



# Cancellation Club NEWS

Vol. 26, No. 2, Whole No. 243, May 2002

## Modifications in Design

by Roger Curran

During the stampless era it was necessary for post offices to "rate" each letter by determining the postage required and then indicating that amount on the face of the letter. Before July 1845 the rates were normally applied in manuscript because any of a considerable number of rates might be applicable and having a handstamp for each was not practicable.

When the rate structure changed in 1845 resulting in a 5 or 10 cent charge for the considerable majority of letters, rate handstamps bearing a "5" or a "10" became common. (Handstamps for other rates are well known during this period but are seen with much less frequency.) Starting in July 1851, due to a further rate reduction, "3" handstamps also came into rather common use. Beginning with the 1847 issue, and for many years thereafter, some postmasters used rate markers to cancel postage stamps without regard to the rate conveyed by the marking. In other words, the handstamp was purely a canceler and no notice was intended to be taken of the rate it conveyed. It was the postage stamp that was to show both the rate involved and prepayment.

There are covers showing that a few postmasters using rate markers as cancelers were concerned about the

confusion such a practice might cause and took action to avoid it. Generally speaking this involved altering a "5" handstamp so that it no longer read "5." Probably the best known alterations come from Cecilton, Maryland and a tracing from the Skinner-Eno book is shown as Figure 1. It is thought that the altered "5" in this case is intended to be a "C" for Cecilton. (Indeed, perhaps the motivation here was *just* to create the "C" rather than to also eliminate the "5.") A wonderful cover

Figure 1

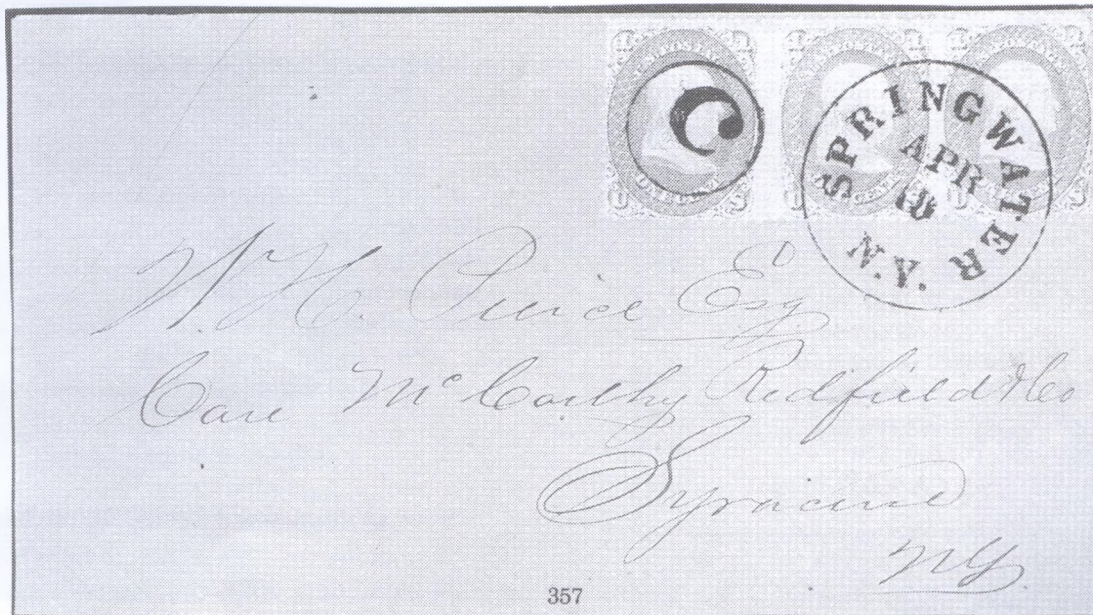


showing a similar alteration comes from Springwater, N.Y. An auction lot photo that appeared some years ago is illustrated here as Figure 2. A third example from what may be Pottstown, Pa. is shown as Figure 3. A further example on an off-cover stamp is Figure 4. What is interesting about Figure 4 is not only does it involve the curved bottom part of the "5" but also a small portion of the straight back leading to the top. It clearly differs from the Figure 1-3 killers.

The alteration of rate numbers was not limited to the "5." The cover in Figure 5, postmarked Allegheny, Pa. shows three strikes of a "10" handstamp after the numeral "1" had been removed. A modified "10" in circle, where the numeral "1" is removed, appeared as lot 1033 in the October 1985

(continued on page 24)

Figure 2





Dear Readers,

NOJEX is close at hand and we hope that a number of members will take the opportunity to stop by the Club's table at some point during the three-day show. As we have mentioned earlier, the USCC will be holding a seminar, which will be at 10:30 on Sunday, involving brief presentations of members who have entered one-frame cancellation exhibits. NOJEX, a World Series of Philately show, runs from Saturday, May 25 through Monday, May 27 at the Meadowlands Crowne Plaza Hotel in Secaucus, N.J. just outside of New York City. We look forward to a fine event.

A word about contributions to the *NEWS*. If you have information on any pertinent subject that may be of interest to the readership, even if very brief, please submit it. If you have a question, please ask it. If you have a favorite cancellation, on or off cover, please share it. In short, communication is key to our collective undertaking and I urge you to come forward with your observations and interests. Remember, the *NEWS* is your newsletter and we always need input.

A "Help Needed" notice appears in this issue. We will gladly run free notices pertaining to philatelic research projects. If you have such a study underway and wish to seek the assistance of other USCC members, we encourage you to submit a note about it to the *NEWS*.

Roger Curran

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Doing research on plate # singles

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On and off cover.

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## OK?

by Wendell Triplett

Beginning as early as the 1850s but particularly from the 1860s to the 1890s, post offices would examine the postage on mail and then sometimes cancel it with an "OK." Skinner & Eno listed 34 examples of these "OK" cancels in their book and Cole listed 62 more examples in his book.

"O.K." was recorded in print on March 23, 1839 in the *Boston Morning Post* in an article reprinted from a Providence newspaper. "O.K." was no doubt in circulation even before this date. It is significant that the letters were printed as initials with a period after the "O" and after the "K."

In the late 1830s it was fashionable to reduce phrases to initials, such as:

"All right" became "A.R."  
 "All correct" became "A.C."

