



Cancellation Club **NEWS**

Vol. 24, No. 1, Whole No. 226, Winter 1998

The Subjectivity of Pricing

c. Calvet M. Hahn 1998

Roger Rhoads' recent piece on fancy cancel pricing struck a chord. But what can I contribute? As background I might note I've been auction buying since my sub-teen years and have represented others at auction for well over a quarter century. Too, I helped price about a third of one standard postmark catalog and set the price estimates when one popular field of postal history was first coming to market.

Over the years several observations I found were: 1) on scarce material in any collecting area there are only enough examples for six or **fewer** serious collectors and 2) pricing is extremely subjective. The first point means that on that elusive cancel, you are faced with the financial resources of some powerful people who also seek it for whatever reason. The secondary pieces can be picked up but one must fight for the key pieces. The price depends upon the resources of your competition as well as their relative knowledge of rarity and willingness to stretch. Occurring sometimes are inverse pricing effects. For example, in one transatlantic field there are three rare postal markings. One had 1-2 recorded examples, one had 5-10, and the third had perhaps twenty--all were necessary to have a good representation. In the case of the rarest item, it was the cheapest because the competition wasn't aware of its desirability. The most common item was the most expensive, for when examples were seen on the market, the item had been written up and more collectors wanted an example and several had the resources and desire to possess an example.

The subjective nature can be seen by a case I ran into almost twenty years ago. A group of interesting items appeared at auction and I represented six bidders for it. All had absolutely identical information and all were buying for resale. Estimated by the auction firm at \$1,000, my bidders ranged from \$1,400 to over \$5,000. The difference was the degree to which each bidder saw the possibility of reselling the material to that person's "special" customers. The actual winning bidder bid sufficiently high to "shut out" competition in order that he might be the only supply source of this type of material for several wealthy collectors.

Mr. Rhoads cites the Waterbury fancy cancels as an example of the desirability of certain cancels. However, one of the more famous of these--the running chicken--is known on about four covers with one being a 1 cent 1869 where it

stands out because of color contrast although another is a running chicken on a balloon cover. The 1 cent cover (see Figure 1) found no buyer for years while it sat for \$10 in the Burger brothers' counter box until Miss Matthies snapped it up. As one of the philately's most astute buyers of interesting material, her imprimatur meant a substantial price increase was justified when the piece next changed hands and went into the Dr. Glenn Jackson holding. At the sale of his material, two wealthy collectors ran the price up in an effort to run each other out of philatelic spending money with the result that the price again soared and a "story" became attached to the cover.

Next came market manipulation. Another wealthy collector let it be known he wanted and needed this cover. Several professionals got together (possibly buying the item privately) and bid the cover price up against him. By now the price was in orbit and the cover was well romanced. However, is it the greatest Waterbury cover? Certainly, Miss Matthies didn't think so, nor apparently did Dr. Jackson nor Henry Houser, both major Waterbury collectors. It is not as rare as the unique blue Waterbury "garden paths" cover nor another Waterbury bearing two different rare fancy killers--the eagle and a garden path. If postal stationery were more popular, the attractive left-facing woman in a bonnet might be held equally desirable as might one of the Bridgeport fireman covers. The patriotic Waterbury with a man-in-hat killer is as rare as are the chrysanthemum and the rose 1 cent 1869 covers which are equally complex in design. It is not rarity nor attractiveness that put the "running chicken 1 cent" cover at the top of the Waterbury heap, it was the subjective factors, particularly the romance that did it.

Mr. Rhoads also discusses the subject of colored cancels. The market has long given extra price consideration to green cancels. But why? Green has been a premium color far beyond its scarcity for almost three quarters of a century. One reason is that a list of green cancels was compiled in the 1930s--something not done for other interesting shades. A second reason is that Col. Green decided to collect green cancels and paid a premium for them. His example was later followed by Marc Haas. Yet the brown and yellow cancels are ten times rarer and are only beginning to receive appropriate market recognition against the more common greens. True,

(continued on p. 3)

Dear Reader,

Our club will hold its annual meeting again this year at the Philadelphia National Stamp Exhibition (PNSE), October 2-4, 1998 in King of Prussia which is near Philadelphia and convenient for travelers. In addition to the business meeting, we will have a seminar on Saturday afternoon, October 3, about which more will be reported in an upcoming NEWS. What we want to announce now is that the U.S.C.C. will also sponsor a single exhibit competition devoted to cancellations and will present an engraved silver plate for the "best" cancellation exhibit. The overall purpose of this "competition" is, however, not so much to seek a winner as it is to encourage those of us who don't exhibit much, if at all, to come forward and join others in giving it a try. One frame is only 16 pages and I believe club members will find it manageable and an excellent way to organize one's respective thoughts and introduce others to a particular collecting interest we have. Each club officer is going to try and submit an entry and we urge as many in the membership as possible to join in. Also, it is our hope to produce high-quality first generation photocopies of each exhibit which will be bound and offered to each exhibitor at cost. A copy would also be placed in the U.S.C.C. Library.

If you are interested in considering the submission of a one-frame cancellation exhibit, please contact Tuck Taylor, who lives near Philadelphia and has been a PNSE exhibitor, at (610)388-2558, or at the address on the masthead, for an exhibit prospectus and to answer any questions you have about the show, logistics, etc. Please remember that you don't have to be at the show to exhibit, although attendance would be very nice, if feasible. Either way, your participation in this exhibit would be much welcomed and a great way to support the U.S.C.C. and its objectives. Please let Tuck know within the next 30 days, if possible.

Club members who have cancellation exhibits of more than one frame are encouraged to consider entering them in the multi-frame category. Contact Tuck about that, too.

I am delighted to announce the establishment of a program of periodic USCC auctions to be tested this year. It will be coordinated by Seymour (Sy) Stiss. The full details are spelled out in a flyer that accompanies this issue. As with any activity we undertake, the success will depend on active member participation. So please, for openers, consider now what items you may have - duplicates or other material no longer needed for your collection - and contact Sy about putting them in an upcoming auction. I am sure we all have such items that would please other club members and at the same time provide some help for our own future acquisitions. Items to be sold in the first auction, which will be presented in the NEWS going out in early June, should be sent to Sy within 30 days, if at all feasible. Many thanks to Sy for his guidance and support.

Please note the new "Bulletin Board" section and remember that, as mentioned in the Fall 1997 NEWS, members submitting their dues by December 31 are entitled to a free ad of up to 25 words in a 1998 issue. Many readers qualify and you are encouraged to take advantage of this opportunity!

We are still seeking one coordinator for the target cancel project discussed in the Summer 1997 NEWS -

The U.S. Cancellation Club News

Published four times a year by the U.S. CANCELLATION CLUB and included with membership. The U.S.C.C. is AFS Affiliate #75.

Annual Dues: \$12.00 per year. Address inquiries to: Roger Rhoads at the address below.

Address library inquiries to: William H. Bauer, PO Box 519, Unadilla, NY 13849-0519

Back Issues through 1997 are available at \$2.00 each postpaid. 1998 issues, \$3.00. Discount of 10% on orders of 25 or more issues. Address inquiries to: Roger D. Curran at the address below.

Address all other communications to: Roger D. Curran at the address below.

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specifically, someone to handle targets on 1869 issue stamps. Coordinators will receive and compile reports from collectors and will ultimately report their data in some established format. Occasionally, it may be needed to contact a submitter to request additional information or clarify something. Coordinators will also contribute to finalizing the reporting guidelines by reviewing an initial draft. Please contact me if you are willing to help out with this assignment or to explore the possibility.

An article appears in this NEWS on Masonic cancels and mention is made of club member Ray Koch. When Ray sent in his 1998 dues he included a copy of the December 1997 article in The Wisconsin Masonic Journal by William Stonecipher on Ray's interest in collecting Masonic cancels. It illustrates a number of stamps in Ray's collection, discusses various aspects of this fascinating cancellation specialty and conveys well, I believe, the enthusiasm we all share in pursuing such a satisfying hobby. Club members desiring a copy should send a business-size SASE to Roger Rhoads at the address on the masthead.

