

The Cover Story

Rose & Wolcott Covers from New York by Francis Ferguson

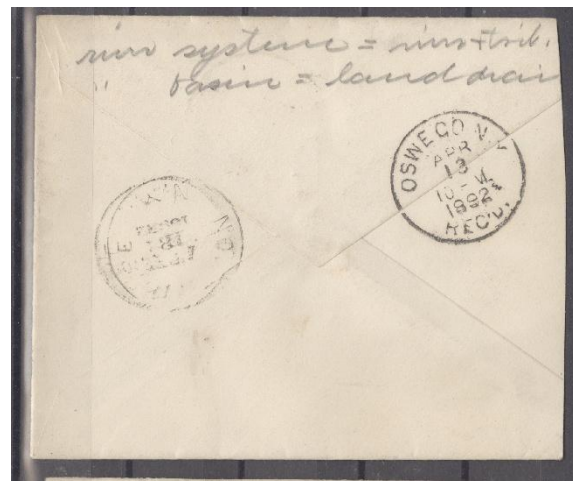
It is no secret that I enjoy a good adventure through the depths of information available on the world wide web. The modern concept of information being accessible far exceeds the boundaries of a physical library and the card catalog that most of us remember from our younger years.

The three covers that are the foundation of this article came into my possession at a show in recent years for the princely sum of a couple of dollars. Why did they attract my attention? Good question. The answer is twofold, first I was born in upstate Utica, NY (Map 2, Utica is circled in red, about 85 miles southeast of Oswego.) and have always been interested in small towns that often have a rich and interesting history – second my family had a very dear friend named “Rose” who was integral part of our extended family from the middle 1950s until her passing in 1996.

Three Covers

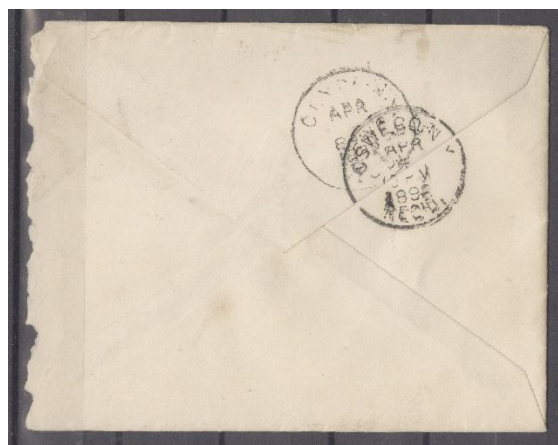


Cover 1; WOLCOTT N.Y. to Rose NY. Dated April 20, 1892. Miss Allie F. Ream | Rose | NY
| Wayne Co Backstamp Rose, NY APR 20 1892 REC' D. [Wolcott frnt/bck]



Cover 2; ROSE N.Y. Dated APR 13, 1892. Undetermined time. Miss Allie F. Ream | 98 W Seneca St. | Oswego | N.Y.

Backstamp OSWEGO NY APR 13 10PM 1892 REC'D. Second CDC North Rose?? N.Y. APR 13



Cover 3; ROSE N.Y. APR ??, 1892. Undetermined time. Miss Allie F. Ream | 98 W. Seneca St., | Oswego, | N.Y. [Rose3 frnt/bck]

Backstamp OSWEGO NY APR ?? 10PM 1892 REC'D. Second CDC undetermined

Researching these three covers started off with the basics.

Rose History

The town of Rose, New York was first settled in 1805 by an early land owner by the name of Robert S. Rose. In 1826 the Town of Rose was created from the Town of Wolcott. (Both still exist today.) Early population numbers in 1830 were recorded in the census at 1,641. Rose in the census of 2010 recorded 2,389. The town has remained small all through the years. Located very near the southern shore of Lake Ontario it has a very northern climate.

The area around Rose and Wolcott supports a large population of Finish decent – who are used to long and harsh winters.

Wolcott History

The Town of Wolcott, NY, established in 1807, has a storied history that reflects the resilience and industriousness of its early settlers. Initially part of the Pulteney Purchase, the town was named after Oliver Wolcott, a signer of the Declaration of Independence. The town's early growth was fueled by agriculture and industry centered around Wolcott Falls, where mills produced lumber, flour, and textiles.

Key figures like Jonathan Melvin and Obadiah Adams were instrumental in developing the town, with Melvin establishing essential mills and Adams opening a tavern that became a social hub.

