



# Cancellation Club NEWS

Vol. 29, No. 2, Whole No. 267, May 2008

## "AIR" Cancels

by Roger D. Curran

Two very different cancels are presented below that have one very prominent-and unusual-thing in common: the word "AIR." However, in one case it was probably not the intent to spell this word.

Figure 1 shows an off-cover Sc 11 (1854 rose red shade from plate 1L) canceled by a postmark reading "Co. & Dn. AIR LINE R.R." A tracing of the cancel is placed below the stamp to illustrate that portion of the postmark not struck on the stamp. A full tracing of the postmark is provided as Figure 2.<sup>1</sup> The abbreviations represent "Chicago" and

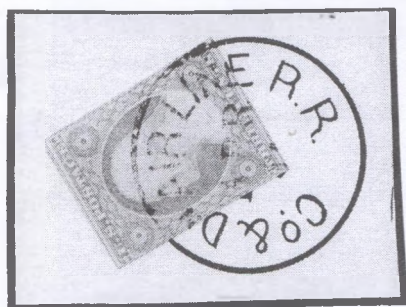


Figure 1



Figure 2

"Dixon." The Chicago and Dixon Air Line was a popular name for a Division of the Galena & Chicago Union Rail Road. Towle reports this railroad to have been incorporated in 1836 and built west from Chicago to Elgin, Rockford and Freeport and then on to Dunlieth using Illinois Central tracks.<sup>2</sup> This was the first railroad to serve the city of Chicago.<sup>3</sup> Perhaps a reader will tell us the meaning or significance of "AIR" in this context. This postmark, incidentally, has a rating in Towle of "extremely rare."<sup>4</sup>

The second item is a wonderful "multiple letters" cancel carved in a piece of cork or soft wood. As far as I know, this has not been reported in the literature. It appeared as lot 198 in the Kelleher sale of 10/18/07. More recently it was offered as item 30 in the Ventura net price sale 185 with a 2007 PF certificate. It seems likely that the letters represent



Figure 2

the initials of the postmaster, but who knows. Can any reader report the post office of origin for this cancel or other examples?■

<sup>1</sup> Charles L. Towle *U.S. Route and Station Agent Postmarks*, Mobile Post Office Society (1986), p. 40.

<sup>2</sup> Charles L. Towle *U.S. Route and Station Agent Postmarks Historical Supplement Railway Historical Notes* (1986), p. A33.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Towle, *U.S. Railroad and Station Agent Postmarks*, p. 41.

## Postmark Initials

Wendell Triplett writes with information about a cancel listed on 1890 issue stamps in both Cole and Whitfield but unattributed in terms of post office. Figure 1 is ML-227 from Cole and Figure 2 is #5249 from Whitfield. Figure 3 is lot 3618 from Nutmeg Sale 159 described as "SH" from Winchester, IL. Since Wendell has an example of this cancel in his collection (Figure 4) he was interested in the Nutmeg attribution. He consulted the on-line USPS postmaster

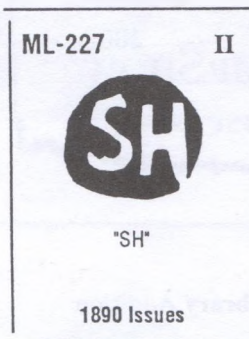


Figure 1

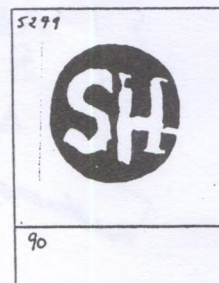


Figure 2



Figure 3



Figure 4

database and learned that the postmaster at the Winchester, Scott County, IL post office from 9/6/89-4/4/94 was a Harry Sanderson. This tells us that the cancel is actually "HS." Figures 3 and 4 are Sc 220 stamps that were current during the 1890-1894 period. One supposes that some strikes of this cancel are upside down on the stamp, leading to the Cole and Whitfield interpretations which, in turn, may have influenced the Nutmeg describer.■

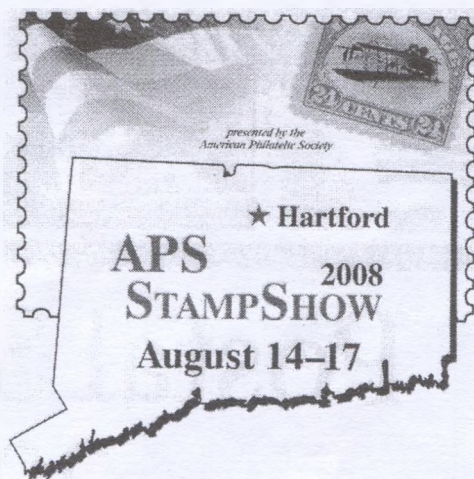


Dear Reader,

A USCC project that really needs attention is the creation of an index for the *NEWS*. I wrote about this, along with a couple of other projects, in August 2006 and there was some response at that time. However, other matters crowded out attention to the index and we now want to get back to it as a high priority.

There was an index prepared in 1973 but nothing since. A major part of the reference value of any journal is the accessibility of the information it contains. And without an index, accessibility is a problem. We are currently seeking a volunteer to work on this. The effort should probably begin by preparing an index for, say, the past 10 or 12 years, and making that available to Club members. Then the project would proceed back for another period of years, and so on. Ultimately, of course, the goal would be an index for all issues going back to the first one in 1951. The earlier index would be utilized to the extent it would be helpful. If you would be willing to take on the initial segment or at least to explore the idea, please let me know. If, for the period involved, the volunteer doesn't have all the issues, we will provide them. Consultation at any time along the way would be available. Please give it some thought as this project would represent a very important contribution to the *NEWS*.

Roger Curran



#### USCC Library Addition

A photocopy record of the extensive cancellations collection of George and Evelyn Lewis has recently been donated to the USCC by Evelyn Lewis. George and Evie focused specifically on the 3¢ issues of 1861-1868 and their collection, which was sold to Ed Hines in 1994, was particularly strong in off-cover stamps but included numerous covers as well. George served as USCC treasurer from 1982-1991 and as sales manager from 1984 to 1987. He and Evie attended numerous stamp shows and often exhibited their fine collection. The binder in which the copies are contained is entitled "Cancellations Found on the U.S. 3¢ Issues of 1861-1868 (George and Evelyn Lewis Collection)."

Our thanks to Evie for her very informative and thoughtful contribution to the Club's library. ■

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Address all other communications to the *NEWS* editor Roger D. Curran at the address below.

#### U.S.C.C. Officers

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## New York Foreign Mail (NYFM) Updates

by Dan Richards

Here are a couple of updates to Mr. Weiss's book *The Foreign Mail Cancellations of New York 1870-1878*.

The first update (Figure 1) is for TR-G18 as illustrated in his book on page 330. The Weiss tracing is from the cover he shows on the same page. Mr. Weiss discusses the possibility of two sections above the two parallel strips of four sections running horizontally. The newly found cover positively shows a more complete strike exposing the two upper sections. The Weiss cover is dated 8/17/72 and the Figure 1 cover 8/29/72.

The other update (Figure 2) is for the RE-LF1 illustrated in Mr. Weiss's book on pages 230 and 231. This

cover is dated 5/23/72. The Weiss tracing is taken from the only cover he reported with this cancel. It is dated 5/16/72. This tracing appears to reflect a partial or light strike as compared to the update. Studying the two strikes gives us a better idea what a complete RE-LF1 cancel would look like. The update cancel has wider or thicker segments. When you overlay the tracings you can see they are the same cancel. Mr. Weiss discusses the possibility that the cover illustrated on the bottom of Page 231 is also canceled with a RE-LF1. The cover in Figure 2 is the bridge between the cover on page 230 and the cover on page 231.

