



# *Cancellation Club* **NEWS**

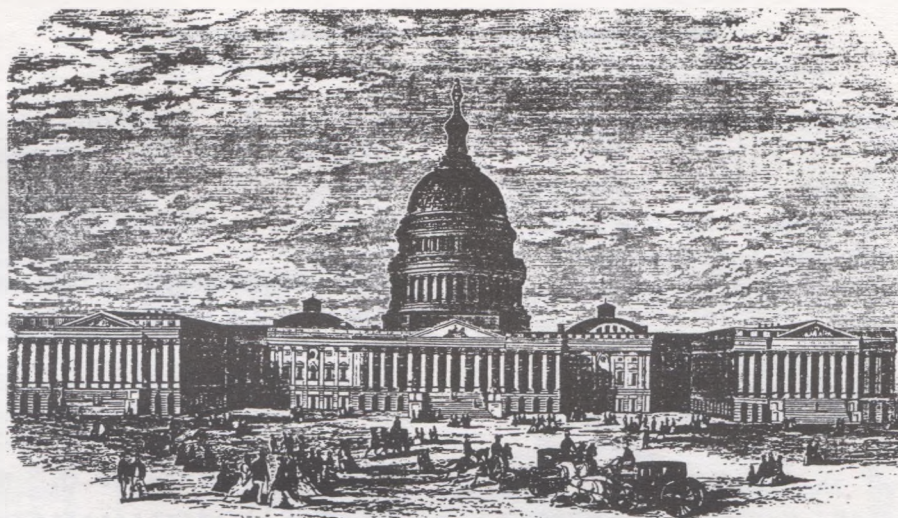
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Spring 1990

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U.S. Capitol --- See article on Congress Postmarks, p19.

## From the Editor

Commencing in this issue is a series of articles on the Congress branch of the Washington post office and the U.S. Senate post office. Written by Rollin Huggins, Jr., the first section will cover the Congress branch.

Carl Steig sends some interesting comments on Roger Curran's Winter 1990 article on "Unusual D.C. Ellipses." He states, "In general all handstamps for D.C. in 1879 were blue; this extended for a couple of months into 1880. For the remainder of 1880 almost strikes are found in violet." He further opines that the "L" killer of postage due stamps would seem to be merely a usage of the obsolete "local" handstamp and it has been seen as late as 1885. During the same period several other miscellaneous devices were employed to cancel postage dues, including the obsolete "l" killer similar to the "L" killer.

I would like to thank Craig Mathewson for his report of Norge and Jamestown, VA Doanes and also Walter LaForce for his of Mount Vernon on the Potomac. Such reports are the life blood of philatelic research.

Your comments about articles published in the NEWS assist the editor in planning and setting up future issues. Of course, a piece about one of your collecting interests would be a welcome addition to the NEWS.

## CLOSED ALBUMS

Russell F. Hanmer

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# CONGRESS POSTMARKS

BY ROLLIN C. HUGGINS, JR.

How can it be that there was a post office at our Capitol that was never officially recognized? You can search in vain in the Postal Guides for the Congress post office, but it existed and had its own canceling devices. Apparently, without publicity, the Washington, D.C., Post Office established a station in the Capitol building for the convenience of Congressmen. We do not know just when this arrangement commenced, but there are distinctive Congress postmarks from the early 1860's until the Congress post office was discontinued in 1881 and East Capitol Station was officially established.

We even know where the Congress post office was located. It was tucked away in a tiny room in the basement of the central portion of the Capitol building (Fig. 1). It had an entrance to the outside so that the general public could use the post office if they knew how to find it. Boyd's Directory of the District of Columbia, 1880, lists Sidney S. Baker as the Clerk in charge of the post office.

THE CAPITOL OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

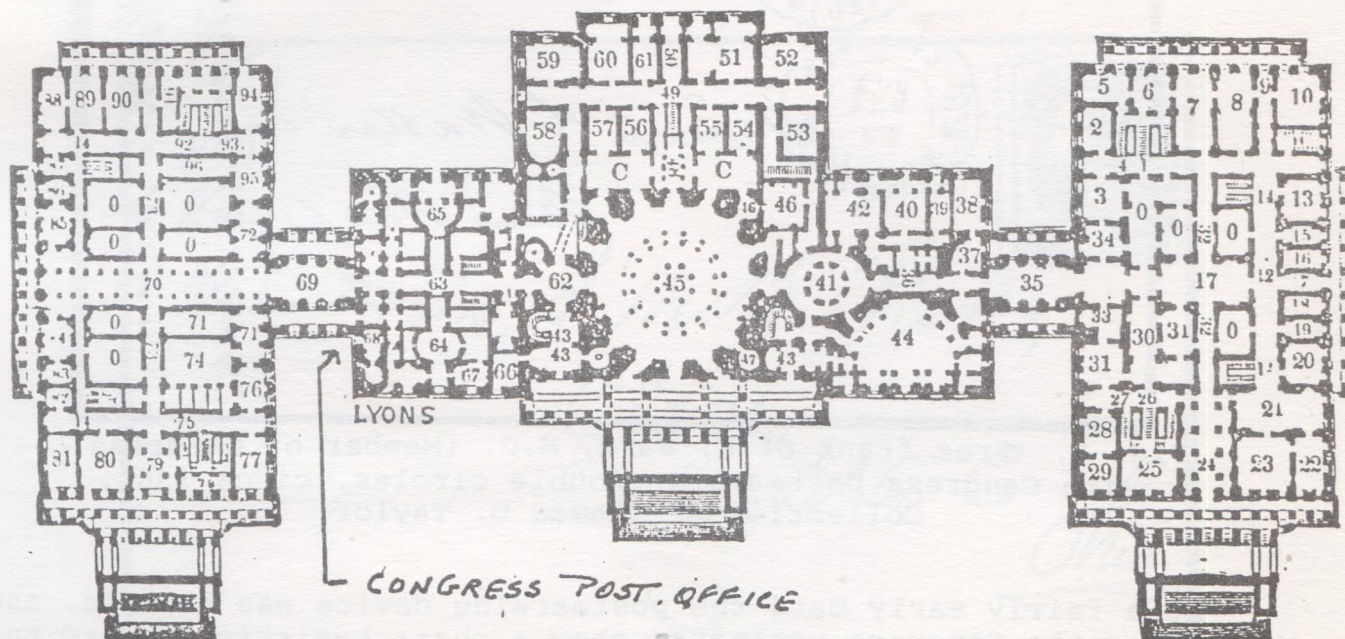


Fig. 1. Basement of the Capitol. Keim's Illustrated Hand-Book, 14th Edition--Corrected to Jan. 1880.

