



U.S. Cancellation Club NEWS

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A Duplex Plus Two

NEWS articles make frequent reference to “duplexes” which, of course, denote handstamps that typically combine a postmarker and canceler under one handle. There are some duplexes which, one could argue, are technically triplexes because the date slugs are not part of either the CDS or killer but rather form a separate marking between the two. They are quite common, due primarily to the fact that the NYPO was a big user – see Figure 1, courtesy of John Donnes.

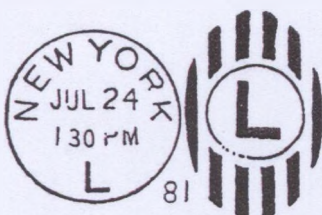


Figure 1.

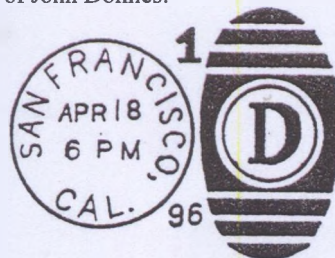


Figure 2.

The San Francisco post office went one step further with a set of handstamps that applied four separate markings – see Figure 2.¹ (Should we call this a “quadplex”?) There were at least three handstamps in this

set as markings with a “2” and a “3” above the year dates have also been reported.² These were used by Station D during the early to mid-1890s.³ (There has also been a “1” marking of this type reported for San Francisco’s Station B.⁴) Your editor assumes the numbers were used to identify the clerks who employed these handstamps. A “triplex” Station D marking (no number) has been reported from the mid 1880s to 1890, presumably a time of lesser workload.⁵ Station D was established in 1886 and from 1888-1899 was located on the Wharf at the foot of Market St.⁶ Figure 3 shows two covers bearing the marking under discussion: the “1” is dated 11/13/95 and the “2” is 3/2/94.

(Endnotes)

¹ Mahoney, John M. *San Francisco Postal Markings 1847-1900* (1992) *La Posta Monograph Series*, Vol.8, p. 79.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid., p. 69.

⁵ Ibid., p.73.

⁶ Ibid., p.66.

Further Update – “R” Precancel

by Roger D. Curran

The August NEWS gave a brief update on a rather large “R” precancel that is seen on one cent Banknotes (Sc 182 and 206) – see Figure 1. Mention was made of two wrappers on which the “R” precancels have been found – one addressed to Sparta, MO and the other addressed locally (although we don’t know the PO since no address was given). A third wrapper has now come to our attention, addressed to Canton, NY. Also, while looking for something else, I came across some notes made about an exhibit seen some years ago. I don’t recall the exhibitor’s name but a wrapper was shown, bearing an “R” precanceled stamp, addressed to East Berkshire, VT. There was a comment on the exhibit page to the effect that several such wrappers are known to locations around Rutland, VT, and at least one to Rutland. As mentioned in the August article, precancel specialist David Smith reported in his 2004 book *Silent Precancels* that Rochester, NY was suspected to be the origin of the “R”. If these precancels were only used on unmarked wrappers, it is a long shot that we will ever learn for sure the origin since we would have to find a wrapper still enclosing the newspaper, or whatever else it might have been, and how likely is that?



Figure 1.

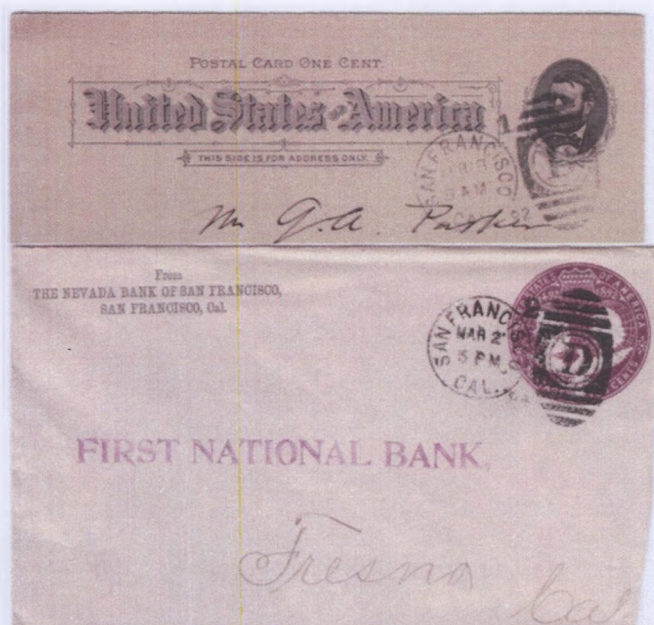


Figure 3.

If readers can supply any additional information on this precancel, which is seen with some frequency on off-cover stamps, please let us hear from you.

From One Letter to Another

Figure 1 illustrates a beautiful cancel on a Sc 161 stamp in the collection of Wendell Triplett. Wendell is the Club's expert on the Whitfield cancellations book, having prepared the 2007 update and now working on what will be a second extensive update. He noted in Whitfield what is apparently an incomplete strike of this cancel – see Figure 2. Mr. Whitfield



Figure 2.

thought what he saw was a letter "A" but we can now identify it with a high degree of confidence as an old English "S". Can readers report the post office of origin of this cancel or show additional uses?



Figure 1.

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New York City's 1880 "Pyro-Canceling Device"

by John Donnes

In two recent issues of the *NEWS* Roger Curran wrote about a New York City cancel that was, as he put it, "Odd to Say the Least". The cover he depicted in the first article with this interesting cancel (see Figure 1) was first spotted in a dealer's stock at the APS show in Pittsburgh by fellow club member

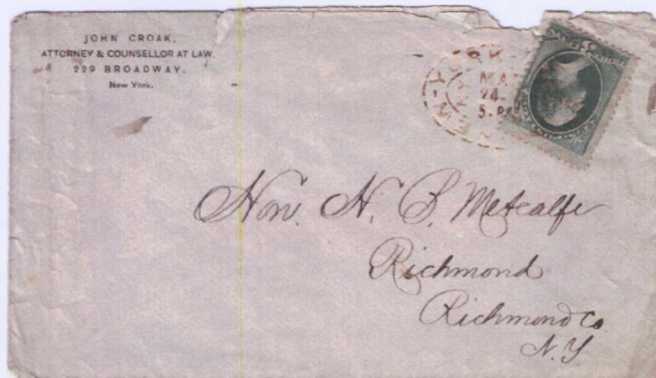


Figure 1.

John Valenti. John, noticing something quite different about the cancel, brought the cover to Roger's attention. Needless to say, Roger didn't hesitate in acquiring it.

One of the things that Roger noticed, besides the brownish color of the cancel, was that the NYC double oval cancel, usually reserved for canceling 3rd class mail, was canceling a three cent stamp (Sc. 184) on an inter-city 1st class mail rate cover. The postmark also contained the full date and time, Mar. 24, (18)80, 5PM.

Roger's first article (November 2009 issue) pertained mostly to the brownish color of the postmark on this cover. He suggested that the cancel may have been "applied by a handstamp that was heated to a point where it would scorch but not burn the cover and stamp". I must admit that, after examining the cover, I had doubts about the cancel being heat related. My initial thoughts were, how long would it take for a cancel, sitting on a heating plate, to get hot enough to burn an impression. The length of time, it seemed, would be too great and would drastically decrease the efficiency of processing the mails. With only one example examined, the question as to the cancel being

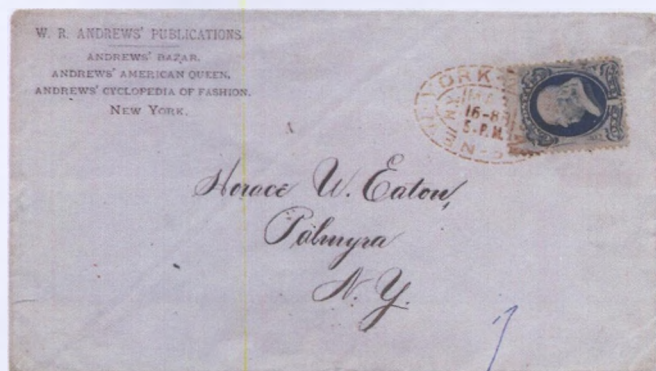


Figure 2.

heat related was left open for debate.

