

Madison County, Dead Letters at the Elwood Post Office, 1899

Erin Wright and Natalie Burriss

Near the end of 1899, the post office in Elwood, Indiana, had processed nearly seven million pieces of mail that were considered undeliverable, known as dead letters. Letters and packages alike were considered “dead” for various reasons, but the two leading culprits included incorrect labeling and no return address.¹

At the beginning of 1899 Ira Kidwell, postmaster for the Elwood post office, began publishing a dead letter list in the *Elwood Free Press*. Here he called for members of the public to claim their lost letters before they were transferred to the dead letter office in Washington, DC, after thirty days. There workers would return them to their original senders.²

New lists of dead letters were not published on a set schedule. Instead, the editors of the *Elwood Free Press* seem to have waited until a number of lists had accumulated. The following transcription includes thirteen separate articles of published names of intended recipients of dead letters, including two sets of lists from the February 2, 1899, issue.

Notes

1. “Too Much Carelessness Causes Your Letters to Land in the Dead Letter Office,” *Elwood Free Press*, November 16, 1899.
2. “Dead Letter List,” *Elwood Free Press*, January 5, 1899; January 12, 1899; February 2, 1899; March 9, 1899; April 13, 1899; April 20, 1899; May 4, 1899; May 18, 1899; May 25, 1899; June 8, 1899; June 22, 1899; August 10, 1899; August 17, 1899.

January 5, 1899

C H Arnold
Fred Boesing
E M Calli
Chas Cole
Jno Copeland
Rampy Elliott
Ola Frazier
Geo Gaul
Verda Gilland
Bessie Gove
Wm Havnes
Dr Huffman
Jno Huffman
Ves Harris
Thos W Heffner
Joseph Jones
Fayette Kelso
Walter Little
John Lowde
L W McClure
L e S Miller
Ada Mills
Frank Morris
Mattie G Ma[---]e
Edith Mack
J J Pitman
Joseph Preumont
Rosetta Reed
Onia Riger

J G Reeder
Logan Santfer
W H Turpin
Chas S Walden
Ellen West
Ellen Welton
J W Williams
Frances Wilson
Johnny White
Geo Widener
W B Wilcox
Blanch [Wilison/Willson] (package)

January 12, 1899

A Alexander
R Beanley
W V Boatingly
P Brunnan
Wm Cain
J Cox
Kenneth Davis
Hannah Everoob
Mary F. Jones
W S Jones
B M Ja k
Wm Keener
Lillian King
Anna Kuker
Logan Layton
Frank Magers

Martha Manis
W J Madderrd
Chris Mures
[J?]Jennie Manford
Thos O'Neil
Wm Joshua Phelps
L M Pyle
Wm Patterson
Ina Quarterman
Orea Sfephens
S R Simmons
Anna Schaefer
John Shaw
Chas Thacker
Harry Van Norman
Peter Van Cole
Frank Walker
Dorie Wanie
Tillie I Wann
Dessa Yates
Chas Yeykel
Al Zaring

February 2, 1899

First List

Christ Alberts
Dock Brown
D Borrows
Wm Brown
Myrtle Bellman

Eda Breaker
Rufus Cook
G A Cope
Tell Cottrell
James Davis
Andy Erwin
May Ferguson
Bessie Green
Wm Corman
A Hatch
G Heingal
Ida Horner
Dea Jones
U Jones
Flora Jones
Chas Louis
Gertrude Lewis
Sam McKinley
H Miller
J A McMullen
A C Montgomery
Chas McCorkle
Geo Nagel
Homer Reed
Lewis Smith
Joe Stewart
Wm Strader
T J Staub
Wm O Stansbury
Allie Summerton

Thos R Williams
Chas Williamson
Mandy Weldon
Chas Weader
Frank Wollon
R A Young

Second List

C W Ackerman
Lulu Andrews
L D Berney
Marie Bradford
C F Brodks
Flora Brown
G W Balzer
May Carroll
Minnie P Conley
Sanford C Cole
John R Cumpson
Rose B Davis
Flora Davis
M M Edwards
Robert Eskridge
Jas A Gwinn
Mos Gasten
Stella Hatch
Gore Howard
Christ Hamm
Anna Kine
J B Lowery

Ross Lockwood
Bessie McVerm
Earnrst Marshall
Neo Morris
Mattie Myers
Clint Mullen
Evertt Moore 2 [letters]
Doss Moore
Maggie Odem
Chester Shaw
Jno Schenher
Alice Simmons
Phebe L Smith
William Smith
Geo Shimp
Reece Simmons
Harry Van Norman
F Waymire
Jennie Writchwine
Edna E Wright
E J Williams
Thomas Wilson
Kitty Wolfe
Mo Oucket
J C Sigler, pkg

