

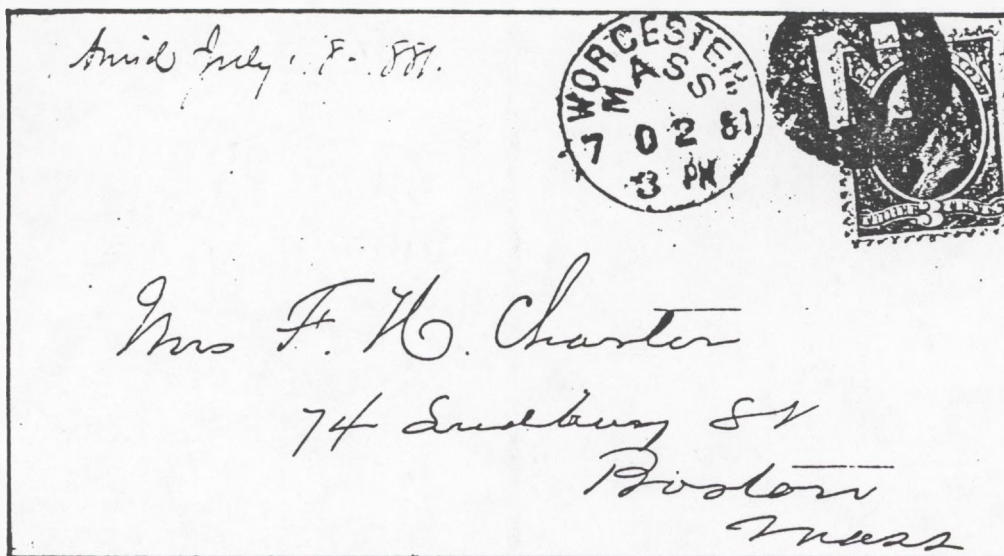


Cancellation Club NEWS

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Table of Contents

From the Editor.....	18
Worcester Wessons by Bob Trachimowicz.....	19
Stamp Nicknames by Herman Herst, Jr.....	25
A Spectacular Fancy Cancel by Gene Schrier.....	26
Cancel Jottings by Geoffrey Remond.....	27
1845 Rate Change.....	30
Norton Patent #37,175 of December 1862.....	31



Worcester Wessons --- See page 19.

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FROM THE EDITOR

The article updating the study of Worcester, Massachusetts Wesson's by Bob Trachimowicz was originally published in the January 1992 issue of the Massachusetts Spy. I know the readers thank Bob for sharing this knowledge and I hope you will respond to his request for assistance.

Geoffrey Remond departs some valuable advice when considering the earliest or latest usage of a cancellation. His wisdom should be heeded when making such a purchase.

In the next issue of the NEWS, I plan an extensive article on the Virginia Central Railroad.

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WORCESTER WESSONS

by Bob Trachimowicz

In his recent update of Ted Bozarth's Wesson Time-On-Bottom survey, the late Russ Hanmer gave special consideration to the Wessons used in Worcester, Massachusetts. This article will present some updated information and independent research concerning the use of Wessons in Worcester.

Several Wesson devices used in Worcester display characteristics unique to that city. The Type 1A postmark dial, Figure 1, which had provisions for four date slugs, and the Type 1B dial, Figure 2, which had provisions for three date slugs, were used only in Worcester. Both Type 1 dials contain the city name **WORCESTER** in an arc at the top of the dial and the state abbreviation **MASS** in a concentric arc just below the city name. Both have the same provision for mounting two time slugs. Type 1 dials are normally found with hand-carved killers, denoted as Type X.

Hanmer reported that the Earliest Known Use (EKU) for a Wesson marking was a Type 1A dial dated July 6, 1881 used in Worcester, Massachusetts. The date in the dial of Figure 1 is July 2, 1881 or four days earlier than previously known. Figure 3 shows the reverse of the cover with this new EKU.

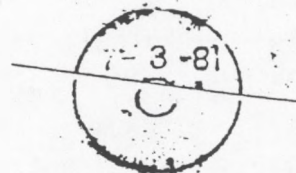


Figure 3.

It bears a Boston receiving backstamp identified as No. 2304 by Blake and Davis. It is dated July 3, 1881. Collectors of Wessons should make note of this new EKU.

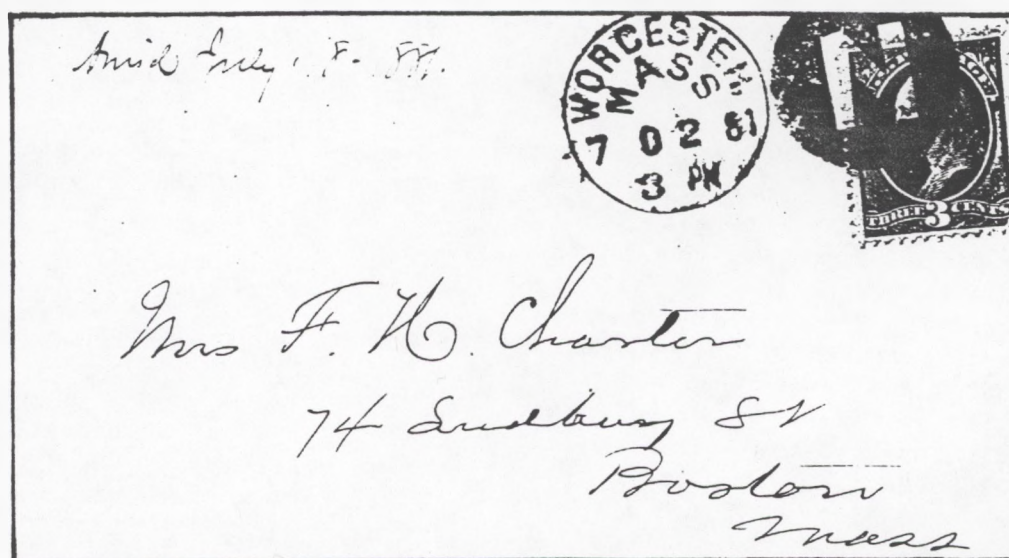


Figure 1. Worcester July 2, 1881 -- Earliest Known Wesson Cancel.

