



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

Vol. 30, No. 7, Whole No. 280, August 2011

## **After 122 Years a New Fancy Cancel Is Revealed: A Solid Shield with "US" and "RF" From Wilton, Connecticut**

*by Joe. H. Crosby*

The postmaster in Wilton, Connecticut in October 1889 was Richard H. Fitch. He was locally known as Dick Fitch and was quite a man, as we shall soon learn. He had fashioned a striking patriotic cancellation in the shape of a solid shield with negative letters "U S" and his own initials "R F" to be used as the killer on postage stamps mailed from Wilton.



**Figure 1.** Wilton, Connecticut Fancy Cancel, October 6 (1889 from backstamp).

Since it is so distinctive, it is somewhat surprising that no one in philately has ever written up this 122 year old cancellation and its origin. In fact it has heretofore not even been listed or illustrated in any of the standard catalogs of 19th century fancy cancels or in periodicals devoted to such things as shield cancels, "US" cancels, or postmaster's initial cancels; i.e., Cole, Whitfield, Salkind, Herst-Sampson, and *U.S. Cancellation Club News*.<sup>1</sup> It also is not listed in *Connecticut Post Offices and Postmarks*, by Arthur J. Warmsley where a whole chapter of 36 pages is devoted to Connecticut fancy cancels. However, Warmsley noted that his listing was not complete and he cautioned that a cancel not shown does not constitute a rarity. With this article, I hope readers will report additional strikes of the "US/RF Shield" cancel, and maybe even help discover that Richard Fitch used other fancy killers.

*Continued on page 118....*



## The U.S. Cancellation Club NEWS

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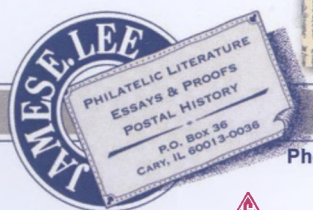
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## NYFM Update, Part 2

by Dan Richards



Figure 1.

The next unlisted New York Foreign Mail cancel, as shown in Figure 1, is a peculiar one. The cancel design appears to be taken from an ink blot personality test. The killer measures 27mm to 28mm from point to point and was used apparently one day only, March 21, 1874.

Figure 2 illustrates a folded letter sheet (FLS) bearing a 6¢ Continental (Scott #159) tied by our unlisted cancel. It has a blue New York merchant's oval handstamp corner card and is addressed to London. The 6¢ stamp prepaid the 6¢ single letter rate to England. The red New York exchange office date stamp is dated March 21. The cover, as per sender's routing instructions, traveled aboard NGL Line's "Donau", arriving at Southampton, England on April 1, 1874.

A second example of this unlisted cancel is shown in Figure 3. It is a folded letter sheet to France that also has a New York Merchant's hand stamp and bears a 10¢ Continental (Scott #161) tied by same unlisted NYFM cancel. It has a New York postmark dated March 21, 1874. The 10¢ stamp prepaid the single direct letter rate via French packet to French port only, with 5 decimes due for inland transit. The cover was carried by the French Line steamer "Pereire", arriving at Brest, France on March 30, 1874.



Figure 2.



Figure 3.

I would welcome any additional information on this unusual NYFM cancel or any other unlisted NYFM cancel. Please send to [chr327@att.com](mailto:chr327@att.com).



## New York Foreign Mail Cancels GE-EP4 and GE-EP4 – Some Observations

by Alex Gundel

As collector of postal stationery, I am aware that the NYFM cancels GE-EP3 and GE-EP4 are found more frequently than any other NYFM cancels on postal cards. Also, the discussion in the Weiss book about these two cancels and the question of how many different types might be subsumed under the two designs recently aroused my interest. The illustrations of NYFM cancel types that are published do not really help in answering this question since they present idealized cancels that, strictly speaking, do not exist on covers.

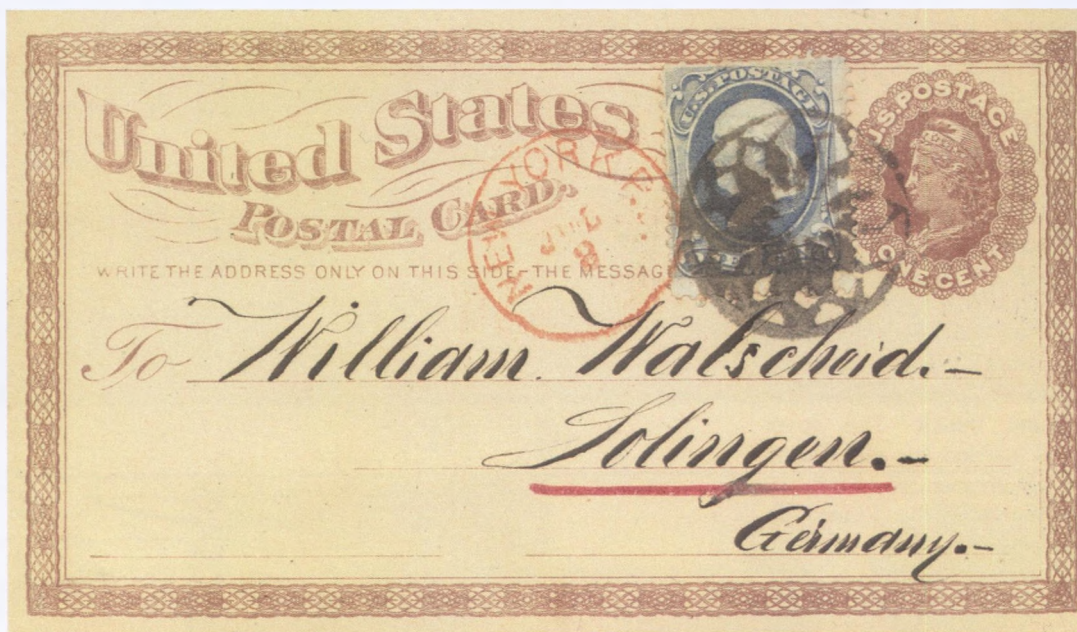
Weiss distinguishes between the two cancels by their diameter: 26 to 27 mm for GE-EP3 and 29 to 31 mm for GE-EP4. He also mentions differences in the size of the 12 diamonds that he had observed. According to Weiss, GE-EP3 was used from April 25, 1875 until October 1876, GE-EP4 from December 15, 1875 to September 1876. Both periods of use are rather long and were thus questioned by Weiss who thought that the long periods might indicate the use of more than only two devices.

