



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

Vol. 35, No. 2, Whole No. 309, May 2019



*This 1886 Ogden City, Utah cover, bound for Tiffin, Ohio carries a killer which is extremely unusual – it includes the town's name in full! John Valenti tells us more, starting on page 26.*

## *Articles*

The Origin of Willard's Negative "1/W" Discovered: Oswego, Kansas	23
Tarborough, North Carolina Fancy Crescent and Stars Cancel	24
19th Century Town-Named Hand Carved Killers	26
Exploring Thomaston, Maine's 19th Century Fancy Cancels	28
Cancellations on the 2¢ Issue of 1890 (Part I)	34
More On The "American Turners" Killer From Worcester, Massachusetts	36
Things My Stamp Collector Daddy Told Me	37
Noted in Passing	38

*The Official Journal of the United States Cancellation Club*



## The United States Cancellation Club NEWS

Robert Conley, Editor,  
52 Vista Ridge,  
Glenburn, ME 04401-1829  
uscceeditor@mail.com



Published four times a year by the United States Cancellation Club and included with membership. The U.S.C.C. is APS Affiliate #75.

Annual Dues: \$26 (\$31 for international members). Please address membership inquiries to Joe Crosby.

Back Issues through 1977 are available for \$2.00 each, postpaid. Issues 1998 to May 2008, \$3.00. August 2008 and later issues, \$6.00. Discount of 10% on orders of 25 or more issues. Contact Vince Costello at 318 Hoffnagle Street, Philadelphia, PA, 19111. Email vinman2119@aol.com

Address library inquiries to the U.S. Cancellation Club Library, P.O. Box 7063, Redwood City, CA 94063-7063. All other correspondence and inquiries should be addressed to the *NEWS* Editor, address above.

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

President: Matthew Kewriga, 47 Kearney Street, Suite 500, San Francisco, CA 94108 matt@kewriga.com  
1st Vice President: Ernie Webb, 610 S. Kokomo Street, Derby, KS 67037 Ewebb02@aol.com  
2nd Vice President: Robert Conley, 52 Vista Ridge, Glenburn, ME 04401 uscceditor@mail.com  
Secretary/Treasurer: Joe Crosby, 5009 Barnsteep Court, Oklahoma City, OK 73132 joecrosby@cox.net  
Governor at Large: Roger Curran, 18 Tressler Blvd., Lewisburg, PA 17837 rdcnrc@ptd.net

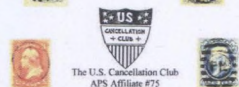
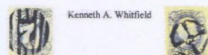
### Advertising Rates

	Per Issue	Yearly
Half Page	\$110.00	\$400.00
Quarter Page	\$55.00	\$200.00
Column Inch	\$15.00	\$50.00

For information concerning advertising, please contact the *NEWS* Editor.

## U.S. CANCELLATION CLUB PUBLICATIONS

CANCELLATIONS FOUND ON  
19TH CENTURY U.S. STAMPS



2002

*U.S. Cancellation Club NEWS, Cross Reference Index for all Issues, 1951-2009.* Presented in three sections: Cancellations, Post Offices, and Article Titles. \$18 postpaid to U.S. addresses.

*Wesson "Time-On-Bottom" Markings Revisited, Compiled by Ralph A. Edson and Gilbert L. Levere,* update of 1990 La Posta monograph, 190pp. See p.70 of November 2010 *NEWS* for announcement. \$25 postpaid to U.S. addresses.

*Cancellations Found on 19th Century U. S. Stamps, by Kenneth A. Whitfield.* With more than 6,000 tracings, this book is an invaluable supplement to the Skinner-Eno and Cole volumes. Includes the latest Whitfield update. \$50 postpaid to U.S. addresses. For Whitfield update pages only, \$8 post paid.

Checks made out to U.S.C.C. should be sent to Roger Curran,  
18 Tressler Boulevard, Lewisburg, PA 17837.



## The Origin of Willard's Negative "1/W" Discovered: Oswego, Kansas

Joe Crosby

The cover shown in Figure 1 carries a very unusual fancy cancel first reported by Willard<sup>1</sup>. He noted that this cancel "...[is] not a rate mark, although there were one cent rates." This comment was made in the context of rate markings. And although Willard reported it, he did not know the originating Post Office. This particular cancel does not seem to be reported in any other literature.

The first aim of this article to report the discovery of this cover and the cancel's usage at Oswego, Kansas. The second aim is to see what can we make of this unusual design, better seen in the tracing of Figure 2.



Figure 1



Figure 2

Narrowing down the possible period of usage may assist in our quest for answers. The cover does not carry an indication of the year of use; merely a date of January 22. It is known that the sender, A. L. Knight, was indeed the proprietor of Oswego House from at least June 1880<sup>2</sup>, a situation confirmed in March 1885<sup>3</sup>. He is also known to have left the town in April 1887<sup>4</sup>. Given that the stamp, a Scott 210, has an earliest known in use in October 1883<sup>5</sup>, it would seem reasonable to deduce that this puts the usage of the cover in the January of 1884, 1885, 1886 or 1887.

The cover is addressed to the town of Femme Osage, Missouri. One might have postulated that the "W" in the cancel meant "west". Unfortunately, Femme Osage is some 288 miles *east* of Oswego.

Another possibility is that the postmaster had a name starting with "W". However, the three postmasters at Oswego from 1876 to beyond 1889 were Jas. Golden, John S. McClain and Frank D. Allen...not a single "W" among them!

None of the above gives us much to grasp at in our attempts to understand the meaning of the "1" or the "W". Are there any other thoughts, theories, ideas, or answers out there? ■

### References:

1. Willard, Edward L., *The United States Two Cent Red Brown of 1883-1887, Volume 2*, H. L. Lindquist Publications, Inc., New York, 1970, pgs 50-52.
2. 1880 United States Federal Census [database on-line]. Lehi, UT: Ancestry.com Operations Inc. 2010, accessed March 16, 2019.
3. 1885 Kansas Territory Census; Roll: KS1885\_67; Line: 1, Kansas State Census Collection, 1855-1925 [database on-line]. Provo, UT: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2009., accessed March 16, 2019.
4. Kansas, Grand Army of the Republic Post Reports, 1880-1940 [database on-line]. Provo, UT: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2010., accessed 16 March 2019
5. Micarelli, Charles M., *The Micarelli Identification Guide to U.S. Stamps, Regular Issues 1847-1934*, Scott Publishing Co., Sidney, OH, 2001, pg 75.



## Tarborough, North Carolina Fancy Crescent and Stars Cancel

Ralph Lott

I have been seriously collecting stamps since the 1960s. As it happens with most collectors, I reached a limit as to what I could afford but, like most dedicated stamp collectors, I found another area to collect. I branched out to postal history and fancy cancels.

In the 1980s, there was a dealer in the New York area that put out a sales listing. The second page was the terms and conditions of the sale plus some "words of wisdom" that I still remember. In general, it was "If you have collected an area and have become knowledgeable of it and you find a reasonably-priced item that you have not seen before, you should buy it." This is not an exact quote, but it conveys the idea.

At about the same time, I would attend the small local shows in the Wichita, Kansas area, most of which have now sadly disappeared. I would check out the dealers for early U.S. material hoping to find something. On one occasion, I found and bought a three-cent stamp of the 1869 issue with a very interesting cancel, seen in Figure 1.