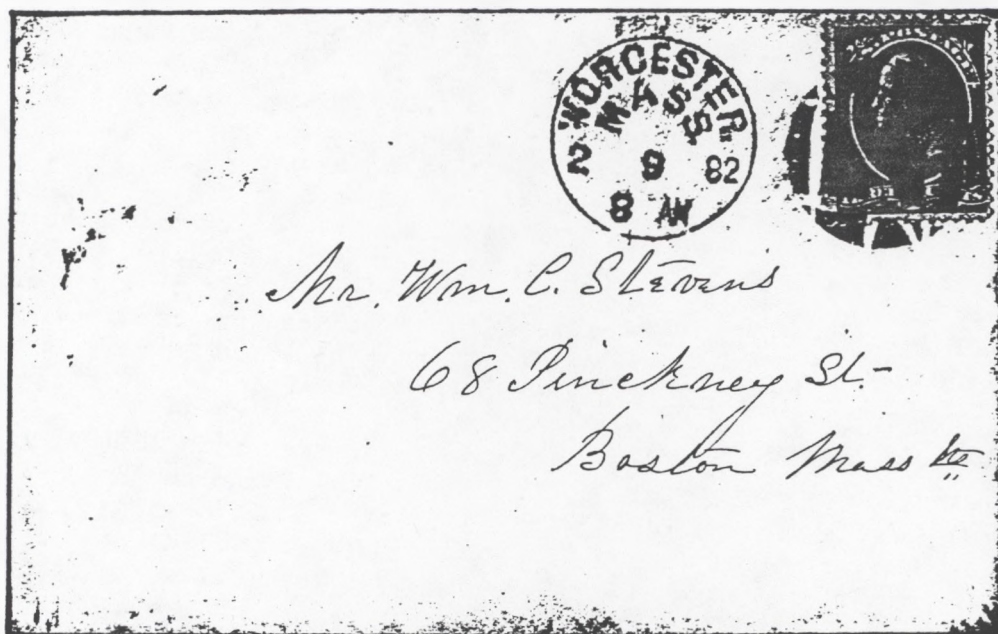


Figure 2. Wesson Type 1B Dial on Worcester February 9, 1882 Cover.

Also unique to Worcester are the Wessons designated as Worcester Types 5 and 6. These devices, which were used as backstamps, have a Worcester Type 2 postmark dial mated, respectively, with either a **RECEIVED** or **TRANSIT** straight line service marking mounted in the killer position. In the Type 2 dial, **WORCESTER** remains in an arc at the top of the dial, but **MASS** now appears in a straight line below the city name. The date and the time positions each have holes for three slugs. The Type 2 postmark dial was used initially with standard elliptical killers and then later with the service markings.

Hanmer reported that the **RECEIVED** straight line service marking was used with at least two different Type 2 postmark dials but, made no distinctions. I will designate the two reported varieties as Dial 2-T and Dial 2-B. The difference in the dials is established by projecting the left vertical leg of the **M** in **MASS** upward until it intersects the letters of the arched **WORCESTER**. Figure 4 shows Dial 2-T. The extension of the **M** hits the tail of the **R** in **WORCESTER**. Figure 5 shows Dial 2-B. In this case the projection hits the bar of the **R**, thus

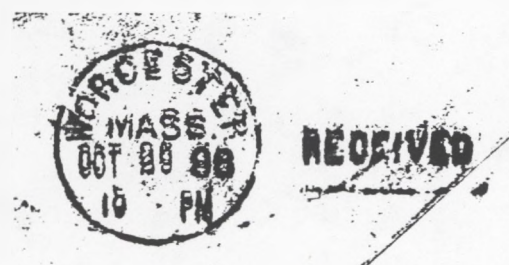


Figure 4. Dial 2-T

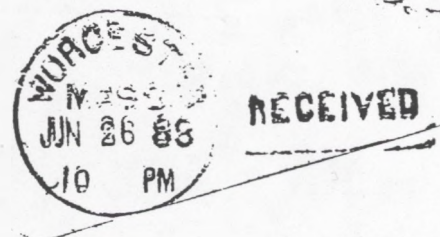


Figure 5. Dial 2-B

establishing the second variety of the Type 2 dial.

One has to ask though, why should the two varieties of the Type 2 dials be limited to use with the **RECEIVED** service marking? This marking is demonstrably scarce and it seems highly unlikely that Postmaster Pickett or

Estabrook would have expended the funds for two devices with such limited backstamp applications. What is more probable is that at least two varieties of the Type 2 devices were procured by the Worcester post office, perhaps at different times, for use with the three standard elliptical cancels. The devices were manufactured with slight differences, as noted above. All of the Type 2 devices were capable of accepting any of the elliptical obliterators. The elliptical cancels were first used in Worcester in 1883. The **RECEIVED** and **TRANSIT** service markings did not see use in Worcester until 1887. When these service markings were procured, I submit that they were designed to mount on any of the

existing Type 2 devices. A look at Wesson's patent drawings confirms that this is possible. Figure 6 is a simplified sketch of the handstamp in Wesson's Patent 286,884. The dial represents a Type 2 device. The horizontal rod could accept a number of different obliterators, including a straight line service marking, **MISSENT**, which is depicted on the patent drawing has yet to be reported. More than likely this service marking was never manufactured.

It is plausible then that both known Type 2 devices could appear with any of the three elliptical killers or the two straight line service markings. The following illustrations represent