For about twenty years, this unofficial branch of the Washington post office used distinctive canceling devices on the mail it serviced. The common thread is that the word "Congress" consistently appears in the postmark. The year of use is never a part of the postmark, and therefore it is difficult to date covers unless docketing or contents are present. There were at least five different postmarks employed at the Congress post office.

C-1. "CONGRESS/WASHINGTON D.C." in Double Circles, 26mm. and 13mm.

The first Congress postmark seems to have been a standard issue canceling device similar to that furnished to many post offices in the early 1860's. The double circle Congress postmark has been observed on covers as early as 1862. Even though the majority of covers having this postmark bear the signature of the member of Congress having the franking privilege, neither the postmark nor an auxiliary marking bear witness to the fact that the cover passed through the mails free of postage (Fig. 2). Occasionally, one finds a cover stamped with the 3¢ 1861 issue, in which case the stamp is canceled by the common four ring target killer which was also widely distributed to post offices in the early 1860s (Fig. 3).

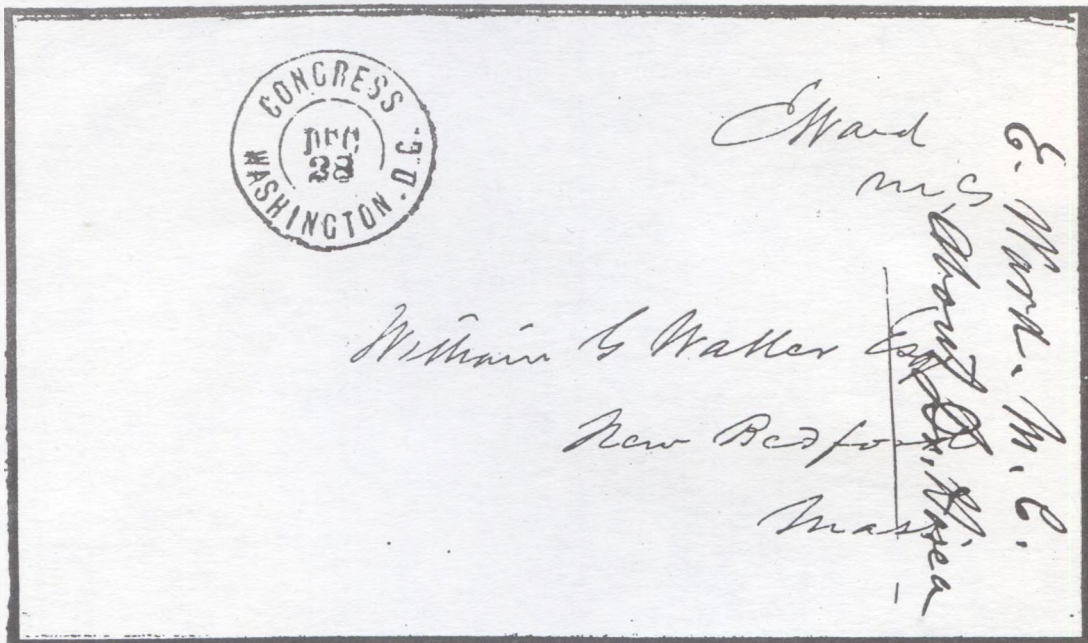


Fig. 2. Free frank of E. Ward, M.C. (Member of Congress), with Congress postmark in double circles, circa 1864. Collection of Thomas O. Taylor.

At a fairly early date the postmarking device was damaged, and thereafter the Congress postmarks show a characteristic outward bulge at the bottom under the "ING" of WASHINGTON. While the double circle Congress postmark was used primarily from 1863 to 1866, it was occasionally used thereafter on private stamped mail (Fig. 4) when a different Congress postmark was being used on free mail.

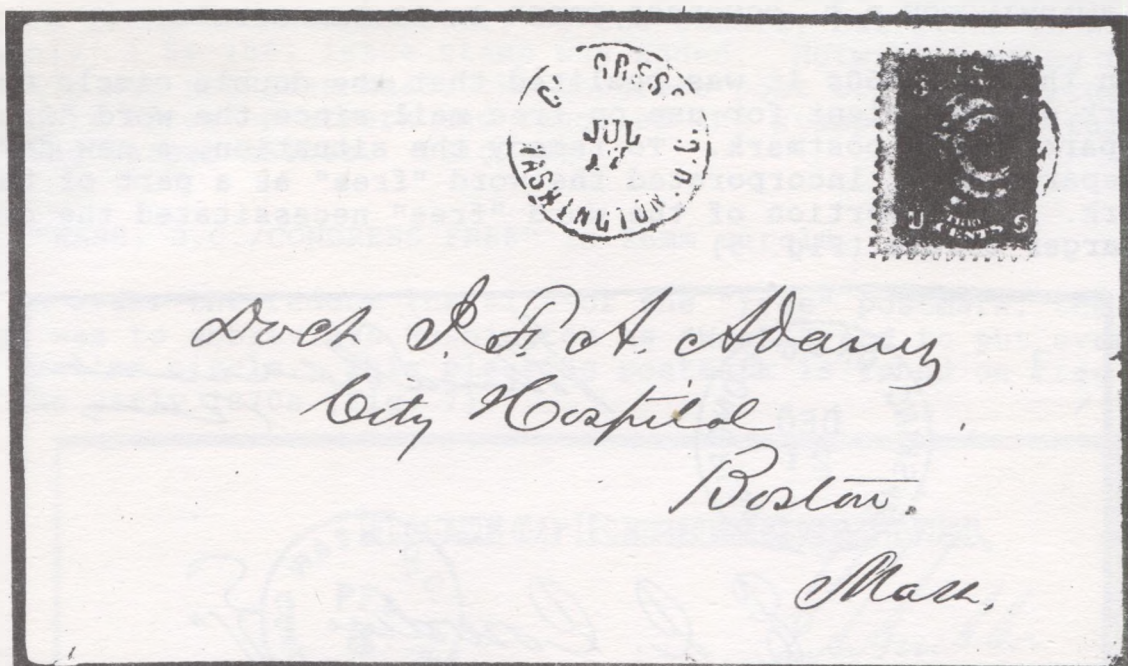


Fig. 3. 3¢ 1861 issue with target cancel and Congress postmark dated July 17, (1866). Note that this appears to be a postmark without an inner ring; but it is believed that this is the double circle postmark so lightly struck that the inner ring does not show.