When I got home, I checked my copy of *United States Cancellations 1845-1869* by Hubert C. Skinner and Amos Eno. No luck; my cancel was not there. Later I got a copy of *Cancellations and Killers of the Banknote Era 1878-1894* by James M. Cole. Still no luck. I put the stamp aside – but I kept looking and reading the literature. Eventually I found a Robert A. Siegel auction catalog for Sale No. 747 of February 17, 1993, and there it was – the cancel I had been looking for. It was Lot Number 1450 with a small illustration, and the price realized was \$350. The cancel was on a postal stationery envelope (Scott U59) and the town was Tarborough (now known as Tarboro), North Carolina. This was my lucky day! Figure 2 shows the catalog listing and illustration.



Figure 1

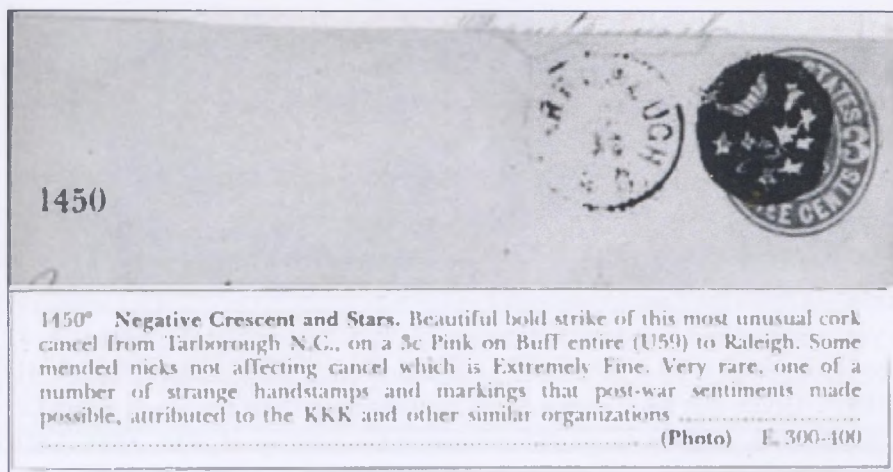


Figure 2

With a little help from Joe Crosby, who referred me to the North Carolina Postmark Catalog<sup>1</sup> which is readily available online, I discovered the information as seen in Figure 3. Bingo!

Through the courtesy of Richard Winter, the Figure 4 cover was provided which is presumably the source of the North Carolina Postmark Catalog tracing.



Figure 3



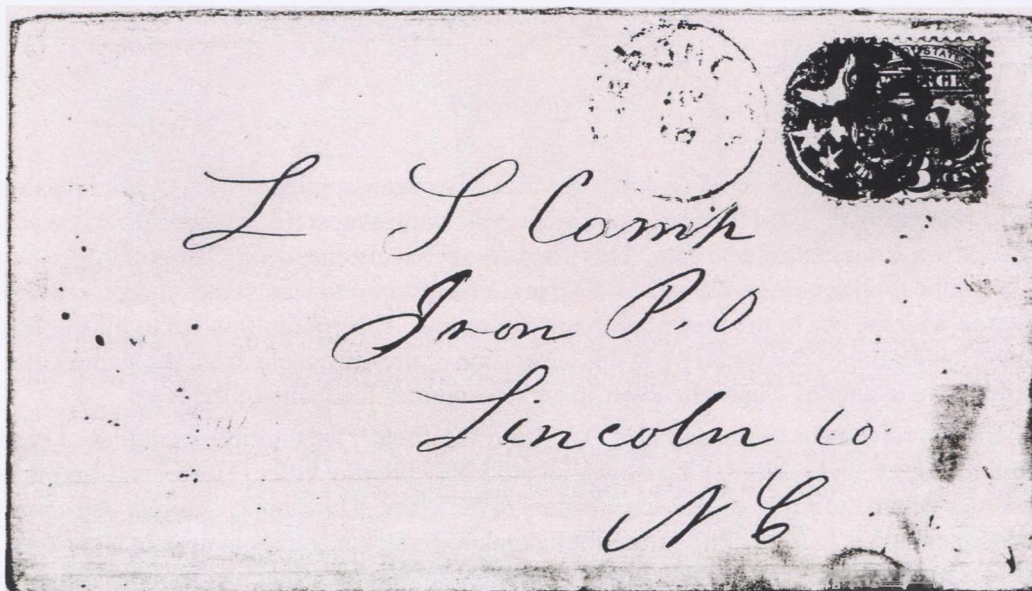


Figure 4

Although both Figures 1 and 2 show all of the field of seven stars with the crescent, neither Joe Crosby nor I have been able to verify that this is, in fact, a Ku Klux Klan cancel as suggested in the Siegel lot description. The crescent is definitely a known KKK symbol. However, the seven stars do not show up as KKK symbols. They probably represent the Seven-Star First National Flag of the CSA<sup>2</sup> illustrated in Figure 5.

Diligent searches of Tarborough local history could not confirm whether or not it was a hotbed of KKK activity. However, it is noteworthy that William Laurence Saunders, the chief organizer of the Ku Klux Klan in North Carolina during reconstruction is buried at Calvary Episcopal Church graveyard in – where else? – Tarborough, North Carolina<sup>3</sup>. Interestingly, CSA Col. Saunders was born and died in Raleigh and spent his last 12 years as North Carolina's Secretary of State, in Raleigh<sup>4</sup> – so why is he buried in Tarborough, 72 miles from Raleigh? Furthermore, the 'first' KKK was active for only a few years peaking in about 1869-1870<sup>5</sup>, right about the time the Scott 114 stamp was in use, and before 1870-71 when Scott U82-84 would have replaced the U59!



Figure 5

In any case, whether it is Ku Klux Klan-related or not, it is still a very interesting cancellation. As far as I am aware, the only two known covers with this cancel are illustrated above – which leads me to the conclusion that my cancel is indeed very rare.

If other USCC members can report more strikes on or off cover please do so at [ralphlott@sbcglobal.net](mailto:ralphlott@sbcglobal.net) or the editor.

In closing, I offer the following pointers:

- good dealers have good suggestions. It's because they have been exposed to more material. Listen to them.
- visit the little shows.
- a reference library can be useful even if you can't find what you are looking for. The books told me I had a good item because it was not listed.
- use the internet to find your missing information.
- there will never be a substitute for knowledge.
- it never hurts to have some luck. ■

#### References:

1. North Carolina Postmark Catalog at <http://www.ncpostalhistory.com>
2. The seven stars represent the original Confederate States: South Carolina, Mississippi, Florida, Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, and Texas.
3. <https://museum.unc.edu/exhibits/show/reconstruction/william-l-saunders--1835-1891>, accessed April 5, 2019
4. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William\\_L.\\_Saunders](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_L._Saunders), accessed April 6, 2019
5. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ku\\_Klux\\_Klan](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ku_Klux_Klan), accessed April 6, 2019



## 19th Century Town-Named Hand Carved Killers

*John Valenti*

Since the advent of postage stamps in 1847, killer devices have been applied to cancel the adhesives. In the early years, especially after the introduction of the 1851 issue adhesives, stamps most frequently were canceled by just the town postmark bearing the town name, state and a date. This practice effectively ended with the Post Office Department's July 23, 1860 P.L. & R. publication requiring the use of a separate handstamp to cancel the stamps, reflecting the P.O.D.'s general dissatisfaction with the use of the postmark to kill the stamp. This prohibition led to the duplexing of killers to postmarks as a single handstamp.<sup>1</sup> So, we arrive at this separation of the town name from the stamp killer. The objective of this article is to explore examples where the killer itself incorporates the name of the town.