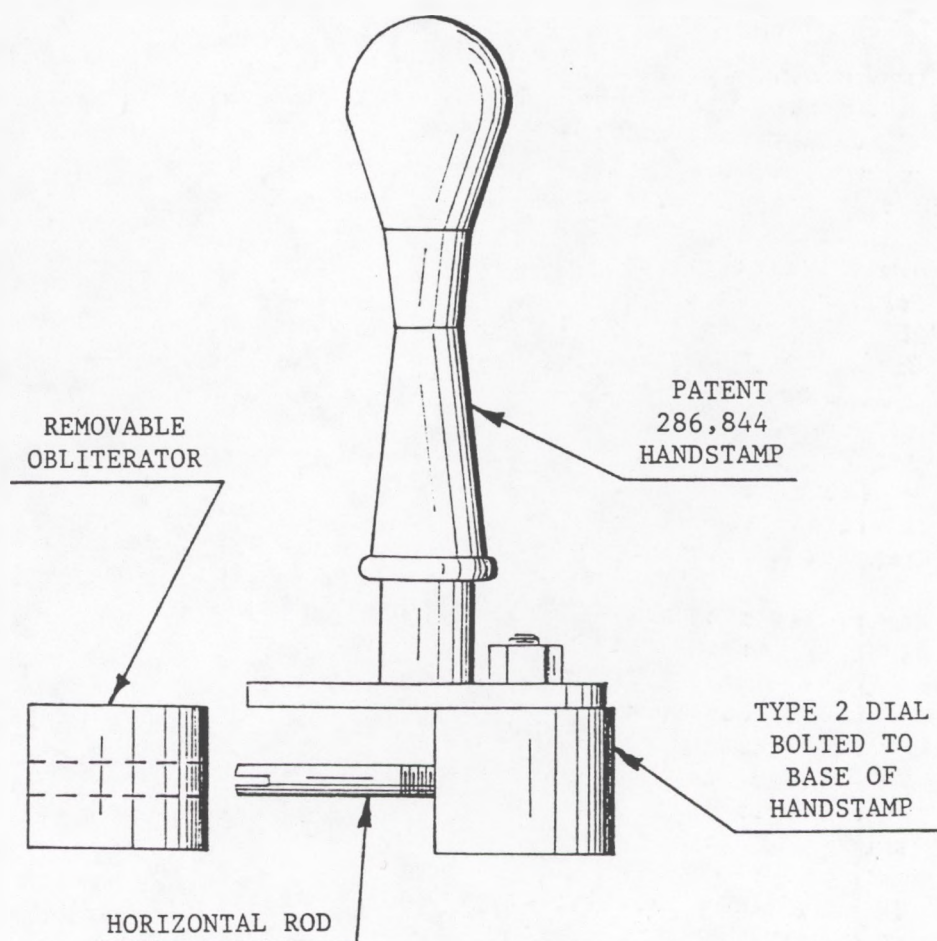


Figure 6. Simplified Sketch of Wesson's Patent #286,884 Drawing.

other pairings found by the writer. Figures 7 and 8 show both Type 2 dials used with the **TRANSIT** straight line service marking. The **C** elliptical

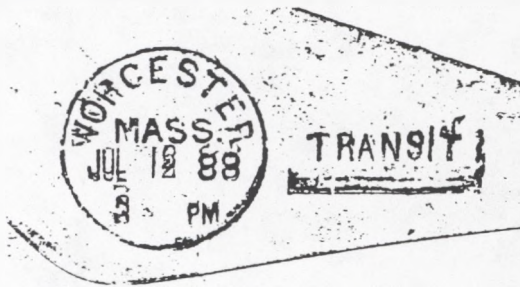


Figure 7.

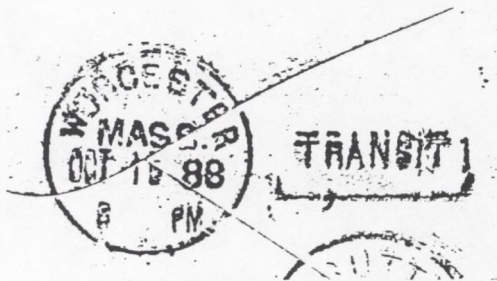


Figure 8.

killers are shown in figures 9 and 10. The **D** elliptical killer has been found with only a Type 2-T dial and is shown in Figure 11. The **W** elliptical killers with both Type 2 dials are shown in

Figures 12 and 13. Examples of the **D** elliptical killer with a Type 2-B dial have yet to be reported.

I would like to establish a chronology of the earliest and latest uses of the two possible varieties of each of the three elliptical killers and two service markings used in Worcester. Readers are requested to check their collections and report killer style, dial type and date to the writer for compilation. Clean copies of the markings are also welcome.

An article planned for the future will discuss the Worcester positive **N** over **S** Shaking Hand Type X killer used with a Wesson 1A dial. Any readers who have examples of this most interesting cancel combination and/or data about its history are also requested to contact the writer at the address below. Also, clean copies of this marking are needed. Happy hunting!

Please contact the writer at:

Bob Trachimowicz
35 My Way
Uxbridge, MA 01569.

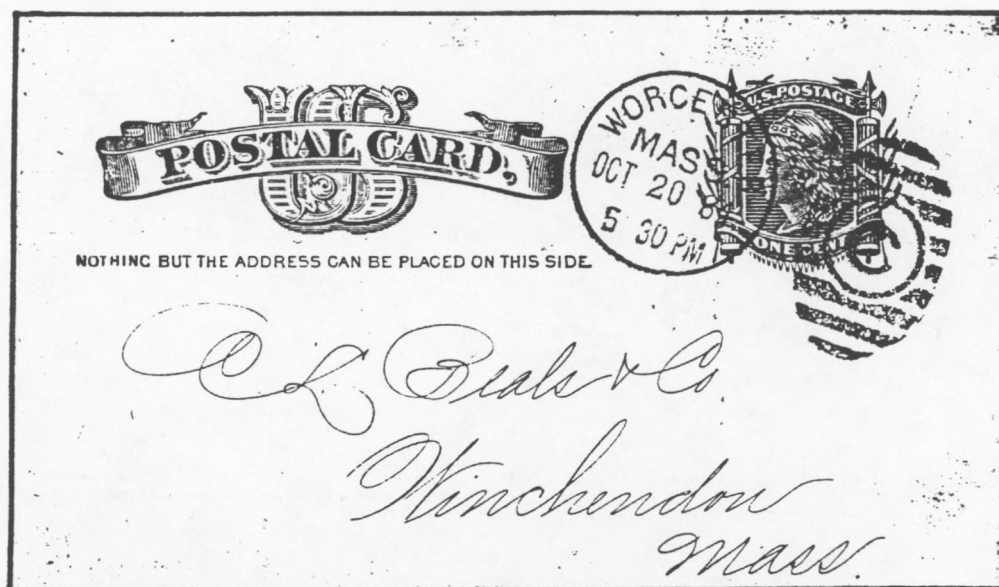


Figure 9. October 20, 1884 with C Elliptical Killer.

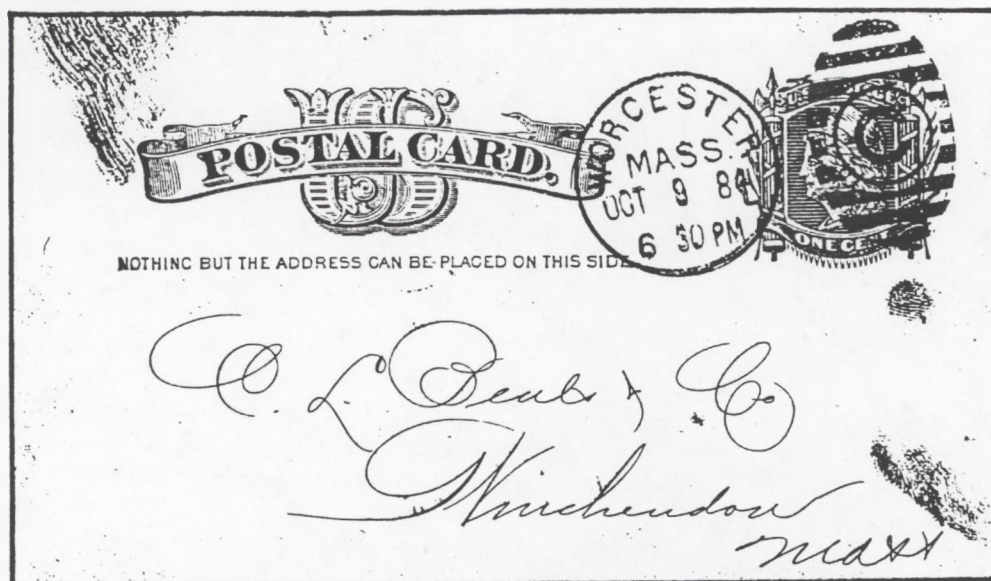


Figure 10. October 9, 1884 with C Elliptical Killer.

