

The Lowell Observatory Covers

by Jason Wells



Figure B0

The Lowell Observatory was established in 1894 by Percival Lowell [1855-1916]. Partnering with U.S. Naval Observatory and U.S. Naval Research Library many notable discoveries have been made there, such as finding Pluto in 1930 by Clyde Tombough. The Lowell Observatory is located in Flagstaff, Arizona [Figure B0] along with smaller sites in Australia and Chile. In 2011, Time magazine placed the observatory on its list of the 100 most important places on Earth. Currently, the observatory is overseen by a descendent of its founder, W. Lowell Putnam. Percival Lowell had a profound effect on planetary science and has been considered the Carl Sagan of his day. More than

anybody else, he popularized the idea that life could have existed on Mars. He wrote extensively about the canals of Mars (along with detailed sketches of the planet) and the landscape of Venus. He was well respected in the scientific community. Seen below is correspondence from Lester Ward of Brown University with the Flagstaff AZ receiving backstamp [Figure B1].



Figure B1

As seen from these early postmarks, there was correspondence, most likely to and from either academic institutions, friends and family back home. At the time Arizona was still a territory and was still a sparsely populated frontier. Arizona didn't become a state until 1912. In fact, it was the last of the contiguous 48 states to achieve statehood.

Flagstaff holds the distinction of being the closest large town to the Grand Canyon.

One of the life-lines between remote Flagstaff and the rest of the country was the California Limited, a passenger train for the Santa Fe Railway [Figure B2]. The train ran from Chicago to Los Angeles and did so from 1892-1954. This is a letter (with the receiving Flagstaff backstamp) to the observatory from the train in November 1907.



Figure B2

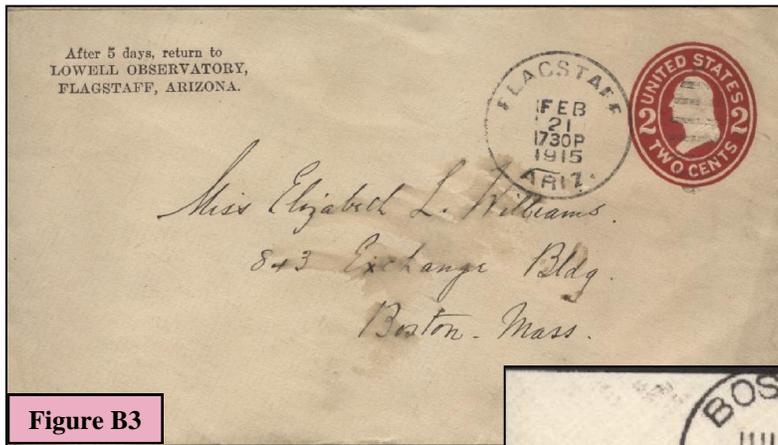


Figure B3

While I'm not certain, but the next piece of correspondence is to what I think is the Boston Stock Exchange Building in 1915 [Figure B3].

From the North Postal Station of Boston comes this piece of correspondence dated July [Figure B4].

The next piece of correspondence comes from

the U.S. Grant Hotel [Figure B5]. Named for the 18th president, but built by his son, the hotel opened in 1910. Among the distinguished guests include Albert Einstein, Charles Lindbergh, and 12 U.S. Presidents. The hotel has hosted navel reunions and comic-cons and is still in operation.

Currently run by Marriott Hotels and Resorts, the hotel had a total building renovation in 2006.

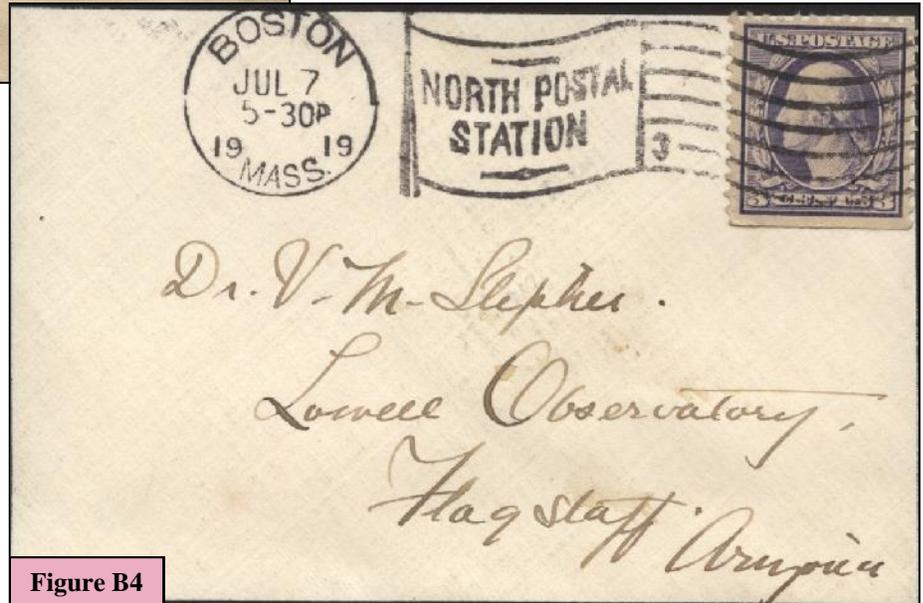


Figure B4

Currently, there are no commemoratives for the Lowell Observatory, though in 1948 the Palomar Observatory commemorative was issued [Figure B6].

The Lowell Observatory has a rich postal history and was one of the first observatory's to be built in remote, elevated locations. A final piece of trivia in regards to Lowell --- is that a nearby town named Winslow was made popular in the Eagles/Jackson Browne song *Take It Easy*.



Figure B5

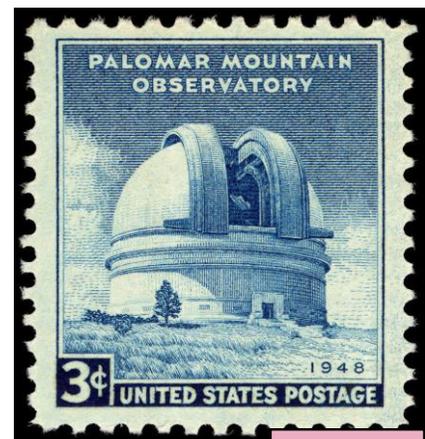


Figure B6

[Editor's note: There is a tremendous amount of information available on the observatory website at <https://lowell.edu>. This year marks the 125th year of operation of the observatory. When I next travel in the Flagstaff, AZ area – I see a side trip happening! These covers are owned by John Latter the owner of the Collectors Exchange.]