



# Cancellation Club NEWS

Vol. 27, No. 6, Whole No. 255, May 2005

## Stampless Initials

The *NEWS* has focused considerable attention on cork and soft wood cancelers into which the initials of postmasters have been carved. This article takes a brief look at two covers in the collection of Arthur Beane bearing postal markings, other than cancelers, that contain postmaster initials. Both covers are from West Stockbridge, Mass. where the postmaster from March 12, 1846 to September 5, 1856 was a Cyrus H. Woodruff.

The Figure 1 cover, addressed to Hopkinton, R.I., was marked with a "PAID/5" handstamp that also contained the initials of Mr. Woodruff. Both the CDS and PAID markings are in red ink. There is no year date on the cover but

this "PAID/5" marking is listed in the *American Stampless Cover Catalog* with a reported 1846 date.

The initials associated with the Figure 2 cover, addressed to Hudson, N.Y., will not be clear in the illustration but occur in the fat part of the "5" and read up from the bottom as viewed from the right side of the cover. The "H" should be quite evident. Hopefully, the "C" to the left will be visible. The "W" to the right, however, will not be clear. The markings on this cover, which does not show a year date, are both in blue ink.

What a remarkable pair of covers! ■

Figure 1

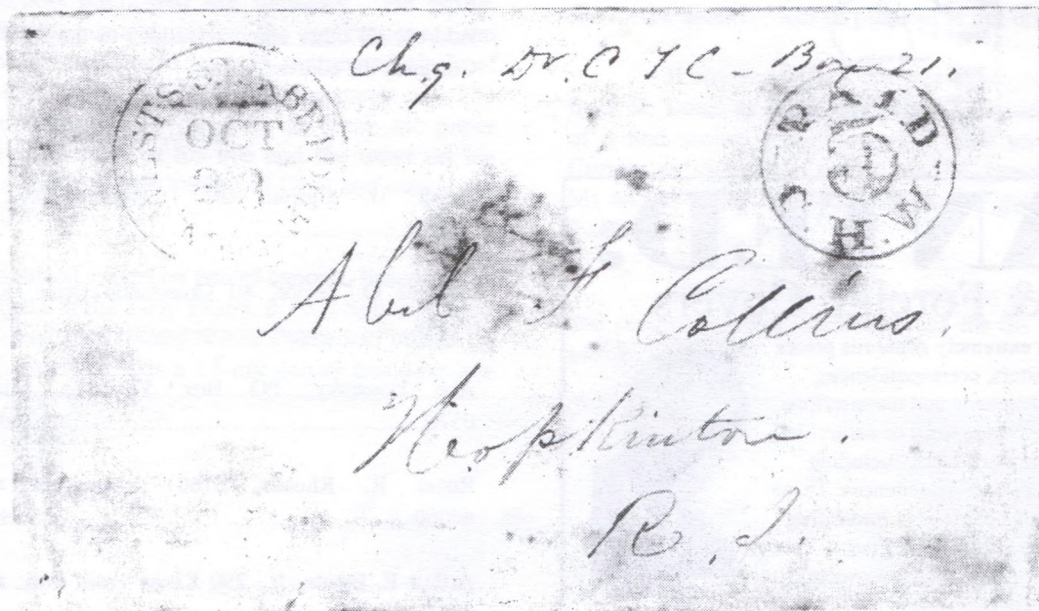


Figure 2





Dear Reader,

Three Club members have recently sent in articles, much to your editor's delight, and they appear in this issue. I'd like to use the occasion to encourage all readers to take such a step. Whether it is a brief write-up of a single stamp or cover, a report of a long-term study of a cancellation category, or something in between, let us hear from you. If assistance of any sort is desired in preparation, we'd be pleased to help out. Beyond making contributions to the literature, authors often learn valuable new information from the readership.

As reported in the February issue, the Club's annual meeting will be held this year at the Philadelphia National Stamp Exhibition running from September 30-October 2. We have twice before held meetings at this show and found it to be an excellent venue. The location is the Valley Forge Convention Center in King of Prussia, Pa., which provides convenient interstate access. We hope a substantial number of members will plan to attend. Join us if you can!

Roger Curran



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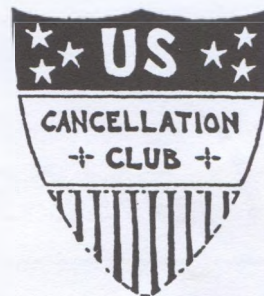
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### *The U.S. Cancellation Club NEWS*

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

Annual Dues: \$16.00 per year. Address inquiries to: Roger Rhoads at the address below.

Back Issues through 1997 are available at \$2.00 each postpaid. 1998 and later issues, \$3.00. Discount of 10% on orders of 25 or more issues. Address inquiries to: Vince Costello, 318 Hoffnagle St., Philadelphia, PA 19111.

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## A St. Louis, Missouri Patent Cancel Discovery

by Charles A. Wood

If a philatelic dictionary defined the term "ratty cover" there is every possibility that the cover shown here as Figure 1 would illustrate it. The envelope was roughly opened, is badly stained and has handwritten notes on both sides. If you think the front is ugly, you should see the back.

I bought it, though, because I thought I could see pinpricks inside the circle of wedges—the sign of a patent cancel. Patent cancels were used, largely on an experimental basis, from about 1850 to the 1880s, to cut, punch or otherwise mutilate a stamp in the process of canceling and thus prevent reuse. The circular date stamp on this cover, though weak, seems to read "St Louis MO."

Examination of the stamp under a good glass revealed a pinprick on Washington's chin that seemed to cut through the stamp. There is another high on the neck and one on the Adam's apple. Needing someone with better equipment and more expertise, I sent the cover to John Donnes in Louisiana. John had helped me with the discovery a few years ago of patent cancels from Detroit and I was anxious to hear his opinion of this item.

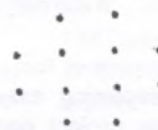
John's report confirmed my thoughts. He wrote, "After examining the cancel under the microscope, and drawing what I see, it appears to be a 15 segmented circle of wedges with clearly 3 pin points breaking the paper . . . The other 4 dots I've drawn in don't appear to break the paper though the one just in front of his eye and the other on his forehead are quite strong." His tracing of CDS and cancel are shown here as Figure 2.

The recognized expert on patent cancels, based on his writing on the subject in the early 1930s, is Fred Schmalzriedt. In the book *Cyclopedia of United States Postmarks* edited by Delf Norona, Schmalzriedt lists a 15-ray cancel but does not