In the latter portion of the article Roger made mention of a "second example" of this cancel, noted as lot 36 in the October 2009 Spink and Shreves sale 117. A nice color scan of the cover (see Figure 2) has now been furnished by its new owner, Steve Pacetti. The cover bears a very fine strike of the "brownish" colored postmark with a Mar. 16, (18)80, 5PM date. It's interesting to point out that the cancel is now canceling a one cent stamp (Sc. 182) on an intercity 3rd class mail rated cover. This would seem the original intent of a double oval NYC postmark.

In the same Spink-Shreves sale (unbeknown to Roger at the time of his November article) was a "third example". Lot. 40, acquired by club members Dan Richards and Matt Kewriga, contained a fairly large group of New York City covers. One of the covers (which I was fortunate enough to acquire from Dan), was still mounted on an exhibit page that had a caption which read:

The "Stencil Cancel"

Unlisted. Total number, unknown.

I have only seen one other (also a mid-March date), and two off cover.

This cover (see Figure 3), bearing a 3 cent stamp (Sc. 184) and dated Mar. 19, (18)80, 3 PM, shows another example of 1st class usage of the double oval cancel with the cancel having the same "brownish" color that I remembered seeing on Roger's cover. After having the opportunity to examine another example of the cancel and with Roger's comment about the cancel possibly being heat related, I wondered "Exactly what would a known burn mark look like on a cover?"



Figure 3.

Taking an old damaged cover from my junk box I went to my back yard workshop, heated up a small tipped soldering iron, and made a few burns into the cover (see Figure 4). Holding the soldering iron to the cover for just a second almost burned a hole through it. The next few burns, for what I would estimate at being a tenth of a second, left a nice "brownish" mark. Using my microscope and comparing the test burns to the cancel on my newly acquired double oval cover, the results were almost identical. Now that I felt Roger was definitely on the right track, my attention turned to seeing if there just might be some sort of patent for this style cancel.

Figure 4.

The patent search

Not knowing the patent number or the inventor's name, but being somewhat familiar with looking for patents on the internet, I went to the site www.google.com/patents and, using their advanced search engine, typed in the key words "heat" and "cancellation". Within a few seconds up popped no less than 100

chronologically listed patents with the earliest patent being in 1877. (It should be noted that most of the patents listed did not pertain to postal or philatelic endeavors but, fortunately for me, the first five patents were postal related and are listed below).

U.S. patent no. 186179, issued to T. F. Taylor on Jan. 9, 1877, and submitted by him as an apparatus for "Branding - Stamp". The patent pictures a device, similar to a table top stapler, with a spring loaded plunger. At the canceling end of the plunger was an ivory or bone substance (non-conducting material) with a plate of mica attached to its surface. Fastened to the face of the mica was a fine platinum wire which, when shorted and heated by a battery, would "burn" a cancel on the stamp (or bank check) in whatever design the wire was configured. Since the cancels on the aforementioned covers do not show a "fine wire" effect, I do not believe it was this device that created the cancels on Roger's, Steve's, or my cover.

U.S. patents 223902 and 223903, issued to A. S. Gear on Jan. 27, 1880, were both submitted as a "Branding - Stamp". As the pictures in the patents show, they were hand held hammer style cancelers. The devices were outfitted with a small reservoir of volatile fluid which, when fed through wicking material to the head of the canceler and ignited, would get the head hot enough to "burn" an impression on contact. I believe it was a device like this that created the cancels on the sample sheet as prepared by Mr. Gear in 1880. (See article by Roger Curran, Figure 4, page 2 of the August 2010 issue.)

U.S. patents 227423 and 227424, applied for in January of 1880 and issued to A. S. Gear on May 11, 1880, were both submitted as a "Pyro-Canceling Device". The patents describe the volatile fluid, or gas, as being supplied from a pressure tank through a long flexible feed line to the head of a hand held hammer style canceler. Patent 227423 illustrates a canceler with just a circular date stamp (cbs) while patent 227424 depicted a canceler with both the cbs and an attached killer. Both patents described in great detail the construction and heat control of the apparatus, the flexibility of using the canceler as a non-heat stand alone inking device, and the ease of using and replacing interchangeable print heads. One of the patents even describes and explains the reason for the "dotted or dashed" segments in the canceling head. (This "stencil" effect was brought up by Roger in his August 2010 article). I am quite sure it is patent 227423 (see Figure 5) that is responsible for creating the experimental test cancels that were produced in New York City during March of 1880.

(For persons not familiar with the patent web site and wishing to view and/or print the entire patent, they can select the above mentioned patent web site, and once there, enter the patent

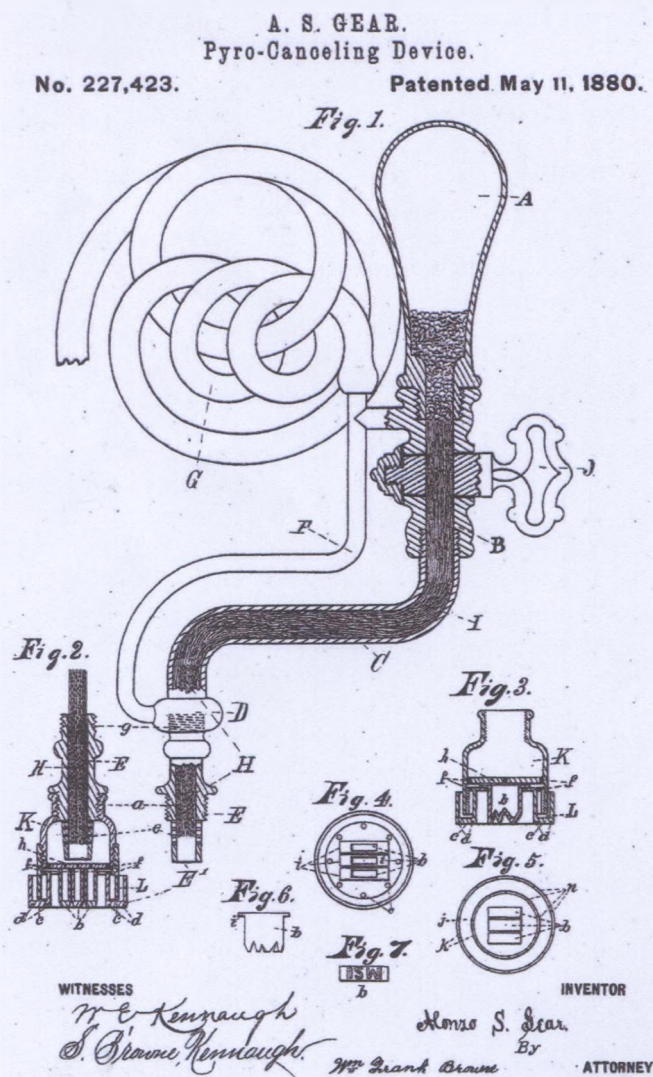


Figure 5.

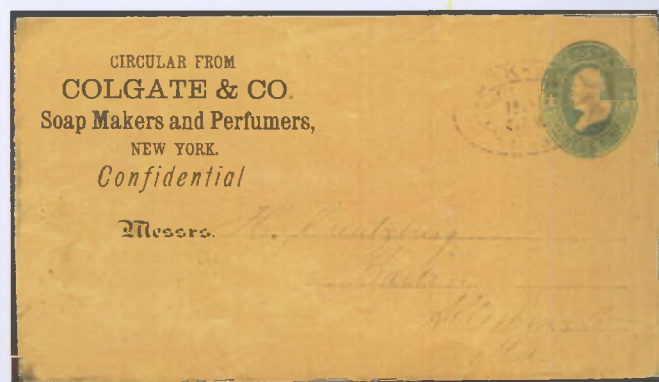


Figure 6.

