



Cancellation Club NEWS

Vol. 24, No. 4, Whole No. 230, Winter 1999

New York "Ocean Mail" Postmark

by Roger D. Curran

The New York "ocean mail" postmark illustrated in Figure 1¹ is known used from February 25, 1854 through November 1, 1861. The overwhelming majority of uses are on mail to California and to a much lesser extent Oregon. Several covers dated February 25, 1854 have been reported. Insofar as I know, all are addressed to eastern U.S. cities. The earliest reported use of this postmark on mail to the west coast is March 6, 1854. There are a very limited number of usages known on covers addressed to foreign destinations, most notably to Cuba.

Figure 1



Apart from the February 25, 1854 covers, usages to domestic addressees not on the west coast are quite rare. On page 353 of his Special Service, Ashbrook illustrated such a cover and described it as follows:

"Here we have an unsealed piece of circular mail with a single 1 cent 1851, Type IV from

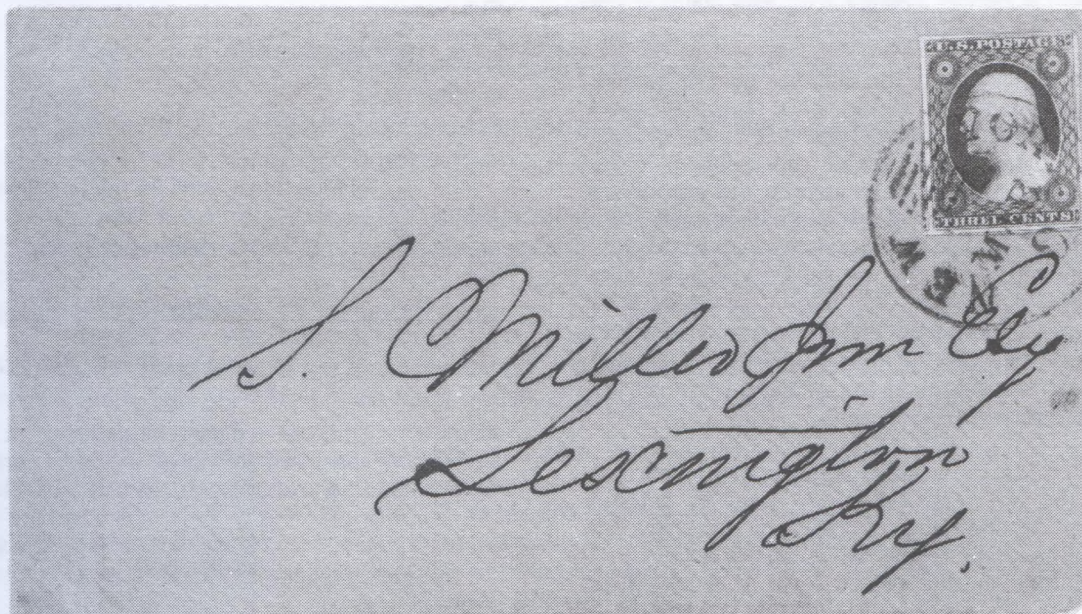
New York to Killingworth, Conn., tied by an 'O.M.' strike of 'Mar 29.' There is no evidence of year use but from the shade and impression of the 1 cent stamp, my guess is that the year was 1854."

On page 19 of the July 1965 Western Express, W. Scott Pollard, M.D. reported a folded letter dated March 8, 1854 addressed to New Orleans bearing two single 3 cent 1851 stamps canceled by a New York "ocean mail" postmark dated March 9. A second March 9 cover is illustrated herewith as Figure 2. It is addressed to Lexington, Ky. There is no docketing or enclosure to indicate the year date. However, there is a pencil note on the back in an anonymous hand that states: "Stamp late 1853 or early 1854 printing per C. Chase."

One surmises that perhaps there was sporadic use of the marking, very early after its introduction, on non-west coast domestic mail. If readers can report additional pertinent covers, please do so.

Hubert C. Skinner and Amos Eno United States Cancellations 1845-1869, p.342.

Figure 2



Dear Reader,

Here we are progressing rapidly through the last year of the millennium. I trust all members residing in northern climes coped well with the winter weather and its challenges. We had our share in central Pennsylvania and it's nice to have a hobby like stamp collecting to occupy us for hours when staying inside becomes more or less mandatory.

I want to thank the large number of members who promptly paid their 1999 dues. For those who haven't yet paid, a reminder is enclosed. Please take a moment now to write that check and send it to Roger Rhoads. We surely don't want to lose you and, by responding now, extra effort and expense will be avoided.

Tuck, Roger Rhoads, Carl and I were all reelected to our current positions. And we welcome the Club's new Governor at large, Arthur Beane, and express appreciation for his willingness to help. Arthur is introduced with the brief "bio" that follows. He was born in Cambridge, Mass. and graduated from Brown University '42. He went to work for John Hancock Life Ins. Co., followed by a short stint in the U.S. Maritime Service, and then spent 12 years with Boston University. Arthur became self-employed in 1972 as an antique and household appraiser. He has always been interested in antiques and historic houses and has served on the board of three historic houses in the region where he lives. He became interested in stamps as a small boy and is now interested in Massachusetts postal history, fancy cancels, U.S. revenue stamps and Wheel of Fortune cancelled covers from all states. Arthur has served as a director of the U.S. Philatelic Classics Society and was for many years the president of the Philatelic Group of Boston. He resides now in Duxbury, Mass. with his wife in a retirement complex.

I'm pleased to report that U.S.C.C. auction #2 was a success, realizing more than \$800. However, it is very important that we increase the number of sellers and not rely primarily on a small percentage of the club membership. We have included a flyer as a reminder to us all to go through those collections to see what we can offer for sale. In so doing, we support the U.S.C.C., provide an opportunity for other club members to enhance their collections, and garner some cash (which is always useful!) The next issue of the NEWS will include the catalog for auction #3.

As we did last year, the club will hold its annual seminar and meeting at the Philadelphia National Stamp Exhibition (PNSE) which will run October 1-3, 1999. We will again sponsor a one-frame exhibit "competition." As reported in the last issue, we really enjoyed the experience in 1998 and decided to reprise it. More information will follow in the June NEWS but if it is feasible for you to join us, mark your calendars now! Our seminar/meeting will take place on Saturday, October 2. And even if you cannot be there, please give thought to entering a one-frame (16 page) exhibit. If you have any questions about exhibiting or related logistics, contact Tuck Taylor at the address listed on the masthead or call him at (610)-388-2558.

The U.S.C.C. has grown considerably in the last several years but we must continually work to get our message out and into the hands of collectors who share our interests. If you have any recommendations of actions that the club might take in that regard – or that individual

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members might take – please let us know. It goes without saying that the more members we have contributing their ideas, support and knowledge, the better our club will be.

Roger Curran

Through the courtesy of Abe Boyarsky, the *NEWS* has the opportunity of presenting correspondence to and from J. Arthur Ritchie about an outstanding cancellation which is illustrated herewith. Figure 1 is from *United States Cancellations 1845-1869* by Hubert Skinner and Amos Eno. The Figure 2 illustrations are from *Connecticut Post Offices and Postmarks* by Arthur J. Warmesley. Mr. Warmesley notes that representations in his book are not "drawn to scale." Figure 3 comes from *Fancy Cancellations on 19th Century United States Postage Stamps*, (second edition, revised) by Michael Zareski. In both Skinner-Eno and Zareski, reference is made to the postmaster being named Fox. Figure 4, described as "The fox, or 'Putnam Wolf' . . . used at Hackanum (sic), Connecticut," comes from the column of William Evans, M.D. in the September 24, 1932 issue of *Stamps* magazine. This was the second installment of what was to become the long-running "U.S.



Figure 1



Figure 2



Figure 3



Figure 4

Cancellations" column by Dr. Evans (later by William W. Reynolds) that continued until 1946. In the first installment, Evans summarized previous U.S. cancellation literature and began by stating the following:

"A number of years ago John A. Ritchie undertook the task of collecting and illustrating all known varieties of U.S. Cancellations. Before the work had progressed very far his health became impaired and it was necessary to abandon the undertaking. He furnished to each co-operator a proof sheet of the illustrations, many of which were new."