The major cancellation references (Skinner-Eno<sup>2</sup>, Cole<sup>3</sup>, and Whitfield<sup>4</sup>) list multiple examples of hand-carved killers where a town's initials (single and multiple) have been incorporated into the killer. However, I find in these references and others no examples where the entire town name appears in the killer. The closest example of a complete town name that I discover in Skinner-Eno is LC-P 8 "Phil" from Philadelphia, Jefferson county in upstate New York, seen in Figure 1. Whitfield also lists an interesting advertising killer, illustrated in Figure 2, that incorporates a full town/state name, BEACH HOUSE, SEA GIRT, N.J., yet the mailing town is Spring Lake, New Jersey.

Then we have examples of multiple-letter town name abbreviations: illustrated in Figures 3, 4 and 5 respectively are cancels from from Hyde Park, Massachusetts (Cole ML-44), San Leandro, California (Cole ML-230) and Albert Lea, Minnesota (Whitfield 5276).

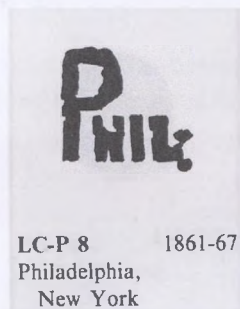


Figure 1

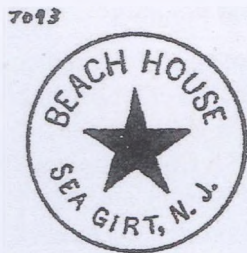


Figure 2



Figure 3



Figure 4



Figure 5

As a dealer in 19th century cancellation material, I have viewed thousands of covers and off-cover stamps and discovered only two examples where the stamp killer contains the town name (excluding the killers used on 3rd and 4th class mail, such as Cole killers VL-1 through VL-72 and others, which are typically applied in simplex format, that is, without postmark).

The first example, shown on the front cover, is a cover with an unusual town-name killer (enlarged killer detail in Figure 6). The cover bears a Scott #210 postmarked June 12, 1886, Ogden City, Utah (DPO Weber County, 1854-1888), to Tiffin, OH, forwarded to Beatrice, NE. The killer tying the stamp at first appears to be a simple boxed grid. Closer examination, however, reveals that this "grid" is in fact the city name OGDEN (inverted) expressed in tall and narrow letters within the box. It is easy to understand how this city-named killer has avoided detection by collectors.

Secondly, we have something from the small town of Hika, Wisconsin (DPO Manitowoc County, 1858-1954), with an 1880 population of 1,590. It is on a UX7 postal card postmarked June 14 (1883) to Sheboygan, WI, detail shown in Figure 7.



Figure 6



Figure 7

The Hika town name sits atop a grid killer. The italicized letters "IKA" are clear, but it appears that the letter "H" has mostly broken away from the killer. A rapid deterioration of a killer such as this is not surprising given that the lettering is unprotected along the top edge.

I suspect that there are more hand-carved town-name killers from the 19th century that remain to be discovered. Any reader with additional information on this topic is invited to contact the *NEWS* editor. All such information will be attributed in any future updates in the *NEWS*. ■

#### References:

1. Richard B. Graham, "Postmarks and Postmarking Devices of the Banknote Era", p. 4, in James M. Cole, *Cancellations and Killers of the Banknote Era, 1870-1894* (U.S. Philatelic Classics Society, Columbus, OH 1995)
2. Hubert C. Skinner & Amos Eno, *United States Cancellations, 1845-1869: Unusual and Representative Markings* (American Philatelic Society, State College, PA 1980)
3. James M. Cole, *Cancellations and Killers of the Banknote Era, 1870-1894* (U.S. Philatelic Classics Society, Columbus, OH 1995)
4. Kenneth A. Whitfield, *Cancellations Found on 19th Century U.S. Stamps* (U.S. Cancellation Club, Lewisburg, PA 2002)

Phil Bansner  
P.O. Box 6854  
Wyomissing, PA 19610

Phone: (610) 678-5808  
E-Mail: phil@philbansner.com  
Website: www.philbansner.com

## The Classic Cancel

Quality 19th Century U.S. Stamps, Cancellations and Postal History

### John Valenti

P.O. Box 211  
Wheeling, IL 60090-0211  
(847) 224-2401 ✉ classiccancel@att.net  
Visit my Web Site at <http://www.theclassiccancel.com>

Member: APS, USPCS, USCC

Postal Exhibition & Symposium 2019

**Sponsored by the Confederate Stamp Alliance  
in conjunction with the American Philatelic Society\***

**October 24-26, 2019 (Thursday, Friday, Saturday)**

**American Philatelic Center  
100 Match Factory Place, Bellefonte PA 16823**

**All are Welcome! Free admission**

**[www.cwstampex.org](http://www.cwstampex.org)**

A World Series of Philately Show with 125 competitive frames plus court of honor. Dealer bourse emphasizing postal history from both sides of the American Civil War. Civil War Postal History Symposium with dynamic guest speakers on related topics. Dedication of the Kaufmann Civil War Room at the American Philatelic Research Library. Welcoming Reception at Big Spring Spirits ~ Catered Awards Dinner and closing reception.

\*This event made possible with a grant from Robert A. Siegel Auction Galleries and financial support from H.R. Harmer GPN and Schuyler J. Rumsey Philatelic Auctions. The Welcoming Reception is kindly sponsored by Daniel F. Kelleher Auctions.



## Exploring Thomaston, Maine's 19th Century Fancy Cancels

Nancy B. Clark

Prompted by our editor's request for a story and also pushed by the need to develop a brand-new single-frame exhibit for the APS Winter Show, I looked to see what could be shown from Thomaston, Maine, situated on the coast, about halfway between Portland and Bangor. Were there enough other killers from this little town, best known for their pumpkinhead obliterators, to make a decent single frame exhibit; or, if I filled the frame with pumpkinheads, would the storyline be interesting enough to carry an exhibit?

On resurrecting my collection of Maine obliterators, I found that Thomaston, which never exceeded 3,500 residents until the year 2000, produced a prodigious number of cancellers in the period from 1860 to 1899.

The earliest history of Thomaston's Post Office is subject to some conflicting reports. However the one I consider most correct was penned by Cyrus Eaton<sup>1</sup> in 1865: "[As at 1790] the most eastern post office [in the United States] was at Wiscasset, to which mail from Portland [about 45 miles to the southwest] was brought twice a month. In 1793, however, George Russell of Castine was hired by private individuals to go [66 miles] from Castine to Wiscasset to bring letters and newspapers to the several towns between those places. He went on foot once a fortnight, and carried his mail at first in a yellow silk handkerchief, afterwards in saddle-bags. As letters for people here at this time were received and given out at Col. Mason Wheaton's [residence], he has been traditionally handed down as the first postmaster of Thomaston; but the first legal postmaster appointed and recognized by Government, was his son, James Dexter Wheaton...and the mail sent officially once a week on horseback. The earliest official mail-carrier recollected, was one Clark of Camden, a shoemaker and bachelor, who was subject to constitutional fits of sleepiness, so intense as to cause him to slumber for miles, while his faithful horse pursued the accustomed route...James Wheaton was probably appointed in May 1795, as his first returns to the General Post Office were made July 1, 1795. He either kept the office in the grist-mill or his dwellinghouse, holding it until November 1799, when he was succeeded by David Fales."

