



# U.S. Cancellation Club NEWS

Vol. 36, No. 1, Whole No. 316, February 2021



*Some of these may be familiar, but some are not. All originating from Putnam, Connecticut, Bill Duffney has more to share – and on page 9, asks for your help in finding more.*

## Articles

A New Orleans '1880' Cancel and Two Famous Men	4
Interchangeable Elements Within the Ellipse Portion of Duplex Devices	6
Putnam Observations Beyond the Stars	9
The Advent of Rubber-Faced Handstamps	10
An Assortment of Manuscript Cancels	14
Observations on the Oval and Circular Date Stamps Used in Worcester, Massachusetts – Revisited	16
New York City's Four-Ring Target Cancellation	18
Noted in Passing	21
Punched Holes as Cancels	24

*The Official Journal of the United States Cancellation Club*



*The United States Cancellation Club NEWS*

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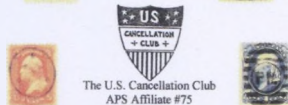
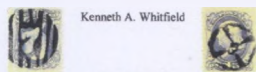
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**CANCELLATIONS FOUND ON  
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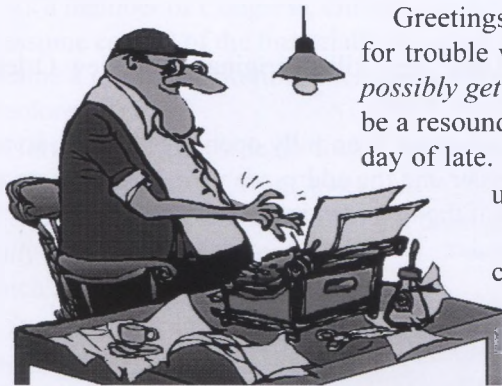
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## EDITOR'S NOTES



Greetings! And welcome to the year 2021. Your humble editor really did ask for trouble when he enquired in the previous edition of this journal: *Could things possibly get even worse before they get better?* Astoundingly, the answer proved to be a resounding "yes!" It seems that history is made, and records are broken, every day of late. When will it ever end? When will life again be mundane and the days unextraordinary?

Until that day arrives, all we can do is maintain a stiff upper lip and carry on – and keep looking forward to one of those four (only) days each year when your friendly postperson personally presents you with your USCC NEWS. Today is one of those red-letter days!

This first issue of Volume 36 is graced by three new authors! We start off with **Don Barany** who has found a lovely folded letter, thrice-struck with Jim Cole's YD-137 "1880" fancy cancel. Turn the page to see what Don has to say about it. This story drips with irony and it will give some readers cause to pause and reflect.

The exceptional **Ardy Callender** regales us with two articles – the first starts on page 6 and discusses interchangeable elements in duplexed ellipse handstamps, and the second article explores the NYPO's four-ring target cancellation device.

In between Ardy's two contributions, our second new writer, **Bill Duffney**, the fine fellow responsible for the fancy cancels on the front, appeals for your help in documenting markings from Putnam, Connecticut. Then, club giant, **Roger Curran** talks about the advent of rubber-faced handstamps, before our third novice, **Greg Hanson** shows us a few more examples of hard-to-find manuscript cancels. The king of Worcester, Massachusetts markings, **Bob Trachimowicz** drops by with a bit more information, bringing us to page 18 and Ardy's second showing.

The final three-and-a-half pages belong to Roger with his "Noted in Passing" column and a little something on punched holes.

While it is fantastic to have three new contributors, your USCC NEWS always needs more. This is the sixth consecutive issue of your NEWS with 24 pages, up from 20 previously (and with no increase in dues, one might add). Only with YOUR help, can we keep up this quality and quantity.

Don't be concerned if you don't write well – just get your bare-boned ideas together and send your editor an email. You'd be surprised how much of many of the articles you read here bear the fingerprints of a ghost writer.

That's about it for now. Enjoy your USCC NEWS – and don't forget to support our awesome advertisers!

Until next time, may your god go with you. ■

## The Classic Cancel

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## A New Orleans '1880' Cancel and Two Famous Men

*Don Barany*

Figure 1 depicts a folded letter with three strikes of a hand-carved "1880" year killer, originating in New Orleans. This killer is recorded in Cole<sup>1</sup> as YD-137, although without attribution as to origin.

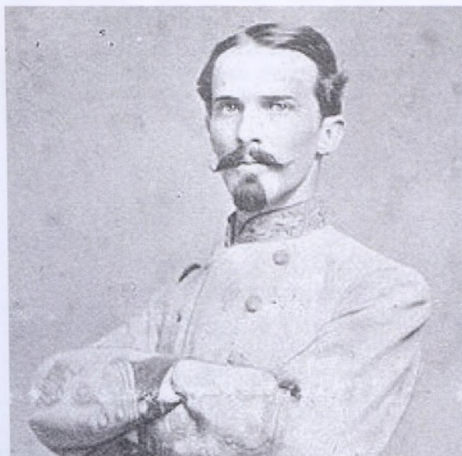
The folded letter is little more than a message of congratulations which has not been fully opened or copied, so as to preclude any damage to the 140 year old item. But as it turns out, the sender and the addressee were both high-profile, well-regarded citizens of New Orleans. The following is a brief account of the two men involved.



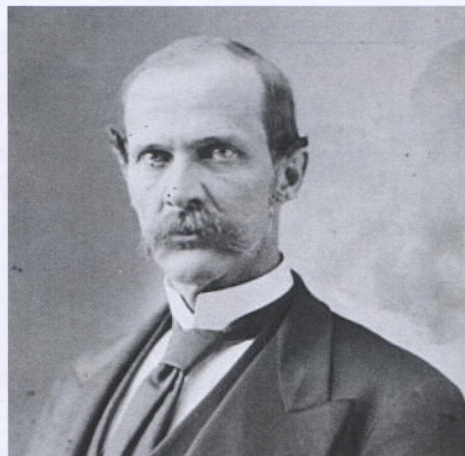
**Figure 1**

Randall Lee Gibson (b.1832) was an attorney and, in later life, a politician. He served in the U.S. House of Representatives from 1875 to 1883, moving to the U.S. Senate until his death in Hot Springs, Arkansas, on December 15, 1892. His father, Tobias Gibson, was one of the leading cotton and sugar planters in the Mississippi Valley.

In August 1861 – prior to his political career – he was commissioned as colonel of the 13th Louisiana Infantry. He fought at the Battle of Shiloh and saw subsequent action. With the Army of the Mississippi, he took part in the 1862 Kentucky Campaign and the Battle of Chickamauga. After being promoted to Brigadier General in January 1864, he fought in the Atlanta Campaign and the Franklin-Nashville Campaign. He was then assigned to the defense of Mobile, Alabama which ultimately failed. After the war, he practiced law. Gibson, the Confederate officer (c.1862) and the U.S. senator (c.1883) can be seen in Figures 2 and 3.