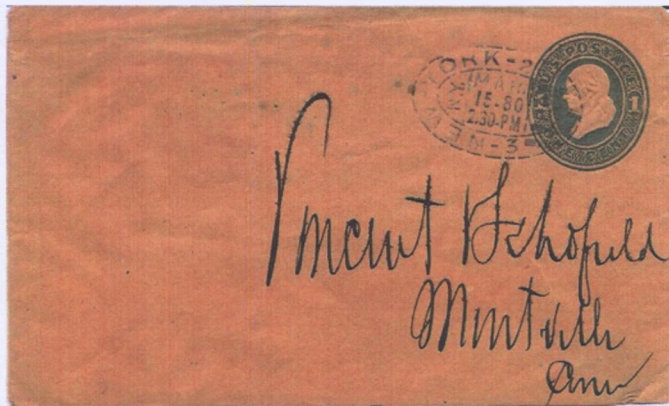


Figure 7.

no. and click on "search patents". At the next screen select the desired patent from the list. When on the patent page it's best to choose "Download PDF" before trying to print the patent.)

Two more covers reported, no's 4 and 5

Cover no. 4 (Figure 6) was reported by Matt Kewriga,

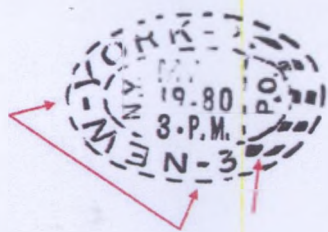


Figure 8.

and was also pictured in the August 2010 issue. The cancel is on a one cent entire (Sc.U116), dated Mar. 15, (18)80, 4PM, and shows the cancel to be somewhat black in color. The cover also shows it as being a circular rate usage.

Cover no. 5 (Figure 7) dated Mar. 15, (18)80, 2.30PM is also a circular rate usage on a Sc.U116 and was first reported by Mike Ellingson who submitted a black and white scan from a picture he had on file. A few days after receiving Mike's picture, the owner of the cover, Lauck Walton, sent a very fine color scan. An enlargement of the cancel (Figure 8) clearly shows the cancel

to be in black ink. It is my personal feeling that on March 15 they were testing the canceler as a non-heat stand alone inking device to see how many covers could be canceled by this method and then comparing it to the numbers canceled by using just heat.



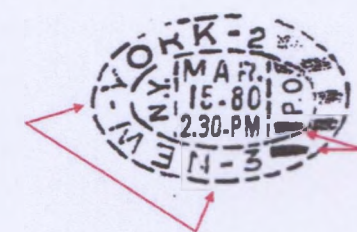
Cancel on 1st class mail.

Figure 9.

A closer look at the cancel

A quick recap of the 5 covers reported: Two were reported as 1st class mail and three as 3rd class mail.

The cancels on both of the 1st class mail covers (Figure 9) have wide spaces between the "dotted or dashed" segments in the lower left portion of the outer ring. This is the area that apparently received the greatest amount of pressure, on all of the covers, when struck by the hammer device. The bars on the right side of the cancel seem to be divided, or cut in half, and there is no bar in front of the "P" in "P.O."



Cancel on 3rd class mail.

Figure 10.

The cancels on all three of the 3rd class mail covers (Figure 10 illustrates one example) show the spacing between the "dotted or dashed" segments (in the same area) as being much closer to each other. It's hard to tell if any or all of the bars on the right are cut in half, but this cancel definitely shows a bar in front of the "P". All three 3rd class mail covers show a clear numeral "2" in the upper portion and a numeral "3" in the lower portion of the cancel.

It's a shame we can't make out a numeral in the upper portion of the cancel on either of the 1st class mail covers. This upper numeral may have represented the number for the canceling head, or for that matter, a completely different canceling device.

I guess it's quite possible that there were more than one device tested, one in the 1st class mail department of the post office and another in the Circular or 3rd class mail department.

Advantages and disadvantages of the "Pyro-Canceling Device", as I see it.

The only advantage that I can readily see is in the greater number of covers that a heat producing device could process as compared to a normal handstamp that would require the additional step of pre-loading it with ink.

The disadvantages seem numerous. Besides the cost of a fairly sophisticated device, the amount of gas needed, and the potential accidental injury to both operator and mail by heat would appear great. Just having to turn down the gas to the head (or possibly turning it off completely) every half hour to replace the hot time slugs would be most disadvantageous.

I believe the disadvantages certainly outweigh the advantages and I can see why the "Pyro-Canceling Device" was not, after testing, adopted by the New York Post Office. I'm sure the NYPO considered the use of a hand held heating device, to cancel the tens of thousands of letters that passed through the various departments, as being totally unsuitable.

In closing, I'd like to thank all the USCC members mentioned above for their help with this article and hope the readers will send additional information or scans of unreported covers to our editor for any update article that might be made. This article should, by no means, close the door on research into the use and history of New York City's "Pyro-Canceling Device".

The Danger of Wishful Thinking

by John Valenti

Let's face it. We all love a bargain. Who among us isn't excited to find that great cancellation item, unidentified and underpriced, in a dealer's stock. That one item can make our whole day spent at a bourse. Not only do we have something to add to our collection, but we have a success story to share.

And then, who among us has not also discovered, belatedly, that our great find is something less than the bargain we thought, a fake, an alteration, something created to fool the collector. If only we had taken greater care examining the item. If only we hadn't let our wishfulness get in the way of our better judgment.

As a dealer with a specialization in cancellation material I examine thousands of "fancy" cancels, both legitimate and fake. Nevertheless, I admit to succumbing to wishfulness like any collector. So, I write this article to help the casual cancellation collector avoid (and to remind myself of) the pitfalls of wishful thinking.

First, there is the "toolset" that a collector needs to bring to cancellation collecting. Of course, we all know the physical tools that allow us to examine and verify. These include tongs, perforation gauge and 10x lens. There are other tools, such as ultra-violet lamps that can help detect alterations, bleached pen cancels, and the like, but we generally do not have such tools available to us when we are examining potential purchases at a show.

Next, the cancel collector should develop a good basic knowledge of the killers used in his area of interest. Reference materials are invaluable. Some of the basics are Skinner-Eno¹, Whitfield², and Cole³. It's not that you need to carry your philatelic library with you to every stamp show, but publications such as these can provide a good sense of killers used during different periods. Specialized cancellation references are also important. I, for one, always carry a copy of the Weiss⁴ NYFM tracings. Yet knowledge acquired through our repetitive viewing of volumes of items in our regular search efforts is easily the most valuable.

Perhaps the most important thing that a cancellation collector can bring to this hobby is skepticism. Is the item or bargain "too good to be true?" (Remember, not all fakes are offered cheaply.) Why has no one else noticed this item? (Am I the only "expert?") I do not know that much about this particular item, but surely it is worth more than what the dealer is asking for it. (Hasn't the dealer shown this to someone who does know?) We all so much want our "find fantasy" to be true that it is easy to fail to consider such questions.

To illustrate how tools, knowledge and skepticism can help avoid the pitfalls of wishful thinking, I have selected two examples of my own mistaken wishfulness.

Figure 1a shows a Scott #147 bearing what appears to be a VF, nearly SOTN strike of NYFM fancy killer, Weiss type GE-S6. This is a rare NYFM, only known used on the National issue Banknote stamps. This NYFM cancel is, however, fake. This can be ascertained principally by two observations. (1) The stamp shows clear evidence of another cancellation that appears to be a light quartered cork



Figure 1a

killer, obscured by the NYFM. This killer, almost certainly the original, can best be observed under the chin of Washington and along the left edge of the stamp. The fake NYFM only partly obliterates the earlier cancellation. (2) As is apparent in Figure 1b, the ink of the NYFM



Figure 1b

killer bleeds through to the back of the stamp. The inks used to apply the real NYFM killers did not do this.

I discovered this stamp on a sheet of 3 cent greens in a dealer's stock, apparently previously unnoticed by casual collectors. Other, obviously genuine but less rare, NYFM killers were also on this page of cancellations.

This was an item that I hoped to buy cheap. And I better buy it before someone else recognizes its scarcity. I knew several customers who would very much want this stamp, a real potential money maker. Moreover, I had never previously encountered this rare killer in decades of collecting and dealing.