Wheaton later succeeded David Fales and in his second term as postmaster, Wheaton had developed a habit of using uncommon styles of CDSs. The first known non-manuscript town mark is an unusual half-circle, struck in red, dating from 1821<sup>2</sup>. The author is also aware of one struck in black. A tracing can be seen in Figure 1. Stampless covers between 1823 and 1832 bear a 30mm "THOMASTON/MAINE." circular device with ornaments. This device appears both with the date in the handstamp, but only in 1827, and with the date hand-written. Known in both red and black, examples are illustrated in Figures 2 & 3. Wheaton's second term ended in 1829 and for the next three decades subsequent postmasters used cancels that were more typical of the times.

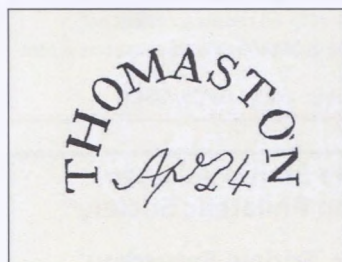


Figure 1



Figure 2



Figure 3



When Postmaster General Joseph Holt issued the regulation requiring a separate marking from the town name, Thomaston's postmasters responded with an unusual level of creativity. The initial fancies were crosses and patriotic shields, in the 1860s. Given the troubles of the day, crosses may have been seen as a hope of gaining some divine intervention. A basic cross is among the easier obliterator designs to carry off with cork and a knife — but the postmasters in Thomaston went further than that — trying a Maltese cross in the mid-late 1860s, as seen in Figure 4, followed by a difficult-to-execute negative cross in 1869 or a little later, illustrated in Figure 5. The negative cross was likely the work of postmaster, Nelson S. Fales, a man who we will learn more about shortly.



Figure 4



Figure 5

Edward Robinson, who became postmaster on April 30, 1861, less than three weeks after the siege and surrender of Fort Sumpter, produced at least one patriotic shield obliterator. This was the ox-bow shield with stars and outer circle seen in Figure 6. This is clearly a complex device and could not have stood up to constant use well and I believe the outer ring wore away over time. The device, in its original form (with full outer ring) is described by Skinner & Eno<sup>3</sup> as PS-FC 51 and by Whitfield<sup>4</sup> as 1264.

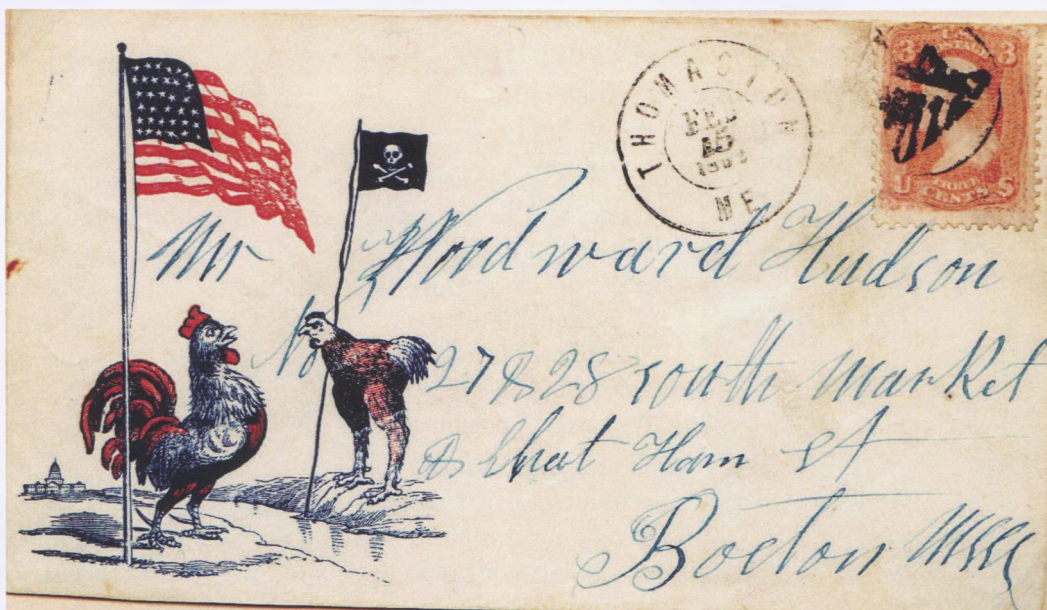


Figure 6

Robinson was not the only proponent of the patriotic shield; Nelson Fales was postmaster when the obliterator, found on 1861 and 1869 issues and shown in Figure 7, was used. This is reported at Whitfield<sup>5</sup> 1429 and by Skinner & Eno<sup>6</sup> as PS-S 22. Fales also used the device illustrated in Figure 8, on 1870 issues. It is listed by Cole<sup>7</sup> as SH-54 and by Whitfield<sup>8</sup> as 1322. Thomaston produced several patriotic shields and a future proper study of these seems warranted.

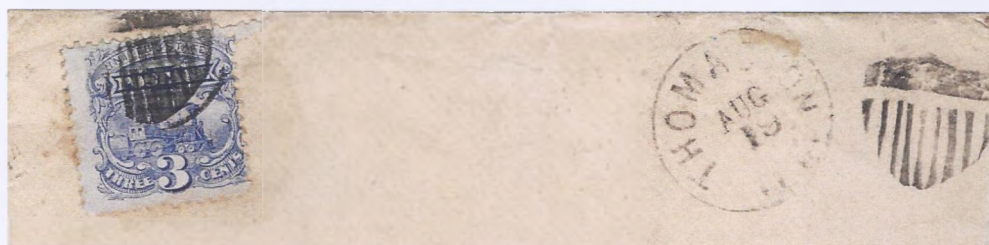


Figure 7



Figure 8



Edward Robinson's second style of obliterator was a compass rose, which is only seen in 1864. Perhaps he was making a political statement in that the Civil War was drawing to a close and he hoped for a moral compass, or perhaps it was Thomaston's ship-building industry he was noting. Regardless, when he left office on August 3, 1865, he continued his business as merchant and ship builder. The device did not stand up well to use. Introduced no later than August 1863, by October there was already a gap in the outer circle. Figures 9 and 10 show the two impressions.



Figure 9



Figure 10

Postmaster Robinson's last fancy was a cross with negative ornaments. It has what many say is a flower and leaves in the four quadrants. It is seen only in 1865 but stood up to use very well as seen in Figures 11 and 12, a January and June impression.



Figure 11



Figure 12



Robinson's successor was Nelson S. Fales, a Thomaston native born in 1838. He had served as a Sergeant in Company B, 7th Maine Infantry and he was gravely wounded on May 4, 1863 in the Battle of Fredericksburg, Virginia. He recovered either at the Armory Square or Carver Hospital in Washington, D.C. (as documented by the Susannah Pullen quilt in the Smithsonian collection)<sup>9</sup>. Fales, who appears in Figure 13<sup>10</sup>, was mustered out a full sergeant in September 1864, returned home and on August 4, 1865, he became Thomaston's postmaster.

Fales was the first Thomaston postmaster to use colored ink for the obliterator; a teal five-pointed star was his first canceler. While a lovely impression when struck properly, it was frequently poorly executed, leaving a point with a smudge which has at times been mistaken for a pine tree. The teal 5-pointed star, seen in Figure 14, is known used only in 1871. His second device was a handsome serif 'T' from 1871, which soon lost the serif portion at the base of the letter. Figure 15 shows the tail of the 'T' in place on the right bottom on November 8, yet in only four weeks, the tail is gone, evident in Figure 16.