March 9, 1899
Florence Atherton
S J Bentlinger (2 [letters])
Jas Brennan

Lenzie Blue
Shirl Branson
Elizabeth Cline
R B Cole
Anna Edwards
Eva Essex
A Falsem
Dora Fox
Maggie Gilvey
Chas Glen
Jas Guy
Mary Gilem
Henry Hall
Cora Hanshoe
Julia Hamflton
Grant Aeisen
Cora Hendricks
Thos Hogan
Patch Hooker
Kate Jones
Mr James
W C Lim
C R Lawrence
Harley Loue (2 [letters])
W C Lutes
John McLar[---]n
Taylor Mockmoic
August Mayor
Edwin McCord
Meggie Myerly

Mrs. Maler
C S Phillips
T Racobs
Wayne Shaw
Rene Stafford
Henry S Steele
A M Symons
Beckie Tileny
Harry Van Norman
E M Wilson
Geo Winchel
A J Yolf

April 13, 1899

Mary Anderson
Geo S Anderson
Nanie Doyle
Adrien Dindal
Catherine Davis
Nelle Davis
Mathew Denniggins
Martha J Cox
Jacob Fuller
Gim Hudson
Clary Houser
O J House
W L Hillard
Retta Hobbs
William Hasseock
Mag Jackson

John Lutson
Bell Knotts
Emma Kelso
Robert Lawrence
Jno Lentz
Joseph Meyer
Nan Miller
Les Pratt
Will Parlon
E C Rowland
James Reily
Ed C Rolland
Chas Stone
E G Schade (2 [letters])
Nora Turner
Henry Thomas
Pearl Todd
Emma Taylor

April 20, 1899

J N Anderson
Anna Adams
Lealia Bartley
S A Brown
Wm Casey
A B Crawford
Mis Cooper
Jake Deal
Reason Duncan
Joseph E Dawson

R H Cockrill
E M Day
Walter Demaris
D M Etchison
O W Edmonds
William Gresham
John Grienas
William Higgins
Harry Krtzer
Mellie Lissie
Debbie Lineberry
George Manheimer
Peter Moran
Chas A Mott
Clara Murphy
Rhoda F Mutt
May Oams
Louise McMahan
Samuel Power
W Robason
Mike Rodey
Wm Robertson
Matthew Simons
Michael Smith
C N Thompson
Lora Wagner
Lora Wilson
William Wright
A K Wright & Co
G W Wison

Clara Wilson
E M Wilson

May 4, 1899

Manda Allen
D N Adams
W J Adams
F Burr Baker
John Bowers
D H Bern
Clarry Bannon
Dan Cooley
J B Dason
Ernest Dimmack
W H Diltmore
Frank Dickinson
Lizzie Deen
Mary Davis
Rena Fenton
Liddie Garr
D Gillespie
Jules Halveck
Jos Hickner
Mary E Horn
Levi Jack
M Johnson
A E Jones
Susan B Kittridge
Jennie Lasso
Wm C Lewis

Noah W Myers
M Mitchell
Mamie Nansker
Pearl Orr
Ada Pappenberg (2 [letters])
Jock Prince
Sarah Pennie
Pearl Mfg Co
C Pettibone
Chas Roberts
David Right
Mattie Shaw
Robt Sharrell
Louise Seberne
Mary E Smith
W B Stout
John Schultz
C P Warner
Bertha Wilson
Clara Wilson
E C Woodrow
Jno Weber
Alverson & White
Mr Warner

May 18, 1899

A N Anders
E M Anders
Jane Ballard
George C Blatt

G C Bangle
Cecil Budd
Nolia Beal
Myrtle Bellman
Lulu Ketneur Burger
Ames Buggy Bow Co
Eunice Clymer
A D Eytchison
Jane Eck
Miller Bros
C H George
D M Gehman
Huntington Art Co
J W Harris
J D Hope
Chas Hough
M C Howel
Hiland Kistler
F Miller
W T Oliver
Hugh Pollock
Wm Robertson
Tom Selina
M J Taylor
Dora Welker
Sarah Welch
J K White
Marion Winters
J M Wilson, pkg.