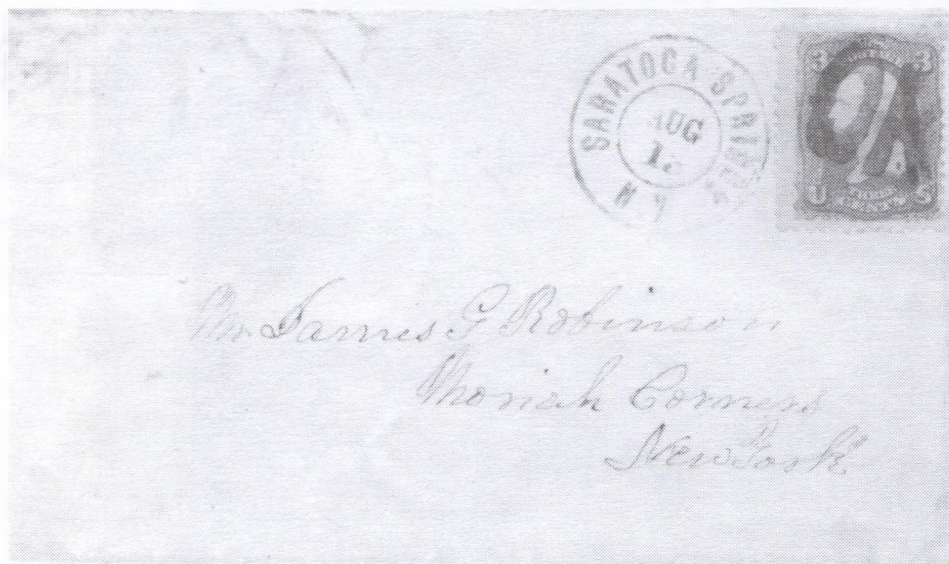
In humorous writings during this time, there had been a deliberate misspelling of some popular phrases and initials:

"All right" became "oll wright" and "O.W."  
 "All correct" became "oll korrekt" and "O.K."

These misspelled initials enjoyed only a brief popularity, except for "O.K."

The 1840 Democratic candidate, Martin VanBuren, born in Kinderhook, N.Y., chose the campaign slogan "Vote for Old Kinderhook, he's O.K." The Democratic politicians cleverly employed the initials that were already in use to remind voters to keep things "oll korrekt," giving "O.K." world press coverage and recognition.<sup>1</sup> ■

<sup>1</sup> Allen Walker Read, a Columbia University professor, researched "OK" in great detail in several issues of *American Speech* in 1963 and 1964. *The Merriam-Webster New Book of Word Histories* presents a good summary of this research.





(continued from front page)

Figure 3

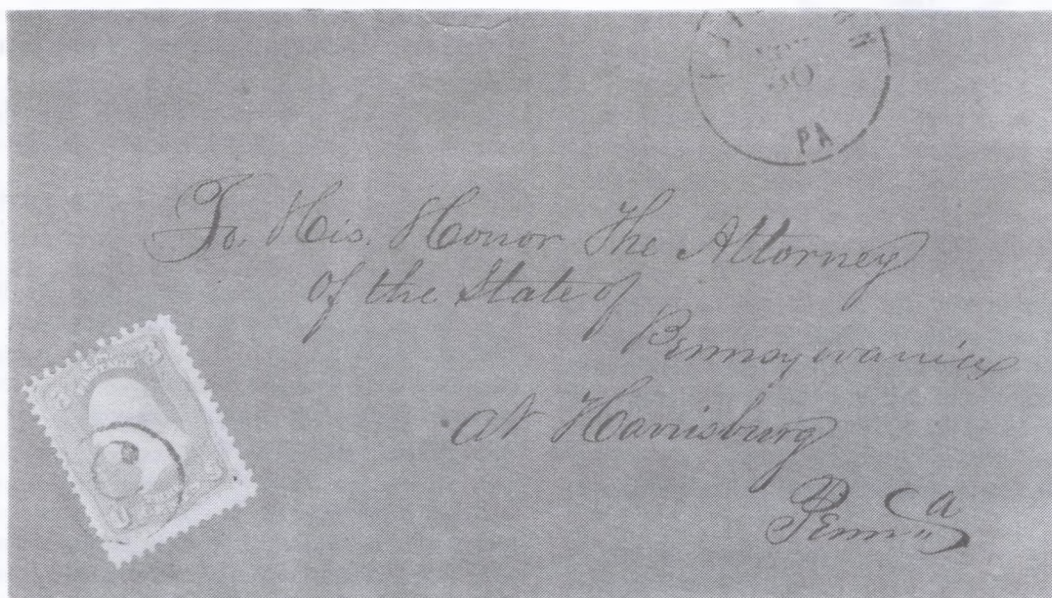


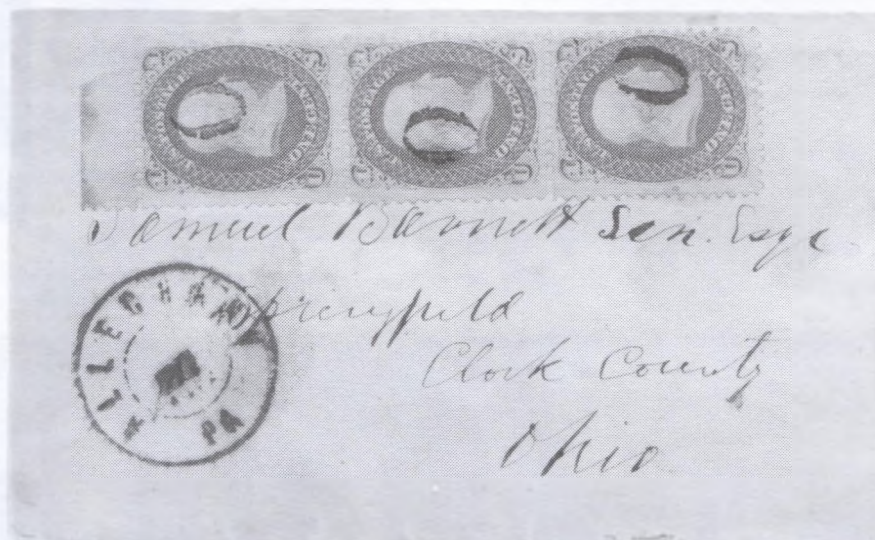
Figure 4



Figure 6



Figure 5



Weiss net price sale #62. Figure 6 shows the lot illustration. The stamp is a Scott #158 and the cover is from Mansfield, Vermont.

While we are at it, let's mention several of what may be modified "PAID" with rate number designs. Figure 7 is a cover from South Abington, Mass. along with a tracing of this cancel from page 52 of George Linn's *The PAID Markings on the 3¢ U.S. Stamp of 1861*. Mr. Linn commented as follows:

"This is a very interesting type and leads to some conjecture in that it is very much like one of the PAID 3 IN CIRCLE, but without the figure 3. The question is, could it be the same handstamp with the 3 chiseled out?"