Figure 2



Figure 3



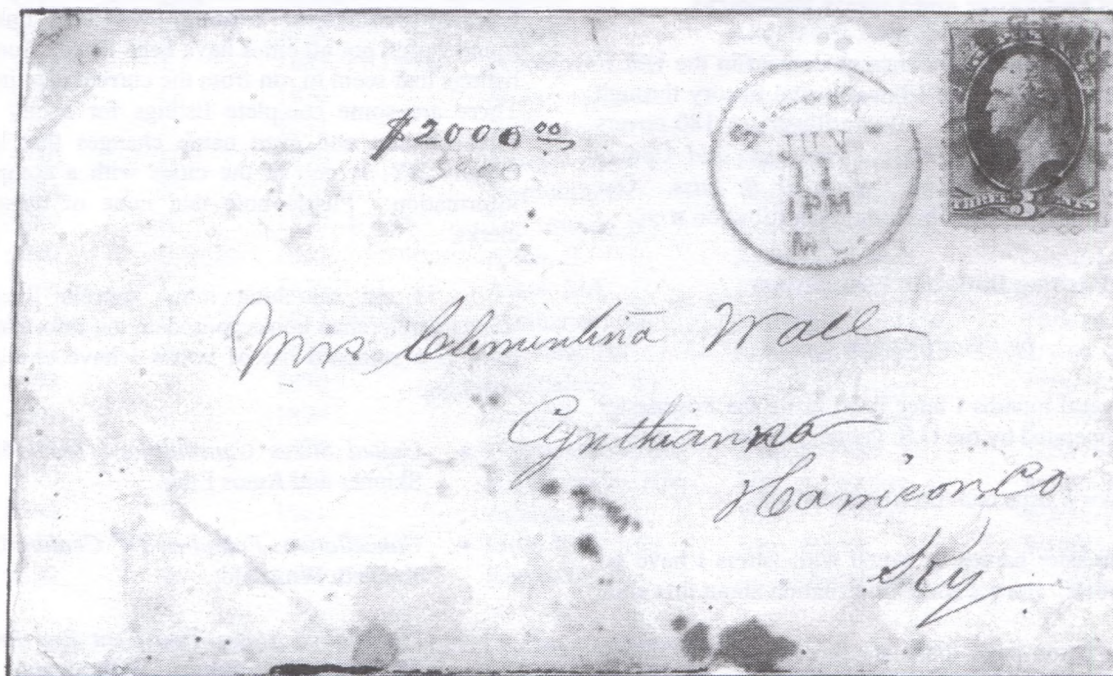
show a drawing or give a city of origin. Had he known about such a cancel from St. Louis he would surely have listed it as he did others from many different cities. Neither Cole nor Whitfield, others who illustrate patent cancels, show or list a 15-ray cancel of this style.

My conclusion is that this is a new discovery at least as far as these recognized listings are concerned. The layout of pins within the circle appears to be the same as I've seen and reported on several Detroit, Michigan items (i.e. rows of 2, 4, 4, and 2 pins, laid out in a cross formation). Figure 3 shows the arrangement of pins but is not drawn to scale.

If any reader has another example of a patent cancel from St. Louis as described above, I would appreciate hearing of it and seeing a photocopy. Please send to editor, Roger Curran, or directly to me at 244 W. Breckenridge, Ferndale, MI 48220-1724. It would be nice to get some confirmation that more exist.

My thanks to John Donnes for his help in examining and confirming this discovery and for his tracing of what he saw. ■

Figure 1



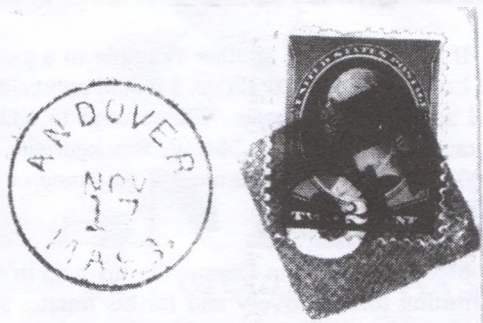


## "Not from Boston" Boston Negatives – Last Call

As a supplement to the August 2005 *NEWS*, we plan to issue a Phase III progress report on the Boston large negative cancels project. This report will address the use of these distinctive "Boston style" negative cancels by post offices other than Boston. A typical example is shown in Figure 1. The list of such post offices thus far developed includes: Andover, Mass., Hartford, Vt., Newton, Mass., Pittsfield, Mass., Portland, Maine, Warren, Mass., Washington, D.C., Waterbury, Ct., and Worcester, Mass.

The purpose of this notice is to request the assistance of readers in reporting examples of "non-Boston" Boston negatives to our project coordinator Ted Wassam at 3504 South Court, Palo Alto, CA 94306. If feasible, please include a photocopy of each cover reported and indicate the year date if that is determined from a marking on the back or an enclosure. Readers may find the above list to be a useful guide as to where to look in their collections but there are undoubtedly some number of additional post offices that used one or more of these cancels.

Please help if you can and submit reports to Ted not later than June 15. All contributions will be gratefully received and all contributors will be acknowledged in the report. Thanks!■



## Illinois Postmaster and County Postmarks

We are pleased to announce placement in the USCC Library of a second volume of Illinois postal history through the courtesy of Sy Stiss. This volume illustrates 180 covers (in color) and is entitled *Illinois Postmaster and County Postmarks from the Collection of Seymour B. Stiss*. Our thanks to Sy for this additional important contribution.■

## Matching Initials to Postmasters

by Vince Costello

For several months I have been using the Postmaster Finder website operated by the U.S. Postal Service

[www.usps.com/postmasterfinder](http://www.usps.com/postmasterfinder)

to look up postmaster names to match with letters I have on 19<sup>th</sup> century cancels. Here is some information about that site.

On the home page there are three links on the left side of the page that all take you to The US National Archives and Records Administration.

A quote from the home page of the Postmaster Finder site reads as follows:

"What you will find: Most postmasters appointed after 1986 and some postmasters appointed before 1986. What you will not find: all past postmasters and post offices. Presently we offer complete information on about 12,000 post offices, and the number increases weekly. We regret that we can't respond to requests."

There are seven ways to search the site in addition to a feature that searches the entire site for selected words. There is also a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) link.

- 1-Postmasters by city
- 2-Postmasters and where they served
- 3-Post offices by county
- 4-Post offices by state
- 5-Post offices by established date
- 6-Post offices by discontinued date
- 7-Post offices by zip code

In the "Post offices by state" search you will find an alphabetical listing of post offices for each state with dates of establishment and dates they were discontinued. You will also find a list of books on individual state postal histories in that link.

When you click on any of the seven links there is another link for "Local Postal History" with information to help genealogists searching for ancestors who worked for the Postal Service or information on a particular post office.

The site has been helpful in matching Postmaster names with letter cancellations. If I know the town that the cancel is from, either by having the town name on a cover or through checking one of the reference books on cancellations, it is easy to search the "Postmasters by city" link. What I have found is that not all cities have been listed. Some have partial listings that seem to run from the current date in reverse order. There are some complete listings for a city with dates of establishment and even name changes that have occurred. Albany NY, is one of the cities with a complete listing of information. Please note that none of these lists include clerks.

I am searching letter cancels illustrated in the standard reference books to update the information presented. Here is a standard list of books I have checked or will be checking:

- *United States Cancellations 1845-1869* by Hubert Skinner and Amos Eno;
- *Cancellations Found on 19<sup>th</sup> Century U.S. Stamps* by Kenneth Whitfield;
- *The United States Two Cent Red Brown of 1883-1887, Vol. 2*, by Edward Willard; and



- *Cancellations and Killers of the Banknote Era 1870-1890* by James Cole.

I am not checking initials that match the town name such as "WE" for West End, NJ, or "A" from Akron, OH nor am I looking up "OK," "PO," or "NY" cancels. I am also not checking the large cities since the site doesn't give the clerks and I don't believe the postmasters of the larger

cities and towns would have time to carve their initials in a canceling device. However, I am aware of the 1864 "AW" cancel, discussed elsewhere in this issue, that matches the name of the New York postmaster who was serving during that year.

Tables that report the results of my checks for two books are provided below.■

#### Skinner/Eno Updates

Page	SE #	Letters	Found on Issues	Town	PM Name	PM Dates
278	LS-A 5	A	1861-67	Greenwich, NY	Norman T. Andrews	2/18/67-2/26/87
287	LS-H 16	H	1869	Georgetown, DC	George Hill, Jr.	7/25/65-6-17/76
288	LS-H 21	H	1861	Chicopee, MA	Jonathan C. Havens	5/11/61-7/17/68
290	LS-L 9	L	1861	Alton, IL	Joshua G. Lamb	3/30/61-1/26/75
291	LS-M 9	MM	1869	Knoxville, IA	James Matthews	3/19/69-10/3/70
296	LS-L 6	S	1869	Quincy, MI	Dan W. Sawyer	8/26/66-3/26/72
296	LS-L 6a	S	1869	Quincy, MI	Dan W. Sawyer	8/26/66-3/26/72
297	LS-T 4	T	1869	Middlebury, VT	Amasa S. Tracy	1/28/70-5/6/81
297	LA-T 7	T	1869	Middlebury, VT	Amasa S. Tracy	1/28/70-5/6/81
299	LS-W 3	W	1861	Virginia City, NV	Charles Warner	3/23/65-4/5/69
305	LC-A 4	AL	1869	Greenville, AL	Adaline Livingston	5/13/69-4/18/70
314	LC-P 16	E	1861	Rutland, VT	Martin G. Everts	3/28/61-5/4/70
318	LC-NP 11	GLEN	1861	Macedon, NY	Elijah M. K. Glen	5/8/61-2/7/66
318	LC-NP 12	GLEN	1861	Macedon, NY	Elijah M. K. Glen	5/8/61-2/7/66

On Page 305, LC-C 3 is identified as Calvin S. Taft, PM but on the USPS site the postmaster is identified as Calvin Turner, dates as PM 4/28/48-5/27/57.