Roger Curran

(continued from front page)

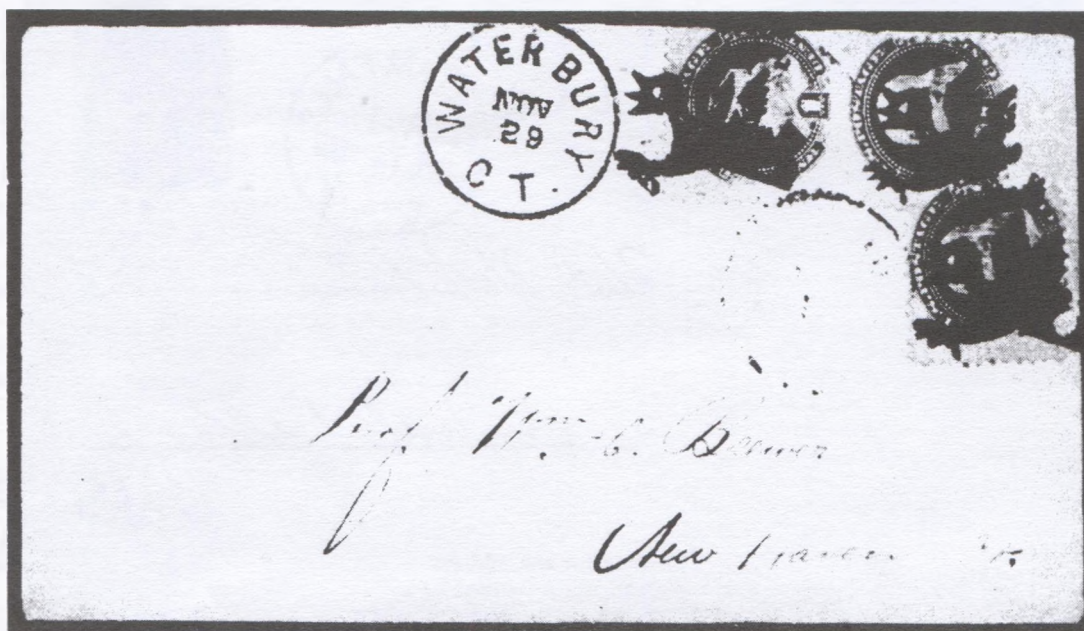


Figure 1

even nice yellows can appear washed out unless against an appropriately dark shaded stamp or cover. Too, the browns can appear muddy with the wrong background. Both are subjective pricing considerations. A recent color development is that any green be a "true" green, not one of the various wishy-washy green shades.

Other items that might be very rare are not considered because of marketplace ignorance. Blue is a common color, but not for a New York City cancel in the 1830-60 era where it is quite rare. Magenta Philadelphia cancels are not hard to find but this is not true of a number of other cities.

A significant problem with fancy cancels is the high degree of bogus or fake items on the market. It has been estimated that about 60% of the fancy cancels offered in the 1930s and 1940s were fake. At the first of a series of presentations by Wade Saadi on fancy cancels 1851-1869, Scott Trepel, president of the Robert Siegel firm, noted that the concentration of fakes is in the \$10-50 price range because these are the ones that are least likely to get expertized.

Cancels not confirmed with on-cover examples constitute another problem. Many of the fakers never worked with covers but concentrated on off-cover items. By now, most fancies should be identifiable with a town of origin from an on-cover example. Those that aren't are "buyer beware" items.

Genuine fancy cancels show evidence of their carving either by wood grain elements in boxwood-carved handstamps or by porous characteristics in those made from cork. Almost always there will be some characteristics of the item having been carved rather than photographically reproduced from a genuine cover or a book illustration. As book tracings are normally not representative of the actual cancel, a book "exact" match is a cause for suspicion.

I have noted that, in bidding over the last year for fancy cancels at auction, there is a focus upon certain items that are 'hot' because one or more important collectors are seeking examples. If a big collector is putting together a holding of flags, the price will rise compared to fancy stars or geometrics. This is the subjective demand factor which operates almost independently of relative rarity.

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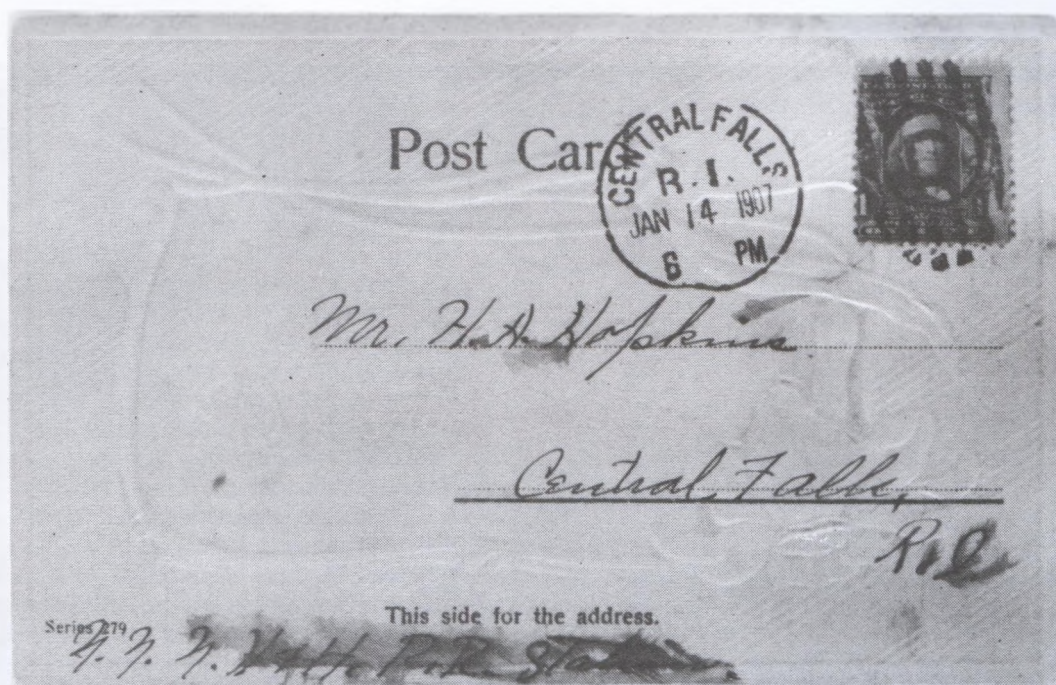


Figure 1

Late Marking

by Roger D. Curran

Figure 1 illustrates a late usage of a "time on bottom" (TOB) handstamp developed by Walter D. Wesson. In fact, no TOB markings have been reported after 1900 except from Central Falls, R.I. When first encountering this item, the date jumped out and I wondered if it might be a new late date for a TOB. Alas, it is not. The 1990 *La Posta* monograph on TOB markings by Ted Bozarth noted the latest reported use from Central Falls as December 16, 1908. A November 1992 update appearing in *La Posta* included a listing of an April 24, 1909 usage.

As mentioned in the Summer 1996 *NEWS*, club member Ralph Edson is undertaking a revision of the monograph and is seeking reports of new dates, etc. (with photocopies of items reported) for any of the post offices that used TOBs. His address is 365 Westland Ave., Chesire, CT 06410. Perhaps Ralph will be able to report a later date still for Central Falls.

Postal History Project

The Washington Philatelic Society (WPS) plans to publish on or about the year 2000 a book on Washington, D.C. postal history. The WPS owns the George Turner collection of Washington covers and this will be partially used for the book. A postal history bibliography is being compiled as a preliminary step. The WPS is eager to learn of any suitable bibliographic entries and about specialists who would be available to write for the book. (Tom Stanton is reviewing back issues of the *NEWS* for entries.) Information or inquiries should be directed to Seymour Stiss, WPS Board, 436 N. Park Drive, Arlington, VA 22203.