May 25, 1899

Phil Adler
Charley Banks
J[e/o]s A Brittenham
W B Brown
Nimrod Bentley
P F Carmack
Edward Crawley
George Cole
Henry Clary
Warner Duggard
Cora Decker
Anna Finley
Mamy Fisher
Mort Farner
Andrew F. Gilson
Ella Hendrick
Minnie Horton
Mr. Hane, Cor. 18-S N
Cora Irwin
James V Lee
Carrie Le[---]nback
Urna McAlister
Edna Miller
Ben McLellen
David Owen 2 [letters]
Roe Plua
Wm Roberts
Frank E Satton

Jacob Smith
Mr Sturgeor, North 12th
David Smith
Clark F Thayer
Thomas Vanover
Henry Veerhellier
Sarah Wood
Harry Wilson
Jos B Newby, pkg

June 8, 1899

H Anderson
S A Brown
S D Bamberger
Mary Brachet
Lora Brunson
Ed Connell
Nellie Conroy
Edna May Dewitt
Matthew Deniggins
H I Fulton
Maud Fleetwood
Jacob Fuller
Arthur Goode
W K Guilaume
A R Humoles
John T Hughes
Frank Haskins
Minnie Horton
Dr Hurry

Alice Miller
Claude McClains
Ella O'Banion
Golda Owen
Alfred Peates
W A Schneider
Irving Shalto
Jennie Weir
Maria Yalto

June 22, 1899

Jessie Arlington
Sanford Adams
Nevada Bowling
James Baird 2 [letters]
Ernest Brown
Robert Barclay
Cliff[f/l]ord Bohlander
Ella Carroll
A E Cooper
Eva Commons
William Cox 2 [letters]
Will O'Connor
Kepler Danusit
Eune Eumerkous
Jesse Evans
Elwood Steel Co
Conrad Flory
Charles Gill[---]spie
Edward Green

William Huston
Frank House
Frank Hellenr
J Jackson
Anty K[---]jib
M H Le[---]ch
Henry W Luley
James Logan
Noah W Myers
O W Murphy
F. H. Miller
Caxia Norris
David Owens
W P O'[P/K]ern
B M Perkins
A D Randall
King Russell
Bertha S[---]ewart
Lizzie S[---]aw
Emma L Thomas
Nora Urry
G A Wolverton
Floyd Wimer
W H Field
Frederick Ashman
Alice Barton
J M Bohanon
Emma Barteh
May Clay
Nolia Cox

Henry Crubough
W F Dunn
Edward Donson
Minnie Edwards
James Francis
Blanche Forrest
Ed Green
Lillie Garrison
Susie M Hamlin
Earl Jones
W R Jewel
Belle Knotts
A J Lyeon
William McAbe
John Morgan
J J Meyers
W Oldham
Jno Peck
Lizzie Pool
M C Richards
Otto C Riffe
Israel Roberston
Alice Robison
[Goldie/Go'die] Ruddle
Maggie Saxon
Robt Sharr[---]tt
Henry L Swing
Charles Skira
Joe Smith
Thomas Snodgrass

Wm H Shepherd
Harry Tipps
Peter Spools
Findly Thomson
Jack Thomas
Norma Walker
W M Wetherold
Susan Wells
Ruth Wrinkle
W Wood
Edith Young

August 10, 1899

J. N. Alexander
Robert Burns
R. H Brown
W. L. Bell
C. H. Bailey
S. B Coen
A. M. Chraleam
John Cook
Flora Carlton
Harry Durkett
Harmon Doran
Alice Dalton
Flora Davidson
Elwood Produce Co.
George Futh
Golda Ferguson
James Griffin

Ab Hobbs
B. J. Jones
Wm. James
Emma Lame
J. A. McMillen
M. J. [Mieste/Miste]
Dan Mote
Joe McGuire
Alice Nixon
Walter Nelson
F. A. Newton
Mrs. C. Nalmon
Eiza Osborn
John O'Hanlon
Lue [Roger/Reger]
D. L. Rush
Minnie Summers
Joseph Scholl
Edward Scott
T. A. Snow
John O. Smith

August 17, 1899

Mrs. W. T. Alverson
F. H. Brown
Peter Brown
Frank Baker
T. B. Blackton
George Cray
Sadie Farquhar

Ed Ferom
A. D. Fitzsimmons
Martin Galvony
Thomas Hogan
Henry Hasecoster
Amel Hartman
A. D. McDonald
W. A. Meehan
George Major
Sarah Morris
Vernie Moore
Brose Moyer
Sheldon McGinnis
Katie Picoll
George Rogers
Flora Reitzel
Sam Shortridge
Curt Shores
Fred Sloymaker
Oma Scott
M. H. Smith
Victory Smith
Ed Sigler
F. Sigler
Ed Toll
Thomas Twigg
Allen White
Will Worden
Elmer Wilson
Bertie White

Clara Wells
Orpheus Wiles
T. J. Watso[r/n]
Charlie Wagner
Margaret Young