Figure 13

Figure 14





Figure 15



Figure 16

Seen only in 1872, Fales introduces a cross in January or February, noted as Whitfield<sup>11</sup> 2528 and illustrated in Figure 17. By December 1872, a second cross killer was in use, shown in Figure 18. Fales continued as postmaster until 1873. He died in Thomaston in 1914 from chronic bronchitis, aged 75<sup>12</sup>.



Figure 17

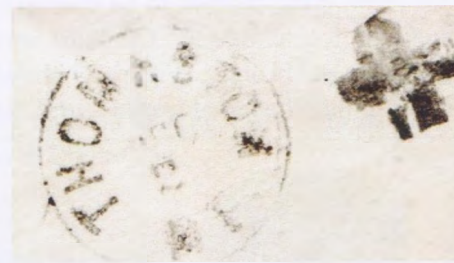


Figure 18

On September 30, 1873, Henry A. Willis took over from Fales. Willis too, was Thomaston-born and had a Civil War story to tell. At the age of 18, he enlisted as a private in October 1861. He rose quickly through the ranks but was captured at Spotsylvania Court House, Virginia on May 11, 1864. The resourceful Willis managed to escape and he returned to duty with Captain Hall's Battalion of the 1st Maine Cavalry, where he served as Acting Assistant Quartermaster. Pictured



Figure 19

in Figure 19<sup>13</sup>, Willis was mustered out as a 1st Lieutenant in April 1865. Willis returned to Thomaston and married Helen E. Thomson on November 30, 1870. Willis is the only other postmaster to use colored ink; marine blue was his preference. His first postmark, illustrated in Figure 20, was a Maltese cross, seen only in 1875. Two copies are known of this cancel. His second known obliterator is this small five-pointed star, also in marine blue, July 21, 1877. Shown in Figure 21, this is the only copy known by the author. It is probably unique.



Figure 20



Figure 21

Willis continued as postmaster until September 29, 1886. Willis' wife died in 1898, an event which precipitated him moving to Topeka, Kansas with his youngest child, Helen (then aged 21 years). Never to return to Maine, Willis became a leading citizen of Topeka and ran a drugstore for 23 years before dying there in 1910, aged 66 years<sup>14</sup>.

Willis' departure from the postmastership also coincided with the beginning of a period where no notable cancels were produced. Willis' successor, Thomas A. Carr served as postmaster until February 1890 and it seems that Carr's successor, Thomas Singer was equally unimaginative. Not until after the end of Singer's tenure in 1894, do we again see anything of interest.



Pumpkinhead cancelers are the most plentiful and longest used design in Thomaston. In fact, Whitfield<sup>15</sup> attributes no less than six different pumpkinheads to the Thomaston Post Office! The author has seen more than thirteen varieties and suspects the number might pass twenty survivors if all were gathered together. They vary in design from small to medium, with googly eyes and with teeny eyes, with broad smiles to lopsided ones, and with large triangular noses to small thinner ones. Given these killers tended to last only short periods, an extensive collection of just Thomaston pumpkinheads would fill pages.

The prime period of use was for pumpkinheads was from 1894 to 1899, however, a newly discovered copy indicates that the first use of the design was in 1875 under postmaster Willis. Shown in Figure 22, this example is the only copy known by the author pre-1894.

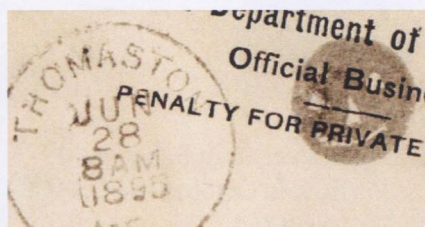
Under postmaster Frederick Eugene Gilchrist, pumpkinhead obliterators became the norm. He served from April 7, 1894 and during his term, there seemed to be special enjoyment for placing a face over another face. He married Martha Waldo and they had four children. The third-born, Ethel Ann, was unmarried and when she was twenty, she began working for her father as his clerk. Figure 23 shows a chronological sequence of different pumpkinheads, some of which can be matched to the illustrated tracings in Whitfield.



Figure 22



10/19/1894



6/28/1895



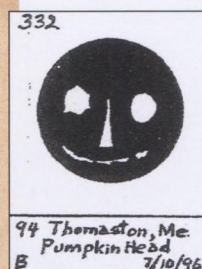
10/28/1895



6/8/1896



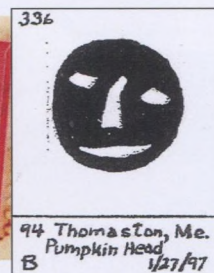
8/3/1896



12/18/1896



1/25/1897



Mar or May 1897

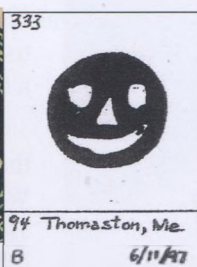


Figure 23



On May 24, 1898, Edward Brown took over the Thomaston Post Office from Gilchrist but, as seen in Figure 24, the pumpkinheads continued — and Gilchrist's daughter, Ethel continued as Brown's clerk. The obvious conjecture is that Ethel Ann Gilchrist was responsible for carving all of Thomaston's cork obliterations.



Figure 24

Ethel Gilchrist was the clerk in Thomaston until 1903 (she married in June 1904), but in 1900 the post office was issued a machine-made duplex handstamp like the one shown in Figure 25.



Figure 25

And with that came the end of the pumpkinheads, and the end of an era of creativity in Thomaston, Maine. ■

#### References:

1. Easton, Cyrus, *History of Thomaston, Rockland, and South Thomaston, Maine*, Smith. & Company, Printers, Hallowell, ME, 1865, p. 201
2. Dow, Sterling T., *Maine Postal History and Postmarks*, Quarterman Publications, Inc., Lawrence, MA, 1976, p. 113
3. Skinner, Hubert C. & Eno, Amos, *United States Cancellations 1845-1869*, American Philatelic Society, State College, PA and the Louisiana Heritage Press of New Orleans, New Orleans, LA 1980, p. 219
4. Whitfield, Kenneth A., *Cancellations Found on 19th Century U.S. Stamps*, U.S. Cancellation Club, Lewisburg, PA 2012, p. 44
5. *ibid*, p. 49
6. Skinner, Hubert C. & Eno, Amos, *United States Cancellations 1845-1869*, American Philatelic Society, State College, PA and the Louisiana Heritage Press of New Orleans, New Orleans, LA 1980, p. 209
7. Cole, James M., *Cancellations and Killers of the Banknote Era 1870-1894*, U.S. Philatelic Classics Society, Inc., Columbus, OH 1995, p. 126
8. Whitfield, Kenneth A., *Cancellations Found on 19th Century U.S. Stamps*, U.S. Cancellation Club, Lewisburg, PA 2012, p. 46
9. National Museum of American History collection, which can be seen and referenced at [http://americanhistory.si.edu/collections/search?custom\\_search\\_id=collections-search&edan\\_local=1&edan\\_q=pullen&op=Search&edanfq%5B%5D=online\\_visual\\_material%3Atrue](http://americanhistory.si.edu/collections/search?custom_search_id=collections-search&edan_local=1&edan_q=pullen&op=Search&edanfq%5B%5D=online_visual_material%3Atrue), accessed February 2, 2019
10. Digital Public Library of America (DigitalMaine) [https://digitalmaine.com/arc\\_civilwarportraits/index.25.html](https://digitalmaine.com/arc_civilwarportraits/index.25.html), accessed March 5, 2019
11. Whitfield, Kenneth A., *Cancellations Found on 19th Century U.S. Stamps*, U.S. Cancellation Club, Lewisburg, PA 2012, p. 86
12. Ancestry.com., *Maine Death Records*
13. Digital Public Library of America (DigitalMaine) [https://digitalmaine.com/arc\\_civilwarportraits/index.25.html](https://digitalmaine.com/arc_civilwarportraits/index.25.html), accessed March 6, 2019
14. *The Topeka Daily Capital*, Topeka, KS February 8, 1910, p. 8, accessed through Newspapers.com March 8, 2019.
15. Whitfield, Kenneth A., *Cancellations Found on 19th Century U.S. Stamps*, U.S. Cancellation Club, Lewisburg, PA 2012, p. 22