This was presumably the first attempt to present organized information about U.S. cancellations.

Before getting to the correspondence, we begin with an article that predates the correspondence and is mentioned in one of the letters. The January 25, 1919 *Mekeel's Weekly Stamp News* ran an article by Cotton C. Doyle entitled "McVittles vs. Cancellations." The article is primarily in the form of an imaginary dialog between "McVittles" and "Casey" about a cover McVittles bought from "O'Hoolihan." Portions are extracted below.

"'Is it true what I hear that you've added a goat to your other troubles?' inquired Casey, between puffs at his pipe. . .

Casey took the envelope McVittles tossed on the counter and examined it closely.

'A goat is it?' said he. If that's a goat the feller who made it had better take lessons in drawin' from a mustard plaster. He'd draw a cow and every man who saw it would say, "ah! What a fine hippopotamus!" That's no goat at all. It's a fox, and runnin' as if all the hound dogs in the Meadow Brook Hunt was tight after it.'

'Go out to the zoo and come back and try again,' said McVittles. 'Goat it isn't and fox it isn't, but wolf it is, and the most famous wolf that ever stole sheep in all New England, Casey.'

'You don't say! But fox or wolf, how comes it on this old envelope? I see the postmark says 1864--were there wolves around New England then?'

'Probably not, Casey, anyhow not fourlegged ones, but as I just told you, this wolf was famous and its memory lived long after its bones had been ground up for fertilizer. Have you never heard of Israel Putnam?'

'I might have. What stamp is he on? This one here is just a common three center and the face on it is the same noble profile of the great George that I have seen a million times before. I never heard of Prisdint Putnam, but I raymimber there was a Gin'ral Putnam way back in the Revolutionary War.'

'The same, Casey, and a grand American he was. This cancellation commimorates his exceptional bravery and makes even a common stamp very desirable in the eyes of stamp collectors. Putnam tracked the wolf -- an old she one -- to its lair and crawled into the cave with a rope around his legs and shot her with his old muzzle-loader and was hauled out by the rope with his eyes and his digestion full of smoke and lived to tell about it, and the wolf didn't.'

'What part of New England is it; I'd like to see it myself-maybe the cave is full of old stamps?'

'Maybe the packet of a thousand Continentals f'r 25 cents in the window is full of Post Office Mauritius too, Casey. Give me your quarter and find them if you can. The wolf den is not far from the town named after Ginral Putnam up in the State of Connecticut . . .'

'Are there many cancellations like that? I don't raymimber seein' anything of the kind before. Who made them and how and when and why?'

'One question at a time, Casey. There are lots of them. Stars and shields and bumble bees and dickey birds and even the Evil One himself, tail and all, with his pitchfork in his hand waitin' impatiently f'r his first chance at the man who invented watermarks. Durin' the Civil War the postmasters often spent all their spare time between Union vic'tries cuttin' them out of a plug of wood or a second hand cork. Every time the Army of the Potomac welcomed a new commandin' gin'ral with hope and prayer half the postmasters from Maine to Minnesota sharpened their trusty jack-knives and started whittlin'. Frequently they were disappointed, or every old three center you'd find now-a-days would have a different cancellation on it. . . .'

'And now that I see the connection between this here zoological specimen and ancient and modern American history perhaps you'll tell me how you got O'Hoolihan's goat, or wolf, away from him. Did you use a black-jack or T N T.'

'Neither, Casey. Twas like this - O'Hoolihan tried to sell me about fifty covers with three centers of the vintages of '61 to '66 on them. Nearly half of the stamps was pretty dark red like this one with the wolf on it, and, for a wonder, fine copies. He wanted me to believe those were No. 66 that the catalog calls 'lake' but by good luck I had a copy of No. 66 and showed him how he was wrong, never lettin' on the whole truth or that I'd noticed the wolf.'

'What d' you mean - the whole truth?'

'Just this, - what the catalog calls lake is not a true stamp at all but only a finished proof - a trial color. Not one of them was ever sold for postage. When the printin' fellers tried to match that color for regular stamps they couldn't do it and soon gave up tryin', and these dark ones is the nearest they got. The catalog prices number sixty-six at fifteen dollars unused and nothing used and the real lake red stamp isn't priced at all, or even mentioned. No doubt they were made in '63 and occasionally used as late as '64, barrin' hangovers. A good used copy is worth maybe five dollars, especially on the letter and I would buy unused copies happily at fifteen dollars each all day long, if I could.'

'And O'Hoolihan didn't know that?'

'He did not. He's found it out since - I told him myself. When he saw none of his were like my number sixty-six he decided his were just common reds, badly oxidized, and thought he was gettin' out of me about ten times what they were worth. Havin' stung me before naturally he thought I would be just as easy pickin' the second time. But very foxy he was - foxier than any wolf.'

'How much for any I happen to like says I.'

'Ten cents each if I pick 'em and a quarter apiece if you pick 'em, and I won't break the lot for less than a dollar, says he.'

'He was out to stick you either way. Heads he wins; tails you lose. How did you settle it?'

'I did the stickin' myself and I settled it and him all at once. I stuck the Putnam Wolf in my pocket and I stuck the others in the drawer under the counter and locked it and threw the key over the transom and handed him a five dollar bill.'

'What's the idea? say he, satisfying himself that the bill was genuine.'

'I'll take 'em all, says I - and you pick 'em.'"

Now with the above background, the correspondence is presented. Figures 5 and 6 provide the texts of a letter from Mr. Ritchie to the Hockanum postmaster and the response it generated.

March 11, 1920

Postmaster,
Hockanum, Conn.

Dear Sir:

Enclosed is a reprint of the first article of my contemplated work on United States Postmarks and Cancellations.

In this connection, I am very anxious to obtain information regarding the origin and use of the Hockanum Fox cancellation used in Hockanum, Conn. I am most anxious to obtain all the correlative and historical data regarding this cancellation that I can and if you are not able to supply it all, I should be grateful if you would tell me how to go about to dig it up.

As a concrete illustration of what I desire, here are a few of the questions I am anxious to have answered.

- 1-Is the Postmaster who first used this stamp still alive? If so, what is his address?
- 2-If he is not now alive, do you know of any of his direct descendants from whom I could get information?
- 3-What color ink was used?
- 4-When was it first used?
- 5-Is the original cancelling stamp still in existence or is the present one a copy?

Enclosed is a stamped envelope for your reply.

With many thanks in anticipation,

Very truly yours,

J. Arthur Ritchie

Figure 5

Mr. J.A. Ritchie

October 21, 1920

Dear Sir--

Your letter of Mar. 11th to the P.M. of Hockanum which I return to refresh your memory, was handed first to one relative and then another until it finally reached Mrs. Baker who was a second cousin of Dudley Fox and who for a time lived in his family. He has been dead since August 23 '89. He has no nearer relatives than niece and a half brother who remember he was a P.M. in '66 but are not positive about any other year.

Mr. Fox had a fad of using the head of a fox wherever he could and Mrs. Baker recalls very distinctly his cutting the fox on pieces of cork, striking same on a pad of blank ink and cancelling stamps on envelopes. She knows that they quickly wore out, or the eyes of the fox would fill, and he was very fussy about having that clear, so that new ones were frequently made, always on cork, and the old ones would be lying around and finally thrown away. She has not seen one since and is sure none is in existence.

By the way, when your letter reached us there were no illustrations therein. Mrs. Baker vividly recalled the facts however and regrets she is unable to give you further facts.

Most of the delay in replying was caused before letter reached us. Yesterday we drove home ten miles in hopes of getting more information than we had, from a niece of Mr. Fox, but she could only corroborate the above. Very sorry you could not have had this before, unsatisfactory tho it may be.

Yours truly,

Isaiah Baker, Jr.

Figure 6

Figure 7 provides the text of a letter from Elliott Perry to Mr. Ritchie. What a remarkably full and interesting response it was! Figure 8 is Mr. Perry's photo of the entrance to the cave of the "Putnam Wolf."



Mr. J. Arthur Ritchie,
8305 Andrews Avenue,
New York.