I produced transparencies of scans of clear strikes and listed all covers for which I found an illustration. From the Weiss book, Nick Kirke's collection and my collection, I found, in total, 36 dated covers.

Figure 1 shows a scan of a very early use of GE-EP3.



**Figure 1.** Scan of GE-EP3 from a cover dated May 1, 1875. A distinctive feature of this cancel is the short distance between two of the points of the star (7:30 hours).



**Figure 2.** Postal card of July 8, 1875 showing a slightly worn GE-EP3. The two close points of the star are at 2:30 hours.

It is from a cover of May 1, 1875 (Weiss, page 109). Since the device was new at the time, the strike is clean and clear. The diameter of the cancel is 26.5 mm measured between points in the middle of the rim. I consider the short distance of 5 mm between two points of the star (at 7:30 hours in Figure 1) and a wider distance of 6 mm to the next points on both sides to be a distinctive feature of the cancel. The diamond below the two closer points is short and farther away from the center of the cancel than most of the other diamonds. This feature was found on 15 cancels dated as late as July 31, 1875. They are measured between 26.5 and 27.5 mm. A postal card of July 8 is illustrated in Figure 2 and the cancel shows some wear and inking problems.

Subsequently, GE-EP3 appears duplexed with a date stamp on mail to Central America on two covers of October 18 and November 16, 1875 (Figure 3).

Only one of the 36 covers indicates that GE-EP3 was used again as a separate cancel after GE-EP3 appeared in a duplex cancel (Figure 4). However, the cancel in Figure 4 is only partly struck, possibly due to wear. The two close points are not clearly visible but otherwise the cancel seems to match GE-EP3. The diameter measures 27 mm. In total, 18 of the 36 cancels that I could study are GE-EP3. Overall it was used for 8 months. I consider the main period of use the time until the end of July 1875.



**Figure 3.** Cancel GE-EP3 duplexed with a date stamp from a cover of November 16, 1875 to Mexico. The two close points of the star are at 12:00 hours.



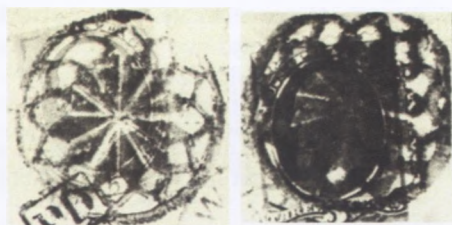
Weiss lists uses of GE-EP3 well into 1876. The two or three 1876 covers I have seen are GE-EP4 in my opinion. This may start an interesting discussion.

A larger cancel (Figure 5) appeared first on September 15, 1875 (Weiss, page 110). It measures 29 mm and in contrast to GE-EP3 the points of the star appear at equal distances from one another. The September 15 usage presents a key cover for the discussion of GE-EP4 since it bears four strikes, two of which are shown in Figure 5. They illustrate the inking problem that persisted with GE-EP4 throughout. The cancel on the left clearly shows the details of GE-EP4 whereas the cancel on the right clearly shows the details of GE-EP4 whereas the appearance of the right one resulted from stronger inking. It is easy to see how inking may have changed the apparent size of diamonds and the space between them.

I have identified 18 of the 36 covers as GE-EP4 uses with diameters measuring between 29 and 31 mm; very few measured more than 30 mm. The time period of use is about 12 months from September 15, 1875 until September 1876. Obviously, uses before December 1875 were considered GE-EP3 uses by Weiss.

A January 13, 1876 usage is the last one showing an almost complete rim. The later ones show less than 75% of the rim and sometimes no rim at all. The compilation of strikes in Figure 6 illustrates the combination of wear (missing rim), different inking (size of diamonds), and soiling by dried ink that probably contributed to the often strong lines and to the changes in the size of the diamonds.

Coming back to the question raised by Weiss, are there any subtypes? Certainly not for GE-EP3. After less than three months the device was already showing clear wear and subsequently the device was duplexed. The possible separate use in December 1875 is showing wear again. The distinctive features of GE-EP3 are the diameter of 26.5 to 27.5 mm and the two closer points of the star.



**Figure 5.** Two strikes of GE-EP4 from a cover of September 15, 1875. The left one shows the details of GE-EP4 clearly, whereas the right one has been applied with more ink which blurred details somewhat.



**Figure 6.** Compilation of three GE-EP4 strikes showing wear and inking problems. The dates of the strikes are February 18, 1876, December 22, 1875 and September 18, 1876.

The periods of use of GE-EP3 and GE-EP4 barely overlap. GE-EP4 is always larger than GE-EP3 with a diameter of 29 to 31 mm. After four months of use, the wear of GE-EP4 becomes considerable. Complete strikes of GE-EP4 are not observed for the last eight months of use. This fact almost excludes the necessity to think about subtypes of GE-EP4 unless a cancel was introduced that shows considerable defects from the start.

I am interested in discussing this matter further and would appreciate any comments and contributions by readers. I can be reached under alex.gundel@googlemail.com.

1. Grundel A (2011) "Census of US Postal Cards Showing New York Exchange Office Postmarks Until 1879." *Postal Stationery* Vol. 53 (377). pp. 21-24.
2. Weiss, WR (1990) *The Foreign Mail Cancellations of New York City 1870-1878*, pp. 108-20.
3. Gundel A (2010) "New York Foreign Mail to Central and South America From 1870 to 1876." *U.S. Cancellation Club News* Vol. 30 (275). pp. 21-24.



Wilton, Connecticut, continued from front page.

