



Cancellation Club NEWS

Vol. 26, No. 6, Whole No. 247, May 2003

The Evolution of the Four Corner Cancel of Greensborough, Georgia

by Frank Crown

The end of the Civil War brought many changes in the operation of post offices in the South. Most noticeable was the enforcement of the prewar requirement to cancel stamps with a device other than the postmark. Grids and target cancels were widely used but fancy cancels made from cork were also used.

Sometime after the reestablishment of the

Greensborough, Georgia post office in October 1865 the postmaster began to use a segmented cork cancel. The stamp on the cover at Figure 1, which bears a manuscript date of 1867, is tied by this segmented cork cancel. The cork was cut into quarters with wide colorless gaps between the segments. This cancel is similar to many other simple segmented cancels of the period, although one of the gaps is somewhat wider than that found in most cancels.

The cover at Figure 2 is dated 1869 by the annotation of Alexander H. Stephens, former Vice President of the Confederacy, on the reverse. The segmented cancel on this

(Continued on page 87)

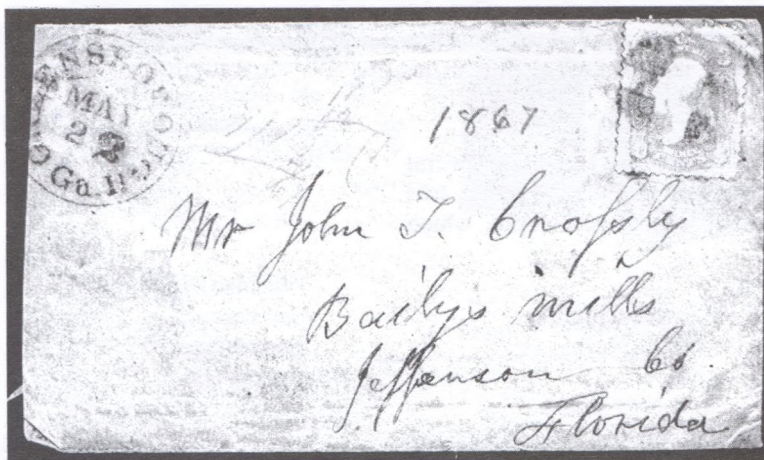


Figure 1. Black postmark and cancel on cover with 1867 pencil notation.

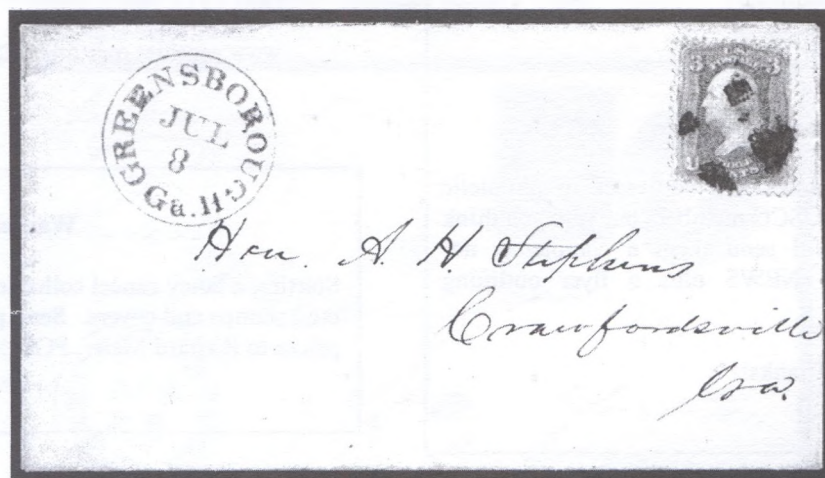


Figure 2. Black postmark and cancel on cover to Alexander H. Stephens, annotated 1869 on reverse.

Dear Reader,

Just back from the Boxborough show outside Boston where our Club held its annual meeting and sponsored a one-frame, 19th century U.S. cancellations exhibit competition. Five members participated and, in the aggregate, displayed a wide range of material in this field. Herewith the details:

-Vermeil: *Unusual & Uncommon Usages of and Markings on the First Postal Card*/Roger Rhoads

-Vermeil: *U.S. 2 Cent Vermilion Banknote: Fancy Cancels*/Matthew Kewriga

-Silver: *Highlights from a Collection of Massachusetts Fancy Cancels 1855-1895*/Arthur Beane

-Silver: *Fancy Cancellations on the Large U.S. Banknotes 1870-1890*/Vincent Costello

-Silver-Bronze: *Washington, D.C. "Fishtail Numeral" Cancels*/Roger Curran.

Congratulations to Matthew Kewriga who took home the U.S. Cancellation Club award.

The annual meeting/seminar consisted of brief presentations by each of the five exhibitors in an informal atmosphere with considerable audience participation. This is a seminar format we'll likely continue as several persons made a point commenting that it brought the exhibits to life in an informative way.

Meanwhile, at our society table we signed up several new members, met existing members and other visitors, and took orders for the new Whitfield cancellations book which was on display.

Roger Curran



Help Our Club Grow

Please notify us of the names and addresses of philatelic acquaintances who are not USCC members but who you think might be interested. We'll send them a completely no-obligation sample of the NEWS plus a flyer outlining membership benefits.

Thanks!!

The U.S. Cancellation Club NEWS

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Wanted

Starting a fancy cancel collection on A25 USA (Sc 65 etc.) stamps and covers. Send photocopies/scans with prices to Richard Meier, POB 597, Hemet, CA 92546.

(Continued from front page)

cover is essentially the same as that in Figure 1 although both colorless gaps are now quite wide.

The cover at Figure 3 is not dated but based on the appearance of the cancel must follow the 1869 cover. It shows even wider colorless gaps between the segments. So wide that the segments appear as four small, but distinctive, blotches of ink forming the four corners of a square.

The cover at Figure 4 is dated 1873 by the German receiving marking on the reverse. On this cover the blotches still retain some shape but the two on the right side are significantly reduced in size. This cover bears two strikes of the cancel and they are noticeably different.

The final cover at Figure 5 is dated 1874 by the German receiving mark on the reverse. The cancel shows continued deterioration with the blotches no longer having a distinctive shape. Again it illustrates how different the strikes can be even when they are applied at the same time.

The cancels on these five Greensborough covers graphically illustrate a couple of interesting things about cork cancels. First, over time the cancels can change shape dramatically as the cancel is cleaned and reworked. (In this case the colorless gaps were continually widened until only the blotches of ink in the four corners were left.) Second, strikes produced by the same cork cancel, applied at the same time, can differ greatly.



Figure 3. Black postmark and cancel on undated toned envelope.



Figure 4. Black postmark and cancel on cover to Germany. Red "NEW YORK PAID ALL/ DIRECT" postmark just ties stamp. German receiving marking is dated 1873.



Figure 5. Black postmark and cancel on cover to Germany. Red "NEW YORK/PAID" postmark ties stamp. German receiving mark is dated 1874.

Cancels of Note

Eric Cutler submits the two interesting cancels shown here as Figures 1 and 2. Figure 1 is a remarkable item – a fresh, bluish Sc 207 socked with the cancel struck in a wine-red ink. Eric said he has had the stamp for years and has no knowledge of what the letters stand for. We'll speculate that, particularly with the bar in the middle separating the "N" and "S," the cancel represents North and South. The split "S" is curious, appearing somewhat as a letter made by a stencil.

The "S.F." cancel is supposedly a San Francisco cancel reports Eric. However, it is not listed in *San Francisco Postal Markings, 1847-1900* by John M. Mahoney. (This publication, incidentally, is Volume 8 of the *LaPosta* monograph series and an excellent reference.) The cancel is listed, but unattributed, on page 314 of Skinner-Eno as LC-S2, appearing on 1867 issue stamps.

Readers who can supply additional information about either cancel are urged to do so.■



Figure 1



Figure 2

More on Quincy

John Bean writes with two updates to the Quincy, Illinois article that appeared on the front page of the November 2002 *NEWS*. The first involves a new "latest reported use" of the Type 2 Wesson "time on bottom" marking – December 6, 1888. The cover originated in Chicago and was addressed to Quincy. The Quincy post office determined that the addressee was no longer in Quincy and struck the cover with a "RETURNED/TO/WRITER" pointed hand and the Quincy "time on bottom" marking. A small part of the duplexed ellipse cancel also shows on the

cover. John also reports a new "earliest reported use" of the "S" in circle killer – February 23, 1874.

Roger Rhoads has copy of the 1875 Official Register and notes that the "S" in the above cancel probably refers to John Schrage, one of eight clerks employed in the Quincy post office that year. He earned \$900 in 1875.■

Pseudo-Machine Cancels

We have given considerable attention in these pages to the use of hand-carved versions of ellipse cancels. Manufactured ellipses of brass or steel were very common during the 1880s, especially in the larger post offices. They also provided inspiration for the creation of cancelers in small post offices. It shouldn't be surprising, therefore, to find that when machine cancels replaced handstamp ellipse killers, they too were copied in small post offices. We touched on this subject briefly on page 80 of the last *NEWS* but want now to give it more attention.

Machine cancel specialist Bob Payne has been maintaining records on pseudo-machine cancels for some time and has graciously shared with the *NEWS* a recently updated version of his 19th Century listing which we publish below.

Bob points out that it is sometimes very difficult to determine whether a particular cancel is or is not from a machine and he cites the Athens, Pennsylvania cancel illustrated in Figure 1 as a good example. While he classifies it now as a pseudo-machine cancel he wonders if it could be a machine cancel of an unknown inventor.