February 24, 1920

Dear Sir,

Your two letters are received. The Victory Special of Mekeel's for Jan 31, 1918 contained the only write-up of the Putnam Wolf which I know of. A copy of the Weekly for this date was sent you the same day as the letter and should have reached you before this. The article is in a piece of fiction headed "McVittles V.S. Cancellations" or something like that. It is really a combination of several historical facts not all related to each other. I think there is no connection between the Hockanum Fox cancellation and the story of Putnam Wolf but it may be that Dudley Fox knew the story of the wolf and that furnished the inspiration for his cancellation. The name Hockanum seems to belong to the Connecticut Valley in the vicinity of Hartford rather than to the Quinebaug valley around Putnam. In the town of Rookville, Conn. about 10 miles east of Hartford there is an old worsted mill known as the Hockanum and run by the Hockanum Mfg. Co.

You will probably find a biography of Israel Putnam in the New York library if not in a good history of the Revolutionary War. The main facts in the wolf story are as follows. Putnam lived on a farm in the plateau west of the Quinebaug River about seven miles south and west of what is now the town of Putnam, Conn. (named after him). The place is still called Putnam Farm and is probably partly in the town of Pomfret and partly in the adjoining town of Brooklyn. The plateau is surrounded by steep hills, heavily wooded and rather wild and sparsely settled even today. The farmers in the vicinity were greatly troubled for quite a while by the depredations of an old she wolf who raided their flocks of sheep and eluded all efforts to kill or capture her. Finally she was trailed to her lair which I am unable to locate exactly on the map but which probably was in the broken country about two miles west of the Putnam farm house. Putnam volunteered to crawl into the den and kill her. A rope was tied around his leg so he could signal to those who remained outside and he went in taking his musket. I don't know how long the cave is nor how far he went but presently he saw two balls of fire - the wolf's eyes - glaring at him in the blackness and fired between them. He then kicked on the rope and was hauled out full of smoke and dirt but unharmed. After a while as nothing was heard in the cave he crawled in again and found the wolf shot through the head and stone dead. He dragged her out and the sheep stealing stopped. This must have been some years before the Revolutionary War.

The story is given from my recollection of a schoolboy history and is accepted as a fact in that part of Windham county. The cave is located in a side hill and the whole side of the hill is so strewn with great boulders that it took three of us about twenty minutes last summer to find the hole although we were within about 200 feet of it all the time. The entrance - as you can judge by the photo - is big enough so a man can almost walk in by stooping and the hole appears to go straight back into the hill with a slight downward declivity but is so dark you can see in only fifteen feet or so.

Putnam took an active part in the Revolutionary War. It is said he was plowing in his field when the minute man from Concord reached him with the news of the skirmish at Lexington April 19, 1775 and that he unhitched his horse and rode for Lexington leaving the plow standing where it was. At the battle of Bunker Hill he gave the famous command "Don't fire boys till you see the whites of their eyes" - which had a disastrous effect, for the red coats. Later in the war when mixed up in the fighting around New London he was surrounded by the British but rode his horse down a long flight of stone steps and gave them the merry ha-ha and good-by. My recollection is that they offered a bigger reward for him, dead or alive, than the colonial farmers had offered for the wolf. Yes, a real he-man and no mistake. But anyone who could make a living on a farm in that part of Conn. must have had an unusual will and constitution. Don't know when he was born but think he was fifty, or maybe sixty, at Bunker Hill.

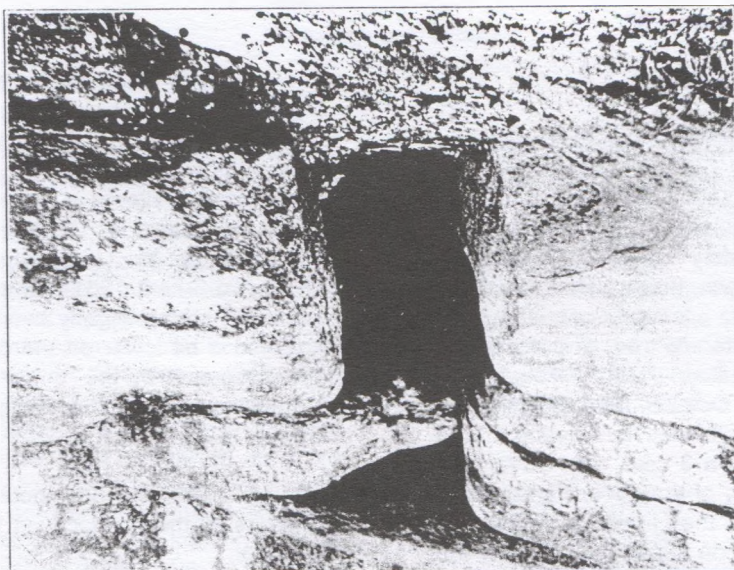
I think the old Hartford Post Road to Boston went through or near Putnam, Conn. and three or four miles north of the Putnam Farm. It is sixty miles from Putnam to Boston and about forty miles from Putnam to Hartford. I think what is now the automobile road known as the Nutmeg Trail is the old Hartford Post Road and altho there are several ridges of big hills between Putnam and Hartford, "Old Put" was so well known all through that part of New England that the story of the wolf may have been and probably was very familiar to people living in Hartford and the vicinity. Communication usually went up and down the valleys because of the steepness of the hills but on account of the Post Road news traveled cross country to a greater extent than might be imagined. I was born only 15 miles from the Wolf Den and should know more about it than I do.

Y.V.T.

Elliott Perry

Figure 7

Figure 8



By the way, recent issues of The American Philatelist have carried a Ventura Stamp Company advertisement illustrating in color various stamps and covers including an off-cover 10 cent 1861 issue stamp with a wonderful strike of the Hockanum fox.

Editor's note: Regarding the 3 cent 1861 lake shade mentioned by "McVittles," we are reminded of an article by Robert B. Meyersburg in the May 1983 Chronicle. Mr. Meyersburg stated that he had occasionally seen, over a period of years, copies of the 3 cent 1861 issue that "... approximated in color my recollection of the color of the lake proof ..." but he did not actually compare them to the proof. Mr. Meyersburg then told of acquiring a particular 3 cent 1861 issue on cover:

"... the shade of which was so striking that it ordered the comparison made forthwith. Result: I could see no difference in color, even under controlled light conditions, including selective filtration. This coincidence started me keeping records - and in the intervening five years I have seen another half-dozen copies that could pass for lake.

During the past year I became aware of the technological capabilities of x-ray fluorescence analysis (XRFA) of stamps in order to learn the chemical composition of the ink through its x-ray reemissions. The stamp and proof in question were subjected to such an examination. Result: both revealed the presence of substantial levels of mercury as a soluble salt, which does not appear in any of the other red shades of the three cent stamp, iron oxide being the prime colorant in them.

This set of events leads me to the natural conclusion that there is a three cent lake (Scott #66) which was regularly issued, but in limited quantity."

As of 1998, however, this stamp is still listed as a trial color proof in the Scott Specialized Catalogue of U.S. Stamps.

In the U.S.C.C. Mailbag

Dear Club Members,

As most of you know, in December I sent out a note asking if anyone had any 65's, 88's or 94's to sell. I have been buying primarily from dealers and auctions for a couple of years now and have formed a reasonable collection. I remember reading a quote from an old time dealer who said that the amount of material in the hands of dealers is really quite small compared to the vast amount held by collectors. I figured why not go to the source, or at least one source I had a list for, the U.S.C.C. members. I thought that it might be possible, as Wes Shellen said in his reply, to "shake loose a few stamps from the members."

I was quite surprised by the response. Within just a few weeks, I received back something like a 15% response.

Some members had items to sell, others didn't, others wanted more specific information on my wants and some saw an opportunity to inquire after their own specialty. I ended up buying quite a few stamps. In addition, I traded some material and was even given a couple of items. The quality of cancels is pretty well explained with photocopies and this is the method I requested. I intend on ordering more material this way in the future. I would like to thank all the members for their generous responses and look forward to continuing correspondence and association with the valuable contacts I have made here.