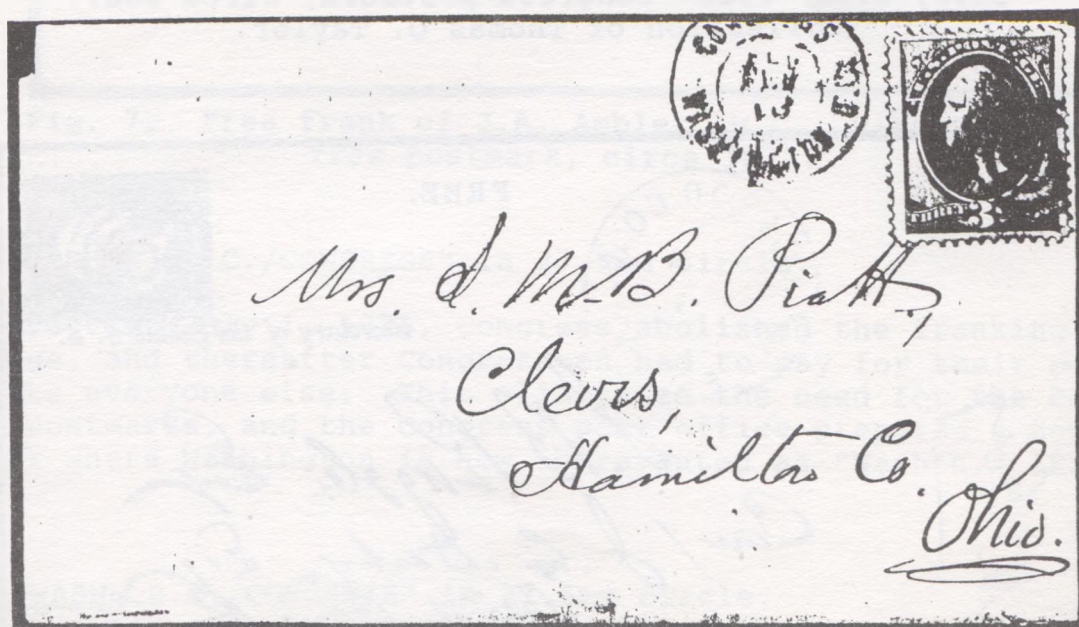


Fig. 4. Double circle Congress postmark used Feb. 13, circa 1871, with 3¢ National Bank Note Co. issue.

## C-2. "WASHINGTON D.C. CONGRESS/FREE" in 29.5mm Circle.

In the mid 1860s it was realized that the double circle Congress postmark was deficient for use on free mail since the word "free" was not a part of the postmark. To remedy the situation, a new device was prepared which incorporated the word "free" as a part of the postmark. The insertion of the word "free" necessitated the creation of a larger circle (Fig. 5)

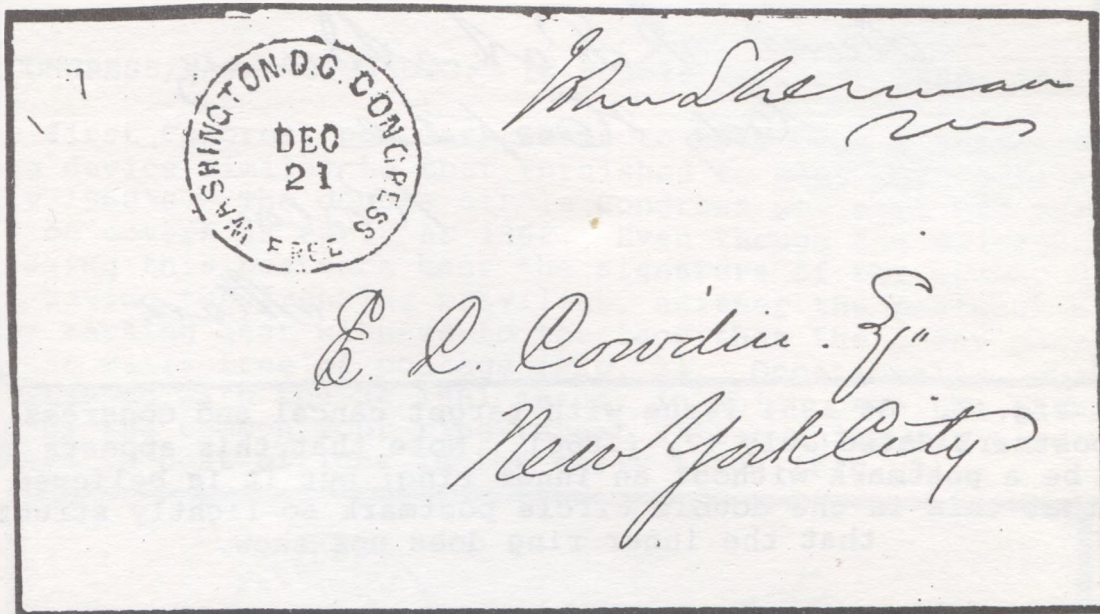


Fig. 5. Free frank of John Sherman, U.S. Senator from Ohio, with "free" Congress postmark, circa 1867.  
Collection of Thomas O. Taylor.

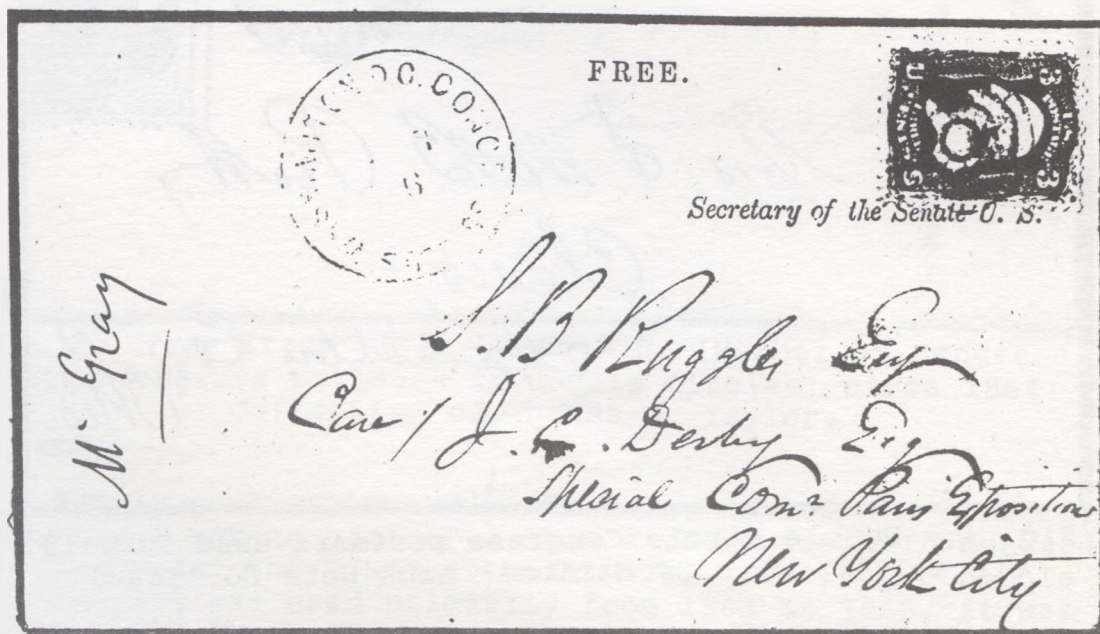


Fig. 6. Improper use of "free" postmark, circa 1869.

