

U.S. Cancellation Club **NEWS**

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Odd New York Double Oval

The November 2009 *NEWS* carried an article about an odd and very scarce New York double oval. It is seen in a brownish color. Two on-cover examples had been reported at that point – the example dated 3/24/80, illustrated in the article, canceling a 3¢ green and a second strike canceling a 1¢ Banknote on a circular cover dated March 16. Since then, two more covers have come to light, the cover presented here as Figure 1, recently



Figure 1.

acquired by John Donnes and dated 3/19/80, and the 1¢ circular cover in Figure 2. Both of these covers show detail in the marking that wasn't visible on the cover in the earlier article. The Figure 2 strike shows a "2" after "York" and the design thus includes both a "2" and a "3" (see the "3" just before "New"). What the significance is, if any, of these two numbers is an interesting question.

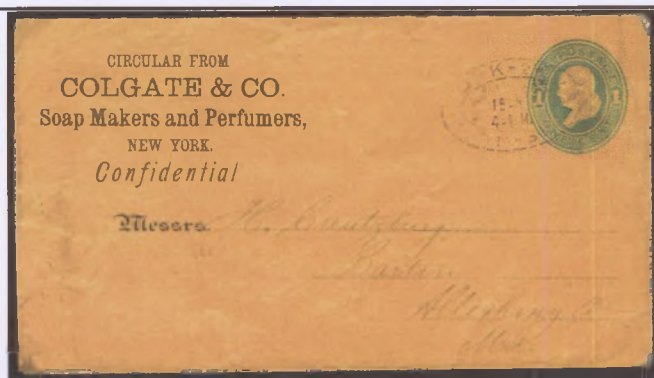


Figure 2.

It has been speculated that this double oval was applied by use of a stencil, no doubt due to the segmented oval lines and the segmented vertical lines on either side of the date. However, this seems unlikely. Some of the letters and numbers, for example – “P”, “O”, “8”, and “0” - have inner spaces that cannot be formed with continuous lines in a stencil because these inner sections would fall out of the stencils. It is necessary in a stencil to make the line enclosing the center sections discontinuous as illustrated in Figure 3. This illustration is taken from the introductory section (Fall 1882 *NEWS*) of an excellent series of articles by Frank Mandel on stenciled postmarks and other postal markings. Frank also pointed out that stencil markings do not normally show any indentations on the paper and the Figure 1 double oval shows distinct indentations.

The November 2009 article raised the question about whether the marking was caused by scorching (after the handstamp heated) or was applied in ink that was either brownish in color or that, over time, had degraded to brown from what had presumably been black. In this regard, the June 2009 Heritage Auction Galleries sale contained the Harvey Tilles collection of material pertaining to the prevention of postal fraud and deceit. It shows various means of attempting to defraud postal authorities and methods used by such authorities to prevent these occurrences. Lot 32032 consisted of the “sheet” shown here as Figure 4 with description as follows:

“Branding Iron Cancellers. A.S. Gear of New York City, a manufacturer of wood and iron working machinery, proposed the use of branding iron cancellers in 1880. This sample sheet, with ‘brands’ from three different canceling devices, is unique.”



Figure 4.

The three devices are the postmark-like circle with "P.O." in the center, the elaborate cross-roads cancel in the lower left corner and the circle of tiny wedges. The writing that appears below the "P.O." circle in the upper right corner states:

Ink on Stamp
This Paper Represents

The writing below the second row of "P.O." circles reads:

Patent Applied for
A.S. Gear
No 20 East 13th St. New York City

Although not mentioned in the lot description, it appears that the markings on this sample sheet are in a brownish color. Is there a connection between A.S. Gear and the double oval? Research on this question is being undertaken by John Donnes.

Thanks to Matthew Kewriga for assembling information on the four covers.

For Sale: Cancellations, 3 cent 1861. Please send \$3.00 for 3 color and 3 black and white photocopies. Abe Boyarsky, P.O. Box 570, La Mirada, CA 90637-0570

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.

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Thomaston & the Charter Oak

W.J. Duffney

Part of the enjoyment of philately is researching the historical background surrounding the items in our collections. Before turning to the Thomaston fancy cancellation, we review the story of the Charter Oak. It has been told and retold so many times over the years that fact has been mixed with fiction, legend has become myth. So, we always take it with a grain of salt. It is surprising, however, to find that many of the details thought questionable can be corroborated with memoirs or written statements of those who were there. Adding more hyperbole than is already present has been avoided, mostly...

Old it was — very old. Older than living memory. Post-humous ring counters estimated that it was over 700 years old. It ruled the landscape when Dutchman Adrian Block, the first European to travel up the Connecticut River, saw it in 1614. We know this because he wrote about it in his journal. The indigenous local tribes had been holding their council meetings under its protective canopy for generations. During times of seasonal flooding they secured their canoes conveniently to its branches. This great white oak was revered long before it became an iconic symbol of the American Revolution and the State of Connecticut itself.

Big it was, too — very big. You could say that it was humongous and actually be using the word properly this time. Massive, somehow gothic, gnarly limbs meandered out in all directions seemingly unaffected by Newton's Law of Gravity. The tree and branches measured about seventy feet across while the trunk was said to be 33 feet in circumference.

About 1638 George Wyllys, third Governor of Connecticut, built a mansion on a site which became known as Wyllys Hill. The stately home was the largest thus far built in the area. Wyllys fortunately spared one venerated oak from clearing during construction. The Suckiag Indians had pleaded him to do so; after all, it was their beloved ancestral *Peace Tree*. From this estate the Wyllys family helped govern the Colony and State of Connecticut for decades.

The English settlers of Windsor, Hartford, and Wethersfield wrote and adopted the *Fundamental Orders*, considered the first constitution in America, in 1639. The document established a government of freemen without mention of any outside sovereign power. The Connecticut Colony was therefore established without a properly authorized charter from the king. It was virtually operating as an independent state. Even so, it was decided to apply for a charter of liberties like the other colonies had from King Charles II.

John Winthrop, the first Governor of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, was the most ardent supporter of Charles I in New

England. His grandson John Winthrop, known as 'Winthrop the Younger' and was governor of Connecticut at the time, negotiated the charter. It was hoped that Charles II would treat him with kindness because of his family ties. The plan worked; the Connecticut Charter of 1662 granted very liberal rights and major concessions to home rule.

King James II, who succeeded Charles II, intensely disliked the New England colony charters and their lack of conformity. In 1686 Sir Edmund Andros was appointed "Captain General and Governor in Chief in and over the Colonies of Massachusetts Bay and New Plymouth, the Provinces of New Hampshire and Maine, and the Narragansett county or King's Province." James II wanted to consolidate control over the colonies by recalling the charters, so ordered Andros to confiscate them. Connecticut did not comply.

Andros, whom the colonists judged to be arrogant and tyrannical, took this affront badly and decided to travel to Connecticut himself to demand they turn over the Charter. He sent a letter announcing that he would be present to address the General Assembly in Hartford which met on October 26, 1687, at Moses Butler's Tavern on Main Street. He arrived in a procession intended to intimidate led by two blasting trumpeters and riding on a magnificent steel gray horse accompanied by a force of "twenty-five or thirty red coated soldiers with small guns and short lances in the tops of them." Some reported that there were as many as seventy troops with him. For their part the local Hartford militia took up positions along the route to keep an eye on the menacing redcoats.

Connecticut's then Governor Robert Treat, known to have been long-winded, presided over the afternoon meeting at the tavern. As the day wore on towards evening two seven-branched candelabra were lit to illuminate the room. When Sir Edmond finally got to address the assembly, he wasted no time in pointing out that he was the King's Governor of all New England and that they in turn were all subjects of the king. He demanded that they surrender the charter without further delay.

Failing to do so would be considered a treasonous act. It was threatened that the Connecticut Colony might be split up by adding half of it to Massachusetts and the other half to New York. The real possibility of a confrontation with firearms then and there charged the atmosphere.

Just prior to the meeting a copy of the Connecticut Charter was placed in a locked blanket chest and brought to the Wyllys mansion for safe keeping. (The British authorities seem not to have known that there were actually three copies.) Governor Treat, realizing the gravity of the situation, sent Captain Joseph Wadsworth to retrieve the charter. Meanwhile, the assemblymen began a raucous debate over whether or not to hand it over. Each stood making his arguments while the rest shouted out their support or dissatisfaction with the speaker from their seats.

At this point Captain Wadsworth returned with the chest which was opened by Governor Treat. Guilford's Andrew Leete sprang to his feet to rail against the return of the charter. The more he argued, the more animated the frail old man got. He was gesticulating wildly when he suddenly collapsed striking and knocking down both candelabra, plunging the tavern into darkness.