Regards,

Lynn Johnson
22127 Providencia Street
Woodland Hills, CA 91364

The Leominster "3"

by Roger D. Curran

In the Spring 1998 NEWS, we discussed very briefly the well-known and popular Leominster, MA rating numeral "3" cancels used in the 1850s and early 1860s. Because Leominster "3" cancels are consistently struck completely on the stamp with typically very clear impressions, these were considered for years to be precancels. Indeed, one still sees references to the Leominster "3" as a precancel. However, an article entitled "More About the Leominster, Mass. '3'" in the October 1964 Chronicle by Lester Downing effectively disputes this notion. One thing Mr. Downing reports is a 3 cent 1861 cover and enclosure. A carbon rubbing of the upper right portion of the enclosure reveals the impression of the Leominster "3" as it appears on the stamp. Clearly the cancel was applied to the stamp while the stamp was on the cover containing the enclosure. Those interested in the subject are urged to read this fine article.

We mentioned in the Spring 1998 NEWS that a 3 cent 1857 cover in the collection of Arthur Beane was illustrated in the Spring 1984 NEWS showing a Leominster "3" cancel that actually had a small tie to the cover. We now show in Figure 1 a cover that presents additional evidence, although certainly not needed, that the Leominster "3" was not a precancel. The two 3 cent 1861 stamps are singles - not a pair. The left stamp slightly overlaps the right stamp and is placed a bit lower on the cover. The two stamps are tied together by the "3" on the right. This could have happened only if the stamps had been affixed to the cover first.

Readers are encouraged to report interesting covers in their collections bearing the Leominster "3" cancel.

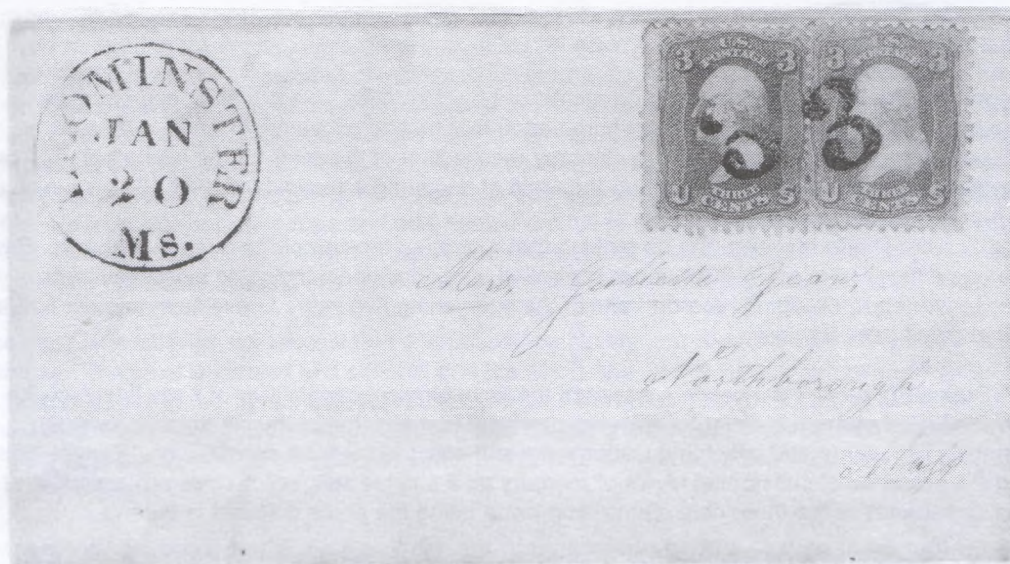


Figure 1

About Earlier Articles

The Fall 1998 NEWS reproduced a late 19th century advertisement offering postmarking handstamps. It illustrated a New York CDS apparently duplexed to an 11-bar ellipse killer containing the number "24." We mentioned that we had never seen such an ellipse from New York. Bill Bauer wrote to say that the Denver, Colorado postmark, which was also shown in the ad (see Figure 1), is unknown to him and to other Colorado Collectors with which he is acquainted. Bill suspects these were "dummies" for illustration purposes rather than impressions from handstamps actually distributed.

followed the standardized metal ellipse killer – just the opposite of what one would expect.

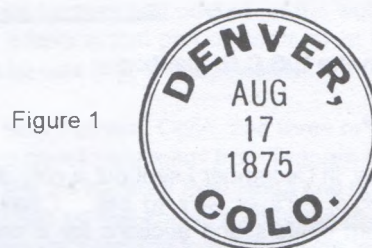


Figure 1

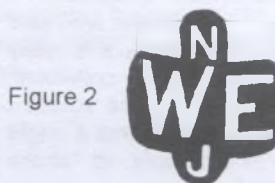


Figure 2



Figure 3

Also in the Fall 1998 NEWS, we discussed the West End, N.J. killer illustrated in Figure 2. Arthur Beane wrote to mention that Figure 2 was by no means the only "WE" killer used by West End. Negative and positive hand-carved letter killers were used as well as an ellipse with "WE" in the center. Figure 3 illustrates the ellipse as it appears in Jim Cole's Banknote era cancels book. It is interesting to note that the more primitive "WE" cancels

Tracings and Scans by Victor Kuil

Since the beginning of cancellation collecting, manual tracings of killers and postmarks were made to record and describe them. Scott Trepel states in the *Postmarks and Cancellations* book¹ on page 149 what most of us must have experienced: to make a good tracing is quite often a difficult job. But computer equipment can make our life easier. What is needed is a PC, a scanner and a printer. Mr. Trepel also mentions in the same article that scanners can be used but notes that they are expensive. Well, that was in 1990, nine years ago.

Prices of scanners have come down to levels of about \$100. These cheap scanners are good enough to make an electronic picture of the stamp. Further, most scanners come with basic image manipulation software. A scanned picture of a Scott 65 with the Skinner and Eno² PA-E7 killer in black is shown in Figure 1. This is not a difficult cancel to trace manually, but by electronically applying only a brightness change to this scan, the stamp almost disappears from the picture and leaves the killer behind. And we can do even better than that. Most scanner software contains a tool called "Selection by Magic Wand". When this tool is used the computer selects the cancel automatically. With one mouse click a subsequent "cut" command shows the cancel more accurately than the best tracing artist could do (Figure 2). It must be noted that due to the good contrast - caused by the light color of the stamp and the dark cancel - the computer had no difficulty in finding the cancel. In order to show this killer with maximum contrast I made it as black as I could.



Fig. 1

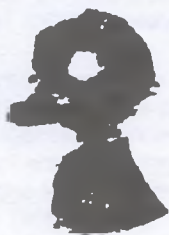


Fig. 2

As an interesting side issue, this cancel resembles a dog in the Skinner and Eno book, but here it looks like a duck. Was the tracing used in the book made from an incomplete or worn strike?

Now I'd like to show the more difficult aspect of the tracing spectrum (Figure 3). The stamp is a two-cent Interior Official. One may expect that when a tracing seems easy to make, the computer can probably also do it easily. However I have found that difficult tracing jobs are also difficult for the computer. The most difficult ones are the cancels where the color of the stamp resembles the color of the cancel. But why is the cancel in Figure 3 so difficult to trace? Because there are no sharp boundaries between the cancel and the stamp and there are plenty of thin lines.

Although it cannot be seen in the black and white Figure 3, the reddish color of the stamp shows through the gray/black cancel. There is too little contrast between the cancel and the background. Last year I showed this stamp to your editor, and he was of the opinion that the killer device might have been an engraved button or similar device. In this case I found that a manual tracing could best be made by

enlarging a picture of the stamp, making the tracing and then shrinking the tracing back to its original size. But that's easier said than done. I started several times but I finally gave up as my manual results for this particular cancel were really not acceptable.

Not all image processing software is capable of improving the contrast between the stamp and cancel. But often this is needed to increase the contrast between the fuzzy edges that separate the stamp from the cancel. Better software is necessary to do a complex electronic "tracing" job.