The next cover is a curiosity. The envelope was designed for the free frank of the Secretary of the Senate, but since it was used privately, a 3¢ 1861 issue stamp was added. Notwithstanding the fact that this was not free mail, the Congress post office nevertheless used their "free" postmark and canceled the stamp with the familiar four ring target killer. (Fig. 6).

C-3. "WASH. D.C./CONGRESS FREE" in 26mm circle.

In order to reduce the size of the "free" postmark, the next change was to abbreviate Washington as "Wash." and to put everything in a smaller circle. This pleasing postmark is found on free mail from the early 1870s (Fig. 7).

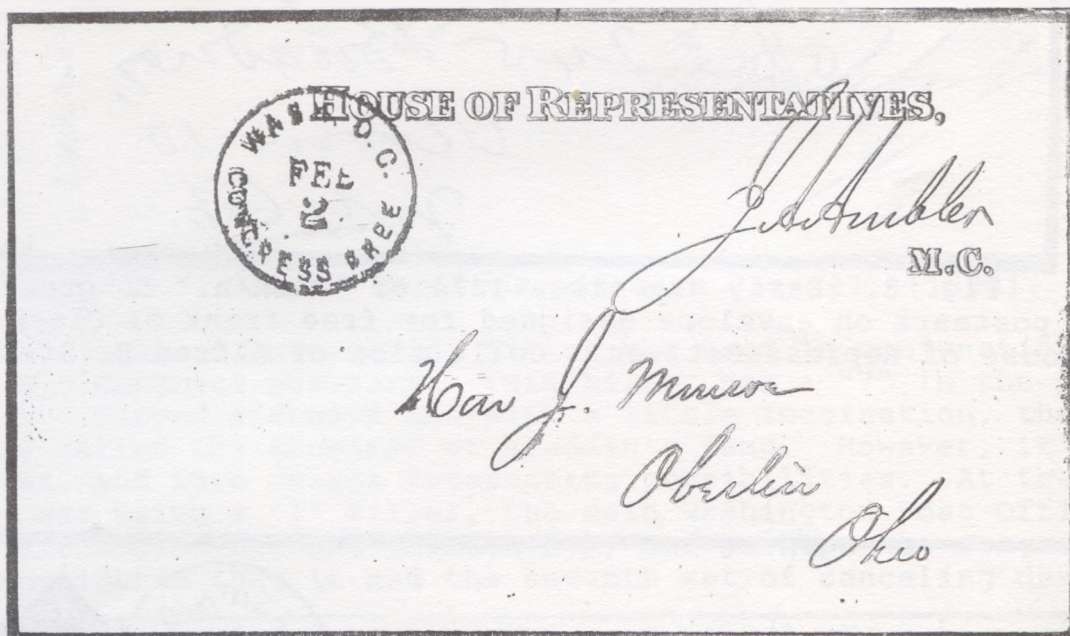


Fig. 7. Free frank of J.A. Ambler, M.C., with Congress free postmark, circa 1872.

C-4. "WASH'N. D.C./CONGRESS" in 27.5mm circle.

Effective July 1, 1873, Congress abolished the franking privilege, and thereafter Congressmen had to pay for their postage just like everyone else. This eliminated the need for the Congress "free" postmarks, and the Congress post office prepared a new postmark where Washington is now abbreviated as "Wash'n." (Figs. 8 and 9).

C-5. "WASH. D.C./CONGRESS" in 27.5mm circle.

The last Congress postmark appeared in 1879 and is similar to the preceding one except that Washington is further abbreviated to be simply "Wash." The lettering is slightly larger than before (Fig. 10). This postmark continued in use until the Congress post office was discontinued in 1881.

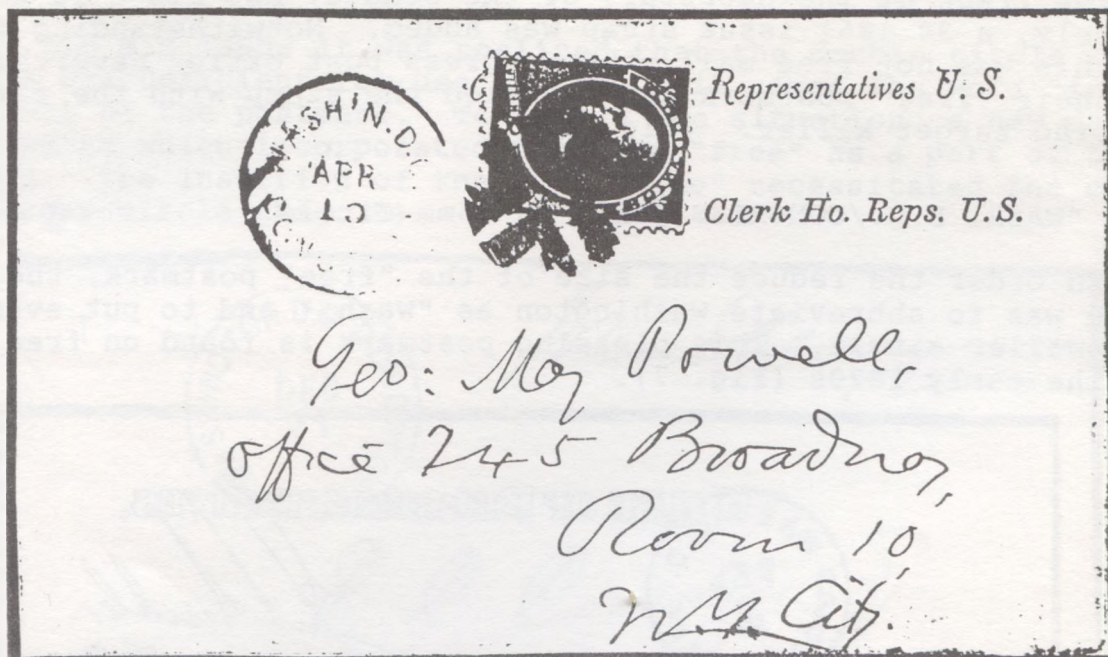


Fig. 8. Early use circa 1874 of "Wash'n." Congress postmark on envelope designed for free frank of Clerk of House of Representatives. Collection of Alfred E. Staubus.