A similar item is shown as Figure 8, which is taken from page 111 Tom Alexander's *U.S. Postal Markings, 1851-1861*. It is unattributed and reported in black ink. What may be the same

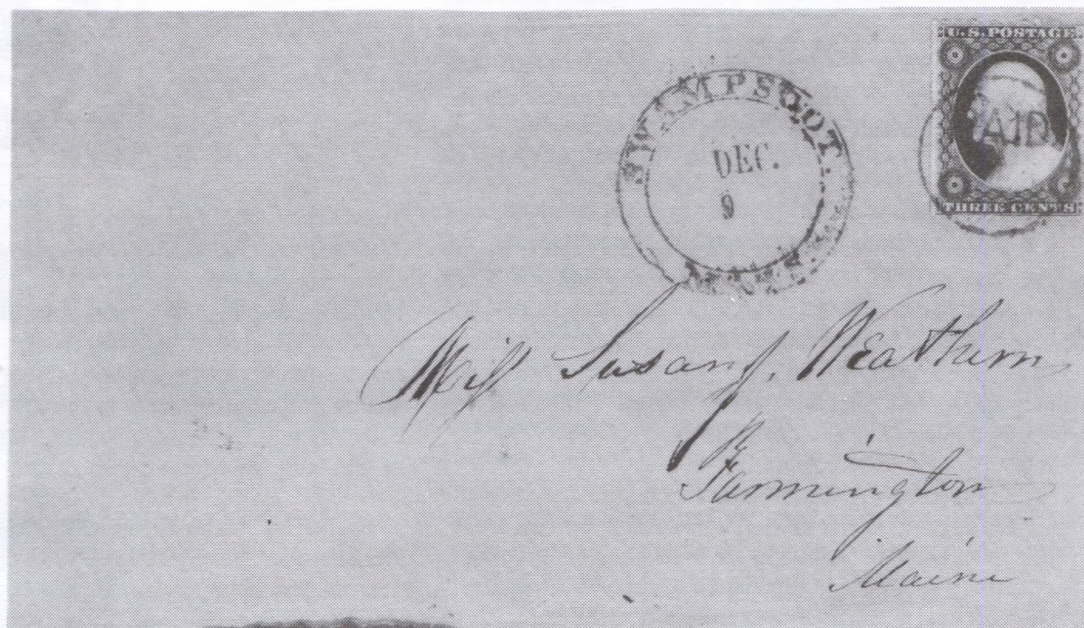


Figure 7



Figure 8

Figure 9



cancel but in blue ink appears on the cover in Figure 9 from Swampscott, Mass. The stamp is a Scott #25.

The Skinner-Eno book lists a "PAID" at the top of the circle, similar to that of South Abington but with the "PAID" in a more pronounced arc, from Genoa, N.Y. Another such "PAID," but where the letters have serifs is shown in Figure 10. Origin is unknown.

Figure 10



These cancels consisting of "PAID" at or near the top of the circle with no rate number below have also been noted on Banknote stamps. The Cole book on page 207 illustrates an example seen on an 1875 cover from Burton, Ohio. A different example of unknown origin is shown as Figure 11.

Figure 11



It appears that at least one postmaster thought it unnecessary to eliminate the rating numeral entirely from these "PAID" handstamps but enough to just deface it beyond recognition. Figure 12 illustrates the result. Presumably it was originally a "6" at the bottom. Who can report the origin? Your editor has Chicago in mind but can find no reference to support it.

Figure 12





One final item. Collectors sometimes note "10" in circle designs used as killers, particularly on 1861 issue stamps, where the numerals have been cut through horizontally, sometimes also including the rim of the circle. Such an example is shown in Figure 13 along with a tracing from the Kenneth A. Whitfield tracing compilation. Was this defacing intended to make it clear that the "10" had no significance as a rate number?

Figure 13



Who can add to the story by reporting additional cancels of the above types or the post offices of origin of examples shown that are unattributed?■

### An Array of Stars

Patchogue, N.Y. is, or at least was, a small town along the southern flank of Long Island located about halfway out to its eastern tip. A short distance away is Great South Bay, which is separated from the Atlantic Ocean by Fire Island, a very thin and long strip of land. In 1969 there were about 9,700 residents.

Figure 1 illustrates a Patchogue cover dated September 26, 1891 bearing an elaborate star killer. This would be considered decidedly fancy in any decade of 19<sup>th</sup> century cancellations but gains additional significance because 1891 is late for such cancels to appear. However, Patchogue used fancy stars even later than that! Figure 2 illustrates a piece bearing a Patchogue star dated January 12, 1898.

Cole lists the three additional Patchogue stars shown in Figure 3.<sup>1</sup> Proulx, in his monograph on star cancels from New York state, lists the following for Patchogue: Figure 4 in

Figure 1

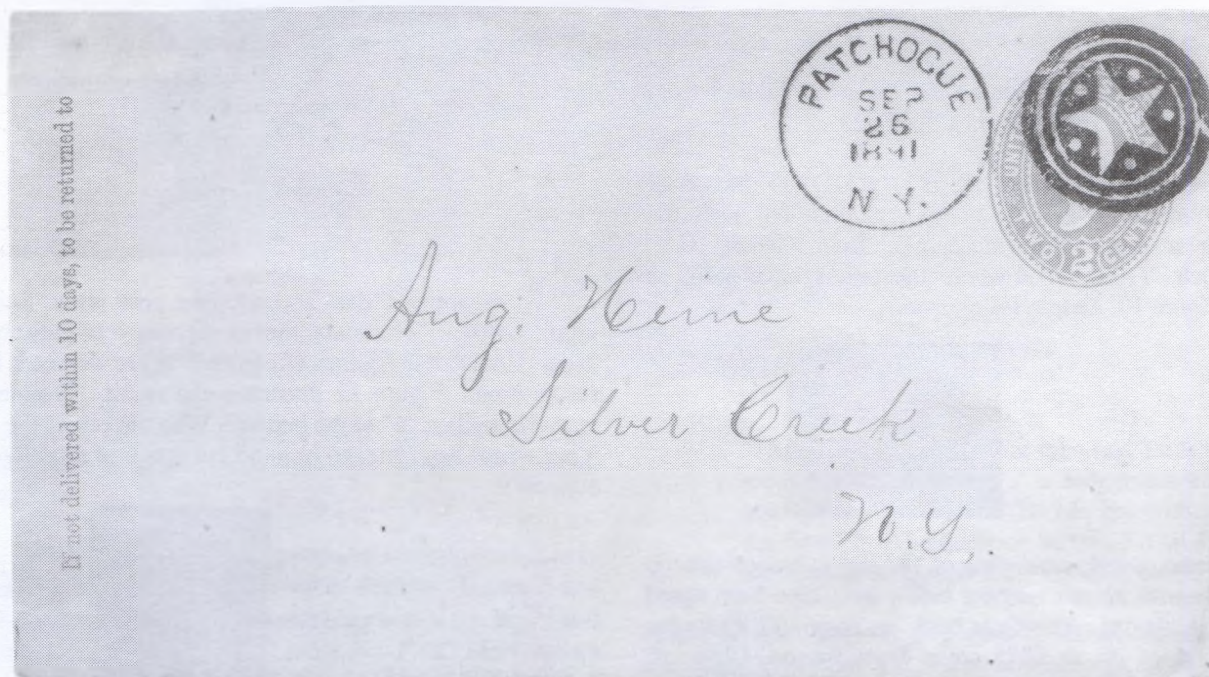


Figure 2



STN-57

II- STN-58

II-



Patchogue, N.Y.

July 9, 1892

1891

Figure 3

STN-60

II-



Patchogue, N.Y.

February 27, 1891

1894, Figure 5 in 1891, 1894, and 1897; Figure 6 in 1898 and Figure 7 in 1898.<sup>2</sup> (The Proulx illustrations are general representations and not tracings with precision.) Incidentally, this helpful monograph is in the process of being updated and I suspect will be considerably expanded. It's a publication to be on the lookout for.

