



U.S. Cancellation Club **NEWS**

Vol. 29, No. 4, Whole No. 267, November 2008

Initials on Undelivered Mail

by Roger D. Curran

Wendell Triplett submits three covers from his collection bearing New York Post Office markings that are related to undeliverable mail. The meaning of these markings has long been a question for collectors. Twenty years ago, as Wendell pointed out, the subject was addressed in the *NEWS* by Warren Bower. A question had been raised about "B.L." and "C.L." markings and Warren provided an answer in the Spring 1988 issue. While no documentary evidence is available that I am aware of, Warren's response is thoroughly plausible and I believe we can assume it to be correct. With a largely new generation of readership and three interesting covers for illustrations, now is a good time to revisit the subject. As with all *NEWS* articles, we eagerly solicit comments, additional information and any needed corrections to what is stated.



Figure 1, front and back



Figure 2.

Let's begin with a bit of context. During the late 1800s, incoming mail for delivery by the NYPO was sorted into three broad categories: (1) to be placed in P.O. boxes at the main post office, (2) to be delivered by carriers attached to the main post office, and (3) to be distributed to NYPO branch post offices for delivery. About 25% of the incoming mail was said by Warren to have been delivered by branch post offices in the 1890s. From his study of letters bearing "B.L." markings, he found that this marking was only seen on letters that would have been distributed to branch post offices for delivery. (Warren was able to determine this by comparing addresses on the letters to the servicing areas of the main post office and the branches). He thus concluded that "B.L." meant branch letter. Another marking, similar in nature, found on undeliverable mail – "C.L." – was identified by Warren as meaning carrier mail, carrier in this context referring to the carrier section operating from the main post office rather than from one of the branches.

The cover in Figure 1 originated at Breadloaf, Vermont. The postmark date is unreadable. Breadloaf is a DPO that operated from 1874-1955. The cover made transit through Middlebury, Vermont on its way to New York. The New York receipt marking (below the yellow label on the back), applied by the branch, is unreadable. The address tells us that delivery was attempted by Station G. Since the addressee had moved with no forwarding address, Station G returned the letter to the main post office whereupon the 4/14/91 receipt marking on the back and the

Continued on Page 51

Dear Reader,

Thanks for the feedback on the "new look" August issue of the *NEWS*. Overall, the comments were very favorable with a few expressions of concern about color quality. A number of Club members recommended that we move the text to the right on the pages so that there would be room for hole punching. That, of course, has now been addressed. On a recent telephone conference call, the USCC Directors discussed the new look with particular attention to the color question. Here is the situation. Even though the cost of color printing has come down in recent years, our outlay for the August issue was more than 100% higher than for the normal black and white issues, from about \$500 to about \$1,200 with electronic page layouts included. I had checked earlier with a couple of fairly large commercial printers, which I assume would have given us higher image quality, and the estimates were at least \$2,000 and this excluded page layouts. It was the conclusion of the Board to continue the present association with Dick Sine. While the color images are not Siegel catalog quality, they are nonetheless quite good, especially when scanning from original material. For example, the Cancellation Gallery article in the August issue showed images scanned from color copies, albeit of very good copies, and some diminution of quality is evident. We will strive to scan original material whenever possible but will inevitably use color copies, at least on occasion. The Board considered the page layouts to be excellent and I have found working with Mr. Sine to be entirely satisfactory. Please know that we will welcome your comments and suggestions at any time.

If the good news is that we are now printing in color, the bad news is that the USCC dues amount must be increased. However, through some very generous donations we are able to phase in the increase over three years which would not have otherwise been possible. Again this summer, the USCC was the recipient of funds from the charity auction of the New Orleans based Crescent City Stamp Club (CCSC). A remarkable \$2,797.50 was received. We have thanked the CCSC and the individual donors directly but want to take this occasion to recognize the following persons publicly: Donald Barany, Alan Campbell, Joe Crosby, John Donnes, Glenn Hanle, Matthew Kewriga, Nick Kirke, Dan Richards, and Steve Tedesco. This support is sincerely appreciated.

You will find enclosed a combination dues payment notice and ballot. Please take a few moments to complete the form and return it promptly with your check. If you have comments or recommendations about Club projects or activities, please jot them down on the back of the form.

Best wishes to you and your families for an enjoyable holiday season.

Roger Curran

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 through May 2008, \$3.00. August 2008 and later issues, \$6.00. 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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Full Page.....	\$60.00
Half Page.....	30.00
Quarter Page.....	15.00
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Whitfield Book Available Again

Additional copies of the book *Cancellations Found on 19th Century U.S. Stamps* by Kenneth A. Whitfield are now available. The book contains more than 6,000 tracings and is a valuable supplement to the Skinner-Eno and Cole books. This printing incorporates the new Whitfield update that has been offered recently. The cost is \$52 postpaid. Checks should be made payable to U.S.C.C. and orders sent to U.S.C.C., 20 University Avenue, Lewisburg, PA 17837.



Figure 3,
front and
back

Continued from Page 49

three purple markings on the front were applied. The cover was returned to sender and received back in Middlebury on April 15, 1891.

The postal card in Figure 2 entered the mails at Medusa, New York on 10/12/88 and was received in the NYPO that same day. Delivery was attempted but not made by a carrier attached to the main post office. The card was then routed to a central section of the main post office where the "C.L." marking was applied. It seems certain that delivery was ultimately achieved but how that was made possible is unclear. There is a notation "answered" at the bottom that we can assume was written by the addressee.

The Figure 3 cover entered the mails at Locust Valley, New York on April 5, year undetermined. The address on this cover is, to say the least, minimal. There is no box number and not enough information to distribute it to a branch or to the carrier section. Two steps were taken to locate the addressee. A "D.S." marking such as that on the Figure 3 cover was stated by Warren to mean "directory search." (As a slight alternative, perhaps it meant "directory service.") This is seen with numbers ranging up to "No. 4." One assumes the directory search in this case was undertaken first, with no luck, and then the letter was advertised. Advertised letters not called for within one month were sent to the Dead Letter Office (DLO) in Washington, D.C. If there had been a return address on the Figure 3 cover, it would have been returned by the NYPO to the sender without advertising. Local post offices had no authority to open a letter in an attempt to identify the sender

so it could be returned to that person, such task being the province of the DLO only. The fact that this cover did not go to the DLO (there would have been a marking on the cover to indicate receipt in the DLO) indicates that the letter did finally reach the addressee. Presumably that occurred on or about May 21, per the postmark on the back of the cover.