**Figure 2**



**Figure 3**

Of some irony and intrigue, during Gibson's time in the U.S. Senate, a political opponent unsuccessfully challenged his status as a white man, claiming that his great-grandfather was a negro. In fact, it is now known that Gibson's great-great-grandfather was indeed a (free) man of color!

As a member of Congress, Gibson also helped to establish Tulane University by assisting philanthropist Paul Tulane to assume control of the financially-troubled University of Louisiana (Gibson's old alma mater in New Orleans). It thus became a private institution, exempting it from Louisiana's Constitution of 1868 which had extended public education to colored people.<sup>2</sup>

Notice of Gibson's death took up almost the entire front page of New Orleans' newspaper, *The Daily Picayune*,<sup>3</sup> a small extract of which is seen in Figure 4.

Nearly three years later, the sender of the 1880 letter, Robert S. Day passed away several hours after accidentally shooting himself while confronting burglars in his home. Although taking up only a full column of *The Daily Picayune*'s front page, the article stated that he was a very popular socialite, successful cotton trader, talented artist and unrivalled at anything related to sailing. Part of the newspaper article can be seen in Figure 5. The newspaper also noted that Day was active in the Crescent City White League "...during the troublous times of 1874." In closing, the article claimed that "He probably had as many friends as any man in the city, and news of the sad affair was everywhere received with sorrow."<sup>4</sup>

Times and social attitudes have certainly changed in the last 140 years. Nonetheless, the two gentlemen involved with this piece of postal history were then big, respected names in New Orleans.

Sometimes, change *can* be for the better! ■

**RANDALL LEE GIBSON.**

Death of Louisiana's Great Senator Yesterday, at 3:15 O'clock p. m., at Hot Springs, Ark.

His Sons and Other Members of His Family at the Bedside.

The End of an Eventful and Honorable Career.

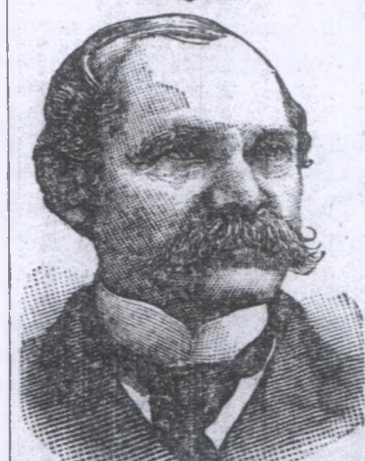
Eminent as a Soldier, Statesman, Orator and Scholar.

A Sufferer from a Long Illness Borne With Patience and Fortitude.

The Remains to Rest by the Side of His Wife at Lexington, Ky.

The Funeral Train to Leave for That City This Morning.

Sketch of a Life Which is Part of the Nation's History.



Hot Springs, Ark., Dec. 15.—(Special.)—Senator R. L. Gibson died at 3:15 p. m. to-day at the Park Hotel here. His death had been hourly looked for

man, that the news and that truth, as the w a change of cll sary. He was ness and his tr were of his 7 greatly attach was to come t and find rest i placed it in th en an order fo freed to be pu This order he left. The plac full of rich s with a library ing for years. ness for this e did not have a in which he d war. He had but he scarcely parison to the "Senator Gib gularly happy, though the br for memory. h who died five fond of his th devoted in th second son, a b rurse during 1867 Springs, father's side. Richardson, of from the Hop Connecticut, te "You ask as the dead, but no close upon t to single then able was his cld friends. I with zealous t lar about that friend. He al soldiers who membered encl derful accuraci was the Tulai mited plans f the university, reference to crested. One when he foun been in carryl in connection v But I really justice to the Judge Waite of the Army t the sectors a "The Army of "General Gibso lity of the me They recogniz zibility as a sol spot in their us who were reason to rem son and his r several tigt be found a m of religion or ccerely regret the statesman

Figure 4

**THE SAD DEATH OF ROBERT S. DAY.**

The Popular Orleansian Awakened During the Night

By the Noise of a Burglar's Entrance Into the House,

Goes in Pursuit of the Thief, Pistol in Hand,

When a Stumble Causes an Explosion and a Fatal Wound Results.



Robert S. Day.

Business and social circles were shocked yesterday by the announcement of the death of Mr. Robert S. Day. He was par excellence an ideal gentleman and respected citizen, a general favorite in his large circle of friends and acquaintances, and those who did not know him are extremely few; for these reasons there was profound sorrow occa-

Figure 5

References

1. Cole, James, M. *Cancellations and Killers of the Banknote Era 1870-1894*, The U.S. Classics Society, Inc., 1995.
2. Website: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Randall\\_L.\\_Gibson](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Randall_L._Gibson). Accessed October 27, 28 & November 16, 2020.
3. *The Daily Picayune*, New Orleans, LA, December 16, 1892.
4. *The Daily Picayune*, New Orleans, LA, November 17, 1895.

## Interchangeable Elements Within the Ellipse Portion of Duplex Devices

*Ardy Callender*

In the August 2019 USCC *NEWS*<sup>1</sup>, I posed the question of interchangeable central elements within the ellipse portion of duplex cancellations. Earlier, in 1935, Gilbert Burr<sup>2</sup> had also considered the idea of removable items.

While searching back issues of the *NEWS* on a different topic, I ran across a couple of articles also exploring the possibility of interchangeable elements. The first article dates back to November 1957 and is titled "Some New Remarks on Standardized Hand Stamp Cancellations on the Bank Note Issues," by R.S. de Wasserman<sup>3</sup>. The article included tracings of two Boston ellipses shown here as Figure 1. In discussing the tracings, de Wasserman states the following:

"First, I will try to solve an old argument; the question arises whether or not these numerals and letters were interchangeable. Please compare the following two "C" cancellations: which are from Boston Mass. and you will see that the second "C" on a 2¢ vermilion is not quite vertically inserted and so I think that the letters and numerals were loose i.e., interchangeable. Messrs. Blake and Davies show us in Fig. 2022 of their Boston book the same cancel but with a "3" in, and in my opinion this "C" and this "3" were interchangeable and in the example I give above the "C" was not sufficiently secure."

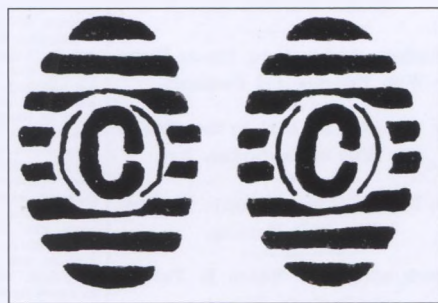


Figure 1

A response to de Wasserman's article appeared in the September 1958 issue of the *NEWS*<sup>4</sup>. The article written by W.E. Tinsley is entitled "Killers with Movable Letters or Numerals" and discusses two handstamp patents which as he put it, could "shed some light on this question."