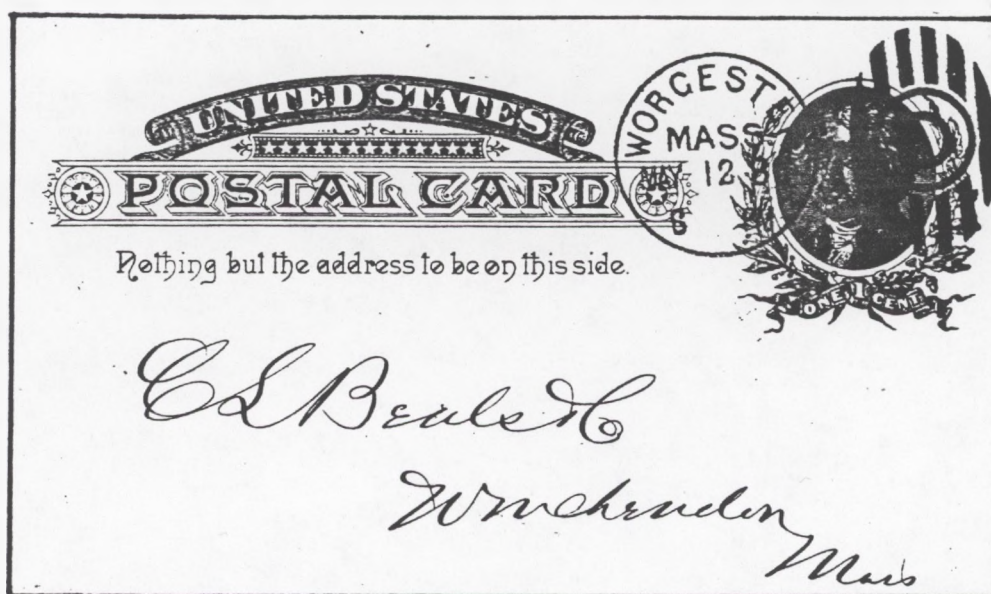


Figure 11. May 12, 1886 with D Elliptical Killer.

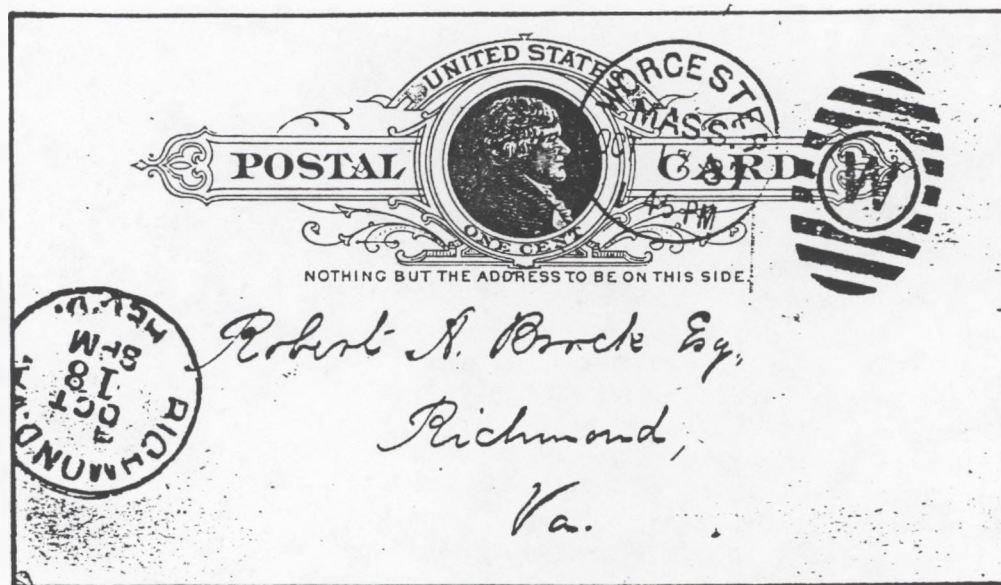


Figure 12. October 17, 1887 with W Elliptical Killer.

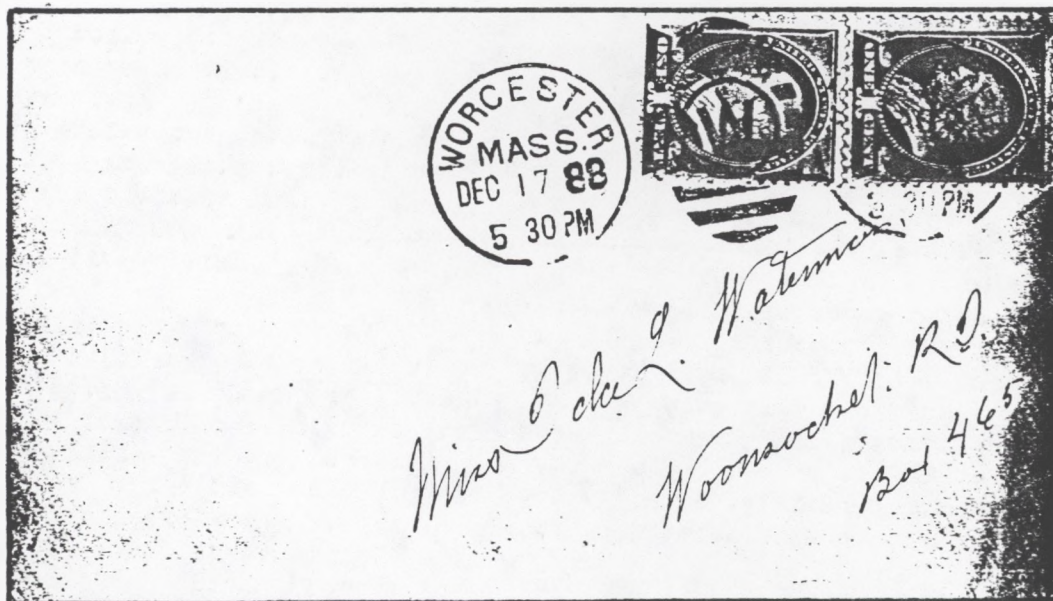


Figure 13. December 17, 1888 with W Elliptical Killer.