My encounter with this stamp is a perfect example of how my own wishful thinking clouded my judgment (and eyesight). My wishfulness would not let me believe what technically I knew, that this was a fake. Let's look at the facts:

1) Two inconsistent killers on the same stamp. Most fakers of fancy cancels are amateurs and cheap. A used 3 cent green can be acquired for pennies. Selling the faked item for just a few dollars provides a significant return on investment. More serious fakers may buy higher value used stamps and clean the original cancel (often a pen cancellation) before adding the new killer. Same formula for deception for a little more money. Close examination, using a lens if high detail is required, should help dispel the power of wishfulness.

2) Ink from the cancellation bleeding through the stamp. Again, most fakers are amateurs. They do not perform rigorous analysis and study of inks used in different periods.

Instead, they use what is convenient and available. Thus, the ink pad becomes their tool of choice. Unfortunately for the faker, the type of ink available for modern ink pads is completely different from that used by 19th century postal clerks. Black ink pad inks are generally less intense; the pattern of the ink pad frequently transfers to the cancellation; and the ink used tends to bleed, both through the stamp paper and around the killer, reducing the sharpness of its impression.

3) Is it the right stamp? It is often important to be able to identify similar appearing stamps to verify the validity of a cancellation. In the case of the Figure 1 stamp, the faker chose the correct issue to fake this NYFM killer, a National issue stamp. Knowing when and where certain killers were used is important. A similar situation arises with identifying faked Banknote grills. I most frequently see fake grills on soft paper stamps, such as the 15 cent American issue (Scott #189) and the 10 cent re-engraved issue (Scott #209). Fakers select the soft paper stamps because it is easier to impress the fake grill on these. (A discussion of grills and the detection of their fakes are beyond the scope of this article.)

Figure 2a pictures a Scott #26 tied on piece by a Wataga, Illinois postmark and an attractive diagonally split horizontal



Figure 2a

grid killer. Here again, knowledge, references and tools can help one identify the killer on this stamp as a fake. Figure 2b is an enlarged detail of the killer.

Again, let's apply our "toolset" to analyze this item:

1) Attribution. Skinner-Eno⁵ lists this killer design as SD-G 88 on 1861 issues from Oquawka, Illinois. Neither the fact that Skinner-Eno attributes this killer to Oquawka and not Wataga, Illinois, nor the fact that it is attributed to 1861 issues whereas here it appears on an 1857 issue, is a definitive problem. Misattributions and uses of killers across different stamp issues are rather common events. However, it is the first inconsistency.

2) Killer design. With a copy of Skinner-Eno one notes that it almost perfectly matches the tracing in the book. Real killers normally show variations, the product of inking, angle of strike, wear to the killer device, and other factors. Fakers do not have the real items from which to make copies, so rely on



Figure 2b

published tracings for their models. Indeed, it is typical for fakers faithfully to reproduce the published images, even reproducing the known mistakes in these tracings.

3) Killer placement. Note the location of the killer relative to the postmark. It almost appears to be duplexed, although this is highly unlikely since duplexing of killers with postmarks for this period is only known from a few large post offices. What is more notable is the proximity of killer and postmark. Why would the postmaster need to kill the stamp with both the postmark and a separate killer? It is my experience with covers and cancellations from this period that where a separate killer is used, the postmark does not touch the stamp and is frequently well separated to another part of the cover.

4) Killer ink. Figure 2b reveals the most definitive condemnation of this fake. First note the differences in intensity of the ink used in the postmark as compared to that for the killer. The postmark ink is darker and more opaque. A magnified examination of the killer itself delivers the final evidence of fakery. Note the overall grainy pattern of the killer's inking. This and the lighter ink are clear evidence of the use of an ink pad to apply this killer.

As should be apparent from my experiences, even a professional can let wishful thinking impair good judgment. I hope that sharing these provides you, the reader and cancellation collector, tools to avoid the pitfalls of wishfulness.

(Endnotes)

- ¹ Skinner, Hubert C. and Eno, Amos, *United States Cancellations 1845-1869*, American Philatelic Society, 1980.
- ² Whitfield, Kenneth A., *Cancellations Found on 19th Century U.S. Stamps*, U.S. Cancellation Club, 2002.
- ³ Cole, James M., *Cancellations and Killers of the Banknote Era 1870-1894*, The U. S. Philatelic Classics Society, Inc., 1995.
- ⁴ Weiss, William R., Jr., *The Foreign Mail Cancellations of New York City 1870-1878*, William R. Weiss, Jr., 1990.
- ⁵ Skinner, Hubert C. and Eno, Amos, op. cit., p. 28.

Star Ellipses

by Roger D. Curran

Ellipse cancelers became popular in the U.S. beginning in the mid-1870s and appealed to large post offices for a couple of reasons. They were manufactured in a durable metal that didn't require frequent replacement and could be produced in sets with a run of numbers in the center which allowed the identification of the clerks who used them. Letters were employed but to a lesser extent and these sometimes represented PO stations. As time went on, ellipses without numbers or letters appeared – sometimes with a void in the center and sometimes with designs of one sort or another. Such uses were primarily, but by no means exclusively, from smaller post offices. Also, ellipse designs came to be manufactured in rubber as well as metal and this resulted in reduced cost. Smaller post offices didn't need, of course, a run of numbers and other designs were popular. Letters were sometimes chosen by smaller post offices to designate the name of the post office; for example, "R" for Rauchtown, PA.

The two most frequently seen designs not involving numbers or letters were solid dots and stars. Few other designs have been reported. Crosses in several styles are noted but they are not at all common. This article takes a look at ellipses with stars in the center. As might be expected, the star is by far and away the most common "fancy" variation from the norm of letters and numbers.

Few star ellipses are seen on 3 cent greens. The most common example, and the only one noted with any frequency, is a hollow star from Hoboken, NJ – see Figure 1 from Burr. I believe it was used for a considerable time as I have seen off-cover examples on stamps issued as late as the mid – 1890s. Of course, this design could have been used by other post offices but this author has never seen such reports. If readers can amplify the period of use at Hoboken, they are encouraged to do so.



Figure 1

There was an explosion of star ellipses during the Sc 210 (1883-7) era. This continued through the Sc 213 and small banknote periods and into the first bureau issues. Some of the primary reports in the literature together with examples that I can add are presented below.

The only advertisements for star ellipses I have seen are those of John Goldsborough of Philadelphia, but surely there are others. One of Goldsborough's illustrations is shown in Figure 2. This is obviously a reduced-size image but I believe it can be matched to the five covers in Figure 3. The commonalities are as follows: bold lettering in the CDS with more than normal separation



Figure 2

between the letters, ellipses of seven bars with rather wide spacing, one star point facing straight down, and minimal distance between CDS and killer. Cole illustrates a Croton Lake, NY duplex dated 3/5/88 that is clearly of this type. I suspect the Niagara University



Figure 3

duplex in Figure 4 can be added, with spacing between the letters reduced due to the larger numbers of letters required. Although one cannot assume that markings illustrated in ads were actually used, the Union City illustration is accompanied by a testimonial from the postmaster, so perhaps examples from this post office are out there to be found. Incidentally, the Figure 2 image was taken from a two-page Goldsborough ad that was presented in an article entitled "More on 19th Century Cancel Suppliers" by Tom Clarke in the November 2002 *La Posta*. The testimonials in the ad are dated during the 1881 to early 1885 period, so perhaps the

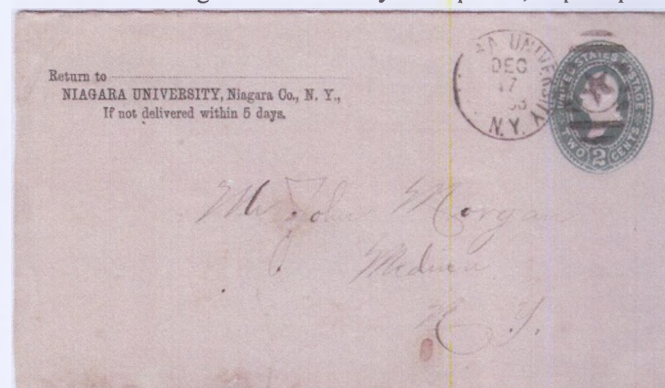


Figure 4



Figure 5

ad was distributed in 1885 or 1886. Gilbert Burr illustrated a tracing (Figure 5) of what I think is the Goldsborough ellipse and reported it used at Rochester, NY, and Auburn, NY.

