

Watch Fob Not Mentioned for 99 Years

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The unpredictability of what Junior Fellows might find spurs both the interns to continue seeking and the staffers around them to wonder what will turn up next.

In late July, Elizabeth Delmage, 2007 Junior Fellow, found a long-ago gift to Register of Copyrights Thorvald Solberg. Nearly 99 years to the day the item was sent (July 22, 1908), Delmage discovered a watch fob in the boxed 1908 copyright registration applications for photographs. A watch fob?

Applicant William L. Weatherby of Philadelphia was registering his claim to copyright in a photograph titled “Elevated Railroad, Market St Ferry. Looking North on Delaware Ave. from Chestnut Street. Phila. Pa.” Enclosed with his letter of application, deposit, and fee was an additional letter to the Register of Copyrights that is transcribed here with the original spelling:



Dear Sir,

Will you kindly favor me by giving me a copyright on this photograph as i want to use it in a soulviner post card and on envelopes as i went to grate expence to have the wagons taken off the street so as i could get a good clear photograph and as the other publishers are after this picture i take this means of protecting this subject. Inclose you will find one dollar to defray the expence hoping you will give this your prompt attention so as i can go a head and have the post cards made up and thanking you for the same i also inclose a watch fob witch i hope you will except with my complements, as i have sent one to Hon James Sherman also Hon Wm. H. Taft and this one makes the third one of the first dozen that has been struck off.

Yours Respectfully,

William L. Weatherby

The claim was referred to correspondence because the applicant did not initially send an application form, and the watch fob was consigned to an envelope on which someone wrote, “Lv [leave] attached to letter + make no mention of.” The Register was probably not ungrateful for the token, but no doubt he could not accept a gift from someone requesting services from the Office. The fob depicts images of William Howard Taft and James Schoolcraft Sherman, who were running for, and soon elected to, president and vice president of the United States.

Watch fobs, which were chains attached at one end to a man’s pants and at the other to a pocket watch stored in a waistcoat pocket, hung across the chest. The term also referred to medal-like ornaments attached to the chain. Fobs were popular items of male adornment up to World War I, when pocket watches were replaced by wrist watches. This fob will be on exhibit in the new display cases planned for the Register’s reception area in LM-403 as part of the graphics project (see *Copyright Notices*, August 2007). ©