

A Cover – More Than a Stamp and an Envelope

by Rick Cohen

On one fall day in 2017, I came across a simple envelope bearing a single two-cent stamp (US Scott # 220). **Figure B1**. Nothing really exciting! What caught my eye were several other details regarding the envelope: (1) the beautiful handwriting of the addressee, (2) a legible postmark providing city and date, and (3) a distinctive cachet promoting the business from which it came. I decided then and there to research the business owner to learn more about him as well as to attempt to find any offspring still living. My goal was to present an heir with



Figure B1

the envelope and contents as a part of his/her family history. On went my detective's hat!

From the letter found inside the envelope **Figure B2**, I discovered Mr. Arthur Conger performed multiple business functions. The letter itself was a basic acknowledgement of a Satisfaction of Deed of Trust. The letterhead was very interesting, to say the least.

Using a search engine, I found that Harrisonville, MO still existed. It is a city of approximately 10,000 residents (2010 Census) and is the county seat for Cass County. Figuring that the City Manager should know everyone, I called him, only to learn he was completing his fourth week on the job! Not familiar with the Conger family name, he recommended I contact the Cass County Historical Society. That turned out to be a winning idea!

I will not bore you by listing Arthur's family tree, but I was able to go back 10 generations before Arthur's birth in 1845 to Robert Belconger, born in England in 1445 during the reign of Henry VI. The "Belconger" name became "Conger" with the birth of John Conger in 1633. It was the same John Conger that came to America during the second half of 1600s.

As I continued my quest for offspring of Arthur Conger, I was able to piece together more recent family members listed in an obituary in an Atlanta newspaper. I had discovered three surviving great-great-grand daughters of Arthur Conger! Great -- a total of 15 generations going back over 570 years of history, but how do I achieve my goal of getting this cover and contents into the hands of an heir?

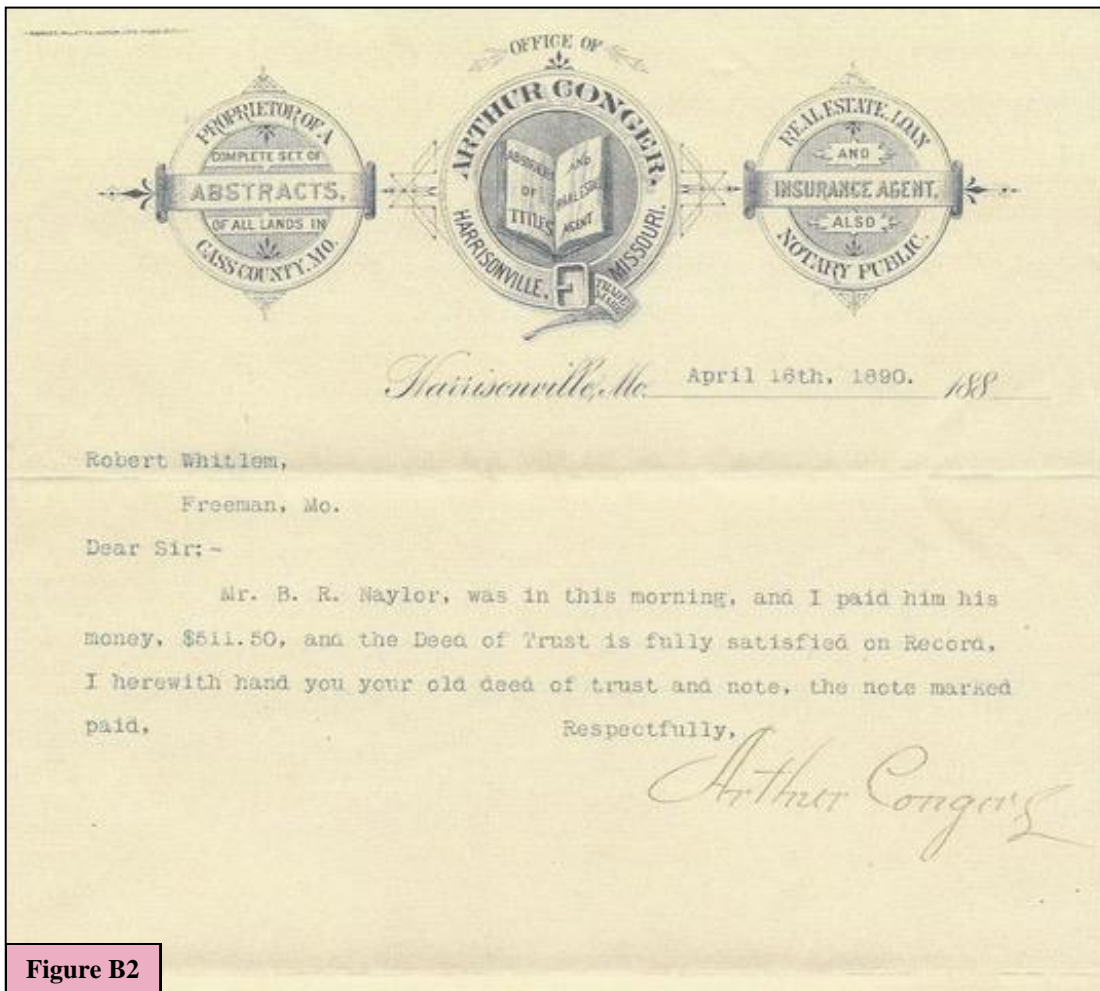


Figure B2

(envelope & letter) that her great-great-grandfather had mailed over 127 years earlier on one condition – she must keep it in the family hereafter for all to enjoy. “Deal” she said and promised to show it to her two sisters first.

It was very satisfying and informative for me to pass on some very interesting family history to someone I will never meet, all in the name of philately!

[Editor’s note: Postal history such as this can be fascinating to connect with present day family. If you have time to do research, a lot of web-based resources are available, to you free of charge, without ever leaving the comfort of your chair. I have found it profoundly interesting to look back at history and be able to establish the who, when and why of something that happened generations ago. While Rick’s experience had concrete results that are very satisfying – that is not always the case. Incomplete family histories, with names that are repeated generation after generation can be extremely confusing to untangle. In my mother’s family there are so many with the name John and James that things can get really mixed up unless you know the context of the association. To make it even worse in one case, there are six men that all share the same name, followed with Sr, Jr, II, III, IV and V. Can you imagine trying to make sense of that 200 years into the future? I find it confusing and I personally knew the first three! Research and writing can be a very fulfilling adventure and it is one I enjoy tremendously – when time allows.]

The obituary listed names and cities. Using Facebook, I located the eldest of the three. Reluctant to engage in dialog with me, a stranger, I preceded to text her information regarding her family tree, which in turn made my reason for communication more plausible. We exchanged phone numbers and conducted two conversations. She was living in Tacoma, WA and about to retire from a long career as a lineman for the local power company and planning to move to, you guessed it, Harrisonville, MO.

I told her I would mail her this family treasure