The Williamstown, MA post office used this style of Goldsborough handstamp and was apparently enamored with the star design because, when it subsequently employed a different handstamp, it continued to use a star in the ellipse – see Figure 6. The latter



Figure 6

handstamp design employed the well-known “time out” feature with time slugs between the CDS and killer. This subject was discussed in the Summer 1999 *NEWS*, together with a census of “time out” covers from Northfield, CT, Lockport, NY, and Williamstown. Of these three post offices, Williamstown was the only one to use a star ellipse and the dates reported were from September 1872 to November 1898.



Figure 7



Figure 8

I’m quite sure that the “time out” handstamps were also supplied by Goldsborough notwithstanding a very different “look” from the earlier examples. One of the illustrations in the above-mentioned ad showed a “time out” marking – see Figure 7.



Figure 9



Figure 10



Figure 11



Figure 12

(Presumably this Bombay, India marking was for illustrative purpose only and didn’t represent an actual handstamp.) Additional evidence comes from the transition of one “time out” handstamp to another at Lockport with the earlier style showing the lettering characteristic of the Goldsborough handstamps discussed above – see Figure 8.

Now for some distinctive examples. Figure 9 is Cole EL-22 and reported from McLean, IL. Figure 10 is a very nice cancel from Stoneham, MA and, I believe, is only seen during the Sc 213 (1887-1890) era. Figure 11 is from Boston, MA and is apparently very scarce. The circumstances of its use are unknown. Blake and Davis do not associate it with a postmark, so perhaps it was an unduplexed killer for non-first class mail. Figure 12 shows an odd ellipse configuration. Who can report the origin?

Figure 13 shows a dot in the center of the star from Sheldon, ND. Figure 14 is an ellipse that tapers down to a point at the ends. The Brockton, MA cards show a five year spread – May 1887 – May 1992.

Duplex handstamps were, of course, frequently pressed into service to produce received markings even though the killer portion was superfluous. Figure 15 shows two examples involving star ellipses – Allaire, NJ and East Woodstock, CT.



Figure 13



Figure 14

Figure 16 shows “simplex” star ellipses although it is possible the Wynnewood example is actually duplexed. At least one more cover is needed for confirmation purposes. The Bart CDS, incidentally, shows the distinctive Goldsborough lettering we have been discussing and the killer also has Goldsborough hallmarks.



Figure 16

There are some wider and bolder star ellipses (or “heavier,” to use Burr’s term) that are associated with post offices that would not be characterized as small. Figure 17, from Brookline Station,



Figure 17

MA is reported by Cole from August 1883 to June 1884. What is apparently the same design is reported by Willard from Chelsea Station, MA on a cover dated June 26, 1884. Figure 18 shows a star ellipse from Macon, GA with what is sometimes referred to



Figure 15



Figure 18

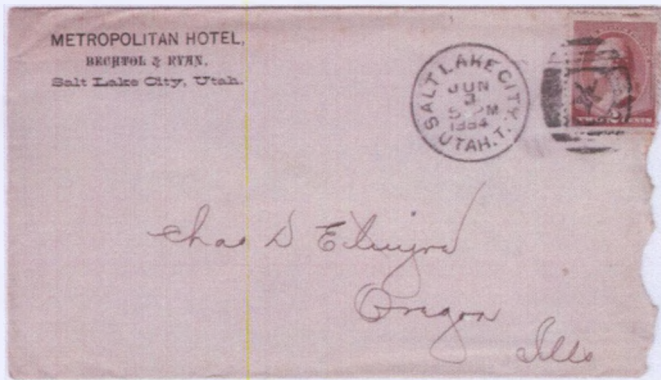


Figure 19

as a "solid barrel" along the sides with two bars above and two below. I have seen a 12/10/83 example and Willard reports it as late as 11/1/86. Figure 19 shows a somewhat similar design from Salt Lake City, Utah Territory dated 6/3/84 but with a smaller star that has a different orientation. Incidentally, where tracings of duplexed star ellipses are presented in the literature without the accompanying CDS, I have occasionally noted that they are shown upside down and thus the orientation of star points in the illustration is misleading.



Figure 20

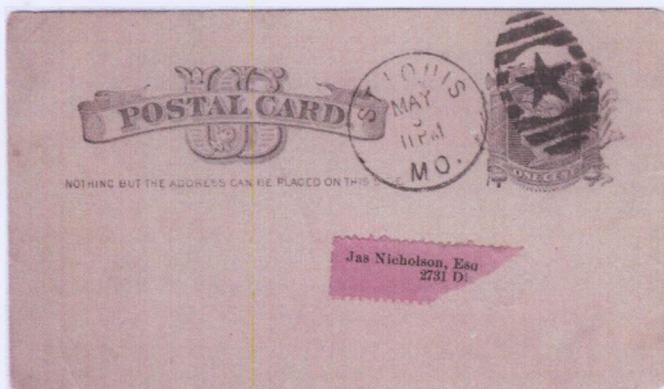


Figure 21

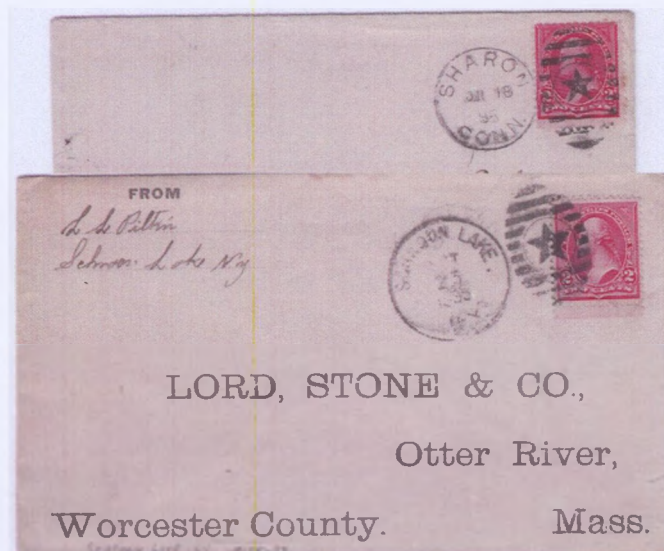


Figure 22

Probably the most common cancel of this larger type is from St. Louis (judging from off-cover examples I have seen) - see Figure 20 from Burr. Blunt star ends, particularly the one at the top, constitute the most distinctive feature. I have not seen it on cover but can show Figure 21, which is dated 1885 from the reverse. I surmise two St. Louis star ellipses with Figure 21 the first and Figure 20 for a second and perhaps longer period of time during the Sc 213 (1887-1890) era. In the Figure 21 duplex, there would be less space between CDS and killer. Will a St. Louis collector please help out on this matter!

Figure 22 shows two rather late uses - Sharon, CT (7/18/95) and Schroom Lake, NY (10/25/95).

The ink color for star ellipses is almost always black. Examples not in black, in my experience, are exceedingly scarce. Figure 23 is the only on-cover star ellipse in a colored



Figure 23

ink I have seen. The texture of the marking is suggestive of a ribbon dater but I strongly suspect that this effect results from the cloth covering of the ink pad. The design of the marking - both CDS and killer - certainly appears to be that of a Goldsborough handstamp.

The above probably does little more than scratch the surface of this interesting category of cancellations. Several other star ellipse designs are shown in Burr, Cole, and Willard. Reports of additional star ellipses or more information about the above examples will be welcomed.

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.