On this general subject, a person familiar with the operations of the NYPO was quoted in some detail about the subject in the Marshall Cushing 1893 book *The Story of Our Post Office*. Among his comments (page 712) was the following:

"Letters for which no owner can be found are sent in due course of time to the Dead Letter Office at Washington, but postal cards are tied into bundles and burned in the fire under the boiler which lifts the elevator; literally, this class of lost and useless correspondence helps to run the big post office."

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Cancellation Gallery

As a general proposition, it is difficult to identify the post office of origin for off-cover ellipses unless one has on cover examples (or good tracings from covers) available for comparison. This is because differences are often slight. However, in some cases identification can easily be made as illustrated by these vertical bar ellipses with a thickish circle. The overall ellipse design, including numeral shape, is very characteristic of Wesson "time-on-bottom" handstamps and Boston was the **only** post office to use Wesson vertical bar killers with a number in the center. The face of each handstamp was hand engraved and variations are sometimes quite obvious. Examples of "8" and "12" demonstrate the point.



In 1872 the New York Post Office began using a series of hand-carved numbers in its wood killers. These were undoubtedly employed to identify the particular clerks so that poor handstamping could be attributed to the right person. (The NYPO was the first to adopt such a system which was ultimately employed by all big city post offices and many others as well.) Numbers "1" through "14" have been seen. These cancels were replaced by manufactured metal ellipses in 1876.



Chicago Cancels on the Large Numeral Dues

by Roger D. Curran

This article reviews the canceling practices of the Chicago post office regarding the large numeral postage due stamps, 1879-1894. Due stamps were, of course, affixed to covers by post offices, not the mailing public. Therefore, precanceling of these stamps by post offices to save time and work was a natural

step that found favor throughout the country and especially in larger post offices. The story in Chicago during this period is almost exclusively one of precancels.

Postage due stamps were authorized for use in July 1879 and the cover in Figure 1 presents what is probably an early use of the J3 stamp. What appears to be a Robertsville, Tennessee postmark is dated September 24 ("SEP" inverted) with a magenta Chicago carrier marking on the back dated September 27. (Robertsville is a DPO that operated from 1832-1917.)



Figure 1. The due stamp is canceled by two thin freehand lines in a magenta ink. This cover and most of the others illustrated herein were in the exhibit of Warren Bower who was a highly regarded student of postage due stamps and their postal history. He noted that Figure 1 was one of two nearly identical covers in his collection. The top canceling line begins and ends on the stamp. The bottom line goes to the edge of the stamp (or virtually to it) at the upper end but not at the lower end. Warren was confident that the cover was mailed in 1879 (although there would seem to be no way to prove it) and stated that the free hand lines demonstrated "... a lack of routine yet for canceling due stamps." I accept this conclusion.

Chicago switched to pen line precancels that extend to the edges of the stamps indicating application to sheets or at least partial sheets of stamps. The April 1880 cover in Figure 2 shows such a precancel. The canceling ink appears to have



Figure 2.

elements of both magenta (primarily) and black ink. Possibly the stamps were lined separately with black and magenta. Leonard Piskiewicz reports these early precancels in black pen and blue pencil lines.¹

Later in 1880 Chicago introduced (Figure 3, Piskiewicz PD-1) what collectors refer to as the "Chicago pearl" precancel. It was struck in what Mr. Piskiewicz terms a "light purple" ink, a term that I believe is apt since magenta may be said to have more red in it. This cancel is remarkably similar in design concept to the New York pearls precancel (Figure 4, Whitfield #4326) which the NYPO



Figure 3.



Figure 4.

began using a year earlier. Indeed, many years ago, according to Mr. Bower, there was a speculation that the Figure 3 cancel was a New York cancel with the large "C" representing the "central" New York post office. John Boker, who was a leading collector and student of U.S. postal history, with a particular interest in precancels, took a guarded view of the situation when he first encountered the Chicago pearl cancel. Writing about the New York pearls in the May 1946 *New York Journal of Precancels*, he made the following interesting comments:

"I have in my collection a 5¢ Brown with the precancellation in a purplish red ink. However, only the pearls show clearly, and the centre is too smudged to distinguish the "N" and the "Y." Therefore I hesitate to add this to the colors of ink used. A clearer impression may turn up later. This color should be very rare, since while the G.P.O. in New York (where the precancellation was used) employed both blue and black ink extensively for canceling during this period, red was rare."

As an aside, the ink color described by Mr. Boker seems more like what we might call magenta today. Perhaps there was some variation in the batches of ink involved.

The use of a light purple or magenta ink for the Chicago pearl is puzzling as it did a poor job of obliterating. Several examples are shown in Figure 5 that demonstrate the point. The



Figure 5.

cover in Figure 6 entered the mails on May 19, 1880. The due stamp bears portions of four Chicago pearl precancels. Sheets of stamps were presumably precanceled by a roller handstamp. A magenta "advertised" marking dated May 31 and magenta "unclaimed" dated July 6 appear on the front. A May 21 carrier marking and a July 6 Chicago postmark, both in magenta, appear on the back along with a black July 7 or 17, 1880 Dead Letter

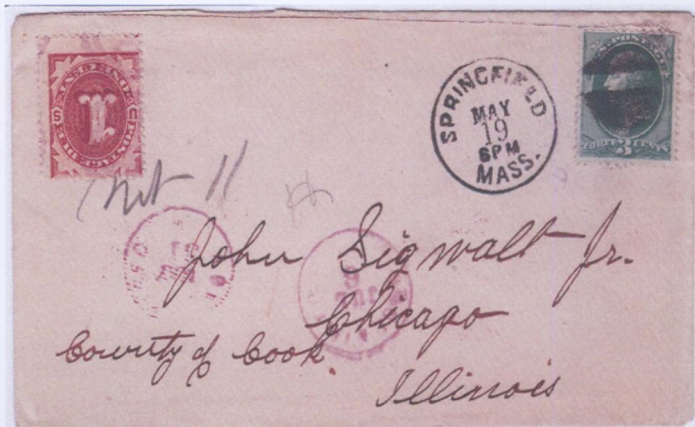


Figure 6.