## Cancellations on the 2¢ Issue of 1890 (Part I)

*Merritt Jenkins*

I suppose that most collectors of "little bits of colored paper", as my wife likes to call them, started out rather young. I was nine years old when my "Aunt" Rena (a neighbor) gave me my first stamp album. In fact it was called - *My First Stamp Album*. And, like any child with a dominant collecting gene, I tried to collect the whole world. Of course this did not last very long and my collecting experience evolved from the world to U. S. plate blocks and finally to the postal history of the Issue of 1890. By 1979, I had exhausted my ability to add to the collection for financial reasons.

In the 1970s, I lived in Baltimore, Maryland and worked downtown. On my lunch hour I would often visit with a Baltimore dealer and friend, John Birkinbine, who I probably worried to death trying to figure out what I should collect next. Since my postal history collection contained some fancy cancels on cover, John suggested that perhaps I would be interested in collecting just the fancy cancels. On a subsequent visit, John had purchased a small but interesting collection of fancies on the 2¢ 1890 issue. Without a moment's hesitation, I purchased it.

From the heyday of fancy cancels in the 1870s, the advent of ellipse cancels in the late 1870s and machine cancels in the 1880s, the 1890s marked the beginning of the end fancies. By 1890, the volume of mail had grown to the point that a great many postmasters did not have the time nor the inclination to create artistic cancellations. Even though the 1890 issue was the last issue of the banknote era, collectors generally ignored it because it fell outside the "Classical Era." This Birkinbine accumulation became the nucleus of my present collection. Here are four examples from that collection:



*Hen-on-Nest*



*Jack-o-Lantern*



*Head with Hat*



*Flying Witch*

The "Hen-on-Nest" cancel is very similar to one used from Baxter, West Virginia. The "Head with Hat" cancel was on a badly mangled cover from Gardner, Kansas. The cover was in such bad shape I soaked off the cancel. It is the only one I have ever seen. A previous owner named them and, arguably, the Hen, Head and Witch are a bit ambiguous and can be subject to other interpretations depending on the eye of the beholder.

In 1980, I was transferred back home to Knoxville, Tennessee and my wife and I built a house. In an effort to reduce the mortgage a bit, I sold most of my postal history collection, a decision I regret to this day, but I kept the fancy cancels.

In 1986, I discovered Sol Salkind's book, *U. S. Cancels 1890 - 1900*. I sent him two or three copies of cancels that were not illustrated in his book. This resulted in a correspondence between us that lasted until around 1992. During that time I purchased a number of examples from him, such as these four.



*Mask*



*Hen-on-Nest*



*"T"-in Diamond*

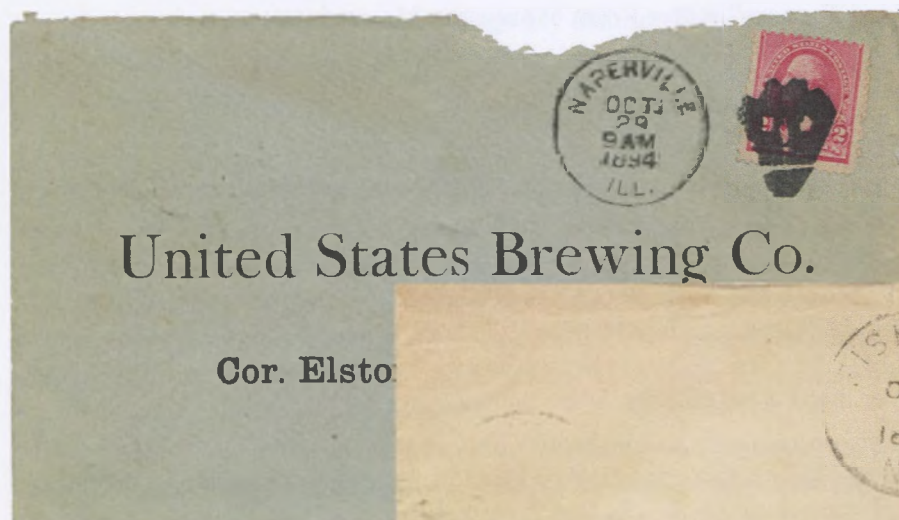


*Sunburst*

Concerning the "Mask" cancel, early on I thought the cancel was perhaps a fake as I was unable to find a similar one in the literature. Then, several years ago, I obtained this Naperville, IL cover from an auction (house unrecalled). It is reminiscent of the mask in Sol's book. This is the only one I have seen on a #220 cover, noted as Whitfield 361.

A few more of my other favorites follow.

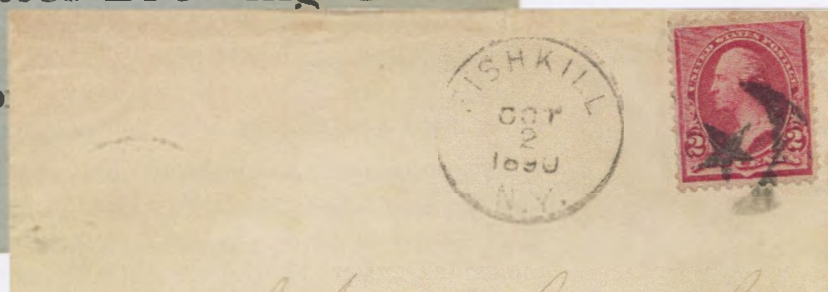




United States Brewing Co.

Cor. Elston

Naperville, IL, 10/29/1894  
with mask, Whitfield 361.



Fishkill, NY, 10/2/1890,  
unreported star and shield.



Pleasant Gap, PA, 10/18/1890, unreported shield in circle, and cds "18" is inverted.



Other shield cancels, all unreported.



Unreported "Skull & Crossbones,"  
purchased from a Siegel Sale about  
20 years ago.



Magnolia, WI, 6/6/1891, cancelled by a very large anchor (Whitfield 666).

End of Part I



## More On The "American Turners" Killer From Worcester, Massachusetts

Bob Trachimowicz

In the previous issue of the *NEWS*, I described a second documented example of the Worcester, Massachusetts "American Turners" cancel. Both cancels noted in that article were struck in conjunction with Worcester Style S-11 Circular Date Stamp (CDS), illustrated here as Figure 1.



Figure 1

The Worcester Style S-11 CDS was used from some time in 1876 to July, 1881, when it was replaced by the Style S-12 Wesson X-Type Time-On-Bottom (TOB) CDS. The X-Type indicates the use of hand-carved cork or metal cancels, rather than barred ellipses, in the duplex cancelling device.