U.S. Domestic Postal Card Regulations, 1874-1885

By Robert Stendel

This book was recently published by the United Postal Stationery Society and covers some very obscure areas of postal regulations that help explain why we see certain markings and stamp combinations. An example contributed to the book by myself is shown in Figure 1. The bright blue “DUE 5” was applied at Chicago enforcing the regulation to “write the address only

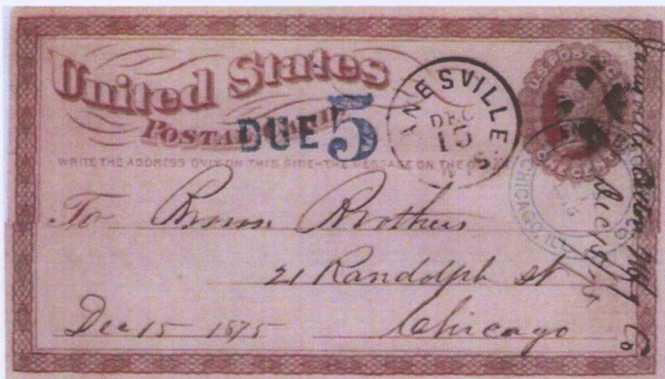


Figure 1. “Due 5” as the author had written the date on the lower left corner.

on this side”. “Dec. 15, 1875” was written on the lower left, and this was determined to be against postal card regulations. Thus it became a first class letter requiring 3¢ postage. Being short paid, there was a penalty of twice the postage requiring 6¢ minus the 1¢ already paid, owing 5¢. So far only three of these cards have been reported including the one shown by Charles Fricke in his book *A Contemporary Account of the First United States Postal Card, 1870-1875*. Though the PMG had issued a ruling on this subject, there have been very few examples found, and apparently this rule was disregarded by the vast majority of offices.

The book is profusely illustrated in color with 135 figures within its 90 pages. In addition to the above, it covers areas such as message-reply usage, advertised markings, registered cards, coated cards, steamboat markings, insurance receipts, forwarding and return to sender among its various pages. A message-reply example is shown in Figures 2 and 3. Again, it was one of my

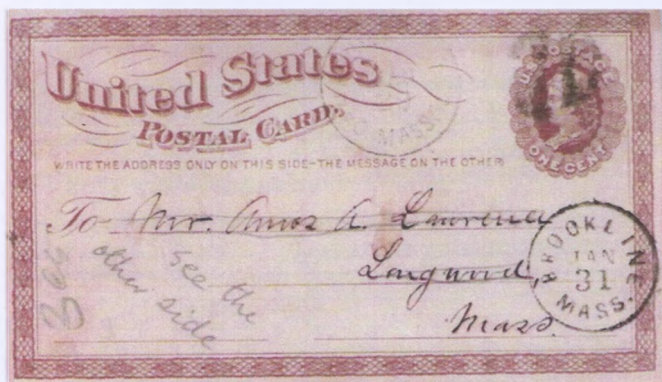


Figure 2. The Cambridge, MA, writer's handwriting could not be read by the reader at Brookline, MA.



Figure 3. Three cents was required to return postal card to the sender.

contributions. In this case the author was asking for information concerning his old class at Harvard. The recipient could not read his handwriting, and thus did not know to whom the information should be sent. He wrote “See the other side” on the lower left face and put a 1¢ stamp on the backside saying “I cannot read this signature, AAL”. Apparently he was hoping the originating post office might be better able to read the signature.

As there was no “Return to sender” allowance in the postal card regulations, the local PM wrote “3cts” on the lower left face and on the other side wrote “2cts more”, rating it as first class mail. A 2¢ stamp was added by the writer and apparently sent back to the original office. The final chapter to this little saga is the cryptic “No Luck” written below “Cambridge, Mass.”. Even the Cambridge PM could not make it out.

The book is available from the USPS for \$45 for non-members and \$35 for members at www.usps.org. It is also available from leading philatelic literature dealers. -- Roger Rhoads

More on M.O.B.

An August 2010 article briefly described an Alexandria Bay, NY postmark containing the initials “M.O.B.” at the bottom. Edward Willard provided interesting commentary on the use of “M.O.B. daters.”¹ He wrote in 1970 of personal recollection, no doubt from many years earlier, of M.O.B. purchases. He recalled a separate post office window where a clerk would validate, with strikes of an M.O.B. dater, both the money order and a receipt that was handed back to the sender. The sender would then put the completed money order in a previously prepared envelope and hand it back to the same clerk who then canceled the stamp with the M.O.B. dater or some other cancel that was on hand. Whether or not a specific window was involved, it seems reasonable to believe that this procedure did frequently occur and many of the cancels we see bearing M.O.B. marking did, in fact, carry money orders. Your editor had always assumed that uses of the M.O.B. daters as postmarks on letters were just done because they were handy to the person stamping the mails and were not likely related to whether the letters contained money orders.

(Endnote)

1. Willard, Edward L. *The United States Two Cent Red Brown of 1883-1887* (Vol. One), H.L. Lindquist Publications Inc. (1970), p. 125.

Dear Reader,

One of the interesting aspects of the field of cancellations is that of the makers and suppliers of handstamps to post offices. Much of what we know comes from advertisements that appeared in the periodical *United States Official Postal Guide* or from one page circulars sent out through the mail. However, these ads and circulars often give but a small sampling of the markings available for sale. For example, an 1882 ad by the F.P. Hammond Co. illustrates several markings but states prominently:

"Before purchasing, send for our 48-page catalogue, containing over one hundred different Post Office Daters alone."

The Hammond Company, of course, sold the wheel-of-fortune cancel. An 1879 advertising postal card from the Excelsior Rubber Co. illustrated three markings and asked the reader to send a stamp to receive:

"...Our large circular showing twelve different styles of Daters and other miscellaneous stamps, for Post Office use."

I have before me a small 1890's booklet from the Henry B. Chambers and Bros. Co. offering steel postmarking and canceling stamps. It shows seven handstamps and the opening paragraph states that the handstamps shown are "...only a few of the styles we manufacture." It would be very helpful if we could locate some of the more comprehensive circulars and catalogs. Apparently a few – perhaps very few – Hammond catalogs do exist in collectors' hands but I have not seen one or reproductions in the literature. If any Club members have 19th century catalogs or large circulars pertaining to post office handstamps or know of their whereabouts, the *NEWS* would very much welcome learning of this. All of the above is brought to mind because an article in this issue on ellipse cancels with a star in the center refers, at various points, to a large John Goldsborough broadside for post office handstamps.

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. There is space for write-in votes but if you choose this option please be sure that you have the Club member's permission. If you have comments or recommendations about Club projects or activities, please jot them down on the back of the form. You will note an increase in dues for 2011. After a careful review by your board of directors, the \$5 increase was determined necessary to meet current and projected expenses.

Readers are reminded of the discounted prices for back issues of the *NEWS* that are in effect through December 2010: 1951-1997 issues, \$1.50 each; 1998 to May 2008 issues, \$2.25 each; with an additional discount of 5% on orders over \$100. This special offer is made in conjunction with the recently announced *NEWS* index which has met a long-standing need.

It is a real pleasure to include this issue an announcement (see separate article) of an important update on the popular Wesson TOB markings. Ralph Edson and the late Gilbert Levere developed this report over a considerable number of years and readers with an interest in the subject are encouraged to consider adding this reference to their libraries. Wesson handstamps were used by nearly 30 post offices, including several of the nation's largest, plus several RPOs.

Finally, the USCC will staff a society table and hold a meeting at the APS Stampshow this coming August in Columbus, OH, details to follow. We hope to see many Club members there and encourage one frame or larger exhibits of U.S. cancellations!

Best wishes for a happy holiday season.

Roger Curran

NEW PUBLICATION AVAILABLE

Wesson "Time-on-Bottom" Markings Revisited

Compiled by Ralph A. Edson and Gilbert L. Levere

Volume 5 of the *La Posta* Monograph Series, entitled *Walter D. Wesson's "Time on Bottom" Duplex Hand Cancelers*, appeared in 1990. Consisting largely of an illustrated listing of earliest and latest reported dates of Wesson TOB markings by post office on a state by state basis, it was compiled by Russ Hanmer and represents an update of a series of ten articles by Ted Bozarth on the subject that appeared in the *U.S. Cancellation Club News* from 1982-84. The new publication announced herewith is an extensive further update to the foundation laid down by Mr. Bozarth and expanded by Mr. Hanmer. It also extends the scope of reporting to include much more attention to postmark differences.

