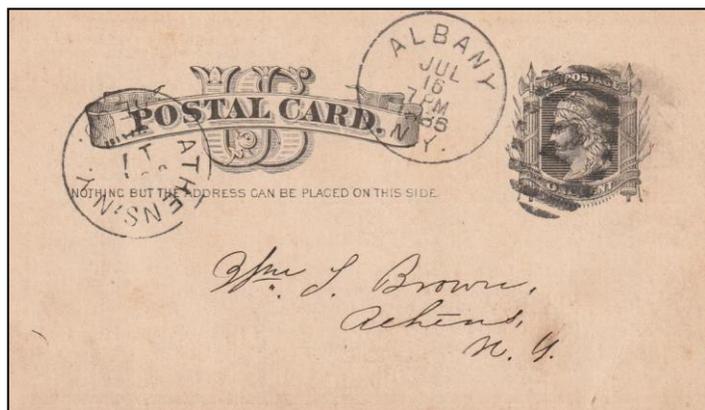


# The Albany Boatmen's Relief Association

by Josh Furman

Among my philatelic interests are two that involve U.S. postal cards, and both of those are concerned with the cancels that appear on these kinds of cards. The first, of course, is the use of precancels on U.S. postal cards, the subject that was explored in my book on these titled, appropriately, *U.S. Precanceled Postal Cards 1874 – 1961*.

But I also developed an interest in collecting duplex cancels on postal cards. That was what led me to acquire the card pictured in **Figure E1**. It has an Albany N.Y. duplex cancel with a number 2 in the horizontally barred oval. Adding to its interest is the fact that it also has a receiving cancel from Athens, N.Y. on the day after the card was posted in Albany.



**Figure E1 (left).** A postal card bearing an Albany, N.Y. CDS with a duplexed, horizontally barred oval cancel with a number 2 inside, and a receiving cancel from Athens, N.Y. dated the following day.

**Figure E2 (right).** The reverse side of the postal card asking for payment to the association of an assessment of \$2.20 due to the death of two members. According to the card, the assessment was to be paid by August 15<sup>th</sup> of that year. If members wanted a receipt acknowledging their payment, they were to include this card and a two-cent stamp with said payment. Payment was to be made by money order, check, or registered letter to the secretary.

ASSESSMENT Nos. 222 & 223. Expires Aug. 15th. Members who will act as Agents are requested to correspond with the Secretary.

**ALBANY BOATMEN'S RELIEF ASSOCIATION.**  
ORGANIZED JAN. 26, 1874. INCORPORATED JAN. 20, 1877.

Office, Room 4 Museum Building.  
Open from 8 to 1 P. M.  
2 to 6 P. M.

ALBANY, N. Y., JULY 16th, 1885.

DEAR SIR—Within **Thirty Days** from date hereof, you are required to pay into the Treasury of this Association **Two Dollars and Twenty Cents**, on account of the death of the following members:

NAME.	AGE.	RESIDENCE.	OCCUPATION.	CAUSE OF DEATH.	DATE OF MEMBERSHIP.	DIED.	Amount Paid by Deceased
John J. Foster.	47	Albany.	Bar-keeper.	Ratty Degeneration.	Jan. 26th, 1874.	Mar. 7.	\$245.10
John Elmsdorf.	65	Albany.	Steamboat Agent.	Apoplexy.	Jan. 26th, 1874.	Mar. 11	248.00

**\$2.20** } REMIT BY MONEY ORDER, CHECK OR REGISTERED LETTER, TO **SAMUEL COOK, Secretary.** EXPIRES Saturday, Aug. 15th, 1885.

Please notify in case of change of residence.  
If you wish a Receipt, return this Card with TWO Cent Stamp.

But when I turned the card over, I was even more impressed with what I saw on the back: an assessment notice from a “Relief Association”. This jumped out at me because I have cards from two other “relief associations”, those from two cities in Maine who used precanceled cards to request their assessments, North Bridgton and South Lewiston. The North Bridgton one was called, “Odd Fellows’ Mutual Relief Association of Maine”, and the South Lewiston’s was called, “Patrons’ Mutual Aid Society of Maine”. And now I find one from Albany, N.Y. that was called “Albany Boatmen’s Relief Association”.

The reverse of my card is seen in **Figure E2**. It turns out that the association was seeking an assessment from one of their members as the result of the death of two fellow members. Details of the deaths are even given! Names, ages, locations, occupations, causes and dates of death, as well as the amounts paid to the beneficiaries of the deceased members are all noted on the card. The recipient of the card had thirty days to pay the assessment, and they could even receive a receipt from the organization, if they so desired.

I began to look for more information about this Relief Association. It was not easy to find. But I did locate something about it in a volume called, *The Empire State: its industries and wealth: also an historical and descriptive review of the industries and wealth of the principal cities and towns in Albany, Rensselaer,*

*Saratoga, Schenectady, Columbus, Ulster, Dutchess, Orange, and Westchester counties*, by Warshaw Collection of Business Americana. The publication date was 1888, and the publisher is listed as American Publishing and Engraving Co. of New York. I mention the publication in case others would like to research their interests from this time period. Here is the article on the Albany Boatmen's Relief Association:

*Albany Boatmen's Relief Association, James S. Campbell, President, Samuel Cook, Secretary. – One of the most useful economically managed and honorably conducted of the benefit associations of the State of New York is the "Albany Boatmen's Relief Association." Its mission is one of the most humane and beneficial possible, and since its organization on January 26, 1874, it has had a growth and secured a class of worthy membership. The association was incorporated on January 20, 1877, and its by-laws and regulations are clear, just, and based on the principles of true life insurance, pure and simple, provided without any "extras" or unnecessary expenses whatsoever. The mutual system is here seen at its best.*

*Though known as the "Boatmen's" Association, any citizen in good standing, and in good health, under fifty years of age, can become a member. The membership is largely boatmen and those connected with river pursuits, and no better risks can be had; the rate of mortality is very low, and the assessments are small, and the association is in excellent financial condition, and we would advise all who seek to make sure provision for their families after their death to insure here. The*

*admission fee is only \$3, and the assessments are very low, being graduated as to ages, from 90 cents to \$1.35, payable at each death, except when there is \$10,000 in the association's treasury, when no assessment is levied. The average amount of life insurance paid over is \$1,500, and the association is in a solid flourishing condition, a purely mutual concern. The officers who are as follows: president, Mr. James R. Campbell, the well-known steamboat agent; Vice-president, Mr. R. B. Rock, influential in commercial circles, and likewise a popular steamboat agent; treasurer, Mr. P. Kinnear, long a prominent brass founder of Albany; secretary, Mr. S. cook, an energetic and popular officer, who faithfully discharges the duties devolving upon him; the association's attorney is Mr. Galen E. Mitt ...*

In another volume, the *Report on Insurance Business in the United States at the Eleventh Census, 1890* there was a note that this business, the Albany Boatmen's Relief Association was closed in 1889. Unfortunately, I could not find anywhere what the membership of this organization was at any time during its existence. This card represents the 222<sup>nd</sup> and 223<sup>rd</sup> assessments, so there have had to be hundreds more of these notices distributed to members over the fifteen years that this company was in business. I have not seen another card like this one. I did some further searches for Boatmen's Relief Association and didn't find one. I searched for "relief" associations and found many for firemen or firefighters all over the country as well as some for Civil War veterans and folks from other countries. But nary a one for Boatmen's Relief Association. So, it looks like our state, New York, and Albany in particular is unique in tending to Boatmen's relief!

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