

## 011 - Applied Philately: An Inconspicuous Lettering

A picture of a classic evergreen holly branch with red berries and in the background a church and Christmas wishes. Such a friendly greeting by postcard is an old tradition that unfortunately seems to be disappearing. But maybe now you can make up for it at Easter.

On the back of the card is a green one-cent stamp with an image of George Washington - apparently mutely postmarked - and next to it is neatly handwritten lettering, "Radium 12/22-10 Kans(as)". This suggests that there may be more to it than a missing meaningful postmark. And as is so often the case, Google helps us, philatelists. It soon turns out that there is a town called Radium in the Midwest of the USA in the state of Kansas, which had a mere 25 inhabitants on July 1, 2020.

In 1904, a Wells family settled here. A common name among immigrants from Great Britain, the new town was first named Wellsville. In 1909, the Missouri Pacific Railroad built a new line that would also bring a boost to the newly settled Wellsville, which of course included its own post office. The problem was that a town called Wellsville already existed on the east side of the new railroad, so the "newcomers" had to look for a new name. They chose the name Radium. In the first decades of the 20th century, the element discovered by Pierre and Marie Curie in 1896 was considered a miracle cure with great promise for health. In several places in the world, towns or villages were named Radium. On October 17, 1910, the local post office was opened with the first mail sent by rail.

Unfortunately, there were no postmarks at that time and Postmaster Miles Standish and his assistant and son Earl had to manually cancel mail from Radium for the first few months. Father and son also operated the local grocery store and I imagine this is where local news was exchanged. Post offices were also meeting places with a social function in those days, but as is the way with progress, the local post office here also disappeared on April 28, 1990, and the long-awaited postmarks went back to the U.S. Postal Service.