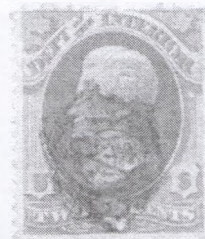


Fig. 3



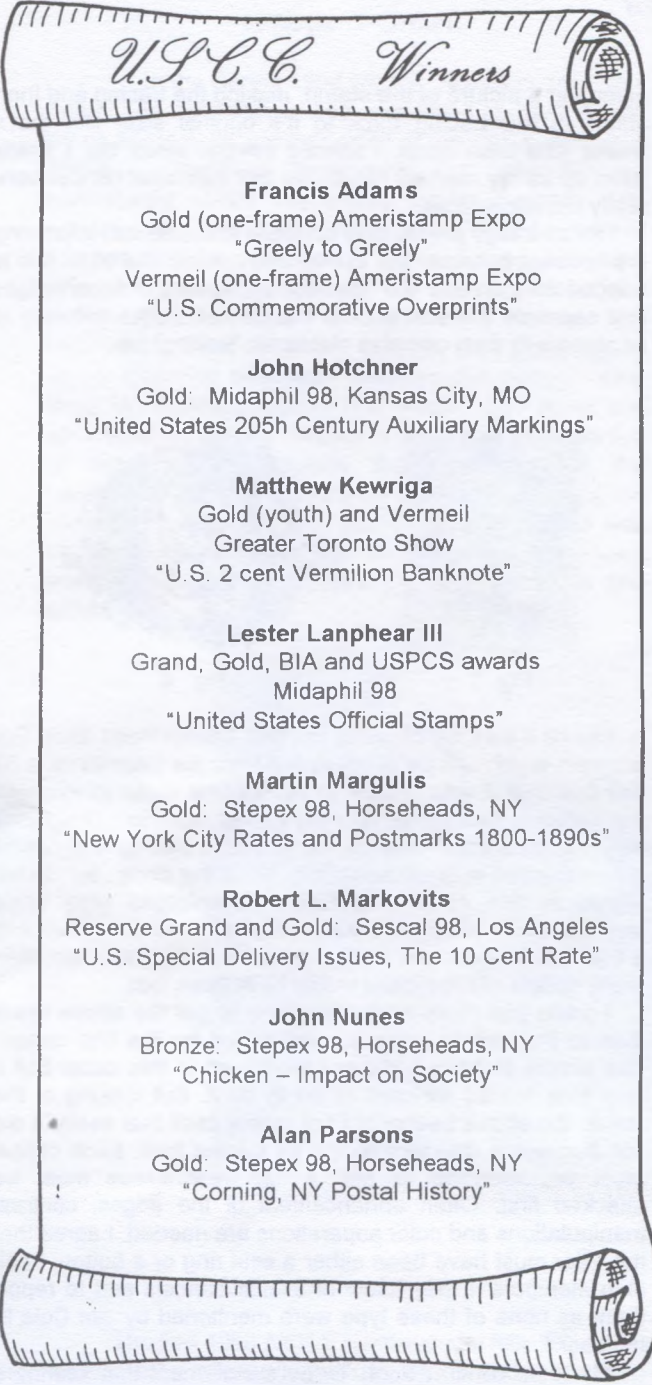
Fig. 4

Figure 4 was made using the well known Paint Shop Pro program which can be downloaded from the Internet for a 30 day free trial. I was unable to even come close to this with the software that came with my cheap scanner. This result differs from a traditional tracing in that a tracing is a cancel representation in black and white, while the computer rework shows in this case a rotated and enlarged gray scale representation of the killer strike. I could have converted it to a true black and white tracing as I did in Figure 2, but then many details of the picture would have been lost.

I admit that more work was done to get the above result than to the simple technique described for the first cancel. The simple technique did not work well in this case. But it only took me 15 minutes or so to do it. But looking at the result, the above beauty did not reveal itself that easily! I did not discover a standard recipe for tracing jobs. Each cancel must be analyzed to see which weaknesses must be attacked first. Often enhancement of the edges, contrast manipulations and color separations are needed. I agree that the killer must have been either a seal ring or a button. I ask club members if they know of similar cancels and to report them as none of these type were mentioned by Jim Cole in his book³.

My tests confirm Scott Trepel's statement that scanners work well. Low priced or expensive, they all exhibit the stamp image well enough for tracing purposes. Computers with better software work much better on image processing tasks than those with simple software. One must often undertake some trial-and-error for best results. Even with a computer, making a good tracing is rather more an art than a science. As a tip, for those who work with tracings on acetate overlays, make sure that you use transparent sheets that match the type used by your printer.

- 1) *U.S. Postmarks and Cancellations*, textbook 3 The P.F. Seminar Series, Editor Scott R. Trepel.
- 2) *United States Cancellations, 1845-1869*, Hubert C. Skinner and Amos Eno.
- 3) *Cancellations and Killers of the Banknote Era, 1870-1894*, James. M. Cole.



U.S.C.C. Winners

Francis Adams

Gold (one-frame) Ameristamp Expo

"Greely to Greely"

Vermeil (one-frame) Ameristamp Expo

"U.S. Commemorative Overprints"

John Hotchner

Gold: Midaphil 98, Kansas City, MO

"United States 20th Century Auxiliary Markings"

Matthew Kewriga

Gold (youth) and Vermeil

Greater Toronto Show

"U.S. 2 cent Vermilion Banknote"

Lester Lanphear III

Grand, Gold, BIA and USPCS awards

Midaphil 98

"United States Official Stamps"

Martin Margulis

Gold: Stepex 98, Horseheads, NY

"New York City Rates and Postmarks 1800-1890s"

Robert L. Markovits

Reserve Grand and Gold: Sescal 98, Los Angeles

"U.S. Special Delivery Issues, The 10 Cent Rate"

John Nunes

Bronze: Stepex 98, Horseheads, NY

"Chicken - Impact on Society"

Alan Parsons

Gold: Stepex 98, Horseheads, NY

"Corning, NY Postal History"

We have a fine research library available to the membership composed of over 150 books, monographs and articles specific to cancellations and postal history. We want to keep it as up-to-date as possible for the use of serious or just curious members who do not have particular resources to assist them. In trying to keep this archive as complete as practical, there are a few volumes that are good cancellation references that would be of value to add to our collection. Rather than allocating money from the treasury for their purchase, we are asking the membership for any of the following titles that they might consider donating either because they are no longer needed or are duplicates.

California Postmarks (to 1935), Los Angeles County,
J. Williams

Canadian Fancy Cancellations of the 19th Century, K. Day
and E. Smythies

A Catalog of Philadelphia Postmarks, 18th Century to the Present, parts I (1991, revised), II and III, Tom Clarke

Chicago Postal History, Harvey Karlen

Chicago Blue Postal Markings, 1870-77, Paul Berg

The Foreign Mail Cancellations of New York City 1870-1878,
William Weiss

19th Century Cleveland, Ohio Postal Markings, Thomas Allen

Postal History of Louisville, KY, Louis Cohen

Redirected Mail, Anthony Wawrukiewicz

San Francisco Postal Markings, 1847-1900, John Mahoney

U.S. Postal History Sampler, Richard Graham

The U.S. 1¢ Franklin, 1861-67, Donald Evans

U.S. Route and Station Agent Postmarks, (1986) Charles Towle

Walter D. Wesson's "Time on Bottom" Duplex Hand Cancellers, (1990) Theodore Bozarth

Look over your copy of the latest update on the library holdings dated Aug. 1996. Perhaps you may be aware of other volumes/ monographs that are not in our library. If you have such a volume that you would be willing to donate, the club would be most appreciative of your contribution.

Please send them to our librarian, William Bauer, P.O. Box 519, Unadilla, NY 13849-0519.

Roger Rhoads

Help Wanted

Part of my cancellation collection of U.S. #65's, 88's and 94's is devoted to "mystery" cancels. These are ones that I have tried to identify with no success. They certainly look like something but exactly what remains a mystery to me. I've been through all my reference books, past auction catalogs and back issues of the USCC News with no luck finding a match for these. If anyone could shed some light on these curiosities I would be interested in hearing from you. Lynn Johnson, 22127 Providencia St., Woodland Hills, CA 91364.