Office (DLO) triangle marking. This all tells us that delivery in Chicago was attempted May 21 without success, the letter was advertised, held for a month but not called for, and on July 6 it was sent to the DLO. We can assume the DLO marking was July 7, given the Chicago July 6 date.

I believe the due stamp was added on or about May 31 in connection with the advertising. A better procedure, it seems, would be to wait to see that the letter was claimed before adding the due stamp. In other words, be sure that there is someone to pay the 1¢. In the case of Figure 6, there is no evidence that the letter was ever delivered. Mr Piszkiwicz reports Chicago pearl precancels from 10/10/80-11/21/80 with a question mark after the November year date. The Figure 6 cover pushes the usage period back to July. Incidentally, one example of the Chicago pearl has been reported in black ink by noted precancel collector Arnold Selengut.

In 1881 a new Chicago precancel design emerged (Figure 7, Piszkiwicz PD-2), first in what Piszkiwicz terms purple and then in black ink. Based admittedly on only a few examples seen, I would disagree slightly with Mr. Piszkiwicz in that they generally seem to be struck in magenta with the greater presence of red. He reports purple cancels from 3/14/81-6/11/81 and black from 10/29/81-9/5/82.



Figure 7.



Figure 8.

Two colored ink examples are shown in Figure 8. The cover in Figure 9 entered the mails at the Chicago West Division ("W.D." in postmark) station on May 12. At the main Chicago post office the "due 2" and the J2 stamp with Figure 7 cancel were added to the double weight letter. Readers will note that the cancel strike on the due stamp is poor, much like those of the typical Chicago pearl. There is no direct evidence of a year date but from the Piszkiwicz listing we can surmise 1881.

Probably it was the poor obliteration problem that caused the Chicago post office to switch to black ink while still using the



Figure 9.



Figure 10.

Figure 7 cancel. Several examples are shown in Figure 10. The cover in Figure 11 is quite interesting. It was sent from Leeds, England to Peoria, Illinois on 10/6/81. It was short paid 3¢ and, with the deficiency doubled, six cents was due on delivery. The three 2¢ due stamps (with concentric circles cancels) were added at



Figure 11.

Peoria. The cover was forwarded to Chicago where it was advertised (magenta marking next to bottom left stamp) on October 29, 1881. This caused the 1¢ due stamp with the Figure 7 cancels to be added. The letter was unclaimed and sent to the DLO where it was received in December 1881 according to the DLO triangle on the back. (The day slug in the marking is unreadable.) What is a latest reported use is shown in Figure 12. Was the distorted appearance of the cancel due to wear over time on the roller, heavy inking, or degradation caused by using black printers ink on a rubber-faced canceler?

Next up for Chicago was a simple large "C" – see Figure 13 (Piszkiwicz PD-3). Mr Piszkiwicz reports usages from 10/17/82-



Figure 12.



Figure 13.

12/3/82. It is a very scarce cancel in my experience. Arnold Selengut reports only four covers known to him. The present article is the first to report the cancel on a 1¢ due stamp.



Figure 14.

At some time in the late 1882 or early 1883, Chicago began using a succession of roller precancels consisting of multiple bars or lines. The first consisted of thick bars about 4 mm wide. The short paid cover in Figure 14 entered the mails at Macedon, New York on May 10 and was received in Chicago on May 11. The J3 is canceled by the thick bars precancel. Mr. Bower considered this to be a 3-bar cancel but there is what appears to be part of a fourth bar at the bottom. It may show a lighter strike and was perhaps part of a second roller application on the stamp sheet. Figure 15 shows an off-cover J1 canceled by what is assumed to be the Chicago thick bars cancel as it was started on the sheet. Notice the straight edge at right of the stamp which indicates, of course, the edge of the sheet. It appears that the roller face degraded over time so that the bars became indistinct. Figure 16 illustrates two examples, May and October 1884. The 1886 cover in Figure 17 shows virtually no evidence



Figure 15.



Figure 17.

of any bars but rather random splotches of ink. Mr. Piskiewicz reported the heavy bar cancels from 5/10/83-12/22/88 so perhaps the problem had to do with poor inking as well as some canceler degradation.



Figure 18.

Precancels consisting of multiple wavy lines appeared while the thick bar cancels were still in use and then replaced them. Several off-cover examples are presented in Figure 18. They are found applied both vertically and horizontally on the stamps and often overlap one another so the spacing between the bars is sometimes confusing. They seem to show variety in number of bars and the slope of the wave. The lines vary from crisp to thick and smudgy. A cover dated 1889 is shown in Figure 19. The 1892 cover in Figure 20 shows an ambiguous cancel that is not even clearly a wavy line cancel. Figure 21 shows an interesting 1893 cover sent to a person at the World's Fair in Chicago. The 1¢ due stamp shows nothing more than minor splotches of ink as in Figure 17. The 10¢



Figure 16.

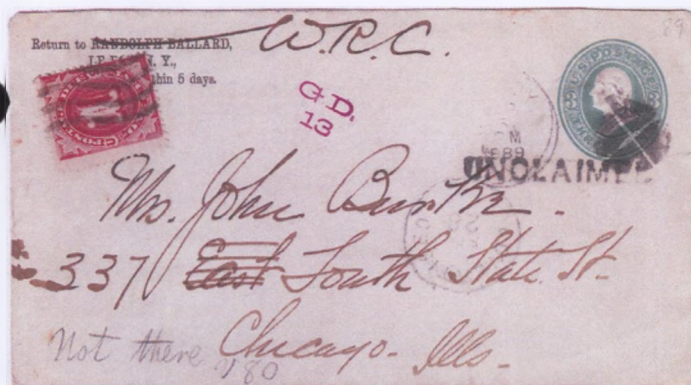


Figure 19.



