



Cancellation Club **NEWS**

Vol. 23, No. 2, Whole No. 217, Fall 1995

NEW YORK CITY CANCELLATIONS ON CIRCULARS AND PRINTED MATTER 1870-1878

Part IV: Some Elusive NYFM Cancellations, Are They NYCM?

by

John A. Valenti

My personal introduction to the topic of cancellations on NYCM came through my interest in and study of NYFM cancellations. Indeed, as I have shown in previous installments of this series of articles, several long recognized NYFM cancellations were principally used on domestic NYCM. Covers bearing these cancellations to foreign destinations are quite elusive. This factor has caused me to speculate that other scarce NYFM cancellations might fall into the NYCM category, but have not yet been recognized as such because of the absence of confirming covers.

One such NYFM cancellation that I believe falls into this category is shown in Tracing 1(a). This is Van Vlissingen and Waud (VW) type W3 and Weiss type GE-C6. This cancellation has always struck me as stylistically out of place among NYFM cancellations. Compared to the traditional geometrics, its lines appear too thick and it has curves, not angles. This cancellation is quite scarce. No cover bearing a W3 cancellation appears in the VW book. Furthermore, Bill Weiss wrote of the one GE-C6 cover pictured in his NYFM book "that the very poor strike certainly leaves much room for doubt."¹ Bill confirmed his doubts in a recent APS journal article² in which he writes about a cover bearing an apparent example of the GE-C6 cancellation.



Tracing 1(a)



Tracing 1(b)

The cancellation on this cover does indeed possess many characteristics of the GE-C6. However, I do not agree with Bill's identification of this cancellation. Instead, I believe the cancellation to be a worn and over-inked strike of the cancellation in Tracing 1(b), VW type A27 and Weiss type ST-4P2, the "compass rose." Dates in the Weiss cover census for ST-4P2 run from 9/18/74 to 5/20/75.³ According to the Weiss article, the subject cover is dated March 27, 1875, a date late in this reported period of use. My own examinations of worn off-cover strikes of this cancellation have frequently revealed evidence of the narrow space between the two outer circles becoming solid, lines widening and interior angles becoming less sharp. A close examination of the cover pictured in the article reveals evidence of a gap between the star and the inner circle, particularly at the upper right of the strike. Moreover, the circles in the outer ring appear to be squared off, as are the eight interior segments of ST-4P2.⁴ Finally, every identifiable off-cover strike of GE-C6 which I have seen has been on a 1 cent Banknote stamp.

(Continued on p. 24)

SECRETARY'S LETTER

As we reach the end of 1995, the Club has received an early Christmas present. Roger Curran who recently reached the blissful state of vocational retirement has agreed to return to his previous post as Editor of the News. This issue is the first under his stewardship and you can already see his hand in the layout as well as in the articles and book review. We can help Roger by submitting articles and letters to him.

We are all grateful to Harlan Stone for so capably editing three issues of the News over the last two years.

Others changes are in the works. Several committee assignments will be filled and we hope to go back to a four times a year schedule of publication for the News. If we can find someone to handle a Club mail auction, we might find that to be a suitable replacement for the Sales Circuit. We must be mindful of the limited ability of the Club to reimburse members if there are losses in this kind of activity.

Finally, there is the matter of dues. They are payable for 1996 at the rate of \$8 for domestic members and \$15 for overseas and Canada members. Checks should be made out to:

U.S. Cancellation Club, c/o Gene Schrier - Secretary
P.O. Box 815, Upper Montclair, NJ 07043

Also, if you find a red star on you mailing label, it is to remind you that you have not paid your 1995 dues.

Sincerely,

Gene Schrier
Secretary

Dear Reader,

Greetings once again as editor of the News! I now have more time available and am eager to work with you on our mutual interest - cancellations on U.S. stamps. And what a wonderful field this represents with so much yet to be learned and documented. It is a study of American inventiveness, of the personalities of postmasters and their associates, of technological change, of success and failure and it constitutes, of course, of an important aspect of the overall postal history of the Nation.

A quarterly schedule is being resumed for the News. If you have information on any pertinent subject that might be of interest to the readership, even if very brief, please submit it. If you have a question, please ask it. If you have a favorite cancellation - on or off-cover, please share it. In short, communication is the key to our collective undertaking and I sincerely urge you to come forward with your findings and interests. Remember, the News is your newsletter.

Roger Curran

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WASHINGTON COLORS

by
Roger D. Curran

A noteworthy practice of the Washington, D.C. post office during the 1878 to 1880 period was the use of purple, initially, and then blue postmarking and canceling ink. Black ink was, of course, normally used by post offices and had been required by postal regulations. I have wondered about this apparent anomaly but an article by Arthur Bond makes one think of a linkage between the use of these colored inks and the introduction of rubber handstamps.

In Baker's The Postal History of Indiana,¹ an article by Bond, describing the development of postal markings generally in this country, discussed the introduction of rubber handstamps and stated: "Very few postal markings from rubber stamps are found before 1877, but in that year a great many made their appearance..." He quoted the following "Notice to Postmasters" appearing in the April and July 1878 issues of the U.S. Postal Guide:

"Rubber canceling stamps having been recently introduced into many of the post offices and the ink provided for these stamps being of such composition and quality that the cancellation marks are easily removed, the attention of postmasters is directed to the following extract from Sec. 404 (page 223) of the Postal Laws & Regulations:

"The cancellation must be effected by the use of Black Printing Ink wherever that material can be obtained; and where it cannot, the operations should be performed by making several heavy crosses or parallel lines upon each stamp with a pen dipped in good black writing ink.

Hereafter these requirements respecting the kind and quality of ink used for the purpose of cancellation must be strictly complied with. The Section is so far modified that colors other than black may be used, but the quality thereof must not be inferior to that mentioned in the Regulations."

The problem, according to Bond, was that black printer's ink could not be used satisfactorily with rubber handstamps and he stated that the POD was "experimenting with rubber stamps in several designs through 1878-9 at the Washington, D.C. and Northampton, Mass. post offices." Bond noted that satisfactory black ink was formulated in 1883.

In 1878, the Washington post office introduced purple postmarking and canceling ink. Two CDS designs have been noted employing the purple ink, each duplexed to a circular cross-roads killer. They are illustrated as Figures 1 and 2. Specialists record Type I examples from January through September 1878, and Type II from September through November 1878.



Figure 1



Figure 2

I believe it is reasonable to surmise that these markings were produced by rubber handstamps. For openers, why otherwise would a colored ink, in violation of postal guidelines, be used? It would seem that black provided the best contrast with the various postage stamp colors. Also, it was presumably less susceptible to quality control variations -- what would have been more standardized than black printer's ink? Particularly in the case of the Type I design, the lines of the letters and numbers show, in the aggregate, substantial variations in shape and thickness that are, in my estimation, characteristic of rubber handstamps creating what I would call a "modern" look. This is less true of the Type II design insofar as the month, day and time slugs are concerned but the "WASHINGTON/D.C." is similar to Type I.