As a student of NYFM cancels I may not agree with all of Mr. Weiss's conclusions but grateful for his work. He has left a good foundation for further study. I feel his book is a work in progress.■

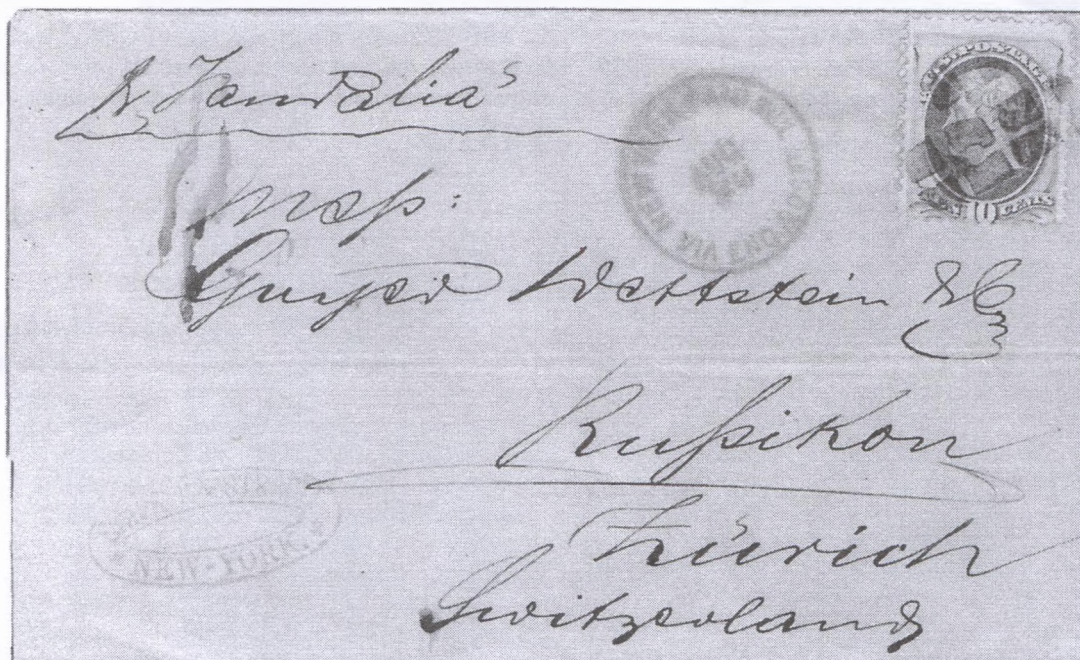


Figure 1

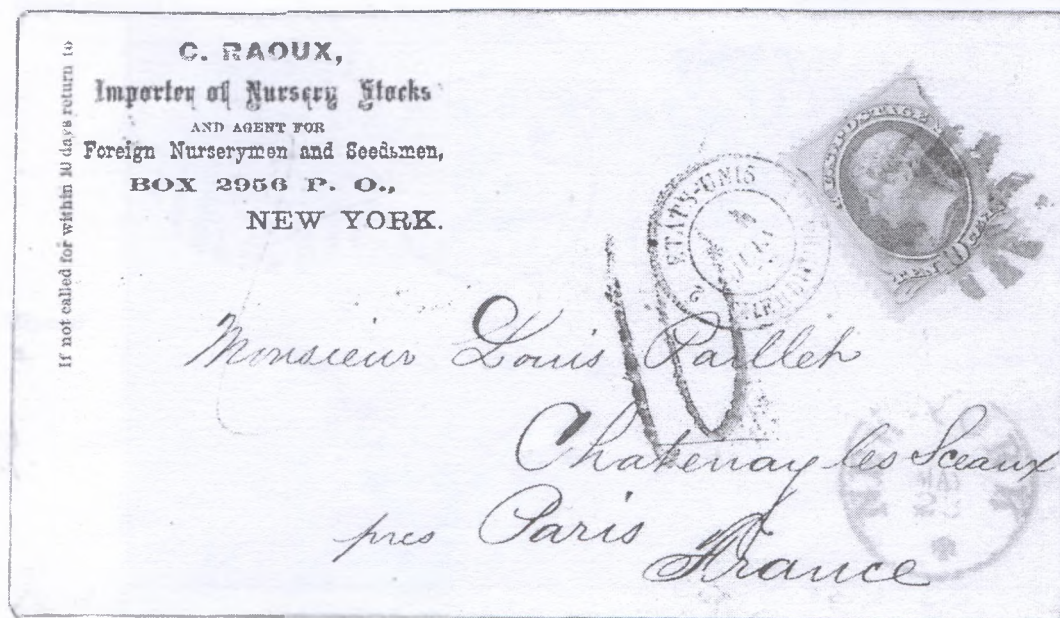


Figure 2



## The Early Boston Ellipses

by Roger D. Curran

The first set of ellipse cancels employed by the Boston Post Office is very interesting. Blake and Davis reported uses from 1875-1878.<sup>1</sup> Tracings of several examples from their book are shown as Figure 1. Some variation in the



Figure 1

appearance of the numerals is characteristic of this set. The purpose of the present article is to summarize earlier reports in the literature and to add such information as we can. An on-cover strike is shown as Figure 2. These ellipses have nine

horizontal bars, a number in the center and are reported by Blake and Davis to run, with some exceptions, from 1 through 44 with a 63 as well. Numbers they do not report are 3, 7, 8, 11, 12, 16, 19-23, 29 and 41.

A remarkable aspect is how the cancels sit in relation to the CDS with which they are duplexed. They appear to be more or less cockeyed, depending on the particular angle which varies dramatically, even to the point of being completely upside down on occasion. An example dated 1/17/78 is illustrated as Figure 3. To demonstrate that these odd angle ellipses were, in fact, the product of a duplex handstamp, the cover to South Africa dated 3/25/78 in Figure 4 is shown. It was struck three times with a handstamp duplexing a Boston CDS with an ellipse containing a "27" in the center. In each case the ellipse is in the same horizontal position in relation to the CDS and with the same 2mm distance from the CDS.

An early literature report was that of Gilbert Burr in 1935.<sup>2</sup> Mr. Burr was the first person to present a serious study of U.S. ellipse cancels and his lengthy article remains of