Tinsley notes that the "C" shown by de Wasserman and the "3" featured by Blake and Davis<sup>5</sup> possess two vertically positioned "arcs" and have only been reported from Boston. He mentions he has "seen a number of 3's and a number of C's, neither of which is consistent, all showing slight variations in the orientation of the C or 3 relative to the bars, being skewed in the order of plus and minus five to ten degrees from the vertical."

A patent for a "Mail Stamp" granted to T. H. Stokes on March 21, 1899 is reproduced in the Tinsley article and is shown here as Figure 2. Tinsley states that the patent "shows a type of handstamp which could have produced these skewed Boston Cancels." Referring to the patent diagram, the handstamp consists of a two piece base (labeled B and C) and a handle (A). As shown in Fig. 4 of the diagram, a two piece base is connected by a pin (b) which allows the lower piece (C) to rotate to access the date slugs (s). A spring catch (D) holds the bottom block in place and prevents any movement of the bottom block (C). However, as observed by Tinsley "A small amount of play or looseness in the spring catch D would permit the numeral or letter carried on the bottom end of the boss b to be skewed." Thus, Tinsley felt that the Boston "C's" and "3's" to be a result of a loose device rather than interchangeable elements.

The other patent referenced in Tinsley's article is U.S. Patent No. 481363. It was granted to Fredrick C. Lidke of New York on August 23, 1892 (shown here as Figure 3). Referring to the figures and letters included on the patent diagram, Fig. 2 illustrates the bottom of Lidke's device with the ellipse portion being labeled (G) and a central plug (F). Lidke's Fig. 3 is a cross-section of the ellipse taken at between points y - y (shown on Lidke's Fig. 2). The cross-section clearly indicates the central plug (F) is inserted into body of the device (D) and held in place by a plate (C). An enlargement of the patent's Fig. 3 is shown as Figure 4 with the central plug colored blue. As Tinsley notes, the central plug (F) must have been slotted to prevent the plug from rotating or shifting. He states "Plugs similar to the removable plug F, but carrying other numerals or letters, could be substituted therefore, resulting in a handstamp with interchangeable letters and numerals." Tinsley concludes "While we cannot say positively that such killers (interchangeable) were actually used in cancelling mail, this patent establishes that cancelling devices with interchangeable letters and numerals were known."

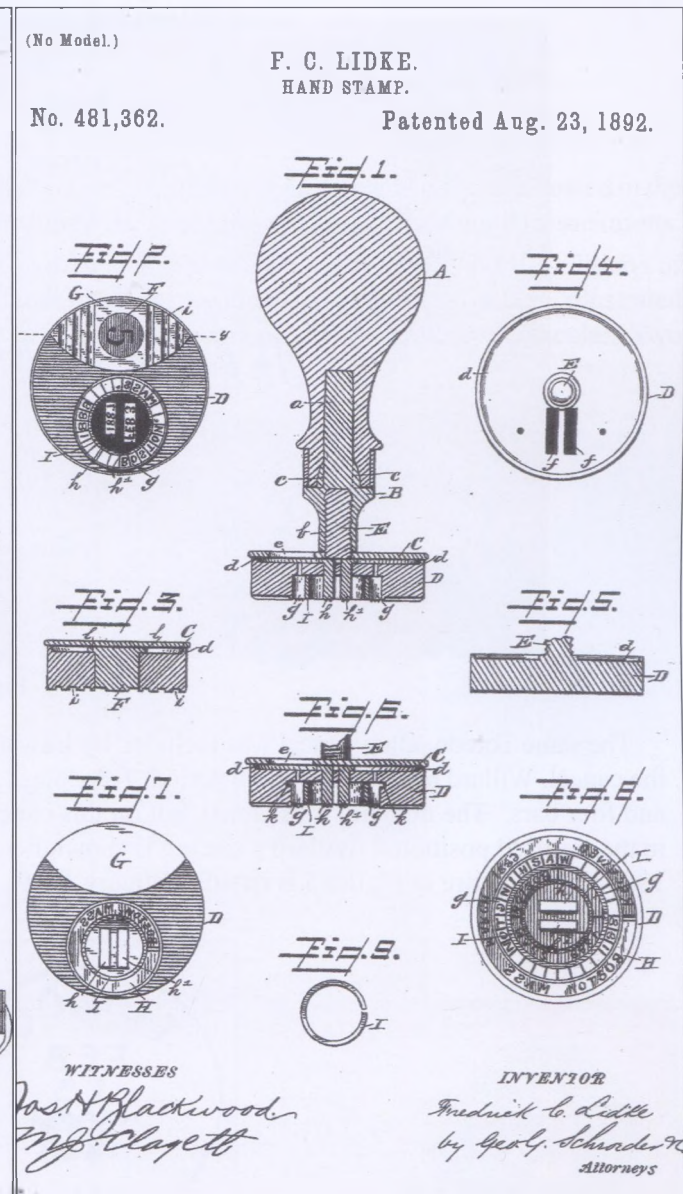
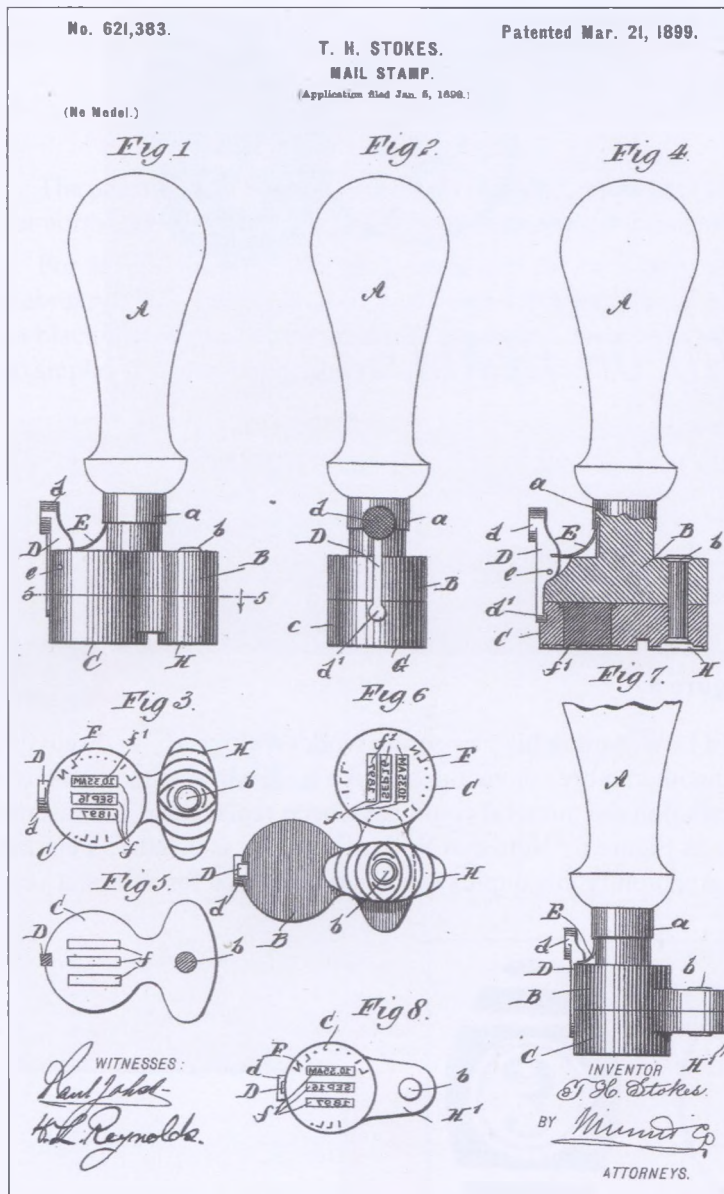