Seizing advantage of this moment of chaos, assemblyman Nathaniel Stanley grabbed the charter and passed it out a window to Captain Wadsworth who was standing there. Wadsworth ran it back to the Wyllys mansion as he recounted, "in less than ten minutes." He had little difficulty when he encountered the two trumpet players who were obviously drunken along his path. Ruth Wyllys was at home alone and she assumed that the house would be searched by the king's men at some point because they all knew it had been kept there previously. It was her idea to place the charter in the large hollow cavity of the stalwart great oak to keep it from Andros. Wadsworth wrapped the Connecticut Charter in his own coat and carefully hid it inside the tree. Andros never found the charter.

When order was restored back at Butler's Tavern Andros knew that he had been had. Without displaying any level of annoyance to the public, he turned coldly to what must have been his 'plan B'. He said that there was no reason to continue with the meeting and dictated the following which he insisted be included in the minutes:

His Excellency, Sir Edmund Andros, Knight, Captain General and Governor of His Majesty's Territories and Dominions in New England by order of His Majesty James the second King of England, Scotland, France and Ireland, the thirty-first of October, 1687, took into his hands the Government of this Colony of Connecticut, it being by His Majesty annexed to the Massachusetts and other Colonies under his Excellencies Government. — *Finis*.

The venom of that *Finis* still stings strongly today. With that entry he assumed control of the of the colony, governing it himself until 1688. Since the charter had never been officially nullified the colonists choose to resurrect it when Andros left. It stayed in force until it was replaced, long after the birth of the nation, by the Connecticut State Constitution in 1818.

That is not the end of the story, though it might be the beginning of our philatelic interest in it. The 'Charter Oak', as it came to be known, had attained legendary status and lived on much longer, only adding to its mystique.

Fast-forward 170 years. Imagine the great storm that occurred August 21, 1856, which caused the demise of the cherished oak. At ten minutes before one o'clock in the morning high winds brought it crashing to the ground amid crackling and rustling of its heavy foliage. A city watchman who was within two hundred feet of it said that it reeled "convulsively in the air" for a moment after the fall.

The people of Hartford went into mourning, giving their Charter Oak all of the respect and tribute usually bestowed upon a fallen martyr at his funeral. Many of those who gathered to view the tree that day began taking pieces of the wood and acorns as relics. An honor guard was set up partly to stop the blasphemous looting. At noon Samuel Colt's Armory Band played a dirge titled *Dead March in Saul*, then *Home Sweet Home*, and finally the patriotic *Hail Columbia* at the site. Two flags of the republic were draped over the trunk and stump. When sundown came bells all over the city tolled at the loss. The Hartford Courant ran the headline *The Charter Oak is Prostrate!* on a black bordered obituary. Thanks to the telegraph newspapers across the continent and England also carried the news.

State Senator Isaac W. Stuart was the owner of Wyllys Hill and had therefore been the caretaker of the Charter Oak since 1840. The politician was also a historian. One of his books, *Life of Captain Nathan Hale, the Martyr Spy of the American Revolution*, was published the year that the mighty oak fell. A local cabinet maker John H. Most helped Stuart during the careful dissecting and removal of the tree. Stuart gave him a goodly portion of the saintly wood remains, possibly for payment of services rendered.

The clamor for Charter Oak souvenirs increased exponentially from the very first day. Requests for pieces of the wood were received by Isaac Stuart from as far away as Texas, Mississippi, Minnesota, and California. It is estimated that Stuart sent out thousands of fragments himself, although this seems exaggerated. He famously donated a large block of the trunk to the State of Connecticut which was beautifully carved into an imposing high back ceremonial chair featuring an eagle, State coat of arms, oak leaves and acorns. The 'Charter Oak Chair' now takes pride of place in the State Senate Chamber. Artifacts of all sorts were fashioned, including earrings, bracelets, beads, and the infamous wooden nutmegs. Proliferation led provenance to be met with skepticism. We can imagine many Connecticut yankee peddlers traveling the countryside with ample inventory of Charter Oak items. Not all were actually authentic.

Exactly ten years after the fall the newspaper marked the event with a one paragraph notice which bemoaned the "...many frauds... practiced in the sale of the wood." Hartford's most illustrious resident, Mark Twain, later would quip that he had seen enough Charter Oak mementos, "...to build a plank road from here to Great Salt Lake City."

It was about the time of the tenth anniversary that the Thomaston, Connecticut, Post Office began using its Charter

Oak fancy cancellation. Whether this was intended to commemorate the anniversary is not known. Developing a cover census helps us to make a few observations. The fact that most of the examples are not "auction house quality" complicates the effort because we must rely upon the availability of private holdings.

The fancy cancel is always found in black ink on covers bearing Scott #65 accompanied by a 24mm THOMASTON/CONN. cds which is placed 5mm away at its nearest point. This strongly suggests that the handstamp was a duplex device. The fancy cancel itself measures 17.5mm high by 17mm wide. The earliest datelined record is of November 23, 1866, during the tenure of Postmaster Seth Thomas, Jr., son of the famous clock manufacturer. The postal marking continued to be used by his successor, George Wakeman. Only thirteen covers are currently recorded.

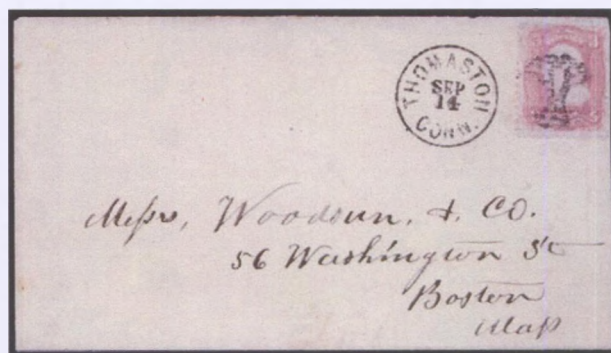
Looking at it objectively, the cancel is a bit rough. Very fine strikes are truly rare. The irregular boughs of the Charter Oak are difficult to represent, but there is a good attempt at showing the legendary hollow in the center. We can speculate that it might have been made by a clock case maker working in

resented in the Main Exhibition Building and the Connecticut Cottage by dozens of innovative manufacturers: Ansonia Brass and Copper, Collins Axes, Colt Firearms, P. & F. Corbin, Eagle Lock, Meriden Britannia, Northfield Knife, Pratt & Whitney, Scovill Manufacturing, Waterbury Button, Winchester Repeating Arms, etc... The list was very long and impressive. Thomaston's Seth Thomas Clock Company was responsible for making the Great Clock Tower in front of Machinery Hall, one of the main buildings of the exhibition. It was described as having "twenty dials in various sections, connected by electricity." The firm was awarded a patent for the first small bedside alarm clock that year.

John H. Most, mentioned previously, was rather busy making things from his allotment of Charter Oak wood to be displayed and sold at the Centennial. His handiwork was shown in the Main Exhibition Hall and the Connecticut Cottage. It included: a square piano veneered with Charter Oak wood, a child's cradle, five canes, four card cases, two wine goblets, a wooden imitation of an 8 lb. ham, a chess set which featured an outline of the tree, a lifelike wooden human hand formed naturally by the Charter Oak, and a picture frame made of Charter



September 17, 1867 Thomaston Charter Oak fancy cancel detail.



September 14, NYD Thomaston Charter Oak fancy cancel on #65 to Boston.

the Seth Thomas clock factory who certainly would have had necessary carving skills, or that it was simply bought as a curio from a passing peddler and used as a cancel. Perhaps it was Seth Thomas himself or John H. Most who crafted it. We will probably never be able to prove who carved the fancy cancel.

There is one detail worth mentioning: Parallel horizontal channels are clearly cut into the fancy cancel. This might have been a futile attempt at gathering ink to improve the strike; in fact, it only serves to weaken the strike. This engraving-like technique might have something in common with the Windsor Locks Steam Boat-in-Canal type II postmark which also has parallel channels, sometimes called 'shading lines'. The difference is that they are cut vertically on the Windsor Locks handstamp. Of course, if the cancel was made of wood or cork, we could be looking at the grain pattern. In all likelihood however, the grain would not have been as pronounced. The passage of time has made the unanswered questions unanswerable.

Just ten years on the United States Centennial Exhibition was held in Philadelphia in 1876. Connecticut was well rep-

Oak wood with an engraving of the tree which was hung over the Cottage mantelpiece. Since Connecticut already had a reputation for its wooden nutmegs, Most used the joke by offering modestly priced examples made from his oak. The curios were so popular with the crowds of people that he had difficulty keeping up with the demand.