Cancellation Club Notes

THE matter of pricing cancellations is one of the primary problems to the collector. The answer to this question will ultimately be given through the operation of the trading dept. of this club. One observation might well be made now and that is—the price of a given stamp is determined by two factors: 1. the condition of the stamp itself; 2. the completeness and neatness of the cancellation. To illustrate—In one of our circuits was a copy of the 3c green with the common 4 ring target cancellation. The stamp was an average copy and only a part of the cancellation was on the stamp. It was priced at 2c. In the same circuit was the same cancellation on a superb copy of another 3c green, the cancellation was perfectly struck in the middle of the stamp making it an attractive piece. It was priced at 8c. The latter stamp was taken by the first member having the circuit. The other stamp with the same cancellation at $\frac{1}{4}$ the price has been passed up by 10 members thus far.

— *Stamps* magazine Mar. 4, 1939

Early Machine Cancel?

by Roger D. Curran

The earliest reported usages of U.S. machine cancels are generally considered to be those emanating from Pittsburgh in 1871 and 1872. 1871 examples are rare with only five copies reported of each of the two basic killer types illustrated in Figures 1 and 2. One example of the accompanying CDS type is shown in Figure 3. Since reported uses of these markings are heavily inked, they generally show a solid frame. Indeed, it is possible that the killers are not double framed. 1872 examples (see Figure 4) are more familiar to cancellation collectors but still decidedly scarce.



Figure 1



Figure 2



Figure 3

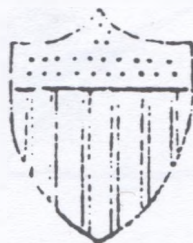


Figure 4

The above information was presented in an outstanding 1987 article by Reg Morris and club member Bob Payne appearing in Machine Cancel Forum (MCF).¹

There are, however, clear indications of experimentation with canceling machines before 1871 in U.S. post offices. One such indicator is the brief notice that appeared in the February 1863 U.S. Mail & Post Office Assistant (USM & POA).² Although previously illustrated in the Winter 1997 NEWS, we reproduce it here as Figure 5 as a convenience to readers. In a recent MCF article,³ Bob Payne presented and discussed a NYPO memorandum, in the collection of Howard Ness, the contents of which are as follows:

"POST OFFICE, NEW YORK
May 13, 1863

MACHINE FOR STAMPING LETTERS.—An ingenious contrivance for post-marking letters and cancelling postage stamps, has been in operation in the New York office recently. It is kept in motion with the foot, and requires two persons to operate it—one to arrange the letters, and the other to adjust them for receiving the stamp. It is as much work to feed it as it would be to feed a small family of children.— This prevents it from stamping with sufficient rapidity to answer the purpose, in large offices at least, where despatch is so essential. In fact one of the experienced stamping clerks, on a race with the machine, stamped three to its one with the common hand-stamp.

If all letters were uniform in size, and the postage stamps always in the same place, there would be less difficulty in inventing a machine to do this important part of post office labor.

Figure 5

Will Mr. McAdams please call at this office and sign proper voucher for payment on letter stamping machine.

Respectfully,
W.W. Whitney
Cashier"

The envelope in which it was enclosed was addressed as follows:

John McAdams, Esq.
Corner Kent & DeCalb Avenue
Brooklyn, NY

Bob checked all information available to him to see if the name John McAdams could be located as an inventor of, attorney for, or witness to a patent. It was to no avail. In the same article Bob presented two early 1863 New York covers from his collection that are at least strongly suggestive of processing by a canceling machine. The fronts and backs of the covers are illustrated in Figures 6 and 7. He described the markings as follows:

- a) Both cancels have double rimmed dials. Outer rim measures 26 mm. and the inner rim 12 mm. In all likelihood the same dial was used in both cancels.
- b) Lettering in both dials measures:
 . Height of NEW-YORK letters if 4.5mm.
 . Height of 1863 is 2.0 mm.
 . Height of MAR and APR is 2.5 mm.
- c) Oval grid cancelers are unusual for



Figure 6

this early date of 1863 and suggest experimental use.

- d) March 28, 1863 oval grid canceler:
- . 10 total bars - 8 middle bars .75 mm. thick.
 - top and bottom bars .50 mm. thick.
 - . Width of the two middle bars - undetermined.
 - . Width between the two dies is undetermined.
 - . Height of the 10 canceler bars is 26.5 mm.

- e) April 8, 1863 oval grid canceler:
- . 12 total bars from 1.0 to 2.0 mm. thick.
 - . Top of the dial and canceler bar

damaged.

- . Stamp prevents full inking of bottom bar.
- . Extreme width of the oval canceler is 16 mm.
- . Height is approximately 26.0 to 26.5
- . Width between the two dies is 2.0 mm."

Bob suggests that the reason for the thicker bars associated with the April 9 CDS was to do a better job of canceling the stamps than did the earlier March 28 killer.

Bob also pointed to the significance of the offsets on the backs of the two covers. These are, to my mind, extremely important. As I understand it, machine cancel specialists consider a canceling machine to be a device with a feed mechanism that sends the mail pieces to the spot where the self-inking canceling dies are automatically struck.

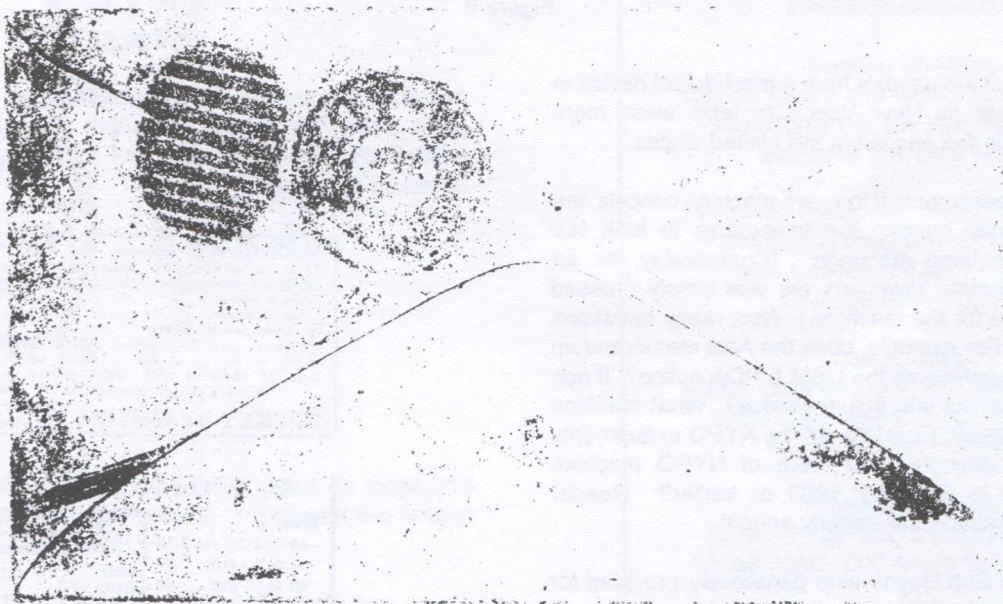
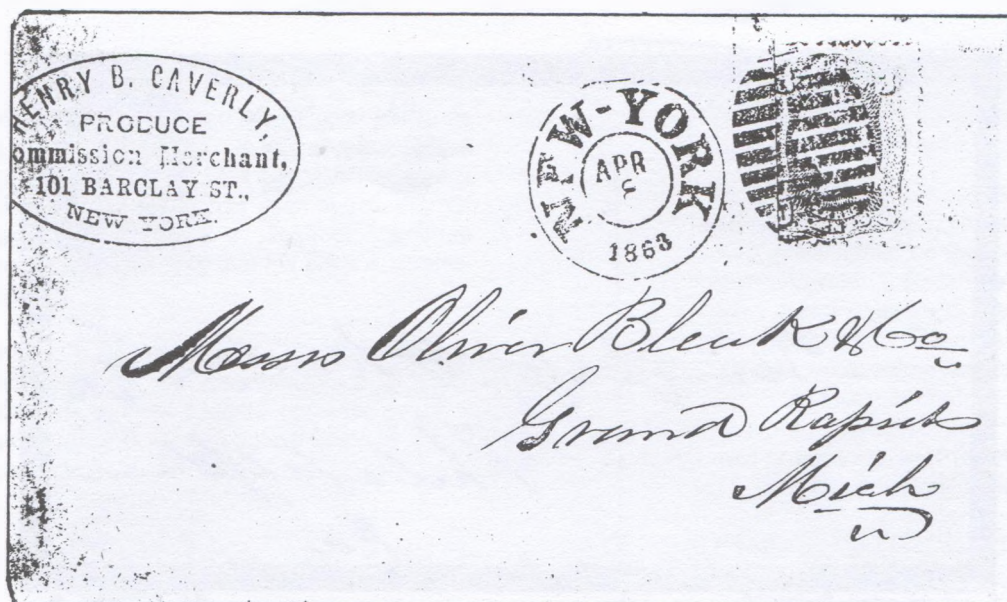