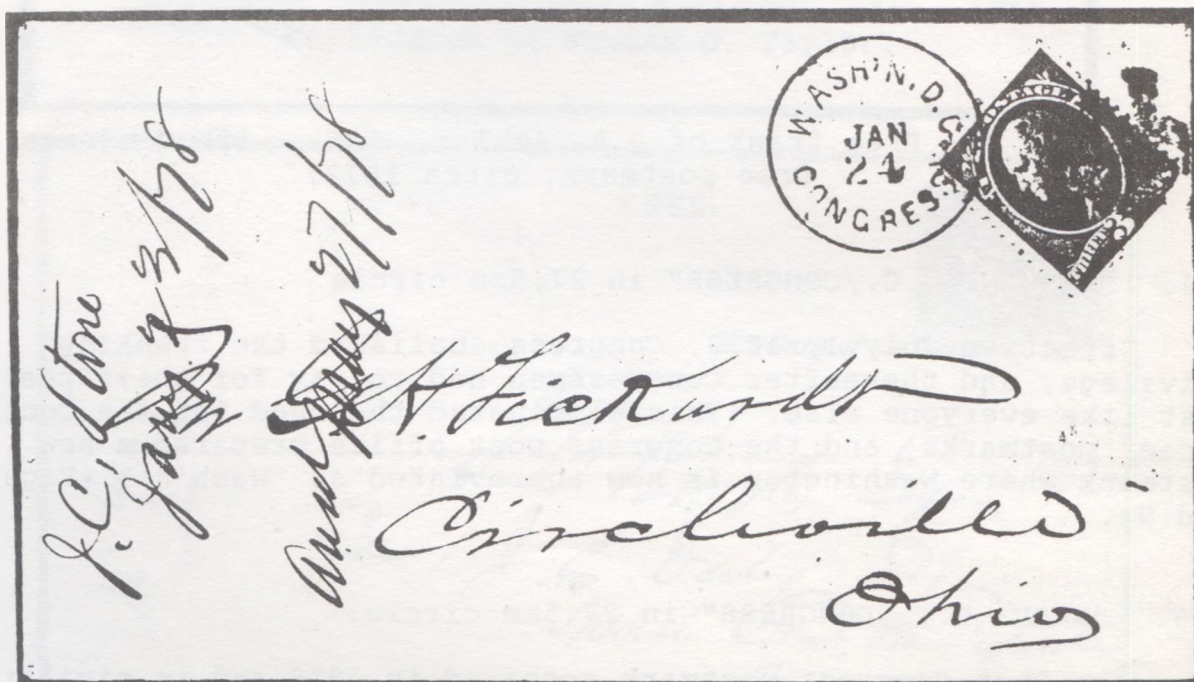


Fig. 9. "Wash'n." Congress postmark Jan. 24, (1878).

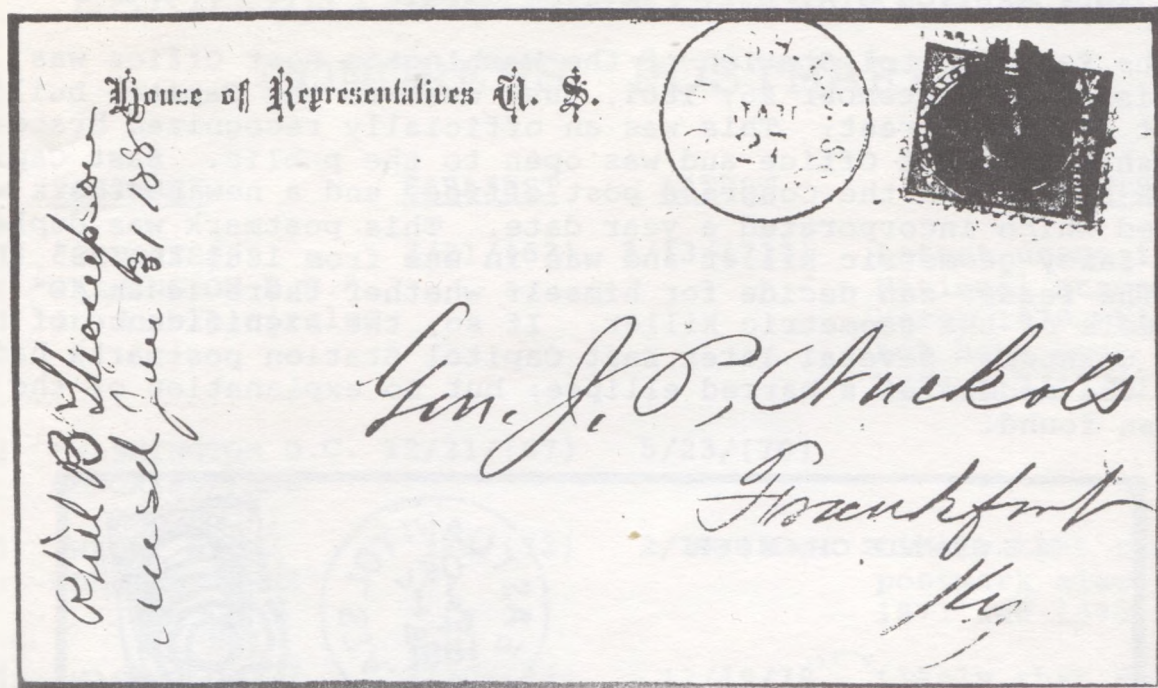


Fig. 10. "Wash." Congress postmark Jan. 27, (1880).

For a time, an interesting killer was used in conjunction with the "Wash." Congress postmark. This killer has a "7" in the middle. (Fig. 10). Tipped sideways and with a little imagination, the "7" is sometimes called the atomizer or Aladdin's lamp. However, it really is a seven, and this raises interesting possibilities. At the time Congress was using a "7" killer, the main Washington Post Office was using killers numbered one through six; and perhaps the Congress post office considered that it had the seventh set of canceling devices.