Richard H. Fitch was a Republican appointed in the Benjamin Harrison administration as Postmaster in Wilton, Connecticut and served from May 22, 1889 to November 1, 1893. Then, Democrat Grover Cleveland appointed George Taylor to replace him. In 1896 Richard Fitch and George Ogden formed the "Sound Money Club" to support the gold standard advocated by William McKinley. Fitch was rewarded by the McKinley administration with the Wilton postmaster appointment again from January 10, 1898 through September 23, 1909. His father, Joseph P. Fitch, was a Democrat who had served as Wilton Postmaster from 1839-1841 and again from 1844-1861. But Richard was not only different politically from his father, he was just plain different. A local historian summed him up as a real renaissance man. He is mentioned throughout the extensive local history book *"Wilton Connecticut: Three Centuries of People, Places, and Progress"*.<sup>2</sup>

He is first described as "married and was later divorced from Bertha Brady, a Wilton schoolteacher. Richard was a Wilton postmaster, Town Clerk, storekeeper, writer, photographer, staunch Republican, and the last Fitch in Wilton." Richard was born in 1866 and lived a full and interesting life. However, ten years after his divorce, Richard's memory failed in 1930 and he was moved to the Insane Asylum in Newtown and the Raymond/Fitch House was sold out of the family. Fitch died at that institution in 1943 at the age of 77.<sup>3</sup>

Richard Fitch moved a 12' x 12' building to the side of the town green in October, 1893 and opened a store called Dick's Inn. Here he sold a variety of five-cent cigars, candy and ice cream, and even bicycles. When he was reappointed postmaster he moved the post office to his little store, certainly making the post office a very eclectic place. However, he spent so much time



**Figure 2.** Richard H. Fitch, Postmaster Wilton, Connecticut. (Courtesy of Wilton Historical Society)

out of his office, allegedly picking up mail at the station, that the local wags dubbed it "Dick's Out."

During his first term as Postmaster in Wilton, Richard Fitch also worked as page editor for the *Ridgefield Press* in 1892, a position he retained, with a brief interruption, until 1910. During his second term as postmaster he had the same responsibilities for the *Norwalk Gazette* in 1898. In 1875, Richard's brother Arthur attempted a local news weekly called *The Weasel*.<sup>4</sup> Richard revived it from 1900 to 1903.<sup>5</sup>



**Figure 3.** Richard H. Fitch sitting in front of Dick's Inn (Note the post office sign behind the bicycle).



Fitch was a skilled photographer and often had his work published in national magazines. He published a number of Wilton real photo postcards which are highly sought after today. For a few years he published the Town Annual Reports. He unsuccessfully ran for state representative in 1916. His last public duty was as a special census taker for the selectmen of Wilton in 1925.<sup>6</sup>

The local historian accurately says "Dick Fitch had a way with words", and his newspaper columns over nearly 20 years still make entertaining reading as well as provide a window into everyday Wilton activities of the time. For example:

**May 22, 1891:** *"The Ladies Aid sociable last Thursday was greatly enjoyed by all. Not the least of the attractions was a little dispute between a stern parent, his Loving daughter, and her best young man. As the party was breaking up, the S.P. called his L.D. to go home, but the maiden informed him that she was going home with the Y. M. The father attempted to force his daughter to obey, but she entered the carriage of the young man, which the father did also. Before Pa could start the horse, the young man was at the horse's head with a firm grasp, and progress was not rapid. After exchanging compliments for over an hour, youth finally triumphed, and the young man and the determined maiden drove off together."*<sup>7</sup>

Since this was a town of less than 2,000 it can be certain that everyone who read this piece knew exactly who Dick was writing about. Or consider this gem:

**Jan. 27, 1899:** *"One of South Wilton's enthusiastic wheelmen met with a severe loss last Saturday. He stopped at a farmhouse near Cannon, took off his coat and laid it on an old pigpen, not knowing it was occupied. When he returned he discovered Mr. Pig had devoured the larger portion of his coat, a fine pipe, and a pocketbook containing quite an amount of money, and had chewed but given up on a pearl pocket knife."*<sup>8</sup>

Rural Free Delivery began in Wilton, Connecticut in December 1899, while Richard Fitch was postmaster. The RFD eliminated the need for some of the six local post offices in Wilton; two were closed quickly thereafter - Hurbutt St. and North Wilton. Richard Fitch, proprietor of Dick's Inn and Wilton postmaster, tendered his resignation in August, 1909. The office was now under the civil service and an exam was required to choose Fitch's successor. The selection was John L. Davis, a shoemaker and Civil War Veteran.<sup>9</sup>

In 1916 Richard Fitch demonstrated the same patriotism exhibited in his 1889 fancy shield and "US" cancellation. He arranged to hold the 5th reunion of the Civil War Veterans of the 17th Connecticut Volunteers, known as the Fairfield County Regiment. Forty-five Wilton men had served in the unit. Sixty-six of the surviving members from all over Fairfield County attended, including John L. Davis who was still postmaster at the time.<sup>10</sup>

#### ENDNOTES

1. *Cancellations and Killers of the Bank Note Era, 1870-1894*, by James M. Cole, U.S. Philatelic Classics Society, 1985; *Cancellations Found on 19th Century U.S. Stamps*, by Kenneth A. Whitfield, U.S. Cancellation Club, 2002; *U.S. Cancels 1890-1900*, by Sol Salkind, Lake Worth, Fla. 1995; *Fancy Cancellations on Nineteenth Century United States Postage Stamps*, by Herst and Sampson, Shrub Oak, N.Y. 1993; and *U.S. Cancellation Club News*.
2. *Wilton Connecticut: Three Centuries of People, Places and Progress*, by Robert H. Russell, published by the Wilton Historical Society, Wilton, Connecticut, 2004
3. Ibid pp. 78, 301
4. Ibid p. 259
5. Ibid pp. 265, 269, 299
6. Ibid p. 358-359
7. Ibid p. 301
8. Ibid p. 306
9. Ibid p. 312
10. Ibid p. 339

**Figure 4.** A Richard Fitch Real Photo Postcard of Wilton, Conn. (Note RFD wagon at the crossroads).





## How to Figure Out a 19<sup>th</sup> Century U.S. Fancy Cancel

by Joe Crosby

*Editor's note. Joe discusses below his journey of discovery in tracking down background information on the cancel featured on the front page of this issue. Insights on the research process in the electronic age abound.*

The Wilton, Connecticut cover is backstamped Boston 1889. Since the cancel has "RF" in it, I go to "Postmaster Finder" on my Google search engine. It takes me to the USPS Postmaster Finder. I enter WILTON, and select CONNECTICUT from the State menu ... AND instantly up comes Richard Fitch as postmaster in 1889-93. And a Joseph P. Fitch is listed for two terms in 1839 and 1844.