In late 1878, a blue-black ink was introduced and has been noted used with at least five killer designs. (Perhaps this ink was formulated to come as close as possible to black and still retain the property needed to make it usable with rubber handstamps.) A cross-roads killer with a Type II CDS has been noted as early as December 5, 1878. Figure 3 examples have been reported in May 1879.² Figure 4 examples have been reported in the May through August 1879 period.³ Figure 5 examples have been noted in the August 1879 through June 1880 period.⁴

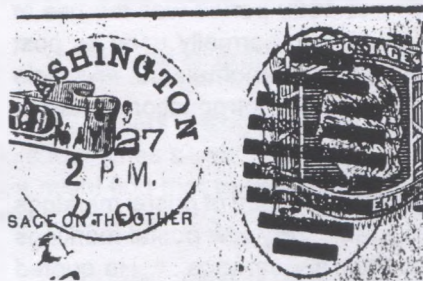


Figure 3

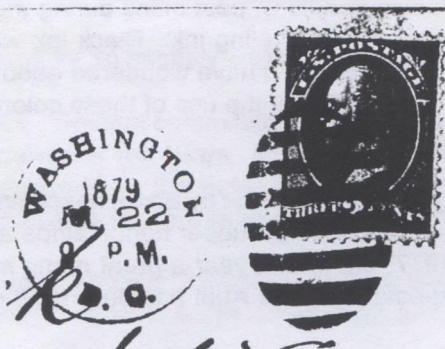


Figure 4

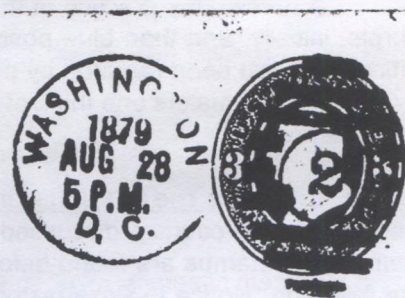


Figure 5

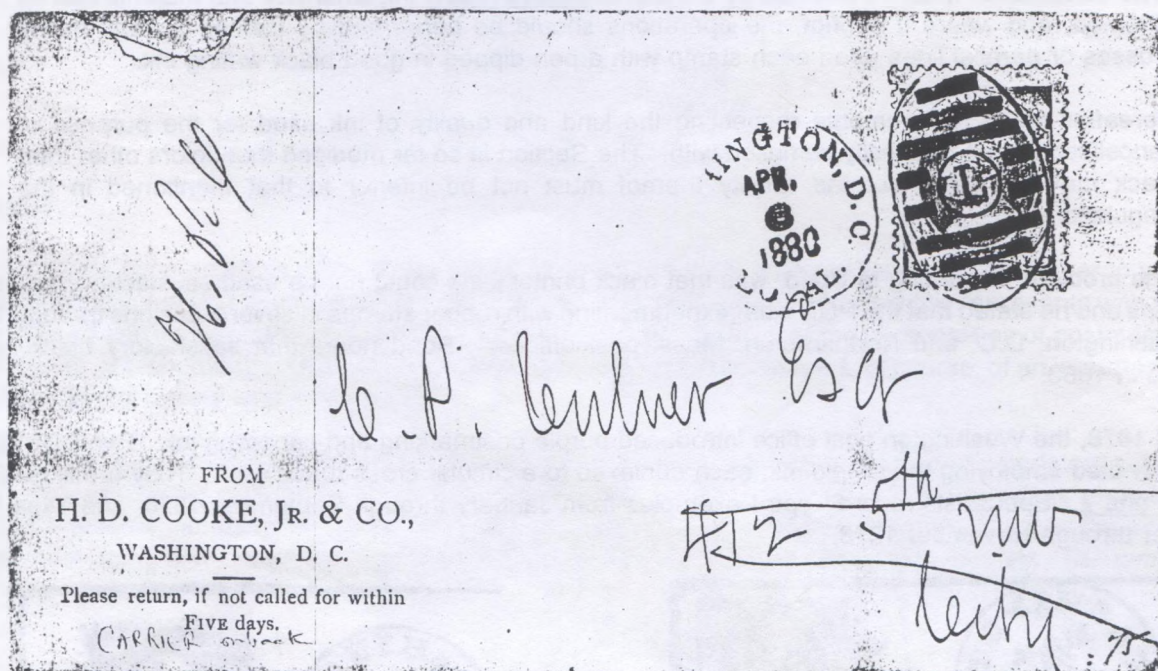


Figure 6

(This ellipse also exists with a "1" in the center.) Figure 6 examples have been noted in blue in March and April 1880. I assume these all involved rubber handstamps for the reasons stated above for Figures 1 and 2.

Apparently the Washington post office gave up on rubber handstamps in early 1880, at least as the principal postmarker and canceler, because the blue-black markings gave way to black markings produced by metal handstamps that duplexed (see Figure 7) a CDS to a killer consisting of concentric circles with a number ("1" to "6") in the center. I am confident these were metal handstamps because the letters and numbers in the CDS are much like those of earlier years and the CDS and killers taken together are similar in appearance to the duplexed CDS and ellipse/concentric circles combinations of the time that are widely accepted as having been produced by metal handstamps. The study of a number of the purple and blue-black markings may well suggest why the handstamps that produced them were discontinued. Possibly ink smearing and/or uneven impressions were factors.

It has been brought to my attention that the 1878 cross-roads killer shifts from time to time; that is, the

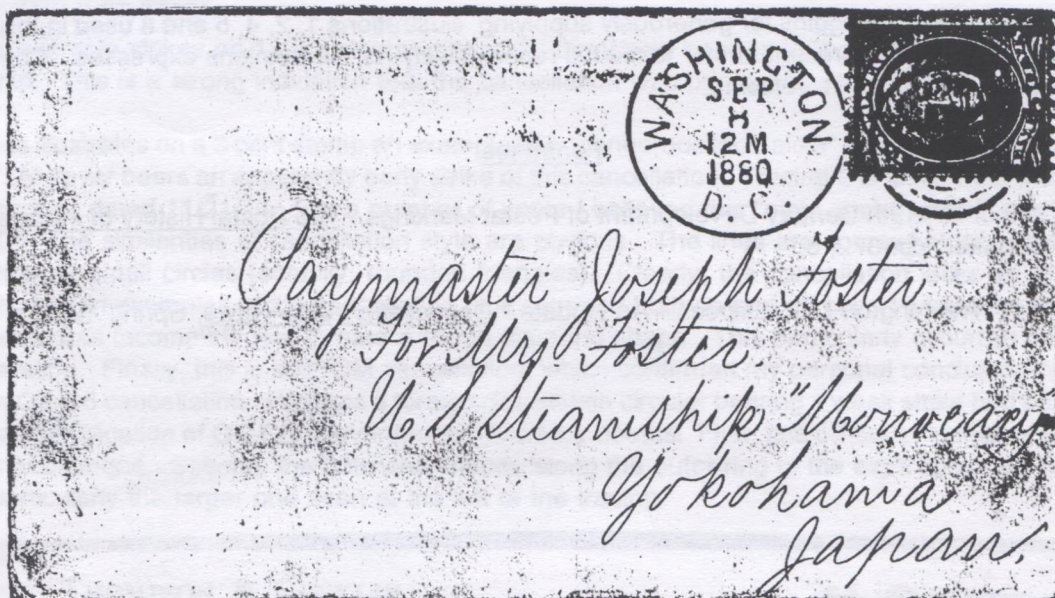


Figure 7

orientation of the negative cross-lines to the CDS does vary. Thus these markings could not have been applied by one-piece rubber handstamps. Unless the rubber killer was somehow plugged into the handle containing the CDS, the fact of the shifting orientation raises a doubt about the rubber handstamp theory for 1878. Of course, rubber CDS stamps did provide for inserting day and month slugs which I assume were also rubber.