Figure 2

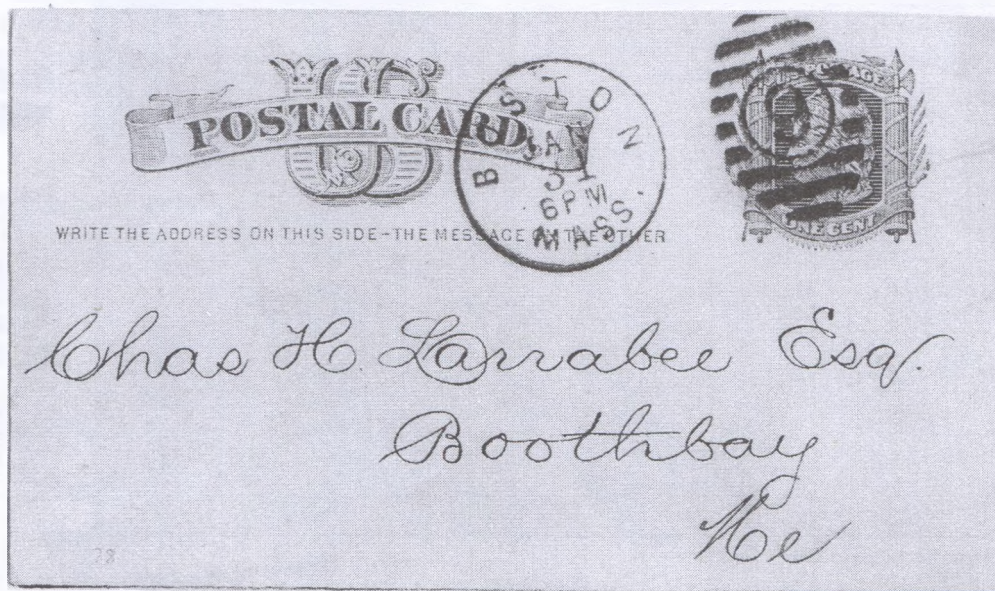


Figure 3

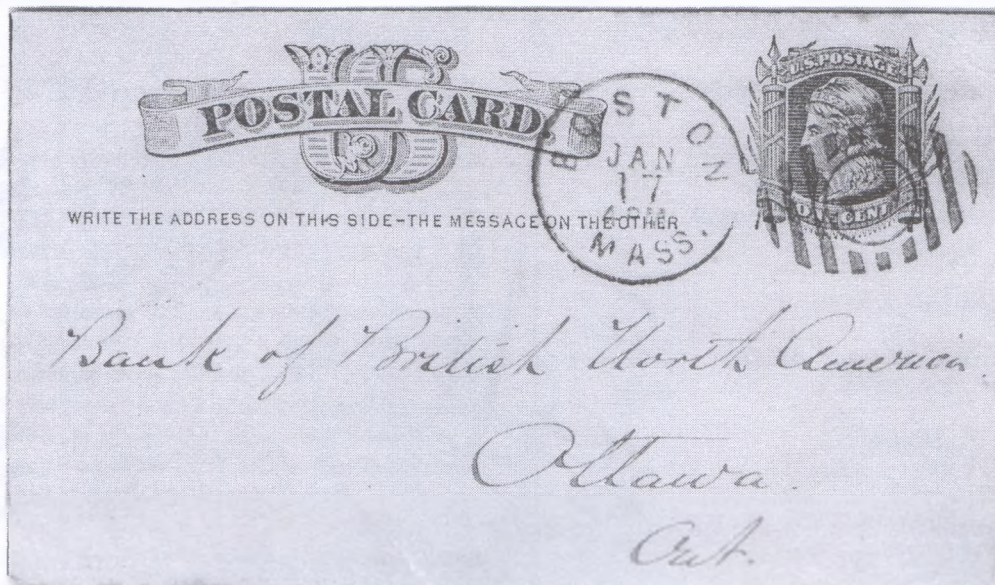






Figure 4



Figure 5

considerable value today. He illustrated the tracing shown here as Figure 5 and remarked as follows:

"The next cancel shown is one of the most unusual of any that I have found to have been used. It was sent me by Fred G. Floyd, of Sierra Madre, Cal. in whose collection it is. I have found one other instance where the ellipse is used horizontal instead of the usual vertical, but this was a hand cut "B" used by Brooklyn, N.Y. so I did not place any importance on it as the hand cut items exist in many forms, but this one seems to be of the regular engraved type usually found vertical."

These cancels are not particularly common. However, when taken in the aggregate they are certainly not rare and do not, in my opinion, really qualify as scarce. However, some numbers are, I suspect, very scarce or even rare. Insofar as the odd angle relationship of ellipse to CDS is concerned, it is by no means unique to this particular set. An 1879 cancel from Rochester, N.Y., in the collection of Arthur Beane, is shown as an example in Figure 6.

To the above list of Blake and Davis numbers, we can add the following: "3" (Figure 7 from the collection of Ted Wassam), "7" (Figure 8), "16" (Figure 9, dated 2/16/78),



Figure 7

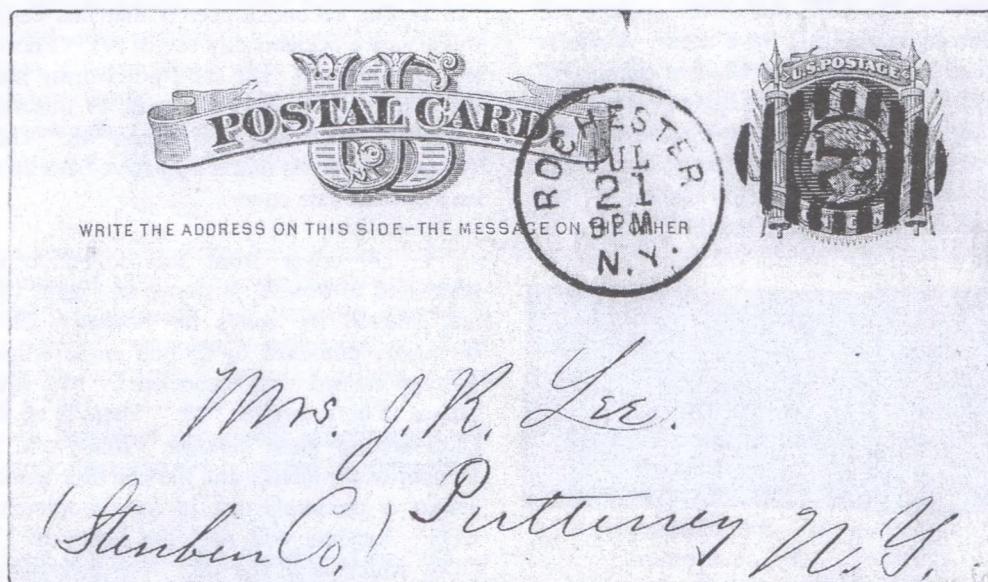


Figure 6



Figure 8



Figure 9

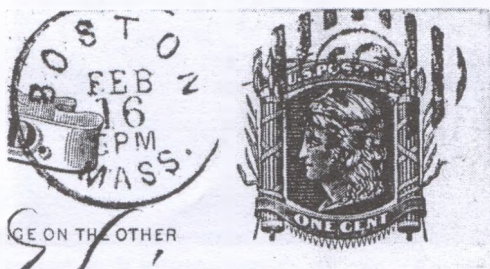


Figure 10



and "29" (Figure 10). On off-cover stamps (Figure 11), the following numbers are shown which are, I believe, likely from the set in question: "11", "12", "19", and "41." When we broaden the search to "stations" within the Boston postal district, a little more information is added. Figure 12 shows a Cambridge Station January 24 (1878) CDS with an "8" ellipse that may well be part of the set. Was the "8" only used by Cambridge Station? Figure 13 shows a Somerville Station CDS with a "11" ellipse. Does that mean that the "11" in Figure 11 is from Somerville Station or were there "11" uses from Boston as well? The Somerville Station CDS appears to be dated March 29 but a year date cannot be determined. While the "11" ellipse has characteristics of the set, the fact that it is duplexed close to the CDS makes the arrangement different from the Boston examples I have seen. A similar close duplexing (Figure 14) involves the Chelsea Station "7" and we know there is a "7" reported from Boston. Figure 15 is from East Boston and the "3" ellipse shows some skewing. The year date cannot be determined but Blake and Davis report an example dated 4/2/85. Perhaps the Boston "3" was added to an East Boston handstamp years after it was no longer used in Boston.



Figure 11

Figure 12



Figure 13



Figure 14



Figure 15

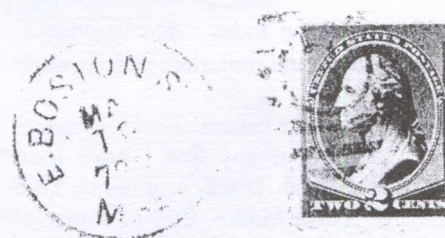


Figure 16 shows a cover in the collection of Ted Wassam. There is a faint "MASS: postmark dated 9/6/79 in a pinkish or magenta ink with a post office name that cannot be deciphered. Apparently the cover went through the Boston post office on its way to Shelburne Falls where it picked up a Boston ellipse cancel. This cover has several remarkable aspects. First, the ellipse contains a new number above 44: a "48." The second aspect is that this cancel is unduplexed, much as we occasionally see of NYPO domestic mail ellipses on circular mail. The third noteworthy feature, of course, is the late use of a Sc 65. Figure 17 illustrates a Sc 182 with what I believe to also be a Boston "48." The fact that it is on a 1¢ stamp suggests that it may have been an unduplexed cancel on a circular rate cover.

A cover from the collection of John Donnes, addressed to Ireland, is shown in Figure 18. It is dated 1878 and entered the mails on February 22. The CDS was obviously duplexed to an odd angle ellipse. However, the postage stamps were canceled by two strikes of what John judges to be a simplex "28." There is no evidence at all of a CDS around these cancels. Blake and Davis illustrate a number of postmarks and the one they associate with the "28" ellipse is definitely not, in John's opinion, the February 22 CDS. Readers will note the February 23 Boston "PAID" CDS, which is in red ink. The processing of this cover is