So I know the shield cancel with negative "US /RF" is a patriotic marking with the postmaster Richard Fitch's initials. Why don't I just quit while I am ahead? Instead I ask "Who was Richard Fitch?" A simple Google search on Richard Fitch, Wilton, Conn. yields nothing. A second search on Richard Fitch, Postmaster, Wilton, Conn. on the 2<sup>nd</sup> page of hits yields a genealogy of Wilton and mentions the last name Fitch and the website of a book dealer with a considerable listing. I cannot search his webpage by word so I copy it over into Microsoft Word document on my computer and then search under "editing" on Wilton and come up with:

### **Genealogical Resources Southwestern Fairfield County Connecticut \$14.95**

Stamford, Connecticut: the Stamford Genealogical Society, Inc., 1959. In the towns and cities of Darien, Greenwich, New Canaan, Norwalk, Stamford and Wilton. 40 pages, 9 x 12 softbound, ex library, covers worn, good condition.

I don't really want to spend \$14.95 on a genealogy book right now, but I save this for future reference and go on. I go to page 3 of my Google search and it is way too far afield. I never go much beyond page 3's. So next I search on Wilton, Conn. Historical Society and find:

### **Wilton Historical Society**

224 Danbury Road, Wilton, CT 06897, 203.762.7257, [info@wiltonhistorical.org](mailto:info@wiltonhistorical.org)

I call on the phone, an archivist answers and I tell her what I am doing. She wants an image emailed to her of my wonderful cancellation (which I do as soon as I get off the phone). She knows a lot about Richard Fitch: he had a little newspaper *The Weasel*, wrote poetry, was considered a small town renaissance man, and died in a mental institution. She tells me I need to order their Historical Society book for \$35 which has many references to Richard Fitch and family. She also works at the library two days a week and will look for a flat file on Fitch and will try to send me a requested 300 dpi photograph of him from their archives. I have hit a gold mine! I have been at this for one hour and 10 minutes and am I ever having fun!

Now I'll put it down for a while and wait for her email and for the book. (Yes, I could have gotten it through interlibrary loan, and usually do, but the archivist was a great sales person, and I have no patience anyway – I am hyped and having fun!)

Next I Google search on *The Weasel* published in Wilton and get a reproduction of the Vol. 1 No 1 from 1875 reprinted in the Wilton Bulletin in 1938. However, in reading it I find it was not Richard Fitch, but an Arthur Fitch. So what is the relation of these Fitch men – Richard H. and Arthur T and for that matter the earlier postmaster Joseph P? Perhaps the family politics would be revealed from the timing of their postmaster appointments. So I Google the dates of each U.S. President and I quickly learn that Joseph P. Fitch was always appointed when Democrats had the White House. Richard H. Fitch was always appointed when Republicans had the White House, although his second term ended with a different Republican appointment.

I get the Historical Society book in a few days and while I am reading it, feverishly noting wonderful things about Richard Fitch for my research article on his cancel, the archivist sends an email from the library with a great image of Richard in 300 dpi jpeg format. I call her back, thank her profusely, and ask if just maybe this picture, in my new book of Richard Fitch sitting in front of his "Dick's Inn" ice cream, candy, bicycle store and post office might be available in original form for an equally great scan. Bingo, back it comes attached to another email from Wilton Library the very next day! And all at no charge!

I read in the book that Richard took real photo postcards and the book jacket has one taken by him showing an RFD wagon at a town intersection. So after roaming on the internet for postcard dealers for 15 minutes, I find a dealer with that very postcard available for \$7.05!

In the days waiting for the postcard to show up, I get busy and check every cancel book and periodical in my library and cannot find this cancel even mentioned anywhere. I prepare a bibliography of all the books that didn't have it to use in a footnote to my article and I re-shelve all the literature.



I also do a first and second draft of my research article and get it proofread by my wife. I wait a few more days for the postcard to show up, scan it into my draft article on the shield cancel with negative "US/RF" and I am ready to go.

Now, we have learned:

1. Use Postmaster Finder of the USPS if are looking for postmaster's initials in a cancel (you won't always be lucky).
2. Use Google to keyword search everything you see on your item and accept the fact you will go down a few blind alleys.
3. Look up the local historical society and CALL and talk to a live person. You will wait for weeks for email replies and then get asked to pay for a local researcher by the hour. By talking to an archivist and explaining your challenging project, they usually will fall in love with it and want to help any way they can.
4. Look for photographs of anything that will help bring your story to life.
5. Ask for 300 dpi scans so they will print in quality for philatelic journals.
6. Spend a little money to add value to your item; i.e., buy books, photos, postcards, etc.
7. Make a bibliography before you re-shelve all the literature you get out. That way you won't have to go get it again.
8. Type a draft and let your spouse or someone else proof read it. It is amazing what they see that you are blind to by this time.
9. Send the final draft off to an unsuspecting editor who will be shocked and amazed and will become your friend for life.

## Postmaster Name in Ohio Cancel?

*by Roger D. Curran*

Gary McIntyre submits the cover shown in Figure 1 with a cancel that appears to have "SCHOOLEY" in the center and with what was possibly some ornamentation above and below before being trimmed. The Miami, Ohio post office was established in 1848 and operates today. There was an Ohio post office named Schooley's Station that operated in Ross County from 1858-1882. Miami is in nearby Clermont County.

Perhaps "SCHOOLEY" was the name of the local postmaster. Unfortunately, your editor didn't have access to the postmaster data needed to check this point. Since the letters in the cancel form the word correctly (as opposed to being in reverse order), the canceler was obviously made to impress the word on an underlying surface. While very speculative, let's suggest that the canceler was a linen marker such as those used occasionally as postmarkers. A postmark example (Skinner-Eno PM-TF15) from Kingessing, Pennsylvania is illustrated in Figure 2.

Additional information and reader comments will be welcomed.



Figure 1.



Figure 1a. close-up of "SCHOOLEY" cancel.



Figure 2. postmark example



## A "Set" of Cancels Traveling Under the Radar?

by Roger D. Curran

To say that the cancel in Figure 1 is odd is an understatement. On first glance one might think it was hand drawn, especially given the filigree around the edges. However, the "S" in the middle appears to be professionally formed. The cover entered the mails at Sherwood, California on July 27, 1884. This DPO, located in Mendocino County, operated from 1883-1920.