As a general proposition, in trying to determine whether a particular cancel is or is not the product of a machine, Bob considers the following questions:

Is the cancel positioned parallel to the top edge of the cover? (Not all mechanical devices, however, had positioning guides.)

Does the letter or card have any needle or feed marks? (Machine-processed mail may not have visible needle or feed marks.)

Is there a canceling machine patent on file that has a corresponding patent drawing of the cancel?

Does the post office from which a possible machine cancel comes from match the hometown of an inventor who has a patent for a canceling machine?

Bob believes that a few of the listed pseudo-machine cancels could well be obscure machine cancels which have yet to be correctly identified. Readers who can report other 19th century machine cancel look-alikes or extend the dates of current listings are encouraged to do so.■

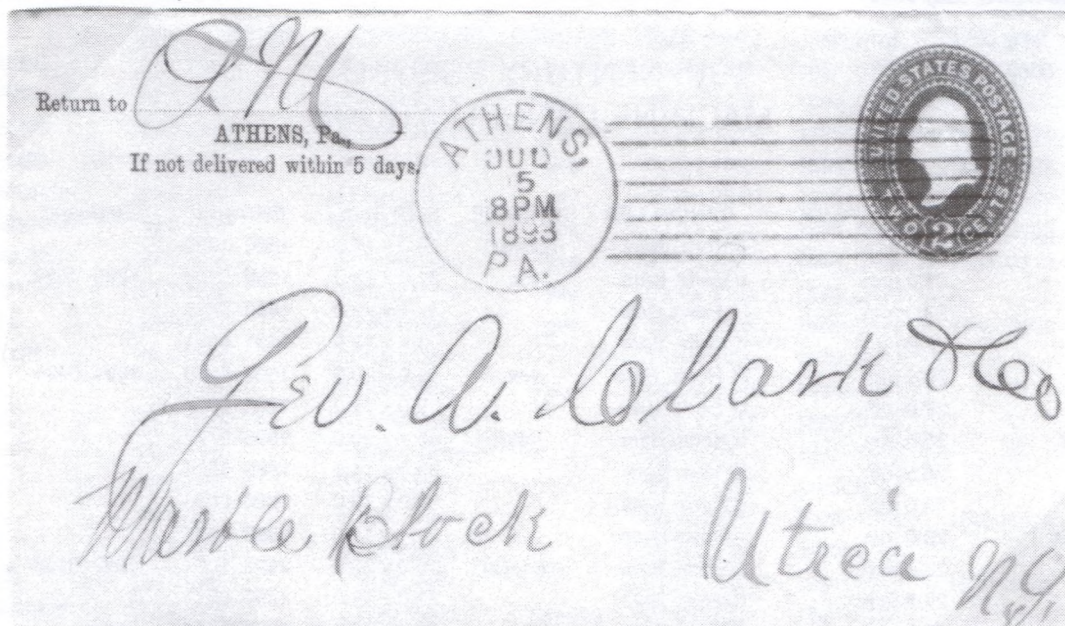


Figure 1



Figure 2

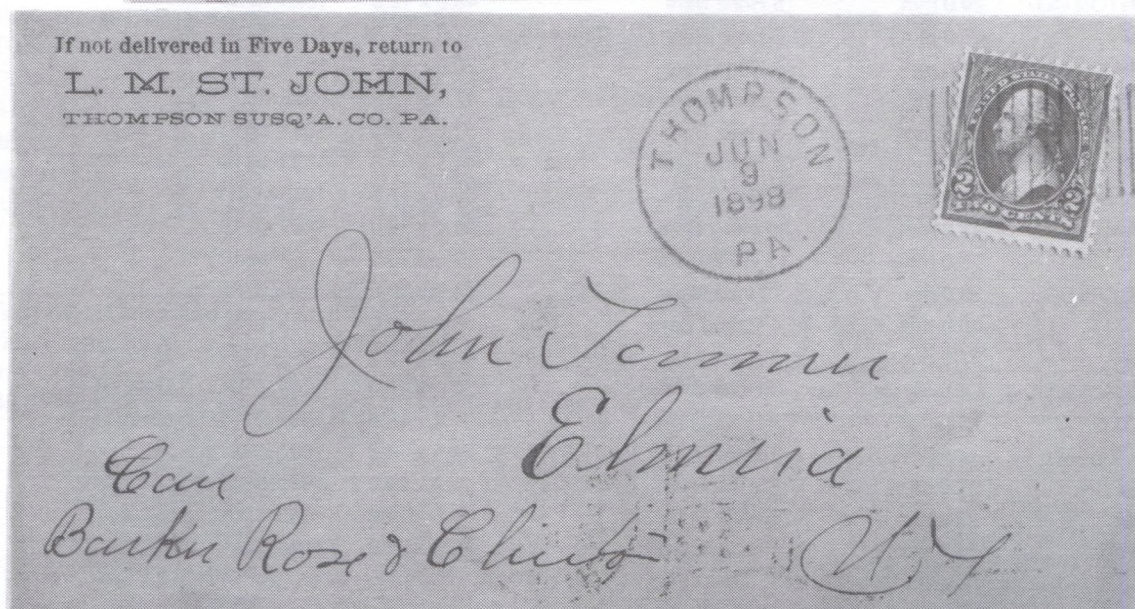


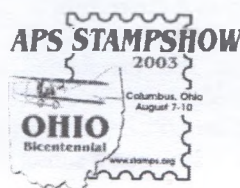
Figure 3

19th CENTURY PSEUDO MACHINE CANCELLATIONS

| ST | TOWN | DIAL - PSMK | CANCELLER | CONCAVE | SIZE (mm.) | EKU ymd | LKU ymd | COMMENT |
|----|-------------------|-------------|----------------|----------|-------------|------------|-----------|---------------|
| AL | LOGAN | 26.0 mm. | 6 Horiz. Bars | (convex) | 29.0 x 17.5 | 1890 1020 | | |
| CT | ANSONIA | 27.0 mm. | 6 Horiz. Bars | yes | 31.0 x 23.0 | 1890 0320 | 1890 0509 | |
| CT | NIANTIC | 27.0 mm. | 11 Rows Dots | | 31.+ x 22.0 | 1890 0922 | | Die Space |
| CT | SANWICH | 26.5 mm. | 6 Horiz. Bars | | 23.+ x 12.0 | 1891 0331 | | |
| IL | MENDOTA | 28.0 mm. | 11 Horiz. Bars | yes | 34.0 x 20.0 | 1892 0618 | 1894 0421 | Die Space |
| IL | MORRISON | 27.0 mm. | 12 Horiz. Bars | | 19.0 x 11.0 | 1892 0929 | | |
| IL | NEW BERLIN | 28.0 mm. | 8 Horiz. Bars | yes | 45.+ x 20.0 | 1895 0722 | | |
| IL | PEORIA | 28.5 mm. | 12 Vert. Bars | | 30.0 x 14.0 | 1885 0529 | | |
| IL | STREATOR | 25.0 mm. | 8 Horiz. Bars | | 34.0 x 20.0 | 1886 0908 | | |
| IL | WOODSTOCK | 28.0 mm. | 4 Rows Diam. | | 21.+ x 11.0 | 1898 0525 | | Diamond rows |
| IN | ENGLISH | 27.5 mm. | 6 Horiz. Bars | (convex) | 25.0 x 20.0 | 1898 1001 | 1899 0108 | |
| IN | ENGLISH | 27.5 mm. | 6 Horiz. Bars | | 31.0 x 18.0 | 1899 0617 | | |
| IN | ENGLISH | 27.5 mm. | 4 Horiz. Bars | | 32.0 x 17.5 | 1899 1014 | | |
| IN | ENGLISH | 27.5 mm. | 4 Horiz. Bars | | 35.+ x 15.0 | 1900 0505 | 1900 0604 | |
| IN | MIDDLETOWN | 24.5 mm. | 8 Horiz. Bars | | 36.0 x 16.0 | 1895 0315 | | |
| IN | PERU | 25.5 mm. | 8 Horiz. Bars | | 29.0 X 16.0 | — 0925 | | |
| IA | AMES | 28.0 mm. | 4 Horiz. Bars | | 22.0 x 17.5 | 1897 0514 | 1897 0621 | |
| IA | COUNCIL BLUFFS | 27.5 mm. | 7 Horiz. Bars | | 33.+ x 28.0 | 1890 1013 | | |
| IA | DECORAH | 3 Line yes | 3 Rows Mrks | yes | 19.+ x 15.0 | 1897 1217 | | * Vert. marks |
| IA | WEST LIBERTY | 27.5 mm. | 6 Horiz. Bars | | 50.+ x 16.0 | 1899 0312 | | |
| KY | CARROLLTON | 28.0 mm. | 10 Horiz. Bars | | 21.5 x 19.0 | 1891 0926 | 1895 0916 | |
| KY | DANVILLE | 28.0 mm. | 5 Horiz. Bars | | 29.0 x 15.5 | 1894 0202 | | |
| ME | EAST SUMNER | 27.5 mm. | 4 Rows Dots | | 44.0 x 12.5 | 1896 0625 | 1900 0912 | |
| ME | RICHMOND CORNER | 27.0 mm. | 7 Horiz. Bars | | 32.0 x 14.0 | — 0704 | | circa 1890's |
| ME | WINTHROP CENTER | 26.0 mm. | 6 Horiz. Bars | | 29.0 x 15.0 | 1880 0628 | 1891 0219 | |
| MD | BROOKEVILLE | 27.0 mm. | 5 Horiz. Bars | yes | 10.+ x 15.5 | 1892 0208 | 1893 0810 | |
| MD | NEW WINDSOR | 4 Line yes | 11 Horiz. Bars | | 52.0 x 14.0 | 1894 0107 | 1894 0210 | Press Print |
| MA | BURLINGTON | 26.0 mm. | 9 Horiz. Bars | | 34.0 X 17.0 | 1895 0615 | | |
| MA | SOUTH WEYMOUTH | 26.0 mm. | 4 Horiz. Bars | yes | 23.0 x 18.5 | 1888 0526 | | |
| MA | TOPSFIELD | 27.0 mm. | 5 Horiz. Bars | yes | 43.0 x 16.0 | 1894 0425 | 1897 0621 | |
| MA | TRURO | 29.0 mm. | 4 Horiz. Bars | | 39.+ x 15.0 | 1889 0218 | | |
| MI | CASS CITY | 28.0 mm. | 8 Horiz. Bars | | 23.0 x 18.0 | 1897 1115 | 1897 1208 | |
| MI | EAST SAGINAW | 26.0 mm. | 8 Vert. Bars | | 25.5 x 14.0 | 1884 0702 | | |
| MI | MILFORD | 26.5 mm. | 13 Diag. Bars | | 25.0 x 13.0 | 1896 0430 | | |
| MI | OVID, CLINTON CO. | 29.0 mm. | 5 Horiz. Bars | | 48.0 x 19.0 | 1890 0206 | | |
| NE | CHADRON | 27.0 mm. | 6 Horiz. Bars | (convex) | 37.0 x 15.0 | 1890 0219 | | |
| NE | RANDOLPH | 27.5 mm. | 6 Horiz. Bars | | 26.0 x 14.5 | 1894 1022 | | |
| NH | NORTH CONWAY | 28.5 mm. | 6 Horiz. Bars | | 47.+ x 16.0 | 1898 1025 | | |
| NJ | OAKLAND | 29.0 mm. | 5 Horiz. Bars | | 33.0 x 9.5 | 1894 0510 | | |
| NJ | REDRICKTOWN | 28.0 mm. | 5 Horiz. Bars | yes | 44.+ x 17.0 | 1893 0319 | 1895 0322 | |
| NJ | RUTHERFORD | 27.0 mm. | 5 Horiz. Bars | | 36.0 x 17.5 | 1883? 0317 | | |
| NY | EDDYTOWN | 27.0 mm. | 10 Horiz. Bars | | 26.0 x 18.0 | 1889 0119 | | |
| NY | ITHICA | 26.0 mm. | 15 Horiz. Bars | | 23.5 x 20.5 | — 0614 | | |
| NY | LAKE WACCABUG | 29.0 mm. | 7 Horiz. Bars | | 44.0 x 18.0 | — 0725 | | |
| NY | LODI | 25.0 mm. | 4 Paired Bars | | 36.0 x 19.0 | 1888 0710 | | |
| NY | LODI | 27.5 mm. | 7 Horiz. Bars | | 43.+ x 19.5 | 1894 1121 | 1895 1114 | |
| NY | NORTH GRANVILLE | 24.0 mm. | 6 Horiz. Bars | | 35.+ x 18.0 | 1886 0104 | 1888 0509 | |
| NY | NORTHVILLE | 26.5 mm. | 8 Horiz. Bars | | 25.0 x 19.5 | 1898 0714 | 1899 1101 | |
| NY | ORWELL | 33.0 mm. | 6 Horiz. Bars | | 24.+ x 18.5 | 1895 0121 | | |
| NY | PHILADELPHIA | 27.0 mm. | 7 Horiz. Bars | yes | 45.0 x 20.0 | 1893 0605 | 1893 0616 | |
| NY | PINE PLAINS | 26.5 mm. | 6 Horiz. Bars | | 33.5 x 17.0 | 1889 1209 | | |
| NY | SCHOHARIE | 28.0 mm. | 9 Diag. Bars | | 40.0 x 21.0 | 1899 0418 | | |