Figure 7

It sometimes happened that a piece of mail was not in place when the canceling die or dies were activated. In those cases, the inked impression was applied to the underlying surface on which a piece of mail was supposed to be resting. When a mail piece was subsequently fed into that area and canceled, the force of the strike created pressure on the underlying surface which then deposited a mirror image offset of the marking or markings on the back of the cover. That is just what Bob's covers show, albeit much more clearly on the April 8 cover. Machines with automatic feed and cancel mechanisms are distinguished by specialists from mechanical handstamps which just have a self-inking mechanism accomplished by an inked ribbon that moves underneath, or an inked roller that wipes across, the canceling dies in preparation for each strike. These devices remain handstamps, however, since they must be depressed by hand and it seems quite unlikely to me that a clerk would depress a handstamp without a piece of mail underneath except in isolated, accidental cases such as when a cover was not

correctly positioned where the strike was to fall.

The double-circle townmarks on Bob's covers look like typical New York townmarks of the period that collectors have long accepted as products of handstamps. There are, of course, variations among these townmarks, the most basic being whether or not a year date is present. I have made no study of these but one does also see variations in the size and shape of the letters and numerals. As an example, Figure 8 shows a larger "1863" than on Bob's covers. I believe his two examples come from the same or identical townmark canceling dies because the two impressions are so alike even down to the "3" numerals in "1863" which are heavier than the "186" numerals.

Bob concluded about the two covers:

"In my opinion, both duplex cancels with a grid bar canceler are excellent candidates to be the earliest

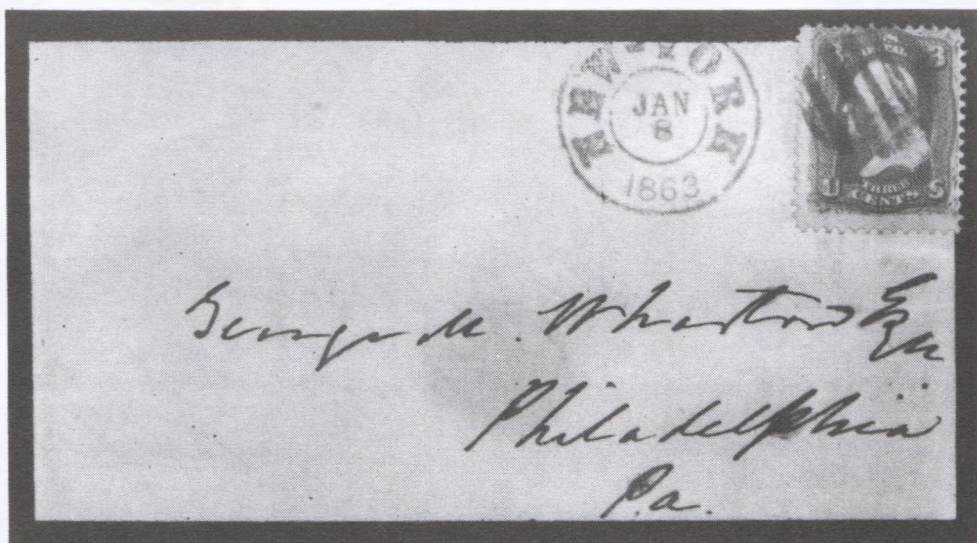


Figure 8

Vintage Ads

known machine cancels from a mechanical device to mark letters in New York City and even more important in the earliest in the United States."

I agree with that assessment. If they are machine cancels, the die maker apparently created the townmarks to look like contemporary handstamp markings. (Conceivably, as an alternative, a handstamp townmark die was simply pressed into service as a die for the machine.) Also, many questions would still remain. For example, does the April memorandum refer to the same machine as the USM & POA notice? If not, were both machines put into actual service? What machine canceled Bob's covers? How late did the NYPO experiments last? Are there examples out there of NYPO machine impressions made in February 1863 or earlier? Reader comment and information are eagerly sought.

Thanks to Bob Payne who generously provided for illustrations of the two covers under discussion and gave permission to quote portions of his 1997 MCF article.

Bibliography

¹Morris, Reg and Payne, Bob The Pittsburgh Star and Shield Machine Cancel of Unknown Origin, Machine Cancel Forum (July 1987), pp. 101-122.

²Holbrook, J. U.S. Mail & Post Office Assistant, February 1863, Vol. One, p. 114 as reprinted by the Collector's Club of Chicago, 1975.

³Payne, Bob A Major Discovery, Machine Cancel Forum (October 1997), pp. 2110-2127.



Abe Boyarsky submits three ads that appeared in the philatelic press during the 1930s. Attractive prices, to say the least! Incidentally, how would you like to go through one million unpicked Banknotes?

U. S. Covers unusual lot from 1880 to 1890, 2c greens, 2c browns, 3c greens, etc. Most of them with the popular advertising corner cards—
 20 different cities.....\$1.00
 3c Greens—off cover
 Pairs10c Strip of 320c
 Strip of 430c Strip of 550c
 One of each—4 nice show pieces.....\$1.00
 Send for our 46-page U. S. List
BUCKEY STAMP CO. 5-35 W. 5th St.
 Dayton, Ohio

U. S. Odd Cancellations

Scott's
 44 3c Pds. ea. \$.18
 44 3c 10 diff.. .60
 65 3c 10 diff.. .40
 114 3c 5 diff.. .40
 182 1c 10 diff.. .60

3c GREENS	
One Each	
Pair	All Four
Strip of 3	\$1.00
Strip of 4	
Strip of 5	

3c GREEN Cancellation Collection—Stars, Numerals, Letters, Grids, etc.—25 different—fine lot\$1.00
 Ask for our 40-page U. S. List.
BUCKEY STAMP CO. 5-35 West 5th St.
 Dayton, Ohio

U. S. CANCELLATIONS

Recently I searched one million unpicked 8c greens, 1c large blues and 2c browns (210) to build up my great stock of fine cancellations.

	2c or 3c	1c
Sample 10 different.....	\$3.00	\$3.50
25 different	1.00	1.50
100 different	5.00	7.50

GAYLE A. FOSTER
 9 Ferryridge Road Greenwich, Conn.

Address Changes

If you are moving, please let us know. Every issue sent out results in several address change notifications from the post office for which the U.S.C.C. is charged 50 cents each. To save your club this additional expense, as well as to speed delivery of the NEWS to you, inform the NEWS of any upcoming move. Thanks for your cooperation.

Gin Barrel

Paul Berg, author of Chicago Blue Postal Markings 1870-1877, offers a correction to the "gin barrel" drawing that appeared on page 162 of the Fall 1997 NEWS. He reports that every copy of the gin barrel he has seen shows the "G" in reverse or backwards. Figure 1 presents the three examples (from pages 105 and 106) that his book illustrates. He goes on to state:

"Furthermore I have never seen a G with the central horizontal bar that distinguishes a G from a C even in what I would consider a perfect strike of the Gin Barrel cancel which is shown on page 106."