Figure 20.



Figure 21.
stamp bears heavier splotches.

Mr. Bower reported that in 1894 a blue crayon ruled line replaced the wavy line precancels and he presented the March 29, 1894 cover in Figure 22 which shows a faint blue line that may be hard to see toward the top of the stamp. He also reported uses of the blue crayon free hand line over the wavy line precanceled stamps. This was apparently done to improve the cancellation of stamps with poor precancels. Figure 23 illustrates an example. It is interesting to note that Mr. Piskiewicz illustrates an early 1898 cover with a strong impression of the wavy line bars on a Bureau postage due stamp. Perhaps a new wavy line precancel roller was ordered at



Figure 22.
some point after the Bureau postage due stamps appeared in mid-1894.

Readers are urged to report covers in their collections bearing large numeral due stamps affixed in Chicago. There is much more to be learned, especially in regard to dates of use of various cancels.



Figure 23.

Endnotes

- 1 Piskiewicz, Leonard *Chicago Postal Markings and Postal History*, James E. Lee Publishing, Cary, IL (2006), pp. 429-33.

Boston Ellipse

The August *NEWS* discussed a scarce set of Boston ellipses comprised of four heavy vertical bars with a number in the middle. We illustrated the only two examples we had encountered that had a "12" in the center



Figure 1.

and noted that they were both on official stamps. Not much significance should be placed on this observation, we can now report. Two examples from the collection of John Donnes on the regular 3¢ green stamps are shown in Figure 1. Additional reports of cancels from this set are still eagerly sought.

Cancel Interpretation

In the May 2008 *NEWS*, the cancel shown in Figure 1 was illustrated with the question as to what it represented. Clearly something appears to have been intended. Gil Levere wrote to say that what came to mind when he saw it was a well with canopy. He recalled a well on a farm owned by an aunt and uncle he visited many years ago that looked fairly similar. I think this is a very plausible interpretation. Maybe we'll need a new pictorial category beyond anchors, animals, arrows, barrels, birds, boots and on and on to now include wells! Anyone have an old photograph of a well with canopy above it?



Official Machine Cancels

by Roger D. Curran

Looking over the evolution of 19th century U.S. cancellation practices, I would say that the two most significant advances were the introduction of (1) handstamps that duplexed a canceler to a postmarker and (2) canceling machines. There were, of course, other innovations that had great impact such as the advent of "standardized" cancels involving ellipse and concentric circles cancels with a number or letter in the center and the introduction for rubber-faced handstamps. But duplexes and machines produced the most fundamental and ultimately widespread change.

In this article we take up the subject of machine cancels as they appeared on official stamps. Official stamps in the 19th century were current from July 1873 to July 1884, but the vast majority were used during the 1873-1877 period with sharp decline thereafter. It wasn't until December 1884 that the first successful continuous use of a canceling machine on letter mail began. Efforts prior to that date were experimental and very limited. Students report only three attempts during the above-mentioned era of official stamps. One experiment, conducted briefly in at least five post offices, involved what collectors refer to as the Palmer and Clark machine. A tracing of a typical strike, courtesy of John Donnes, is shown in Figure 1. In the March 2006 issue of *Excelsior!*, the

journal of the Empire State Postal History Society, Lawrence Laliberte reported a census of 29 covers (plus one piece added

by the editor) bearing Palmer and Clark cancels ranging from 9/30/76-3/27/77. An undated April 23 example is assumed to be 1877. Most of the covers apparently cannot be year dated but, when reviewing the whole census, what appears to be a clear pattern emerges of usages of one machine as it was employed successively in the five post offices. (The one exception is a brief trial in Baltimore during a period of use in Washington, DC.) Two of Mr. Laliberte's Washington listings involve official stamps.



Figure 1.

At least two and probably more off-cover official stamps are known to bear Palmer and Clark cancels. The 7¢ War Department stamp in Figure 2 shows enough of the CDS to establish a November 22 Washington, DC usage. One of the nine Washington covers listed by Mr. Laliberte is a November 22 usage.



Figure 3.

Incidentally, there are undoubtedly some unrecognized Palmer and Clark cancels on off-cover stamps lurking in collections as they would not necessarily be easy to identify. Figure 3 is an example that one



Figure 2.

might assume to be just a large grid cancel. A tip for identification is that the bars of the grid normally have a somewhat grainy quality.



Figure 4.

Recently the 6¢ Navy stamp shown here as Figure 4 was offered on the website of dealer John Valenti. It bears, as John noted, a rare machine cancel. A truly pioneering machine cancel, it is considered the first experimental machine cancel used for any duration by Thomas Leavitt on the road to developing a machine that successfully canceled postal cards but, unfortunately, not letter mail. This particular cancel, referred to as Type A-1 by collectors, has been reported from 1/6/76 to 6/8/76.¹ A tracing of this cancel type is shown as Figure 5.² The only other canceling machine tested



Figure 5.

during the 1873-1877 period is one attributed to Frederick R. Myers. It was used briefly in the New York Post Office in 1876 and cancels resulting therefrom are very rare.³ (See page 72 of the February 2007 *NEWS*.)

As far as I know, no examples of Myers cancels are known on official stamps and Figure 4 illustrates the only official stamp identified with a Leavitt cancel. The available evidence strongly indicates that there was no overlap between uses of the Leavitt Type A-1 cancel and Palmer and Clark cancels; i.e., the Leavitt A-1 was discontinued before the appearance of Palmer and Clark cancels. I believe we can thus say that the Figure 4 cancel, even though we don't know its exact date of use, bears now the earliest reported use of a machine cancel on an official stamp. Comment is invited.

