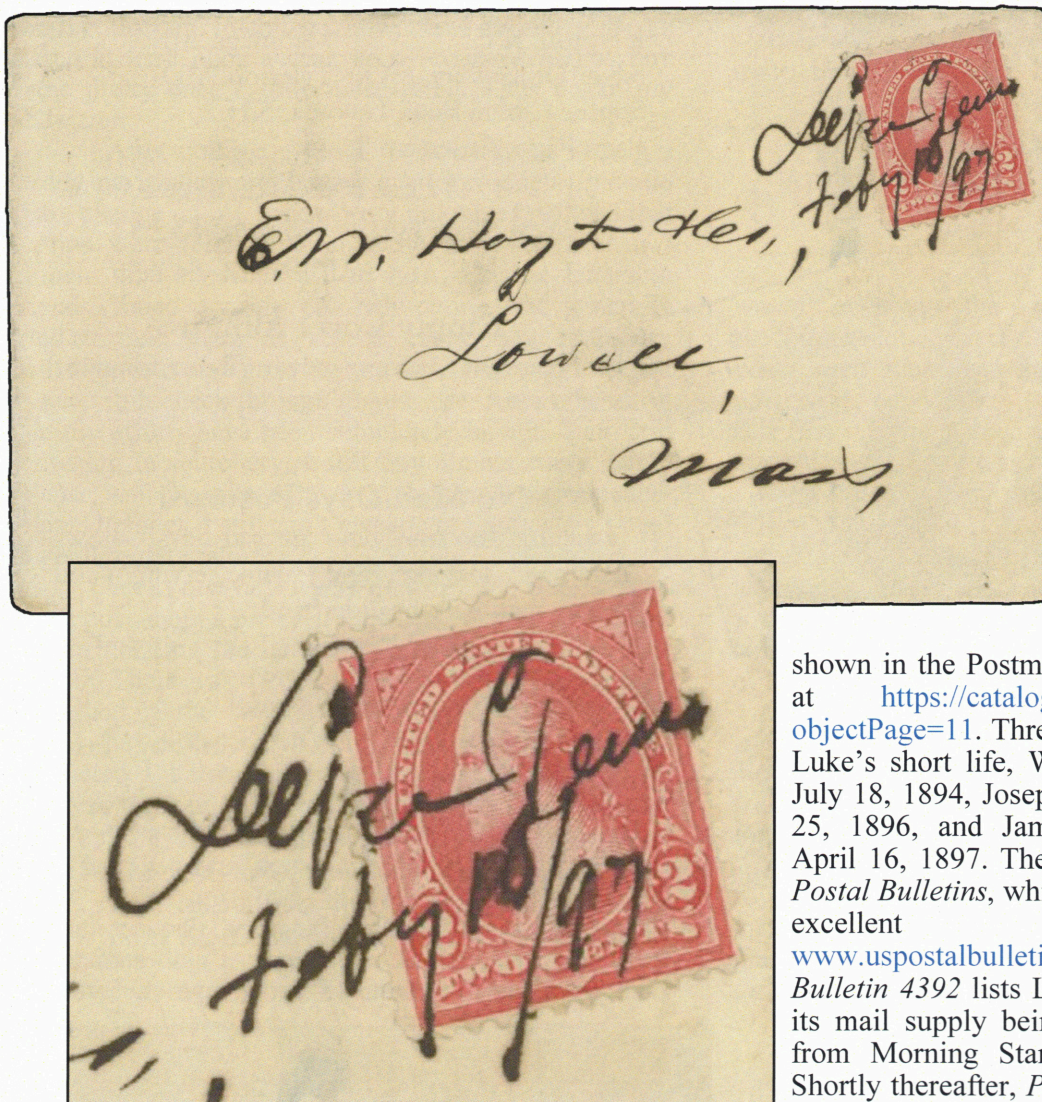
Claire's reading of the manuscript in question is Luke, Tenn. The initial L is pretty clear, and once one realizes the first letter of the state is a T, then "Tenn." fits perfectly. The top of the T has an ornamental loop in it. The town name starts with L,

followed by what appears to be two e's, but is actually one u, then the vertical piece and the next part do look rather like a k, followed by an e. The date is somewhat unclear, but is believed to have been written as Feby. 15, then changed to 16, 1897. I will be very happy to put a label on the cover's sleeve and file it in the Tennessee boxes in April! We are lucky to have such expertise within the club!