| ST | TOWN | DIAL - PSMK | CANCELLER | CONCAVE | SIZE (mm.) | EKU ymd | LKU ymd | COMMENT |
|----|----------------|-----------------|---------------|----------|-------------|-----------|-----------|----------------|
| NY | SKANEATELES | 28.0 mm. | 8 Horiz.Bars | yes | 25.0 x 18.0 | 1887 0708 | 1894 0306 | 4 Bar Plug |
| NY | SKANEATELES | 27.5 mm. | 8 Horiz.Bars | yes | 45.0 x 16.0 | 1894 0706 | | |
| NY | SKANEATELES | 27.5 mm. | 8 Horiz.Bars | yes | 31.0 x 16.0 | 1895 0402 | 1898 0716 | No Die Space |
| NY | SKANEATELES | 27.5 mm. | 8 Horiz.Bars | yes | 31.0 x 16.0 | 1899 0516 | 1900 0927 | Die space Ball |
| NY | WARRENSBURGH | 27.0 mm. | 11 Horiz.Bars | yes | 39.0 x 26.0 | 1892 0318 | 1892 1027 | |
| NY | WARRENSBURGH | 28.0 mm. | 11 Horiz.Bars | yes | 39.0 x 26.0 | 1893 0614 | 1894 0608 | Die space |
| NY | WARRENSBURG | 27.0 mm. | 10 Horiz.Bars | yes | 41.+ x 24.0 | 1894 0820 | 1898 0311 | Die space |
| NY | WARRENSBURG | 27.0 mm. | 6 Horiz.Bars | yes | 39.+ x 21.0 | 1899 0404 | | |
| NY | WELLSVILLE | 28.0 mm. | 9 Hor.Dashes | yes | 51.0 x 21.5 | 1892 0201 | 1896 0620 | Short Dahes |
| NC | FRANKLINTON | 29.0 mm. | 7+ Horiz.Bars | | 15.+ x 13.+ | 1896 1114 | | |
| NC | SKYLAND | 27.0 mm. | 8 Horiz.Bars | yes | 50.0 X 13.0 | 1894 0901 | | |
| NC | SILER CITY | 24.0 mm. | 6 Horiz.Bars | | 61.+ x 16.0 | 1889 0131 | | |
| NC | WORTHVILLE | 27.5 mm. | 7 Wavy Lines | | 39.+ x 20.+ | 1896 1015 | | Die space Star |
| OH | AKRON | 25.5 mm. | 6 Horiz.Bars | | 39.+ x 16.5 | 1888 0111 | | |
| OH | CADIZ | 28.0 mm. | 8 Vert. Bars | | 24.0 x 28.0 | 1898 1005 | 1898 1022 | |
| OH | DANVILLE | 31.0 mm. | 5 Horiz.Bars | | 20.+ x 14.0 | 1897 —12 | | |
| OH | EAGLEVILLE | 26.0 mm. | 7 Horiz.Bars | | 41.+ x 19.0 | 1892 0719 | 1892 1205 | |
| OH | MARTIN'S FERRY | 27.0 mm. | 5 Horiz.Bars | (convex) | 31.0 x 16.0 | 1887 0204 | | Die Space (11) |
| OH | TAPPAN | 27.0 mm. | 4 WavyLines | | 28.0 x 21.0 | 1898 0906 | | |
| OR | McMINNVILLE | 26.5 mm. | 5 Horiz.Bars | yes | 36.0 x 20.0 | 1891 0504 | | |
| PA | ATHENS | 27.5 mm. | 8 Horiz.Bars | yes | 55.0 x 18.5 | 1891 1002 | 1896 0225 | |
| PA | BEHAM | 27.0 mm. | 6 Horiz.Bars | | 43.0 x 16.0 | 1895 1210 | | |
| PA | BROOKLYN | 28.5 mm. | 8 Horiz.Bars | | 23.0 x 15.5 | 1899 0513 | | |
| PA | COALPORT | 24.0 mm. | 6 Horiz.Bars | | 68.0 x 16.5 | 1887 0719 | 1887 1001 | |
| PA | COALPORT | 24.0 mm. | 6 Horiz.Bars | | 68.0 x 16.5 | 1888 1201 | 1991 0604 | Die space Blob |
| PA | COALPORT | 24.0 mm. | 6 Horiz.Bars | | 50.0 x 17.0 | 1891 1019 | 1892 0408 | Die space Plug |
| PA | FALLBROOK | 3 Line yes | 8 Diag.Bars | | 39.0 x 15.5 | 1898 0201 | 1898 0725 | |
| PA | FRANKLIN | 26.0 mm. | 8 Horiz.Bars | | 21.0 x 23.5 | 1879 0114 | 1880 1206 | |
| PA | NEW BETHLEHEM | 28.0 mm. | 5 Horiz.Bars | | 44.0 X 18.0 | 1887 1115 | | |
| PA | NEW BETHLEHEM | 29.0 mm. | 7 Horiz.Bars | | 42.0 x 27.5 | 1887 1119 | 1890 1010 | |
| PA | PHILADELPHIA | 24.5 mm rimless | 5 Vert. Bars | | 15.0 x 24.0 | — 0813 | | circa 1870's |
| PA | THOMPSON | 27.5 mm. | 15 Vert. Bars | | 28.0 x 15.5 | 1889 1213 | 1898 0716 | |
| PA | UNION CITY | 28.0 mm. | 6 Horiz.Bars | | 34.0 x 13.0 | 1897 0831 | | |
| PA | UNION CITY | 28.0 mm. | 16 Diag.Bars | | 55.0 x 15.0 | 1897 0924 | | Diagonal bars |
| SC | PEAK | 26.5 mm. | 6 Horiz.Bars | | 29.0 x 29.0 | 1888 0224 | | |
| SD | SAINT THOMAS | 22.0 mm. | 7 Horiz.Bars | yes | 34.+ x 16.5 | 1899 0524 | | |
| TN | GREENVILLE | 2 Line yes | 5 Rows Diam. | | 26.+ x 16.0 | 1899 0801 | | Diamond rows |
| TN | WOODVILLE | 2+3 Line yes | 7 Horiz.Bars | | 35.0 x 14.0 | 1893 0315 | | |
| VT | EAST GEORGE | 26.0 mm | 8 Horiz.Bars | | 26.0 x 21.0 | 1888 1120 | — 0322 | |
| WA | BLAINE | 27.0 mm. | 5 Horiz.Bars | | 31.+ x 21.0 | 1894 0712 | | |
| WA | CHEHALIS | 28.0 mm. | 8 Horiz.Bars | | 30.0 X 18.0 | 1893 0506 | | |
| WA | HAMILTON | 28.5 mm. | 4 Horiz.Bars | (convex) | 38.+ x 15.0 | 1894 0517 | | |
| WA | MONTESANO | 27.0 mm. | 5 Horiz.Bars | | 30.0 X 15.0 | 1893 0221 | | |
| WV | WADESTOWN | 27.5 mm. | 6 Horiz.Bars | | 36.0 x 17.0 | 1894 0810 | 1894 1017 | Die spce w/1? |
| WI | COLUMBUS | 27.5 mm. | 4 Horiz.Bars | | 22.0 x 8.0 | 1893 1109 | 1896 0709 | |
| WY | FORT WASHAKIE | 27.0 mm. | 8 Horiz.Bars | | 29.0 X 10.0 | 1898 0529 | | |
| WY | FORT WASHAKIE | 29.0 mm. | 9 Horiz.Bars | | 29.0 x 11.0 | 1898 0716 | | |