I also noted in my article that the Worcester Style S-11 CDS had slugs for the Day and Month, but lacked a Year slug. However, the docketing on the reverse of my postal card indicates that it was mailed in 1880. Both examples were mailed in October. I postulated that both Matthew's cover and my postal card were mailed in October, 1880.

For this article, I now postulate that the third known example of the Worcester Turners cancel, which was mentioned in the Schuyler Rumsey auction catalog, was also paired with the Worcester Style S-11 CDS and was struck in October, 1880. Recently, additional information has come to light.

Figure 2 illustrates an exciting new find. It is a carved cork Turners cancel paired with a Style S-12 Wesson TOB CDS rather than the Worcester Style S-11 CDS that is associated with at least two of the three previously reported and documented examples. And, because of the design of the Worcester Style S-12

Wesson TOB CDS, it is evident that this new find was struck in 1881, which is a year later than the other documented examples. Is it possible that a clerk in the Worcester Post Office pulled a little piece of carved cork, which was last used in 1880, out of his drawer, mounted it in a patented Wesson duplex cancelling device, and created a possibly unique piece of postal history? Did he, in 1881, pair the extremely rare Turners cancel from 1880 with a Style S-12 CDS, or did he carve a new copy of a year-old cancel?

Fortunately, included in the auction lot with the Worcester Turners cancel on the postal card was a very accurate hand-drawn tracing of the cancel, as seen in Figure 3. When I overlaid the tracing of the cancel from 1880 onto the newly-discovered cancel paired with the Worcester Style S-12 Wesson TOB CDS, it was an exact match, thus indicating that the piece of cork carved in 1880 was, for some reason, re-used a year later in 1881.

This new find of an elusive Worcester Turners cancel potentially brings the documented population to four examples – the three that are mentioned in the Schuyler Rumsey auction catalog that are thought to be paired with the Worcester Style S-11 CDS, and this unique example that is paired with the Style S-12 CDS.

Does anyone have information on the whereabouts, or a scan, of the third cancel noted by Schuyler Rumsey?

Please let the editor know if you can shed more light on this subject. ■

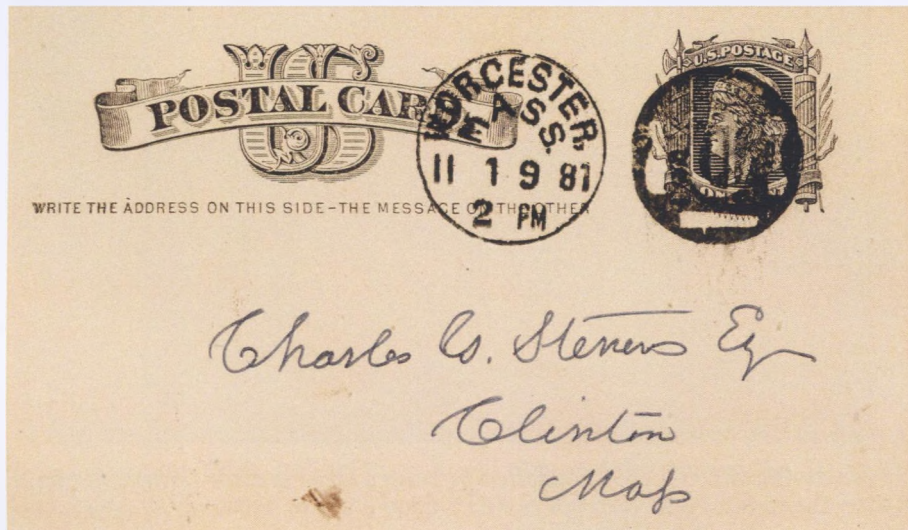


Figure 2



Figure 3



## Things My Stamp Collector Daddy Told Me

Joe Crosby

The many lessons my dear father taught me can be summed up by the following pieces of his sage advice:

*Son, you have to do your homework to know WHAT to look for - but they aren't gonna find YOU. You have to be out there looking for them. This applies to stamps, postal history, and fancy cancels equally.*

*Understand, it is ethically acceptable to take advantage of superior knowledge when dealing with a professional stamp dealer. If he is selling something for \$10 and you know it is a \$100 stamp, don't worry; he's still making a profit when you pay his price. But, you never take advantage of superior knowledge when dealing with the lady at the corner who has inherited Uncle Henry's stamps.*

*The real fun in all this is the chase, the searching, the seeking, and most importantly, the finding. That thrill is unmatched, even more so than when you bring the item home. After all, you may leave it languishing in a cigar box for a few years with all the best intentions of mounting it, adding it to an exhibit, or maybe even reselling it accurately described for a nice profit.*

*And yes, son, you are gonna make some mistakes along the way. You are gonna think that this is a rare fancy cancel, when it is fairly common - or you are not gonna remember that you already have one, or maybe even two of these things you are diligently chasing. But don't worry, over a lifetime of collecting, it has a way of balancing out - the mistakes and the discoveries.*

*Still, the most important thing is the people you will meet along the way. Philatelists are the finest folks you will ever know: honest, well-meaning, considerate, friendly, genuine, salt-of-the earth folks. There is simply not a better bunch out there.*

*So do you homework, son, and keep on doing it, and do your chasing, and keep on doing it, and make new philatelic friends along the way...because that collection of friends is absolutely the best part of the hobby I am sharing with you.*

*The joy is in the FINDING, MORE THAN IN THE OWNING, with very few exceptions. The bonus is, you can do this anywhere, anytime - especially with computers these days.*

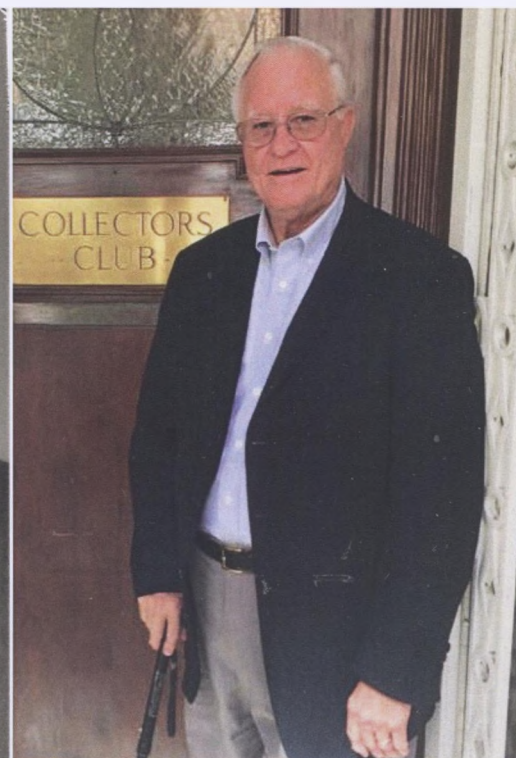
*This is only going to extend your life expectancy 15-20 years. You are gonna have something to do every morning when you get out of bed. It will be a life-long learning experience, full of surprises and if you are lucky, you might even make a buck or two along the way.*

My father started his stamp collecting at the age of ten, in 1907. By the time I was eight years old, he was having me figure out if a stamp was orange brown or red brown. He was taking me along to stamp club meetings and the occasional stamp show in some remote school gym or church parish house. And all his adult collector friends and dealer friends treated me like I was really SOMEBODY... JUST BECAUSE I WAS A STAMP COLLECTOR!!