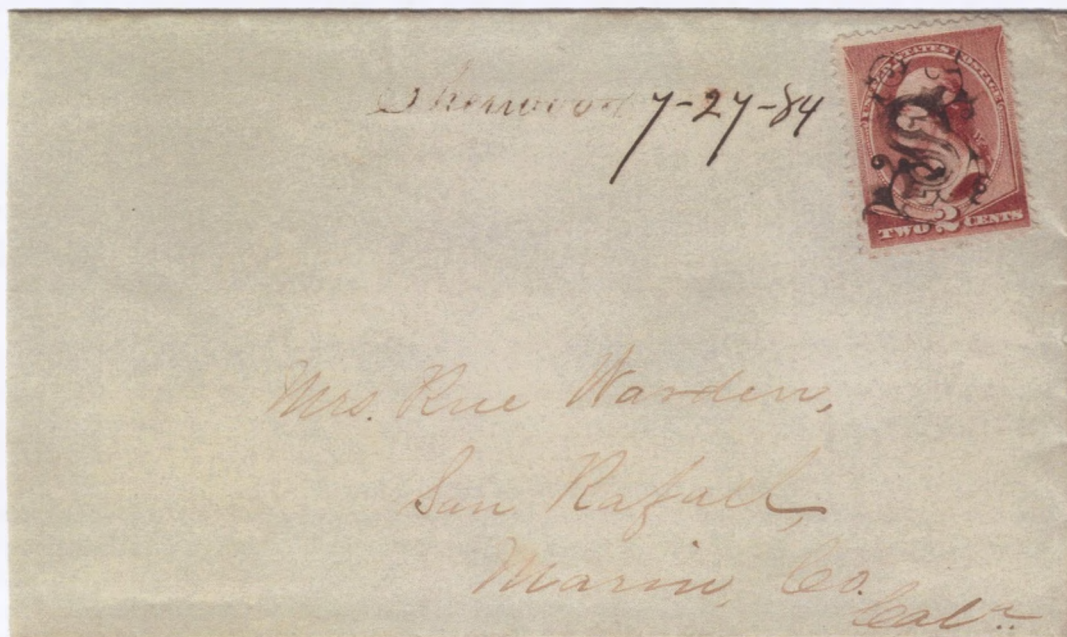
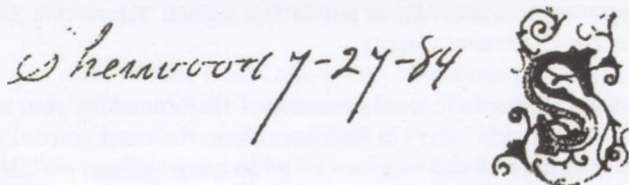


Figure 1.



I did not find the cancel listed in Cole, Whitfield or Willard, but did notice something else. Whitfield records several other letter cancels that utilize the same basic design concept – see Figure 2. The "A" is listed on 1890 issue stamps, the "D" and large "H" on 1883 issues, and the "B" and small "H" on 1870-81 issues. None are attributed but the large "H" was subsequently reported by Arthur Beane to be from Hurley, New York. Cole's Lh-28 is probably Whitfield's small "H" which Cole lists, without attribution, on 1881 issues.

I think it reasonable to speculate that all the handstamps came from a single source, but were they designed as postage stamp cancelers? Might they have been advertised for some other purpose in circulars sent through the mails that happened to be noticed by postmasters, several of whom had the same idea – that they would make attractive cancelers on the mail they processed?

Comments on the purpose and origin of these cancelers are encouraged as well as reports of additional letters of this type used as cancelers and of post offices of origin.



Figure 2.



## Edward Willard on Orford, NH Cancels

by Roger D. Curran



Figure 1.

One of the most important references on 19th century U.S. cancels is volume 2 of Edward Willard's *The United States Two Cent Red Brown of 1883-1887*, published in 1970. This volume is devoted entirely to cancellations found on the Sc 210 stamp. In the introduction to Volume 1, Willard discusses how he became a stamp collector. It began with his stamp collecting grandfather, Isaac Willard, who operated a country store in Orford and also became the local postmaster in 1874. Willard mentioned that his grandfather made his own canceler by carving the letters "NH" in outline form in a block of wood. Figure 1 shows Willard's tracing of this cancel from page 49 of volume 2. This cancel may have been used only during the period of Sc 210 but another Orford "N.H." cancel was used earlier. Figure 2 illustrates this cancel which Cole reports (page 213) on 1873-1883 issue stamps. I am a little surprised that this cancel would be reported for such a long time period. The stamp in Figure 2 is an 1881 issue, Sc 207. Willard also illustrates the Figure 2 cancel but doesn't mention it in his introduction. Isaac Willard served his first of three separate terms as Orford postmaster from August 28, 1874 to August 24, 1885, so it seems likely that he carved this "N.H." as well as Figure 1. Judging from the Figure 2 cover, it appears that he was very conscientious in applying both his postmarker and canceler.



Figure 2.

Willard also stated that his father worked at the country store and post office in the summer months during his years at nearby Dartmouth College. Dartmouth had an Indian mascot and there is an Indian head cancel from Orford which, Willard thought quite certainly, was carved by his father to represent the Dartmouth mascot. Willard's tracing of this cancel (Volume 2, page 14) is shown here as Figure 3 and he stated that he was "particularly proud of this cancellation." Surely it must be at least a very scarce if not rare item.

If any reader can show an example of the Indian head or, indeed, any Orford cancel used during the August 1874-August 1885 period, please contact the *NEWS*. Cole lists, incidentally, two "OK" cancels enclosed in rims from Orford on 1870-73 issues but I suspect they were carved by Isaac Willard's predecessor.



Figure 3.



## Machine Cancel on 1857 Issue Stamp?

by Roger D. Curran



Figure 1.

Some years ago I acquired the Sc 24 stamp illustrated in Figure 1. The cancel, consisting of five thin-lined horizontal bars, seemed unusual for a stamp of the 1857-61 era. Since it had the look of a machine cancel, I sent an image of the stamp to Bob Payne, now deceased, asking whether this configuration of bars was similar to those of established machine cancels. Bob sent for comparison purposes the images of two covers bearing different American Postal Machines Co. cancellations but expressed some doubt that the Figure 1 cancel was the product of a machine.

When I laid the stamp over one of the cover images, the canceling bars on the stamp closely approximated those on the cover below but they were not quite the same. However, when the stamp was laid on the cover with a cancel of the type shown in Figure 2, there was essentially an exact match. While I have great respect for the opinions of Bob Payne, I believe the Figure 1 cancel is the American cancel shown in Figure 2.