This report is contained in a 3-hole binder and is presented in a format similar to the 1990 monograph with all markings illustrated. Photocopy images are used with some variation in quality. This publication is priced at \$25 postpaid to domestic and \$30 to foreign addresses. Checks should be made payable to "U.S.C.C." and orders sent to 20 University Ave., Lewisburg, PA 17837.

NOW AVAILABLE

U.S. Cancellation Club NEWS

Cross Reference Index for all issues: 1951-2009

Presented in three separate sections:
Cancellations, Post Offices, and Article Titles
\$18 postpaid to U.S. addresses
Checks payable to "U.S.C.C." and sent to
U.S.C.C., 20 University Ave., Lewisburg PA 17837

Light Strikes

Christopher Perry submits the whimsical cancel shown here as Figure 1. It was struck very lightly so it will not show clearly on the stamp. However, John Donnes was able to make the largely complete tracing. What shall we call it – “funny face”, “rising sun”? Chris reports that it was one of a number of late 1800s cancels he had an opportunity to acquire recently. Most of them were not unusual but Figure 1 stood out. He could find nothing in the literature about it nor could your editor. One can logically assume that it came from a rubber-faced handstamp, especially when considering the fact that Chris reports it in a “light black of even grey” ink. If readers can report additional examples, on or off cover, they are urged to do so.



Figure 1

Figure 2 illustrates another lightly struck cancel, no doubt also from a rubber-faced handstamp, but in this case we know

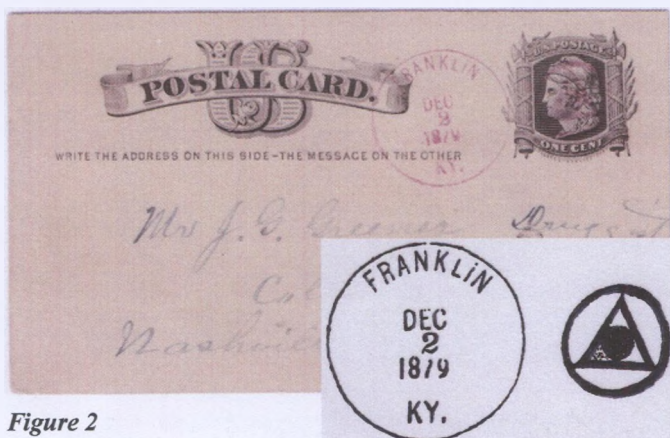


Figure 2

the origin and can be quite sure it is genuine. Cole reports the same cancel (GET-48) from Fall River, WI in 1884 and Whitfield reports it (#1971) from Island Pond, IN and (in violet) from Lower Salem, OH. It thus appears to be a commercially made canceler advertised to postmasters. Is there a particular meaning to the design? I have wondered about whether it is Masonic in origin and consulted a “Masonic Cancellation Classification Chart” compiled years ago by Milton Greenbaum – see Summer 1998 NEWS. The triangle isn’t identified as a major Masonic design but under Greenbaum’s heading of “Masonic Significance”, the triangle, star and crescent, and Maltese Cross are listed.

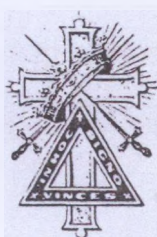


Figure 4

We do see Masonic trowel designs in cancels and these are, of course, largely triangular but with at least a small handle also present. Does the presence of the dot in the center of the triangle (“moon” or “sun” perhaps?) help with identification?

There is a book entitled *Classic Clip Art* which presents a collection of copyright-free images taken from the 1900 edition of the *America Type Founders*

Cut Book, a catalog for printers. It has a section on Masonic emblems and there a couple of triangles shown – see Figure 3.¹ However, there were two other images in this section that really caught your editor’s attention – see Figures 4.² Is Figure 1 a Masonic cancel? And is the particular representation of the skull and crossbones in Figure 4, which is a cancellation design used by a number of post offices, also Masonic in origin? Is there a Mason amongst our membership who can provide some clarification?

(Endnotes)

¹ *Classic Clip Art*, Gloria Hale Brooke, an imprint of Random House Value Publications, Inc. (1996), pp 134-5.

² Ibid.

St Louis Killers, But Not for Letter Mail

by Roger Curran

The St. Louis post office used some very bold and distinctive cancels on non-first class mail during the 1870s and early 1880s – see Figure 1. They are found basically on 1¢ and

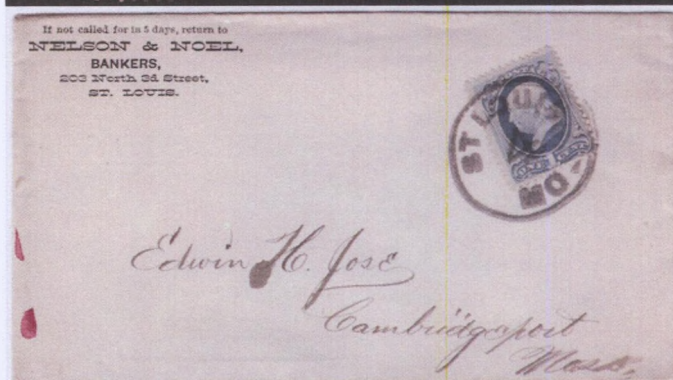


Figure 1 (see also next page)

2¢ stamps. Examples on higher values are probably quite scarce. There were apparently several different “sets” used with numbers in the center. The numbers run from “1” to “4”. There are also cancels of this general style found with “B” in the center, presumably used by Station “B.” As with the numbers, several variations of the “B” letter are seen. Are there examples from other St. Louis Stations? Figure 2 shows a “4” cancel in blue ink. These cancels are seen as late as on the 1¢ re-engraved issue

Thanks to Dan Haskett for supplying material for several of the images in this article.

Odd Machine Cancels?

Two unusual cancellations are presented below that raised the question of possible machine origin. Figure 1 was submitted by Dan Haskett. One might speculate that it was a grid (machine or handstamp) on top of some sort of CDS. Research subsequently uncovered the answer and while it is no machine cancel, we can say that it is undoubtedly a scarce and possibly even rare cancel. It is part of a set of Boston cancels designed for use on non-first class mail.



Figure 1



Figure 2

An illustration from Blake and Davis shows the "2" cancel (Figure 2) from this set. The authors did not report either a "3" cancel or a "1". For the "2", they listed it on a 2 cent 1879 stamp with the cover dated August 1880. Dan located an example of the "1" cancel in the Bill Wiess net price sale #62, page 39, on a War

Department Sc 0116 stamp. Can readers show additional examples? Incidentally, there is also a set of smaller cancels of this general design – see Figure 3.



Figure 3

The cancel in Figure 4 is another odd item that has somewhat of a machine cancel look. (An early Barry cancel variety, perhaps?) Your editor is not familiar with it and machine cancel specialist Mike Ellingson was consulted. He reported that he had not seen the cancel and believed that it was not a machine cancel. Can any reader show a more complete strike and identify the origin of this enigmatic cancel?



Figure 4



Figure 1 (see also previous page)



Figure 2

(Figure 3) but by the time of Sc 210 stamp they were gone.

The above discussed killers were replaced by double oval cancels (Figure 4), likely produced by rubber-faced handstamps.

Willard reported usages with a "1", "2" or "3" in the center and also with a "C", "W" or a void in the center.



Figure 3

There is obviously much more to be discussed about the cancels in Figures 1-3 and the assistance of readers in filling out the story will be very much welcomed.