I am now 79 - AND I STILL AM!! ■



My father: James Henry 'Bing' Crosby



My father's son: Joseph Henry Crosby



## Noted in Passing

*Roger D. Curran*

Jon Steadman sent in this Boston example of a Large Negative 20 in a ringed circle, illustrated as Figure 1. The reverse of the card confirms a franking date of July 28, 1882, making this find a new late day of use.



Figure 1

Sticking with Boston, Dan Haskett reports this an unusual and unlisted cancel, as seen in Figure 2. It appears to be a negative Masonic square and compass. It is maddening when cancels such as these are not clearly struck. And, of course, it can be that incomplete portions allow us to see a cancel design as we wish to interpret it rather than what it is more likely to be. Can readers report additional strikes of this cancel?

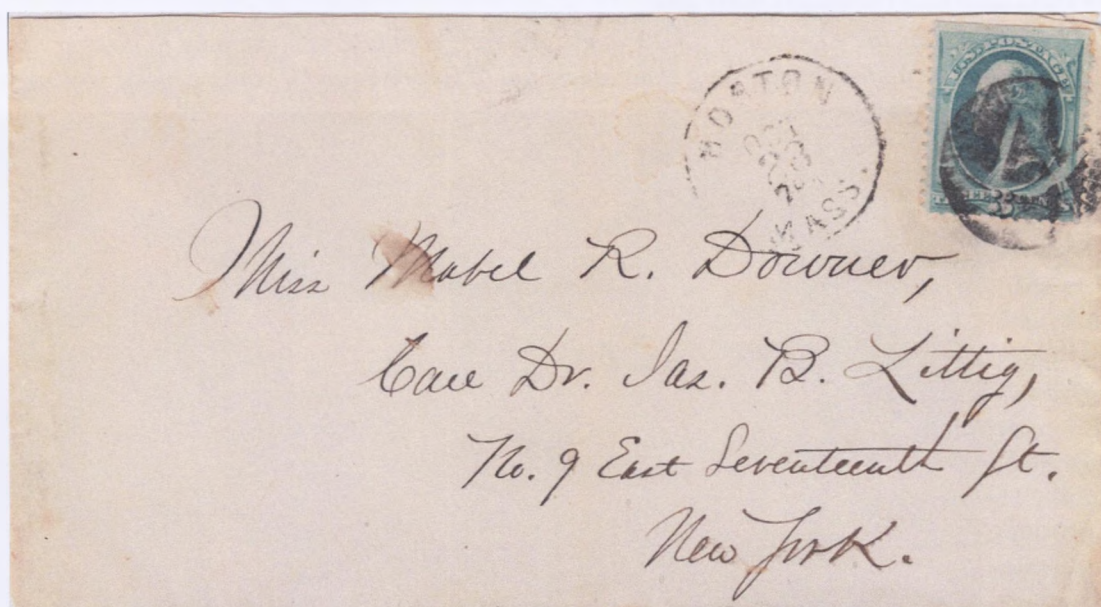


Figure 2

The next two items are in the collection of our editor. Firstly, the cover in Figure 3 was postmarked at Kittery Depot, Maine. There is no indication of a year date. Kittery Depot is a DPO that operated in York Co. from 1858 – 1923. It is the southern-most town in Maine, laying directly across the Piscataqua River from Portsmouth, New Hampshire. The Figure 3 pumpkinhead cancel, with tracing also shown, is not listed in Cole or Whitfield, nor are any other Kittery Depot cancels. Also illustrated, on the back of the cover is a pencil note that reads “only one known”. In addition, there is a small handstamped “BH” in a circle that was used by Bruce Hazelton, a well known specialist in Maine postal history. He may well have written the note.



Maine is known for its pumpkinhead cancels and, as we have just seen, from Thomaston in particular. Aside from that town, the Cole book lists pumpkinheads from the following Maine post offices: Old Orchard, Dexter and Lewiston. The Whitfield book adds Oxford and Augusta. Readers are encouraged to report further examples of the Kittery Depot pumpkinhead to the editor.



Figure 3

Figure 4 illustrates an interesting and attractive cover postmarked Foxcroft, Maine on February 25, 1886. Foxcroft, about 37 miles northwest of Bangor, is a DPO that operated in Piscataquis county from 1821-1917. The name of the postmaster, J. F. Arnold, appears prominently at the bottom of the CDS. That the ink is grey and clearly not printer's ink suggests a formulation chosen to avoid damage to a rubber faced handstamp. Rubber is, of course, very pliable unless dried out and letters and numerals made from rubber would spread out under pressure. We can see that more pressure was applied at the bottom as the letters are somewhat larger. The letters "J." and "F." show particular contrast. Also, the fact that the letters have serifs is consistent with rubber products.



Figure 4

Returning to the circle of wedges canceler – tracing provided – was it duplexed in the handstamp to the CDS? If "yes", one would assume the canceler was made of the same material as the CDS. The juxtaposition of the CDS and cancel in Figure 4, unfortunately, is not conclusive as to whether a duplex handstamp was used. However, the odd wedges cancel, showing substantial breakdown and numerous holes, does not appear to have been made by a manufactured canceler but rather by a soft cork or some such material that was hand carved to produce the wedges design. I believe the CDS and cancel were applied by separate stamps. Comment is invited.



Last of all, Merritt Jenkins recently acquired the cover shown in Figure 5. It originated from Kingston, Pennsylvania on January 17, 1893. This unlisted heart cancel, no doubt hand carved, has an interesting aspect – the numerous cuts all around. Merritt suggests the creator may have been conveying a broken heart. Can any reader report another example?



Figure 5

“Broken” heart cancels are occasionally seen, typically with a single horizontal line – see Figure 6.



Figure 6

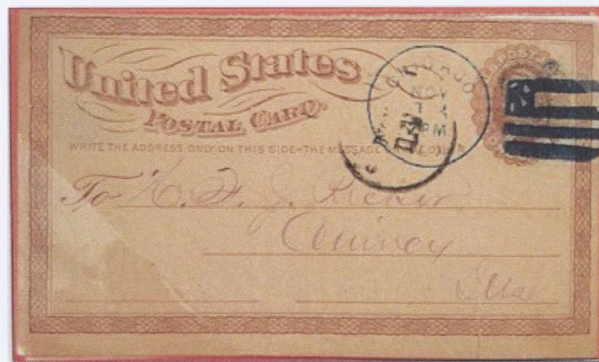


Figure 7

While we are at it, illustrated in Figure 7 is a 3 cent grilled stamp. It shows a heart with a negative arrow and what might be a natural break in the canceler, or perhaps, it was intentionally created to signify “broken.” A tracing is provided. This unlisted cancel was shown years ago in the *NEWS* but the Post Office of origin is still to be identified. ■

## Recently Acquired

Roger Rhoads' Six Frame Gold Medal Exhibit of Chicago Blue cancellations on Postal Cards.



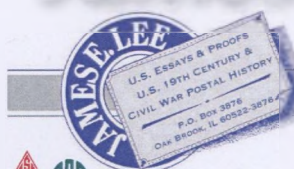
American Flag – One of two reported on a postal card

Over 300 cards, over 25 newly reported varieties, high quality strikes throughout.

Offered Intact. P.O.R.

See our new half page ad in the June *American Philatelist*

# JamesLee.com



P.O. Box 3876 • Oak Brook, IL 60522-3876

Call: (847) 910-6048

Email: jim@jameslee.com

It pays to visit our website often!