Figure 16

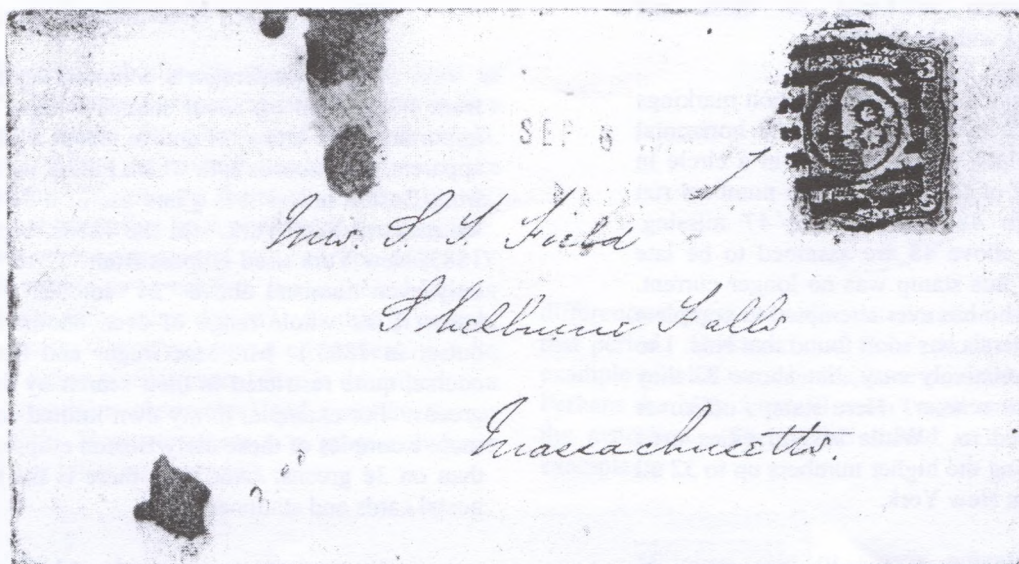
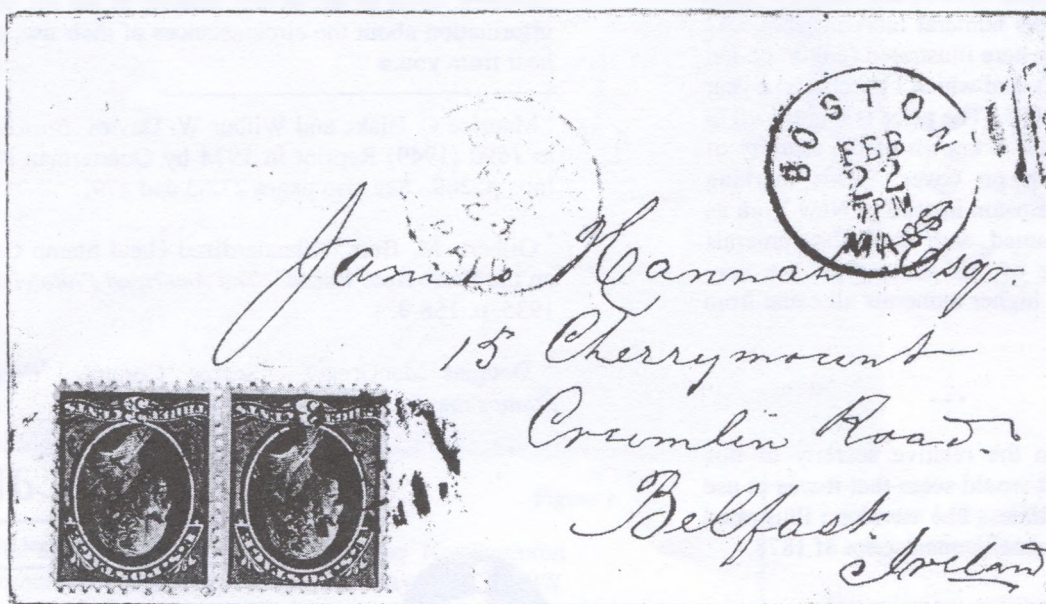


Figure 17

Figure 18



unclear. One can understand the placement of the February 22 CDS in the upper right corner but why not then use the same handstamp to cancel the postage stamps? Perhaps the stamps were inadvertently left uncanceled at 7PM February 22 and the problem was noted – and resolved – at some later stage of handling. The Figure 4 cover shows what we might call the “expected” procedure – initial processing with cancellation upon receipt in the post office (February 25) and then referral to the foreign section (red “PAID” CDS that appears to read February 26).

The covers seen by this writer have clustered during the first several months of 1878. However, Blake and Davis report a much wider period of use. Of particular interest is how early they are reported: an example with either a “33” or “39” on 2/2/75, which is very early for any U.S. ellipse. There are also reports of a “44” on 5/12/76 and a “31” on 5/13/76. Perhaps there was a period of occasional experimental use until 1878 when more intensive use occurred for three or so months.

Finally, there is the interesting matter of the “63” as this would be the only 19<sup>th</sup> century U.S. ellipse, insofar as I

know, with a number above the 50s. I have wondered if this report resulted from some over inked and distorted strike that was misinterpreted, possibly of a “39” that was on its side. However, I doubt this. It is my understanding that Wilbur Davis did most or all of the cancellations reporting in Blake and Davis. He also wrote a fair number of articles in the *NEWS* in the early to mid-1950s. His articles and, indeed, the cancellation section in Blake and Davis, reflect a careful attention to detail and wide experience which argue against any “63” report unless he was quite certain. And then there is the “48” report, so who knows what additional numbers beyond “44” are out there yet to be reported.

We’ll close with a consideration of some interesting comments from a 1945 article by Douglas MacGregor entitled “Scarce ‘Common’ Cancellations” in which he discussed two covers, one of which is pertinent to the cancels under discussion.<sup>3</sup> Herewith are excerpts:

Only persons specializing in the cancellations of a certain period can appreciate the scarcity of some cancellations. These may seem to be just



the common markings to those not acquainted with the facts.

One of the most common markings on the Three-Cent Green is the horizontal barred ellipse with a numeral in a circle in the center of the ellipse. The numbers run from 1 to 48 with 45 and 47 missing. Numbers above 48 are assumed to be late use when this stamp was no longer current. Anyone who has ever attempted to complete these numerals has soon found that Nos. 1 to 32 were relatively easy, but above 32 they were much scarcer. Here stamps off-cover are referred to. While several cities used this marking the higher numbers up to 32 all come from New York.

Having access to two large 3¢ Green collections besides my own I find no covers with this numeral marking above 32 except the one here illustrated (editor's note: see Figure 19), and which I purchased a year or so ago for 15¢. The price is mentioned to show how little is known of the scarcity of these numerals on cover. This marking originated in Boston instead of New York as had been assumed, and, as all the numerals above 32 are of this same type, we may assume these higher numerals all came from Boston.

...

From the relative scarcity of this cancellation it would seem that it was in use only a short time. The envelope illustrated shows a year date in manuscript of 1878.

...

Mention was made earlier in this article of having access to two other 3¢ Green collections. In the building up of these collections, the three of us have gone through literally millions of stamps of this

issue and many thousands of covers . . ."

I find MacGregor's comment about seeing numbers from 1 to 48 on off-cover stamps without a 45 or 47 to be important. We know, of course, about a 48 from Boston and apparently he records a 46 which I think we can assume is also from Boston unless it is a late use of a 3¢ green that entered the mails at New York. (In the 1880s, beginning in October 1883, New York used ellipses from "1" to "24" inclusive and only even numbers above "24" to "52." However, I don't know if the whole range of even numbers was used at the outset in 1883.) Mr. MacGregor and his friends were, of course, quite restricted in their search by focusing just on 3¢ greens. For example, in my own limited collection, there are more examples of these early Boston ellipses on 2¢ vermilions than on 3¢ greens. And then there is the whole category of postal cards and stationery.

If readers can provide additional reports (new numbers, dates of use of any cancels in the set, etc.) or more information about the circumstances of their use, please let us hear from you.■

<sup>1</sup> Maurice C. Blake and Wilbur W. Davies *Boston Postmarks to 1890* (1949) Reprint in 1974 by Quarterman Publications, Inc., p. 268. See also pages 272-3 and 279.

<sup>2</sup> Gilbert M. Burr "Standardized Hand Stamp Cancellations on the Bank Note Issues" *The American Philatelist* February 1935, p. 158-9.

<sup>3</sup> Douglas MacGregor "Scarce 'Common' Cancellations," *Stamps* magazine, March 17, 1945, p. 378.

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Figure 19





### Intriguing Cancel

Jim Blandford submits the cover shown here as Figure 1 with a Sc 210 stamp canceled by what appears to be a coiled, open-mouth snake or, given the town of origin, possibly an eel. There is enough ambiguity to make identification less than certain. As far as your editor knows, such a cancel has not heretofore been reported in the literature. Can readers report other examples of this Schroon Lake, NY cancel that would enable us to confirm the snake/eel idea or determine that it was some other design? As this is written, there is on The Classic Cancel website a cover bearing a Sc 210 canceled by a rather similar cancel that is described as a spiral killer (no "mouth" is observable) and a similar format CDS of Nyack, NY. However, there is a greater distance between the CDS and killer on the Nyack cover.