Figure 1

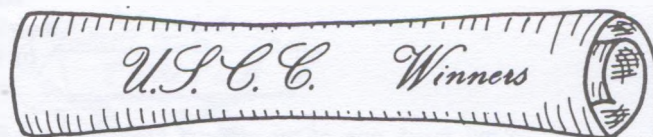
Paul also refers to another cancel illustrated on page 118 which is presented here as Figure 2. He reports two known examples in blue and states:

"... it is my hypothesis that this one was made by the same individual who made the Gin Barrel. The NIC is a mirror image of the GIN assuming that the C is or was a G."



Figure 2

We learn from Paul's book and the 1996 supplement that reported dates of use of the gin barrel are 9/14/73-11/4/73 and the one reported date of Figure 2 is 3/25/75.



Matthew W. Kewriga

Gold (youth): STAMPSHOW 97 Open
"Cancellations on the 2-cent
Vermillion Banknote"
also Junior Philatelist of America,
H.E. Harris medal, North American
Youth Competition Award, and
USPCS medal

Vermeil (Youth): STAMPSHOW 97 Open
"U.S. Departmental Officials"

Gold (youth) and USPCS award: Phila. Nat.
Stamp Exhibition
"Cancellations on the 2 cent
Vermillion Banknote"

Norman Shachat

Grand Award and Gold: SCOPEX 97
"Philadelphia French Mail, 1849-1873"
also APS pre-1900 Medal

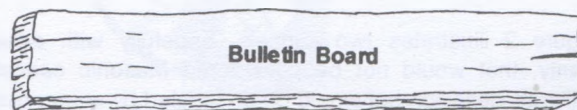
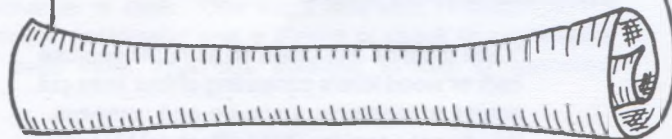
Vermeil: Phila. Nat. Stamp Exhibition
"Philadelphia French Mail, 1827-1874"
also Collectors Club of Phila.
Championship Award

Carl L. Stieg

Grand, Gold and U.P.S.S. Marcus White
show case grand: MILCOPEX 97
"Victoria Postal Stationery"

Thomas O. Taylor

Silver: Phila. Nat. Stamp Exhibition
"Washington, D.C. Killers for 25 Years"



Wanted Fancy cancels on U.S. Officials and on 178, 183 and 210. Steve Sims, 1769 Wickershaw Dr., Anchorage, AK 99507.

Wanted First US postal card (UX1 and 3) fancy cancels, unusual usages (postage due, advertised, Intl., county/PM, etc.) Send photocopy/price to Roger Rhoads, 1313 Newbridge Dr., Lockport, IL 60441.

Masonic Cancels

by Roger D. Curran

To my mind, one of the difficult areas of studying cancellations is that of trying to determine what representations are intended to denote Masonic symbols. The most common design is, of course, the square and compass, of which there are innumerable variations, especially since many were carved from cork or other soft wood. For example, the Skinner - Eno book illustrates about 275 different examples and we illustrate in Figure 1 three of these chosen to reflect some idea of the range of variations. But even here



FR-M2c 3
New York,
New York



FR-M3b 16
Brookline,
Massachusetts



FR-M4b 1
Island Pond,
Vermont

Figure 1

there is a question of what is or is not intended to be a Masonic cancel. Edward Willard, in his outstanding work on the two cent red brown of 1883, stated the following about square and compass cancels:¹

"Care must be exercised so as not to confuse cork or wood killers consisting of four lines cut across to resemble a square and compass. We do not consider these killers as Masonic, unless, they also include the round head of a compass."

Figure 2 illustrates two cancels, hopefully with adequate clarity, that would not be considered Masonic cancels by Willard's definition but would be so labeled by some, perhaps many, students. An additional approach would be to



Figure 2

determine whether the bottom right angle was thicker (and perhaps with straight ends if contained within the killer) than the "compass" above it, and, if so, consider it to be Masonic. Figure 3 from Skinner-Eno is such an example as is the cancel on the right in Figure 1. This process becomes rather subjective, doesn't it?



FR-M3b 9
Welch Run,
Pennsylvania

Figure 3

One aspect of the problem for me, as a non-Mason, is what indeed are the other symbols considered clearly Masonic in origin. Two examples from previous issues of the NEWS are presented below.

On the cover of the November 1971 issue Mr. Willard illustrated the cancel shown in Figure 4 and stated, in part, the following:

"Pictured above are a stamp with an unusual Cancellation and also a drawing of the Cancellation. This stamp was sold to me as an unusual 'STAR OF DAVID'. Perhaps I am wrong but I think it is a 'MASONIC APRON' with a 'SQUARE AND COMPASS' worked into the design of the top of the apron. There is no doubt in my mind that this is a good Cancellation but I have never seen one similar. DOES ANYONE KNOW THE ORIGIN? IS THERE A COPY ON COVER? IS THERE AN INTERPRETATION OF THE DESIGN OTHER THAN THE ONE I HAVE MADE?"



Figure 4

I don't know if he ever learned more about this unusual item.

In the Spring 1982 NEWS, Alyce Evans illustrated a grouping of Masonic symbols (Figure 5) and a drawing or tracing of a cancel (Figure 6) on an 1867 issue stamp. Her interesting comments are quoted herewith:

"The Masonic Temple Festival card shown above is from a reproduction of an antique 19th century printer's cut. It illustrates



Figure 5



Figure 6

many of the Masonic signs including the seeing eye, trowel, apron, square and compass, open book - most of which can be found as fancy killers on U.S. stamps. Careful scrutiny of the cut will reveal several other Masonic emblems.

A seldom seen Masonic cancel with a 'Pythagorean Theorem' design, is identified by the arrow. The cancel graphically illustrates the well-known geometry theorem, "the square of the length of the hypotenuse of a right triangle equals the sum of the squares of the lengths of the other two sides." An example of this cancel is shown here on an 1867 3 cent rose grill and tied to a Topeka, Kansas cover."

Please also note the Masonic apron just above and to the left of the Pythagorean Theorem. Surely I would have never guessed that either was a Masonic design.

Illustrated as Figure 7 is a cover submitted by Jim Kesterson with a 3 cent 1861 canceled with what may well be a Mark Master symbol. Figure 8 is an illustration of the Mark Master symbol taken from an old magazine article on masonry.

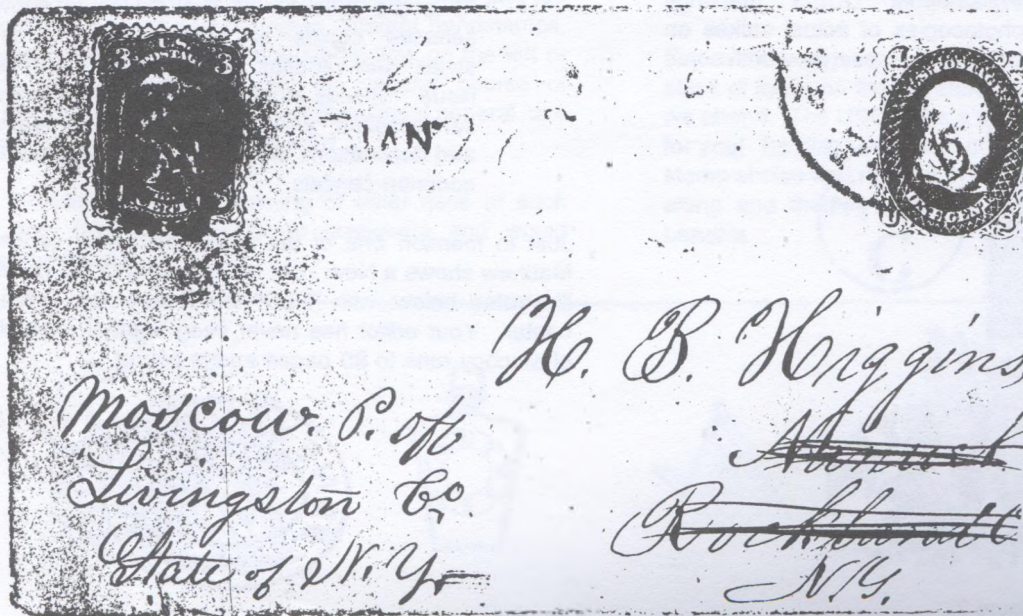


Figure 7

It would be nice to have a reference group of Masonic symbols and Figure 5 is a start. Along these lines I came across a book entitled "Classic Clip Art"² that contains, in the words of the publisher, a "collection of . . . images . . . taken from the . . . 1900 Edition of the American Type Founders Cut Book, a catalog for printers." There were two pages of Masonic emblems and several that are in my experience similar, or contain elements that are similar, to 19th century cancellations are illustrated as Figure 9. These