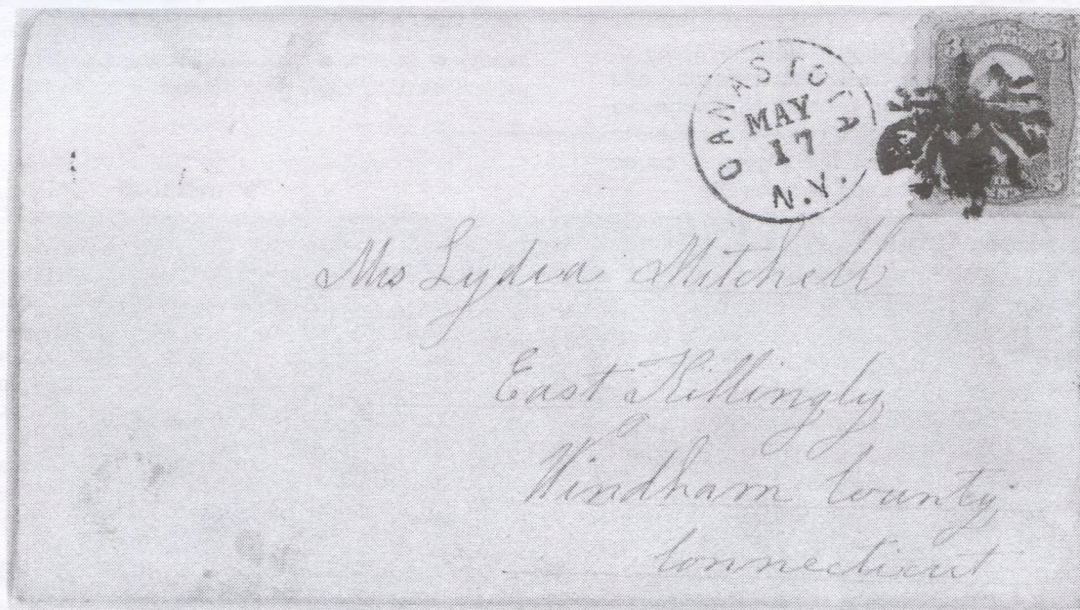
Canastota, N.Y. Cover

by Abe Boyarsky

I wrote an article in the *American Philatelist* (April '98 issue) titled "The Whittling Yankee Speaks Out." I received several letters in regard to this article. One of the letters was from a collector who had in his possession a cover with a bug or insect marking. He wanted to know if I had ever seen such a cancellation and whether the contents of the envelope went with the envelope because the townmark on the cover was different than the town written on the letter. The cover shown in Figure 1 is from Canastota, N.Y. dated May 17th and was sent to Lydia Mitchell. The letter shows that it was written in Clockville - May 14th 1870 (to Dear Sister) from your affectionate sister Aurelia W. Palmer.

The Canastota postmark is authentic as it was used during the 61 and 69 period. In *United States Cancellations 1845-1869* by Hubert Skinner and Amos Eno, please see listings PA-I 7 and PA-I 38. There are many of these bug or insect cancels and after some use a piece would break off and the cancel would be more of a blob. Canastota and Clockville were both in Madison County and but a few miles apart. For whatever reason the person wrote the letter in Clockville and mailed it three days later in Canastota. If there are any collectors who have a cover with a Canastota insect cancel, please send me a photocopy.

Figure 1



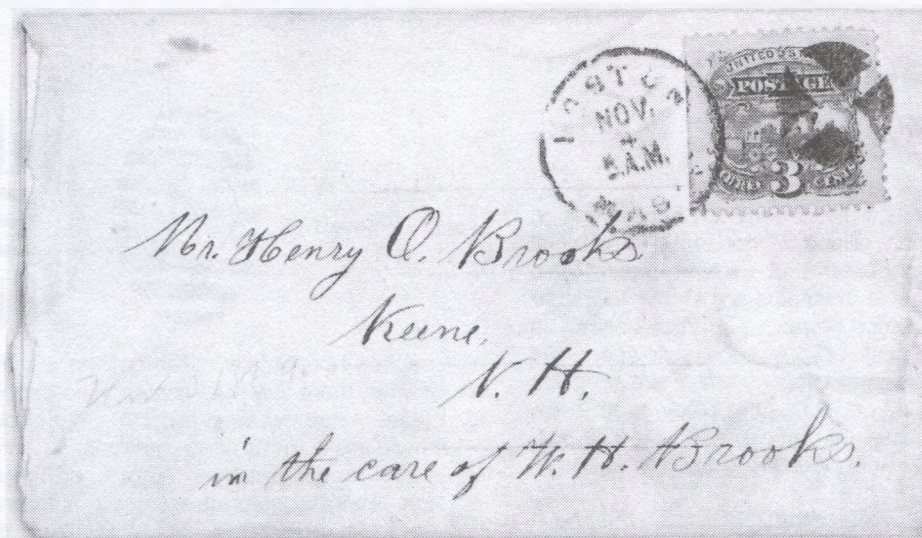
3 Cent 1869 Issue Stamp

by Roger D. Curran

Abe Boyarsky submits the 3 cent 1869 cover shown in Figure 1 bearing a Boston CDS and cross-roads killer cancel. However, it is not the postmark that draws our

attention to this unusual item but rather the 3 cent stamp itself. It has large margins all around, but especially on the sides. Can readers report larger examples, on or off cover, of this stamp? If so, please let us know.

Figure 1



Early U.S. "Maltese Cross"

by Roger D. Curran

The Winter 1998 NEWS carried an article about "Maltese cross" cancels. These have quite a place in cancellation annals since the Maltese cross was the design of the first handstamp obliterations of postage stamps used in 1840 by British post offices on the world's first stamps: the Penny Black and Two Penny Blue. It was noted that Maltese cross cancels have not been seen on U.S. 1847 issue stamps and are quite uncommon on 1851-1857 issue stamps. A Lafayette, Indiana cover (Figure 1) has come to our attention dated February 23, 1852 bearing a 3 cent orange brown (Scott #10) canceled by a "Maltese cross." It would be interesting to see how much earlier a U.S. "Maltese cross" cancel can be found.

The Postal History of Indiana, Volume 1, by J. David Baker illustrates a Maltese cross from Lafayette and through the courtesy of the publisher, Leonard Hartmann, we show that tracing here as Figure 2. It is somewhat similar to but not the same as the cross on the Figure 1 cover. Perhaps more than one cross was used by Lafayette.

Figure 2



In the earlier article I mentioned an off-cover Scott #10 canceled by a crude "Maltese cross" in the Siegel sale of the Amonette collection in October 1996. I wonder now if that, too, is a Lafayette cancel since both the Figure 1 cancel and that on the Amonette stamp are blue.

Figure 1



Caveat Emptor

by Roger D. Curran

By far and away the most common cancel design used in the 1880s was an ellipse of horizontal or vertical bars with a circle in the center that usually contained a number or letter. Two typical examples are shown in Figure 1.¹ The New York Post Office began using such cancels in 1876 and many other post offices soon followed. As common as they are, it is surprising how few are noted in colored inks. The Washington, D.C. post office used a few ellipses in a blackish blue ink in 1879 and 1880 but, otherwise, colored ellipses are not easily found.

It is with the above in mind that I acquired the 1 cent State Department issue illustrated in Figure 2. The stamp is canceled by what is apparently an ellipse killer

Figure 1



applied horizontally. Rather than a number or letter in the center, there is a solid center. The canceling ink is a reddish violet. I had not seen this particular ellipse design before but there are a great many and coming across a new one was by no means unusual. Also, I had never seen an ellipse in this color but colored ellipses I have encountered generally seem to be isolated examples. And there was one other thing – a long horizontal thin across Mr. Franklin's shoulder that, curiously, appeared to correspond with a lightening of

Figure 2



the cancel. For awhile I didn't pursue the matter, subconsciously I suppose not wanting to find a problem. After all, this was surely an attractive and unusual item. Washington, D.C. had used a purple canceling ink in 1878 and, while this ink was not purple, it was in the same family, very broadly speaking, and perhaps, I mused, Washington very briefly used a redder formulation with a particular handstamp. Later, however, I concluded that the cancel should be checked by someone with directly pertinent knowledge of the subject at hand. Thus I sent the stamp to club member Rollin Huggins who is a specialist in official stamps and has made a considerable study of Washington,

D.C. and other cancels found on official stamps. Mr. Huggins' prompt reply confirmed the worst: (1) it is a specimen stamp with the "SPECIMEN" overprint crudely scraped or rubbed off and (2) the cancel on the stamp is undoubtedly fraudulent. By then, regrettably, it was far too late to return the stamp to the seller. Hopefully, however, a lesson was learned.