Figure 3



difference represents major deterioration of the canceler over that period. However, Jim Cole's book illustrates a sharper example of what must be the same cancel dated May 15, 1884. Perhaps the May 5 cancel wasn't well struck and this caused the distortion. The NEWS would welcome seeing further examples. ■



Figure 1

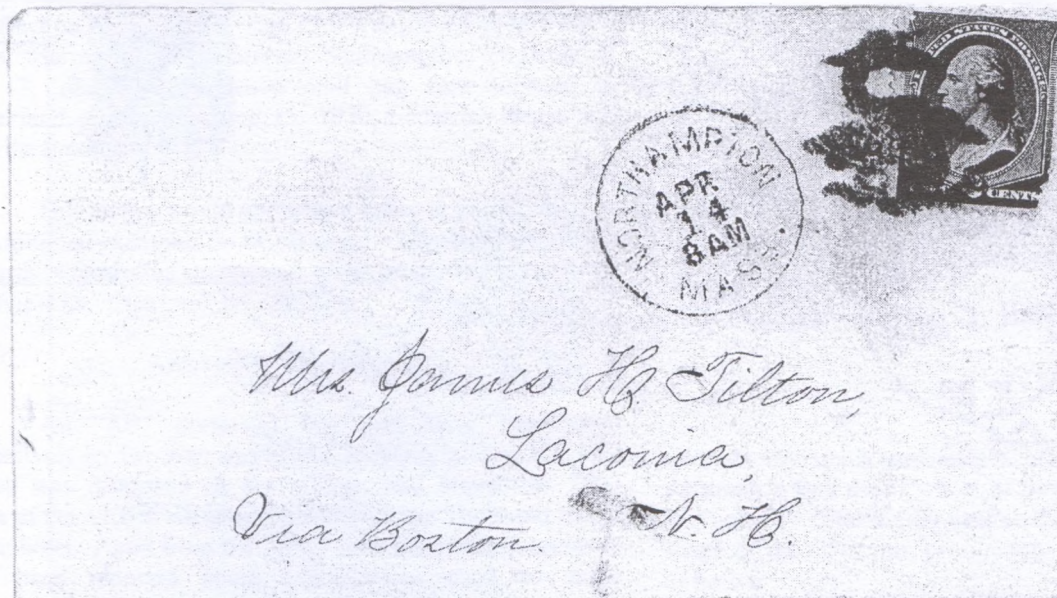
Jim also sends two examples of the Northampton "dragon" cancel that was discussed in the May 2007 NEWS. The cover in Figure 2 received a November 2007 APS certificate stating that it bears a genuine "dragon" cancel. Jim also provides a cover dated apparently three weeks later with a very fuzzy and indistinct strike. One would assume that this

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Figure 2





## Yet Another Unlisted New York Foreign Mail Cancel

by Dan Richards

I am delighted to report another unlisted New York Foreign Mail (NYFM) cancel. The tracing shown in Figure 1, which originated from the cover shown in Figure 3 below, has characteristics both of a fancy geometric and of a leaf. This

Figure 1



unlisted cancel measures 21x22 mm and has been seen by this author, on and off cover, only in black ink. A vertical centerline or spine divides the three Vs on the left from the five segments on the right that are connected by a vertical line running parallel to the centerline. The earliest date I have noted is April 21, 1870 with the latest being June 2, 1870. This provides a length of 41 days in use and one would suspect additional unrecorded examples. I have designated this unlisted NYFM as a RE-LF5. I have used the following four covers (Figures 2-5) to support my findings.

Figure 2

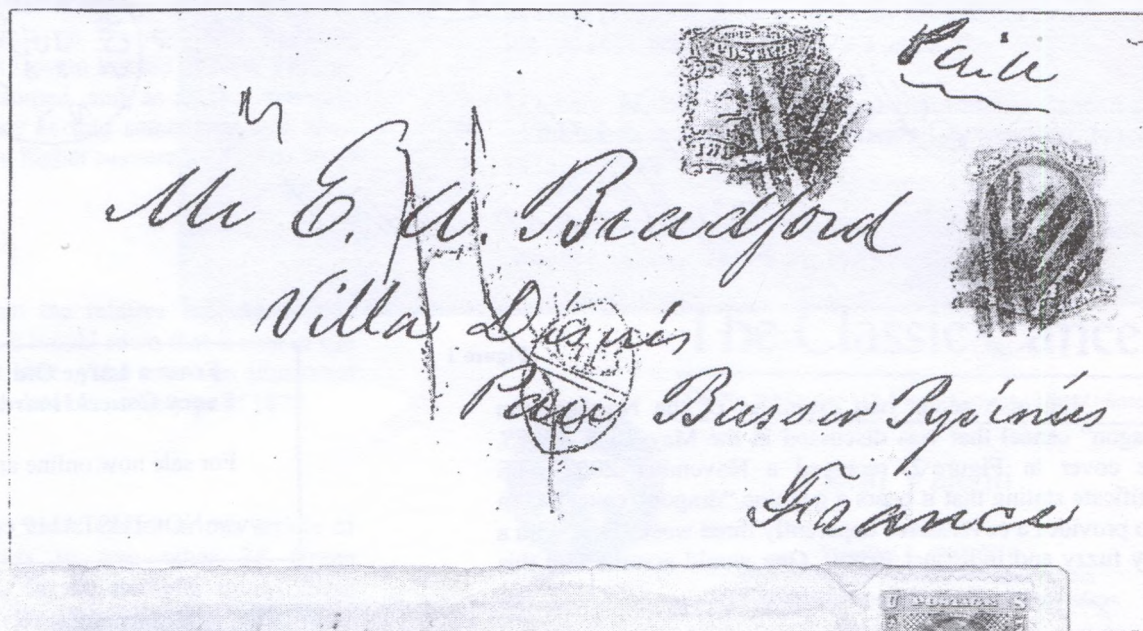


Figure 3

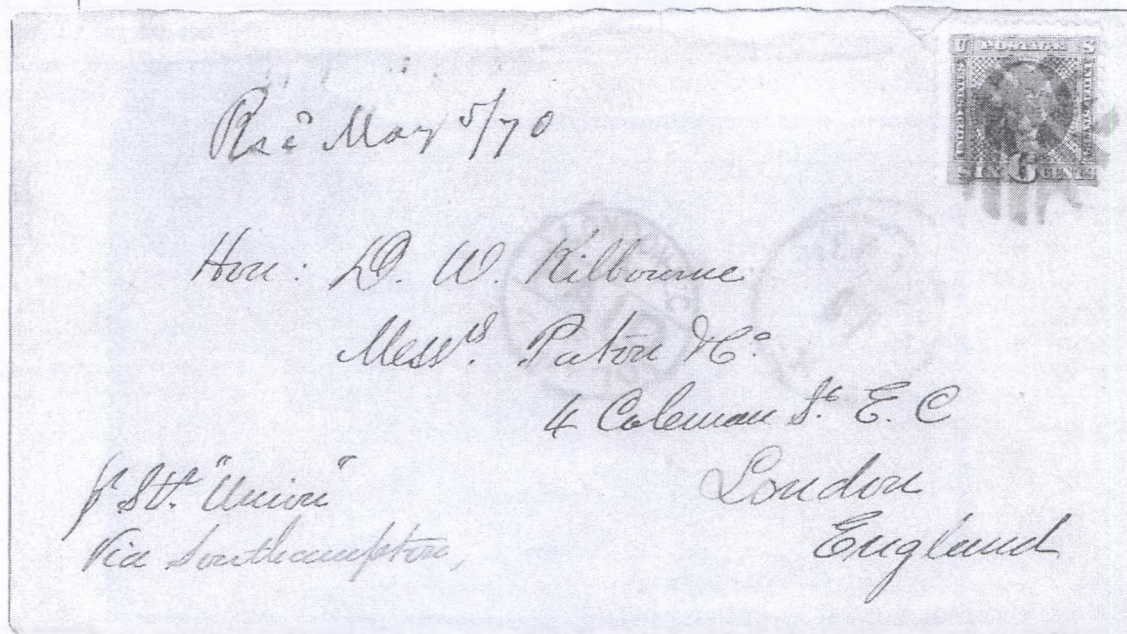


Figure 2 is the earliest usage I could find. The cover is dated New York April 21, 1870. It is franked with a 2 cent brown (Sc 113), used with a 6 cent carmine (Sc 148) combined to make the double 4 cent open mail rate to Pau Pyrenees, France. The cover is signed by Ashbrook. The current owner is unknown but it was sold in Robert Siegel Auction No. 876, Lot 94.