Perhaps at some point postal historians will be able to confirm conclusively the above explanation for the purple and blue-black inks but how does one square with postal regulations the very unusual use of red CDS and killer inks by the Washington post office on local mail (which created some lovely covers) during the 1873-1875 period? A possible explanation is that the Washington Post Office was used as a site for testing some new approach regarding canceling ink and thus excepted from the general regulation for a test period. Also, limiting the use of red inks to local mail would mean that little of it would come to the notice of other postmasters thereby minimizing confusion as to what was, in practice, permitted. This is, of course, all speculation.

On a separate matter and given Bond's reference to early Northampton, Mass. rubber handstamps, we illustrate as Figure 8 such a cover with postmarking and canceling ink in what Mr. Rollin Huggins describes as "...a lovely red approaching cerise in shade."

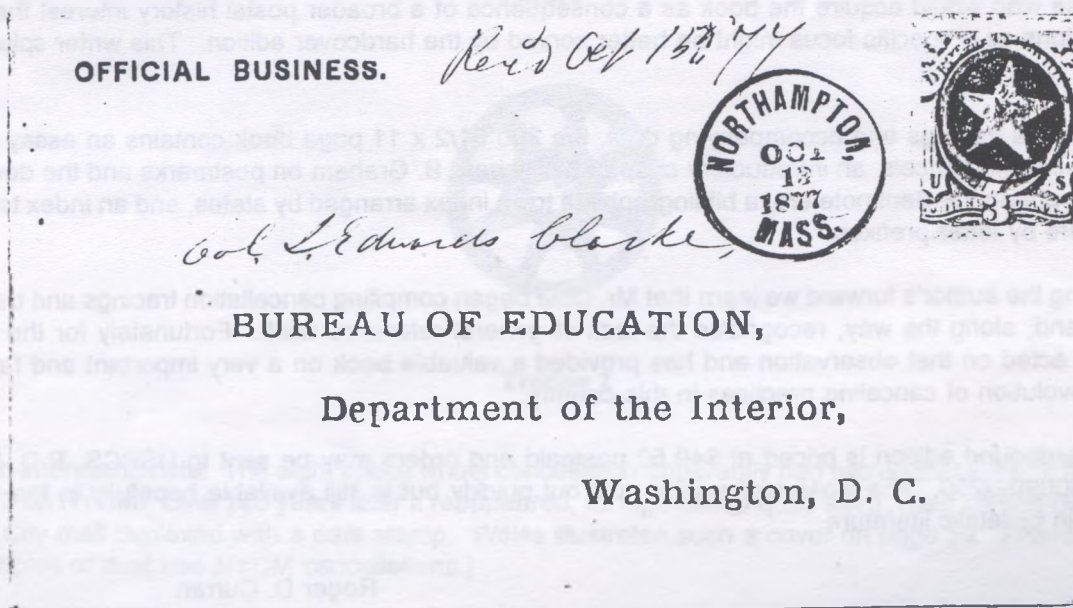


Figure 8

I would like to thank Huggins for generously supplying illustrations 1, 2, 4, 5 and 8 used in this article and Tuck Taylor for 3 and 7. The present author takes full responsibility for the opinions expressed. Comments and additional reports would be most welcome.

Footnotes

1. Bond, Arthur H. "19th Century Development of Postal Markings," The Postal History of Indiana, Vol. 1, by J. David Baker, pp. 372, 6
2. Cole, Jim, "Washington D.C. Ellipses - An Update," Cancellation Club News, Spring 1989, p. 105.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.

NEW BOOK ON CANCELLATIONS

A welcome addition to the philatelic literature concerning obliterations found on U.S. stamps is James M. Cole's Cancellations and Killers of the Banknote Era, 1870-1894 published by the U.S. Philatelic Classics Society (USPCS). The intent of the book, as stated in the introductory pages, is to present a representative sample of the various types of cancellations used during the period and thereby address the need for a general reference on the subject. Mr. Cole has met this objective.

The book is formatted in a manner similar to that in United States Cancellations, 1845-1869 by Skinner and Eno. More than 5,000 individual tracings of Banknote era cancels are pictured along with town of origin, where known, an identification of ink color if other than black, and a value rating indicator which takes into consideration scarcity and demand. About 150 covers are also illustrated. Tracings are organized into four broad groups with a number of subgroupings and each cancellation is given a Cole "catalog number." This provides a convenient and relatively simple system for researching particular items and, if the reader so chooses, for organizing his or her own examples and cancellation data.

Published in both hardbound and loose-leaf editions. I strongly recommend that cancellation students consider the loose-leaf edition, which has been drilled for a 3-ring binder, because additional data can so easily be added to an established scheme. Providing this option represented a very wise decision, in my opinion, by the USPCS. Those who would acquire the book as a consequence of a broader postal history interest that doesn't have cancellations as a specific focus might be better served by the hardcover edition. This writer splurged and ordered both!

Beyond the tracings and accompanying data, the 360 8 1/2 x 11 page book contains an essay by Clyde Jennings on collecting cancels, an introductory chapter by Richard B. Graham on postmarks and the devices that produced them during the Banknote era, a bibliography, a town index arranged by states, and an index to the Cole catalog numbers by letter prefixes.

Reading the author's forward we learn that Mr. Cole began compiling cancellation tracings and data for his personal use and, along the way, recognized the lack of general reference work. Fortunately for the philatelic community he acted on that observation and has provided a valuable book on a very important and fascinating period in the evolution of canceling practices in this country.

The hardbound edition is priced at \$49.50 postpaid and orders may be sent to USPCS, P.O. Box 250, Wheeling, IL 60090-0250. The loose-leaf edition sold out quickly but is still available hopefully in the stocks of some dealers in philatelic literature.

Roger D. Curran

(Continued from front page)

Notably, two example strikes on 1 cent stamps appear in the Weiss book (p. 57) along with a blurred strike on a 15 cent stamp. This is a strong indication that the cancellation was principally used on domestic circular mail.