Table 1

#### Whitfield Update

Page #	Whitfield #	Letters	Found on issues	Town	PM Name	PM dates
152	4515	JIM	1894	Springfield, IL	James C. Conkling	3/17/90-3/19/94
159	4712	JEB	1897	Mexico, NY	Jerome E. Baker	5/24/95-7/7/99
178	5265	CP	1870	Oswego, NY	Charles R. Parkinson	6/29/81-4/6/86
192	5688	E	1883, 11/15/86	Woodsville, NH	Ezra B. Mann	11/13/85-7/3/89
194	5745	G	1870	Jacksonville, IL	John Gordon	10/18/80-12/15/85
195	5777	H	1851	Williamsport, TN	Samuel P. Hunt	8/10/53-7/22/56
195	5780	H	1870	Jersey City, NY	Henry A. Greene	4/6/61-11/3/79
198	5864	K	1870	Plymouth, IN	Wm. M. Kendall	5/15/69-7/18/85
199	5889	K	1870, 4/7/82	Tonawanda, NY	Robert Koch	2/27/79-4/2/84
199	5899	L	1861	Alton, IL	Joshua G. Lamb	3/30/61-1/26/75
199	5906	L	1870	Athol, MA	Lucien Lord	4/21/69-1/16/88
206	6127	S	1887, 6/21/88	Manhattan, KS	John Q.A. Sheldon	10/8/86-1/16/90
207	6153	S	1870	Fairview, IL	James M. Suydam	4/7/69-9/18/85
209	6198	T	1870	Middlebury, VT	Amasa S. Tracy	1/28/70-5/6/81
209	6203	T	1870	Grand Rapids, MI	Aaron B. Turner	4/9/69-3/19/77
210	6231	T	1870	North Adams, MA	John B. Tyler	1/29/79-3/3/87
211	6270	W	1883	Albuquerque, NM	Wm. A. Walker	8/3/85-3/24/90
212	6294	W	1861	Atlanta, GA	Wm. T. Wilson	2/3/58-1/7/61
213	6312	W	1883, 3/14/87	Little Falls, MN	John Wetzel	8/19/85-9/28/89
213	6323	W	1861, 5/23/69	Knoxville, IA	James Matthews	3/19/69-10/3/70

On Page 213, 6323 is identified as a letter "W" which I believe is a letter "M".

Table 2



## Months of the Year – Ballston, N.Y.

Cancels with hand-carved year dates were employed at one time or another by a fair number of post offices. Far fewer incorporated a month designation. The May 2002 *NEWS* discussed such cancellations from Mexico, N.Y. in the 1890s.

Club member Ralph Edson recently submitted two examples from another New York post office – Ballston – shown here as Figures 1 and 2, dated May 25 and July 17, 1874. It is interesting to note that the May killer appears to be duplexed and the July killer not. Whitfield illustrates on page 157 several “month” cancels from Ballston shown here as Figure 3. He dates the large “May” as 5/11/76 and the July as 8/6/74. Cole illustrates Figure 4 as ML-204 and reports it used from Ballston from 7/18-8/6/74.

In brief summation, the reports reflect uses in 1874 and 1876 and one example where the month does not correspond to the mailing date. We’d like to compile a more substantial record and appeal to readers to report any on-cover examples in their collections and also any off-cover strikes that appear to be likely Ballston cancels.■

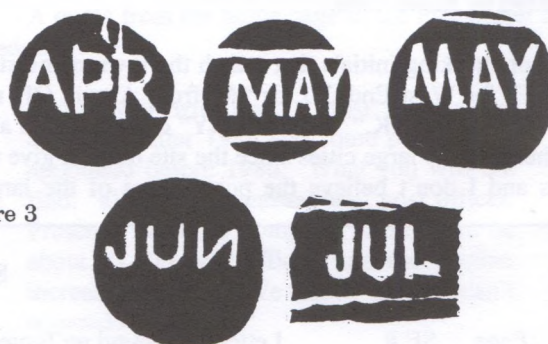


Figure 3



Figure 4

Figure 1

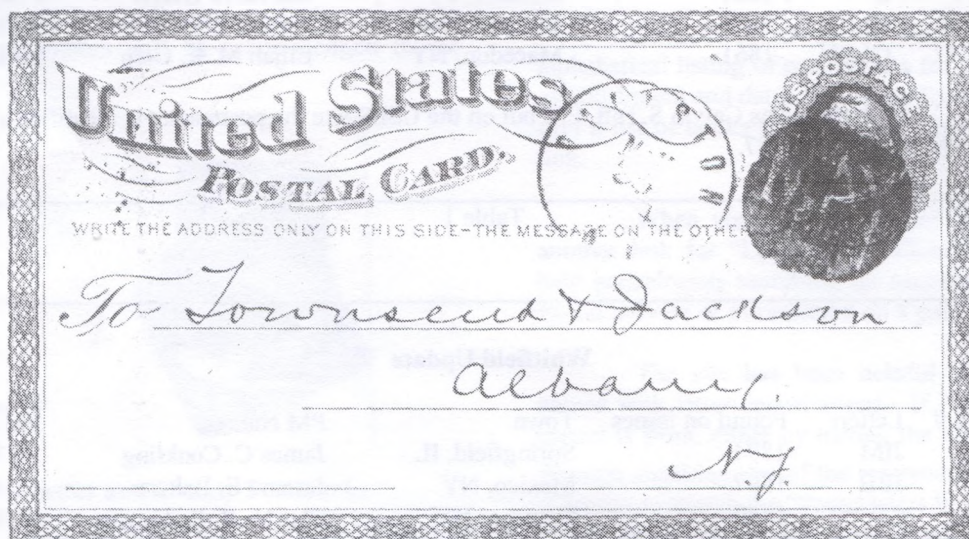
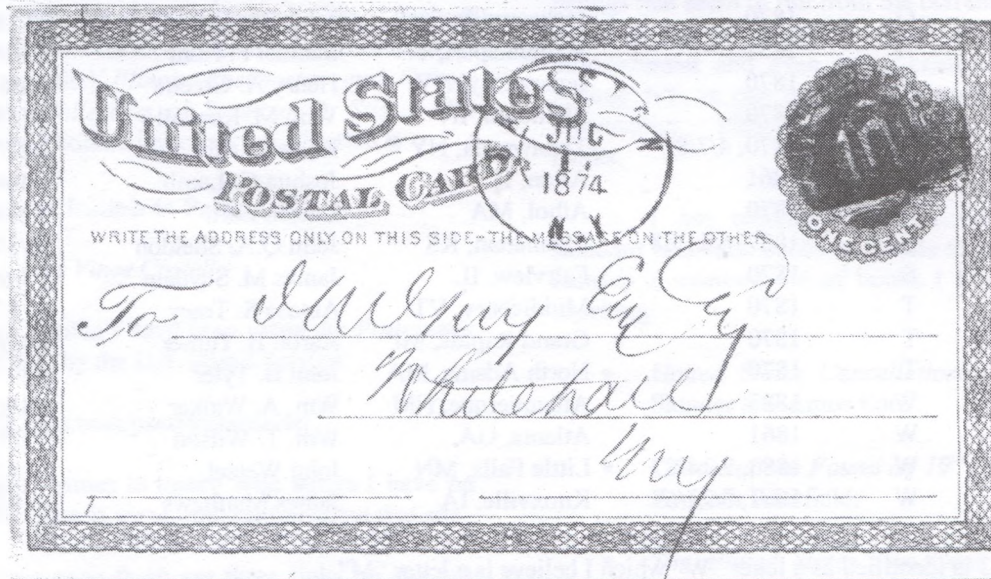


Figure 2





### A Novel Approach?

Figure 1 illustrates an unusual cover. Before reading further, please take a good look at it to assess, using a phrase popular today, "what's going on."