Figure 3 is dated New York April 23, 1870 and franked with a 6 cent blue (Sc 115) which paid the ½ ounce British letter rate. The cover sailed aboard NGL Line's "Union" which arrived Southampton, England on May 4, 1870 and railed to London the same day.

Figure 4 is franked with a 6 cent carmine and has a red orange New York Exchange Office postmark dated May 21, (1870). The cover was placed aboard the NGL Line's "City of London" which arrived Queenstown, Ireland on May 31, 1870. It was received in London on June 1, 1870 as indicated by the red orange "LONDON E.C. PAID 1 JN 70" postmark.

Figure 5 was recently sold from the John Barwis



Figure 4

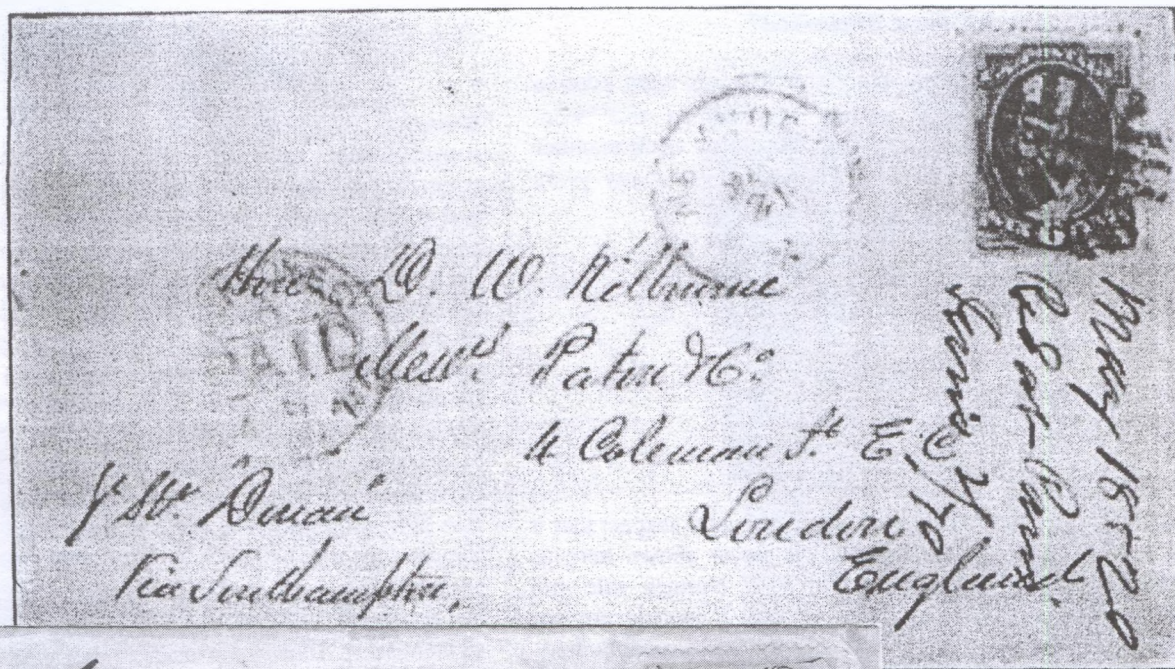
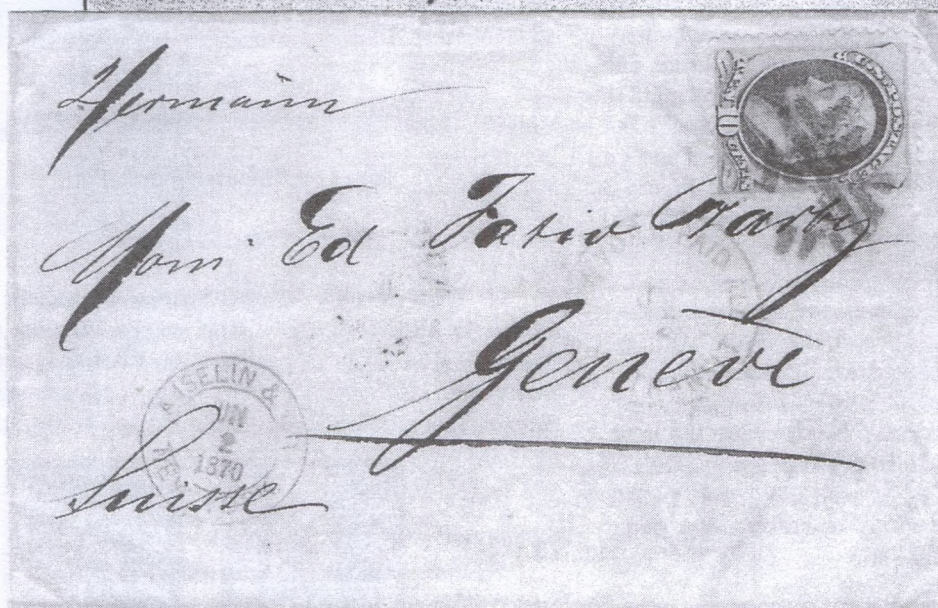


Figure 5



collection by the Matthew Bennett Auction No. 323, Lot 357. The FLS has a 10 cent brown (Sc 150), and is dated New York June 2, 1870. The 10 cent National prepaid the ½ ounce letter rate by Switzerland Closed Mail via England. This rate went into effect on May 1, 1870. The FLS was placed aboard NGL Line's "Hermann" which arrived Southampton, England on June 13, 1870. This closed mail bag then traveled to Switzerland. There are June 15, 1870, Lausanne-Berne and Basel backstamps.

This author would appreciate scans or photocopies of any additional examples on or off cover. My email address is [drichards14@carolina.rr.com](mailto:drichards14@carolina.rr.com) and for regular mail it is 10012 Hazelview Dr., Charlotte, NC 28277. ■

#### Alexandria Bay Cancel

An "AB" precancel that may have been used successively by the Alexandria and Alexandria Bay, NY post offices was discussed in the August and November 2007 issues of the *NEWS*. It is associated with the Thousand Island House hotel. Apart from the "AB," little information seems to have been reported about cancellations used by these

Figure 1



undoubtedly small post offices. However, we do know that Alexandria Bay used "wheel of fortune" cancels as illustrated in Figure 1. The 8/1/89 strike shows some distortion in the shape of the CDS rim, presumably due to wear over a period of time. ■



### A Cancel Unmasked?

After publishing his book *U.S. Cancells 1890-1900* in 1985, Sol Salkind began selling the stamps that were illustrated therein. One that was purchased by Club member Merritt Jenkins appears here as Figure 1. For many years



Figure 1

Merritt saw no other examples and had begun to suspect that it was a fake. But, lo and behold, the cover shown here as Figure 2 appeared in a November 2007 Nutmeg sale and Merritt acquired it. The Figures 1 and 2 cancels are not identical but the variations may well be – and probably are – due to some combination of inking, pressure of the strike, and wear. Tracing 361 from Whitfield (Figure 3) and tracing 838 from Russell<sup>1</sup> (Figure 4) are similar to Figures 1 and 2 but show important differences – what appear to be ears and no jagged top. Both are attributed to Naperville, with Figure 3 reported on a November 1894 cover and Figure 4 on a Sc 220 cover.

From the above, one may suppose that two distinct cancels were used in the same general timeframe with the “ears” version following the “jagged top.” But, rather than two wholly different cancels, might it be that the jagged top variety was cut down and re-carved a bit to create the ears? Or are the differences perhaps just the result of the vagaries of inking, pressure and wear? Readers who can report further examples of these intriguing cancels or information about them are urged to contact the *NEWS*.■

<sup>1</sup> Russell, Richard *Illinois 19<sup>th</sup> Century Cancells*, published by the Illinois Postal History Society (March 1984).