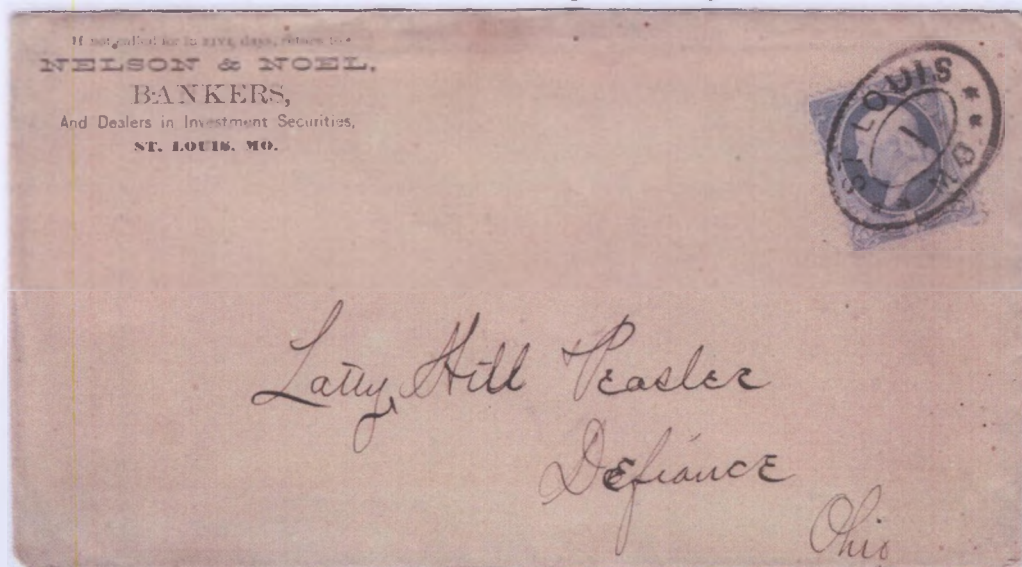


Figure 4

Chicago "Clock" Making

by Roger D. Curran

Figure 1 illustrates a Sc 183 with a most unusual Chicago marking that was not intended to be a canceler but was pressed into such service nonetheless. Markings of this general type are associated with special delivery service which began on October 1, 1885. Examples from Chicago,¹ Boston² and San Francisco³ are shown in Figures 2. (The General Delivery Office marking is interesting.) Just when the Figure 1 marking was used is not clear but I'm confident that it involves, in this case, a late use of the stamp.



Figure 1

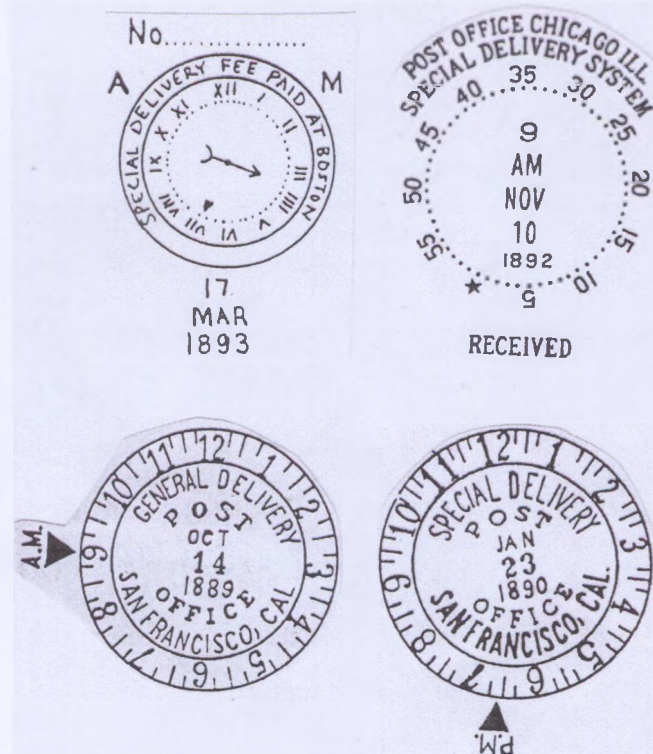


Figure 2

Readers who can add more information are encouraged to do so. A very interesting collection could be put together of seldom seen postal markings that found happenstance use as cancelers.

(Endnotes)

- ¹ Piskiewicz, Leonard *Chicago Postal Marking and Postal History* (2006), James E. Lee Publishing, p.275.
- ² Corette, Thomas *The Two Cent Columbian—Cancellations Part III Auxiliary and Service Markings*.
- ³ Mahoney, John *San Francisco Postal Markings 1847-1900* (1992) *La Posta Monograph Series*, Vol. 8, p. 58.

Canceling Bars in the Postmark — an Update

The May 2010 *NEWS* carried a brief article on incorporating canceling bars in the CDS, a practice that was used, at least briefly, by several post offices in the 1851-61 period. Three

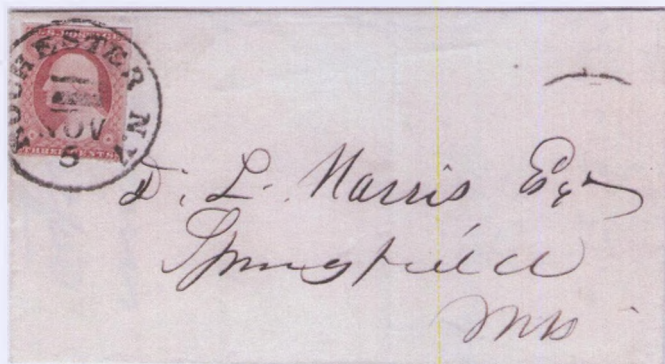


Figure 1

examples from the NYPO were shown but none from elsewhere. Figure 1 illustrates an example from Rochester, NY on an orange-brown stamp. The date is assumed to be November 5, 1851.

NYFM Dissent

Nick Kirke wrote an article, appearing the August 2010 *NEWS*, on fakery as it involves New York Foreign Mail cancels. One of the cancels he discussed is shown here as Figure 1. Nick noted that the cancel was opined by the Philatelic Foundation to be genuine, but he expressed several reasons why he believes it to be a fake.

Bill Wiess subsequently contacted the *NEWS* to offer a dissenting opinion. He stated that he previously owned the stamp in question and carefully examined it several times because of the controversy that surrounds NYFM cancels on off-cover stamps that were issued later than the known period of NYFM uses on cover. He concluded, as did the PF, that the cancel is genuine.

WANTED

Scotts Type A-25 (#65, 88, 94, etc) both on and off cover with an S&E GE-P 29 San Francisco Type 1 Cogwheel cancel.

Ronald Williams
PO Box 132
Brunswick, TN 38014

rmbwilliams@earthlink.net

(Bill is, of course, very knowledgeable about NYFM cancels, having written the 1990 standard reference book on the subject.) He also mentioned that, in response to Nick's concern about the ink in the Figure 1 cancel being "rather darker" than in strikes during the established period of use, such a difference may be attributable to the later use of the cancel and the possible difference in ink formulation that may have existed. He urges readers to bear in mind both the PF opinion and his independent conclusion in deciding what to think about the Figure 1 cancellation.



Figure 1

Your editor has not seen the stamp. However, I will say that it is hard for me to conceive of a realistic circumstance whereby a NYFM cancel such as Figure 1 would be used so late. The latest reported on-cover uses of this particular cancel (Weiss GE-EP4) are in September 1876 and the Sc 210 stamp wasn't issued until October 1, 1883. This means that the cancel was struck *at least* seven years later. I know of no foreign or domestic covers that show such a late usage of *any* NYFM cancel, or usage close to it, although Bill reminded me that there is an 1881 wrapper to Madeira known bearing a GE-EN5 cancel. Given the totality of the situation, however, I believe the Figure 1 cancel has a couple of strikes against it.

Reader comment is invited.

Help Wanted

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

In black ink

March 10 & 22, May 25, August 3, and October 30

In blue ink

March 27 & 29, September 26, November 27 and December 4

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

United States Stamps and Postal History, and Worldwide Literature Specialized Fancy Cancels

Please visit our website to see our extensive inventory of fancy cancels. We have material from many sources including the Hubert C. Skinner mounted collections of N.Y. Foreign Mails 1850-78 and Fancy Cancels.



Zebra Head
(S-E #PA-H 13) a rare NYFM cancel. *Ex-Skinner*.



Pumpkin Head
(Whitfield #123) complete bold strike on #136.



"Three Oak Trees", two strikes in *olive green* and matching "Three Oaks Mich Jul 30" cds, 2009 PF Cert., *Ex-Skinner*.



Centennial "100"
of Waterbury Ct., 1979 PF Cert., *Ex-Bitgood*.



Four-Bar Shield
(S-E #PS-S 12) of Cambridge Mass., perfect strike on #94, Very Fine.

Matthew W. Kewriga

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www.kewriga.com

Cancellation Gallery