Figure 2

Figure 3

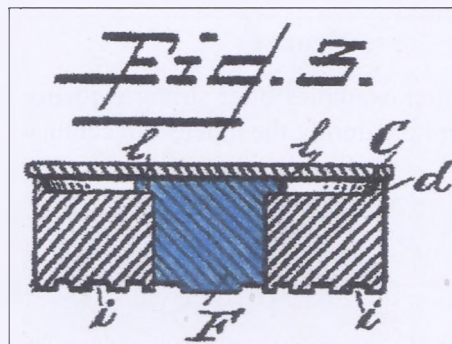


Figure 4

Recently, a postal entire canceled by an ellipse with an inverted numeral "3" from Toledo, Ohio was acquired by the author (shown here as Figure 5). It certainly appears to be a good candidate for proof of interchangeable elements as it seems highly improbable that the Toledo post office would request a duplex with an inverted numeral. It is envisioned that a duplex device, similar to the Lidke patent, possessed a slotted central plug which when inserted reversed, would result in an inverted numeral. The partially pre-printed entire was addressed to Office Board of Health, J.S. Billing U.S.A, Washington D.C. Dated 4 January, 1889, it was sent from the Health Office in Toledo, Ohio. The solid barrel, 4 horizontal bar ellipse encloses an inverted numeral 3 surrounded by a single ring.

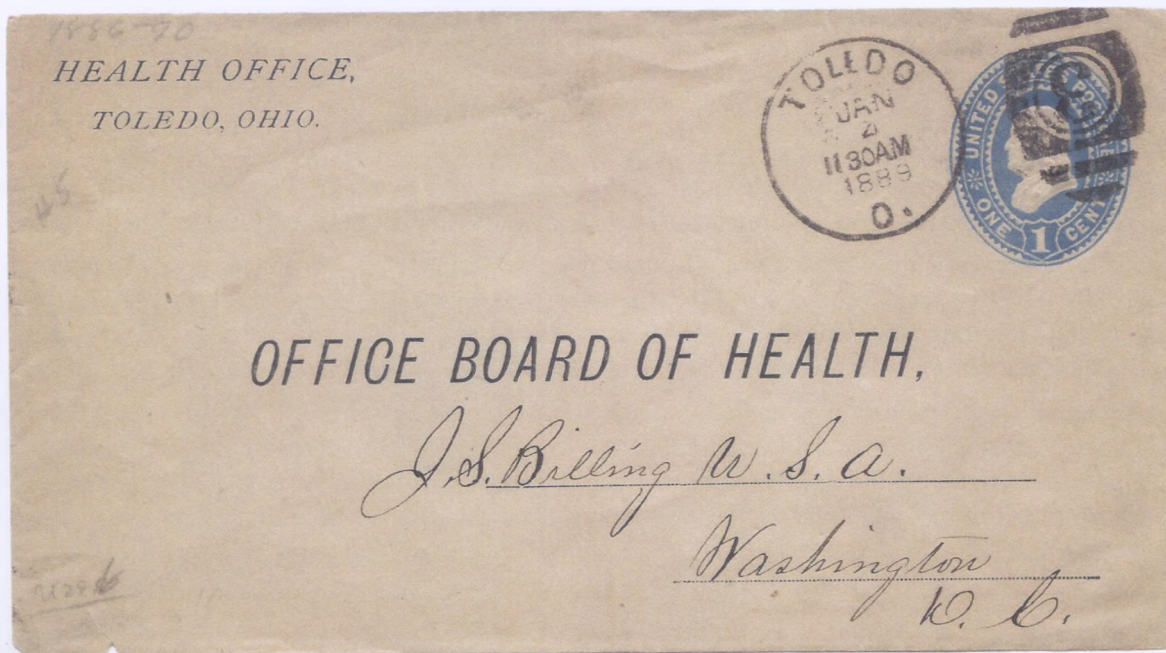


Figure 5

The same Toledo, Ohio cancel was included by Edward L. Willard in his pioneering work on ellipses<sup>6</sup>. In discussing the cancel, Willard notes "Late in the period, Toledo had another, more conventional 3 in a solid barrel with inner circle and four bars. The numeral is reversed, but on this cancellation the numeral could have been replaceable and inserted in the inverted position." Willard's tracing is shown here as Figure 6. Note that Willard's tracing is dated 15 February 1888 and the entire in Figure 5 is dated 4 January 1889. Apparently this duplex remained in service for at least a year.

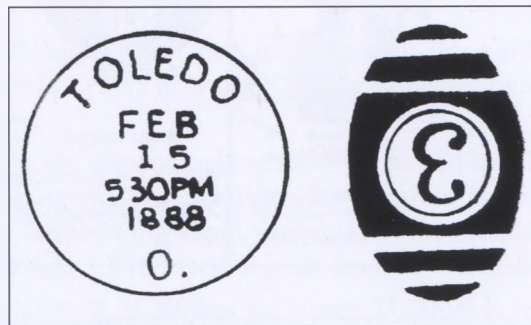


Figure 6

Both the existence of patents and cancellation examples offer strong evidence for the presence of interchangeable elements employed within some duplex obliterators during the nineteenth century.