The Kenneth Whitfield compilation of tracings includes four stars attributed to Patchogue in Figure 8. The





Figure 4



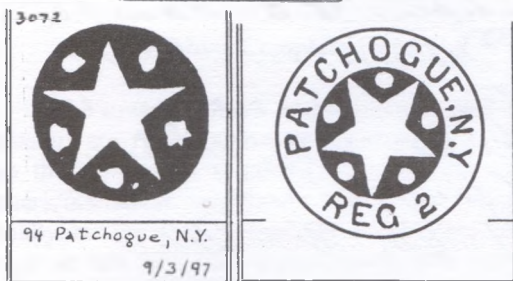
Figure 5



Figure 6



Figure 7



Figures 8



cancel on the right strongly suggests that at least some of the star killers were professionally made rather than hand-carved within the post office. In addition to Figure 8, Whitfield shows three unattributed stars that appear to be good candidates for Patchogue stars. They are illustrated here as Figure 9.

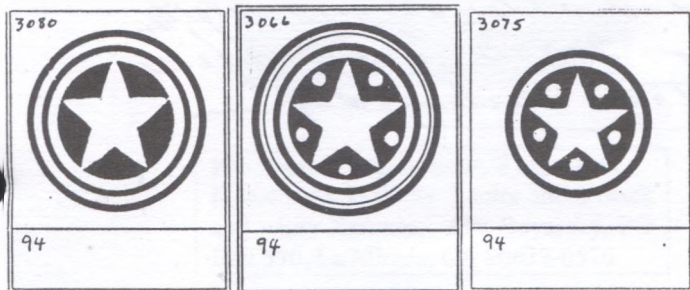


Figure 9

Readers who can provide additional examples or dates of Patchogue stars are urged to do so. These stars form an interesting page near the end of the U.S. 19<sup>th</sup> century fancy cancel story.

<sup>1</sup> Cole, James M. *Cancellations and Killers of The Banknote Era 1870-1894*, U.S. Philatelic Classics Society (1995), pages 95-6.

<sup>2</sup> Proulx, Dave (editor) *Star Cancels of New York State*, Empire State Postal History Society (1987), page 12.

### Unusual Variations of a Common Type

The *NEWS* received an inquiry about the origin of a large concentric circles cancel on an off-cover Scott #65. It appears to have five rings and is about 24.5 mm in diameter. The Skinner-Eno book illustrates on page 34 a tracing of a 26.5 mm. 3-ring concentric circles cancel that has been noted on the 1861 issue. There is a wide space between the middle and outermost rings. The origin of the cancel is unknown.

Neither your editor or 3¢ 1861 specialist Abe Boyarsky was able to identify the origin of the 5-ring cancel. However, Abe mentioned that, from his experience, a 24.5 mm. or more target or concentric circles cancel is a rare item. He also reported a 26 mm. 6-ring target cancel in his collection with a solid center, origin unknown.

We'll take this opportunity to mention the three unattributed cancels on Scott #65 shown in Figure 1. The "split" concentric circles on the left measures about 19 mm. in diameter. The 4-ring target canceling the middle stamp measures about 23.5 mm. The cancel on the right has a slightly psychedelic look due to how individual rings vary in width as they go around. A tracing of what appears to be the same cancel, appearing in the Kenneth A. Whitfield compilation of tracings, is shown in Figure 2.

Can readers identify post offices of origin for these cancels?



Figure 1

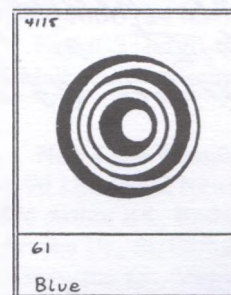


Figure 2



### "Postage Stamps" For Sale

Tom Keesling has kindly provided to the *NEWS* a copy of an interesting 1852 letter from a handstamp supplier. The cover sheet or envelope was not present but the letter was obviously directed to a postmaster. Tom suspects the postmaster was located in east central Indiana or west central Ohio.

The Ithaca, N.Y. postmark is, of course, the sample mentioned. It was struck on a separate piece of paper, which was attached to the letter as you see it. Although the Ithaca postmark shows month and day slugs, they are not specifically

mentioned in the list of what would be provided for \$1 postpaid.

Your editor was struck by the use of the term "postage stamps" to describe the handstamps available. One can easily understand why *that* particular description didn't catch on.

The reproduction of the letter and postmark are at 80% of actual size. A typed version of the letter is also provided. Tom found the letter among his father's philatelic materials.

Fulton St. New York  
Jan 9 12<sup>th</sup> 52. —

Sir,

Understanding that you require a set of Postage Stamps for your Office, we beg to call your attention to a sample enclosed of our new Premium ones, which are cheaper & better than any as yet introduced. A complete set, including the name of your Office, Paid, Rate, & Free Stamps for \$1.00. We send them free of postage in our regular weekly mail without loss or risk.

Respectfully Yours  
Rippon & Co

Please address  
Rippon & Co  
New York City —

We take this opportunity to inform you that we have just published a new & complete Post Office Guide, containing the recent bye laws & alterations, together with a list of over 20000 Post Offices. Price 25 cents. — (Postage included). —





Text of the 1852 Rippon & Co. letter.

Fulton Street New York  
Jany 12<sup>th</sup> 52 \_\_

Sir,

Understanding that you require a set of postage stamps for your office, we beg to call your attention to a sample (enclosed) of our new premium dies which are cheaper and better than any as yet invented. a complete set, including the name of your office, Paid, Rate, and Free stamps for \$1.00. We send them free of postage in our regular weekly mail without loss or risk.

Respectfully yours  
Rippon + Co.

Please address  
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We take this opportunity to inform you that we have just published a new + complete post office guide, containing the recent by laws and alterations, together with a list of over 20000 post offices. Price 25 cents. \_\_ (postage included). \_\_

#### A More Complete Picture

The town postmark and obliterator dies in a duplex handstamp are raised above any surrounding surface area. When the handstamp is pressed into the inkpad, only the postmark/obliterator elements normally receive ink. Normally, but not always. Sometimes ink is also deposited on a larger surface area and, depending on how the handstamp strikes the cover, an image may show beyond what is intended. Figure 1 illustrates an example from Lynn, Mass. The stamp is a Scott #213. Such strikes are not particularly scarce but form an interesting sidelight to the usual outcome. Readers are encouraged to report examples from their collections. ■

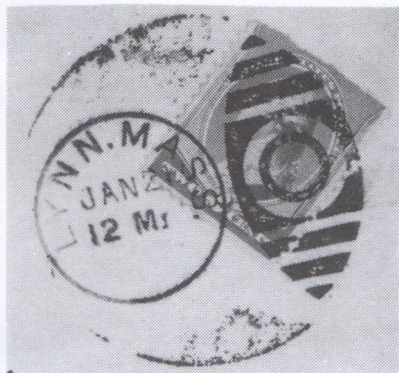


Figure 1

**For Sale: Cancellations, 3 cent 1861.**  
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Larry Cherns, 6 Arvona Dr., St. Catharines, Ont., Canada

Phil Quillin, 621 Mossycup Dr., Virginia Beach, VA 23462

Kenneth Willman, 309 Frey Dr., Weexford, PA 15090



## Mexico Followed the Calendar

by Roger D. Curran

Nick Todaro, a specialist in Oswego County, N.Y. postal history, brought to your editor's attention a very interesting series of cancels from Mexico, N.Y. that appeared primarily in 1892. They involve crude, hand-carved, three letter abbreviations of months of the year. The purpose of this article is to present information we have and request the assistance of readers in filling in some blanks.