The Connecticut Cottage was a popular meeting place for the 40,000 attendees who signed the guest book. Everything on display, historical or otherwise, was manufactured and/or donated by Connecticut citizens. People could send or receive mail at the branch post office which operated within the building. The cottage was comfortably appointed with chairs in which to sit and read Connecticut newspapers provided at no cost. The reception room had a beautiful antique fireplace and mantel. On one raw and rainy late autumn day a visitor was standing by the hearth talking advantage of the warmth when he turned to a nearby cottage guard and asked,

Is this a Charter Oak wood fire?

Editor's note. In discussing the Charter Oak cancel, Bill makes reference to the fine channels that are evident in the design and mentions that they are somewhat similar to those in the Type II Windsor Locks Boat-in-Canal marking, albeit horizontal rather than vertical in the Windsor Locks. An image of the Windsor Locks marking, supplied by Bill, is shown herewith.



Dear Reader,

The *US Cancellation Club News* has an index! There was a great need for this and, thanks to Club member Judson Sartain, it is now a reality. The index covers all issues from the first in 1951 through 2009. Annual updates are planned and Judson has agreed to prepare them, at least over the near term. In recent months he devoted countless hours to the project and has made a very important and high quality contribution to our common enterprise. Elsewhere in this issue are details about the index and ordering instructions. In recognition of Judson's outstanding work, the USCC Board of Directors presented to him, as a token of appreciation, a clock embellished with the USCC logo. From now to the end of 2010, and notwithstanding the published prices on the masthead, the Club is offering a 25% off sale on back issues of the *NEWS* as follows: 1951 through 1997 - \$1.50 each, and from 1998 through May 2008, \$2.25 each. An additional 5% discount will apply to orders over \$100. Also, it should be noted that the USCC Library has a full set of *NEWS* issues.

Included with this issue is a new one-on-one advisory service listing based on reader response to the request for volunteers sent out last fall. A hearty thank you to all 18 Club members who have agreed to offer consultation in their specialty areas. This list is subject to revision at any time (please advise on any errors) and I very much encourage additional readers to join in. Whether your area is one of those already listed or a new one, please contact the *NEWS* if willing to advise. If available for more than one area, as many of our advisors are, please list them all. And for Club members with questions in any of the areas identified, you are urged to take advantage of the assistance offered. There is a great deal of experience and knowledge represented in our list of advisors.

Officers of the USCC serve two year terms and it will be time for a new election in November. All clubs benefit from the variety of perspectives and fresh ideas that an intake of new officers can provide. The positions are listed on the masthead and if you would be willing to serve as an officer, *please* let me or one of the other officers know within the next month. The officers work as a board to oversee Club operations and new initiatives. This is accomplished primarily through occasional conference telephone calls.

The excellent article by Wendell Triplett in this issue about a "Liberty torch" cancel presents an aspect of cancellation collecting that we all encounter from time to time. For some

percentage of cancels that are not crystal clear, there will be debate about what the design is intended to be. This is as it should be. Differences of opinion are to be expected and in some cases absolute truth will never be known. I suspect the "Liberty torch" is one that will engender debate. Personally, I believe it entirely plausible and reasonable that the cancel is, in fact, the Liberty torch but it is a judgment call. Comment is invited.

Finally, there is a very informative article in the May-June 2010 *Collectors Club Philatelist* by Vernon R. Morris, Jr., M.D. entitled "The Earliest Fancy Cancel in America." It involves a cancellation by the private American Letter Mail Company (ALMC) in 1844 on adhesives issued by that company. This small cancel, applied in red ink, has what Morris describes as a "Floral" design. He reports two covers, one dated 2/14/44 and the other 2/10/44, both incoming to New York, one from Philadelphia and the other from Boston. Morris stated his belief that these cancels were "receiving marks" applied by the ALMC office in New York. Very shortly thereafter, as early as 2/21/44 according to Morris, the ALMC in New York began using a "circle of stars" that had previously been suggested as the earliest fancy cancel. The Summer 2000 *NEWS* includes an article on this subject. Dr. Morris now reports what is apparently an earlier cancel which is most interesting, indeed.

Roger Curran

Boston and More

by Roger D. Curran

Dan Haskett sends several interesting cancels, most of which are from Boston. Figure 1 illustrates an unusual postmark. The full duplex marking, as reported by Blake and Davis, is shown as Figure 2.¹ Dan points out that there is no state indication which would seem to violate the basic POD requirement (ignored by NYPO) that first class postmarks are to show both post office and state. While



Figure 1.

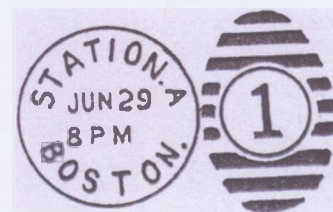


Figure 2.

it certainly appears to be a first class postmark, it probably wasn't that. Two rather similar Station A postmarks illustrated in Blake and Davis are noted as received markings and this was probably the intention in designing the Figure 1 postmark. However, why there would be a killer duplexed to a received marking is a good question. One of the two similar Station A postmarks was also apparently duplexed to a killer, albeit a small one. From the information in Blake and Davis, I gather the Figure 2 duplex was, in fact, used on first class mail.² Obviously the Figure 1 usage was not as a received marking and was likely on a piece of first class



Figure 3.

mail. Given the placement of the postmark on the stamp, it would appear that there was at least one more stamp on the cover. Who can show a Boston station postmark with no state as an originating office postmark on a piece of first class mail?

The Figure 3 cancel with a “sunburst” in the center, shown together with a Blake and Davis illustration³, is probably quite scarce. A nice strike on cover would be a very desirable item.

Figures 4 and 5 show Boston cancels *unlisted* in Blake and Davis. Figure 4 contains “(BO)STON MASS” at the bottom with a large slug in the center that was no doubt intended to increase the effectiveness of the marking as a canceler. We can speculate that this is a non-first class station marking with the station identification at the top. Figure 5 is an appealing cancel with a “fancy” aspect. The full design apparently has “MASS” at the bottom. Who can show a full strike?



Figure 4.



Figure 5.

Leaving Boston now, Figure 6 shows a 2¢ vermilion pair with a style of cancel discussed briefly in the November 2004 *NEWS*. The Whitfield tracing of Figure 6. This design is in Figure 7. A somewhat similar cancel, but with vertical rather than diagonal bars, is also shown in Whitfield. To my knowledge, the origin has never been reported for either. Now, at least, we can add a new number to those listed for Figure 7.

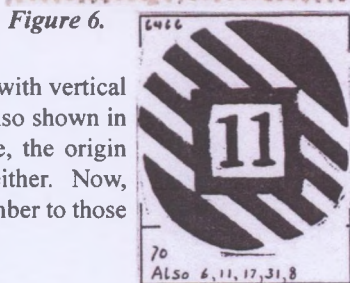


Figure 7.

There are a large number of star cancels reported with internal ornamentation or other variations but the Figure 8 cancel has not been noted, to our knowledge, in the literature. We'll describe it as a solid star with a negative interior border, five negative dots associated with the five points and a negative “W”. Can readers identify the origin or show additional examples?



Figure 8.

An article in the November 2009 *NEWS* illustrated a double line hollow Maltese cross with a solid “E” in the center, origin unknown. Dan submits the solid Maltese cross with negative “E” shown in Figure 9, origin also unknown. A coincidence or is there a connection between the two?



Figure 9.

(Endnotes)

- 1 Blake, Maurice C. and Davis, Wilbur W. *Boston Postmarks to 1890*, 1949, Quarterman reprint (1974), p. 343.
- 2 Ibid., p. 342.
- 3 Ibid., p. 283.

Not Normal Procedure

by Roger D. Curran

The cover in Figure 1 is quite an anomaly. The stamp is canceled by an upside-down “5” ellipse. A full duplex marking was struck in the top center portion of the cover, also upside-



Figure 1.

down. What would possess someone to mark the cover in this manner? Can this have been a deliberate approach by a Boston clerk who had perhaps stamped thousands upon thousands of covers entering the mails?