## Endnotes:

1. Callender, Ardy, "Solid Center or "Black Ball" Ellipses (Part 1)," *U.S. Cancellation Club NEWS*, Whole No. 310 (August 2019), pg. 66.
2. Burr, Gilbert L., "Standardized Hand Stamp Cancellations on the Bank Note Issues," *The American Philatelist*, Vol. 48, No. 12, (September 1935), pg. 619.
3. de Wasserman, R. S., "Some New Remarks on Standardized Hand Stamp Cancellations on the Bank Note Issues," *U.S. Cancellation Club NEWS*, Whole No. 31 (November 1957), pp. 88-89.
4. Tinsley, Walton E., "Killers with Movable Letters or Numerals." *U.S. Cancellation Club NEWS*, Whole No. 36 (September 1958), pp. 35-38.
5. Blake, Maurice C., and Davis, Wilbur W., *Boston Postmarks to 1890* (Lawrence, Massachusetts: Quarterman Publications, Inc., 1974), pp. 268-269.
6. Willard, Edward L., *The United States Two Cent Red Brown of 1883-1887* (New York: H.L. Lindquist Publications, Inc., 1979), pp. 153, 155.

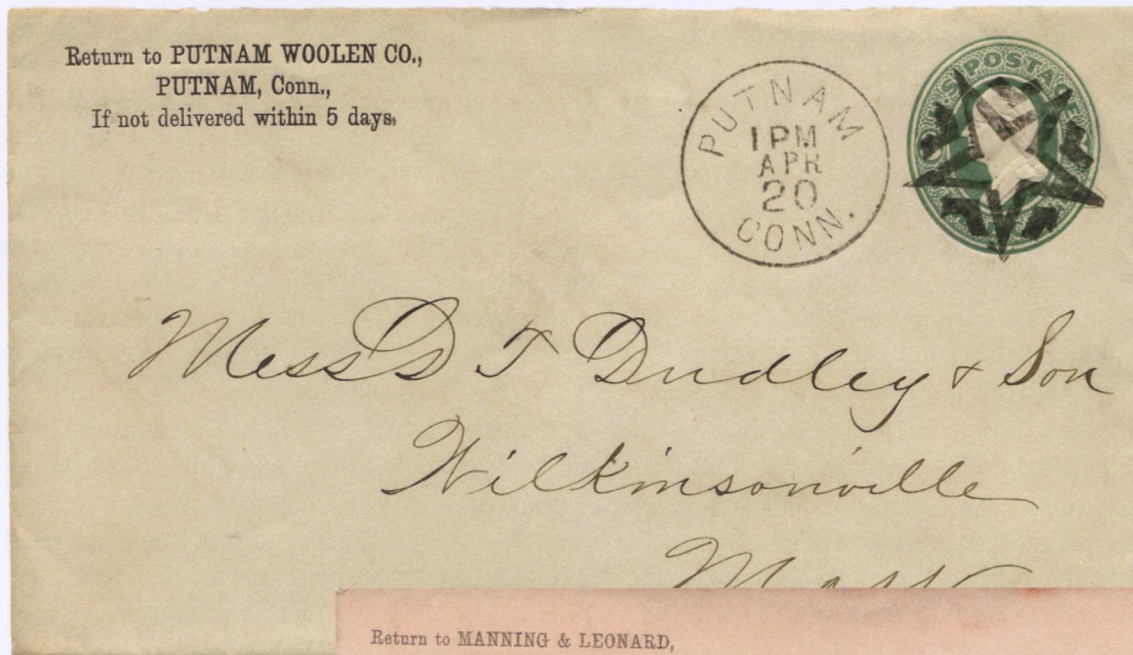


Putnam Observations Beyond the Stars

Bill Duffney

The post office in Putnam, Windham county, Connecticut has been in continuous operation since 1855. Situated in the far north east corner of the state, Putnam is no more than six miles from the state lines of Rhode Island and Massachusetts.

For several decades, Putnam's fancy cancels have been of particular interest to me. The USCC NEWS editions of February 2002, February 2005 and August 2006 ran articles about Putnam, reporting several new cancels, illustrated in black-and-white. I have subsequently found more unlisted fancy cancels, some of which are quite spectacular. Two examples from my collection are shown below.



Within the next few months, it is intended to conclude a census and a new study of Putnam's cancels. Readers are asked to review their collections and send me high-resolution scans or color photocopies of any Putnam killers, previously reported or otherwise. My email address is [wduffney@comcast.net](mailto:wduffney@comcast.net). The results of the census will be published later this year in the NEWS.

Readers are also invited to take a look at my website devoted to Connecticut postal history at <http://www.ctpostalhistory.com/CtPP/Home.html>. ■

## The Advent of Rubber-Faced Handstamps

*Roger D. Curran*

In 1876, the New York Post Office introduced a set of handstamps that duplexed circular date stamps to ellipse cancelers. Thus began a trend in the U.S. that was to spread to all big city post offices and to many smaller ones as well. These handstamps were metal-faced, typically steel. They produced what are frequently referred to by collectors as "standardized" cancels because they all involved the same general design. Virtually all were struck in black ink. Large post offices favored these handstamps because they held up well under heavy use.

In this same year a countervailing trend emerged that was also to have major impact – the use of rubber-faced handstamps. These appealed to small town postmasters because they were inexpensive. Cancels from such handstamps have, of course, been popular with collectors due to myriad and often highly intricate designs that were created and to the fact that they were frequently struck in colored inks. The reason, incidentally, why colored inks were used is because black printer's ink could not be used satisfactorily with rubber stamps. Colored inks, however, were also problematic in that, generally speaking, they could be easily removed from the stamps they canceled. The U.S. Post Office Department in 1878 specifically forbade the use of colored canceling inks unless their indelibility was equal to that of black printer's ink.

I have been interested in early uses of rubber-faced handstamps and how they evolved. The late Arthur Bond, a noted student of 19th century U.S. postal markings, wrote that "the first practical mold and vulcanizing equipment for rubber stamps was invented by J.F. W. Dorman, of Baltimore in about 1870."<sup>1</sup> However, he went on to state that "Very few postal markings from rubber stamps are found before 1877, but in that year a great many made their appearance in a wide variety of forms, frequently including the county name, and occasionally the name of the postmaster. Obviously, such stamps were purchased by the postmasters."<sup>2</sup>

It is not necessarily an easy task to determine whether a particular marking was struck from a rubber stamp. Often, it becomes a matter of judgement with no conclusive proof available. Here are some factors I take into consideration:

1. Since most early rubber cancelers are duplexed, I look for any indication that one or more letters in the CDS have spread out under pressure; in other words, letters that are in some way larger than others which would indicate a pliable canceler face. This also applies to the CDS outer rim. If a rubber-faced handstamp was struck at an angle, the portion of the rim receiving more pressure will likely appear thicker than the rest of the rim.
2. The presence of colored canceling ink is an important factor. Included also are inks that are greyish with a slight watery (for want of a better word) quality and sometimes a suggestion of color. These inks arose in the early 1880s.
3. CDS letters with serifs are more common in rubber-faced handstamps than in metal-faced, especially so beginning in the 1880s. Also, any ornamentation in the CDS is much more common with rubber.
4. Strikes from rubber stamps don't show indentations on the cover from the CDS letters and numerals. Slight indentations are sometimes seen with metal strikes. In questionable cases I slide a finger over the CDS to judge whether a perceptible indentation is there.
5. In the earliest rubber years, 1876 and 1877, the typical canceling ink colors, in my experience, are purple and magenta.