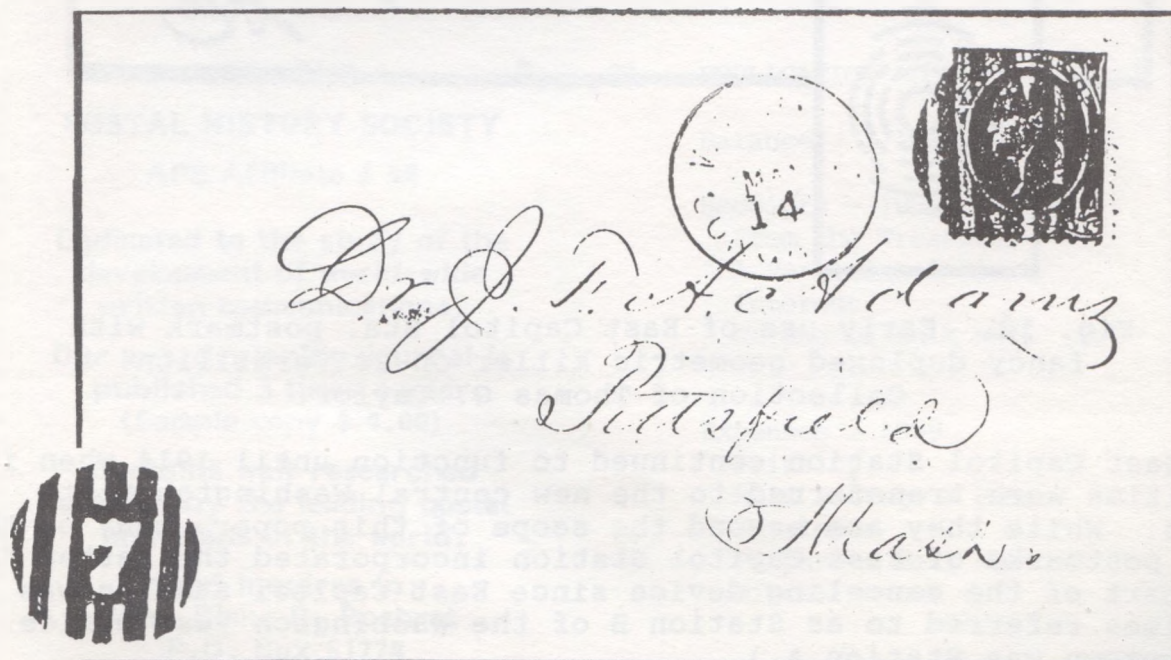


Fig. 11. Congress postmark with "7" killer. Collection of Thomas O. Taylor

## C-6. "EAST CAPITOL STA./D.C." in 29mm Circle

The East Capitol Station of the Washington Post Office was established on September 26, 1881, just east of the Capitol building on East Capitol Street. This was an officially recognized branch of the Washington Post Office and was open to the public. East Capitol Station supplanted the Congress post office, and a new postmark was prepared which incorporated a year date. This postmark was duplexed with a fancy geometric killer and was in use from 1881 to 1885 (Fig. 12). The reader can decide for himself whether there is an "O" in the middle of the geometric killer. If so, the significance of the "O" is unknown. Several later East Capitol Station postmarks had an "O" in the middle of a barred ellipse; but no explanation of the "O" has been found.

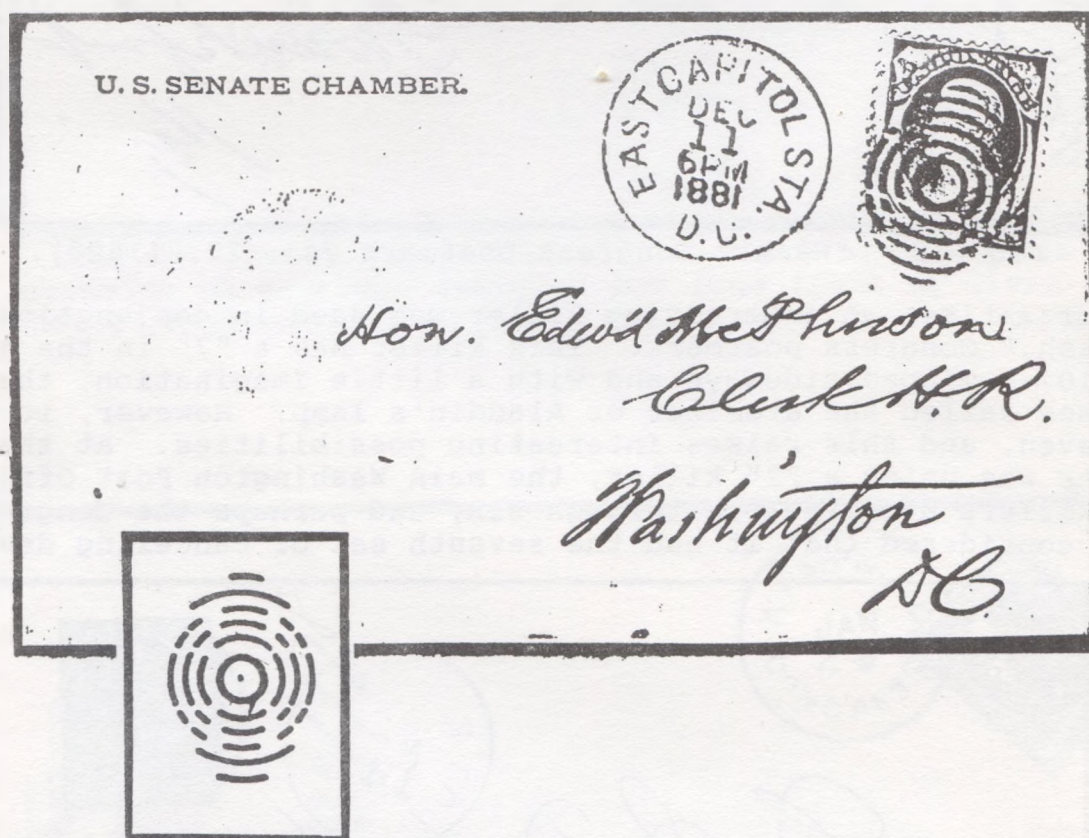


Fig. 12. Early use of East Capitol Sta. postmark with fancy duplexed geometric killer on 2¢ vermilion. Collection of Thomas O. Taylor.

East Capitol Station continued to function until 1914 when its activities were transferred to the new central Washington Post Office. While they are beyond the scope of this paper, many of the later postmarks of East Capitol Station incorporated the letter "B" as a part of the canceling device since East Capitol Station was sometimes referred to as Station B of the Washington Post Office. (Georgetown was Station A.)

# EARLIEST AND LATEST REPORTED CONGRESS POSTMARKS

	<u>POSTMARK</u>	<u>EARLIEST</u>	<u>LATEST</u>	<u>COMMENTS</u>
C-1	"CONGRESS/ WASHINGTON D.C." in double circles	2/21/(62)	2/13/(71?)	Latest usage is on 3¢ National stamp issued March 1870 which could not have been canceled before 2/13/71.
C-2	"WASHINGTON D.C. CONGRESS/FREE"	12/21/(67)	5/23/(70)	
C-3	"WASH. D.C./ CONGRESS FREE"	1/8/(72)	2/15/(72)	Likely that this postmark also used in 1871 and 1873.
C-4	"WASH'N D.C./ CONGRESS"	3/20/(74)	12/18/78	Likely that this post- mark was used after free franks were abol- ished on July 1, 1873.
C-5	"WASH. D.C./ CONGRESS"	2/19/79	1/28/(81)	
C-6	"EAST CAPITOL STA./D.C."	12/11/81	1/13/85	

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Interest	17
Refund of Bulk Mail	93
	3076

### Expenses - 1989

Printing	1297
Bulk Postage & Fees	447
Envelopes	207
Prepare & Mail News	351
Miscellaneous	41
	2343