First of all we have a remarkable overall advertising design that allows limited space for the name and location of the addressee. There is, however, a completely inadequate space for the stamp and postmark. (What was the envelope designer thinking?) Indeed, the stamp is affixed over part of the design. There is a manuscript cancel on the stamp and a manuscript date on the cover – "Aug. 10 '88." The ink from the "88" ties the stamp to the cover. No postmark is present and it is, indeed, hard to know where the postmaster could have put it without obliterating an important part of the advertising design or placing it partially over a dark area where it might be hard to read.

Your editor submits that the lack of a postmark on this cover does not represent post office oversight but rather a

conscious decision on the part of the postmaster to allow the printed "Phonicia, Water Co. N.Y." to serve the purpose. Would this qualify as a desirable "county postmark" or as a precancel? (Just kidding!). The date was added next to the makeshift postmark, the stamp was canceled and, since no more markings were thought to be needed, the letter was sent on its way.

Reader comment is invited.■

### More Goldsborough Handstamps

John Goldsborough of Philadelphia was a major supplier of 19<sup>th</sup> century post office handstamps. He advertised extensively and portions of one of his circulars were reproduced in the May 2004 NEWS. We asked readers to report examples of markings that match the Goldsborough illustrations and several were shown in the August NEWS. We now have two additional markings to mention. An April 13, 1885 postmark from Asbury Park, N.J. duplexed to a 9-bar



Figure 1

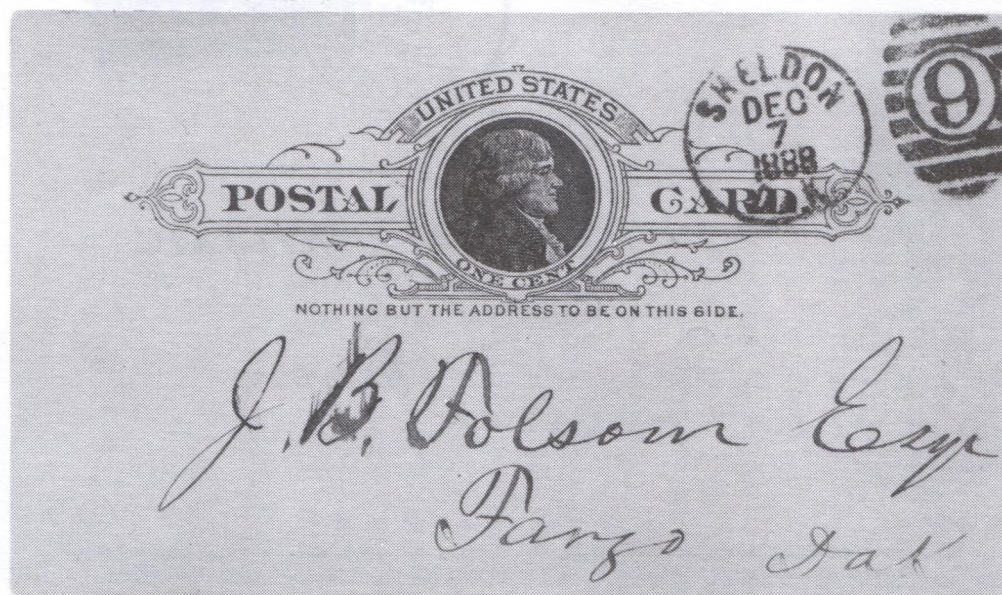


Figure 1



ellipse with a star-in-circle in the center, in the collection of Gil Levere, is the same as the Goldsborough illustration of Skinners Eddy, Pa. duplex on page 23 of the August 2004 NEWS. And Figure 1, from Sheldon, N.D. presents another example of Goldsborough's "9" in ellipse cancel. Undoubtedly, a complete listing of post offices that used Goldsborough's handstamps would be very extensive.■

### Hand Carved Letters

The Mystic Bridge post office is well known to cancellation collectors because of the hand carved "MB" killers it used in the 1880s. Multiple versions of the "MB" are out there to be found. Cole shows five different examples on page 212 of his book. A tracing of Whitfield #1679 is illustrated as Figure 1. A remarkable cover in the collection of Arthur Beane bearing eight strikes of an "MB" cancel is shown as Figure 2.

Figure 1



In 1890 the name of the Mystic Bridge post office was changed to Mystic. Various hand-carved "M" cancels were used in the early 1890s by the Mystic post office. Figure 3 shows an example. There are also what appear to be negative "C" cancels known from Mystic and Figure 4 illustrates two examples. Cole shows a tracing of what is probably this same basic cancel (Lc-37, page 246) and notes usage dates of 9/26-12/17/90. What did the "C" represent? The USPS online postmater database for Mystic doesn't go back to 1890.■

