

Washington, D.C., postmark returns to most district mail

By Bill McAllister

Washington Correspondent

Yverne P. Moore, Washington, D.C., postmaster, promised Dec. 18, 2007, that most letters mailed in the nation's capital will once again carry a Washington, D.C., postmark.

The announcement follows a furor over a *Washington Post* news story that reported that most Washington letters were being postmarked with a suburban Maryland sprayed-on postmark in mail plants outside the city.

Moore's promise came after protests by the district's nonvoting delegate in the House of Representatives, Delegate Eleanor Holmes Norton, D-D.C., filed a formal complaint Dec. 5, 2007.

Although the Maryland postmarking has been going on for nearly seven years, few people noticed until the *Washington Post* story.

The story prompted many Washingtonians to

present their letters to postal clerks, asking for Washington handcancels.

That apparently led clerks at one of the city's major post offices to begin assessing charges for the cancels.

When informed by *Linn's* of the action, Postal Service officials stopped the practice and promised a refund to a *Linn's* reader who was charged \$1.05 for a single handcancel at the National Capitol station.

"The incident at National Capitol was a mistake," said Postal Service spokeswoman Deborah A. Yackley. "The customer will be getting a refund. The rules say a clerk can handcancel up to 50 pieces for free."

The demand for a fee to handcancel a letter was a shock to longtime *Linn's* reader Larry Morse, a Capitol Hill resident who collects used U.S. stamps.

Morse told *Linn's* he "wanted a nice postmark rather than a machine

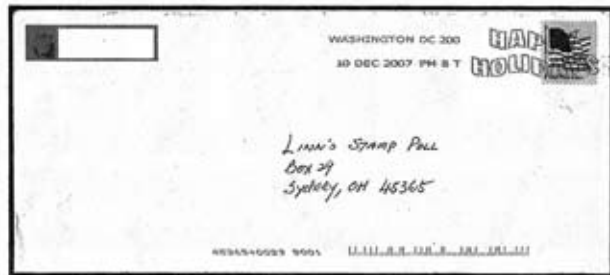
scramble" applied by ink-jet canceling machines. So he went to the National Capitol station Dec. 15, 2007, and asked for one, as he often had in the past.

But this time, the clerk told him the office was overwhelmed by demands for handcancels as a result of the *Washington Post* story. The clerk told Morse he would have to pay a \$1.05 certificate of mailing fee to get the handcancel.

Morse protested, but the clerk refused to budge. Morse said that he paid "under protest." Angered, he called *Linn's*.

Yackley said the Washington postmark "never went away," and that the amount of mail from the district receiving a Washington postmark at the suburban plants that process the city's mail will be increased.

A cover addressed to *Linn's* bearing a Dec. 10, 2007, Washington postmark is shown nearby.



This cover mailed to *Linn's Stamp News* bears a Dec. 10, 2007, Washington, D.C., Happy Holidays sprayed-on postmark.

"Almost all mail will receive the postmark," Yackley said. "The only mail that will not receive the postmark will be mail that is deposited late in the day."

That late mail, processed at a plant in Capitol Heights, Md., will continue to have a Maryland postmark.

Postmaster Moore told reporters at a news conference she now believes that "ninety percent of the mail on average will go through the right machine."

Delegate Norton is a senior member of the House committee that oversees

the Postal Service.

Norton said "Postmarks may be of diminishing significance for some cities.

"The [Washington, D.C.] postmark is more than a matter of local pride. The postmark identifies the capital of the United States of America.

"Its significance, which dates back to the founding of the country, argues strongly for preserving the postmark. I do not believe that England or France would allow London or Paris to disappear as postmarks recognized worldwide." ■