Several covers are discussed herewith. The earliest strike I have seen from a rubber-faced handstamp is the February 8, 1876 example from Normal, Illinois shown in Figure 1. Comparing the CDS and cancel strikes in Figure 1 with those on the Figure 2 cover, it appears a duplex handstamp was used with more pressure applied to the circle of wedges strike in Figure 2. Please note the double circles in the two CDSs which I believe represent a further indicator of having been struck from rubber stamps.

The card in Figure 3 postmarked at Mount Pleasant, South Carolina, is datelined "March 30th 1876" on the reverse. I think the simplex town postmark was struck by a rubber stamp because of the magenta ink color and the shape of the "Charleston County" letters. Also, the oblong shape of the CDS is much more characteristic of rubber stamps.

I believe the card in Figure 4, struck in an unusual blue ink, is postmarked Mantorville, Minnesota. The date is April 7, 1876. The CDS letters have serifs and no indentations were detected. Also, the second "N" in "MINN." is larger than the first "N". I think the CDS is from a rubber stamp but have no opinion about the negative star cancel.

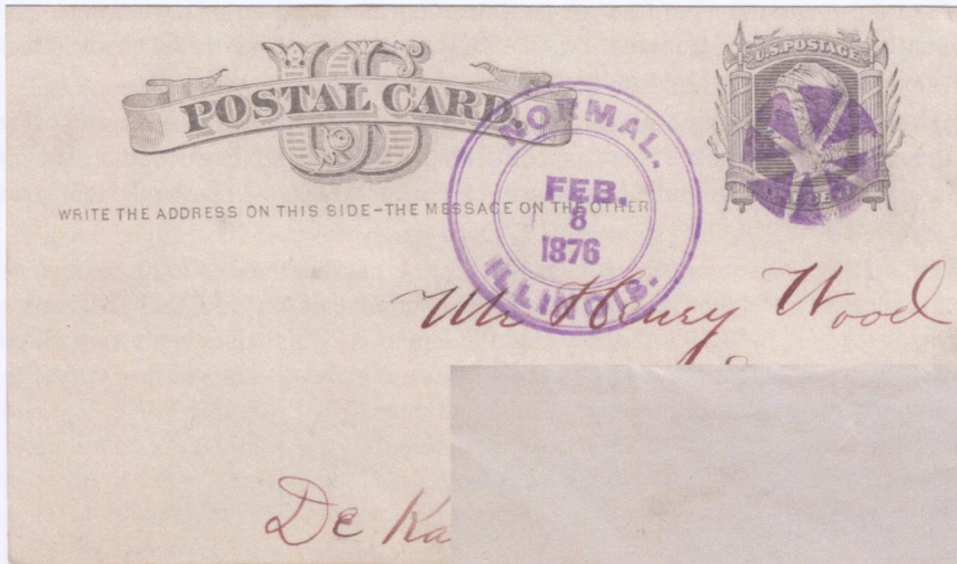


Figure 1



Figure 2



Figure 3



Figure 4



Figure 5

The canceling ink on the card in Figure 5 is a darker purple than the norm but may well be of the same general composition. However, there are indentations in the card from the "ALBIA" letters indicating that the CDS was struck from a metal device. The cancel may have been produced by a quartered cork placed in a ring holder.

The cover in Figure 6, with markings surely struck from a rubber stamp, is interesting in a couple of respects. The cancel is an "OK" in a thin circle which makes it a very early "fancy cancel" from a rubber stamp. Second, there was no "City of Sherman" post office, at least as a Post Office Department listed post office, but there is a "Sherman" in Grayson Co., Texas which is an operating post office established in 1847.

Figure 7 shows a card bearing an El Paso, Illinois postmark dated August 4. The card is datelined 1876 on the reverse. Magenta ink was used for postmark and cancel. The "4" in "AUG/4" is indented but none of the "EL PASO ILL" letters show an indentation. The "A" and perhaps the "G" in "AUG/4" show slight indentation. This raises a question. Were the date slugs placed in the handstamp in such a way that they were raised a bit from the handstamp surface and, if so, were they made from rubber hard enough to create the indentations? If indentations existed from the PASO ILL non-slug letters, we could reasonably say that the handstamp was metal faced but, in this case it's a little more complicated. Comment is invited. Figure 8 illustrates a cover postmarked E. Nodaway, Adams Co., Iowa dated November 30, 1876. East Nodaway is a DPO that operated from 1867-1892. Thanks to John Donnes who determined there was a faint crossed



Figure 6

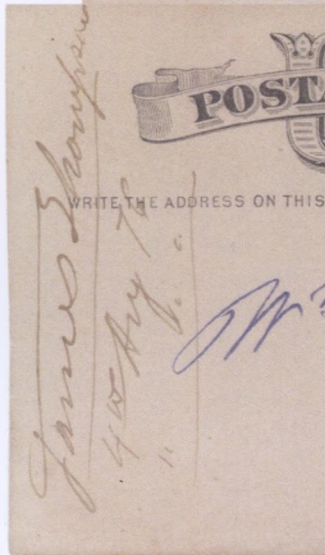


Figure 7



Figure 8

lines manuscript cancel on the 3c stamp. Given the double-lined outer circle of the CDS and the magenta ink, I believe it can be said with confidence that a rubber stamp was used.

The cover in Figure 9 was postmarked Cynthiana, Kentucky on January 1, 1877. If the concentric circles canceler was duplexed, it was not aligned with the center of the Cynthiana CDS. The rectangular "PAID" marking, applied by the Hinsdale County Bank in Lake City, Colorado, appears in a magenta ink very similar to those of the Cynthiana markings. Both Kentucky and Colorado markings were surely applied by rubber stamps.

Figure 10 illustrates a cover postmarked at Hermitage, Missouri. The negative star cancel does not appear to have been struck from a duplexed canceler. I believe both markings came from rubber stamps. First is the purple ink. The presence of serif letters is also an indicator for the CDS. The overall manufactured look and thin circle are also factors for the cancel.