Figure 2

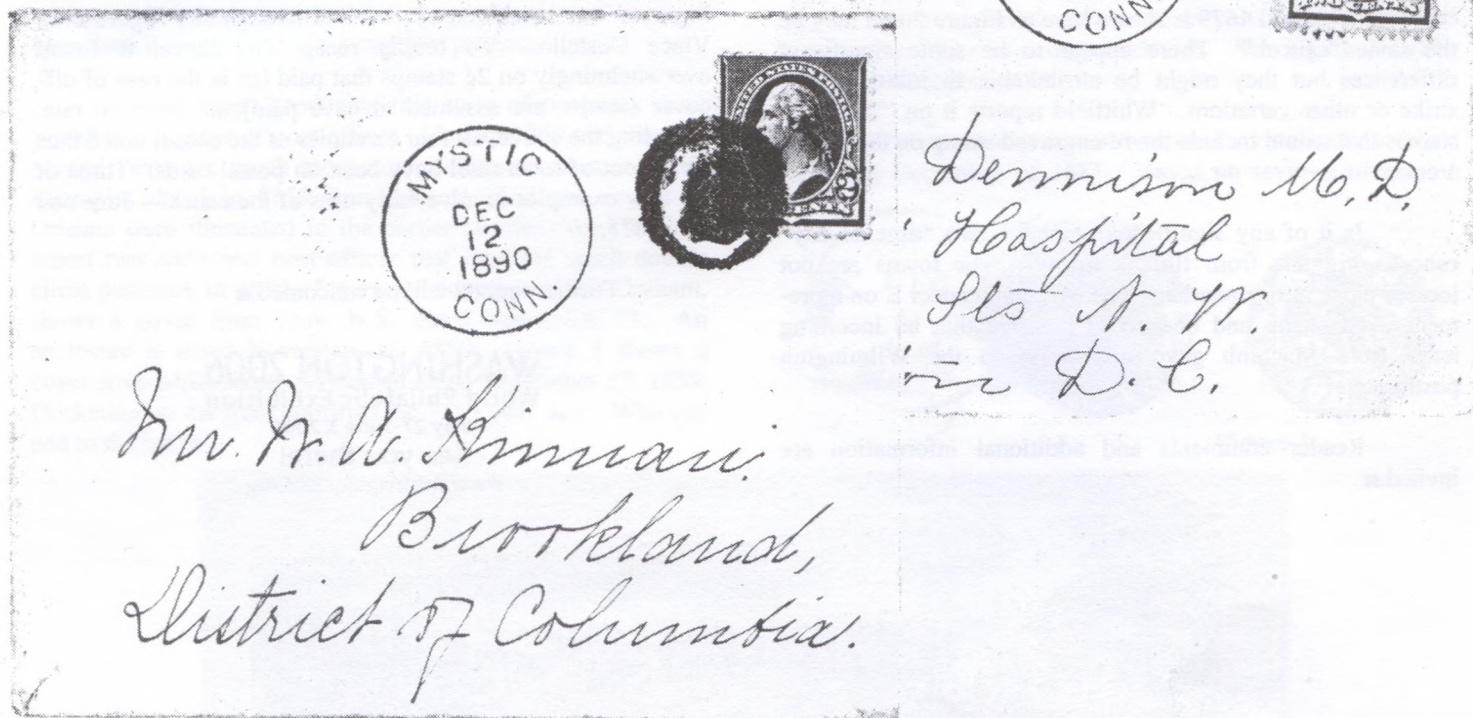


Figure 3





Figure 4



### Another "Time of Day" Cancel

The February 2005 *NEWS* illustrated on page 73 a hand-carved cancel that conveys a most unusual subject – time of day. The cancel reads "6 PM" with half-moons above and below. The marker that produced it was apparently duplexed to the Macomb, Illinois CDS. We mentioned that this cancel is not listed in the three standard reference books consulted.

Vince Costello has now submitted the cover shown in Figure 1, which bears a hand carved "5 P.M." marking applied presumably at Wilmington, Illinois. As far as we know, this cover has not been expertised but, in your editor's opinion, the marking looks good since the ink matches that of the CDS strikes. However, just why this marking would have been used, since it doesn't seem to have been applied to cancel the stamps, is an intriguing question.

Figure 1

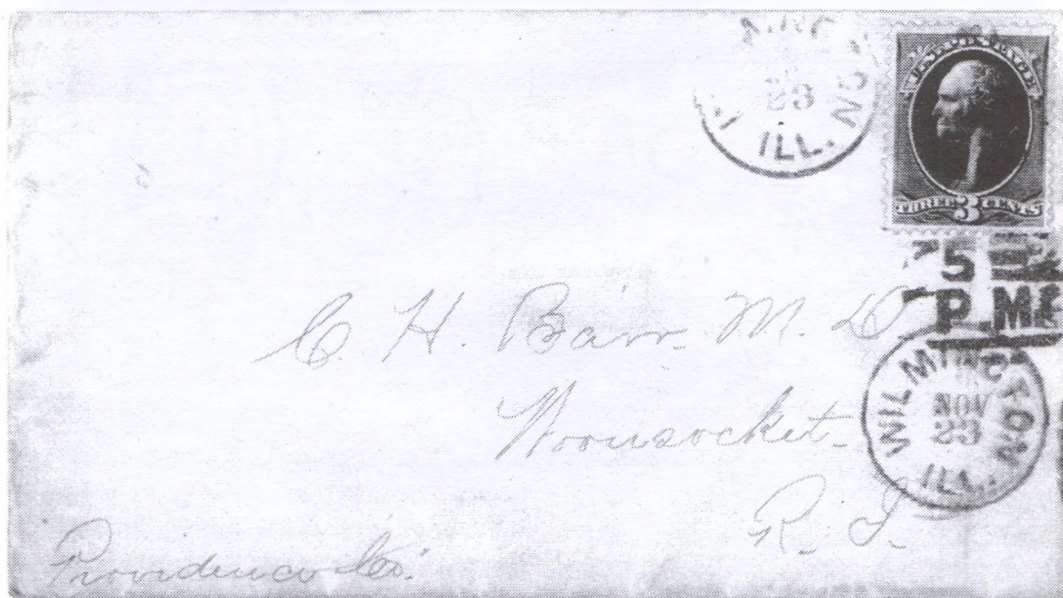




Figure 2



Whitfield 4679 is shown here as Figure 2 and may be the same "cancel." There appear to be some significant differences but they might be attributable to inking, wear, strike or other variations. Whitfield reports it on "70" issue stamps that would include the re-engraved stamp on the Figure 1 cover.

Is it of any significance that the two "time of day" cancels originate from Illinois towns? The towns are not located close to one another. The Macomb cancel is on a pre-engraved stamp and one could theorize that an incoming letter from Macomb gave inspiration to the Wilmington postmaster.

Reader comments and additional information are invited.■

### Boston "1"

Two more reports have been received concerning the Boston "1" cancel discussed in the November 2004 and February 2005 issues of the *NEWS*. Both involve 1875 year dates and out-of-town destinations and are on postal cards. Figure 1 was submitted by Joe McDonough and Figure 2 by Vince Costello. To briefly recap, this cancel is found overwhelmingly on 2¢ stamps that paid (or in the case of off-cover stamps, are assumed to have paid) the 2¢ local rate. Including the above, all four examples of the cancel noted thus far on out-of-town mail have been on postal cards. Three of the four examples involve early uses of the cancel – June and July 1875.

Further reports will be welcomed.■

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Figure 1

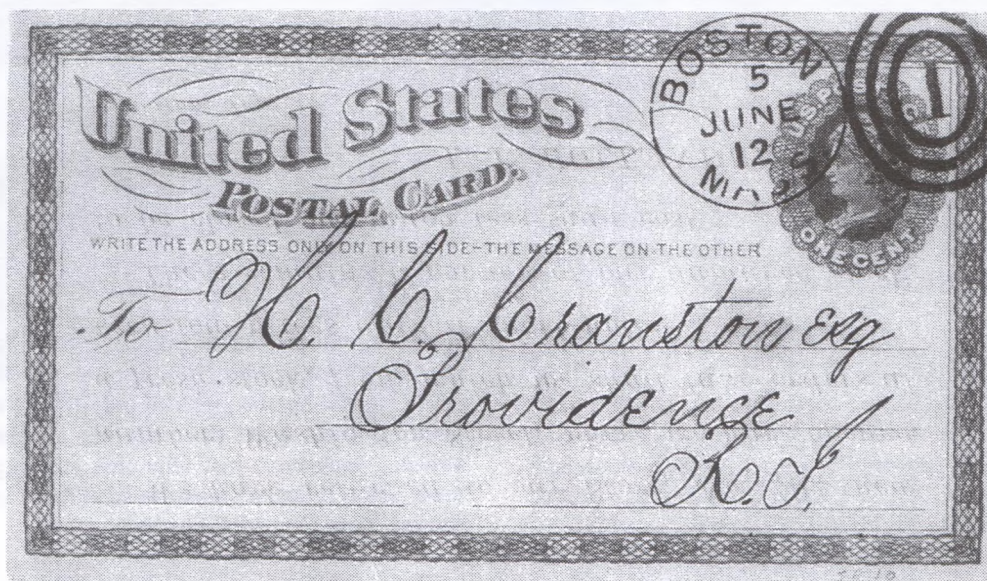
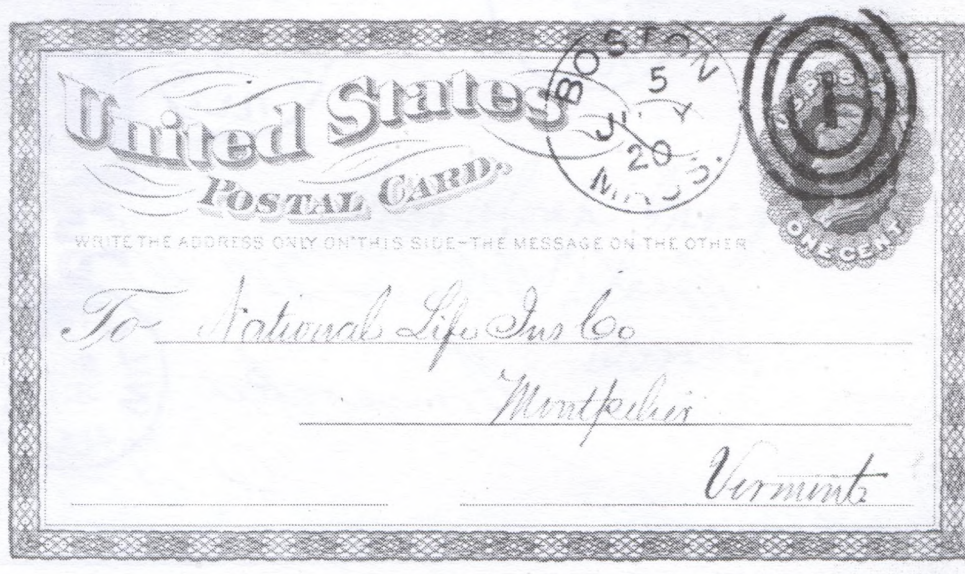