Weiss illustrates on a 3 cent stamp an example of a "dangerous look-alike" to the GE-C6 cancellation. The Figure 1 NYCM cover bears an apparently early strike of this cancellation. Tracing 2 is taken from this cover, which contains a circular dated 11/21/73. For a number of years I believed this "eight spoke wheel" cancellation to be NYFM GE-C6. The similarities of cancellation style are obvious. The lines are somewhat thick, and there is an outer ring of eight small circles (actually, rounded triangles). Clearly, the cancellation lacks an inner diamond. However, I had seen examples of the cancellation (it is common both on and off cover) where the inner portion of the cancellation was incomplete and formed a rough diamond shape. This particularly occurred on weak strikes of the cancellation. Finally, this is a NYCM cancellation, which confirmed my personal conclusion concerning the nature of the GE-C6 cancellation. Perhaps a foreign destination circular bearing a weak strike had been the source of the original identification of GE-C6. Nevertheless, I had my doubts. First, fine off-cover strikes of GE-C6 display a distinct inner diamond. Second, the hollowed shapes along the outer ring of the eight spoke wheel are just too triangular, particularly the larger one seen at the left of the tracing.

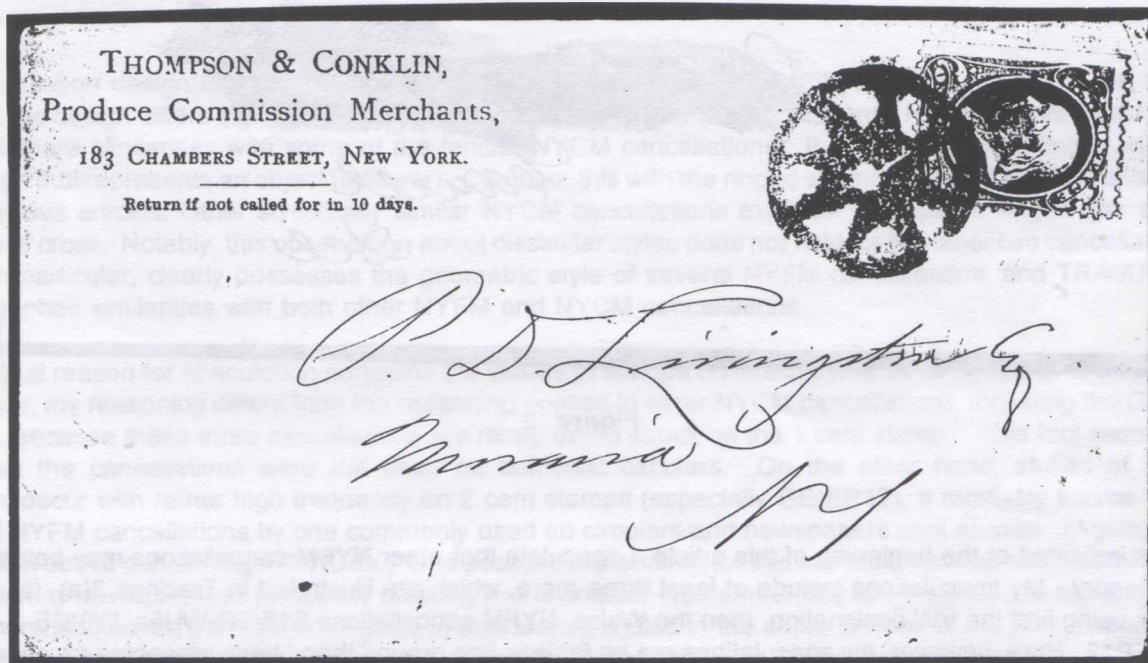


Figure 1



Tracing 2

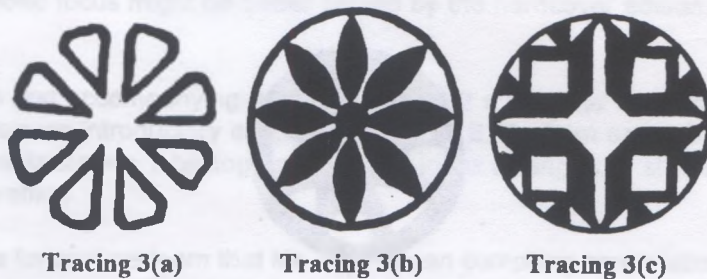
[An interesting note. The eight spoke wheel cancellation apparently had two distinct lives. It first appeared in late 1873 on NYCM. Over two years later it reappeared, its impression quite worn, used on first class domestic New York City mail duplexed with a date stamp. Weiss illustrates such a cover on page 59. I have detected no other examples of dual use NYCM cancellations.]

Finally, the mystery was solved for me with the discovery of the Figure 2 cover. This ugly cover, which I had previously passed over in a dealer's stock because I did not look closely enough, bears a readily identifiable strike on domestic NYCM of the GE-C6 cancellation. My suspicion that GE-C6 is a NYCM cancellation had been confirmed. Now, if someone can only locate the cover that confirms the use of GE-C6 to a foreign destination! Unfortunately, the date this cancellation was used remains unknown, since the cover has neither contents nor docketing.



Figure 2

As indicated at the beginning of this article, I speculate that other NYFM cancellations may belong in the NYCM category. My speculations include at least three more, which are illustrated in Tracings 3(a), (b) and (c). These are, using first the VW designation, then the Weiss, NYFM cancellations S15/TR-WU5a, W8/GE-C-U1 and GU1/GE-EP12. Here, however, my speculations are on far less firm ground than I have presented for cancellation GE-C6.



Tracing 3(a)

Tracing 3(b)

Tracing 3(c)

The first reason for speculating that these cancellations are NYCM is the absence of confirming covers. Both VW and Weiss have classified at least one of these three cancellations as "unconfirmed." I have seen no covers bearing any of the cancellations illustrated in any publication. VW wrote that a single cover confirms W8.⁵ Weiss reported having viewed just one example strike of GE-EP12 on a 5/1/76 5 cent UPU rate cover to Italy bearing 2 cent vermilion and 3 cent Continental issues. However, he writes that the strike "is very worn and difficult to identify."⁶ I have never seen an off-cover strike on the 2 cent vermilion, but instead have noted several on the 2 cent brown Continental (Scott #157).

The second indication that these three cancellations may be NYCM is that none of the off-cover strikes that I have examined have revealed any evidence of transit routing markings. Such markings were typically struck in red or orange red ink on foreign destination covers and occasionally would cover part of the stamp. Interestingly, however, red "PAID ALL" markings can be found on 2 cent stamps canceled by TR-WU5a. This strongly indicates that this cancellation saw use on foreign destination circular or newspaper rate mail. An example appears in Figure 3, which is difficult to see in the illustration. (Note: The 2 cent stamps bearing this cancellation are frequently the grilled National issue, Scott #135, as is the Figure 3 stamp. For reasons that I will explain in a subsequent article, I believe this suggests an 1873 usage.)