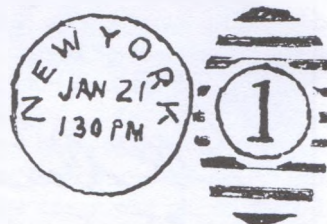
Figure 3



Figure 4



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### More on “Mysterious Patent”

by Roger D. Curran

Club member John Kellerman, a collector of cancels on the 3¢ 1851 and 1857 issue stamps, submits two Sc 26 stamps (Figure 1) in response to the front page article in the November 2007 *NEWS*. The cancel on the right closely matches that article’s Figure 3 tracing, while the cancel on the



Figure 1

Figure 2





left, which may be over inked, is similar but appears to have more widely spaced bars.

John reports that neither cancel indents the stamp and this gets to a matter I have often thought about. Just because a cancel indents a stamp, or even occasionally tears or punctures it, this does not necessarily mean, in my opinion, that it is a patent cancel. I believe a cancel should only be considered a patent cancel if one can reasonably infer that the *intent* was to tear or puncture the stamp. For example, if one creates a "group of dots" cancel by crosshatching a piece of cork or wood and then presses the canceler down firmly when obliterating the stamp, there will likely be indentations or perhaps tears as a result. (See PN-D25 on p. 251 of the Skinner-Eno book for an example.) Generally speaking, I think that such tears or indentations should be considered incidental to the cancel process and not something that was planned. I have seen a number of so-called "patent" cancels that I believe fall in this category. Indeed, I wonder about the "mysterious patent" we have been discussing. What can we really say about the intent of this odd cancel? Comment is invited.

Just to show that the Confederate States weren't completely outdone in the cross roads cancel department, Peter Powell submits a rare cancel from Mt. Crawford, VA illustrated here as Figure 2.■

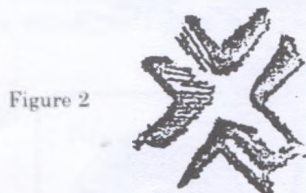


Figure 2

### More Large Markings

by Roger D. Curran

The November 2007 *NEWS* presented several unusually large killers and the February 2008 issue illustrated a large (37-38mm) 1861 postmark. Ted Wassam submitted two large ellipse cancellations shown here as Figure 1. The Newark, NJ 14-bar ellipse is dated May 18, 1891. I believe the texture of the Newark cancel is due to the cloth covering of the ink pad. Although the ellipses have some differences, they are similar and I assume were produced by the same handstamp maker. The CDS designs to which they are duplexed are very similar.

The November article illustrated two large cross-roads cancels. In response, Ted submits an off-cover 6¢ Banknote socked by a cross-roads. It is not an especially large cancel but it succeeded in obliterating virtually the entire stamp. No worry about re-use here!

Gil Levere sent in a remarkably large modern postmark from Shakopee, MN with four short canceling bars on the right side. The date is November 23, 1996 and the CDS has a 45 mm. diameter. It looks to be from a standard USPS handstamp but it is much larger than any postmarks used by our local post office.■



Figure 1



Figure 2

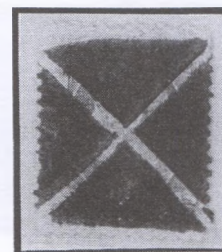
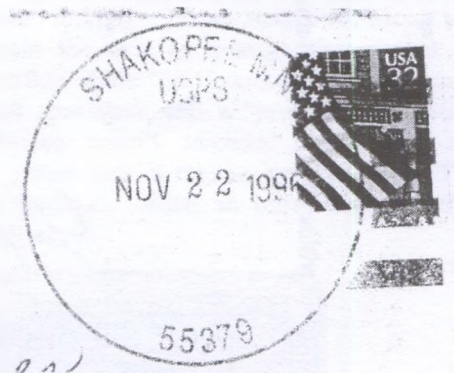


Figure 3



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### Unlisted Cancels

Jim Kesterson submits four interesting cancels that are, insofar as your editor knows, unlisted in the literature, at least in terms of post office of origin.

Figure 1 is from a St. Louis, MO cover bearing a CDS that appears to be dated February 17. There is a circular St. Louis business handstamp marking in the upper left corner that is dated February 16, 1870. The overall shape is very reminiscent of several 1860s (perhaps only late 1860s) cancels from Philadelphia, PA associated by collectors with the "mummers" of the annual Philadelphia New Year's Day parade fame. It appears that the St. Louis cancel was intended to be solid with the breaks that appear in certain places due to the uneven surface created by the embossed indicium. Is there some connection between – or similar inspiration for – the St.

Louis and Philadelphia cancels?

The cancels in Figures 2 and 3 are clearly intended to be something, but what? Figure 2, from Athens, TN, is in a warm magenta ink and the strike appears to be incomplete at the lower right. Figure 3 is from Lenark, IL and the message side is datelined December 20, 1875.

The cancel in blue ink on the cover front from Roseville, IL (Figure 4), is very clear. As Jim describes it, this is a teacher's bell with clapper. It may be Whitfield #1115 which appears here as Figure 5.

If readers can report other examples of the above cancels, or more information about them, please contact the NEWS.■