Let's start in 1891 when we find Mexico using star cancels. Two different solid stars are noted as well as a star with a negative star-shaped center. An example of the latter is shown in Figure 1. The same star has been noted on an October 3, 1891 cover. Whether Mexico used star cancels to the end of 1891 and even into 1892 is unknown.



Figure 1

We do know that the year 1892 brought a fascinating and dramatic change. Two 1892 Mexico covers are noted with a "JAN" cancel, yet both are actually dated in February! One is February 5 (see Figure 2) and the other, a very worn example, is February 19. The assumption is that this killer was introduced in January 1892 and continued in use, for whatever reason, beyond the end of the month. We have no "FEB" or "MAR" killers on cover to report but both Cole<sup>1</sup> and Salkind<sup>2</sup> illustrate a "FEB" cancel (Figure 3) and Salkind<sup>3</sup> a "MAR" (Figure 4) on off-cover 1890 issue stamps that are very likely to be from Mexico. No "APR" cancel that appears to be from Mexico has come to our attention but a nice

"MAY" 1892 example is included in Figure 1. No Mexico "JUN" 1892 covers or likely off-cover candidates have been located. This applies also to July and September.

"AUG" and "OCT" 1892 covers are shown in Figure 5. Salkind illustrates what is perhaps a "NOV" cancel (Figure 6) on an off-cover 1890 issue stamp, but the cancel is rather ambiguous.<sup>4</sup> Two "DEC" cancels are shown in Figure 7 with December 1892 postmarks.

Your editor has a cryptic record of a February 2, 1893 Mexico killer that may be "JAN" but with no indication of source. This needs confirmation before being accepted. What we can report beyond 1892 is the 1895 "JUN" killer shown in Figure 8 along with a "JEB" killer dated July 8,

Figure 3



FEB

Figure 4



Figure 6



1895. There was an apparently brief reintroduction of the month killer design well after 1892 followed by a three letter killer having nothing to do with a month. Salkind illustrates a piece with the "JEB" killer and a July 6, 1895 Mexico postmark.<sup>5</sup>

We'd like to think that Mexico killers for all 12 months were used and are "out there" in collections and dealers' stocks. Please help if you can by reporting Mexico month cancels that haven't been illustrated above and also



Figure 2



Figure 5



Figure 7

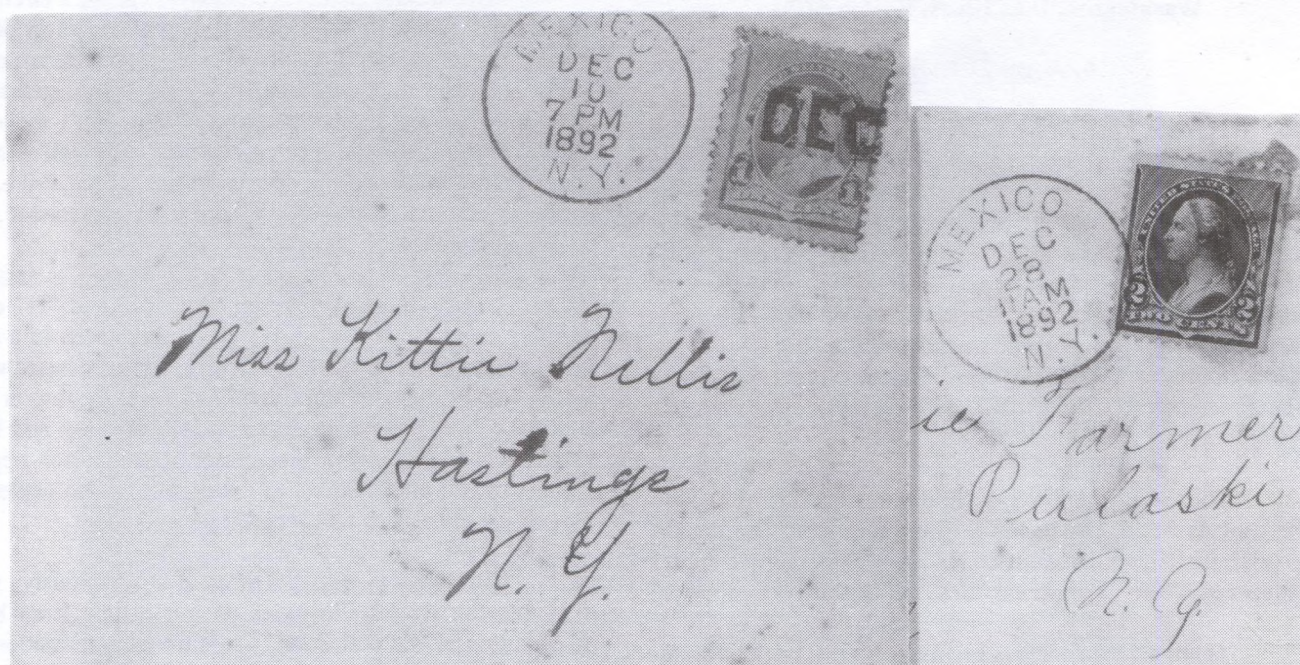
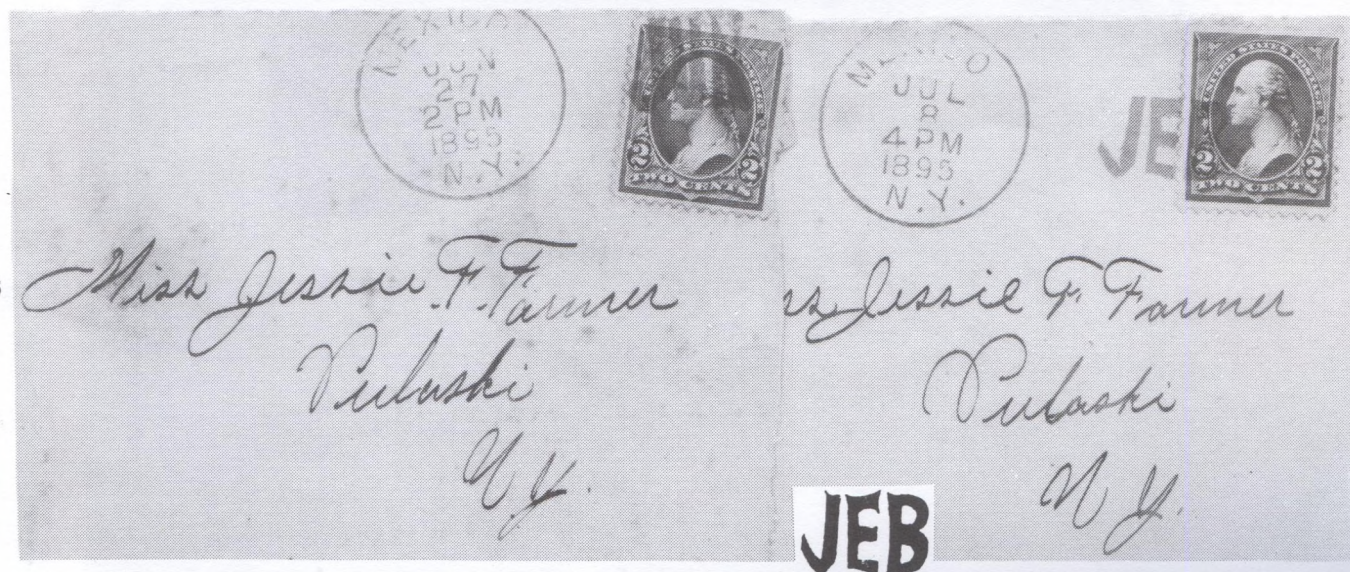