I suspect the faker initially hoped that the "cancel" would hide the overprint. Then, when it did not, the overprint was erased.

¹Burr, Gilbert M. "Standardized Hand Stamp Cancellations on the Bank Note Issues" *The American Philatelist* (January 1935), p. 204.

Brooklyn "4"

by Roger D. Curran

One group of killers that has received considerable attention in these pages over the past 15 years is that composed of hand carved numbers used by the New York Post Office during the 1872-1876 period. Several examples from previous articles are shown in Figure 1. The use of these killers is important from a postal history standpoint because it represents the first attempt by a large post office to systematically identify the particular handstamps and hence the individual clerks who employed them.



Figure 1

It is interesting to note that the Brooklyn post office used a similar-appearing number killer some years earlier. An example is shown in Figure 2 and the date of the

enclosure is 1865. A Skinner-Eno tracing of what I'm confident is the same killer is shown in Figure 3. I've wondered if this killer served as the inspiration for the NYPO in 1872. That doesn't seem likely, at least broadly speaking. Insofar as I know, only a "4" has been seen from Brooklyn during this period. Therefore, apparently no particular



Figure 3

"system" was involved. (Can readers report other contemporaneous Brooklyn numbers?) However, possibly the basic idea of the NYPO to carve numbers in killers came from its neighboring post office just across the East River. Comment is invited.

Figure 2



Unusual Uses of a Common Cancellation

by Roger D. Curran

The New York "CR" double oval is very common. "CR" is generally considered to stand for "Circular Room" and these cancels are found overwhelmingly on 1 cent stamps paying the 1 cent circular rate. Figure 1 is a typical example on an unsealed envelope that contains a printed market report for "country produce" dated December 28, 1885. (The addressee happens to be my grandfather!)

Presented below are three unusual covers. In Figure 2, the stamp to the left was affixed after the "CR" double oval was struck as several perforations on the right side are on top of the outer rim of the killer. Apparently, the cover was initially routed to the circular "room" or section of the post office whereupon the "CR" was applied. The cover was then rated up to first class, presumably because it was

discovered to be sealed. A second 1 cent stamp was added to make the 2 cent first class rate and canceled by a clerk in the section that processed first class mail. (The cover is sealed and slightly reduced at right.)

The Figure 3 example shows a machine cancel designed for use on circular mail since there is no date in the dial. Unfortunately, it did not cancel the 2 cent indicia and the old standby – the "CR" killer – was thus called upon to do the job. One can almost hear the long-time stamping clerk saying, with some satisfaction: "These machines aren't worth a darn!"

The Figure 4 card, postmarked December 23, 1887 seems to reflect nothing more than simple misrouting. It somehow got into the circular mailstream and was canceled by a clerk caught up in his handstamping routine before it was recognized to be a first class item. Sent then to the first class processing area, it was canceled with the duplex

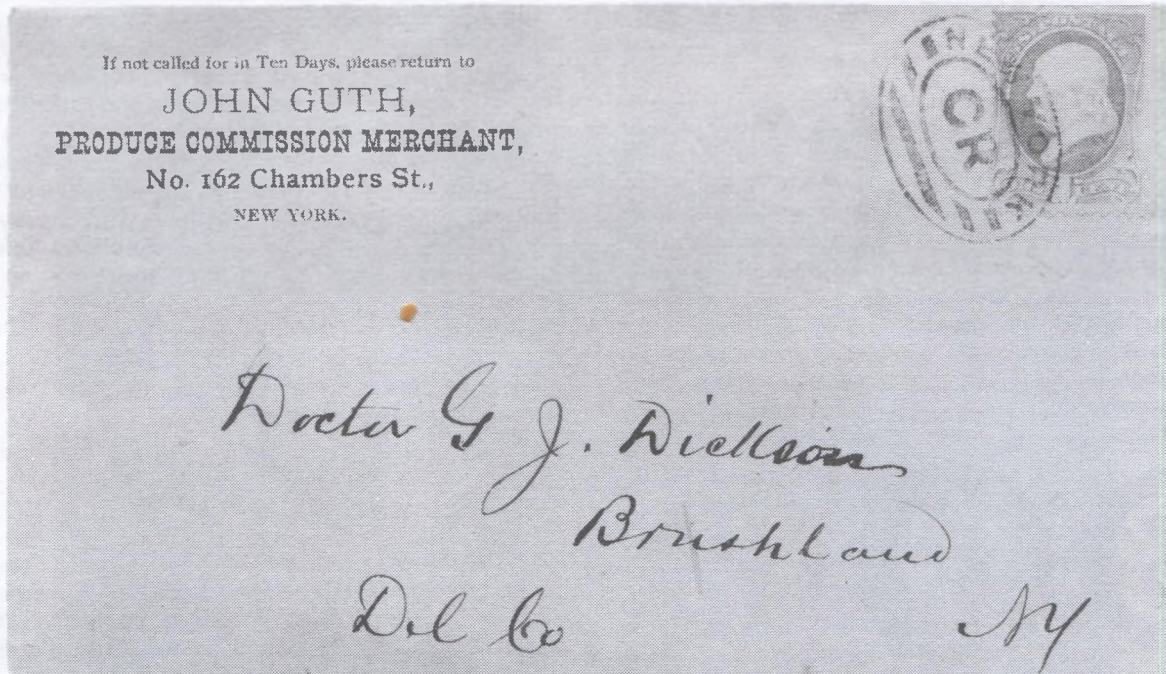


Figure 1

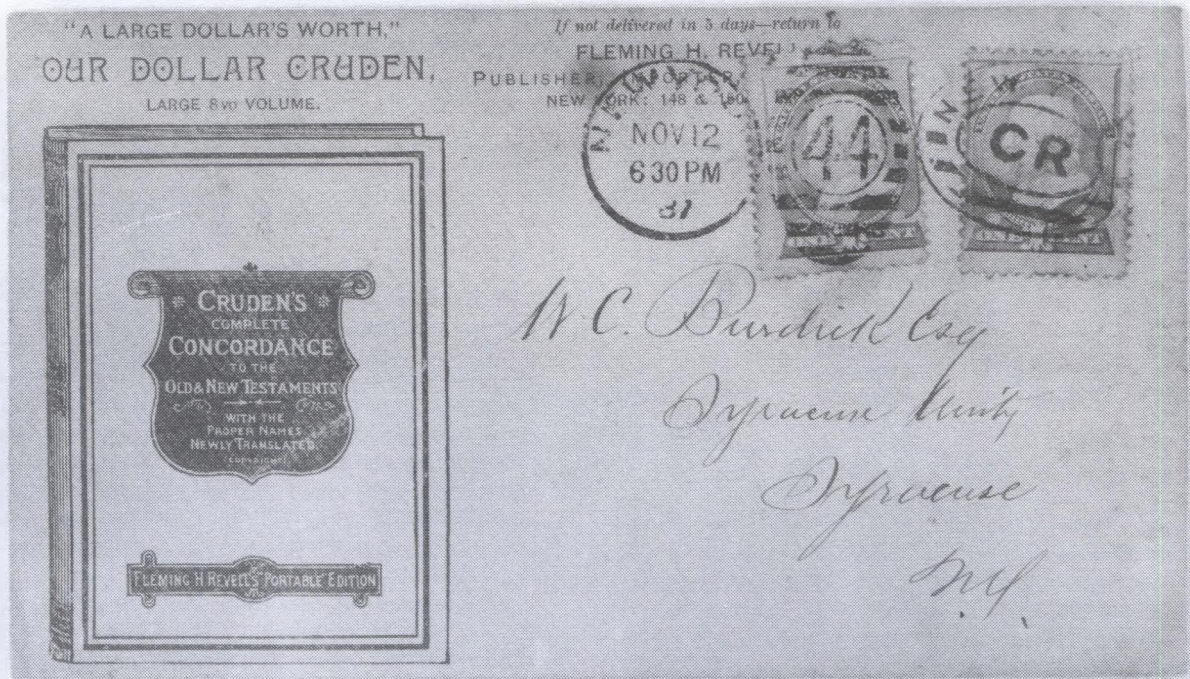


Figure 2

RETURN TO
P. O. BOX 2857,
NEW YORK.