Figure 3

Cancellation design is a third indication of usage on NYCM. This applies particularly to the GE-C-U1 cancellation. Its design differs significantly from the style of proven NYFM cancellations. However, this flower petal design does share similarities with some of the fancier NYCM cancellations. It is a ringed cancellation with an internal design that represents an object (a flower). Compare this with the ringed shamrock and shield cancellations noted in previous articles. Other stylistically similar NYCM cancellations exist, for example, a ringed star and a ringed Maltese cross. Notably, this observation about dissimilar styles does not hold for the other two cancellations. GE-EP12, in particular, clearly possesses the geometric style of several NYFM cancellations, and TR-WU5a, a hollow wedge, has similarities with both other NYFM and NYCM cancellations.

My final reason for speculation concerns the values of stamps on which these three cancellations appear. Here, however, my reasoning differs from the reasoning applied to other NYCM cancellations, including the GE-C6 cancellation, because these three cancellations are rarely found struck on the 1 cent stamp.⁷ This fact seemingly suggests that the cancellations were *not* used on domestic circulars. On the other hand, strikes of these cancellations occur with rather high frequency on 2 cent stamps (especially GE-EP12), a relatively scarce value for standard NYFM cancellations by one commonly used on circulars and newspapers sent abroad. (Again, note my observation above concerning TR-WU5a.) One possible explanation for this apparent contradiction is that these cancellations may have seen use principally on bulky merchandise. Remember, the rates applying to circulars also applied to merchandise, so perhaps both types of mail were handled in the same division of the post office. This might also explain the rare occurrence of these cancellations on high value stamps and blocks.⁸

Much remains to be learned about the use of different cancellations on mail from New York City in the 1870s. I have offered in this article educated insight and observations about four cancellations traditionally classified as NYFM. The reader has been asked to consider the possibility that we should classify these cancellations, either primarily or additionally, as NYCM. The author would very much like to hear from readers additional confirming or controverting evidence about this theory and substitute theories as well.

End Notes

1. Weiss, William R., Jr. *The Foreign Mail Cancellations of New York City 1870-1878*. Published by the author, 1990, p59.
2. Weiss, William R., Jr., "An 'Old' New York Foreign Mail Cancellation Rediscovered," *The American Philatelist*, American Philatelic Society, November 1994, p. 1010.
3. Weiss, *The Foreign Mail Cancellations of New York City 1870-1878*, *ibid*, p. 144. Weiss lists, but discounts, an 8/21/73 date for an ST-4P2 cover in his census, believing it to likely be an 1874 date. I believe that the 5/20/75 latest date of use may also fall somewhat after the actual use on the picture cover

to China. The backstamped *receiving* date, according to Weiss, is 5/21/75. Clearly the cover must have been postmarked (an apparently blurred strike) in New York City several days before the reported date.

4. These features may not be apparent in the APS article photograph, which is reduced and rather dark. I had the opportunity to examine a clearer, full-sized photocopy of this cover about a year prior to the article's publication.

5. Van Vlissingen, Arthur W., and Waud, Morrison. *New York Foreign Mail Cancellations 1870-1876*. Chicago: Collectors Club of Chicago, 1968, p.13.

6. Weiss, *ibid*, p. 137.

7. Weiss, p. 137, illustrates a *pair* of 1 cent stamps bearing GE-EP12. A review of off-cover NYFM cancellations on 1 cent stamps offered in auction catalogs revealed only one other 1 cent stamp bearing GE-EP12, a single example of TR-WU5a, and no examples of GE-C-U1.

8. Weiss, *ibid.*, refers to a block of four 2 cent browns bearing the GE-EP12 cancellation. This block (Scott #157) originally belonged in my personal collection. (At one time I specialized in the 2 cent Jackson large Banknote stamp.) I obtained the block as part of a lot of three used blocks of the 2 cent stamp. All three were on piece, none showed signs of transit routing markings, and all three had faults from paper folding and wrinkling, which I attributed to their use on bulky items. Another interesting block about which to speculate is the block of 16 24 cent stamps (Scott #153) bearing multiple strikes of NYFM cancellation A1/ST-8P11. The block is pictured in V-W, p. 60, and a color photograph appears in the Robert A. Siegel Auction Galleries, Inc., 1993 Rarities of the World auction catalog (sale 755, November 20, 1993, p. 72). This block is interesting because this cancellation was used on both NYFM and NYCM, the block is obviously from a large, bulky package, and close examination of the photographs reveals no evidence of transit routing markings.

Editor's note: John provided an early copy of the article to Bill Weiss and Bill responded with an elaboration of his thoughts about the matter on which they disagree. Bill's letter appears below:

Dear John,

Thank you very much for sending a copy of your latest NYCM article written for the USCC News. I was, of course, particularly interested in your treatment of the W3 versus A27 (compass-rose) debate and your conclusion is interesting. Of course, you could very well be correct, but the two pieces of evidence which bother me, and keep me from agreeing with you, are the physical evidence of the two later-date covers clearly bearing A27 strikes. I mean, of course, the April, 1875 cover to Spain listed in my census list and the May 20, 1875 cover to China in my census, and illustrated on page 144 of my book.

First, the cover to Spain. I attach a photocopy from the Christie's Sale of Nov., 1988 (lot 343) from the Walter Klein Sale. Notice that when I initially studied these lots only via the catalog photo, I made a note on the lot 343 photo "broken W2?" because the strike showed so poorly in the photo that it seemed to look like a broken W2. After personally looking at the cover before the sale in New York, however, I subsequently knew the strike was of a very worn A27, and that is how it was listed in my book census. Notice that the strike, while very weak, is NOT ink-filled as is the strike on the disputed cover. Now, you could well argue that because of the poor quality of the Christie photo, as well as the poor strike of the cancel, that perhaps we are not really looking at an A27 - and you could be correct, but I doubt whether you, or anyone else would argue that the May 20 cover to China is not an A27? Anyone with a decent pair of eyes will easily conclude that the China cover is indeed an A27. Agreed?

If you do agree that the China cover has an A27, then it is difficult for me to conclude, as you have, that the disputed cover, clearly dated **2 months earlier**, has such a different physical appearance than the China cover cancel! How in the world did the device go from such a heavy and perhaps overinked state on March 27 to a greatly differing appearance two months later? Further, the strike on the 12 cent cover to Spain is very consistent with the strike on the China cover, rather than with the strike on the earlier cover. Wouldn't you think that if the device was so worn that in March it required terrific overinking to be reasonably clear, then surely it would require similar overinking months later, presumably after being used for perhaps hundreds (thousands?) of additional strikes?

I certainly agree with you that the cancel on the disputed cover MAY be an A27. Sure, it has the characteristics of an A27. But it also surely has the characteristics of a W3! To definitively decide that it really is an A27 is, in my opinion, an erroneous conclusion, and I am not prepared to do that in fairness to the questions I raise here, namely, it is virtually impossible in my experience, for a cancel to look so differently in its worn state as these two cancels look. Once a NYFM is wearing to the point that it required terrific inking, I just don't believe it could go "backwards" in appearance as this would have to justify your conclusion.