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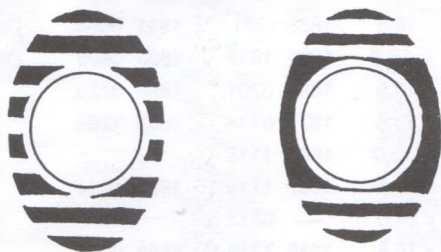
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Washington, D.C. "Fishtail" Numeral Cancels

by Roger D. Curran

The most popular canceler design in the U.S. prior to the introduction of rapid canceling machines was the ellipse-shaped killer composed of horizontal or vertical bars. Typically, a letter or number appeared in the center. These cancels were first introduced for regular use in 1876 by the New York Post Office and in the 1880s were employed extensively. Every major U.S. post office used them and a large number of smaller ones as well.

As would be expected, given various handstamp suppliers and differing post office preferences, ellipse cancels exist in great variety in terms of overall shape and size and in the style of the number, letter or other figure in the center. The most elaborate or "fancy" numerals were in two sets of handstamps used in 1882-1885 by the Washington, D.C. post office. Over the years collectors have referred to these fancy numerals as "fishtail" numerals. One set has numerals "1" through "6" in an 8-bar design and the other has the same numerals in a configuration consisting of a solid "barrel" around the numeral in the center combined with two bars above and two bars below.



The 8-bar design is reported from November 20, 1882¹ through April 13, 1885² and the barrel design from November 14, 1882³ through June 26, 1885.⁴ A variation of the 8-bar design is known consisting of split bars and a split central section. This variation occurs with numerals "2" and "3" and has been reported from June 1⁵ through November 18, 1885.⁶ Given the shorter period of use, these are much less common than the other designs. Also, in my experience, the "2" is especially hard to find.



In these handstamps, interestingly, only numerals "1" through "4" show the "fishtail" design although there is no doubt that the "5s" and "6s," as illustrated herein, are parts of the sets. Figure 1 illustrates the six killers of each set on off-cover stamps plus the two split barrel killers.

In correspondence with the author, Alan Campbell, a specialist in official stamps and covers, commented on his experience with the "fishtail numeral" cancels. After mentioning the scarcity of official covers generally and hence



Figure 1

the difficulty of doing in-depth research on particular cancels, he stated the following about the "fishtail numerals:"

"I collect these off-cover, but have only been able to complete 1-6 in barrel on State. I find the 8-bar type . . . much scarcer. Also, for some reason, the numbers 4 and 6 seem to be particularly hard to find."

Figure 2 illustrates the earliest reported use of the 8-bar design. The "fishtail" in the center of the "3" is very distinct and clear. See the tracing from this cover by John Donnes.

Figure 3 shows a cover with a Vice-President corner card. There was no Vice President in 1882 as Chester A. Arthur succeeded to the presidency in 1881 after the assassination of President Garfield. The enclosure to this cover was written on behalf of a "Judge Davis," apparently by a clerk, and the letter concerned a subscription renewal.

Figure 2

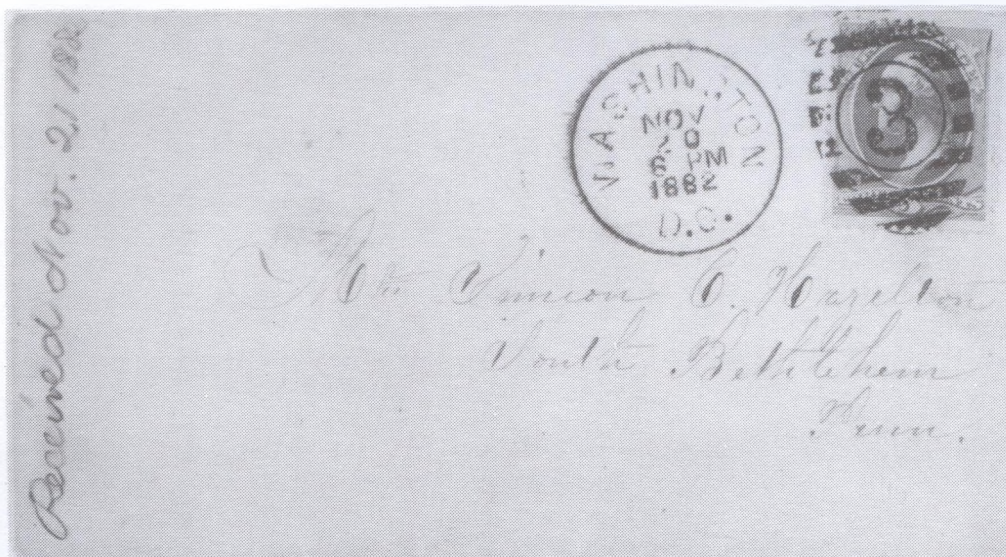
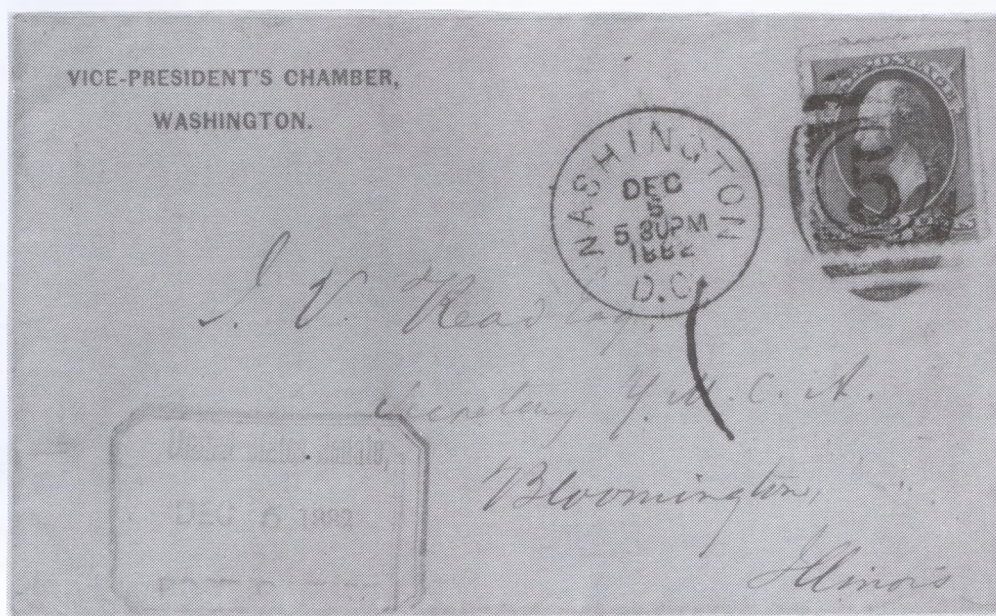


Figure 3



A cover to Mentone, France franked with a pair of Sc 207 overpaying the 5c UPU rate is shown as Figure 4.

Figure 5 illustrates a single rate domestic cover paid by a strip of three Sc 206.