Lake Ontario and the nearby Erie Canal facilitated trade, allowing Wolcott to prosper as goods flowed in and out of the town. The arrival of the railroad in 1872 further boosted Wolcott's economy, making it easier for local businesses to receive and ship merchandise.

Throughout the 19th and early 20th centuries, Wolcott became known for its iron foundry and thriving agricultural industry, with apple farming remaining a significant part of the local economy. The town also developed a strong educational system, with Leavenworth Middle School being a notable landmark.

[<https://www.townofwolcottny.gov/our-history/>]

An odd piece of history was uncovered. About 1840 a mass delusion took over the local inhabitants, and they came to believe that a treasure of gold and jewels was buried within the town. In spite of many secret, nocturnal excavations, nothing was ever found. Apparently, some still believe this legend is real!

The 2026 population count for the town of Wolcott is 1,551. Map 1 shows the location of Wolcott in relation to the town of Rose.

Oswego – History

Oswego boasts a heritage that stretches back beyond written history. Indians, of course, lived in the area for several thousand years, possibly as long ago as 7,000 B.C., following the retreat of the last glacier. The Iroquois represented the final period of Indian culture, migrating here from the Mississippi River region in the 13th and 14th centuries. It is from this proud and legendary Native American civilization that we received our name: Os-we-go, which means a pouring out place.

October of 1615 marked the beginning of recorded history with the arrival of the first European, Samuel de Champlain. The British and Dutch established a settlement at Oswego in 1722 to facilitate fur trade with the Indians. During the French and Indian War era, five local forts were built to protect the British supply route from Albany to Oswego. Three of these (Forts George, Oswego, and Ontario) were located within the present city limits.

During the colonial era, Oswego was the jewel of the empire, vied over by the British and French due to its strategic location and natural transportation advantages played a strategic role in the French and Indian War of the 18th century. The first British fortress - Fort Ontario - was built in 1727 on the west side of Oswego later to be followed by the addition (expansion) to Fort Ontario in 1755.



In 1796, a full 12 years after the conclusion of the American Revolution, the British withdrew from Fort Ontario and, finally, settlers from New England and eastern New York immigrated into Oswego. Fort Ontario fell to the British in 1814 but, with the coming of peace and with the political support of the newly created Oswego County (1816), Oswegonians moved to build roads and bridges and to improve the navigation of the river. The Oswego branch of the Erie Canal opened in 1829 and, from the 1830s to the 1870s, Oswego boomed. (<https://www.oswegony.gov/explore/history>)

Map 2 shows the location of Oswego in relation to the town of Rose.

Two of the covers are sent to an address (picture to left) in Oswego, NY which is located immediately on the south shore of Lake Ontario. The address is a scant three blocks from Lake Ontario which I am sure made for some interesting winter weather! I was able to locate the address that appears to be a structure that would be in keeping with the time period. According to records the house was built in 1885 with 1.5 baths and 5 bedrooms. The home was owned by the Alice's parents Frederick

(1840-1908) and Lovintha (1838-1922). Population count of 2025 of 17,024.



A major employer of the area is the Oswego State University. I have two first cousins that attended the institution in the 1970s. I always was amused and more than slightly frightened when they told me that it was common practice to run ropes between the buildings so those that had to walk between buildings in

the winter could find their way without getting blown away!



The Connections

The sender of the two Rose covers appears to be the same person – compare the script of the receiving address. The cover from Wolcott while similar is obviously in a different hand – note the formation of the letter ‘A’. Since there is no sender information on any of the covers or enclosures -- that part of the mystery is unresolved.

The Receiver

The recipient of the three covers -- Miss Allie F. Ream was only fully unveiled when her grave marker was discovered. Her full name is actually Alice F. (Ream) Allen. Born in 1872 she was 20 years old during the time of this correspondence. Alice was married to Clayton Jerome Allen who was 22 years her senior. Clayton passed away in 1925. Alice passed away in 1948 at the age of 76. Her sister Edith (Ream) Fikes born in 1875 passed away in 1969 at the age of 94. The grave markers are located in the Rose Cemetery in Wayne County New York. Unfortunately, I was unable to access US Census data to go any further in the data collection attempt.

Conclusion

Researching an item from over a hundred years ago can be a mixture of satisfying and extremely frustrating. Often times the ‘dots’ simply cannot be connected no matter how much one tries. No matter the outcome of such an effort it is always fun in my book!

[Many thanks to the great research by fellow CFSC member Ann Fettig who found a number of important data points that helped to connect significant pieces of information.]