I recently asked machine cancel specialist Mike Ellingson about what post offices used this particular American cancel, designated D5( ) by specialists, and he supplied the information below from his records:

MA BOSTON	1893 0104	1893 02 03	MA LYNN	1892 1005	1893 04 13
MA BRIDGEPORT	1892 1017	1893 02 27	NH MANCHESTER	1892 1022	1893 04 11
NJ CAMDEN	1892 0927	1893 01 30	PA PHILADELPHIA	1892 0922	1893 03 01
IL CHICAGO	1892 1222	1893 01 14	PA READING	1892 0607	1893 03 01
MA LOWELL	1892 0930	1893 06 14	PA WILKES BARRE	1892 1008	1893 03 01
VA LYNCHBURG	1892 0930	1893 06 02	MA WORCESTER	1892 0916	1892 11 25

While one cannot pin down the post office of origin for the Figure 1 cancel, assuming it is the American cancel in Figure 2, we can say that it was no doubt struck in 1892 or 1893. And it would, of course, have involved a demonetized use of the postage stamp that either slipped by post office notice, as some such stamps did after demonetization, or its status was just ignored.

Comments and additional information will be welcomed. Thanks to Mike for supplying the above-cited data and for providing the cover images used for Figure 2.



Figure 2.



## Unusual 1850s Postmark and Cancel

by Roger D. Curran

The cover in Figure 1, which entered the mails at Montague, Massachusetts on November 14, is of considerable interest for two reasons. First is the very small postmark. Carroll Chase, the great student of 3¢ 1851 and 1857 issue stamps, wrote that this postmark and a very similar one from Plainfield, Massachusetts were the smallest he had seen used during the 3¢ 1857 stamp period. Tom Alexander lists these two postmarks and gives each of them a "10" scarcity rating, meaning "unique". Chase and Alexander list the Montague postmark with an "1860" year date inside but the Figure 1 strike doesn't show it. Whether the slugs were present in the handstamp and just didn't strike for some reason is unknown. Alexander actually lists two very small Plainfield postmarks, one with and one without an "1860" year date, each with a "10" scarcity rating.



Figure 1.



Figure 2.

used a square grid (but with more bars) at some point during the 1851 and 1857 issues era but I have not seen examples. An illustration from Alexander is shown as Figure 4. Incidentally, Alexander rates the Montague grid in Figure 1 as a "3" or "common" so it must have been used with more than one Montague postmark.

Readers who can add to the story of New York square grid look-alikes are encouraged to do so.

1. Chase, Carroll *The 3¢ Stamp of the United States 1851-1857 Issue*, 1929, 1942, and revised in 1975, Quarterman Publications, Inc., pg. 244.
2. Alexander, Thomas J. *U.S. Postal Markings 1851-1861*, USPCS, Inc. (1979), pp. 4, 54-5
3. *Ibid.*, pp 144-5.



Figure 4.



Figure 3.



## Forwarded "Boston Negative" Covers

by Roger D. Curran

Presented herewith are three "Boston negative" covers that have some postal history interest.



Figure 1.

A duplex was applied along with a separate strike of the killer on the 3¢ stamp to make a more effective cancellation than had been done at Hunnewell's Point. The cover was sent over to Station A for delivery and was received there at 3PM on August 19 (see backstamp).

The cover in Figure 2 was initially franked with the 2¢ stamp paying the local rate for delivery in Boston. It was postmarked at 11AM on July 1 (year date unknown). It was determined that the addressee was in "Pigeon Cove/Rockport Mass". The letter now became an "intercity" letter at the 3¢ rate. Beginning in October 1875, the 3¢ rate on a forwarded local letter could be made up just by adding a 1¢ stamp rather than paying a whole new 3¢. There is an indistinct Boston Postmark on the back dated July 1, 2PM that appears to be a Station marking which presumably reflects when the cover was received from the main post office for initial delivery. Once the 1¢ stamp was provided, Station A applied the July 1, 8PM duplex marking and the cover was no doubt soon on its way. Incidentally, Pigeon Cove was a Station of Rockport.



Figure 2.



Figure 3.

The cover in Figure 1 originated in Hunnewell's Point, Maine on August 18, 1882. This is a DPO that operated only from 1878-1888. The 3¢ green, which appears to have a light strike of a handstamp cancel underneath the Boston "14" killer, paid the postage to Boston. I assume the following. It was received in the Boston post office at 9PM on August 18 (see backstamp). It was determined that the cover required forwarding, in a situation where the addressee had not requested forwarding, thus necessitating a charge for this service. Since the forwarding was to an address in Boston, the local rate of 2¢ applied. The addressee supplied the 2¢ stamp, or at least paid for it, whereupon the Boston August 19, 11AM du-



Figure 1a. The backstamps.

The cover in Figure 3 was in the collection of Arthur Beane. It was posted in Boston and sent to a Boston address. I don't know the year date but it would have been 1878 or later. Apparently the addressee had not requested forwarding and thus an additional 2¢ in postage was needed to pay for the forwarding. Cambridge was within the Boston postal district and the letter was, therefore, still considered a local letter. I gather that local letters forwarded within the city of origin (as defined for postal purposes) are very hard to find and this is a most attractive example.



## Boston Negatives on Demonetized Stamps

by Roger D. Curran

Figures 1 and 2 present an interesting pair of covers, both bearing Boston large negative cancels, that were handled by the post office in very different ways. In Figure 1, the Sc 9 stamp "paid" the one cent circular rate for the unsealed cover that entered the mails on January 3, 1881. The word paid is in quotes because, of course, the stamp had been demonetized years earlier and had no value in 1881. Whether the stamp was not recognized for what it was, or its status ignored, is hard to say. There are no markings on the back of the cover and there seems no reason to think it wasn't transmitted to and received by the addressee in Greenfield, Massachusetts.



Figure 1.

What subsequently happened, I believe, requires a little guesswork. My theory follows herewith. The cover was initially referred to the carrier section of the main Boston post office where the 2:30 postmark was applied. It was quickly determined that the return address (written underneath the docketing on the front) was not within the service area of the main post office but rather that of Roxbury Station where it was then referred with arrival at 5PM, February 26. The sender was notified

The Figure 2 cover, which resides in the stock of dealer Matt Kewriga, entered the mails at 2PM on February 26, 1879. The year date is established by the docketing on the left side of the cover front. At 2PM the clerk canceled the Sc 24 stamps and postmarked the cover with his duplex handstamp. Since the clerk recognized that the stamps were invalid, he also added the "HELD FOR POSTAGE" on the front and struck the 2PM postmark on the back as a received marking.