Figure 4



Figure 5

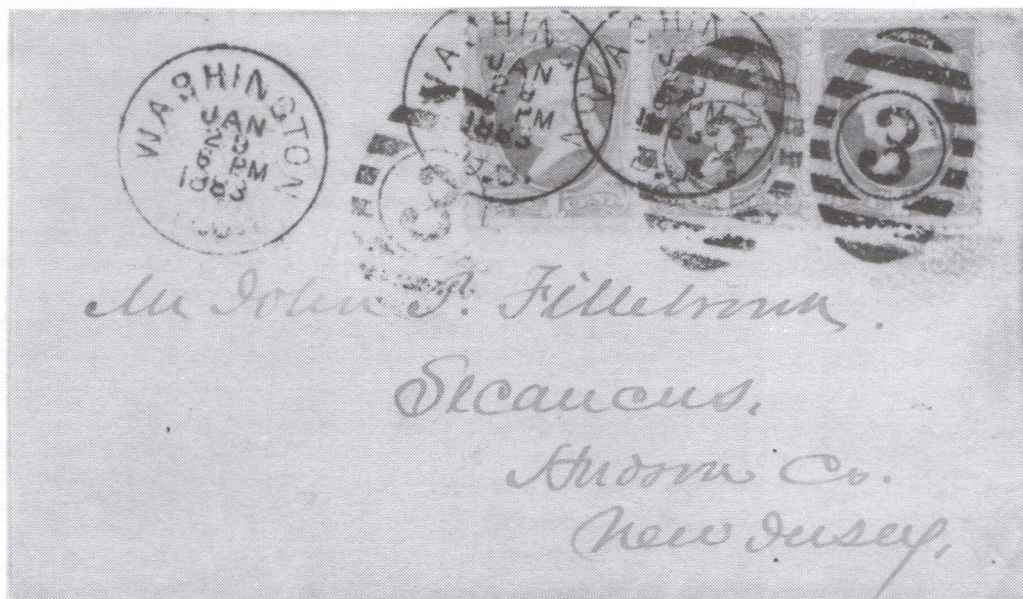


Figure 6

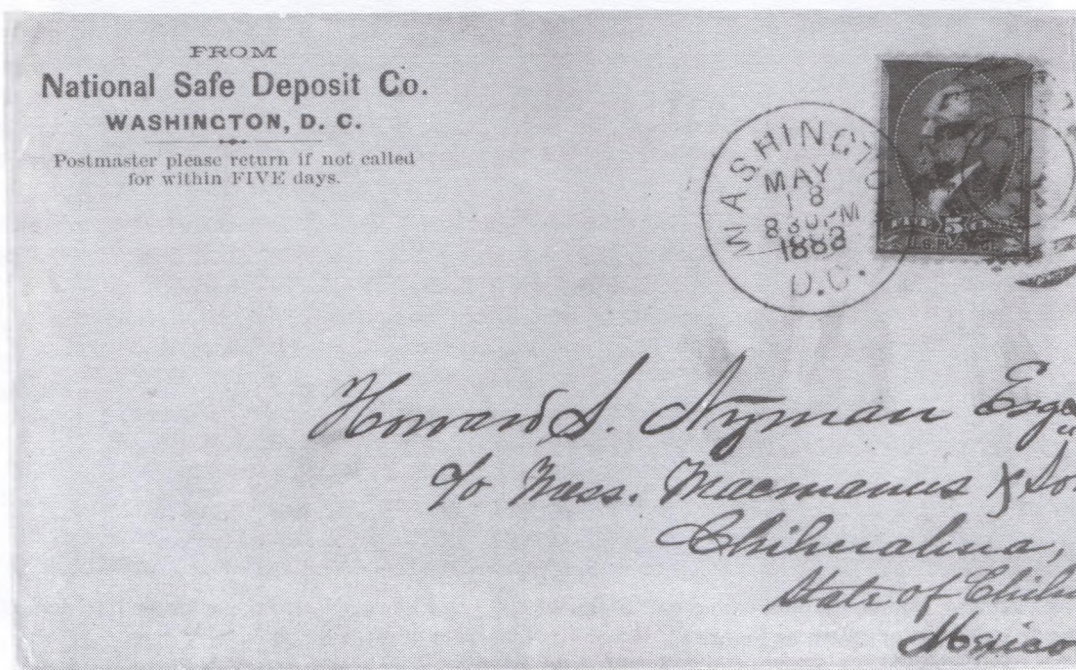


Figure 7

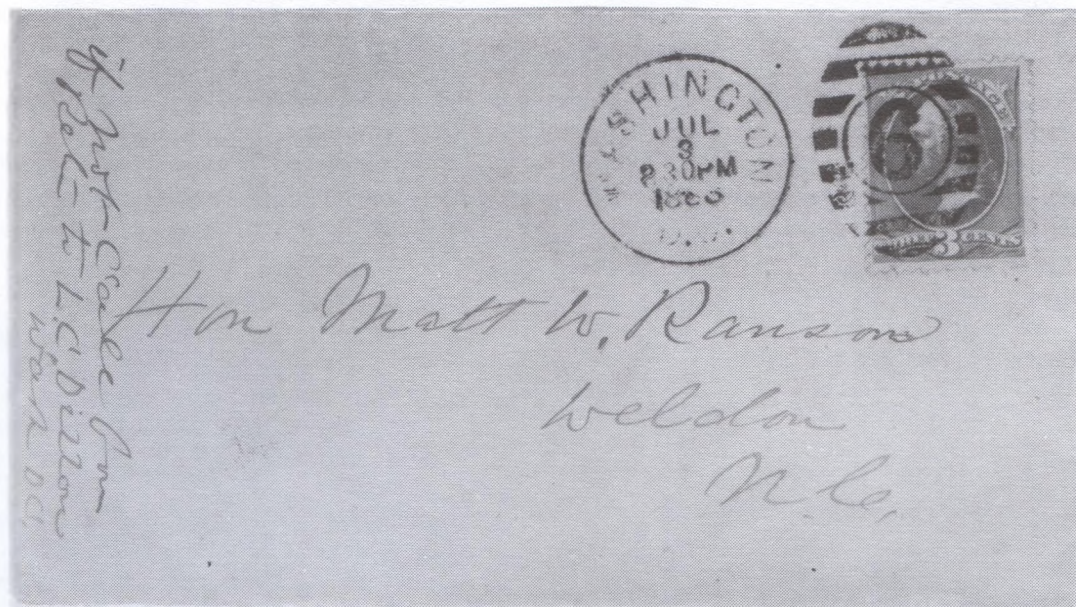


Figure 8

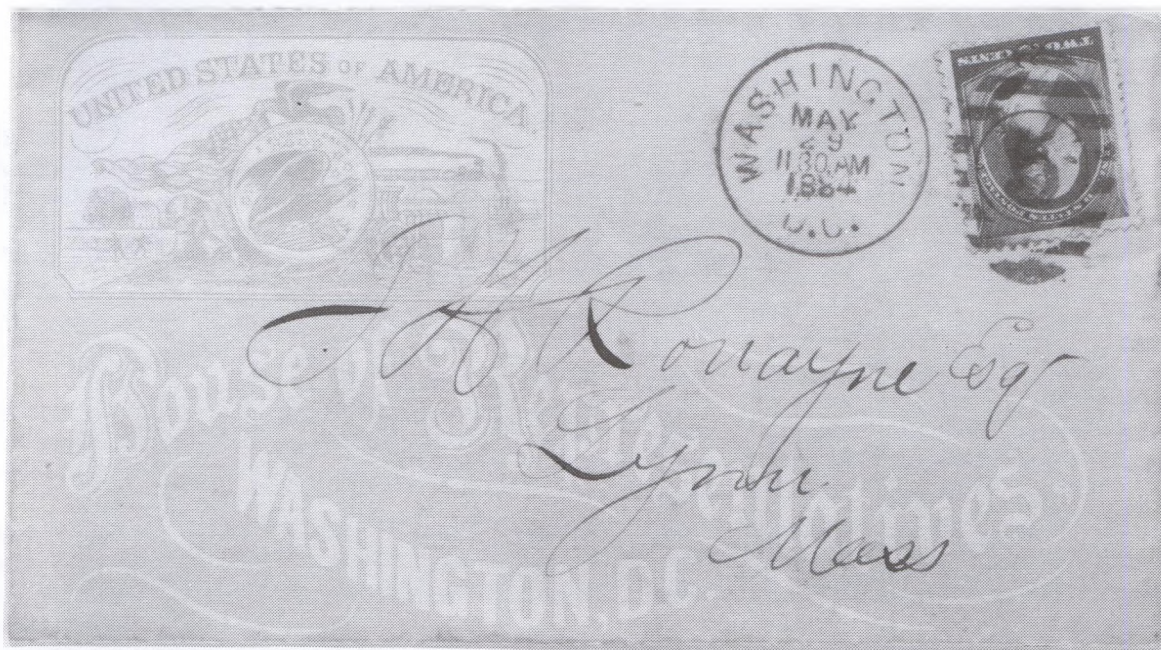
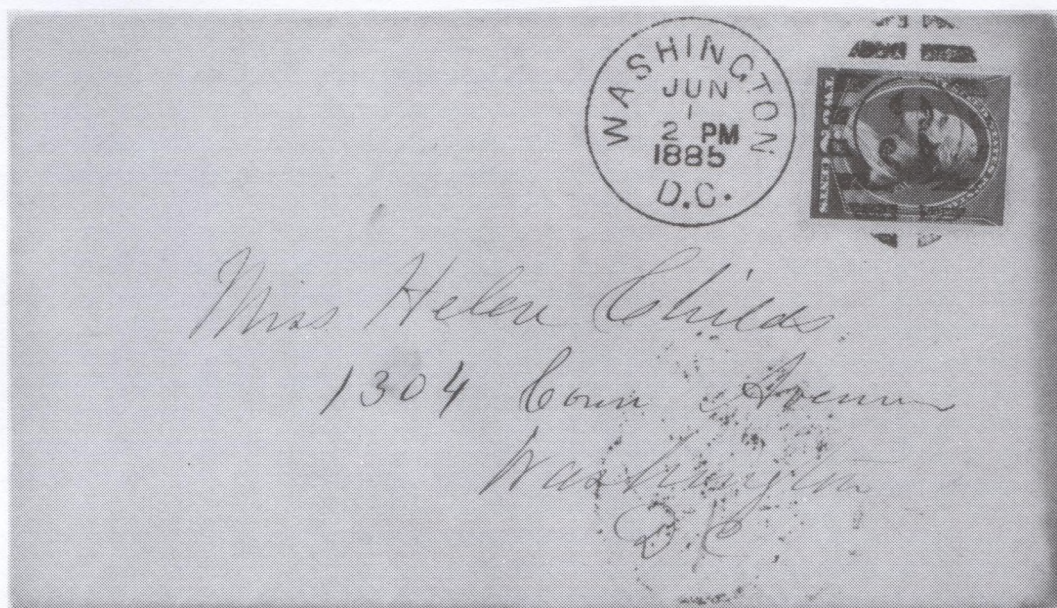


Figure 9



A cover to Chihuahua, Mexico paid with a Sc 205 is shown in Figure 6. The killer has a "4" in the center.