It is a very nice cover, and from a short lived post office. Luke was in Washington County from July 18, 1894 to Nov. 30, 1900, as

shown in the Postmaster Appointment registers, at <https://catalog.archives.gov/id/78774492?objectPage=11>. Three postmasters served during Luke's short life, William H Leach, appointed July 18, 1894, Joseph D. Lyon, appointed April 25, 1896, and James C. Osborne, appointed April 16, 1897. The dates are confirmed in the *Postal Bulletins*, which can be accessed from the excellent website <http://www.uspostalbulletins.com/Home.aspx>. *Postal Bulletin* 4392 lists Luke being established, with its mail supply being by special service route from Morning Star, 2¼ miles to the north. Shortly thereafter, *PB* 4396 changed the base of supply, still special, to Locust Mount. I found

Locust Mount on Google Maps, seven or eight miles northwest of Jonesborough, or a dozen or so miles west of Johnson City, site of the 2013 convention. Special service meant that a new post office that was not directly on an existing route had to provide its own service to transport the mail to and from a point on an existing route, until such time as it showed that

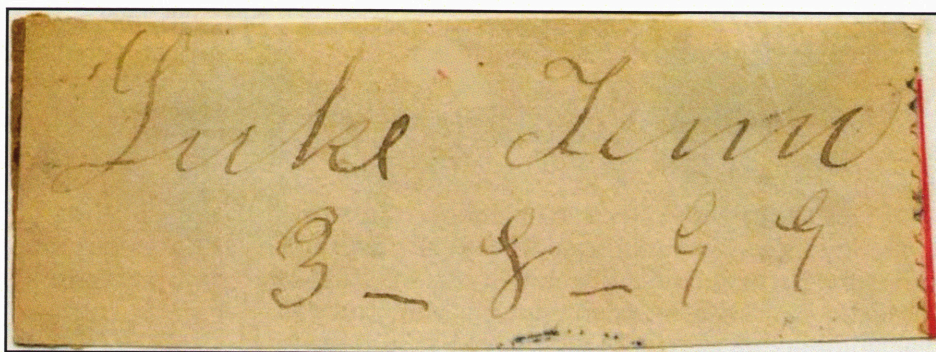


genealogy/census-related records at the National Archives and Records Administration in Washington, which means she has a LOT of experience reading old handwritten records. She gave a talk at the Easton, Maryland convention in 2011, on postal records in the Archives. I was nowhere near as serious about post office history at the time, and

it would do enough business to justify the Post Office Department paying for a carrier. It was quite common for new post offices to be designated as “special,” or earlier, “private,” meaning the mail supply was done at private, rather than Department, expense. *PB 6327* lists Luke as one of 23 small post offices in Washington County all closed Nov. 30, 1900, and replaced by RFD from Jonesboro.

RFD started as an experiment in West Virginia in 1896, with a few individual routes. Three years later, the first county-wide RFD system was tried out in Carroll County, Maryland, whereby a group of RFD routes emanating from the larger towns in the county would cover the entire county. Washington County, Tennessee became the second county-wide system. A total of 33 post offices in Washington County, six in Greene and two in Sullivan were replaced by 32 RFD routes from Chuckey City, Fallbranch, Johnson City, Jonesborough, Limestone and Telford, according to *County Systems of RFD*, by Edith R. Doane. That would be the same Doane for whom Doane cancels are named, and who was PMCC #632.

The Museum’s Willett-Thompson collection has one other Luke, a small cut manuscript, from March 8, 1899. Given that Luke used manuscript postmarks in both 1897 and 1899, by two of the three postmasters, it seems likely that Luke never used a handstamp device.



The Museum Board terms of both John Gallagher and Bette Woods expired at the end of 2025, but they have both been reappointed to terms that now extend until the end of 2028, and I thank them both for their continued service.