Of course, as time goes on, other covers of differing dates may be found to add strength to your argument (or mine). I would think, for example, that if additional A27 covers were to be found dated between March 27 and May 20, 1875, that have the characteristics of the two later cancels, then it seems to me that to continue to argue that the March 27 strike is an A27 is wrong. On the other hand, if something similar in characteristics to the March 27 cancel shows up dated at about the same, or a later date, then I might be willing to take another look at this subject! Further, if additional examples of W3 show up on HIGHER value stamps, that might cause you to concede that W3 may indeed be a NYFM!

One last observation.... the examples of the NYCM W3 which I have seen, and which also can be dated, such as the postal on page 59 of the book, are ALL dated in 1876, a full year after the dates we are discussing here. Not definitive proof of anything, I suppose, but I would feel better if the dates were more consistent.

In any event, as I've always told you, you are an extremely observant student, and I am always willing and anxious to participate in anything you wish me to, so always feel free to contact me. The fact that in this particular case I am not prepared at this moment to agree with your conclusion changes nothing. Matter of fact, if the disputed cover were to be sent to me by an expert committee, I would, in fairness, describe it as being a **W3/GE-C6 NYFM!**

Best Regards,
Bill

CANCELLATIONS IMPORTANT TO THE MAILER

by Roger D. Curran

It's often been said that studies show third class letters bearing postage stamps are more likely to be opened than those with a printed indicia. Firms obviously take this idea seriously because one notes considerable use of stamps on third class mail notwithstanding the extra time and work involved.

But even with a stamp there is still one major aspect that sets mail apart from first class the lack of a postmark and cancellation. This brings us to the cover illustrated in Figure 1. This postmark reads **"MAILED FROM WASH. D.C."** Apparently these markings were applied privately and accepted through some understanding with the USPS. (Canceling such stamps privately should not be a problem for the USPS since it is not USPS practice to cancel them at all.) The ink is a bright blue and when applied to this stamp printed in brown with "Nonprofit" in red, the overall effect is most attractive indeed.

I have no idea how common the practice is of using such cancellations, but this is the only one I recall seeing.

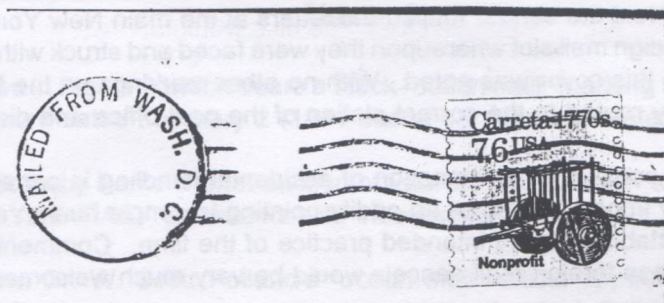


Figure 1

UNUSUAL NEW YORK COVER

by

Roger D. Curran

So what about the cover illustrated in Figure 1? Addressed to a party in Walton, Delaware County, New York, the cover is postmarked January 25, 1879 with a New York duplex CDS and killer handstamp. At first glance this might appear to be just a run-of-the-mill item. But that would be at first glance only.

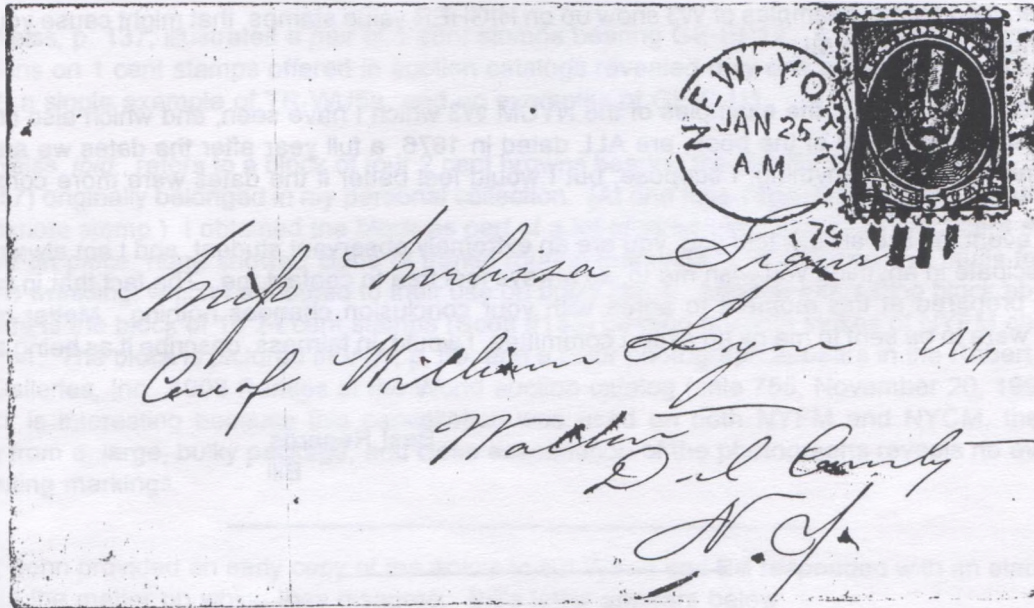


Figure 1

The unusual aspect noticed initially would probably be the five cent Taylor used on a regular domestic first-class letter resulting in a two cent overpayment. But a second unusual aspect is, in my opinion, the far more interesting one. And it will undoubtedly not be clear in the illustration. The handstamp that postmarked the cover duplexed a CDS to a vertical bar ellipse killer with a number in the center -- in this case a "2." Handstamps of this type were designed for use on foreign mails in a set that included numbers "1" through "6" in vertical bar ellipses. They replaced the hand-carved New York Foreign Mail cancels and uses on domestic mail must be quite scarce.

Speculation on how this usage occurred is not hard to develop. It seems logical to me that the sender did have some foreign mail to be sent and purchased some five cent stamps to pay the Universal Postal Union international rate. Through happenstance this domestic letter got in with the sender's foreign mail and inadvertently a five cent Taylor was affixed. Next the sender mailed the letters at the main New York Post Office by dropping them through the appropriate foreign mail slot whereupon they were faced and struck with a foreign mail handstamp before the domestic address on this cover was noted. With no other markings on the front or back, I believe we can assume it was subsequently routed to the correct station of the post office and dispatched appropriately.

Assuming the above or some other explanation of accidental handling is correct, what we have is not a cover of any great postal history import but rather an oddity pointing to simple human error. However, it makes an interesting sidelight to the established and intended practice of the time. Comments or information on other examples of domestic use of these foreign mail cancels would be very much welcomed.

Red "Ocean Mail" Postmarks

by Roger D. Curran

One of the many interesting cancellations used by New York City during the mid-nineteenth century is the New York "ocean mail" postmark. Figure 1 provides an illustration from the Skinner-Eno book. It has been noted used from February 25, 1854 through November 1, 1861. All of the several reported uses on February 25, 1854 were to domestic addressees in the eastern U.S. After that, however, with rather few exceptions, this marking appears only on mail carried to the west coast. This mail was sent via contract vessels to Panama, transported overland across the Isthmus, whereupon contract vessels took it on to California and Oregon.