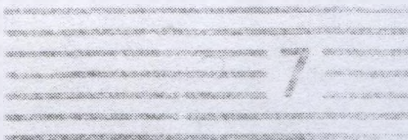
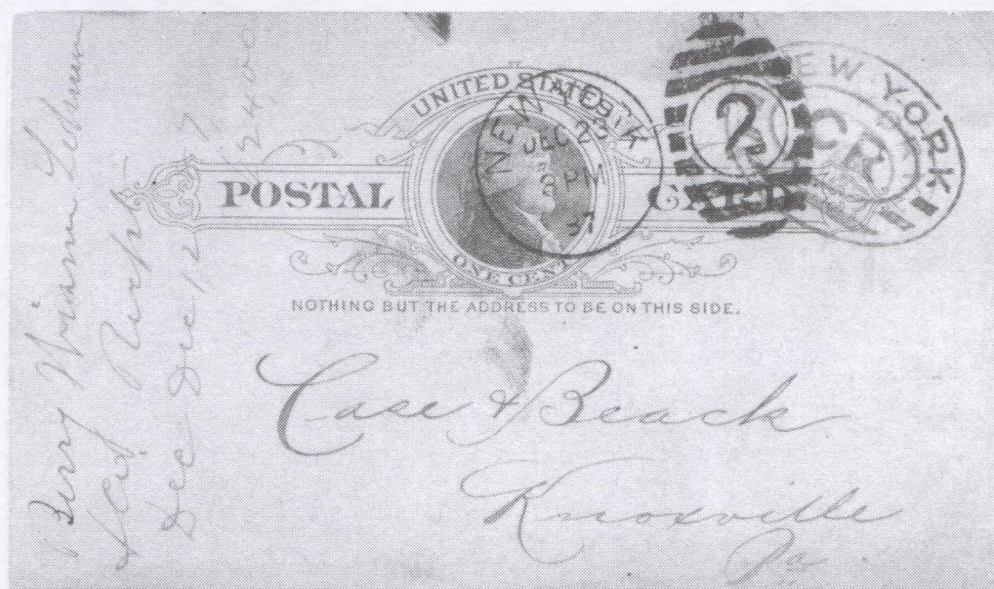


Figure 3

*1st Nat-Bk
Concord
N.H.*

Figure 4



marking which was, of course, applied on top of the "CR" killer. This all happened rather quickly as the card itself is datelined on the back "12/23/1887."

Additions to U.S.C.C. Membership Roster

Donald B. Vail	4740 Sally Dr.	San Jose	CA	95124-0000
Ronald Williams	9055 Deadfall Rd.	Rosemark	TN	38053-4918
Harold Griffin	537 Round Table Dr.	Ft. Washington	MD	20744-0000
Merritt Jenkins	2606 Houser Rd.	Knoxville	TN	37919-9329
Gale G. Ripma	341 Indiandale Rd., SE	Cedar Rapids	IA	52403-0000
John M. Kawecki	PO Box 6	South Deerfield	MA	01373-0000
Lester C. Lanphear III	PO Box 80843	San diego	CA	92138-0000

Zanesville "Z"

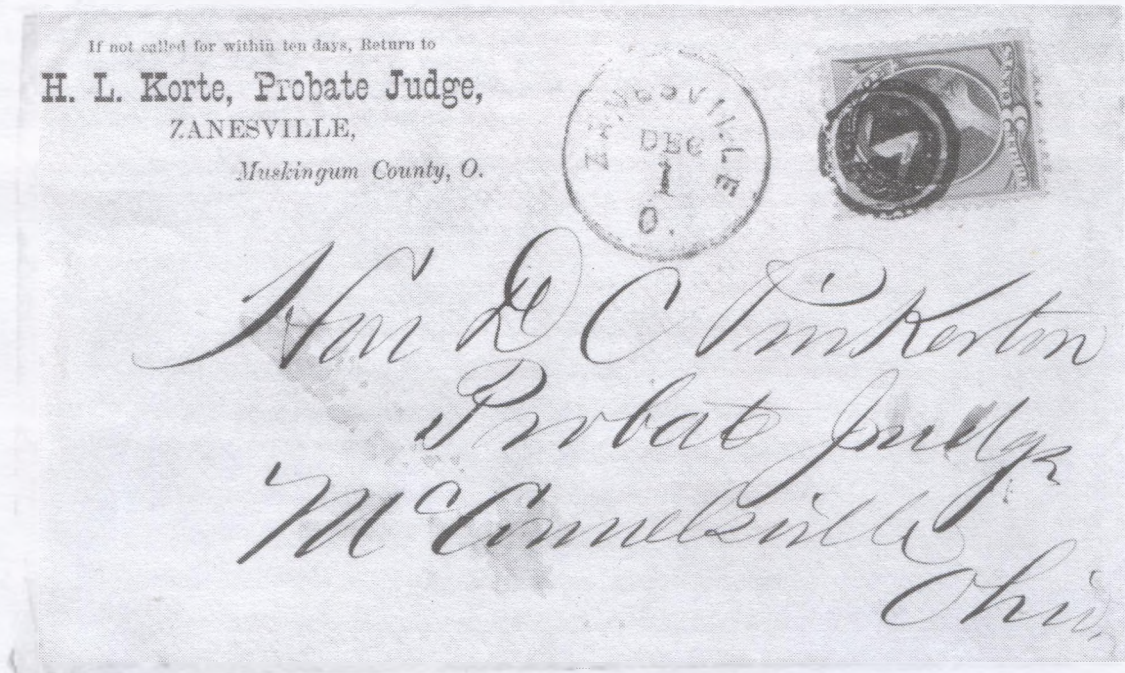
by Roger D. Curran

Letters in killers are seen reversed with some frequency. Usually these are hand carved letters but not always. "N" and "S" are the most common. I suppose this is due, in part, to the fact that these letters themselves are more common than most since they were sometimes used in route agent killers to denote direction; i.e., north and south. Would any among us have identified the killer shown in Figure 1, if we had seen it on an off-cover stamp, as a reverse "Z?" Unless we recognized it as coming from

Zanesville, I suspect all (or virtually all) would have concluded it was a reverse "N." Of course, conceivably it is an "N" standing for the last name of the postmaster or who knows what. However, I'm assuming now that it is a "Z" for Zanesville. An additional factor in support of this conclusion is that the two parallel bars are spread further apart than would be characteristic of an "N" but this spread is typical of a "Z." Comment and further information are invited.

The enclosure is dated November 30, 1875.

Figure 1



Reappearance 46 Years Later

by Roger D. Curran

Figure 1 illustrates a cancel on a Scott #210 the design of which might not be immediately apparent. But collectors would soon enough agree, I think, on what it is -- a mask or face. The back of the stamp is shown in Figure 2, hopefully with enough clarity to make the pencil note on it legible. It reads: "See USCC/Quarterly for Jan., 1953/page 65. This is the same stamp." Well, I went back to check and

Figure 1



Figure 2

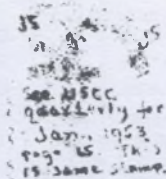


Figure 3 shows the illustration in question. I agree that Figure 3 was taken from the stamp in Figure 1. What do you think? Figure 3 was one of a number of "drawings" presented in that issue of the *USCC Quarterly* (forerunner of

Figure 3



the News) by Edward L. Willard. The origin of many of these cancels was apparently unknown. Mr. Willard did not illustrate this cancel in his 1970 book on Scott #210.

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 just developed a new and attractive flyer on a colorful paper and we have a supply on hand. 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.