It is certainly unfortunate that the Figures 2 and 4 stamps are no longer on their original covers. The 7¢ denomination of the Figure 2 stamp implies foreign mail which would be very nice. A 6¢ stamp with a Leavitt A-1 cancel is, as John Valenti noted, a rarity in and of itself. Collectors see 3¢ stamps and 3¢ PSEs and a few postal cards. One cent stamps and PSEs are less available and 2¢ stamps (Figure 6) and 2¢ PSEs are probably very rare. Figure 4 may represent, indeed, the first report on a 6¢ stamp. One assumes it franked a double rate letter but who can say. All Leavitt A-1s are considered "rare" in Hanmer.⁴



Figure 6.

Brief articles on Palmer and Clark cancels appeared in the August 2007 and February 2003 issues of the *NEWS*.

Endnotes

- 1 Payne, Robert J. *Thomas Leavitt His History and Postal Markings 1875-1892*, United Postal Stationery Society

- (1999), pp. 71, 81.
- 2 Stratton, Frank B. *Descriptive Catalog of the Leavitt Machine Cancellations*, United Postal Stationary Society (1985), p. 4.
 - 3 Hanmer, Russell F. *A Collectors Guide to U.S. Machine Postmarks, 1871-1925*, David G. Phillips Publishing Co. (1989), p. 135.
 - 4 Ibid., p. 127.

“Gin” Barrels



In the excitement of getting out the “new look” August *NEWS*, an error slipped through regarding one of the illustrations. The three “gin” barrel tracings in Figure 2 on page 36 were inadvertently run upside down, which undoubtedly made the accompanying text harder to follow. A correct illustration is presented above. Paul Berg made a very interesting observation about whether this high profile fancy cancel really is a “gin” barrel.

NYFM Colors

by Roger D. Curran

The Cancellation Gallery presentation in the August *NEWS* brought forth a most interesting observation about the middle stamp in the top row, page 35. Victor Kuil, USCC member from The Netherlands and enthusiastic student of NYFM cancellations, pointed out that the cancel on this stamp, listed as GE-EP11 by Bill Weiss in his 1990 book *The Foreign Mail Cancellations of New York City 1870-1878*, is the only NYFM cancel reported *just* in red ink. And here we now have a strike in black! I suppose there may be some debate about whether it truly is a GE-EP11 but, considering its presence on a 7¢ stamp, the overall design similarities to GE-EP11, and how various factors (inking, pressure, etc.) can affect the appearance of individual strikes, it seems to me that this cancel is almost certainly GE-EP11. Comment is invited.

The matter of NYFM ink colors brings to mind the reports of NYFMs in brown ink. Black is by far the most common NYFM ink, of course, but numerous examples are seen in red and these are basically associated with supplementary mail service. In discussing a particular NYFM cancel, GE-S2, Bill made the following general comments on page 28:

“I personally have never seen a true brown NYFM, and all those I have seen which resemble brown are, in my opinion, only a variant shade of black caused by some brown

ink on the pad. Students I respect have told me they own brown NYFMs, so perhaps there were brown cancels!”

I have looked through Bill’s book for other references to brown ink NYFMs and, while I may have missed some, the only one that I found dealt with TR-C7, the well known “flying clothespins” cancel. He lists two on-cover examples in brown, one dated 3/13/72 and the other 4/4/72. One example is illustrated on page 295 and the caption states “. . . The cancel in the so-called ‘brown’ ink which, in my opinion, is not a true brown but a mixture of brown and black.” Bill lists on page 105 GE-EP2 in claret and brown-red.

The standard reference book on NYFMs, before the appearance of the Weiss book, was *New York Foreign Mail Cancellations* by Van Vlissingen and Waud, published in 1968. On page 66, they commented on NYFM ink colors, other than black and red, as follows:

“The claret and claret brown shades are next most plentiful; this color is distinctive, with a bluish tinge suggesting that perhaps it resulted from converting a formerly blue pad by re-inking it with ordinary red. Many of the browns when examined with a low-power magnifying glass turn out to be a mixture of red and black flecks which were almost surely made by the first few strikes after a canceling device was shifted to use with red ink after long use with black. A very few strikes show a homogenous brown ink which clearly was not made by accident.”

Using the Weiss classification system, they identified eight NYFM cancellations as occurring in a true brown: ST-8P10, ST-8P5, TR-W8, GE-EN4, GE-EN5, GE-S2, RE-LF3 and TR-C7. They list 13 cancels in claret or claret brown.

Figure 1 illustrates two cancels that, to my eyes, are in the homogenous brown mentioned by Van Vlissingen and Waud. The stamp on the left is the “flying clothespins” cancel. The stamp on the right is GE-EN2 which is not one of the eight listed brown cancels.



Figure 1.

I am familiar with no use of brown ink on domestic NYPO cancels of the period. The closest that I recall is a late 1870s ellipse in what was termed a “dead leaf” brown, a lighter and not so rich a color as that in Figure 1. This color was, I believe, a consequence of a degradation of black ink presumably due to exposure to atmospheric elements or to a poor composition of elements making up the ink.

I know that the USCC has, among its members, some

serious NYFM students and collectors. Perhaps there have been some studies specifically on unusual NYFM ink colors. If so, it would be very interesting to learn of them. And, beyond that, readers are encouraged to report examples in brown or other odd NYFM inks.

More on "Held for Postage"

Charles Wood reports the cover shown here as Figure 1 in response to the "Held for Postage" article that appeared in the November 2007 NEWS. The cancellation on the stamp is the "Held for Postage" marking illustrated as Figure 1 in the November article. The ink used in the cancel and postmark in Figure 1 is blue and it is interesting to note that the ink on the



Figure 1.

off-cover 3c 65 stamp illustrated as Figure 3 in November is also blue. Considering that examples of this marking as a canceler of postage stamps are decidedly scarce and given that both strikes are on the same stamp issue, it seems likely that the off-cover stamp was also canceled by the Hillsdale, Michigan post office.

Charles, incidentally, is editor of the *Peninsular Philatelist*, the quarterly journal of Michigan's postal history society. Inquiries about membership in the Peninsular State Philatelic Society may be directed to Edward F. Fisher, Society secretary at 1033 Putney, Birmingham, MI 48009-5688.