Figure 8





dated examples of any Mexico month cancels so that we can get a better picture of the periods of use.

How this series of cancels generally "traveled under the radar" of cancel collectors (if such is true) is hard to understand except that many collectors seem to give less attention to cancels occurring after the large Banknote era came to an end in 1890.

All covers presented in this article reside in Nick Todaro's collection and we thank him for the loan of this material for study and illustration.■

<sup>1</sup> Cole, James M. *Cancellations and Killers of the Banknote Era 1870-1894*, U.S. Philatelic Classics Society (1995), page 210.

<sup>2</sup> Salkind, Sol *U.S. Cancels 1890-1900*, (1985), page 62.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., page 71.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., page 73.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., page 67.

### Washington, D.C. Blues, Boston Style

by Roger D. Curran

Perhaps the most commonly found distinctive cancellations on Banknote stamps are those often referred to as the "Boston negatives." Several examples from Cole are shown in Figure 1.<sup>1</sup> We can probably get away with using the word "distinctive" here as the overwhelming percentage *do* come from Boston. However, they are, of course, not uniquely Boston cancels. Portland, Maine and Andover, Mass. were significant users and at least a few other post offices employed them to a very limited extent. When we discuss where they were used in a colored ink, then the pyramid really narrows.

The only post office I know that used these Boston-style cancels in colored ink is Washington, D.C. Applied in the same dark blue ink as used in other Washington duplex handstamps of the 1880 period, these cancels are not common.

There are two designs involved. We'll begin with the

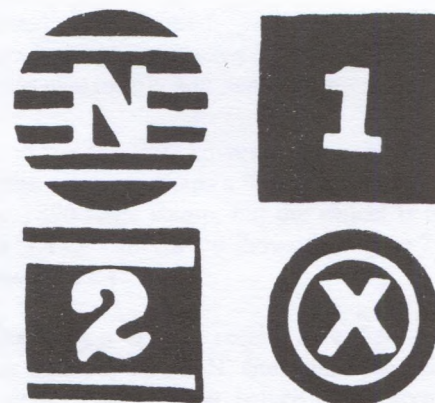


Figure 2

negative "7" in a circular grid of vertical bars. This is known in black as well as blue ink. The first class mail cover in Figure 2 is in black with 1880 docketing on the back. The circular rate cover in Figure 3 is in blue with a January 16 received marking. It is assumed to be 1880. I have only seen this cancel *in blue* on 1¢ stamps. An attractive off-cover example is shown in Figure 4.

The second cancel is a negative "H" in a circular grid of horizontal bars. I have only seen this cancel in blue ink. Figure 5 is an example, assumed to be 1880. Please note the half-moon bars at the top and bottom. Most strikes don't show both the top and bottom bars. Some don't show either. Figure 6 illustrates an example where one half moon bar doesn't show at all and the other with just a light strike. Three off-cover examples appear in Figure 7. We record a January 5, 1880 example of this cancel.

Apart from Washington, D.C. "7" and "H" cancels, the only other Boston-style negative I have seen in a colored ink is on an off-cover stamp in Ted Lockyear's award winning Justice Department officials stamp exhibit. It, too, is in blue and the cancel has negative parallel lines at top and bottom, which is characteristic of one subset of the Boston negatives. I don't recall what number or letter was in the center. The post office of origin was not reported.

Thanks to Tuck Taylor for graciously making available the covers illustrated in this article from his fine Washington, D.C. collection. Additional information about