The key word may be “deliberate.” To answer the question, let us assume that the stamping clerk was distracted for some reason or at least was not attentive to the cover itself. I'm going to guess that the cover was upside-down (Figure 2) in the stack from which he took it and hence, based on a quick

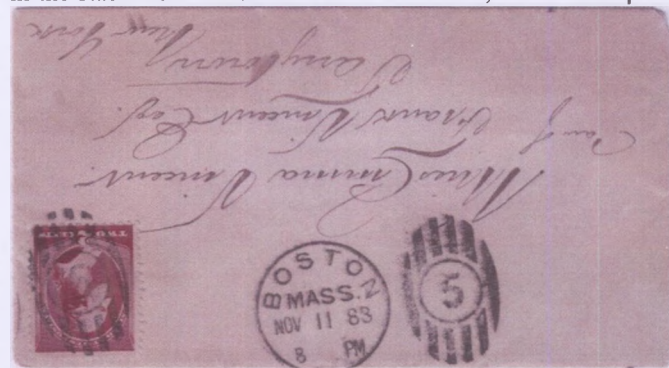


Figure 2.

glance, the clerk saw the cover as having the stamp in the lower left corner. The stamp was canceled by the “5” killer, right side up in the clerk's view, and a second strike of the handstamp was then needed to provide a postmark. Whether the clerk ultimately recognized his error is unclear but, even if he did, there was no need for any further handstamping since the postage stamp was well-canceled and the cover bore a clear postmark.

A second oddity is presented as Figure 3. Why three strikes of the duplex handstamp? Quite a mishmash that seems to be a classic case of overkill. A little study, however, suggests an explanation. The first strike of the duplex – which applied the CDS in the middle and the killer that can be seen just to the left of the stamp – did a very poor job of canceling the stamp. Thus the clerk applied another strike of the duplex which effectively canceled the

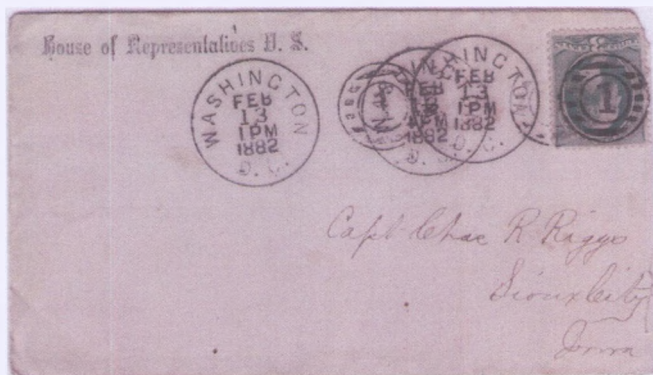


Figure 3.

stamp, only this time the two CDSs overlapped and were somewhat obscured. Therefore, a third strike to the left was needed to make it perfectly clear where and when the cover entered the mails.

The Figure 4 postmark is clear enough but it has its own problem. Instead of month slugs, an additional set of time slugs were inserted into the handstamp, and upside down to boot. It's

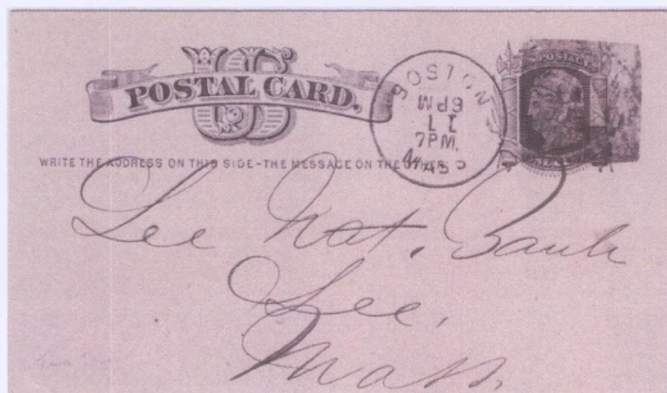


Figure 4.

hard to imagine just what the circumstances were to result in this occurrence. The receipt notation on the reverse appears to read June 11, 1881. The cancel contains a negative "A" in the square and is one of the well-known "large Boston negatives" that have been the subject of a number of *NEWS* articles.

The Figure 5 cover bears a manuscript postmark and cancel that appears to mimic handstamp or even machine markings. The Iroquois, NY post office was located in Erie Co. and operated from 1898-1956. The Figure 5 cover was thus handled early in the life of this post office.

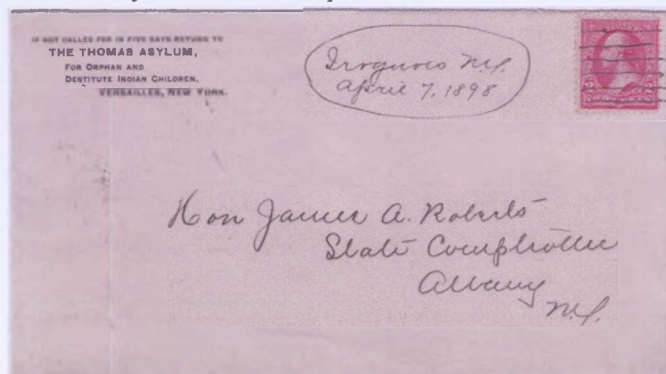


Figure 5.

Small Double Circle Postmarks Revisited

by Roger D. Curran

In 1859 the Post Office Department began issuing handstamps to post offices with a new and distinctive postmark design – see Figure 1. The diameter of the outer circle is about



Figure 1.

25/26 mm. Oftentimes these postmarks are seen without a year date. (In mid-1863, the POD introduced larger double circle postmarks that were usually duplexed to a concentric circles killer.) Distributed to a considerable number of post offices, the small double circles are not, in the large majority of cases, noted before 1860. The *NEWS* has been reporting 1859 uses as they are seen. Six post offices have so far been listed:

New Orleans (7/15/59)
Lawrence, KS (7/26/59)
Milwaukee, WI (9/17/59)
Atchison, KS (9/21/59)
Mobile, AL (11/3/49)
Troy, NY (11/23/59)

The cover in Figure 2 provides an addition to the list: Delaware, OH (9/10/59). A second addition comes from a cover in the collection of Ralph Edson. It bears a small double circle



Figure 2.

from Waterbury, CT dated 11/12/59. The stamp on this cover is canceled by the standard circular 7-bar grid. There surely must be a fair number of additional post offices that received and used these postmarkers in 1859 and readers are encouraged to submit reports to the *NEWS* that will extend the list. They are of interest to cancel collectors since they were employed before the POD banned the practice of canceling stamps with postmarks and are often found so used.

Switching now from early to late examples of these government-issued handstamps, some postmasters kept them in service far beyond the mid-1860s when their use dramatically reduced. Woodstock, Vermont, a town in southeastern Vermont not far from the New Hampshire border, provides a case in point. It was first settled in 1768 and saw prosperity due to manufacturing enterprises. Tourism is the main industry today. It is referred to by a well-known local inn as the prettiest small town in America.



Figure 3.

The town square is flanked by Georgian, Federal and Greek Revival houses and the real estate adjoining the square is said to constitute one of the most expensive areas in the state. The 2000 population was 3232, not much higher than it was in 1859.

The Woodstock postmaster was one of the many who acquired the small double circle postmark. Figure 3 shows usage in conjunction with an 1861 issue stamp. Figure 4 tracks



Figure 4.

the postmark into the 1870s as the outer rim wore away. Figure 5 shows a switch to red ink that made for some attractive strikes. An 1880s usage is shown in Figure 6. The cover in Figure 7, dated July 23, 1889, shows now a very different postmark, one that was no doubt applied by a rubber-faced handstamp. Slawson et al report the period of use for the double circle postmark at Woodstock to be 1860-1885.¹

It was mentioned above that these postmarks frequently show no year dates. Frank Mandel illustrated an interesting advertisement, directed to postmasters, put out by Edmund Hoole.² Mandel estimated that it was issued in about the 1862-3 period. Hoole illustrated a double circle postmark of this exact style along with other postal markings and stated that he held

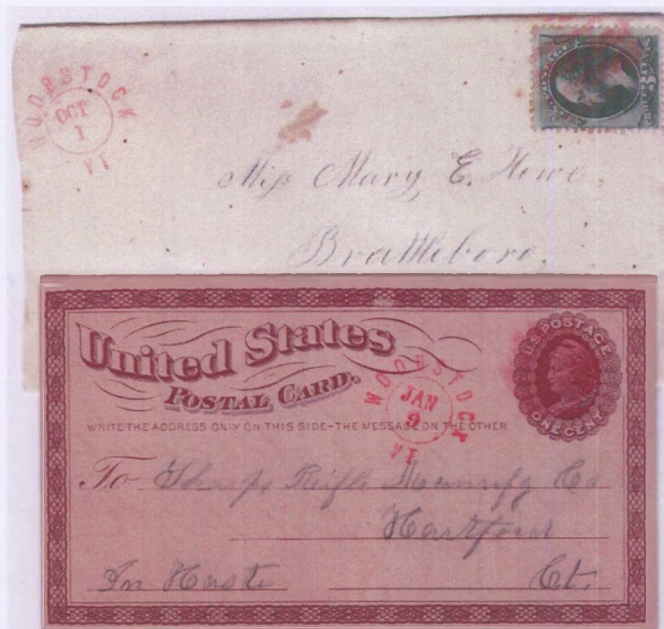


Figure 5.