Peter W.W. Powell submits a "Held for Postage" (Figure 2) used in the Confederacy. Such



Figure 2.

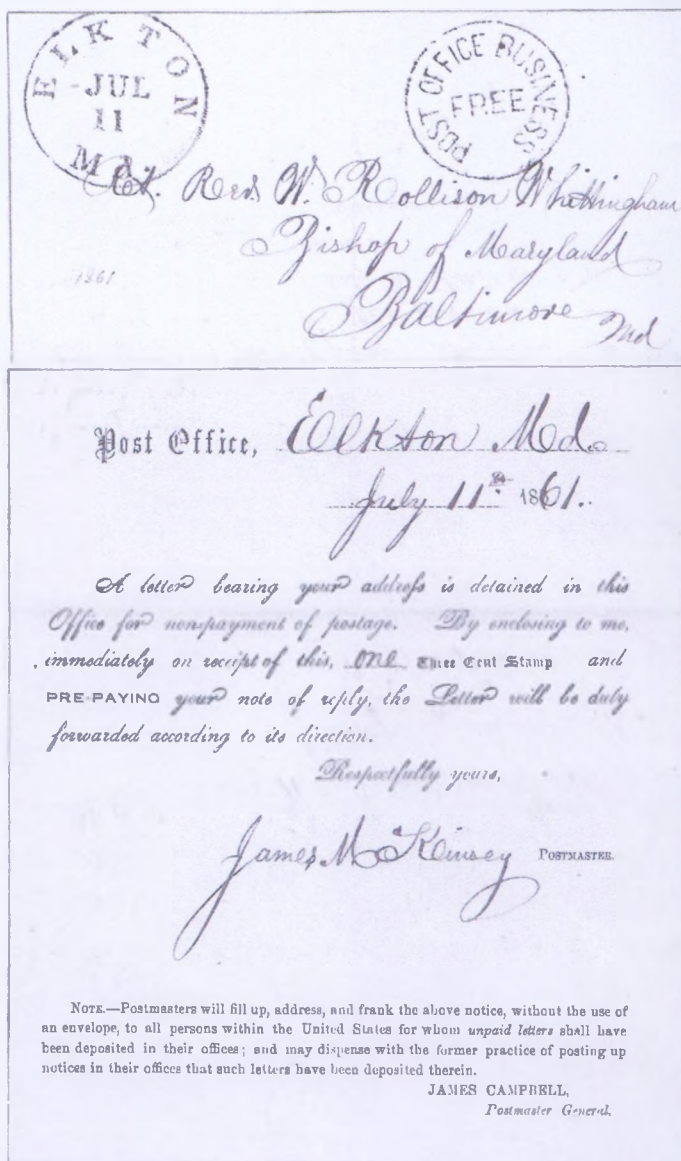


Figure 3.

SEC. 89. The act of March 3, 1855, making no provision for unpaid letters to places within the United States—on the same or day following any such unpaid letter or letters being put into a post office, the postmaster thereof will give notice, upon blanks furnished by the Post Office Department, to all persons within the United States for whom such letters shall have been deposited in their offices; and if not attended to in one month, they will return such letters to the Dead Letter Office.

Figure 4.

markings are very scarce and known only from Richmond, Va. with one example from Norfolk, Va. He notes that the addressee is Alexander H. Stephens, Confederacy Vice President. Perhaps it was assumed that Stephens could receive mail free of postage.

Peter also notes a class of markings ("FREE" in various forms) used on mail to the addressees of "Held for Postage" mail and he submits a very nice folded letter (Figure 3). The pertinent section of the 1857 U.S. postal regulations, as presented in the 1980 Theron Wirenga reprint of the PL&R of 1857 appears as Figure 4. There were, of course, many categories of free mail and these varied somewhat from time to time. The above is but one example of Federal government mail entitled to transmission free of postage.

Cancels on Sc 210

by Roger D. Curran

In the May 2007 and 2008 issues of the *NEWS* we discussed a cancel from Northampton, Mass. that had been reported in the literature as a "swan." During its period of use, this cancel underwent a metamorphosis from what is now known as a "dragon" cancel to the swan. Whether the change was due to some canceler breakup or to further carving is uncertain.

It is interesting to note that this particular "swan" is not the only swan reported from Northampton on Sc 210 stamps. Cole lists the other design (Figure 1) as Bi-27. The 1951 Herst-Zareski book *U.S. 19th Century Fancy Cancellations* illustrates (Figure 2) what is likely the Cole cancel but without attribution. Herst-Zareski reported it on Sc 210 and termed it a "duck." I'm quite



Figure 2.

sure the Figure 3 cancel is the same as Figure 2. The shading on the neck and head on Figures 2 and 3 is essentially identical. (Incidentally, it is not clear that the dark area in the center of Figure 3 is part of the design. It may well be just a blob of ink that was somehow deposited on the stamp.) The Figure 1 cancel is a bit smaller than Figure 2 but perhaps the Figure 1 tracing is reduced in size. Jim Cole did make some tracings from auction catalogs and reference sources and these, of course, do not always present full size illustrations. I would be interested in seeing other "swan 2" cancels from readers' collections and in establishing some dates of use.



Figure 1.



Figure 3.



Figure 4.

Figure 4 shows two strikes of a cancel that I have not found in the literature. The tracing, showing what purports to be the full design, accompanied one of the stamps. I suppose it is a

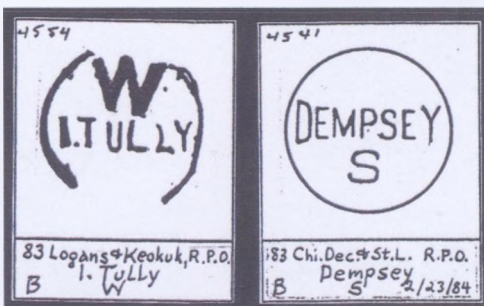


Figure 5.

coincidence, but it is remarkable how similarly placed the strikes are on the two stamps. Was this the result of very careful work by clerk Sayles, if that in fact was his name? This design type is well known to cancellation collectors and is associated with Railway Post Office cancels wherein the name of the clerk and the direction of the train are shown. Two examples from Whitfield are presented in Figure 5. Who can identify the rail line for the Figure 4 cancel or report other examples?

