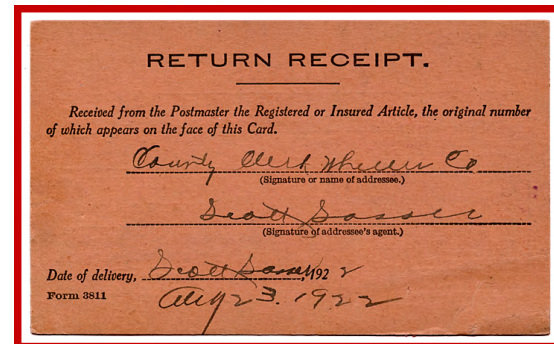


A Fossilized Return Receipt

I've heard that finding a fossilized piece of philatelic material is difficult so thought this example might be as close as some of us will ever get without actually digging.

The 'Return Receipt' Service provides verification to senders that articles they mailed were delivered. The service began in 1863 and until 1925, no service fee was required. The penalty clause on the card paid the return postage fee. Delivery was acknowledged by the postal form. On receiving an item, the recipient signs and dates the return receipt and hands it back to the postal clerk, acknowledging receipt.

This service is available to the public, but also for 'Official Business' mail between government offices which is scarcer than commercial use. More interesting however is the opposite side as the card was sent to the Wheeler County Clerk in Fossil, Oregon where the card was officially 'fossilized'!



RETURN RECEIPT.

Received from the Postmaster the Registered or Insured Article, the original number of which appears on the face of this Card.

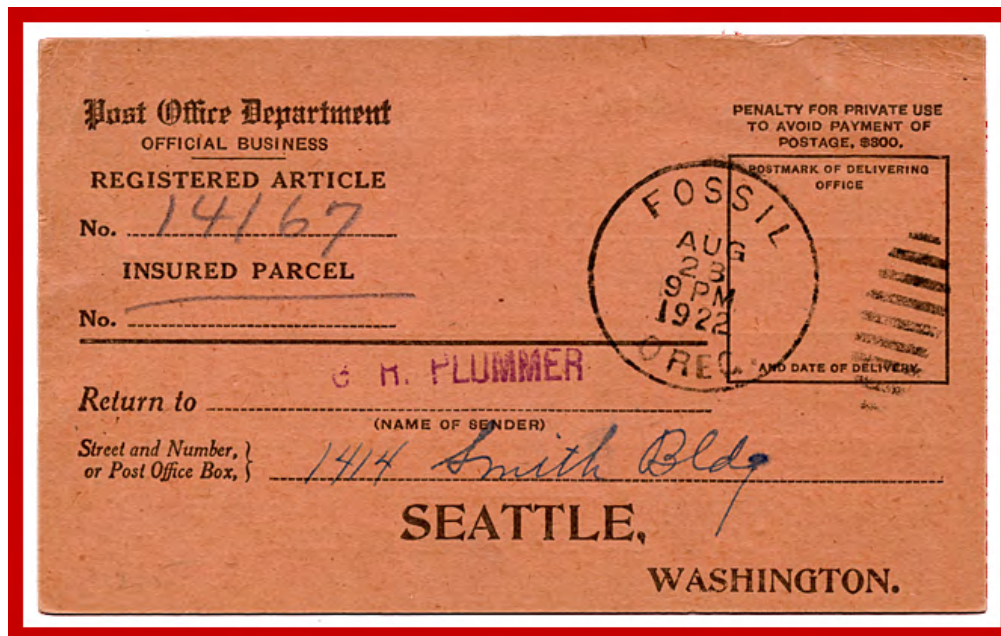
County Clerk Wheeler Co
(Signature or name of addressee.)

Scott Bassler
(Signature of addressee's agent.)

Date of delivery, Scott Bassler 1922
Aug 23, 1922

Form 3811

Return Receipt Form 3811



Post Office Department
OFFICIAL BUSINESS

REGISTERED ARTICLE
No. 14167

INSURED PARCEL
No. _____

Return to G. M. PLUMMER
(NAME OF SENDER)

Street and Number, } 1414 Smith Bldg
or Post Office Box, }

SEATTLE,
WASHINGTON.

PENALTY FOR PRIVATE USE
TO AVOID PAYMENT OF
POSTAGE, \$300.

POSTMARK OF DELIVERING
OFFICE

FOSSIL
AUG
23
9 PM
1922
OREG.

AND DATE OF DELIVERY

Fossil, Oregon, 9 bar killer handstamp, 23 August 1922 at 9PM

The postal clerk validated receipt of registered article number 14167. The instruction to do this is contained in the square box "Postmark of Delivering Office and Date of Delivery." (It's interesting that a postal employee would be working that late in a small town.) This form was then re-mailed, postage paid, under the authority of the "Post Office Department – Official Business" corner card text and penalty clause text in the upper right corner. The form was returned to the original sender in Seattle, Washington.