Figure 1





Figure 3

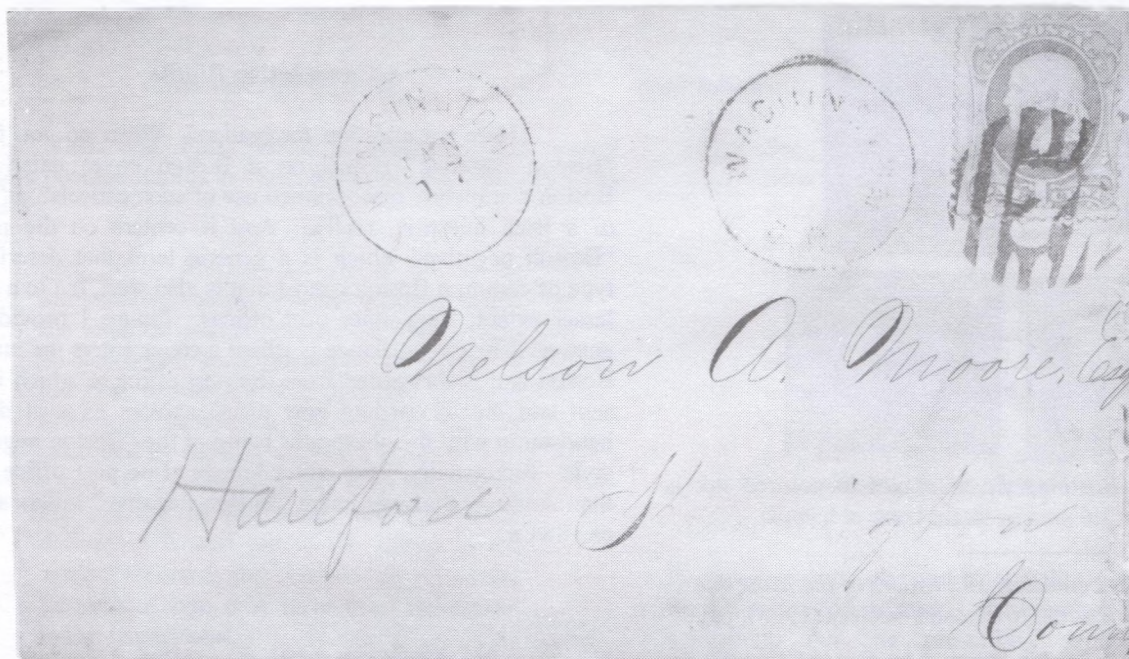


Figure 4



Figure 5



Figure 6

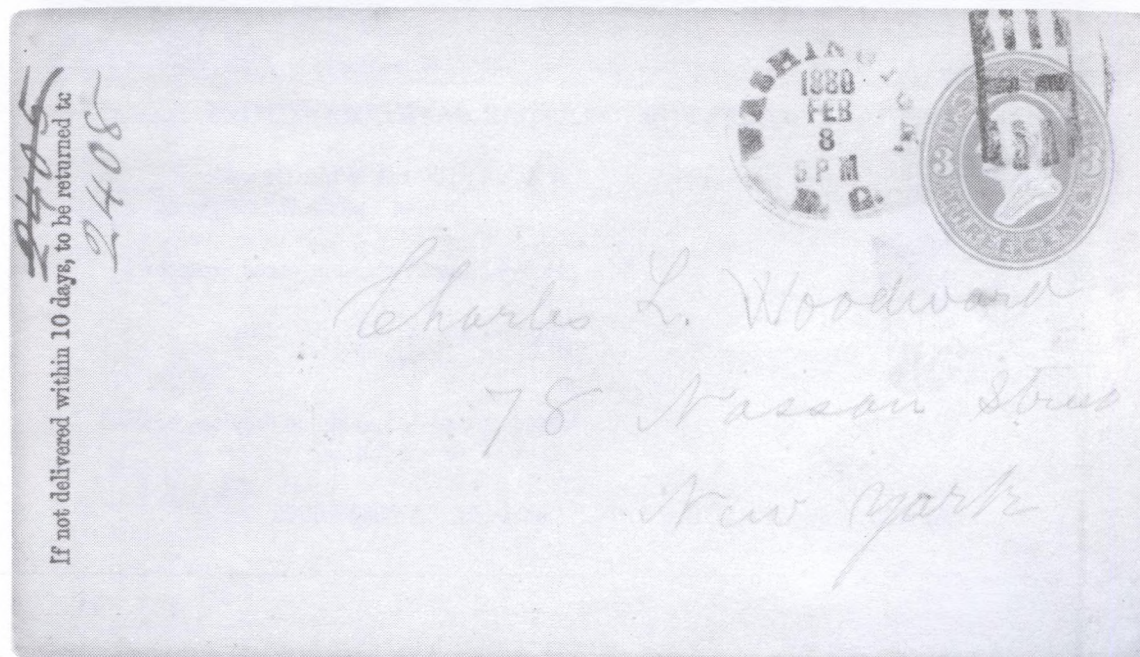




Figure 7



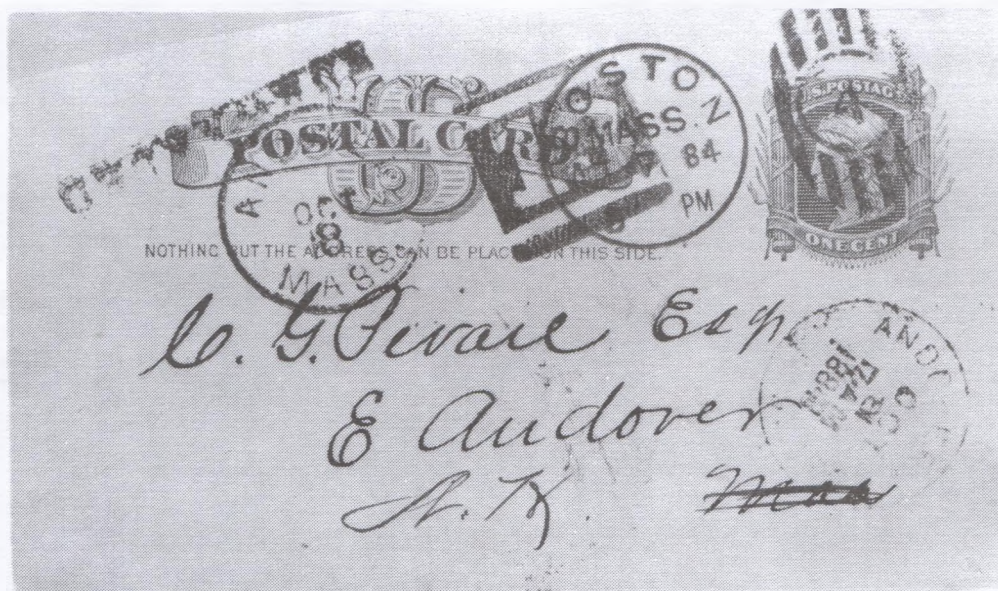
the above or other Boston-style negatives in colored ink is eagerly sought.■

<sup>1</sup> Cole, James M. *Cancellations and Killers of the Banknote Era 1870-1894*, U.S. Philatelic Classics Society (1995), page 294-5.

### A Cancellation Riddle

Here's a question for readers: When do you find a "Boston negative" cancel on a Boston cover dated *after* Boston completely discontinued use of such cancels? It's sort of a trick question, really. And it centers on the phrase "Boston negative" which is a generic term that describes a type of common Boston cancel that is also seen, but to a much lesser extent, from other post offices. Figure 1 provides an answer. The circumstance is where a cover enters the mails at Boston and is forwarded from the post office to which it was sent and the forwarding post office applies its own duplex handstamp with the obliterator being of the "Boston negative" style. Incidentally, your editor knows of no post office other than Andover that was using "Boston negative" killers as late as 1884.■

Figure 1



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### Manuscript Cancels

When the Post Office Department first issued adhesive postage stamps in 1847, the following regulation was set forth:

Sec. 501. Stamps so affixed are to be immediately cancelled in the office in which the letter or packet may be deposited, with an instrument to be furnished to certain of the post offices for that purpose. In post offices not so furnished, the stamps must be cancelled by making a cross x on each with a pen. If the canceling has been omitted on the mailing of the letter, the Postmaster delivering it will cancel the stamp in the manner directed, and immediately report the postmaster who may have been delinquent to the Department.

In 1851 the regulation was modified a bit. This version was continued in the 1857 regulation, which appeared

as follows:

Sec 336. All postage stamps affixed to letters, packets, or parcels of any description, and all stamped envelopes, must be *immediately and effectually* canceled in the office in which the letters, packets, or parcels may be deposited for transmission or delivery. The cancellation should be effected *by the use of black printer's ink wherever that material can be obtained*; and where it cannot, the operation should be performed by making several heavy crosses or parallel lines upon each stamp with a pen dipped in good black writing ink.