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- Hanmer, Russell F., "Walter D. Wesson's Time on Bottom Duplex Hand Cancelers," La Posta Monograph Series, Volume 5, Lake Oswego, Oregon, 1990.
- Blake, Maurice C. & Davis, Wilbur W., Boston Postmarks to 1890, Quarterman, Publications, Inc., Lawrence, Massachusetts, 1974 reprint of the 1949 edition.

STAMP NICKNAMES

by Herman Herst, Jr.

Philatelists have known for a long time that certain stamps answer to pet names.

Most of us know that a Black Jack is a black stamp showing Andrew Jackson, and that a Merry Widow is a special delivery stamp, showing Mercury's helmet, that was issued in the year that the Merry Widow hat, named from the operetta, was the rage. Such terms as Penny Black, Basel Dove, Beaver, Forty-seven, Chainbreakers, Palm Trees, Bull's Eyes and Map Airs are but a few of the descriptive terms, the meaning of which would baffle an outsider, but are perfectly intelligible to a knowledgeable philatelist.

Some times, even the postmarks have nicknames. Most collectors know what a straight line is, but how many know what a dumb cancel is? If you said it was one that didn't say anything you would be correct. As early as the Civil War, the Confederates used dumb cancels on mail from some military camps so as not to divulge the whereabouts of the letter's writer. As recently as World War II, dumb cancels were used for the same purpose. Our present day cancels, showing only the first three numbers of the zip code are not quite dumb cancels, but if the trend continues, we will soon be there.

Specialists in the nineteenth century British markings have a Scottish postmark called the Madeleine Smith. Such an odd name for a cancel must have a story behind it and it does.

In 1857, Madeleine Smith was having an affair with a gentleman friend who one day had the misfortune to turn up poisoned. Madeleine was the

ideal suspect and, looked at from the vantage point of a century's passing, there is little doubt but that she was guilty. The most damning evidence against her was a certain letter she was alleged to have written the victim.

Her skillful lawyer discovered that the postmark on the letter was not used by the Scottish Post Office at the time the letter was alleged to have been written. This important discovery saved her from the gallows and she was found, not innocent, but not guilty either. (This is an odd facet of Scottish law and we believe it still obtains today.)

There is no doubt that Pierre Emile L'Angelier died of arsenic poisoning. There is even no doubt that Madeleine made several visits to a chemist to accumulate sufficient arsenic for a fatal dose; it was bought openly at that time and the chemist so testified. But the verdict was "not proven" and Madeleine was set free.

Years later, a competent philatelist examined the cover to which Madeleine owed her freedom. The date on it was not clear, as had been testified at the trial, but a postal employee had given his opinion as to the date. Years later though, a competent philatelist studied the marking and gave a rather different opinion. Had philately been as developed in 1857 as it now is, Madeleine might have swung her feet from the gallows instead of snickering (as she probably did) as how she had outwitted a Scottish court.

Madeleine Smith was, of course, Britain's Lizzie Borden. However, if there were any philatelic associations to Lizzy's act in Massachusetts, almost

a hundred years ago, we do not know of them. But we are old enough to remember the doggerel by which Lizzy Borden's act will always be remembered:

"Lizzy Borden got the axe
And gave her mother forty whacks

When she saw what she had done,
She gave her father forty-one."

And if we recall correctly, Lizzy's encounter with the law after that gruesome deed ended as happily as did Madeleine's.

A SPECTACULAR FANCY CANCEL

by Gene Schrier



Fig. 1



Fig. 2

Figure 1 illustrates a fancy cancel which brought a Eureka! to the lips of a cancel enthusiast when he liberated it from another dealer and brought it to my table at a recent Midwestern show. Our interpretation from, left to right, is that the markings depicted are a whale, a telescope, a harpoon, and an octopus or jellyfish. It is an unprecedented cancel, the likes of which the two of us had never seen in person or in any of the standard reference books.

On looking through a group of covers, I discovered figure 2 from Santa Barbara, California. While much more crude, this cancel appears to be an attempt at a large fish, a mast and a hull. Could it be that the more polished figure 1 is a refinement of the maker's craft from Santa Barbara? Comments are invited and indeed, if there fare any unreported items such as these or similar to these in anybody's collection, I would like to have enlarged photocopies. Photocopies of new fancy cancels depicting any subject would also be welcome.

CANCEL JOTTINGS

by Geoffrey Remond

I'd like to illustrate two unexciting items for purposes of technical discussion only. There isn't much technical discussion in the philatelic media these days, it's a sad circumstance. Collectors seem to be expected to assimilate this sort of information from thin air apparently and to develop collecting techniques on their own.

The dealer slides two covers across the table to you. It is pointed out that they are from a correspondence to an individual and that the combination shown in figure 1 proves that St. John's, Michigan had no machine canceller on August 28, 1911 and that the Saint John's Doremus machine cancel must be an earliest known usage (EKU) right after the machine was installed sometime in the 13 days between the two cancels. The dealer claims you would have an important piece of Michigan postal history if you owned the pair and asks a premium price for the dynamic duo.

Do you buy and pay the premium? Do you accept the arguments of the dealer? Does the pair prove what he claims them to prove?

I believe you are confronting the old apples and oranges syndrome. Here's the problem...every post office in the United States, which has been operating since before the 1870's, had all hand cancels and only hand cancels in the early days. As machines were first distributed and each office received its first machine canceller, hand cancels were replaced.

However, the catch is that all such offices kept hand cancellers as well, of course, even to this day.

They are used on counter traffic, late postings near closing time, bulky envelopes not to be risked in the machinery, and many other "quickie" type occasions where the machine doesn't have enough mail matter to set up for a run.