Figure 6.

the POD contract for making handstamps. The ad offered his handstamps for sale to postmasters not qualifying to receive free handstamps from the POD. Such postmasters were those with gross annual receipts of \$100 or less. With year dates included, handstamps that produced the double circle postmark were priced at \$6. Without year dates the price was \$4 or \$2 depending on the finish and on the quality of the month and day slugs. One can certainly imagine that small town postmasters would opt for the cheaper handstamps, accounting for at least some of the non-year date examples. I also wonder if perhaps the initial POD orders



Figure 7.

to Hoole were for year dates and, later on, these were changed to non-year dated postmarkers. However, this possibility has not been studied, to my knowledge.

(Endnotes)

- 1 Slawson, George C., Bingham, Arthur W. and Drenan, Sprague W. *The Postal History of Vermont*, Collectors Club of NY (1969), p. 99.
- 2 Mandel, Frank "The Development of Handstamped Markings in the United States to 1900" *U.S. Postmarks and Cancellations, PF Seminar Series Textbook No. 3* (1992), p. 29.

Looking Back 100+ Years

by Roger Rhoads

Recently the Board of Directors of the Garfield-Perry Stamp Club in Cleveland, Ohio, was consolidating its 100+ years of club archives. While doing so we ran into a scrapbook of articles that date back to the early part of the 20th century.

William H. Schneider was one of the original four members of the club when it was founded in 1890. Sometime in the 1930s he went through a variety of philatelic publications, cut out pertinent cancellation articles dating from 1899 to 1930 and glued them in an old ledger book with more than sixty 10x15 inch pages. As the head bookkeeper of the Cleveland Stone Co., he would have had access to a number of surplus volumes.

The clippings are from a wide variety of stamps publications with by far the most frequent being *Mekeel's Weekly Stamp News*. Other journals include *The Weekly Philatelic Gossip*, *Stamp Herald*, *Philadelphia Stamp News*, *The Philatelic Gazette*, *The Philatelic Journal of America*, *The Collectors' Journal*, *The Collectors' Journal of Chicago*, *Philatelic West* and *The Stamp Collector's Magazine*.

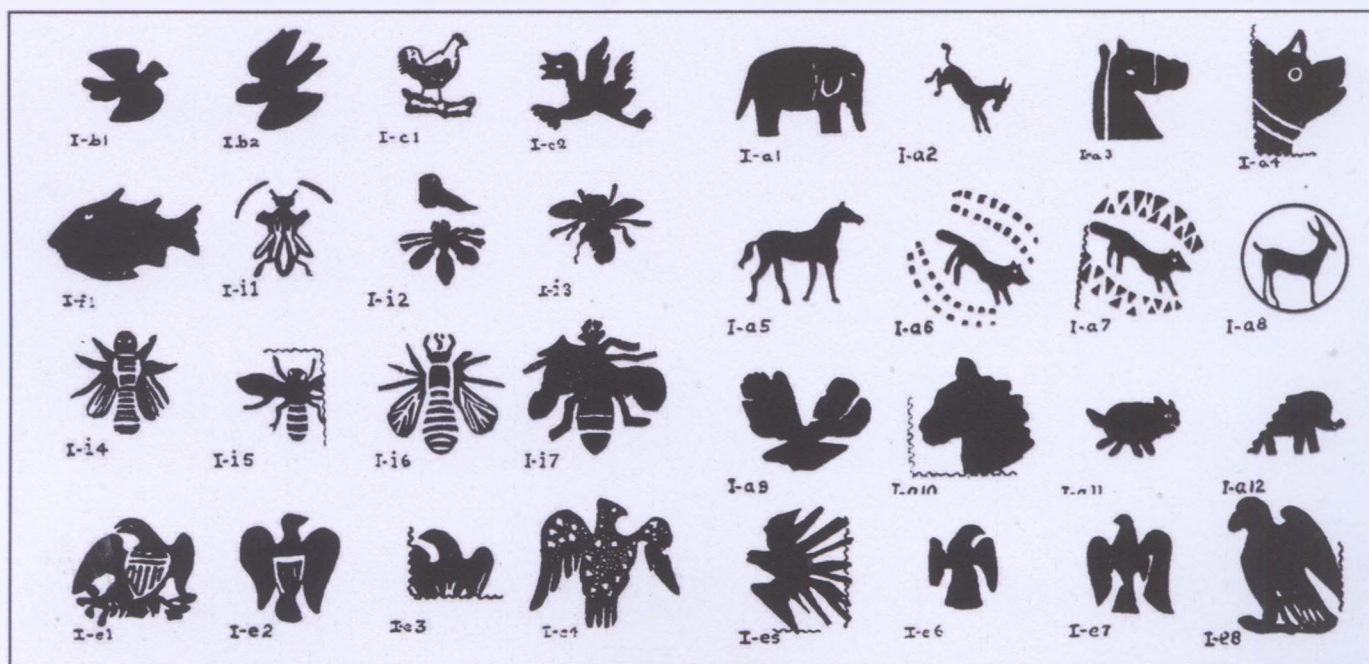
Though it's possible that these journals were Mr. Schneider's personal subscriptions, I'm of the opinion they belonged to the

club and had been housed in their library. The Garfield-Perry Stamp Club rented private meeting rooms at downtown hotels over the years that included housing for their extensive library.

On the first page is a column by John A. Ritchie of New York City from the January 17, 1920 issue of *Mekeel's Weekly Stamp News* announcing that this would be the first installment of a series on the systematic study of postmarks and cancellations and asking for the cooperation of readers to submit philatelic material with these markings that could be traced and printed in future editions. He stated that he asked for the materials themselves and not simply tracings so that they could be studied in an organized fashion. Ritchie was apparently a well regarded stamp collector in that by the February 7 edition he had amassed 48 illustrations of cancels submitted by over 30 collectors including some of the best known in our hobby. These included U.S. Senator Ernest Ackerman, Dr. William Evans, John Luff, M. Ray Sanborn, John Bartels, Percy Doane, William B. Sprague and the Scott Stamp Co. Some of them are shown below and include many famous ones including the Kicking Mule, the Hockanum Fox and the Waterbury Running Chicken.

The columns appeared sporadically until the Oct. 23, 1920 issue when it was announced by *Mekeel's* that the task outlined by Ritchie had gotten too large for him to continue, and Ritchie suggested that "a membership corporation" known as the "American Cancellation Society, Inc." be formed to continue this work. That apparently did not happen, and the May 12, 1923 issue ran an ad announcing Ritchie had sold his collection. But that was not the end of the writings.

On January 4, 1926, H. P. Atherton, another well-known collector, started a cancellation column entitled "The Forum - United Stamps Issues 1847-70". This continued until at least early 1930. A few weeks later, Dr. William Evans started another column entitled "United States Issues 1870-1900" with many of the same types of illustration shown by the previous two columnists. Dr. Evans' column seems to have stopped in early 1928. However, it picked up again in that year in *The Weekly Philatelic Gossip* as "United States Cancellations", continuing until at least late 1929.



There are probably no new findings in these journals, but its fun leafing through these early attempts to bring to the general hobby the many, many fancy cancellations of the 19th century. So that our membership can have this pleasure as well, this album has been scanned and put up on our Club website at <http://bob.trachimowicz.org/uscc/index.html>. Take an hour or so and read the words of early cancellation collecting. There are eleven sections of 5-8 Mb., so downloading may be slow. The first 5 pages are the ledger cover and blank pages. By the way, it's in Adobe format and searchable.

Historic Liberty Torch Cancel

by Wendell Triplett

The Liberty postal card in Figure 1, from West Williamsfield, Ohio, has an unlisted Liberty torch cancel, struck on July 14, 1882. Figure 2 shows more of the detail in the torch handle.

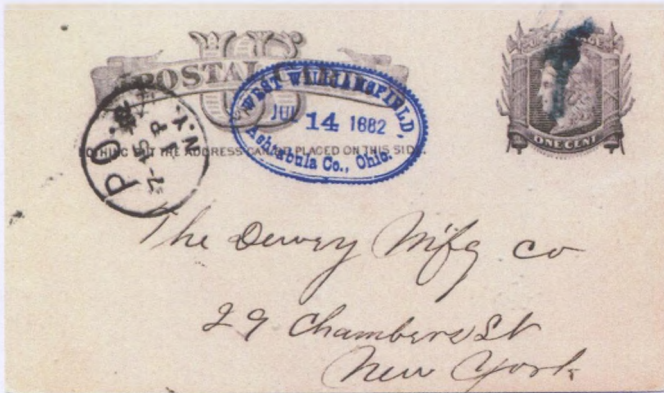


Figure 1.