Figure 2





### Double Circle Postmark

The small double circle postmark introduced by the Post Office Department in 1859 was discussed briefly on pages 47-8 of the August 2004 *NEWS*. One may not normally think of this postmark as a canceler of stamps but since it was employed before the POD precluded use of town postmarks as cancelers, it is often found serving that purpose.

Handstamps producing this style of postmark were issued to a number of post offices. Uses in 1860 and the next several years are much more commonly seen than in 1859. Examples dated in 1859 from Mobile, Alabama and New Orleans were illustrated in the earlier article. We can now report two additional post offices that used the small double circle postmark in 1859. Figure 1, courtesy of Dick Graham, shows a cover from Troy, N.Y. dated November 23. An enclosure is dated November 22, 1859. Figure 2 shows a cover from Milwaukee, Wisconsin dated September 17, 1859. Docketing on the front confirms the 1859 year date. Who can add to the list? ■

### A Quartet of Worcester "Heavies"

by Robert J. Trachimowicz

Probably the best-known fancy cancel of Worcester, Massachusetts is the Negative North-South Shaking Hands cancel. It was carved from a piece of wood or cork and was used as the killer in a duplex device. See Figure 1. (The tracing is Whitfield #555.)

This particular cancel was used sporadically between June and December of 1881. Based on reviews of auction



Figure 1

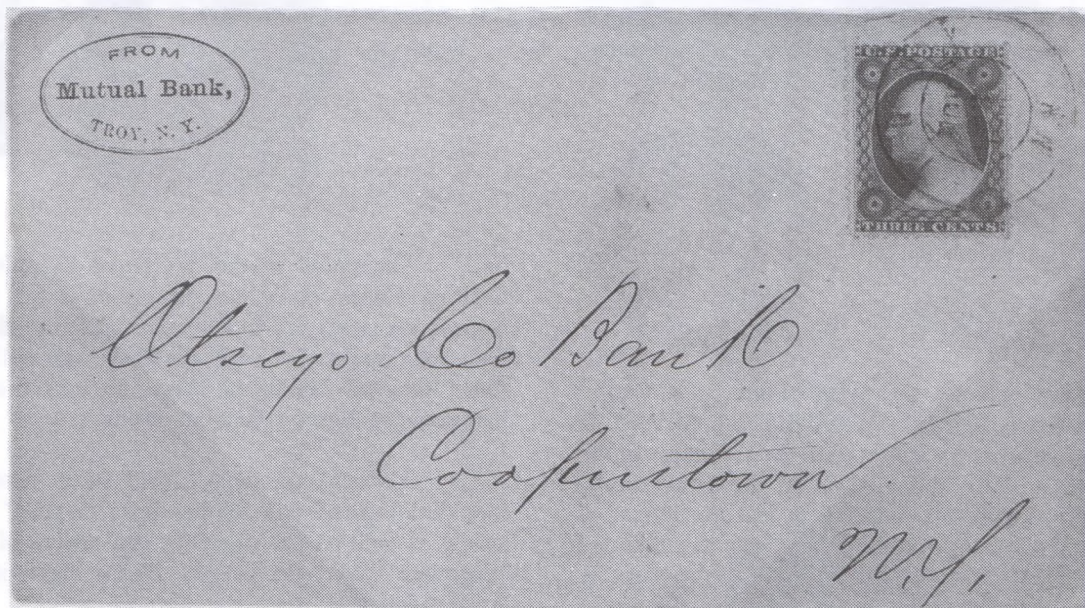


Figure 1

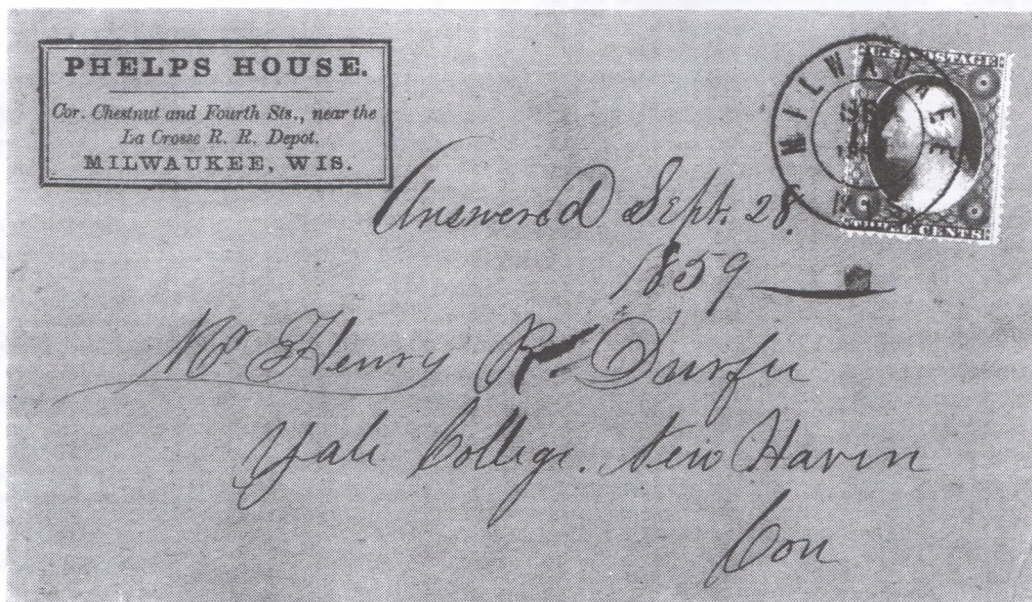


Figure 2



catalogs and private correspondence, I estimate that there are fewer than 25 on-cover examples of this cancel in the hands of collectors.

Less well-known, but just as spectacular, are a number of silent, simplex fancy cancel townmarks that I refer to as the Quartet of Worcester "Heavy" cancels. While doing some research a number of years ago, I found a copy of the magazine *Postal Markings* from February 1942. In it was a short article called "FIVE HEAVIES" which pictured tracings of one townmark from Boston, Massachusetts, one from Portland, Maine, one from Bridgeport, Connecticut and two from Worcester, Massachusetts. Images of actual examples of those two Worcester "Heavy" townmarks are shown below. I have found two additional "Heavies" from the same era and have also displayed them below.

The first Worcester "Heavy" townmark, shown in Figure 2, is a solid jagged-edge circle, quite like a circular saw blade with large teeth. In the center is a negative shield. Negative letters form "WORCESTER MASS" in a circle between the Shield and the edge. This marking was used for a time between the late 1870's to the mid-1880's. (The tracing is Whitfield #7114.)