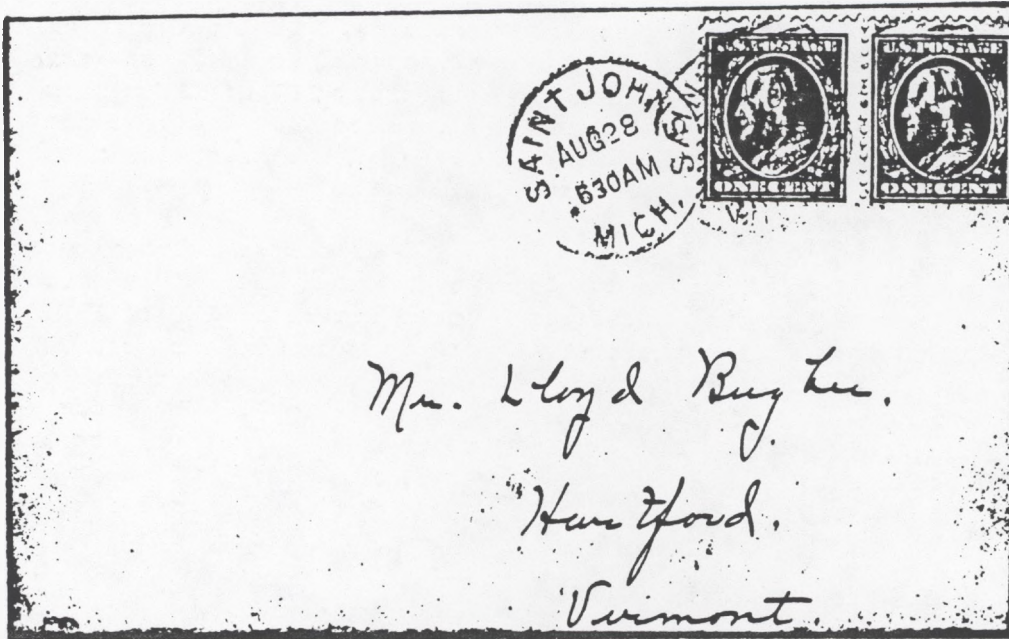
Thus, you the collector know nothing about the Doremus machine cancel until have a well supported catalog with tens of thousands of reports of Doremus cancels, complete with earliest and latest know usages to check the dealer's claims to your own satisfaction.

The Doremus machine may very well have been installed as early as 1909, but on August 28, 1911 the Saint John's postal clerk elected to hand cancel the particular cover for his or her own unknown reasons. The collector is not safe in paying premium prices for hand cancel/machine cancel (apples and oranges) combinations.

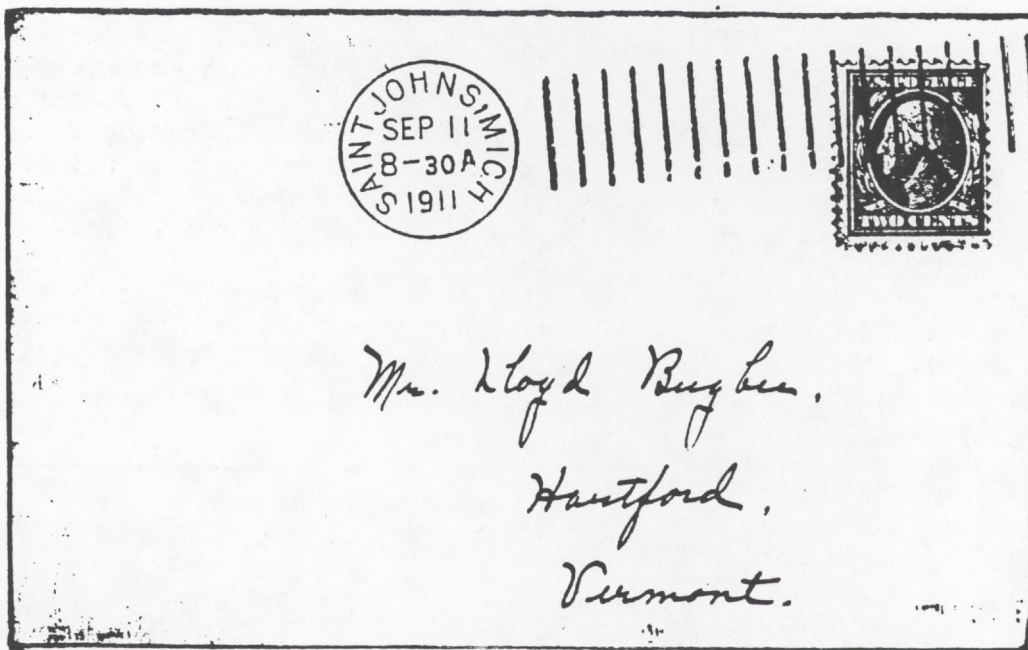
To my way of thinking, if you know a particular town to be small enough that you can surmise a single machine in operation, then I think the following two cancel comparisons are more valid, but still risky.

1) Where the pair of same time frame covers to be both cancelled with duplex handstamps, with the second cancel being noticeably different from the first, then there is a fair, but uncertain chance you have bracketed a handstamp change over the period encompassed by the two items. You are comparing hand cancels and hand cancels (apples and apples).

2) Where the pair of covers to show say a Time-Cummins machine cancel



Handstamp cancel of Saint Johns, Michigan dated August 28, 1911.



Doremus machine cancel for Saint Johns, Michigan dated September 11, 1911.

Figure 1.

first, followed by the Doremus on September 11th, then I would say there was a fair, but uncertain chance the pair of covers had bracketed the actual replacement day of the Time-Cummins machine by the Doremus machine. Here, you have compared oranges and oranges, (machines and machines).

The reason I label prospects 1) and 2) above as "fair, but uncertain chances" is, of course, the possibilities that any small to medium office had two machines, a workhorse and a back-up. The workhorse is frequently seen by collectors, the back-up handles peak loads and breakages of the workhorse.

In the same manner, some offices kept the old hand cancellers, but didn't use them unless they had to improvise. Thus the hand cancel and hand cancel combos are "fair chance, but uncertain" as well.

Nevertheless, if a dealer presented you with a pair of Saint John's machine cancels two days apart and two different machines and made his claims and demanded a premium, I'd pay it. The reason is that in the worst scenario is that you have a bogus combo giving a false scenario. Even then, however, you by definition have a restart on one of the two machines or a complete set of the office's available hardware in action (small and medium sized offices only, of course, ...not Boston, New York, Philadelphia, Chicago, etc.). Neither the restart combo nor the complete set of existing hardware justifies the premium price perhaps, but as a collector you are playing the odds very well. If you made 10 such purchases from various towns and cities across the nation, I would think more than half would be "hits" on the last day/first day combination.