In France, Frederick Auste Bartholdi was commissioned to design a statue, to be completed by 1876, to commemorate the centennial of the American Declaration of Independence. The statue became a joint effort between the United States and France. It was agreed that the American people would build the pedestal with the French people being responsible for the statue and its assembly in the United States.



Figure 2.

Bartholdi completed Liberty's right arm holding the torch and it was exhibited at the Centennial Exhibition in Philadelphia in 1876. Visitors were charged 50 cents to climb the

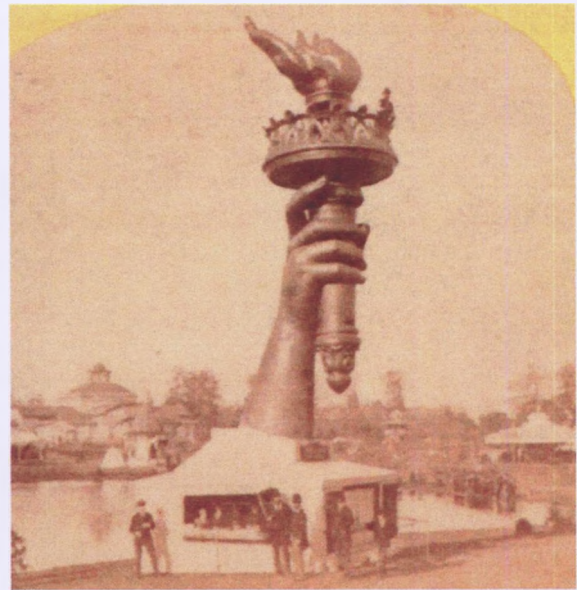


Figure 3.

ladder to the balcony; see Figure 3. This money was contributed to start the funding for the pedestal.

The lack of funds was a problem on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean. In France, public fees, various forms of entertainment, and a lottery were among the methods used to raise funds. In the United States, benefit theatrical events, art exhibitions, auctions and prize fights assisted in providing needed funds. The financing for the statue was completed in France in July 1882, just after the date on this postal card. The West Williamsfield, Ohio Postmaster may have used this cancel to promote US interest for constructing the pedestal so the Liberty statue could be erected.

The pedestal funding proceeded slowly in the US until publisher Joseph Pulitzer opened up the editorial pages of his newspaper to support the fund raising effort in 1883.

The actual construction of the Liberty statue was completed in France by July 1884; it remained in Paris for visitors to see. The US pedestal construction started in August 1884 and was interrupted by lack of funds until Pulitzer renewed his fund campaign again. US construction was finally completed on August 11, 1885. France had shipped the Liberty statue to New York in June 1885 in 214 crates.

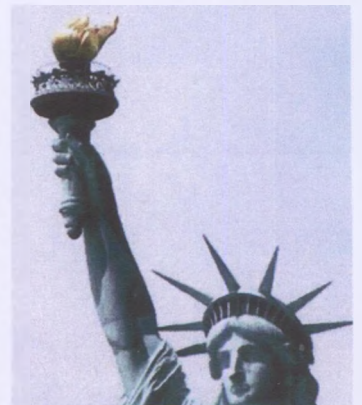


Figure 4.

The Liberty statue was erected on its new pedestal on Bedloe's Island (later Liberty Island) at the gateway to America. On October 28, 1886 President Grover Cleveland unveiled it in front of thousands of spectators.

New York Foreign Mail Fakes, Frauds and Fancifuls

by Nicholas M. Kirke

Embedded in many NYFM accumulations is the occasional item that raises a smile. We will commence with an outrageous fake which my dog, Badger, first spotted.

Figure 1 shows a 3¢ stamped envelope dated 11/11/1876 to Paris. There is a red New York exchange office datestamp 'NOV 11' on the back together with a Paris receiving postmark '22 NOV (18)76'. Yet the front bears a 2¢ stamp not issued



Figure 1.

until 1883. It would appear that the stamped envelope received a bona fide NYFM 'wheel of spokes' cancel, Weiss TR-S5/Van Vlissingen and Waud (VW)W S2, and traveled to Paris. Later our faker added the 2¢ stamp and obliterated it with a crude imitation wheel of spokes in darker ink. The intriguing question is why did he go to the bother and spoil a perfectly decent postal usage? And why would our faker make such a glaring error as to use a stamp issued seven years after the envelope was first posted? I guess we are not talking about a "Philatelist of the Year" candidate in this instance. This cover, by the way, was a Christmas present from Stephen Taylor, that American marooned in the London suburbs. Naturally, it came with a bold 'BUYER BEWARE' sticker.

Now a rather more skillful effort to deceive.

Figure 2 shows a cover dated 12./16/1871 to Germany.



Figure 2.

This cover bears two Bank Note 6¢ stamps both canceled with one of the most common NYFM 'circle of arrowheads' cancels, Weiss TR-C1/VW F9. When I first saw this cover I was excited on two counts:

- it would appear to demonstrate simultaneously on the same cover a grossly over and a grossly under inked state of the same cancel, and
- the under-inked strike on the left resembled Weiss variety TR-C1A/VW F9. On cover this is a most scarce cancel in its true state (I have only seen one true example). In fact, Weiss notes at p. 281 of his book (Reference 1) "I have never seen a type TR-C1A on cover, have you?"

So initially, I thought this cover proved that Weiss's variety TR-C1A was not a variety at all, merely an under-inked state of TR-C1. Suddenly the cover had significance!

Alas, I was wrong. The right hand stamp does not belong. On closer inspection it is not tied and there is a continuation of the cancel from the left stamp beneath the left edge of the added stamp. There is also a slit in the paper between the stamps made by the faker. What was in his mind? Well, maybe if there was originally a stamp to the right side it was either damaged or not to his liking. But more likely it was never there initially. Otherwise this would have likely been a Supplementary Mail cover, 6¢ postage plus 6¢ supplementary fee, which it clearly is not, given the lack of a Supplementary Mail postmark.

Whatever the original situation, our fixer conveniently had an off cover 6¢ stamp with a similar cancel in EXACTLY the correct attitude to match the left hand stamp. We can only assume he wanted to create the illusion of two different varieties of the same cancel or simply two of the same.

The cover, which is no longer in my collection, came from the late Bill Ainsworth 6¢ exhibit. I know for a fact this was not Bill's work; he accepted the cover at face value just as I did.

We now move to a more controversial area: late use of NYFM cancellations on stamps out of the acknowledged NYFM hand carved period 1870-78. I use the word 'controversial' because it seems there are two opinions as to these uses:

- they are outright forgeries; or
- they are strikes from bona fide old cancellation devices used out of time.

Figure 3 shows Weiss GE-EP4/VW G18. Although a perfect representation of the original cancel, this appears too crisply struck and is probably from a rubber duplication device. The ink is also rather darker than on the originals. Nonetheless, the stamp has a clear Philatelic Foundation certificate. I believe, on balance, this is a fake cancel.



Figure 3.

Figure 4 shows Weiss ST-8P8/VW A11. Although the cancel conforms in size and style to the original, it is cruder with thicker lines than the original. I believe this is a fake cancel.



Figure 4.

Figure 5 shows an attempt to mimic Weiss GE-EN4/VW C3. There is no outer circle and the radial lines are double rather than single. I believe this was an attempt to replicate a NYFM style cancellation.



Figure 5.

There is a common thread. Most of these late use cancels appear on either the 1883 2¢ red brown or 1887 2¢ green stamps. The VW book (Reference 2) shows a 2¢ value at p. 81 bearing a ST-MP3/VW A20. Also shown is an 1881 1¢ ultramarine bearing Weiss GE-EN7A/VW 27. The common denominator is that both the 1¢ and 2¢ stamps were relatively cheap unused, plentiful, and large enough to show the cancels to best advantage. I think it is safer to view all these out of date post 1878 uses as outright fakes. For what is the alternative explanation? A friendly post office employee doing a favor cancel for a NYFM collector friend dipping into a box containing five to seven year old cancellation devices? Regrettably, that sounds rather unlikely to this skeptical collector.