Balance - 12/31/89 \$797

## TREASURY REPORTS

## GENERAL ACCOUNT

Balance - 1/1/89	\$12,869
Receipts - 1989	
Dues	2,648
Back issue sales	185
Donations	24
Sale of Mailing labels	240
Interest	<u>1,064</u>
	4,161
Expenditures - 1989	
Postage	342
Supplies	37
Book purchase	40
NEWS publication	2,800
Mailing labels	177
Officer's expenses	30
Phone	15
Photo copies	<u>17</u>
	3,458
Balance - 12/31/89	\$13,572

## SALES DEPARTMENT ACCOUNT

Balance - 12/31/88	\$6,297.93
Receipts - 1989	
Sales	4,037.50
Supply sales	26.00
Insurance Fees	275.37
Interest	199.28
Fines	<u>42.50</u>
	4,580.65
Expenses - 1989	
Retirements	4,211.93
Excess Insurance	336.00
Postage	447.50
Supplies	95.00
Bank charges	24.00
Phone calls	31.00
Uninsured losses	72.25
P.O. Box rental	39.00
Photo copies	<u>12.50</u>
	5,269.18
Balance - 12/31/89	\$5,609.40

## NOTES FROM THE SALES DIRECTOR

The sales department continues to be plagued with a few members who do not, for one reason or another, render prompt circuit reports. To allow you 10 days to look the circuit over, I wait 22 days from the date the prior member sent the circuit to you. (7 days parcel post, 10 days to review, 5 days for 1st class circuit report.) If no response has been made by 22 days, a follow-up card is sent the delinquent member, with \$1 per day fine assessed after the 22nd day.

New books from both old and new participants are solicited! Better grade covers - those priced at from \$5 to \$10 and up generally sell on the first circuit out. The most popular items are 3¢ 1861's, both on and off cover. Most of the members on the USCC circuits are advanced, knowledgeable collectors who are not interested in damaged, ratty material. There are several dealers who receive the circuits as well as a number of collectors who are more than willing to spend several hundreds of dollars at a time.

Direct circuits are available upon request, i.e., you pay postage both ways with the special provision made that the circuit can be retained for 2 weeks to inspect, in addition to mailing time. If interested, drop the sales department a card.

Due to the ever increasing cost of postage and insurance, books or envelopes valued at less than \$25 are sincerely discouraged.

Stamps, off cover with unusual or fancy cancels, do quite well if priced within reason in the current market. We could use 50 new books right now to accommodate the demand. Plus an unlimited amount of new better grade cover books, with a maximum limit per book of \$300. May we hear from you?

## MORE ON NEW YORK DOUBLE OVALS

By Roger Curran

In the Fall 1989 NEWS article on New York double oval cancellations, we mentioned one type that contained a "PO" in the center. We also touched briefly on variations of this "PO" cancellation that contained a small "1," "2" or "3" at the bottom. In the July 1968 NEWS, Arthur Bond reported that the "PO" cancellation without a number appears to have been for early use at the main post office and the variations with small numbers for early use on third-class mail, probably at the main post office. He stated that New York began using double ovals "at least as early as 1881." Warren Bower recently advised that the "PO" cancellations--with and without a small number--were used to cancel postage due stamps "from mid-1887 to about 1893 . . . the start depending on when they ran out of NYC pearls per denomination." He also noted that these cancellations were applied in blue ink for the first few months and then in black. By January 1894 and perhaps in December 1893, Mr. Bower reports that the double oval with "UD" in the center replaced the "PO" double oval.



Figure 1.

In Figure 1 are two "CR" (Circular Room) cancellations that illustrate size variations. Mr. Bond stated about the New York double ovals generally: "At different periods they vary considerably in size - from about 28 mm. x 20 mm. to 35 mm. x 25 mm." Hopefully the illustration on the right will also illustrate the cracking of the rubber face that could occur. Incidentally, the "CR" is normally seen on one-cent values but the three cent in Figure 2 recently came to our attention. And Mr. Bower reported a "CR" used to cancel a postage due stamp on a circular cover that was forwarded.



Figure 2.



Figure 3.

We show in Figure 3 a New York double oval with a large "15" in the center. As mentioned in the earlier article, double ovals with a large "1," "2" or "3" are known used on newspaper wrappers. The writer has had in his collection another "15" double oval partially struck on an off-cover stamp with no post office identification showing. It appears to be the same as or very similar to Figure 3.

Reports and comments on New York double oval cancellations will be welcomed.

# UNITED STATES PATENT OFFICE.

EZRA MILLER, OF JANESVILLE, WISCONSIN.

## POST-OFFICE HAMMER-STAMP.

Specification forming part of Letters Patent No. 23,307, dated March 22, 1850.

### *To all whom it may concern:*

Be it known that I, EZRA MILLER, of Janesville, in the county of Rock and State of Wisconsin, have invented a new and useful Post-Office Hammer-Stamp; and I do hereby declare that the following is a full, clear, and exact description of the same, reference being had to the accompanying drawings, forming a part of this specification, in which—

Figure 1 is a side view of my invention. Fig. 2 is a longitudinal vertical section, and Fig. 3 is an inverted view of the marking-face of the stamp.

Similar letters of reference in each of the several figures indicate corresponding parts.

The object of my invention is to provide a "hand-stamp" which performs all the functions of a power-press and will enable the post-office to mark letters, &c., with an impression so deep that the postage-stamp will be placed beyond a second or surreptitious use and the post-office locality clearly and distinctly seen, two objects which it has heretofore been found very difficult to accomplish with stamps which have their handles running at right angles to their marking-faces.

By the use of the hammer-stamp any desired force of blow may be obtained with very little effort on the part of the operators and a most distinct and positive impression made.

The marking can be accomplished with great facility and neatness and without the hands of the operators being blistered, as is the case with ordinary stamps, with which the force is derived by direct concussion of the hand with the handle of the stamp instead of through a lever, which has the joint of the hand for its fulcrum.

The nature of my invention consists in a post-office marking-stamp which has its handle running parallel, or nearly so, with its marking face or faces, as hereinafter specified, whereby a long handle is provided and the stamp can be operated in the same manner as an ordinary hammer, and, if desirable, two marking-faces may be employed, one above and the other below the handle, but both to be used below the handle alternately by inverting the same.

To enable others skilled in the art to make and use my invention, I will proceed to describe its construction and operation.

A is a cross-head secured to a handle B. The upper end of cross-head is provided with a socket C to receive the types D to mark the words "Paid," "Free," &c. The type is secured by the thumb-screw *a* for convenience of changing the type.

E is a screw-tenon at the lower end of the cross-head, to which is secured the marker F, now in use in the Post-Office Department.

G G G are movable types and figures in the center of marker F, for marking dates, &c., as practiced commonly in post-offices. These types and figures are secured to their place in the marker F by the thumb-screw *b*.