It is interesting to note that Edward Willard, in his extensive study of Sc 210, reported numerals "1" through "5" in the 8-bar design, but no "6."⁷ He did report numerals "1"- "6" in the barrel design.⁸ As noted above, Alan Campbell found numbers "4" and "6" to be "particularly hard to find" on official stamps. We can speculate that the "4" has been particularly popular with cancel collectors because it is the most fancy of the "fishtail" numerals and has thus been subject to greater demand. And given that Willard didn't find



an 8-bar "6" on a Sc 210, perhaps this handstamp was taken out of service early for some reason or was lost or broken, leaving only the barrel design. Figure 7 illustrates an 8-bar

"6" cover postmarked about three months before Sc 210 was introduced on October 1, 1883.

Figure 8 shows a cover bearing an overall House of Representatives design.

The earliest reported use of a split barrel killer is illustrated in Figure 9.

A strip of four Sc 206 on cover paying the double weight domestic rate is shown in Figure 10.

The latest reported use of a "fishtail numeral" is shown in Figure 11. Due to the incomplete strike, the numeral in the center of the killer cannot be determined.

Readers are encouraged to add to the story by reporting covers that extend the dates mentioned above or that show unusual or otherwise interesting usages. ■

Figure 10

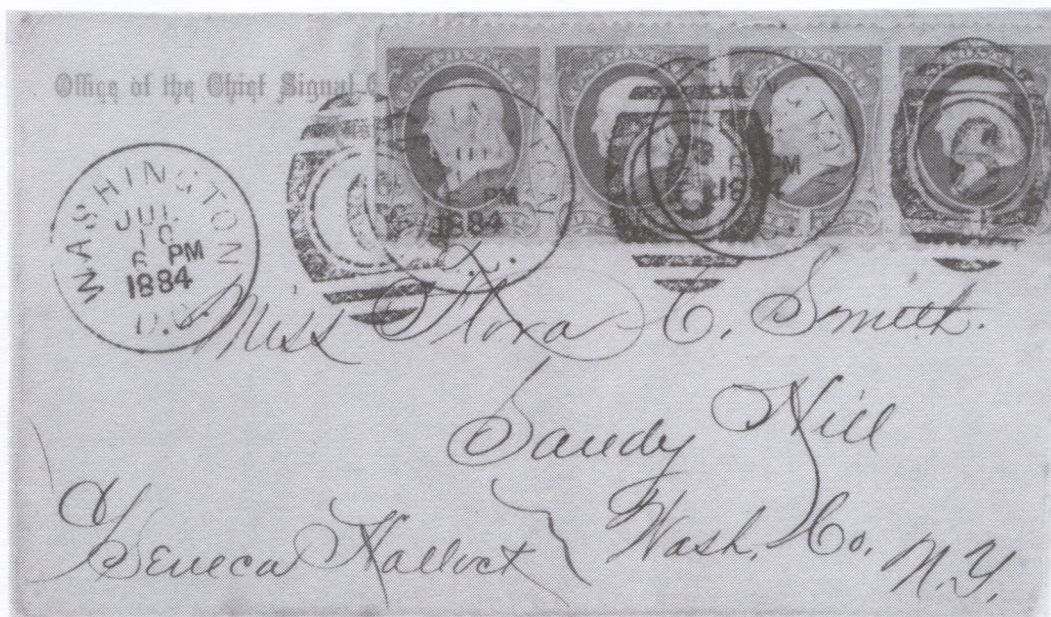
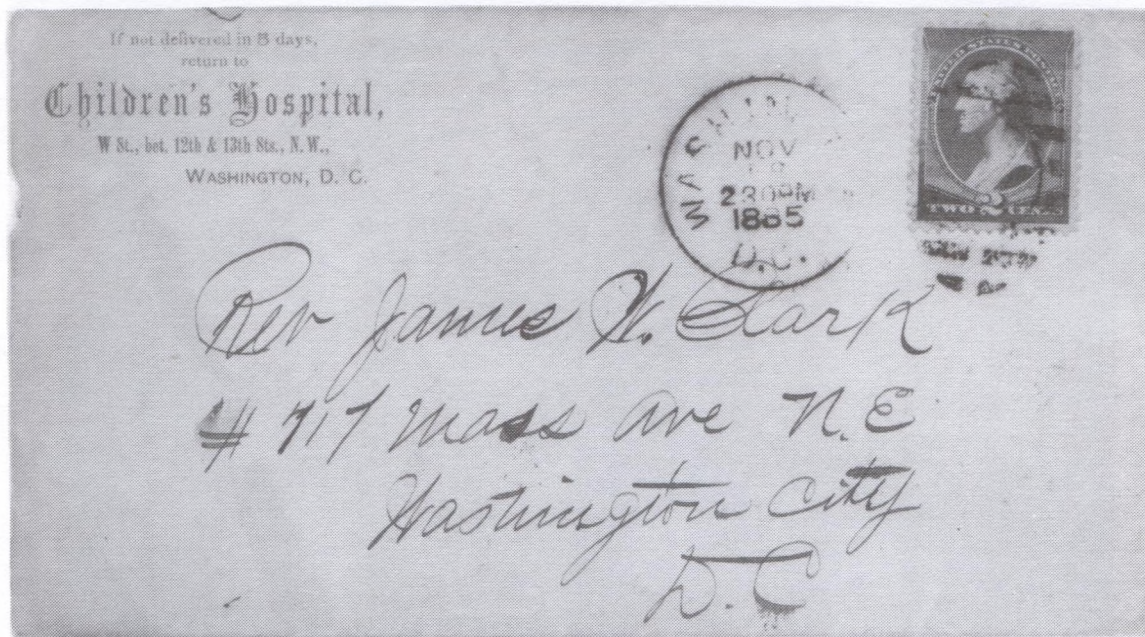


Figure 11



¹ Author's collection.

² Cole, Jim "Washington, D.C. Ellipses – An Update," *U.S. Cancellation Club News*, Spring 1989, page 105.

³ Campbell, Alan C. "Usages of Official Stamps in Washington, D.C., 1877-1884," *Chronicle*, November 1999, page 283.

⁴ Cole, op. cit.

⁵ Author's collection.

⁶ Author's collection.

⁷ Willard, Edward L. *The United States Two Cent Red Brown of 1883-1887*, Vol. II (1970), p. 156.

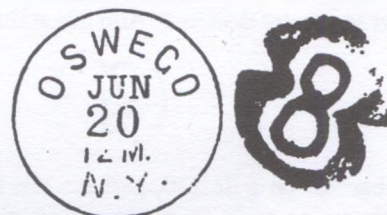
⁸ Ibid.

partial strike of the same cancel appearing as NU-75 on page 188 of the Cole book. Cole's tracing is incomplete and it led him to conclude it was a "38." He lists it as found on 1873 issue stamps. Until now we have not been able to report the post office of origin. John Donnes recently submitted a cover in his collection, locally addressed, bearing the cancel on a Sc 183 stamp. John's tracing of the postmark and cancel are shown as Figure 1. We still have no year date – can anyone help?■

An Unusual "8" Cancel

On page 119 of the November 2001 *NEWS* an interesting "8" cancel in the collection of Wendell Triplett was illustrated on an off-cover Sc 186. Wendell pointed out what is probably a

Figure 1



More on the New York Double Ovals

by Roger D. Curran

In the August 2002 *NEWS* we presented an early New York double oval cancel on a cover that was postmarked January 12, 1880. The following was stated:

"These unduplexed cancels have postal history significance because they are believed to be the first rubber obliterated employed by the NYPO."

A footnote clarified that this comment referred to obliterated *designed* as obliterated because rubber bottle stoppers are known to have been used as cancelers by the NYPO in 1874.

In the February 2003 *NEWS* we reported a New York double oval cancel on a cover that bears a company handstamp dated November 1, 1879. While the cover may not have been postmarked by the double oval on that date, it is no doubt safe to assume it was postmarked very close to that date.

Since November, I have had occasion to reread portions of a calendar year 1877 report of the Third Division (Mailing and Distribution Dept) of the NYPO that had been sent to the *NEWS* by Martin Margulis many years ago. In a section entitled "Postmarking and Canceling Stamps" it states at one point:

"The handstamp used in the Newspaper Department for canceling stamps on 3rd class matter is simply a piece of rubber; somewhat the shape of a bottle cork; set in a wooden handle and having its face cut out in the shape of a cross."

These particular cross cancels presumably appear only on wrappers. Who can report an example for illustration in the *NEWS*? One could say that this cross represents a step by the

NYPO beyond bottle stoppers in the use of rubber cancelers. While not, of course, the product of a molded rubber design – which became the norm with widespread usage in a number of post offices beginning in 1877 – it is a rubber obliterator designed as an obliterator.

There is an aspect about the various New York double ovals – and, indeed, the similar double ovals used by other large post offices – that makes one wonder a bit about classifying them as products of rubber-faced handstamps. This concerns the fact that they are struck in black ink. As we have discussed in several previous articles, a major problem with the introduction of rubber-faced handstamps was that they didn't work well with black printer's ink and the colored inks provided by handstamp suppliers for their use could be washed off the canceled stamps.