Lastly I show an intriguing cancel at Figure 6 classified under my 'fanciful' heading. It would be wonderful if an on-cover use could be found. The design, which is illustrated in Herst Zareski (Reference 3) as Zareski NYFM cancel No 47 at p. 149 is exquisite and accords to the symmetry of the classic NYFM intricate fancy cancels. However, I am extremely doubtful as to the authenticity of this cancel. It is too uniformly inked and precisely defined for a boxwood cancel. It is surely from a RUBBER device (see VW's illustrations of strikes made of rubber with rubber devices at p. 72 of their book). A poor fake that is fanciful in the extreme.



Figure 6.

References

- (1) *The Foreign Mail Cancellations of New York City 1870-1878* by William Weiss Jr., copyright William R. Weiss, Jr., 504 pages.
- (2) *The New York Foreign Mail Cancellations 1870-1876* by Arthur Van Vlissingen and Morrison Waud, published in 1968 by the Collectors Club of Chicago, 105 pages.
- (3) *19th Century United States Fancy Cancellations* by Michael Zareski copyright 1951 by Herman Herst, Jr., edited and published by Herman Herst, Jr., Shrub Oak, New York, 287 pages.

Cancels That Make the Point

by Roger D. Curran

In the May 2010 *NEWS* a category of cancels was discussed that incorporates into the design one or more words that convey the idea that the stamp being canceled is no longer valid for postage. Examples are "CANCELLED", "I'M DONE" and "USED". One of the cancels illustrated incorporated the word "OVER". It is a primitive, hand-carved cancel from Pleasant Hill, MO that probably degraded quickly with use, at least to the point of being illegible. The image came from an old clipping file and I have never seen the cancel reported in the literature. Nor would I have expected to see an actual example, but serendipity intervened. Almost immediately after the May issue was distributed, the stamp in Figure 1 came to your editor's attention on a dealer's website. The negative "R" is, of course, not present but there can be no doubt but what this is the Pleasant Hill cancel. Can Club members show further examples?



Figure 1.

The May article by no means presented all the cancels reported in this category. Indeed, one of the best known is the "USED UP" from Traverse City, MI. and Figure 2 shows a nice strike on card from the collection of Roger Rhoads. The Whitfield book illustrates further cancels of this sort on page 155.



Figure 2.

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An Undistinguished New York Foreign Mail Cancellation

by Nicholas M. Kirke

At Westpex 2010 recently I had the good fortune to obtain the cover illustrated as Figure 1. It shows a full strike of Weiss TR-G9 (Van Vlissingen-Waud F12c), a cancel previously absent from my collection.



Figure 1. 1/7/1871 to France (red 'JAN 7' New York Exchange Office date stamp on the back.) 15¢ postage paid the so called 'second phantom rate' (after July 1st 1870) overpaying the 10¢ rate which included a 6¢ credit to England. Called the 'Phantom Rate' because the 10¢ rate was not published in the U.S. until Oct 28th 1871.

Apart from being a neat 'phantom rate' cover sporting a 15¢ stamp, it is one of only a handful known bearing this cancel and a joint earliest known use. As often happens, in a delightful coincidence, it is dated the very same day as the cover William R. Weiss illustrates at p. 315 of his book (Reference 1).

Why is it that some of these most simplistic NYFM grids are now some of the more scarce to find on cover? A clue might lie in the reason why NYFMs became noteworthy originally. It was Murray Bartels (Reference 2) who first publicized NYFMs as worthy of specialization, noting in his 1927 auction catalogue: 'This is entirely a new subject to nearly all collectors and we take pleasure in enclosing ... four pages of very attractive cancellations ...'. It follows that collectors of the day would hardly have selected such a mundane grid as a cancel representing this so called attractiveness. Similarly, recipients abroad would not have regarded the cancel as noteworthy. We might therefore fairly assume that the envelope would be destroyed or the stamp removed. Ironically, NYFM collectors today derive enormous pleasure from seeking out cancels bearing variations of these simplistic cancels. An example is shown in Figure 2.

Although Weiss illustrates this cover at p. 316 of his book as a candidate for his classification TR-G9a, I believe it is more likely to be a broken TR-G9. Shown below are tracings of the cancels from both covers. As with many struck killers, one has to use just a touch of imagination. To slavishly rely on a tracing of the exact cancel can be misleading. With experience a collector can use HIS imagination to try to understand what the cancel was meant to represent prior to under or over-inking or being broken.



Figure 2. 7/10/1872 to Germany. Postage paid the 7¢ North German Union rate

Two explanations are proposed as to why the cancel at Figure 2 is missing three segments:

- it was atop a pile of other covers with the right hand side of the envelope protruding over the side. There was therefore no hard surface immediately beneath, or,
- since the cancel was struck fully 19 months after the earliest known strike, the cancel had become broken and worn through extended use.



Figure 3. The cancel as originally intended.

It is easy to place degraded cancels such as Figure 4 in separate classifications but I contend we should be careful not to exaggerate the number of different NYFM cancels. By all means call these broken, over or under-inked, varieties of some umbrella design, but I do not believe they are worthy of separate classification. The cancel on the Figure 2 cover, for example, qualifies at best as Weiss TR-G9var (broken state).



Figure 4. The degraded state as in Figure 2

- (1) William R. Weiss, Jr., *The Foreign Mail Cancellations of New York City 1870-71* 1990.
- (2) J.M.Murray Bartels Co., 147th Sale Catalogue, June 2, 1927, 116 Nassau Street, New York City

Editor's comment. I subscribe to the central thesis of Nick's article that, for any of a variety of reasons, strikes from the same canceling device will sometimes vary widely in appearance. This is especially true for hand-carved designs in cork or soft wood. Collectors must therefore be alert to partial or other anomalous strikes when deciding what is a different cancel from what has already been reported. However, in the specific case of the cancels on the two illustrated covers above, your editor sees them as coming from two different canceling devices.

Let's focus on the Figure 2 cancel since the Figure 1

cancel is quite clear. And I'll stipulate at the outset that (a) there is some level of ambiguity in Figure 2 and (b) Nick, certainly a knowledgeable and experienced NYFM student, has the advantage of studying the actual covers which are both in his collection. Based on viewing two images of the Figure 2 cover, it is my opinion that three segments comprising the cancel are clear enough that we can conclude that they are as follows: a triangular or wedge-shaped segment flanked by two rectangular segments. The Figure 1 cancel design doesn't fit that pattern. The two rectangles in Figure 2 are not positioned like those in Figure 1. The question then arises as to whether there is an established NYFM of which the Figure 2 cancel might represent a partial strike. While admittedly not a really good match, I'll offer Weiss TR-G28 (see herewith) as a possibility and theorize (1) a partial strike on Nick's Figure 2 cover due to a glancing blow or uneven underlying surface and (2) rather heavy pressure on the area of the three segments thus spreading them out somewhat. TR-G28 is reported by Bill Weiss as a rare cancel with but one listed cover, dated July 13, 1872. Figure 2 is dated just three days earlier - July 10, 1872. Whatever the Figure 2 cancel is, Nick and your editor agree that it is surely not a complete cancel in terms of its original design.



Weiss TR-G28

Reader comments to Nick at kirke@philatelist.cz or to the editor at rcurren@dejazzd.com will be welcomed.

Coudersport Numeral Cancels

During the 1870s a fair number of post offices incorporated year dates in their hand-carved killers. This also occurred in the 1880s but to a lesser extent. There was a spike in the use of such cancels in 1876 due, no doubt, to a desire to commemorate the U.S. centennial year. A very distinctive example was used by Coudersport, PA consisting of a single large numeral "6." Cole NU-43 illustrates the cancel, shown here as Figure 1. This particular cancel was likely not a centennial commemoration since Coudersport used other single numeral cancelers which

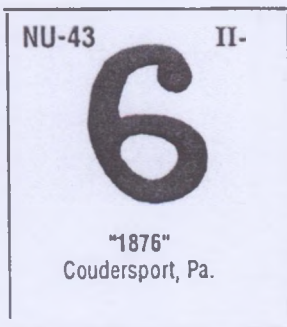


Figure 1.



Figure 2.

are assumed to represent other years. The November 2007 *NEWS* illustrated a 3¢ green PSE with a Coudersport "4" and it was noted that Whitfield 6457 shows a Coudersport "7." Just recently a Coudersport "5" has come to our attention, illustrated here as Figure 2. This appears to be the unattributed Whitfield 6653 cancel – see Figure 3.



Figure 3.

Can readers show additional numeral cancels from Coudersport or covers that confirm the year dates for cancels "4" through "7"?