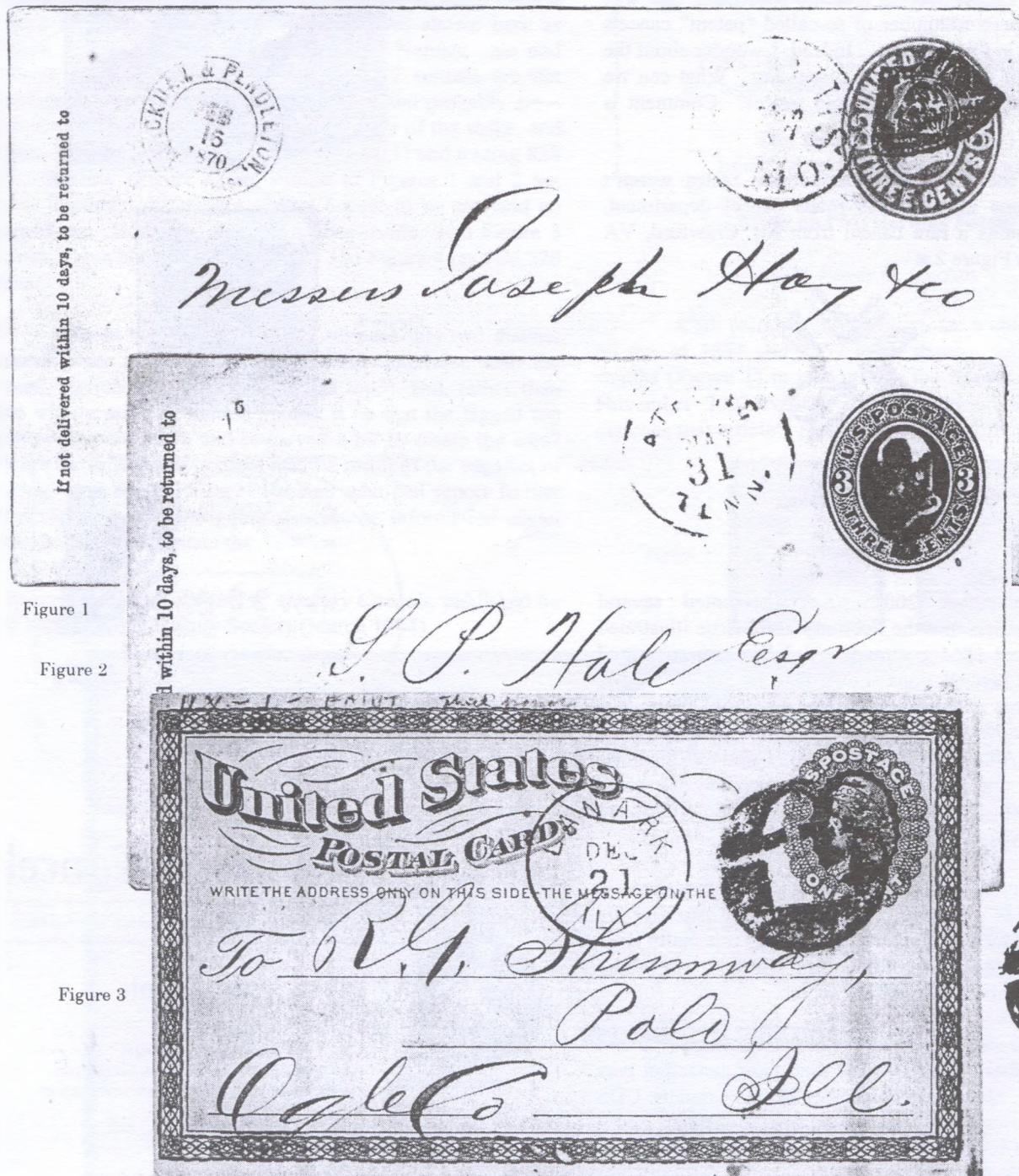


Figure 1

Figure 2

Figure 3



Figure 4

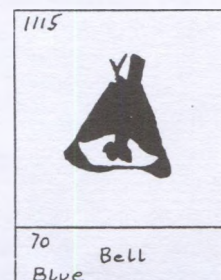
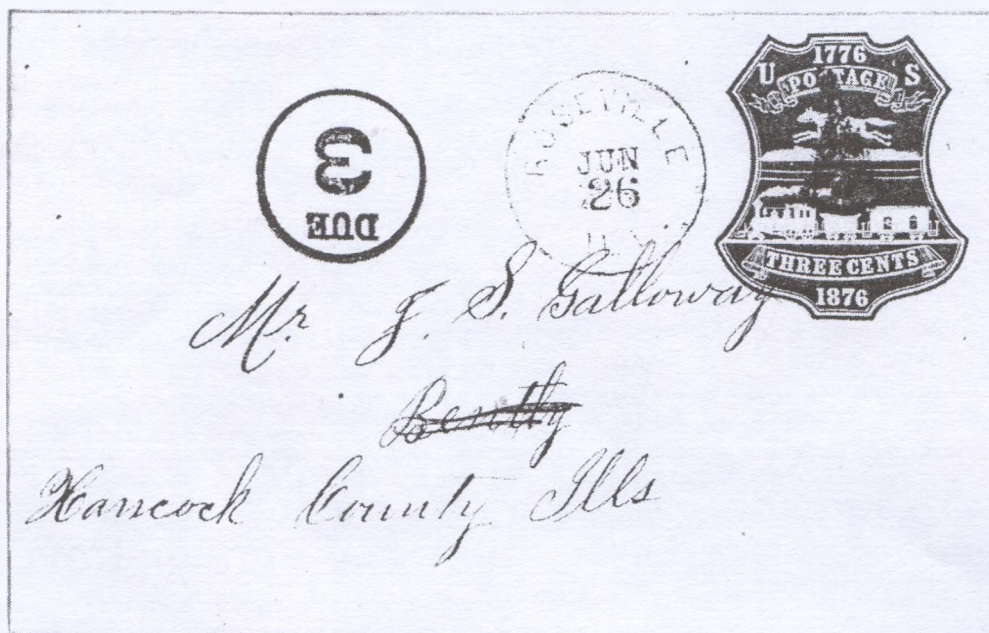
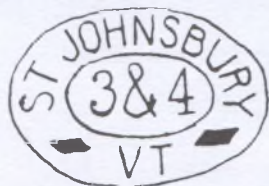


Figure 5

### Double Duty for a Double Oval

Surely one of the most unusual double oval cancels comes from the small town of St. Johnsbury, VT. A drawing from Willard is shown as Figure 1. This cancel was the

Figure 1



subject of a November 2003 *NEWS* article and is decidedly scarce. It is thought that the "3&4" inscription in the center refers to the categories of mail on which it was intended to be used – 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> class. Figure 2 shows an off-cover pair and single of Sc 211 aligned together as they would have presumably appeared on the original cover, probably a package wrapping.

Figure 2



It was of great interest to your editor to come across the cover illustrated in Figure 3 from Nantucket, Mass. to St. Johnsbury wherein the two 1¢ postage due stamps were precanceled by strikes of the "3&4" double oval. It is the type of precancel that specialists call a "provisional" precancel because the device wasn't intended specifically as a precanceler but rather was a regular canceler pressed into service for that purpose. What an interesting use of this remarkable cancel!■

Figure 3





## The Other Side of the Duplex

by Roger D. Curran

Collectors of the "large Boston negatives" note three principal categories of postmarks to which they are duplexed – those with "1881", "1882" or with no year date. The "large negatives" were used from 1878 through 1883, so non-year dated postmarks, of course, were used both before and after the year dated postmarks. At the time I acquired the cover shown in Figure 1, which is dated January 4, 1881, I had the idea that the year-dated postmarks began on or very shortly after January 1, 1881. Later I realized that Blake and Davis illustrated an 1880 postmark (Figure 2).<sup>1</sup> So when did the year-dated postmarks first appear and, for that matter, when did they disappear? Blake and Davis recorded year-dated postmarks as late as December 18, 1882 and non-year dated postmarks with the "large negatives" not only before and after but also during the 1881-2 period.

It is not clear to me that the postmarks with year dates came from new handstamps as they are otherwise very similar to the pre-1881 postmarks. Perhaps there was cavity space already present in the pre-1881 postmarkers to accommodate an extra row of slugs. If they were new handstamps they did not bring with them new "large negatives" killer designs, based on a review of the USCC Progress Report on the "large negatives" published with the November 2003 *NEWS*.

Although a bit of a digression it may be of interest to comment on what the 2003 Progress Report does suggest. It appears that in mid-1878, when these cancels first appeared, only the lower numbers and the earlier letters in the alphabet were used. Only numbers #1 through #5 in squares were reported in 1878 with other numbers - #6 through #13 – first noted in 1879 or later. That generally holds for numbers in a circle except for "12" reported as early as July 24, 1878. For letters in a square, "A" – "K" (no "G" or "I" reported) were noted in 1878 with "L" – "N" only in 1879 or later. A very similar pattern is presented for letters in a circle. Incidentally, the killers with negative ring or negative parallel lines began

showing up in 1881 according to the report.

If readers can help by submitting covers that further refine or contradict in any way what is discussed above, please contact the *NEWS*.■

<sup>1</sup> Maurice C. Blake and Wilbur W. Davis *Boston Postmarks to 1890* Severn-Wiley-Jewett Co. (1949), p. 252.

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Figure 1

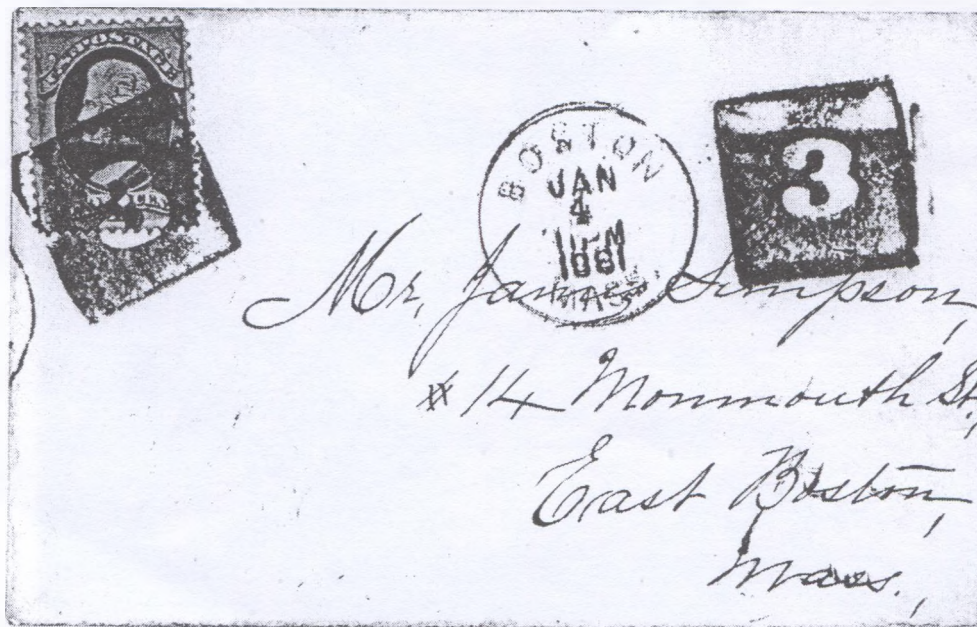


Figure 2