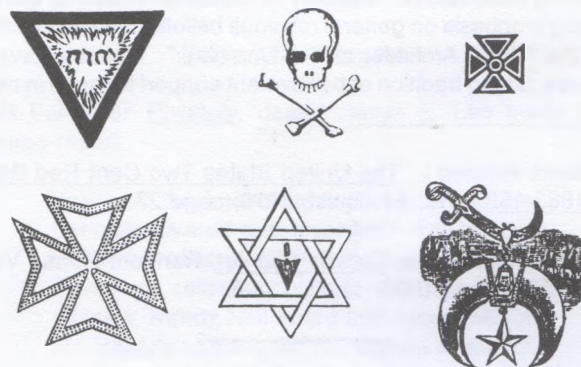


Figure 9

images raise a different question; that is, when are what may be called generic designs - triangle, crescent and star, cross, six-pointed star, etc. - intended to represent Masonic symbols? To answer this may require getting into the mind of the postmaster or clerk. One might also seek to determine if a particular postmaster was a Mason or check to see whether he used more than one Masonic symbol in cancelers.



Figure 8

Comments or advice from readers on any of the above matters would be very much welcomed. Club member Ray Koch, who is a Mason and a collector of Masonic cancels, mentioned in correspondence with the writer that blazing suns, anchors, flaming swords, Christian crosses and St. Andrew's



Figure 10

crosses (Figure 10) are some additional Masonic symbols to watch out for.

Masonry is one of the oldest and largest fraternal organizations in the world. Many of its ideas and rituals are derived from cathedral building in the Middle Ages and most of its symbols are based on the tools and practices of the building professions. Masonry is nondenominational but with strong emphasis on general religious beliefs. God is described as the "Great Architect of the Universe." Masons have, of course, a long tradition of benevolent support to those in need.

¹Willard, Edward L. The United States Two Cent Red Brown of 1883-1887, H.L. Lindquist, 1970, page 27.

²Glorya Hale Books, Classic Clip Art, Random House Value Publishing, Inc., 1996, pages 134-5.

Unusual "DUE/5" as a Cancel

by Roger D. Curran

Figure 1 illustrates a J4 canceled by a "DUE/5" enclosed in a circle. I have been unable to find this marking in the literature. Philadelphia used a similar-appearing "DUE/3" and I thus assume the "DUE/5" is also from Philadelphia. The two Philadelphia "DUE/3" markings illustrated in Figure 2 are photocopies of actual strikes on covers in Warren Bower's collection. I suspect they both come



Figure 1



Figure 2

from the same handstamp, the one on the right showing a later use after it became caked with ink. The diameter of the circle is about 19mm. for both markings and also for the "DUE/5". The same or similar Philadelphia "DUE/3" marking is illustrated in Arfken¹ and Clarke.²

I suspect that the "DUE 5" canceling a 5 cent postage due stamp came from a cover rated 5 cents due. (On each of the covers from which the Figure 2 illustrations were taken, there is a 3 cent postage due stamp canceled by another strike of the "DUE/3" marking.) If the cover was due 5 cents, it probably was an unpaid letter coming into the U.S. from a country that was not a member of the Universal Postal Union. Such unpaid letters were not subject to the doubling penalty that applied to unpaid letters from U.P.U. countries. They were only charged the deficiency, which would have been 5 cents, unless it was a double-weight or more cover.

Additional information about the "DUE/5" marking and your comments will be welcomed.

Bibliography

¹Arfken, George B. POSTAGE DUE The United States Large Numeral Postage Due Stamps 1879-1894, Collectors Club of Chicago (1991), p. 170.

²Clarke, Tom A Catalog of PHILADELPHIA POSTMARKS 18th Century to Present Part III Tom Clarke, Davie, FL (1992) p. 18-13.

Exhibit Photocopy Available

A second generation photocopy of Matthew Kewriga's award-winning exhibit entitled "Cancellations on the 2-cent Vermilion Banknote is available for \$16.00 postpaid from Tuck Taylor at his address listed on the masthead. This fine exhibit won a Large Vermeil in the youth division at PACIFIC 97. (Matthew remounted the exhibit and it subsequently received Gold awards in the youth divisions at STAMPSHOW 97 and the National Philadelphia Show.) In the introduction he stated:

"It is the purpose of this exhibit to show selected copies of representative types, styles, and varieties of cancellations on this issue. Special emphasis is placed on fancy cancellations, while unusual postal usages and destinations are shown to illustrate more common cancels."

Just to mention one of the many interesting cancellations, Matthew shows a New York double circle of the general type illustrated below, with "DLO" for Dead Letter Office, in the center. Your editor has never seen another example. The photocopy runs to 80 pages and is bound.



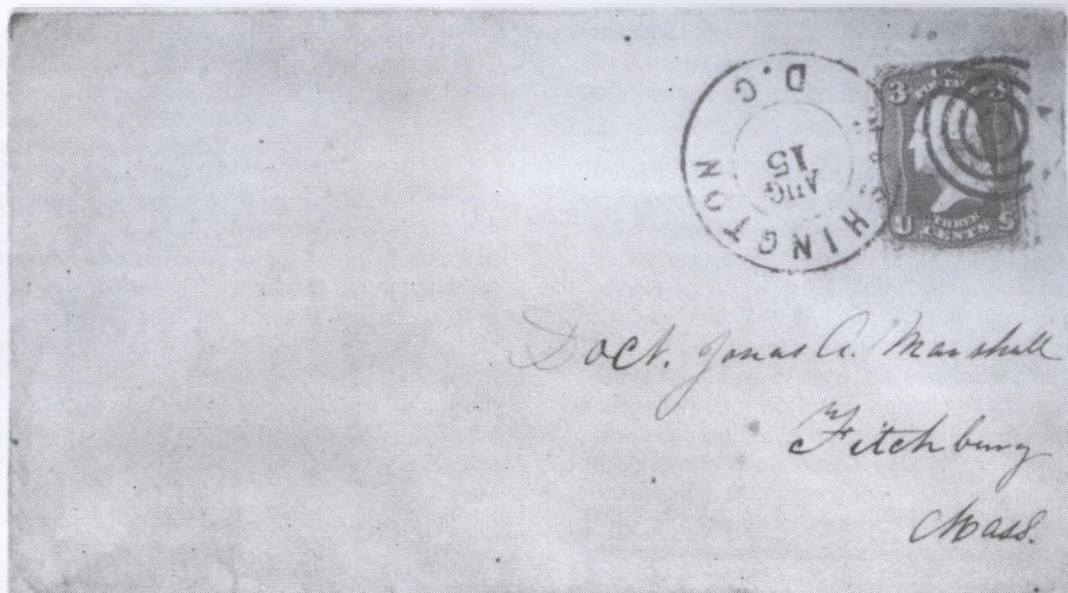


Figure 1

Killers to the Left

by Roger D. Curran

In the Fall 1996 NEWS, we illustrated on page 96 a postal card bearing a received marking that consisted of a star killer positioned to the left of the CDS, rather than to the right as would be normal. We speculated that the handstamp was designed to cancel stamps placed on the left side of covers, an occurrence that happened with some frequency. We now encounter another example (Figure 1), this time from Washington, D.C. In the case of this cover, using the killer to cancel the stamp, while also applying the CDS, required turning the handstamp upside down. Interestingly, Tuck Taylor reports an example of a different Washington killer-to-the-left duplex that was also applied upside down to cancel a stamp on the right side of the cover. (The one obvious difference between the two markings is that Tuck's CDS has a year date present.) His example is dated June 1864.