Before addressing the ink question, however, I want to say that there is, I believe, substantial evidence in support of the rubber classification. The most distinctive aspect of rubber handstamp facings is their flexible or pliable nature. If, for example, a handstamp is applied with more force on one side than another, the rubber letters and/or rim, etc. will flatten out and apply a larger or at least thicker impression. A rather extreme example of this is shown in Figure 1. Note how small the "N" is in relation to the letters in the right side. I don't believe one would ever see such wide variations in letter size from any handstamp of the period other than rubber.

Another characteristic I look for, particularly on the thin rimmed CDS designs, are distortions in the round shape so that it is no longer geometrically proportioned. See Figure 2.

The absence of such indicators on particular strikes doesn't mean that the marking is not from a rubber-faced handstamp, because many strikes from rubber-faced handstamps result in "good" impressions. But when one sees various examples and such an indicator is present on some, I

Figure 1

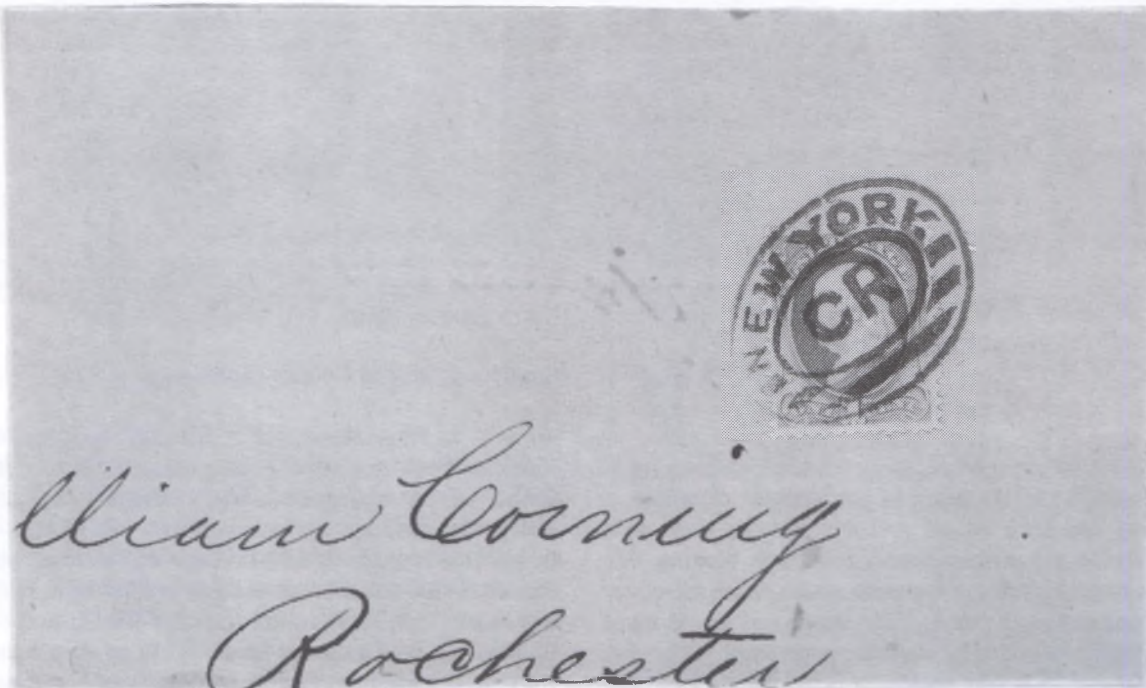




Figure 2

think we can start developing at least preliminary conclusions. This whole area, incidentally, appears to be quite understudied and is certainly under-reported in the literature. The *NEWS* is eager to receive comments, questions and information bearing on what are the indicators of markings from rubber-faced handstamps, as the above only scratches the surface.

Joe Crosby owns the study collection of Gilbert M. Burr (the pioneering student of "standardized" cancellations of the Banknote era) who reported his research in the *American Philatelist* in 1935 and 1936. Joe has been generous in sharing information from Mr. Burr's collection with present-day collectors and recently provided to the *NEWS* Mr. Burr's data on the New York "CR" double oval. Burr made note of an example that "... seems to be made up of a series of short dashes to form the ovals." Figure 3 illustrates such an example and it is my view that the "dashes" reflect the cracking of the molded rubber which, over time, became brittle.

Returning now to the question of why, if these double ovals were made of rubber, black ink was used, I can only offer speculation. These designs were not as finely detailed as most postmark designs and may not have been as susceptible to the adverse effects of black printer's ink. Perhaps also these handstamps were cheaply produced and frequent replacements were not costly. Did the printer's ink help "dry out" the rubber, thus making the facings brittle? So much to learn and understand! Please help if you can. ■

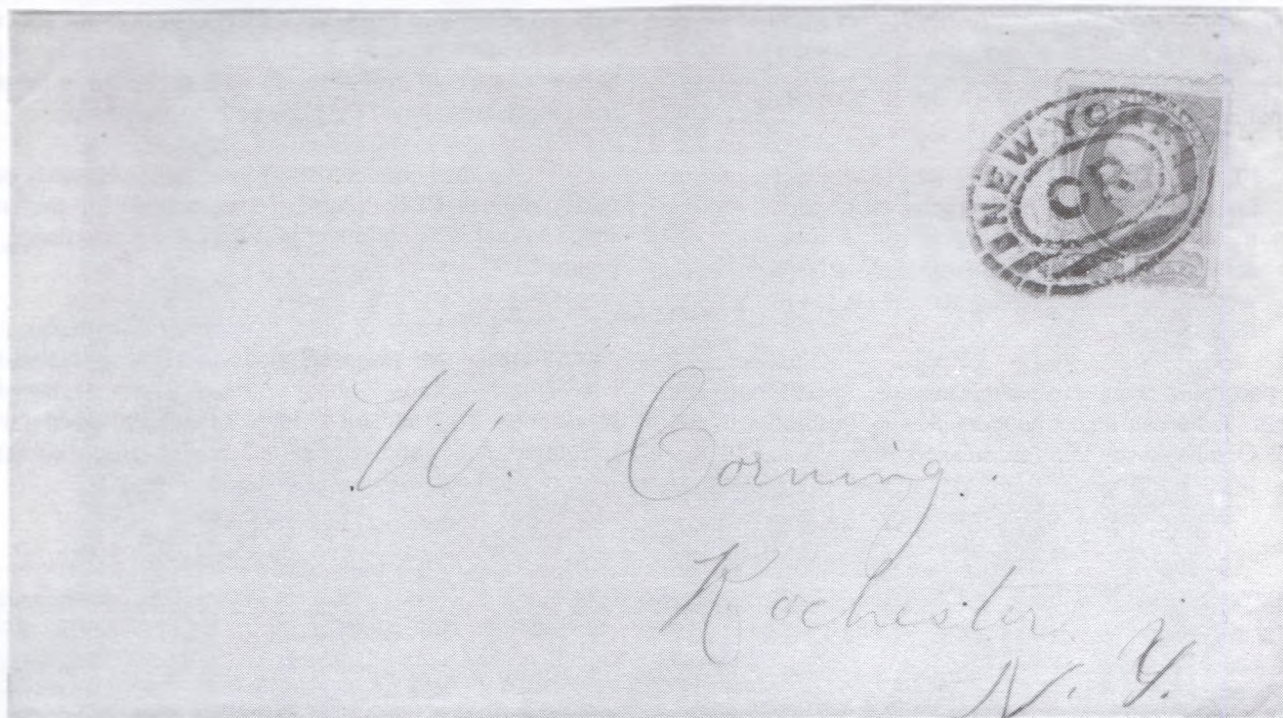


Figure 3

Unusual Ellipse Cancel

by Roger D. Curran

There is a variety of ellipse cancels containing a double lined (or "hollow") letter in the center. Actually, I have seen only one such cancel and that is from Redwood, N.Y. A cover in the Arthur Beane collection bearing this cancel is shown as Figure 1. A superb strike on an off-cover Sc 210 is illustrated as Figure 2. The stamp was in the retail stock of Charlie Wonderlin several years ago. In my experience, the cancel is very scarce. It is not listed in Willard

but does appear in Cole as EL-96 on page 321.