Unusual Concentric Circles Cancel

The Sc 65 stamp with a "split" concentric circles cancel, illustrated here as Figure 1, was presented in the May 2002 *NEWS* with an appeal for information as to the post office of origin. The cancel measures about 19mm. in diameter and consists of six rings. It is not listed in Skinner-Eno or Whitfield. Since 2002, three covers bearing this cancel have come to the attention of the *NEWS* and they establish Washington, D.C. as the origin. Two are shown in Figure 2. The Figure 1 cancel is very sharp. Those on the Figure 2 covers are not as well struck but examination reveals that they are the same six ring split cancel. Two of the three covers are dated August 6, 1862 and the third August 12, 1862. The cancel is apparently very scarce. It is obviously unduplexed and came into use at a time when Washington was finally discontinuing use of the CDS as a canceler, notwithstanding the fact that this had been disallowed by the Post Office Department since July 1860. The interesting evolution of Washington, D.C. cancels from 1847 to 1863 was discussed in the Summer 1997 *NEWS*.



Figure 1.



Figure 2.

Boston Negative

by Roger D. Curran

A wonderful cancel listed in Blake and Davis is shown here as Figure 1.¹ The only information that the authors provided about it is that the cancel appeared on a "2c 75" stamp. Up



Figure 2.

I suspect the block was used on a package as there was apparently considerable additional postage affixed. Who can report further examples?

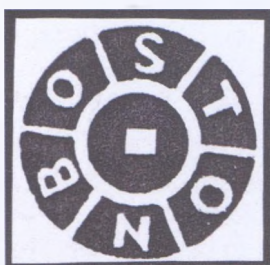


Figure 1.

until recently, the only example I had ever seen was that on the Figure 2 stamp. Charles Collins has now submitted the remarkable block (Figure 3) bearing one socked-on-the-nose strike and two partial strikes.



Figure 3.

Endnotes

- 1 Blake, Maurice C. and Davis, Wilbur W. *Boston Postmarks to 1890*, (1949), Quarterman reprint (1974), p. 291.

Thoroughly Handstamped

One occasionally sees a cover with a mishmash of postal markings where it appears the postmaster was trying out some newly received handstamps. Figure 1 gives that impression, at least initially. As the television pitchman says "But wait, there's more!" The Figure 2 cover shows even one additional marking – a "missent" in black.

What gives with all this handstamping, especially for covers only sent at the 1¢ rate? Actually, nothing outside established routine, but the process was nicely documented. The Figure 1 cover was sent from Kingston, NY and received in

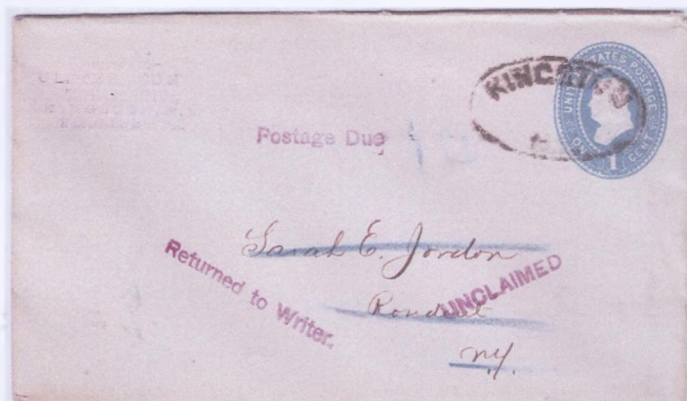


Figure 1.

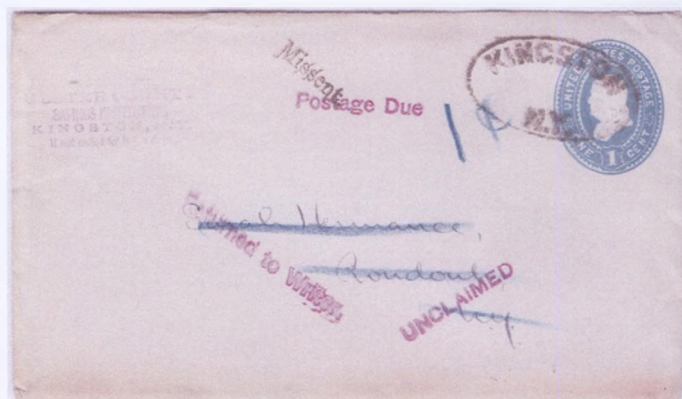


Figure 2.

Rondout, NY on January 21. It was unclaimed at the Rondout post office whereupon it was returned to the Ulster County Savings Institution in Kingston. Unclaimed third class mail such as this would be returned to the sender if so requested but, unlike first class mail, the sender was required to pay for it. The top line of the corner card specifically states "Return to" and the bottom line "If not called for in ten days." A postage due charge of 1¢ was noted for this service.

The Figure 2 cover, perhaps from the same mailing of circulars, was similarly handled but with one additional complication – it was initially missent to Hurley, NY where it was received on January 26, 1902 according to a backstamp. The "missent" was added at Hurley and the cover sent on to Rondout where it was received on January 27 at 5PM according to another backstamp. Rondout is a DPO that operated from 1832-1895 in Ulster Co. Kingston and Hurley are both Ulster Co. post offices.

Odd Cancels

There are many odd cancels to be found on 19th century U.S. stamps. Three are presented herewith. The cancel in Figure 1 involves a very common design – elliptical shape with horizontal bars – but it is decidedly unusual. It has a primitive,



Figure 1.