In attaching the marking stamp and type to the cross-head the face of the marking stamps and type are at right angles, or nearly so, to the line of the cross-head A and parallel with the handle B, the handle being of sufficient length to enable the operator to give a sufficient blow to make the necessary impression. By the same blow that the printed impression is made the postage-stamp is effectually canceled by the indentation or breaking of the stamp, rendering the surreptitious or second use of the postage-stamp impossible. The printing is very clear and the gumming of the type prevented by the concussion caused by the blow in using the instrument and the ease and rapidity of affixing post-marks greatly augmented.

In practice I may find it advantageous to cast or make the stamp and cross-head in one piece, and in some cases the handle, cross-head, and stamp may be cast together.

To make more evident the utility of my invention, I will state in general the disadvantages of the old stamp and the advantages of my hammer-stamp.

First. The old markers do not stamp or mark with sufficient power.

Second. They do not cancel the postage-stamp. The printer's ink laid on by the old markers is so faintly pressed on the stamp that it can be readily washed off and the stamps used again.

Third. The print is imperfect, because the marker is liable to "fill up" with ink.

Fourth. It blisters the hand of the operator.

Fifth. It daubs the hand with ink.

The advantages of my stamp are—

First. It does its work with great power.

Second. It works much more easily and rapidly.

Third. Perfectly and permanently cancels all the stamps. By the power of the blows given with this handle the marker is driven into the stamp, making a perfect impression of the letters of the marker without as well as with ink.

Fourth. The marking or printing is more beautifully and perfectly done.

Fifth. The marker does not fill up with ink. The concussion keeps it clean.

Sixth. It will not blister the most delicate hand or fatigue the weakest arm,

Seventh. The hands of the operator are not so liable to be daubed with the ink. Consequently the letters and papers are kept clean.

What I claim as my invention, and desire to secure by Letters Patent, is—

A post-office marking-stamp which has its handle running parallel, or nearly so, with its marking face or faces, substantially as and for the purposes set forth.

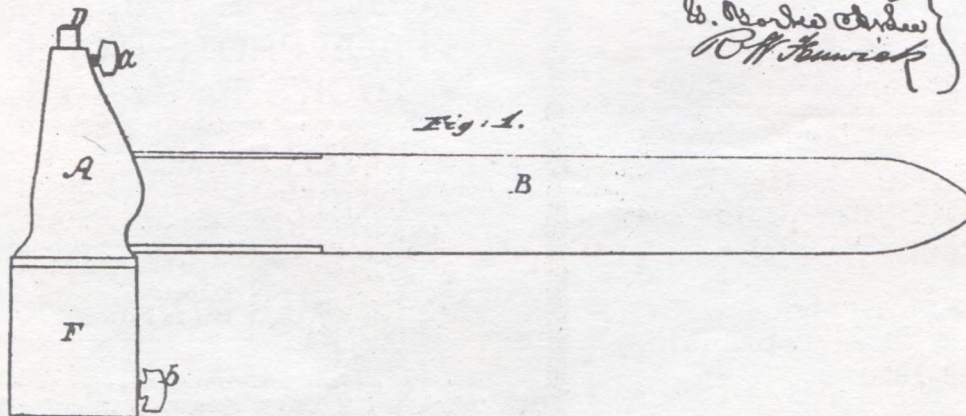
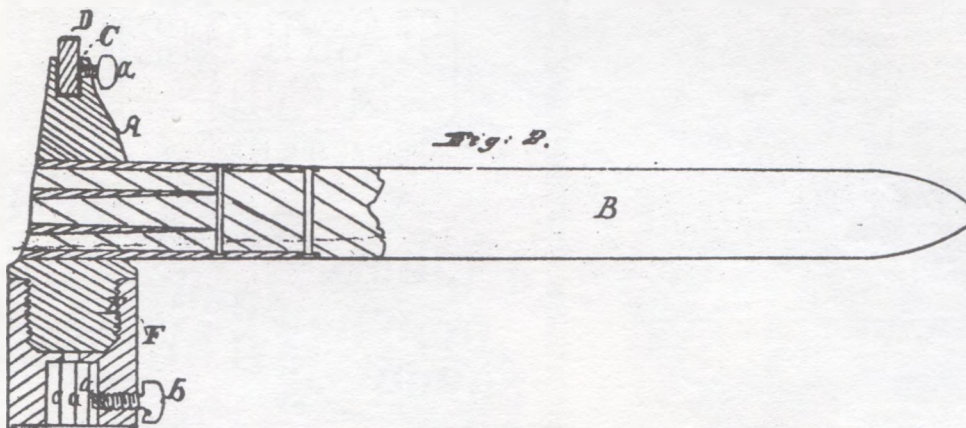
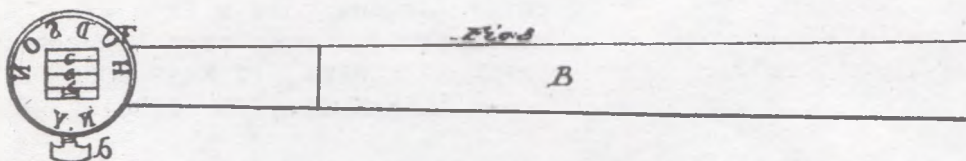
EZRA MILLER.

Witnesses:

G. YORKE ATLEE,  
R. W. FENWICK.

No. 23,307.

Patented Mar 22, 1859.



Witnesses } Inventors  
G. Yorke Atlee } Ezra Miller  
R. W. Fenwick }

## NEW MEMBERS

- 1817 Bernard P. Beston, Esq. PO Box 26, Redcliffe, Queensland 4020 Australia.
- 1818 John Eric Voltin, 13001 Broadmeade, Austin, TX 78729, USPH, Mis-faced/Mis-struck covers, Postally used US stamps on/off cover.
- 1819 A. Donald Amesbury, 4065 Montecito Ave. Tucson, AZ 85711, Fancy cancels off cover.
- 1820 Larry A. Spier, 5046 So. Yank Ct., Morrison, CO 80465, Colorado Terr., Geometric cancels of the 19th century.
- 1821 John E. Peacock, PO Box 1117, Coventry, RI 02816, US, Austria, France.
- 1822 Aaron L. Mitchum, 841 - Two Forty Place, Oklahoma City, OK 73139, Postal history, Postal Stationary, Post cards, US Plate Blocks, World airmail.

## DONATIONS

W. A. Claghorn \$2.00

## RESIGNATIONS

Richard Lancaster

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of 1870-1887
- PLYMOUTH SHOW Robert W. Collins  
Alaska Water Routes and  
Markings to 1921
- MARCH PARTY Thomas O. Taylor  
District of Columbia,  
1788-1830

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Richard A. Russell

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