Postmasters certainly understood that pen and ink markings were the appropriate means of cancellation in the absence of a handstamp but the prescribed *manner* of applying a manuscript cancel either escaped the notice of many postmasters or was ignored. And we can understand why it would be ignored because the goal was to effectively deface

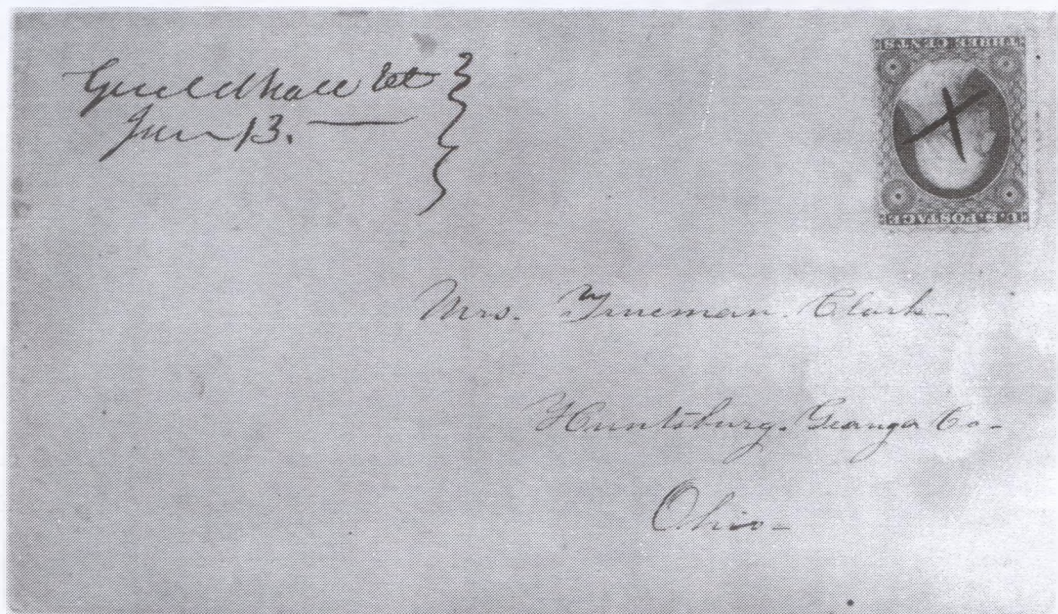
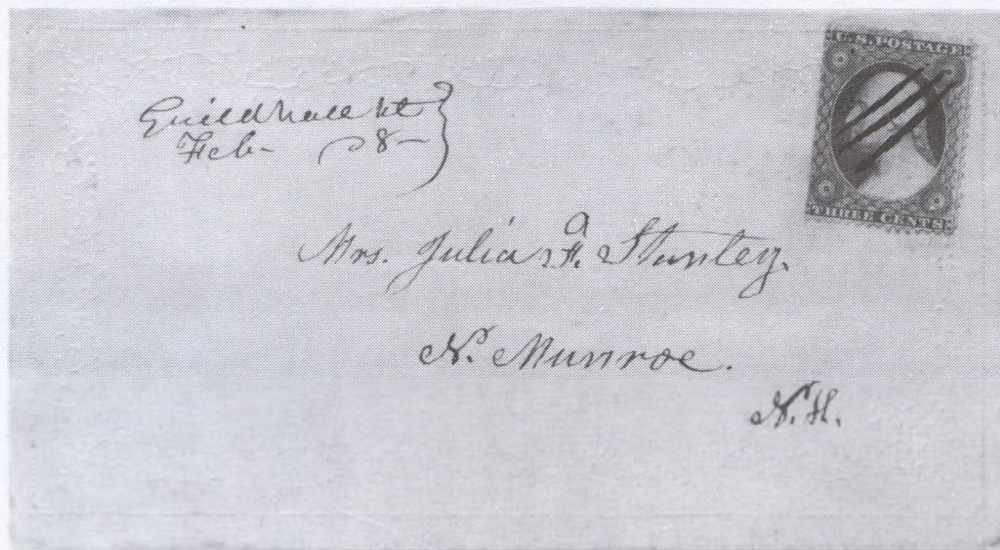


Figure 1





the stamp and that could just as well be done with a good squiggle or a written postmark or whatever. Manuscript crosses are seen to some extent as are parallel lines but neither are really common. Brockett's Bridge, N.Y. always comes to mind as a serious user of manuscript crosses on 1851 issue stamps.

The pair of Guildhall, Vermont covers in Figure 1 seems to reflect a serious attempt to comply. To be sure, the top cover does not have "several" crosses canceling the 1857 issue stamp but it does have a cross and it probably qualifies as "heavy." Your editor votes to give an "A" to the Guildhall

Figure 2

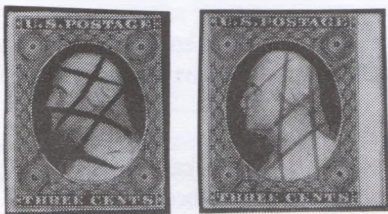
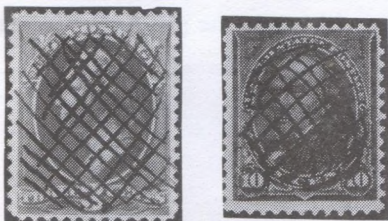


Figure 3



postmaster, especially if we are grading on the curve, for the parallel bars cancel and a "B+" for the cross. A cancel comprised of "several" crosses will generally be seen, we suppose, as the crosshatching illustrated in Figure 2. There were a few postmasters in much later years who were very enthusiastic keepers of the flame as evidenced by the stamps in Figure 3.

The Dexter, Maine cover in Figure 4 is interesting from several standpoints. First, it is not addressed to a person but rather just a box at the Unity post office which is in Maine about 30 miles from Dexter as the crow flies. The second thing is that it appears the Dexter postmaster (who was

himself obviously a student of the canceling regulation) thought it important to offer his name as well as the post office and date in the manuscript postmark.

A third aspect, which probably won't be visible in the illustration, is that the stamp is also canceled by a light strike of a blue grid. Surely the grid was not applied at Dexter. And it is doubtful that it was applied at Unity as the manuscript lines do an effective and considerably better job in canceling the stamp. (Why else would a post office cancel a stamp on a piece of incoming mail other than to rectify a canceling problem at the originating office?). Also, although the 1997 edition of the *American Stampless Cover Catalog* doesn't list Unity markings for 1857, it does for 1852-3 and for the 1860s and no markings are reported in blue.

Yet it does seem rather inconsistent that the Dexter postmaster, who did a conscientious job in canceling the stamp and in applying a very complete postmark, would have overlooked or ignored the blue cancel. Nonetheless, the re-use of a canceled stamp does seem the most likely scenario.

Comment is invited.

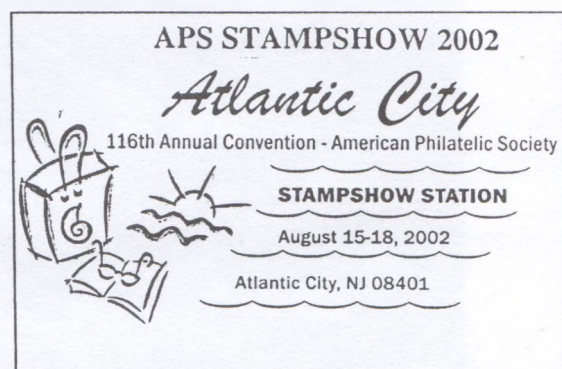


Figure 4