Figure 1

Usages noted of the "ocean mail" marking that were not to the west coast basically involve foreign destinations. (The author knows of one exception - that on a circular addressed to Connecticut.) A few of the foreign usages involve covers addressed to Cuba. These include but are undoubtedly not limited to the following, all of which involve a single Scott #35.

1. A Cover reported in Ashbrook Special Service, pp. 629-30, bearing the "ocean mail" marking in black dated April 22 as well as a red New York "PAID" April 22 postmark of the type illustrated in Figure 2. Ashbrook described this red marking as "... the usual type of New York postmark used on mail to Cuba ..." He explained that the year of the cover must be 1861 as follows:

"Commencing as of July 1, 1860, the Ocean Mail for the Pacific sailed from New York on the 1st, 11th and 21st of each month (a tri-monthly service), unless these dates fell on Sunday, in which event, the sailing was delayed until Monday. Thus the Apr 22 date indicated that the 21st fell on Sunday, hence the sailing date "22." By referring to our perpetual calendar we find that in 1861 April 21st fell on Sunday."

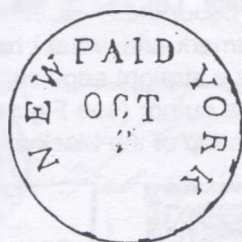


Figure 2

2. The cover illustrated in Figure 3 which bears a black "ocean mail" marking dated February 1 and a red New York "PAID" postmark dated February 2 (1861 based on departure date).
3. Lot 560 from the Sotheby Parke Bernet auction of February 1980 which was a cover bearing black ocean mail and red New York "PAID" postmarks with indeterminate dates.
4. Illustration #22 from Dr. W. Scott Polland's "ocean mail" article appearing in Western Express, dated January 1964 (p. 15), showing a cover bearing two strikes of a black October 22 (1860 based on departure date) "ocean mail" postmark and no red New York "PAID" postmark. The present author is not able to discern whether there was also a grid present from a photocopy of Dr. Polland's illustration but has been

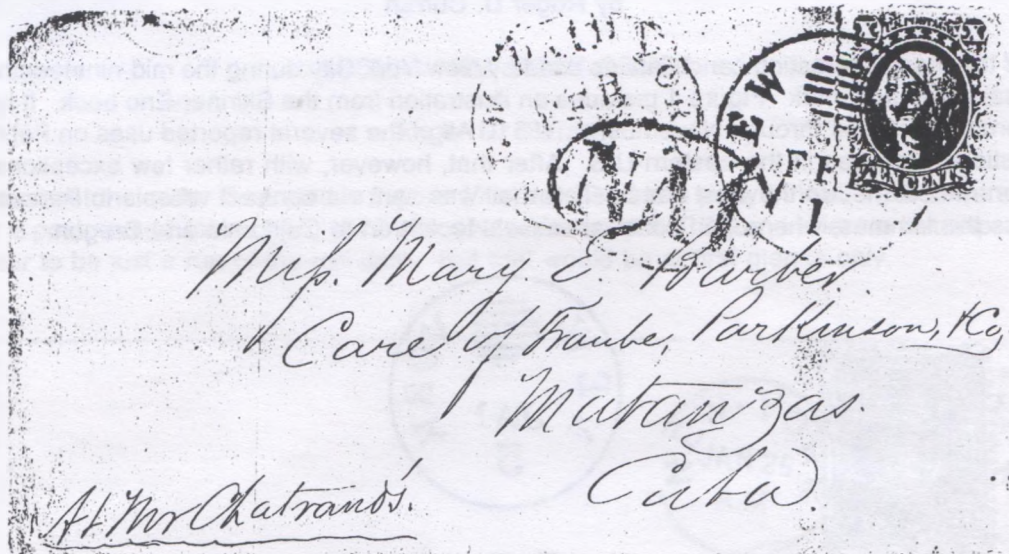


Figure 3

informed by Van Koppersmith that there is no additional grid present. Mr. Koppersmith is a student of "ocean mail" postmarks and graciously provided information on several matters.

5. Figure V on page 176 of The United States Ten Cent Stamps of 1855-1859 by Mortimer L. Neinken showing a cover bearing a stamp canceled with a black March 21 "ocean mail" postmark and a red New York "PAID" postmark dated March 21.

This now brings us to the few instances of the "ocean mail" marking noted in red. The circumstances of the use of red ink have never, to the author's knowledge, been determined as all examples reported are on off-cover stamps - all Scott #35, incidentally. Three examples appeared in the above-mentioned Sotheby 1980 sale, lots 557, 558, and 559. This sale featured the "ocean mail" collection of Father George Murizan which was described by the auction house as "... the finest New York Ocean (Mail) Markings Collection ever formed." The Lot 557 stamp bore just the red "ocean mail" marking. Lots 558 and 559 bore the red "ocean mail" postmark and red grid cancels. Lot 431 in the Siegel sale of May 21, 1969 consisted of two singles on a small piece canceled by the red "ocean mail" postmark and red grids. Lot 217 in Christie's 1989 "Klein" sale bore a red "ocean mail" marking with a discernible "APR" month indicator. Lot 732 of the 1986 Frajola sale of the Eno collection was a rejoined pair bearing the red "ocean mail" postmark and, what I have been advised are red grid cancels. Lot 55 in Steven Hines catalog distributed in 1993 was a straight edge copy bearing a red "ocean mail" postmark and red grid. The eighth and final example noted by the author (see Figure 4) bears strikes of both black and red "ocean mail" postmarks. The red marking is placed on top of the black and the month indicator appears to begin with an



The cancel is depicted more clearly in the drawing. The upper marking (that shows the "W" and grid and CDS circle line just above) is black. The lower marking (showing part of the "Y" and part of the grid at left over the letter "A" and CDS circle line just above) is red.

Figure 4

"A". Mr. Koppersmith reports that he has recorded five additional examples of the "ocean mail" cancel in red, each on an off-cover Scott #35 except for one #35 on a very small peice. Most but not all also bear red grids. And he has also noted the additional month indicators "OCT" and "AUG" and another beginning with an "A". The earliest known use of Scott #35 is May 27, 1859 and it was replaced by Scott #68 with an earliest known use of August 20, 1861.

Was there a particular reason or situation for using the red "ocean mail" postmarks? Certainly foreign mail usage would seem reasonable given the red ink. But some with separate grids and some without and the one example with strikes in black and red suggest differing circumstances. Perhaps they all represent individual departures from normal procedure occasioned by, for example, pieces of mail getting into the wrong mailstream. Speculation about this cancellation appeared in connection with an earlier sale of the "Klein" copy as Lot 371 in the October 1972 Siegel auction (418) wherein the stamp was described as follows:

10c Green, Ty. V (35). Clear New York Ocean Mail pmk. in Red, Exceptionally Fine Example of this Extremely Rare Cancellation in Red, Very few known, believed to have been used for a short time on mail to Havana, Cuba.