Figure 9

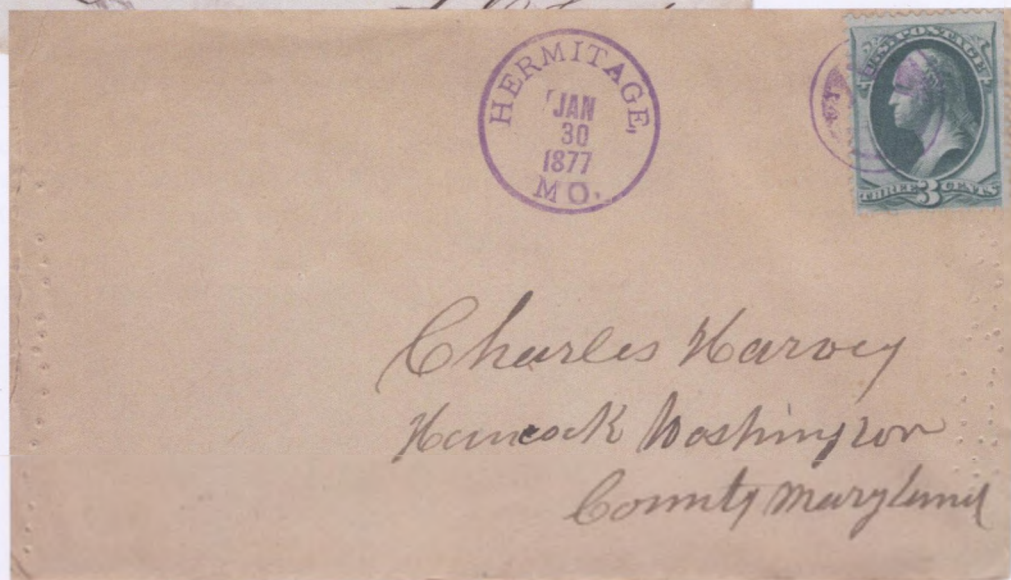


Figure 10

Readers are encouraged to send scans of additional covers mailed in the 1876 and early 1877 that bear or appear to bear rubber stamp markings. Commentary on any aspect of the above will also be welcomed.

Thanks are extended to Ardy Callender who reviewed the article in draft and contributed important information. ■

References:

1. Bond, Arthur H., "19th Century Development of Postal Markings" as presented in *The Postal History of Indiana* by J. David Baker, published by Leonard H. Hartmann, Philatelic Bibliopole, Louisville, (1976), pg.372
2. *ibid.*

An Assortment of Manuscript Cancels

Greg Hanson

In response to Joe Crosby's article "The Multiple Letter "J.H.C." Manuscript Cancel of Nottingham, NH" in the previous issue of the NEWS, I am pleased to offer four more examples of manuscript cancels on stamps. Joe's "J.H.C." example dates from 1864, and the four shown below are from the same era.

The first example, in Figure 1, is a "WFH" on a Scott 26 stamp from Paw Paw, Virginia. The postmaster at the time was William F. Hieronimus who served from August 10, 1857 until May 15, 1862.<sup>1</sup>

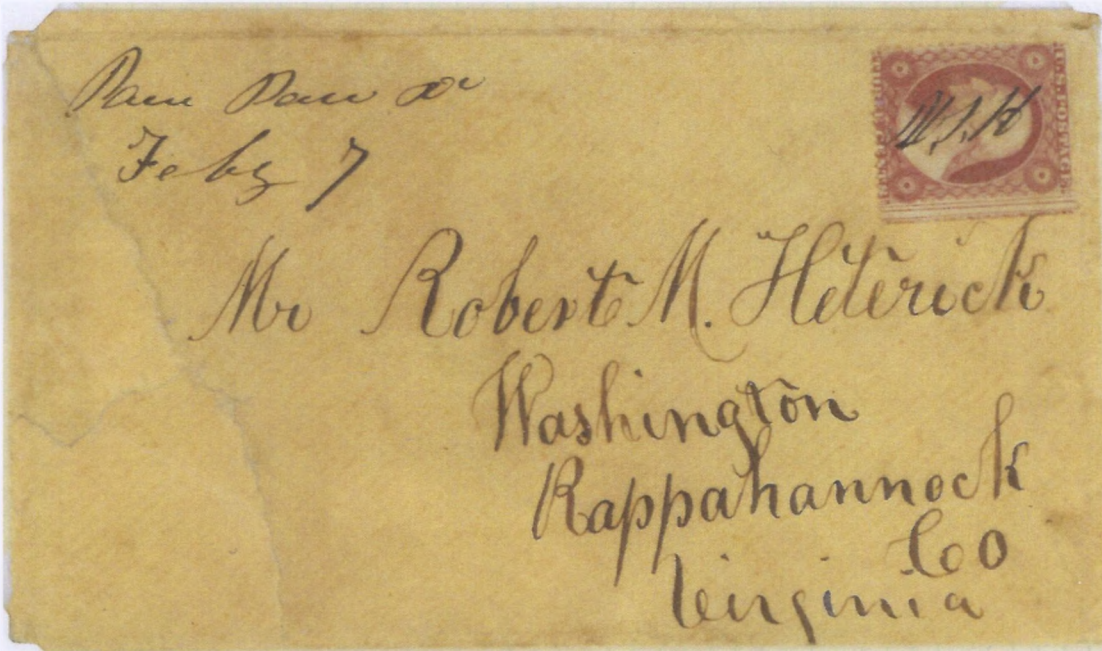


Figure 1

Figure 2 shows a large manuscript "B" canceling a Scott 94 stamp from Mauston, Wisconsin. The earliest known issuance date of the stamp suggests that the September 8 CDS was struck in 1868. Mauston's postmaster at the time was Perry R. Briggs who served from 1 April 17, 1866 until he was succeeded by Mary M. Briggs on December 15, 1870.<sup>2</sup>



Figure 2

The two covers illustrated in Figures 3 and 4 both originate from Kingston Springs, Tennessee, and they both have a simple manuscript "H" from the late 1860s. Closer examination shows that the letters were cancelled by two different hands. So, who are the two "H"'s? Zachary Payne was postmaster from 1865 until he was replaced by Henry Sesler on January 21, 1869. Sesler's tenure was brief as the Kingston Springs post office was closed on December 16, 1869 and replaced by a new office and new postmaster at Craggie Hope.<sup>3</sup> Both of these covers predate Sesler's short term – but not by much.