In the November 2002 *La Posta*, Tom Clarke illustrated and discussed a large advertisement that had been found in an old post office. Presumably copies were distributed widely to postmasters. It is an interesting document replete with offerings of various postmarkers, cancelers and the like as well as testimonials from satisfied customers. Although not exactly the same, one of the illustrations is of a double-lined "R" in an ellipse cancel which we reproduce here as Figure 3, courtesy of Mr. Clarke. One of

Figure 1

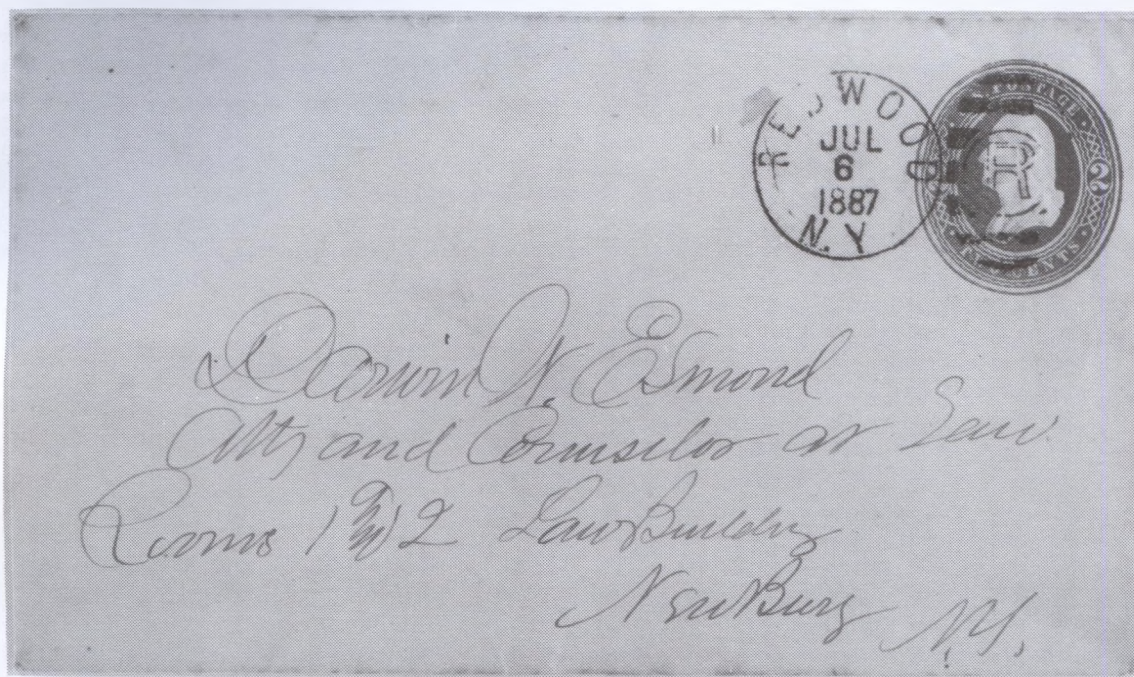


Figure 2



Figure 3



Rauchtown, Pa., January 27, 1885.
 J. Goldsborough—Dear Sir—The brass marker and canceler came to-day. It is a perfect gem; the best thing of the kind I have ever seen. I am ever so much pleased with it. Enclosed is check for the amount (\$5).
 (See Sample.) Yours Respectfully. GEO. RAUCH, P. M.

Figure 4

the testimonials listed by Goldsborough is from the Rauchtown, Pennsylvania postmaster and we reproduce it here as Figure 4. The Rauchtown post office was in operation from 1884-1942. Can anyone report a Rauchtown "R" in ellipse killer? It may well be that Goldsborough *never did* supply a handstamp to Rauchtown with these particular markings but rather they were presented in the ad for illustrative purpose only.

We can speculate that the Redwood postmaster saw a copy of Mr. Clarke's Goldsborough ad, or one similar to it, and ordered a duplex handstamp containing a double-lined "R" in ellipse from Goldsborough. I assume handstamp ads of the period illustrated markings similar to what would be produced by their products but not necessarily identical. ■

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Emergency Temporary Postmarkers and Cancelers

Figure 1 and 2 illustrate unusual postmarks from Washington, D.C. and Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Both are dated March 5, 1898. In the February 15, 1947 issue of *Stamps* magazine, K.F. Olson provides a most interesting explanation for their use, which we summarize herewith. To meet immediate needs for replacing worn out handstamps and for newly established offices or military camps, the Post Office Department adopted the idea of temporary handstamps while more permanent handstamps were being manufactured. These consisted of a blank oval or round die into which movable type could quickly be set. (The ellipse killers were also supplied but they were apparently not duplexed to the emergency postmark.)

An illustration from Mr. Olson's article is shown here as Figure 3. He only reported the marking from Washington, D.C. In addition to March 5, 1898, Tuck Taylor's records show March 3 and April 16, 1898 examples from Washington. I have seen a March 10 example from New York on a letter to Germany but am not sure whether it is 1898 or 1899.

Mr. Olson reported a "Type II" emergency marking illustrated here as Figure 4. He pointed out how the letters spelling out Brighton "do not line up evenly," thus demonstrating that the handstamp face was not engraved.

Readers who can provide additional information on the use of these markings or expand the number or post offices or dates of use are encouraged to do so.■

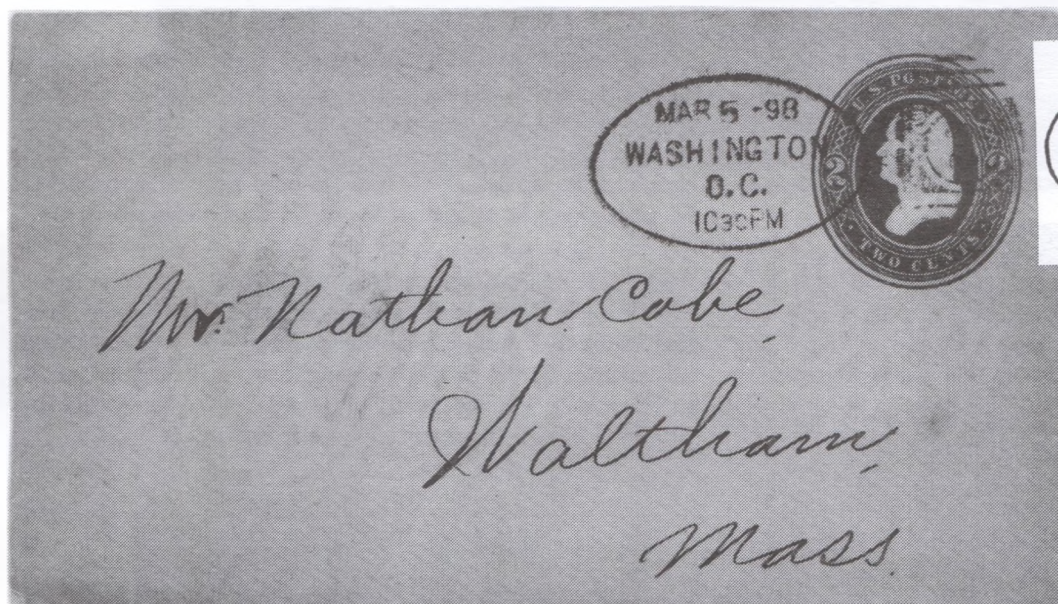


Figure 1

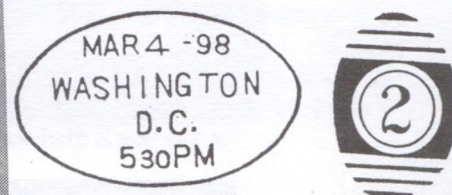


Figure 3



Figure 4

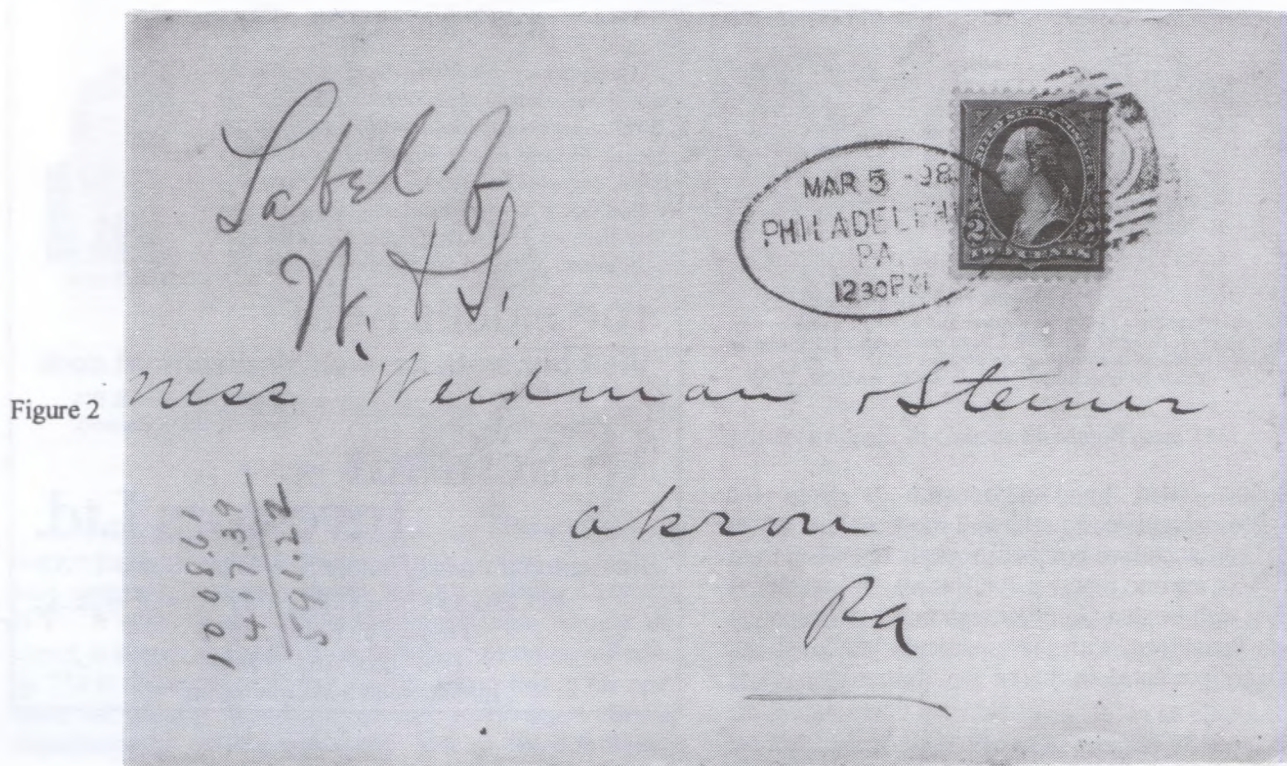


Figure 2