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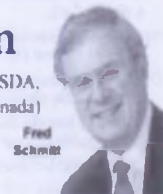
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More on "AB" Cancel

The "AB" cancel illustrated in Figure 1 has been the subject of two recent articles in the *NEWS* – see August and November 2007 issues. It had been listed many years ago in "purple" (magenta in today's terminology) and attributed to Alexandria Bay, NY. It was first reported on a 1¢ Continental and subsequently on 1¢ Americans. This cancel has been considered a precancel, presumably because it had been found only on 1¢ stamps and was always seen fully struck on the stamps. A cover was shown in the August 2007 issue with an Alexandria Bay, NY corner card (Thousand Islands House hotel) bearing a 1¢ stamp canceled by the "AB" in magenta. There was no accompanying postmark.



Figure 1.

Responding to the first article, John Donnes reported the "AB" in black on a 1¢ re-engraved stamp. It is interesting to note that the Alexandria Bay post office was not officially established until 1883 when it took over from the Alexandria post office that had begun operation in 1823. It is assumed, however, that the community had been referred to, at least locally, as Alexandria Bay for some years before 1883.

Just recently, John brought to the attention of the *NEWS* the intriguing Figure 2 piece. This breaks new ground in two respects.



Figure 2.

First, it shows usage of the "AB" on what surely must have been a piece of first class mail. Second, we now have a usage where the cancels tie the stamp to what was previously an envelope and one can reasonably conclude that these strikes are not precancels.

The fact that the Figure 2 strikes are not precancels does not mean the earlier strikes on 1¢ Continental and American stamps, all in magenta, are not precancels. However, it does suggest that the "AB" canceler was not used by Thousand Islands House but rather the Alexandria post office. It would be

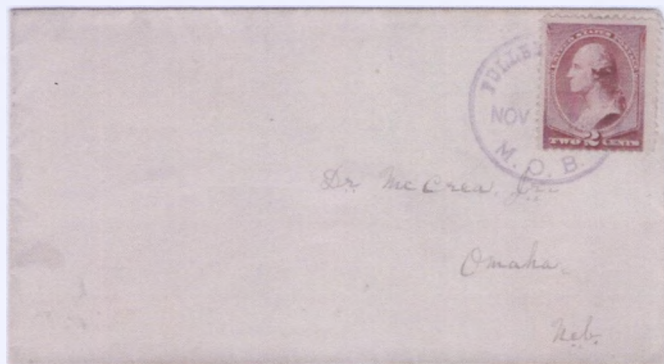


Figure 3.

of considerable interest to know how Alexandria first class mail was canceled during the 1875-1881 period. Can any reader help out by reporting such covers?

The last thing that will be mentioned about Figure 2 is the "M.O.B." postmark which is a marking designed for use on money order business forms. While not common, such examples used as postmarks are occasionally seen during the Banknote era from various post offices. Figure 2 is an 1887 example from Fullerton, Nebraska.

Old Cancel Identified

by Robert J. Trachimowicz

One of the most rewarding aspects of studying postal history is to have the good fortune to identify a previously unidentified cancel. My area of study is the city of Worcester, Massachusetts and one area I specialize in is Wesson Time-On-Bottom (TOB) cancels.

Worcester was the very first city to cancel mail with Walter D Wesson's patented duplex hand cancellation device. The first Worcester variety of the Wesson device, designated as Type 1, featured changeable day, month, year and time slugs in a metal circular date stamp (CDS) on one side of the common base bar and a cup that could hold carved cork, wood or rubber killers on the other side. Carved killers have been designated as X-Type killers. Further, it was the only device in which the city (WORCESTER) and state (MASS) were aligned in concentric arcs in the top half of the CDS. X-Type killers were used in Worcester from July 2, 1881 (EKU) until January 29, 1883 (LKU).

One exciting and controversial exception to the use of carved killers in X-Type Worcester has been designated as the North-South Positive Shaking Hands killer. Cole lists this Worcester killer as HF-5 on Page 173. It is identified and illustrated in Whitfield as No. 557 on Page 20. See Figure 1.



Figure 1.

This cancel has two interesting features that distinguish it from the usual X-Type killers. Its lines are sharp and distinct, as if cut from metal rather than cork. Also, this cancel has a solid, round outer collar.

Whitfield illustrates, but does identify, a cancel with sharp, distinct lines and solid collar as No. 170 on Page 7. See



Figure 2. It is a positive skull and crossbones cancel. Cole illustrates several skull and crossbones cancels but does not show this particular killer. I believe I have found an example of the No. 170 Whitfield cancel that is identified with a city. See Figure 3.

Figure 2.

I consider this cancel as a "brother" to the Worcester Wesson positive north-south

shaking hands killer for which we have seen a few examples. The characteristics of the two cancels are strikingly identical. I believe we can now confidently link Whitfield No. 170 with Worcester Massachusetts.



Figure 3.

An interesting sidelight to this newly-identified Worcester cancel can be found on the USCC website. On the Home Page, follow the link to "100 Years Of Cancels" and then go to Page 40 of the article. The newly-identified Worcester positive skull and crossbones cancel is shown as Figure 13 in the 1917 Meekel's article.

Editor's note. Bob Trachimowicz and David J. Simmons have just published a very informative article on Worcester Wesson TOB X-type killers in the Spring and Summer 2010 issues of *La Posta*.

"R" Precancel Update

We discussed a distinctive "R" cancel, which is found in two versions as illustrated in Figure 1¹, in the May 2004 *NEWS*. Long assumed to be a precancel, no conclusive examples have been reported on other than 1¢ stamps – Sc 182 and Sc 206. It is by no means a rare cancel which makes it rather surprising that the origin has not been settled. Cole attributed the solid "R" to Gloucester, MA and the hollow "R" to Bridgeport, CT.² In recent years the Bridgeport report, which didn't begin with Cole, has been dismissed as incorrect and, while there is a Gloucester report, Jim Cole and your editor agreed some years ago that it needs confirmation.

Precancel specialist David Smith, in his book *Silent Precancels*, treats the two versions as basically reflecting the same cancel.³ Perhaps the outlining ridges on the "hollow" version wore down with use or were only slightly raised and dried ink filled in over time to make a solid surface. Possibly inking variations also played a role. The "R" cancels vary somewhat in size and a multi-subject device was used to lay down the cancels on multiples, probably sheets, of stamps.

There was a wrapper illustrated in the April 15, 1988 *Linn's Stamp News* bearing a 1¢ Banknote canceled by the "R"

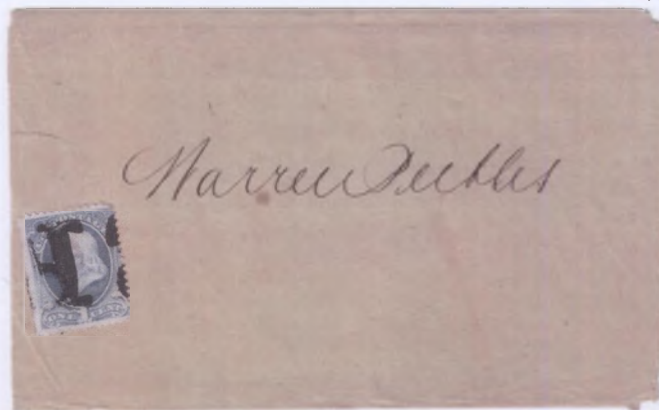


Figure 1.

addressed to Sparta, MO – see May 2004 *NEWS*. That may have been the only reported cover. We can now show a second wrapper (Figure 2), similarly franked and canceled. It was obviously sent locally as no address at all was given. A 2010 APES certificate states the following:

"United States,
Scott No. 206 with
precancel 'R' on
wrapper, genuine in
all respects."



Concerning the "R" Figure 2.
precancel, David Smith stated
the following: "Suspect Rochester, NY is origin."⁴

If readers can shed any additional light on this intriguing cancel, please contact the *NEWS*.

(Endnotes)

- 1 Cole, James M. *Cancellations and Killers of the Banknote Era 1879-1894*, USPS (1995), p. 199.
- 2 Ibid., p. 186.
- 3 Smith, David *Silent Precancels*, Precancel Stamp Society (1995 and updated 2004), p. 12.
- 4 Ibid.

Help Wanted

Abe Boyarsky is seeking CDS strikes on-off cover Sc 65 stamps showing the following dates:

In black ink

March 22, May 10 and 25, October 20

In blue ink

March 27 and 29, July 10, September 26, November 27.

Abe will buy or trade dates. He can be contacted at the email or regular address listed on the *NEWS* masthead.

Philadaelphia

John Goldsborough has been identified as the person who first offered ellipse cancel handstamps in the U.S. This set is reported by Tom Clarke in *A Catalog of Philadelphia Postmarks* (1991) to include numbers "1" through "4" and "6" through "10". For the "5", only a "7" is indicated. Has any reader seen a "5" from this set? Clarke reports this set used during the March 1878 to September 1879 period.