Figure 2.

and provided a 3¢ stamp or paid 3¢ in coin and the 3¢ stamp was affixed (over the "HELD FOR POSTAGE") and canceled back at Roxbury Station at 6PM, February 26. The cover was now ready for dispatch to Woonsocket, Rhode Island.



Figure 2a. The reverse showing the backstamps.



## Easton, Pennsylvania “OK” Cancellations

By Matthew W. Kewriga

This article examines two foreign destination covers from Easton, Pennsylvania that show rather unusual uses of fancy “OK” cancellations. Both are from large correspondences, yet each is the only recorded example of these “OK” cancellations.



Figure 1. The Easton large “OK” cancellation

OK

Figure 2.

Figure 1 shows an 1875 cover from the Lyman correspondence to Yokohama, Japan bearing a pair of 2¢ brown (Scott #157) and 30¢ gray black (Scott #165) that prepaid the 34¢ treaty rate by British mails (effective January 1871 to July 1875). The cover was postmarked with “Easton Pa. Mar 1” circular datestamp duplexed with quartered cork cancel tying the stamps, which are also canceled together by large “OK” cancellation in matching ink (illustrated in the Figure 2 tracing). The reverse of the cover has transits of New York March 3 and London March 15, as well as a “Hong-Kong Marine-Sorter, Singapore to Hong Kong, AP 20 75” double circle datestamp and Yokohama arrival. The cover was carried on the HAPAG steamer *Suevia*, departing New York on March 4, 1875 and arriving in Plymouth on March 15.

Benjamin Smith Lyman (December 11, 1835 – August 30, 1920) was an American mining engineer, surveyor and amateur linguist and anthropologist. He had an office as a consulting mining engineer in Philadelphia and worked on surveys from Pennsylvania to Nova Scotia, Arizona and California. In 1870, Lyman surveyed oil fields in the Punjab for the Public Works Department of the government of British India, and developed a lasting interest in the Far East. In 1872, Lyman was hired by the Japanese government to survey the coal and oil deposits of Hokkaidō and along the Sea of Japan coastline of Honshu. He stayed on in Japan from 1873-1879 as chief geologist and mining engineer to the Meiji government. His correspondence has yielded



Figure 3. The Easton “Fleming. O.K.” straightline cancellation.

FLEMING. O. K.



Figure 4.



many of the fascinating Bank Note era covers from the United States to Japan showing rare rates and routes. The final part of this correspondence only recently entered the philatelic market in 2008.

Figure 3 illustrates an 1878 use from the Shaw correspondence to New Zealand bearing 2¢ vermilion (Scott #178) and 10¢ brown (Scott #161) prepaying the 12¢ treaty rate by American packet via San Francisco. The reverse bears New York August 25 transit and Christchurch September 28 arrival datestamps. The 2¢ vermilion is canceled by two strikes of "Fleming. O.K." straightline fancy cancellation (see Figure 4 close-up and tracing) that just ties the stamp at bottom. The "Easton Pa. Aug 23" postmark is inverted, indicative that the postal clerk did not want to cancel the stamp twice. The quartered cork killer was duplexed and was used to cancel the 10¢. Another September 20, 1878 cover from this correspondence (Figure 5) shows how the stamps were normally cancelled at the Easton post office with the quartered cork killer duplexed with circular datestamp. The "Fleming" cancel is a bit of an enigma, it could very well be a postal clerk's name or something to do with the local Lafayette College. The postmaster of Easton was James K. Dawes from November 1871 to June 1887. Under his direction, Easton started free carrier delivery service in 1873 with six carriers. This "Fleming" marking could be a marking used by one of the carriers to indicate the franking was "o.k." for foreign mails.


Since both "OK" markings are found on covers destined abroad, one could hypothesize the "OK" markings were used by a postal clerk to indicate that the franking properly prepaid the foreign mail rate and was ready for dispatch. If readers have any other examples in their collections or information on "Fleming", please contact the author at [matt@kewriga.com](mailto:matt@kewriga.com).



Figure 5. Easton, Pa. use from the Shaw correspondence to New Zealand.

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## Streator, Illinois "V" Cancels

by Roger D. Curran



Figure 1.

Edward Willard reported in the November 1958 *NEWS* the cancel shown here in Figure 1. In his 1970 book on the Sc 210 stamp and its postal history, he reported (volume 2, page 79) the Figure 2 cancel from Streator but did not also illustrate Figure 1. Presumably he considered Figure 2 to be a more accurate strike of Figure 1. Alyce Evans presented the Figure 3 cancels in the summer 1986 *NEWS* and reported that they were carved by a postal clerk in the Streator post office, Oscar Vielinghopp. The two cancels on the right are shown in Cole on page 213 and the cancel with two lines above the "OV" appeared in Willard. Both Cole and Willard made attributions to Streator. The November 2002 *NEWS* reported the Figure 4 cancel on a pair of Sc 206, related this cancel to the two "OV" cancels, and referred back to the Oscar Vielinghopp report. However, in doing so your editor erroneously referred to Mr. Vielinghopp as the Streator postmaster. The USPS Postmaster Finder data base lists the postmasters for Streator and his name is not present. That he was indeed a clerk in the post office seems a very safe assumption. Thanks to Wendell Triplett for gently drawing my attention to this matter.



Figure 2.



Figure 3.

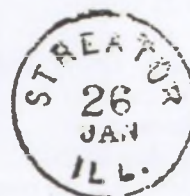


Figure 4.

Wendell recently submitted an additional Streator "V" cancel (Figure 5) that, as he indicates, appears to be an early version of Cole's LV-13 on page 283, which he shows without attribution. Willard reported a similar but obviously different cancel (page 80, volume 2) attributed to Streator – see Figure 6.

Wendell noted the Figure 7 cancel in a lot of 14 stamps offered in 2004 and thinks this cancel might be from Streator. It certainly seems plausible. The cancel shows what certainly appears to be a negative "V" with a negative "O" in the center of the "V." Wouldn't it be nice to find this cancel on cover!



Figure 6.



Figure 5.



Figure 7.



## Letter Cancels

by Roger D. Curran

The Arthur Beane collection of cancellations was sold in recent months by the Kelleher auction house. One of Arthur's particular interests was that of cancels containing one or more letters. Such letters often matched the name of the post offices that

used them. Sometimes they referred to the name of the particular postmaster and other cases it is unclear what they represented. Multiple letters are often more difficult to interpret. Illustrated below are several of the more unusual examples from Arthur's collection. All are unlisted in the literature as far as I know.