The premium on such adjacent day combos ought to be large, compared to cover combos that leave many days in

between containing unknown cancellation activity. Then the premium ought to be minor to my way of thinking. Your temporary EKU of LKU may soon have to play second fiddle to a find by another collector further within the bracket of dates.

Of course, common sense tells you that only one of a wide bracket of dates can be an EKU or LKU (if the days are back to back, of course, then both are winners, except for problems discussed above). The odds are that neither of your items are a valid first or last usage if a week or more of elapsed time occurred from the first to the last. Your chances improve the more the bracket is tightened down and narrowed until you get back to back days, when you get certainty of EKU/LKU except as outlined in the exceptions above.

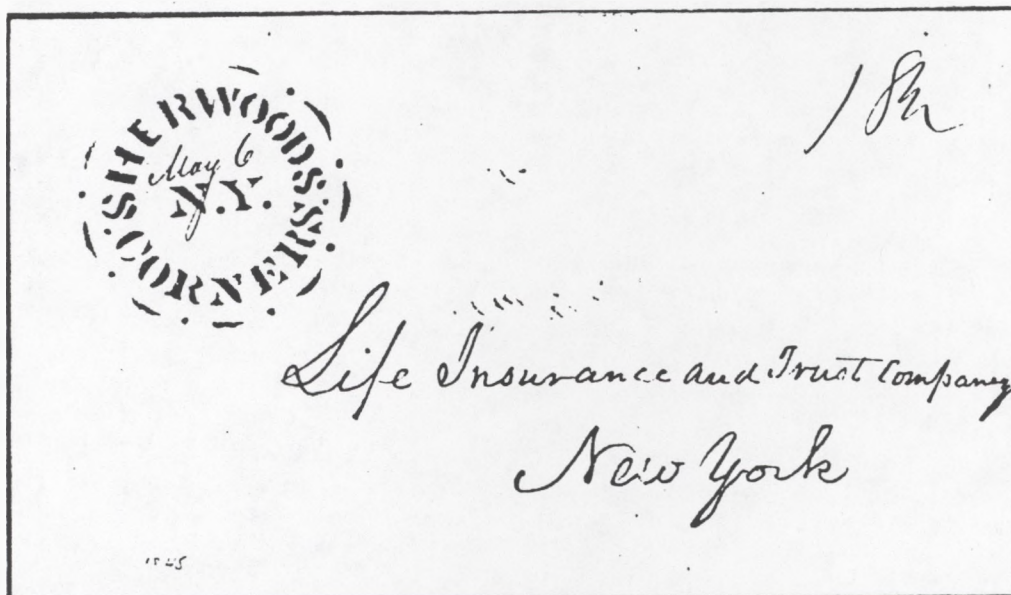
What, finally, is the big deal about an EKU/LKU combination? Firstly, there is bragging rights of a deserved sort. Secondly, you the collector define a moment in postal history without ever having had to be there 50, 75, or 100 years ago. You know from the signals that someone wheeled a new machine into the office and wheeled out the old, thus beginning a new era of cancels at that particular office. Somehow it seems that ought to be important to a collector.

(Ed. note: Langford in his work on the Doremus cancels records the usage of this Saint John's Doremus as from 1908 to 1912.)

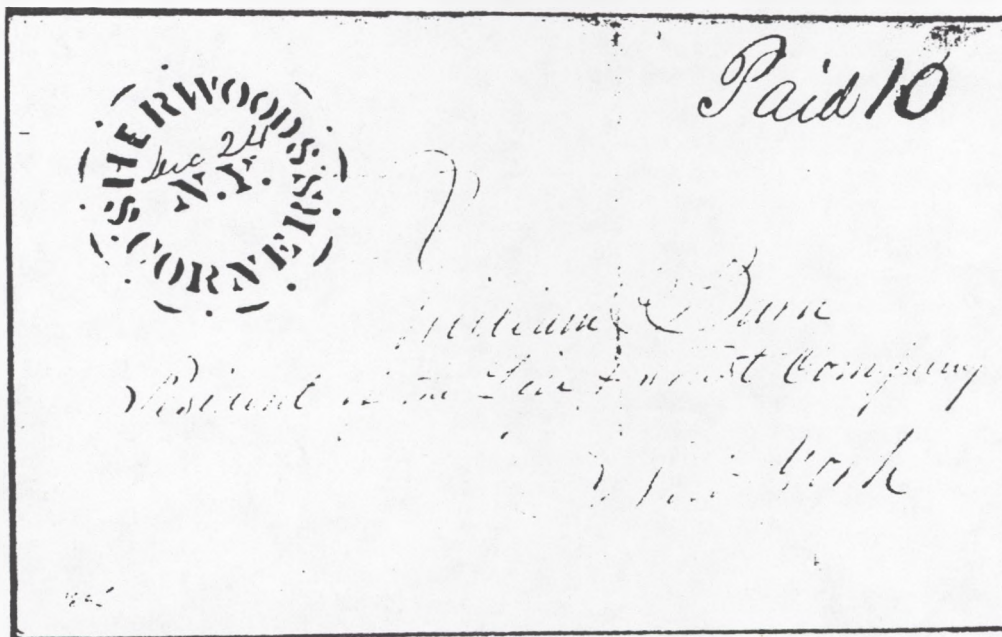


1845 RATE CHANGE

The two covers illustrated below exemplify the 1845 rate change on letters from Sherwood Corners to New York City. The May 6th cover shows the 18 3/4 cent rate for distances between 150 and 400 miles. This rate existed from 1825 to 1845. The December 24th cover depicts the 10 cent rate enacted July 1, 1845 for distances over 300 miles. Sherwood Corners was actually about 320 miles from New York City.



The May 6, 1845 18 3/4 cent rate cover to New York City.



The December 24, 1845 10 cent rate cover to the same location.

UNITED STATES PATENT OFFICE.

MARCUS P. NORTON, OF TROY, NEW YORK.

POSTMARK AND CANCELING STAMP.

Specification forming part of Letters Patent No. 37,175, dated December 16, 1862.

To all whom it may concern:

Be it known that I, MARCUS P. NORTON, of the city of Troy, county of Rensselaer, and State of New York, have invented a new and Improved Postmarking and Canceling Stamp; and I do hereby declare the following to be a full and exact description of the construction and operation thereof, reference being hereby had to the accompanying drawings, and to the letters of reference marked thereon, which make a part of this specification.

Like letters represent and refer to like or corresponding parts.

Figure 1 is a side elevation of the stamp and letter-frank canceling device. Fig. 2 is a vertical section lengthwise through the center of the various parts of the postmarking and canceling stamp. Fig. 3 is a face view showing the postmarking-stamp ready for use, and the construction of the canceling stamp or device, more fully described hereinafter.