Although there is obviously too little to go on at this point, I wonder if possibly such Washington duplexes were not regularly used in the way intended because it was just too inconvenient to pick up and put down different handstamps, depending on whether the postage stamp was on the left or right side of the cover, during the regular course of postmarking mail, but rather only saw occasional general use when an extra handstamp was needed.

I would appreciate learning of other uses of such devices from Washington, D.C. or elsewhere and would welcome comments.

Noted With Interest

In his Fall 1997 Philately, dealer James E. Lee made the following report:

"Have all the known unusual fancy cancels been discovered and recorded? Far from it! Recently, while mounting the huge John R. Boker, Jr. collection of 1850's-1880's fancy cancels, Randy Neil noted that nearly half of Mr. Boker's cancels did not appear in any of the known philatelic literature on the subject. What this means, of course, is that there are good quantities of U.S. fancy cancels yet to be discovered - so the field is still wide open for anyone to pursue."

Jim's philatelic literature catalog is available for \$5.00 (refundable with first order) at P.O. Drawer 250, Wheeling, IL 60090.

Promote Our Club

One of the ways we can publicize the USCC is to set out a stack of flyers on the literature or information tables at shows we attend. The USCC has a supply of such flyers just waiting for you! So please think of our club when planning to attend stamp shows and request flyers from the NEWS editor to take along and thereby introduce others to the USCC and its benefits.



"Maltese Cross" Cancels

by Roger D. Curran

Let's see now, this question needs to be formulated carefully. What was the design of the first handstamp obliteration intended to cancel adhesive postage stamps? To answer that we must look beyond these American shores, of course, to England where the Penny Black and Two Penny Blue were issued in May 1840. In April 1840 a General Post Office circular was sent out introducing postmasters to a new responsibility that no post offices in the world ever had before; namely, to cancel postage stamps found on mail posted at their respective offices. A reduced-size copy of this circular is presented in Figure 1.¹ A full size illustration of the original obliterator is shown as Figure 2.² Many variations of this basic design are to be found through the years of its use.

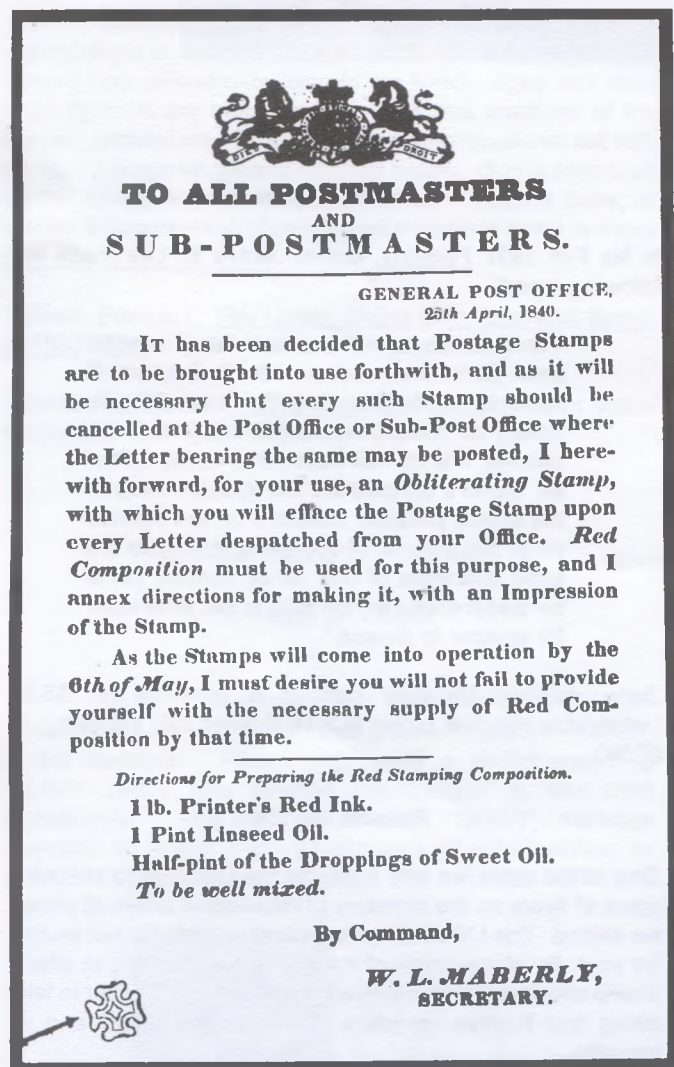


Figure 1



Figure 2

These early British cancels are called "Maltese cross" cancels and although not a technically accurate designation, this term is undoubtedly here to stay as the philatelic description. Actually, the Maltese cross has eight sharp points as illustrated in Figure 3.³ This cross was carried into battle by the Knights of Saint John, also known as the Knights Hospitallers or Knights of Malta, during the Crusades. Founded in the late 1000s in a Jerusalem monastery and dedicated to John the Baptist, this Roman Catholic order initially limited its activities to caring for pilgrims and for the sick. Beginning in the 1500s its headquarters was located in Malta.



Figure 3

I suppose these cancels - and U.S. counterparts of a generally similar design - have been known as Maltese crosses for many, many years. Looking back at early U.S. cancellation literature, we see in Figure 4 "Maltese Cross" cancels illustrated by William B. Evans, M.D. in the June 3, 1933 issue of *Stamps* magazine which he defined as crosses having "... four triangular arms of equal length." I would put it as follows: any cross with four sections that are wider at the ends and slope inward toward the center. Incidentally, H.P. Atherton illustrated many of the Figure 4 cancels, also terming them Maltese crosses, in a January 4, 1926 *McKeel's* article.

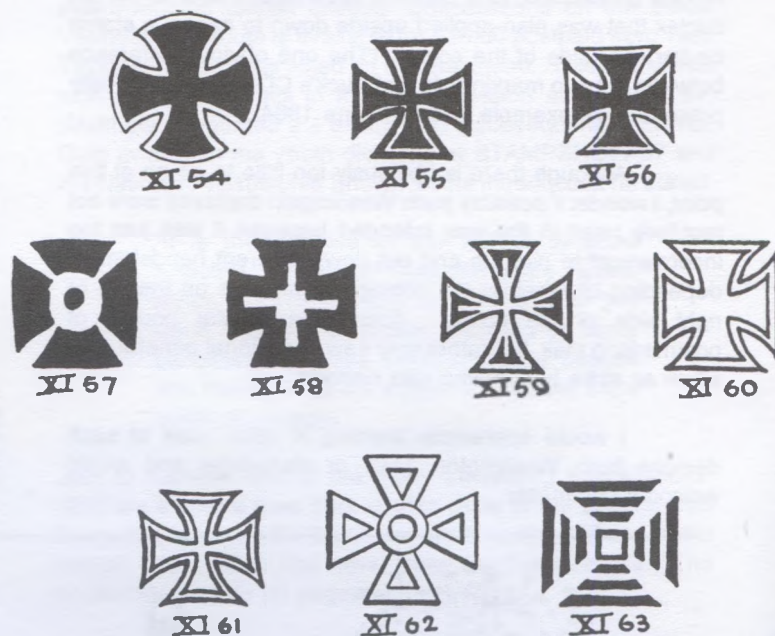


Figure 4

Such cancels are, of course, very common on Banknote stamps. It would not be surprising to collectors to

learn that Edward Willard, who made a comprehensive study of the two cent red brown of 1883-1887, concluded the following: "The second most prolific form of killer in this period is the Maltese cross."⁴ (The star in its various forms was the most common killer.) Maltese crosses on the 1861 and 1869 issues are much scarcer but by no means rare. Figure 4 shows several Maltese crosses on off-cover stamps. Figure 5 shows three examples closer to the original Maltese cross design.