Figure 1 shows two covers from Chester, Vermont, bearing Continental stamps, with the cancel design showing a prominent negative "C". Also included, in the center, is a thin lined negative "VT", with the "T" placed in the middle of the "V", undoubtedly referring to Vermont. That this cancel would not be listed is understandable, given the very delicate "VT" which would easily be subject to distortion caused by inking and strike variations and by breakup of the cork on the soft wood of the canceler itself. It seems remarkable to me that this canceler held up as well as it did from the April strike to the August strike (1878 from docketing). Although the Slawson et al book *The Postal History of Vermont* doesn't list the Figure 1 cancel, it does report a large "M" cork cancel from Chester during the Banknote period. "M" no doubt referred to the name the Chester postmaster Charles M Marshall who served from 1868 to 1882.

"U" is a letter not often seen in cancels. In the case of Figure 2, of course, "U" is for Uxbridge, Massachusetts. Next to the "U" is a small "X" making the reference to Uxbridge absolutely certain.

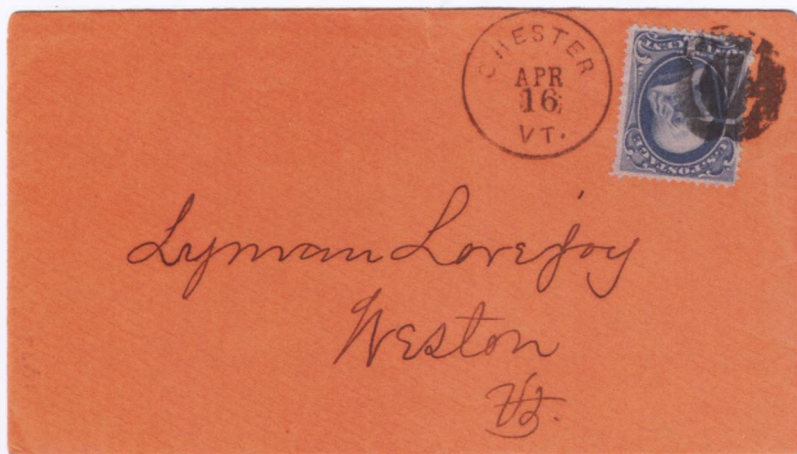
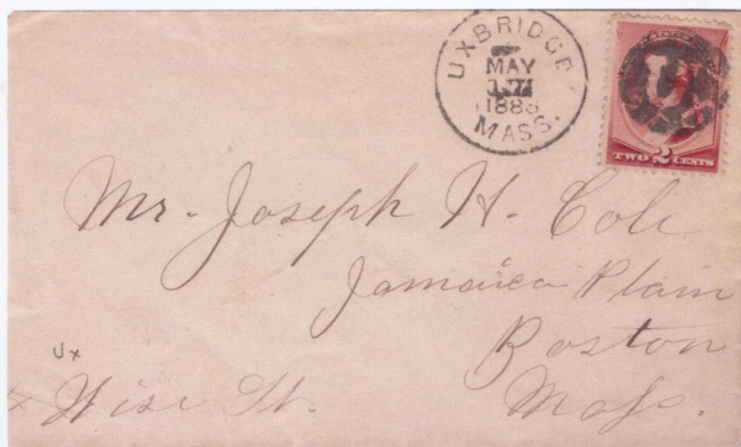


Figure 1.

What a nice cancel we have in Figure 3. The "CG" in the star is, of course, for Casa Grande, Arizona Territory. Surely the purple CDS and cancel were applied by a rubber-faced handstamp. Casa Grande had a population of 382 in 1890. The post office was established in 1880 and operates today.



Figure 2.





Finally, in Figure 4 we illustrate the product of another rubber-faced handstamp. A purple "O", perhaps for Oregon, is the killer. One supposes that, alternatively, it could represent the postmaster's name, but that couldn't be checked because the USPS "Postmaster finder" database does not yet cover this post office. This Centerville post office (Umatilla County) is a DPO that operated only from 1889-1904. In 1890 Centerville had a population of only 35 and I wonder why the postmaster felt a need to purchase a handstamp for what must have been a very light workload. Perhaps he was a perfectionist who took great pride in doing a neat and professional job.



Figure 3.

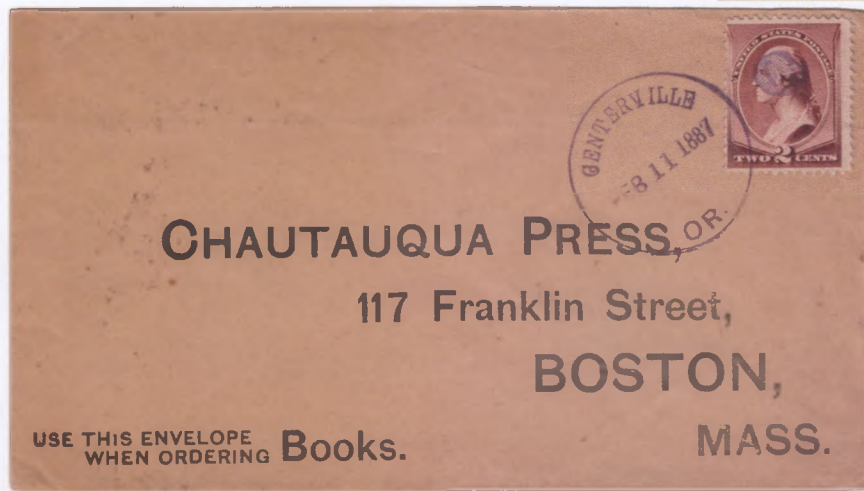


Figure 4.

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Shield with Stars Surrounding (Skinner-Eno #PS-FC 60) of Brooklyn N.Y., bold nearly complete strike on 3c rose (65), large margins, light corner creases, Very Fine appearing. [Item #003909]



Bottle Stopper "4" with Negative Six Point Star (Skinner-Eno #NS-D unlisted) choice strike ties 3c rose (65), on cover to Middlebury, Vt., matching "Berlin, Wis, Jul 27, 1863" dcds; reduced slightly at left, Very Fine and remarkable cancel. Ex-Beane. [Item #005158]



Shield (Skinner-Eno #PS-S22 var.) of Thomaston Me., complete sharp strike on 3c rose (65), Fine. [Item #003902]

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