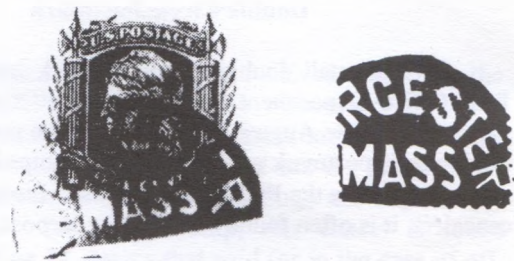


Figure 2

The next townmark, shown in Figure 3, is a solid circle with negative lettering. "WORCESTER MASS" is spelled-out in two concentric circles, with the city name in the outer circle and the state abbreviation in the inner circle. What is interesting about this marking is that the letters of "MASS" are so tightly wound in the inner circle that they are almost illegible. Herb Atherton, in the *Postal Markings* article noted above, drew attention to this fact when he mentioned the "twisted up middle part." This marking was also used for a time between the late 1870's to the mid-1880's. (The tracing is from Atherton.)

The third "Heavy" townmark from Worcester, Figure 4, is not as dramatic as the previous two but it is a wonderful item. It is the shape of a semi-circle or half dome. Negative letters form "WORCESTER" in an arc and "MASS" in a straight line. It was used, like the other "Heavies" above and below, mostly on junk mail in the late 1870's to the mid-

Figure 4



1880's. The tracing of the partial cancel is provided through the courtesy of John Donnes.

The fourth townmark of this quartet, Figure 5, is a solid circle. In the center is a negative star. Negative letters form "WORCESTER MASS" in a circle between the star and the edge. This marking was used for a time in the late 1870's to the mid-1880's.

Figure 5



Compared to the Worcester Negative North-South Shaking Hands fancy cancel, I submit that these "Heavy" cancels on cover are much more scarce, with probably less than six examples of each out there with collectors. Of the four "Heavies" illustrated, I have seen more examples of the half dome of Figure 4 than the others.

I would appreciate input from members regarding their holdings of any of the four "Heavies" shown in this article as well as the existence and design of any additional Worcester "Heavy" cancels. Please email information and scans to me at

track@alum.wpi.edu

or send through the regular mails to 620 North Spring St., Fort Washington, WI 53079 so that I can add that information to my database and, hopefully, write a follow-up article.■

## The Classic Cancel

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"running man"

Figure 3





# "D" is for . . .

Let's add two more hand-carved ellipses to the growing record on this subject. The Figure 1 tracing was made by John Donnes. The cancel has six horizontal bars and encloses a letter "D." The Sc 210 stamp has a missing bottom right corner but this does not appear to have taken any of the cancellation. The date in the CDS is October 3, 1884. The USPS online postmaster database lists a Frank C. Denison

appointed Pittsford, Vt. postmaster on January 3, 1874. He served until September 23, 1885. Incidentally, he reassumed the postmaster position on June 14, 1889 and served until March 30, 1893. He was replaced both times by another "D" postmaster, Richard H. Drake.

From a year-dated backstamp we can determine that the Figure 2 cover was mailed from Deposit, N.Y. on April 24, 1893. Judging from the second bar above the "D" at the top of the cover and the presence of a little ink below the first bar across the bottom of the "D," we surmise that the original full design had two bars below the top section. One assumes "D" for Deposit, in this case, rather than the name of the postmaster. The USPS online database thus far only lists recent Deposit postmasters.■

Figure 1

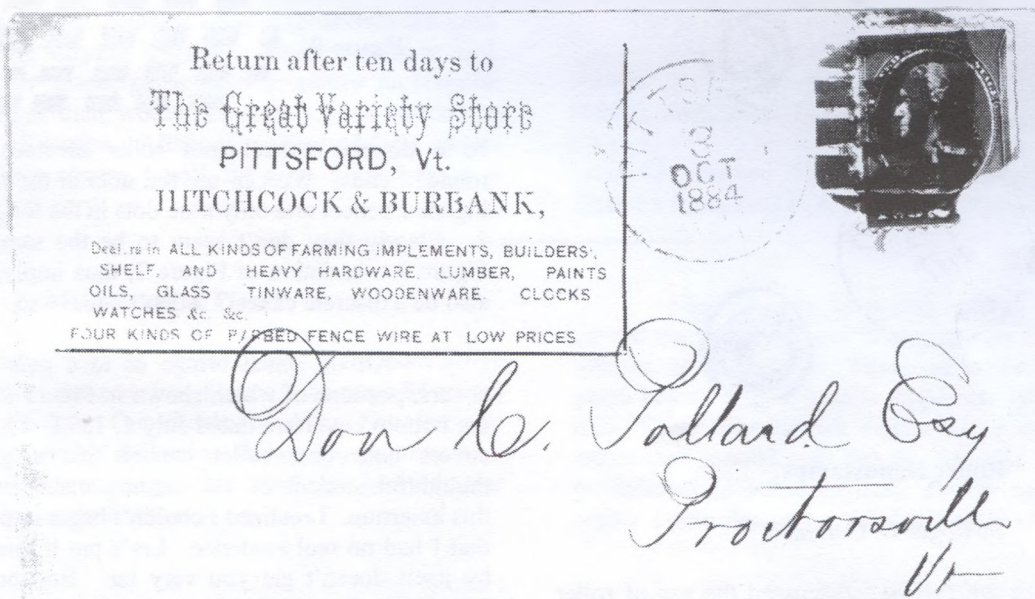


Figure 2





### Illinois "Snake"

A small, unobtrusive garter snake, perhaps? Figures 1 and 2 show two backstamps from Aledo, Illinois in the collection of Sy Stiss. Both strikes are in blue ink. Figure 1 can be dated 1881 and Figure 2 1880. One assumes Figure 2 resulted from over inking (although this is not reflected in the CDS), but how it turned out is rather strange. It would be interesting to examine the face of the handstamp involved, were it to be available, as there is an element of mystery here. Comments and reports of additional examples of this cancel are invited. ■

Figure 1



Figure 2



### Roller Handstamps

by Roger D. Curran

The August 2002 *NEWS* discussed the use of roller cancels by the New York Post Office on circular mail. Circulars didn't require a dated postmark and thus constituted a logical category of mail on which to use rollers. The New York covers reported in the earlier article (that could be dated)

were mailed in the April-May 1875 period. One assumes that New York was not the only post office to use roller cancels in the latter part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Figure 1 illustrates what appears to be an example from San Francisco, this time on a registered letter. A shorter version of this cancel appears on a January 28 registered letter to the same addressee. The year date of these cancels is not known but the Figure 1 cover, given the stamps used, would be 1874 or later. Post offices did not normally employ their regular postmarks (those that were duplexed to cancels) on registered letters and this, plus the fact that registered letters often had multiple stamps, made the use of roller cancels a logical choice for registered mail, too. Regarding the Figure 1 cancel let's also note, however, the tracing of a San Francisco cancel reported by John Mahoney to have been used in 1874 (Figure 2).<sup>1</sup> It appears to

Figure 2



be a discrete cancel (not roller created) with somewhat rounded ends. We can see ten dots in the second line of the Figure 1 cancel and only nine dots in the longest line of Figure 2. Clearly they don't seem to be the same cancel. But is Figure 1 a variation of Figure 2, thus implying Figure 1 may also be a discrete cancel? I don't believe so.

All of which brings us to a pair of Albany, N.Y. covers, portions of which shown in Figure 3. The contents of the bottom cover are dated July 1, 1893. I had assumed these covers both bear roller cancels but a good friend (and thoughtful student of 19<sup>th</sup> century cancellations) challenged this assertion. I realized I couldn't begin to prove roller usage, that I had no real evidence. Let's put it this way, "intuition" by itself doesn't get you very far. But then how does one know what is and what is not a roller cancel? In many cases one probably won't be able to tell conclusively. Here are a couple of things I look for. If there are multiple strikes of the cancel on a cover and they vary in size (length basically), this is suggestive of rollers. (A variation of this would be

Figure 1







Figure 3

assembling several covers bearing what is apparently the same cancel but showing varying lengths.) Another thing to look for is a rectangular shape, particularly a narrow rectangular shape that is longer than would reasonably been needed to cancel a couple of stamps. Although neither of these points apply to the Albany covers, I will, for now, keep them in a "possible roller" category.