Figure 4



Figure 5

Not many Maltese crosses are seen on 1851 and 1857 issue stamps. Simpson's U.S. Postal Markings 1851-61 lists two which are illustrated herewith as Figure 6.⁵ An off-cover stamp I have admired was lot 216 in the Siegel sale of



Figure 6

the Amonette collection in October 1996. It bears a large, rather crude Maltese cross in blue ink. The stamp is a Scott #10 from plate 5 early. This plate was in use from July through late 1851. Since most 3 cent 1851 stamps are found used fairly soon after being printed, this cancel was probably applied in 1851 or early 1852. I have long thought how nice it would be to find a Maltese cross cancel on one of our first issue stamps, the 1847s. There may well be such but I have not seen or heard of one. If any reader can report an

example, he or she is urged to do so. Also, it would be interesting to learn of other Maltese crosses on 1851 or 1857 issue stamps and of unusual examples on any issue.

Bibliography

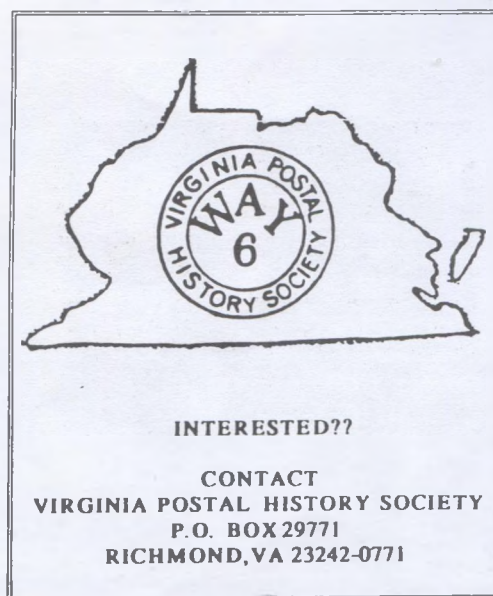
¹Alcock, R.D. and Holland, F.D. The Maltese Cross Cancellations of the United Kingdom, R.C. Alcock, Ltd., Cheltenham, England (1970), p. 109.

²Ibid, p. 1.

³Ibid., p. 38.

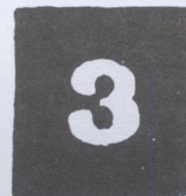
⁴Willard, Edward L. The United States Two Cent Red Brown of 1883-1887 H.P. Lindquist Publications, Inc., New York, NY, (1970) p. 39.

⁵Alexander, Thomas J. Simpson's U.S. Postal Markings 1851-1861, U.S. Philatelic Classics Society, Inc. (1979) pp. 144-5, 148-9.



Help Wanted

We are planning an article on the commonly available but widely varied "Boston negatives," two examples of which are illustrated below. If you collect or study these cancels, or have done so in the past, and are willing to be consulted on the subject, please advise the editor at the address on the masthead. We want to have the benefit of your observations and thoughts which will be fully acknowledged.



Large "R" Cancel

by Roger D. Curran

A cancel that is noted on one cent Banknotes (1879 and 1881 issues) is a large "R" that has long been considered a precancel. This owes, I believe, to the fact that some stamps show parts of more than one "R," thus strongly indicating that plates with multiple "R" designs were employed to cancel sheets of stamps before they were separated and affixed to mail. Both solid and hollow versions have been noted and we illustrate the two tracings that appear in Jim Cole's Banknote era cancels book.¹ Perhaps the most recognizable feature is the upsweep at the end of the right leg of the "R." Several actual examples are illustrated in Figure 2. In two cases you'll note that the "R" is inverted in relation to the stamp and, in one strike, the "R" appears to be partially hollow at the top due, presumably, to a lack of ink on the surface of the "R" canceler.

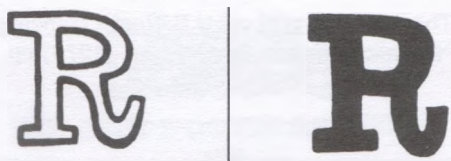


Figure 1

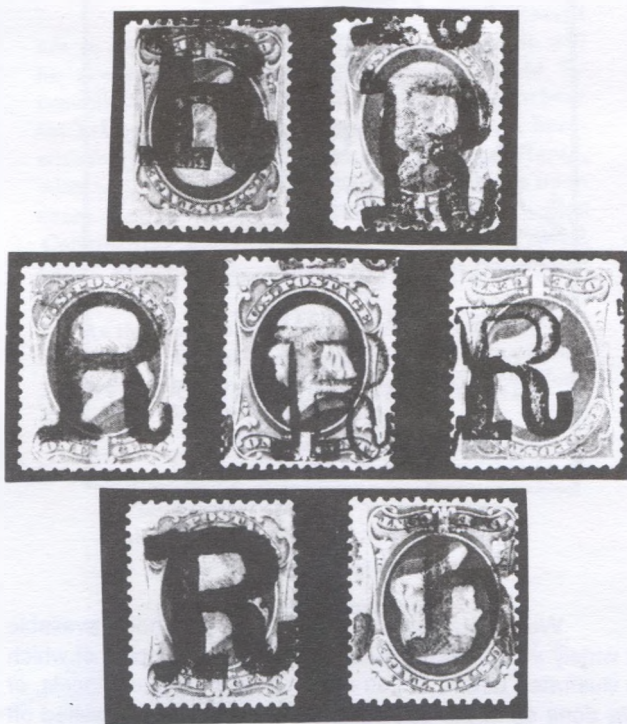


Figure 2

This cancel has been attributed to Bridgeport, Connecticut. However, in his 1995 book on silent precancels, David Smith makes a contrary report under a Bridgeport heading which is quoted herewith:

"solid or hollow R 18mm. high seriffed. 2 reply covers known. Both had stamps added at a later date. Known legitimate use: On wrapper - No city of

origin.

Delete as a CT type."²

"CT" here refers to Connecticut.

Smith showed the cancel again in the back of his book under the heading of "Unidentified Silent Precancels."³ Incidentally, the examples in Figure 2 vary from about 17 1/2 to 19 1/2 mm. high.

In presenting the two tracings in Figure 1, Jim Cole attributed the hollow version to Bridgeport, the solid version to Gloucester, Massachusetts and went on to state: "It would seem likely that . . . (the two examples) would be used by the same post office but have been reported as used by different ones."

Perhaps it is reasonable to presume now that the hollow "R," if it does represent a separate cancel, is also from Gloucester but with the idea that we should at the same time remain alert to on-cover uses that can provide verification.

We'll close with the 2 cent red (Scott #220) illustrated in Figure 3 bearing what is at least a somewhat similar cancel, albeit very much a partial strike. Could this be a late use of an "R" by the same post office, but this time on a stamp that paid the first class rate?

Readers are urged to add to the story by reporting any on-cover uses of this cancel or off-cover uses on other than 1879 and 1881 one cent stamps.



Figure 3

¹James M. Cole Cancellations and Killers of the Banknote Era 1870-1894, U.S. Philatelic Classics Society (1995), page 199.

²David W. Smith Silent Precancels, The Precancel Stamp Society (1995), page 10.

³Smith, page 145.

U.S.C.C. Library Addition

A bound volume of photocopies of two New York City cover collections assembled by John Valenti has been placed in the U.S.C.C. Library and is available for circulation. The first consists of 100+ domestic circular and printed matter covers bearing 1 cent or 2 cent Banknotes plus some additional covers to foreign destinations. The second collection is a selection of about 50 letter-rate covers bearing 3 cent adhesives. A number of interesting cancels are included, some of which have appeared in the NEWS.