The nature of my improvements consists in so constructing canceling-stamps that the same shall cut the postage-stamp or any stamp similar thereto without injury to the contents of the envelope or packet inclosed therein, and at the same time cause a heavy circular mark upon the inside and one upon the outside of that part of the stamp or letter-frank canceled by the cutting device, so that said postage stamp or letter-frank shall readily show cancellation in ink, and when removed from the letter or packet on which the same may have been canceled it shall be reduced to parts or pieces, whereby a second use of the said stamp or frank is thus prevented, although it may have been previously cleaned by a chemical or other process.

It also consists in the employment and combination of a canceling-stamp with a cutting and inking device thereon, with a postmarking or rating stamp, so that the canceling of the letter-frank and the postmarking on the envelope or packet shall be effectually done by the means fully described hereinafter.

To enable others skilled in the art to which my invention relates to make and use the same, I will here proceed to describe the construction and operation thereof, which is as follows, to wit:

I construct the postmarking-stamp D of steel or any material which will answer the purpose. G is the mortise or opening to re-

ceive the type for the month, the day of the month, and the year, around which is the name of the place where used. E is a screw for the purpose of holding the type in the said opening G. This stamp is secured and firmly fastened to the block or cross piece B, Figs. 1, 2, and 3, by means of the screw K, which is held in its place by means of the small screw a, Figs. 1 and 2, which is placed near one side of the said screw K, so as to prevent the same from becoming loose by reason of turning backward.

I construct the canceling-stamp of steel, of any size required in diameter and in length, to correspond to and with the postmarking or rating stamp D. On the face of this canceling stamp I construct circular knives or cutters *i i i*, Figs. 2 and 3, which project somewhat below the face of the marking or rating stamp D, Fig. 2, so as to give a somewhat harder impression and in advance of that given by the said stamp D, whereby the postage-stamp or frank upon which the same is used is cut through, and at the same time make the broad dark lines *o o* on the inside, and the broad dark circular lines *e e* on the outside thereof, and which said circular lines are seen at Fig. 3. That part of this canceling stamp which makes the said circular lines *o* and *e*, Figs. 2 and 3, is made somewhat below the surface or the immediate edge of the said knives or cutters *i*, and serves as guides to prevent the said knives or cutters from cutting through the postage-stamp or frank and the envelope containing the same, whereby injury to the letter or contents within the envelope or packet is prevented, and at the same time makes the aforesaid heavy or dark lines *o* and *e*, Fig. 3, so as to show cancellation more readily.

b b, Fig. 3, are grooves or channels cut across the face of the said canceling-stamp C, so as to leave a corresponding part of the letter stamp or frank in condition without being cut or inked. The said knives or cutters may be made on a straight line across the face of the canceling-stamp C, instead of a circular form, in which event heavy guards or guides will be constructed upon each side thereof, so as to prevent the said knives or cutters from cutting too deep, and thereby injure the letter or contents thereof inclosed within the envelope containing the postage stamp, while at

the same time a heavy line or mark in ink may be given upon the said postage-stamp, thereby showing the cancellation readily. Any number required of the said knives or cutters may be used for cutting the said postage-stamp. The canceling-stamp C may be of any size or diameter desired. The guards thereon to prevent the said knives or cutters from cutting too much and from injuring any letter or any contents therein may be of any form or shape deemed best, so long as the object and result desired by this canceling-stamp are attained. The inner guard or guides may be omitted, if desirable so to do, and the entire face or lower surface of the said canceling stamp may be bevel, instead of convex or oval, which will in no wise change the character of the invention or device—to wit, the knives or cutters and a guard or guards, in combination with each other, for the purposes aforesaid.

The cross-piece B is made of iron or steel, and in width the same as the diameter of the said rating and canceling stamp, and of any thickness required. The said canceling-stamp C is securely fastened to the said cross-piece B, and at any desired distance from the said rating-stamp D, as seen at Figs. 1, 2, and 3, and in the same manner as that of the said stamp D.

H is a screw bolt or stem, the lower end of which is screwed into the center of the said cross piece B. The handle A is then screwed upon the said bolt or stem H, and firmly upon the said cross-piece B, thereby making a strong and reliable joining of the handle to the whole stamp.

This stamp, thus constructed or combined, is designed to cancel permanently and suc-

cessfully postage-stamps on letters or packets in post-offices without injury to the letter or contents thereof, and thereby prevent the possibility of a second or re use of such postage-stamp. It may also be used by banks for the purpose of canceling revenue-stamps upon checks, notes, &c., and it may be used for canceling stamps of any kind, whether postage, revenue or otherwise. It saves great amount of labor in the making up of mails at any post-office, and is a cheap and durable postmarking or rating and canceling stamp.

Having thus described my invention and improvements in postmarking and canceling stamps, what I claim therein, and desire to secure by Letters Patent of the United States, is—

1. The canceling device C, having on the face or lower surface thereof knives or cutters, and a guard or guards, in combination with each other, by means of which the postage-stamp is canceled by the said cutters, and at the same time prevent any injury to the letter or any contents therein from the said knives or cutters by means of the said guard or guards, substantially as herein described and set forth.

2. The combination of the canceling-stamp C and the postmarking or rating stamp D with the cross-piece B, substantially as and for the purposes herein described and set forth.

In testimony whereof I have, on this 7th day of October, 1862, hereunto set my hand.

MARCUS P. NORTON.

Witnesses:

FRANKLIN SCOTT,
JNO. H. MCCHESEY.

Fig. 1.

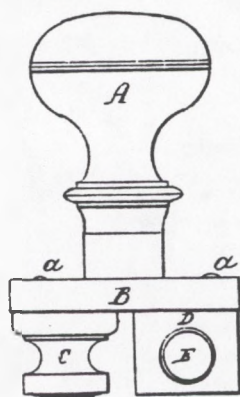


Fig. 2.

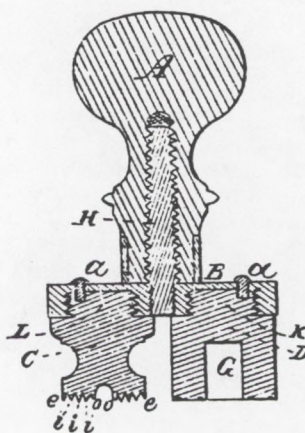


Fig. 3.



Witnesses,

Franklin Scott
Jno H. Chesney

Inventor,

Marcus P. Norton
Fry N.Y.