Figure 2.

handmade quality with the spaces between the bars varying in size and direction. One can only speculate about its origin. Was a piece of wood in this elliptical shape, designed for some other purpose, converted to a canceler by carving spaces to create bars? Was the hole in the middle originally there, perhaps to permit a rod to slide through, or was it added so that a screw or nail could be inserted to affix the canceler to the handstamp base? If the latter, and the nail or screw head didn't sit above the canceler surface as appears to be the case, would it actually hold the canceler in place? Reader comment is invited.

The Figure 2 cancel brings together two cancel designs from two different eras – circle of wedges from the hand-carved era and the “standardized” ellipse design that came into prominence in the mid-1870s. This particular cancel was probably produced by a rubber-faced canceler. In a similar vein, the “target” cancel Figure 3, in Figure 3, submitted by Bob Grosch, shows a small cross-roads in the center.



Finally, we come to a cancel (Figure 4) that gives the appearance of what collectors often consider to be a patent cancel, since cancels with small dots are sometimes seen that puncture the stamp surface. As stated before in these pages, we believe such cancels are sometimes erroneously interpreted as patent cancels because it is hard to know if punctures were intended or just the “innocent” byproduct of using a canceler that applies dots. The Figure 4 cancel shows no perceptible indentations and we'll not call it a patent cancel.



Figure 4.

Thanks to John Donnes for tracings in this article. John also pointed out that the Figure 4 cancel is reported by Whitfield (#2312) on 1890 issue stamps from Pella, Iowa. This strongly implies that it was offered commercially to postmasters. Who can report other post offices that used it?

Registry Marking Used as a Cancel

One could develop a varied and sizable collection of registry markings pressed into service as cancelers of stamps. Many years ago Gilbert Burr illustrated the cancel shown here as Figure 1 in a discussion of registry cancels. He said this about it:

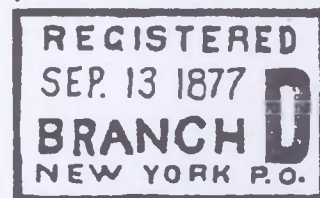


Figure 1.

“The square registered cancel next shown is one of the unusual ones. I have never seen but the one copy of this type which was used on a 3¢ green and 10¢ brown of the Bank Notes.”¹

Mr. Burr was referring to one strike that canceled both a 3¢ stamp and 10¢ stamp. Figure 2 shows three examples. No question



Figure 2.

about the “D” on the 10¢ and 15¢, but on the 6¢ all we can see is the straight back which could be a portion of several other NYPO branch station letters. Your editor assumes the practice of using this marking as a canceler was not limited to Branch D. Readers are encouraged to check their collections and report examples – from Branch D or others – to the *NEWS*.

Endnotes

- 1 Burr, Gilbert M. “Standardized Hand Stamp Cancellations on the Bank Note Issues,” *The American Philatelist*, March 1936, p. 293.

Late “Morrison” Cancel

The May 2006 *NEWS* briefly discussed the cancels carved by railway mail clerk Andrew J. Morrison who worked a 94 mile line from Rutland, VT to Troy, NY from 1869 to 1904. A late example, dated April 6, 1899, submitted by Michael Horan, was featured along with an even later strike, dated October 23, 1899 of a different design. Recently a 1900 “Morrison” strike (Figure 1) came to our attention. Thanks to John Donnes for the excellent tracing. The Figure 1 cancellation must have been one of the last hand-carved “Morrison” markings because, beginning in 1901, MacDonald and Towle list Rutland and Troy CDS



Figure 1.



Figure 2.

designs with "RMS killer" which, your editor assumes, was of the type illustrated in Figure 2.¹

The *NEWS* would welcome copies of clear strikes of "Morrison" cancels from readers' collections.

Endnotes

- 1 MacDonald, Fred and Towle, Charles L. *The United States Railway Post Office Postmark Catalog 1864 to 1977*, Volume 3 (ca. 1995) Mobile Post Office Society, Inc., p. 784.

More on Loon Lake, NY

The February 2008 *NEWS* carried an article on an incorrect postmark used at the time of a change in name of a New York post office from Merrillville to Loon Lake on February 16, 1882. The postmark in question, dated March 11, 1882, reads "Loon Lake House," no doubt because of the presence of a large hotel located there (in the "Adirondack Wilderness") by that name. The article opined that the error surely would have been noted at some point and corrected. John Donnes submits the cover illustrated here as Figure 1 that provides a wonderful followup, showing the same basic corner card and the same addressee. Sent three months later than the cover reported in February, it makes two pertinent changes. First, the name of the post office and of the town or community is changed



Figure 1.

to reflect the official Post Office Department designation of "Loon Lake." Second, it shows that the postmaster ordered a new and now correct postmarker. And of interest to cancellation collectors, the postmarker was duplexed to an attractive "POD" monogram canceler that was used by a number of smaller post offices. John describes the ink color as a rather dark blue and notes a report in Cole (p. 226) of this cancel from Loon Lake some six years later on September 7, 1888. This "POD" monogram was apparently used almost exclusively in the 1880s although Cole has one listing on the 1890 issue and Salkind illustrates a nice strike on an off-cover Sc 220.¹ Who can show an on-cover example in the 1890s? From the dates listed in Cole, it appears unlikely that examples from the 1870s exist.

Endnotes

- 1 Salkind, Sol *U.S. Cancellations 1890-1900* (1985) p. 114.

Chicago Oval

The oval cancel in Figure 1 provides a sharp impression, especially in terms of the ornamentation in the middle. Thanks to



Figure 1.

John Donnes for the tracing and for pointing out a similar cancel (Figure 2, Piskiewicz C-12).¹ It is assumed that these cancels originated at the main Chicago post office as no station abbreviation is present. It is always nice to see some attention given to aesthetics in the design of third and fourth class cancels since they are so often very humdrum.



Figure 2.

Endnotes

- 1 Piskiewicz, Leonard *Chicago Postal Markings and Postal History*, James E. Lee Publishing, Cary, IL (2006), p. 166.

WANTED

New York Ellipses



Years 1876-1889 - Covers, Postal Cards
& Postal Stationery -- NEEDED for STUDY

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