Who can help by supplying additional roller cancel criteria? And who can provide images of other Albany covers bearing cancels similar to those in Figure 3?■

<sup>1</sup> John M. Mahoney *San Francisco Postal Markings 1847-1900*, La Posta Monograph Series, Volume 8 (1992), p. 36.

#### Identification, Please

We'll begin with an identification of the post office that used the cancel illustrated as Figure 1 on page 84 of the February 2005 *NEWS*. Our thanks to Allan Schefer who reported the cover in his collection shown here as Figure 1 from Tamaqua, Pa. dated August 22, 1863. It shows a clear strike of the unusual patent cancel.

Figure 3 is an interesting item on a Sc 65. This hand-carved cancel may have been inspired by the early British ellipses of the period. These were placed in service many years before ellipse cancels came into use in the U.S. in the mid-1870s. The British ellipse had a number in the center rather than a solid core but the size and shape of the bars is reminiscent of some of these British markings. Does any reader know the origin of this cancel or have examples of

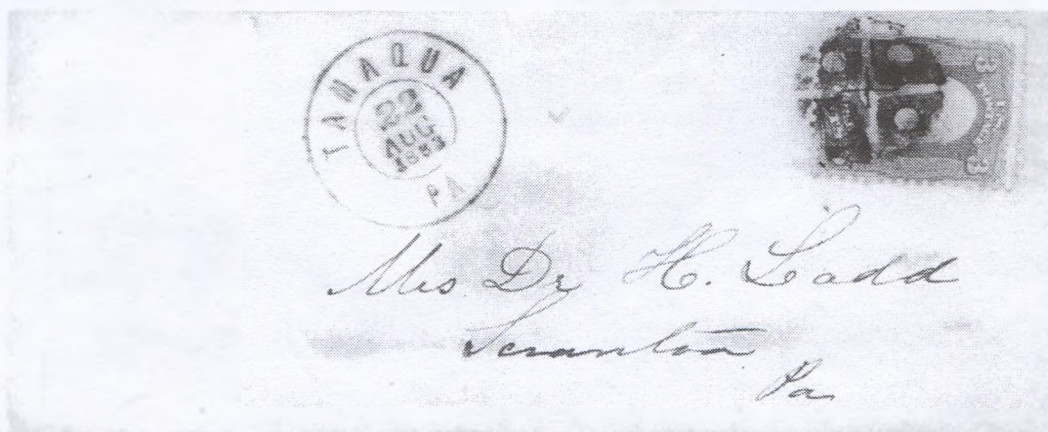


Figure 1

Merritt Jenkins submits the Sc 220 stamp shown here as Figure 2, canceled by what we'll term a "bison" cancel. Years ago a collector gave this stamp to Merritt saying that he had had it for a number of years but did not collect the issue. At some point, Merritt added a notation that it had been reported from Holly, N.Y. While there was no Holly post office, there was a Hollywood, N.Y. post office in St. Lawrence County from 1890-1932. As a long-time collector of Sc 220, he has never seen another example of this cancel nor any reports of it in the literature. Was a bison intended in this cancel? Can readers provide information about it?



Figure 2



Figure 3

other ellipse-shaped U.S. cancels composed of horizontal bars used during the 1860s?

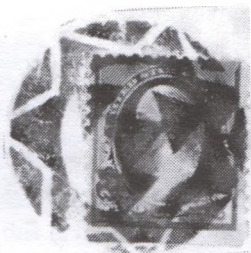
Figure 4 shows a Sc 148 bearing a cross cancel in



Figure 4



Figure 5



outline form. But it is the two dots in the middle – more like two small rectangles, really – that draw our attention. (For the record, here is also a very small dot between the two but that appears to be just a bit of stray ink.) The larger dot, which is the one on top, is strongly indented in the paper and this shows clearly when viewed from either the front or the back. Your editor, therefore, considers it to be a patent cancel. Information about this cancel would be very much welcomed.

Finally, in Figure 5 we show a very large cancel on a Sc 220. In the February 2005 *NEWS* we illustrated another large cancel, also on a Sc 220, this one from North Tunbridge, Vermont and measuring about 33 mm. from tip to tip. The diameter of Figure 5 is about 30.5 mm. One wonders if the same handstamp supplier provided both cancels. Can USCC members report any covers identifying the origin?

As we have urged before, please submit copies of unusual cancellations in your collections about which you have little or no information. Others will no doubt find them of interest and may be able to help with post offices of origin or even the circumstances of their use.■

#### A “Small Town” Cancel from New York City

John Donnes submits the cover shown here as Figure 1. An odd-appearing cancel, to be sure, but it makes more sense when rotated to the left 90°. The hand-carved corks that produced cancels such as this were usually set in a ring that was duplexed to the same handle that held the town postmark. We see many instances in the 1860s and 1870s where the cancel is askew in relation to the postmark,

Figure 1

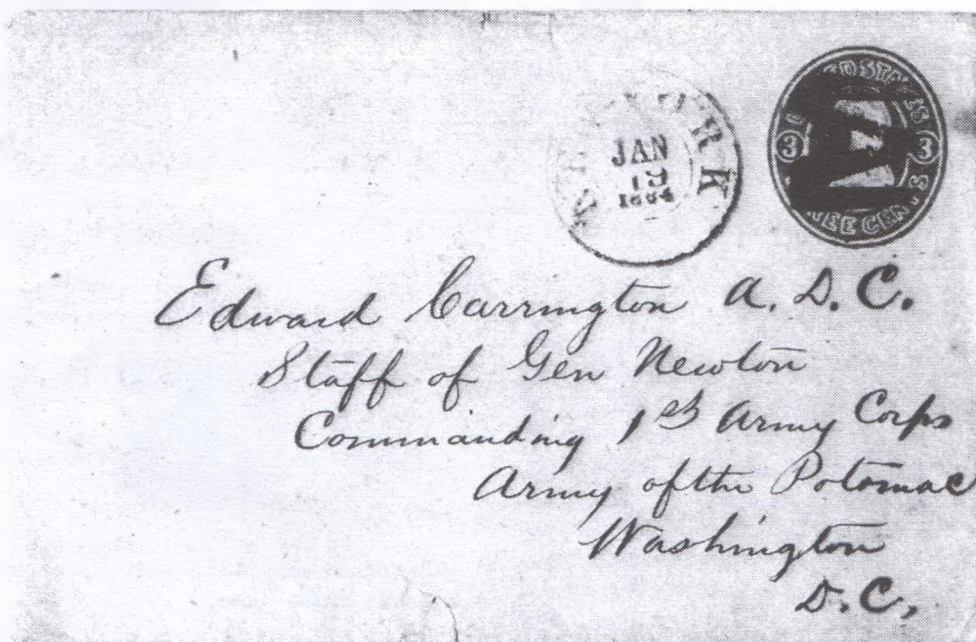


Figure 2



presumably due either to rotation during use or being set incorrectly to begin with.

A 90° shift gives us Figure 2, which John and your editor believe to be a representation of “AW.” Now it just so happens that the New York postmaster from March 21, 1862

to September 18, 1864 was Abram Wakeman, and we suggest it is no coincidence that the “AW” cancel matches his initials. In recent issues, the *NEWS* has touched on a number of hand-carved letter cancels that were derived from the names of postmasters or clerks but these have been from smaller post offices, not a big city post office like New York. Of course, it is possible that “AW” refers to the name of a clerk in the NYPO or is unrelated to a person’s name, but it seems likely to be linked to the postmaster. Was the carver, undoubtedly an employee of the NYPO, attempting to curry favor with the boss or feeling appreciative of some action on the postmaster’s part? We’ll never know, of course, but it is intriguing to think about. If readers can report additional strikes of this cancel or other such cancels from large post offices, they are encouraged to do so.■