Mr. Koppersmith pointed out similar speculation by Ashbrook in volume 2 of his U.S. 1851-7 one cent study, p. 250 based on the fact that mail to Cuba was postmarked in red. Incidentally, the Panama mail contract route had stops in Charleston, SC and Havana between New York and Panama.

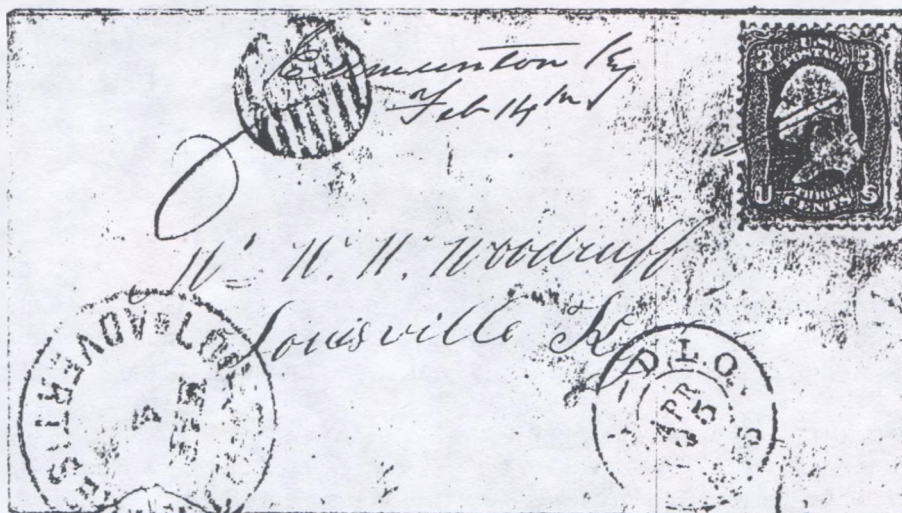
Who can shed some light on this interesting mystery?

A VERSATILE LOUISVILLE GRID

by
Roger D. Curran

Handstamp grid obliterators were used not only to cancel adhesive stamps although that was, of course, the intended purpose. From time to time one encounters grids used to cover up postal markings applied in error. Typically, rating numerals were so "canceled."

Figures 1 and 2 illustrate a different use but the exact purpose of the grids is not clear to me. The Figure 1 cover is postmarked in manuscript "**Edmunton Ky Feb 14th**" and the adhesive is manuscript - canceled in the same ink. The cover front also bears a Louisville "**ADVERTISED**" marking in blue ink of the type illustrated in Figure 3 which is taken from the Louisville monograph by Louis Cohen.¹ There is also a Dead Letter Office ("D.L.O.") double oval dated APR/?5 (indeterminate year) and a grid, both in the same blue ink. Finally, there is a blue crayon marking on the front that could be a "6." The back of the cover has a "**NOT/CALLED/FOR**" marking and an APR/8 Louisville CDS, examples of which are reproduced from Cohen in Figure 4.



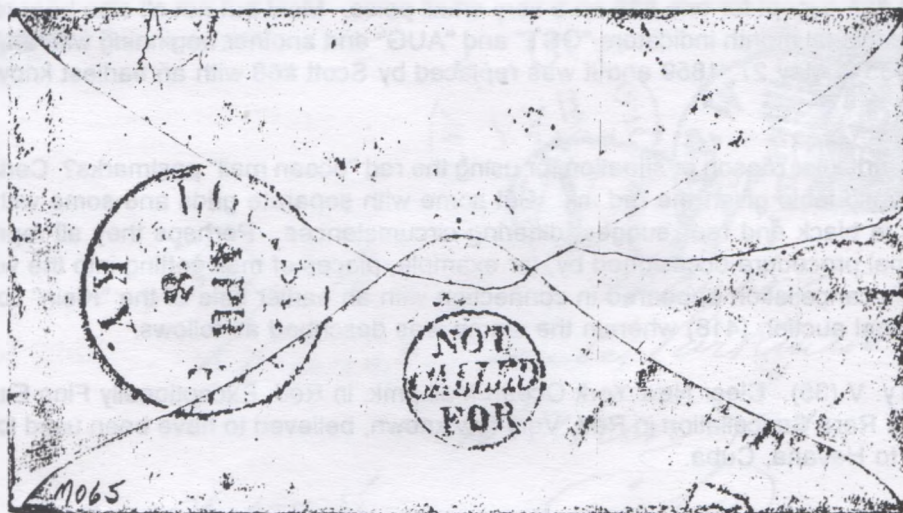


Figure 1

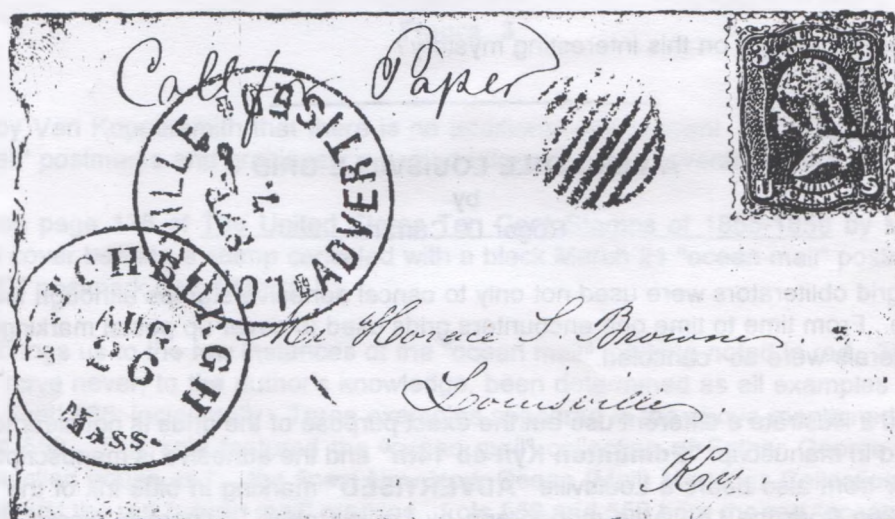


Figure 2



Figure 3

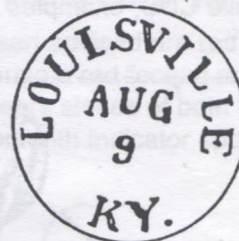
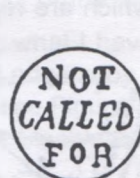


Figure 4

The Figure 2 cover originated in Fitchburg, Mass. with a Fitchburg "AUG/26" CDS and the adhesive is canceled by a black grid. The cover also bears the Louisville **"ADVERTISED"** marking and grid, both in blue. **"CALL for PAPER"** is written at the top of this cover. There are no markings on the back of this cover.

Did the Figure 2 cover find the party to whom it was addressed and the Figure 1 not? And of more moment to this article, what did the grid mean? Was it added by the Louisville post office (for internal purposes to identify it as a letter that could not be delivered) before it was sent over to the clerk who processed mail to be advertised? Who can help solve this interesting mystery?