Figure 3

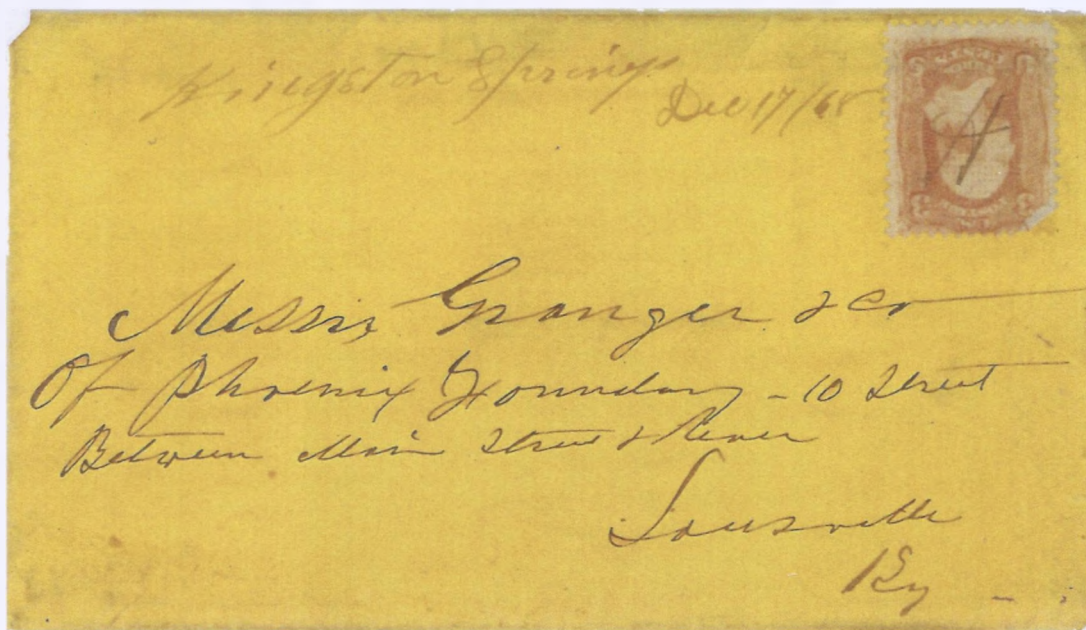


Figure 4

One might speculate that Sesler and an unknown person named "H..." were clerks in Payne's employ – and one hand is that of Henry Sesler and the other is of a second person whose name shall forever remain a mystery.

Readers are encouraged to offer more examples of manuscript cancels. Please direct any comments or questions to the editor. ■

References:

1. *Appointments of U.S. Postmasters 1832 - 1971*, Washington D.C.
2. *ibid.*
3. *ibid.*

## Observations on the Oval and Circular Date Stamps Used in Worcester, Massachusetts – Revisited

Bob Trachimowicz

My two articles describing the Oval and Circular Date Stamps that were used in Worcester, Massachusetts before 1900 appeared in the August, 2019 and November, 2019 issues of the US Cancellation Club NEWS. Subsequently, some new and significant information has been uncovered. This article corrects an error I made in the first article and presents the new CDS information.

The diameter of CDS Style S-10 was erroneously shown as 30mm. The correct size of CDS Style S-10 is actually 31.5mm.

New CDS Style S-10A has the same (corrected) diameter and lettering type of CDS Style S-10 but also has an additional “Rate Outside Dial” numerical marking. A manuscript docketing mark on the reverse of the cover indicates an 1851 year of use. An example is seen in Figure 1.

Figure 2 illustrates a new CDS Style S-11A. It has the same diameter and lettering type of CDS Style S-11 but also has an additional “Rate Inside Dial” numerical marking. A hand-written letter included with the illustrated cover indicates an 1851 year of use.

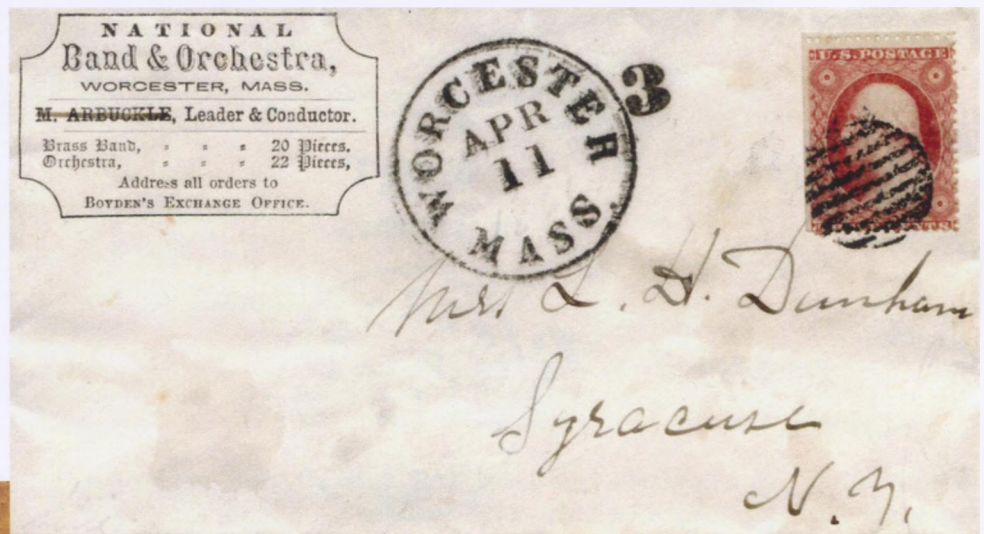


Figure 1



Figure 2

A new CDS Style, S-18A is seen in Figure 3. The CDS has the same diameter as the outside ring of CDS Style S-18. However, for Style S-18A, it appears that the inner ring that is visible on CDS Style S-18 has been retooled, purposely cut away or somehow removed, leaving only tiny remnants of the inner ring. Note that on the example shown, CDS Style S-18A has been used as an Auxiliary Marking when this cover, which entered the mail stream in Barre, Massachusetts, was forwarded from Worcester to Auburn. There are no clues on this cover to help identify the exact year of use, but I would date it in the 1860s.





Figure 3

All responses, questions, comments and updated information (sent through the Editor) are welcome. ■

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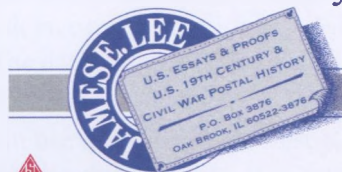
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### New York City's Four-Ring Target Cancellation

Ardy Callender

In the years prior to 1860, the New York City post office (NYPO), as well as most post offices in the United States, had been canceling domestic mail almost exclusively by date stamp. This method proved unsatisfactory as the date stamp did not adequately cancel the adhesive and was often illegible. The U.S. Post Office Department (USPOD) grew increasingly concerned over the reuse of lightly canceled stamps and on July 23, 1860 Postmaster-General Joseph Holt issued a supplemental regulation prohibiting the use of date or "rate" stamps to cancel adhesives.

General John A. Dix, the New York City postmaster at the time, recognized the new regulation would double the amount of time and work necessary to process the mail. Early the following month, Dix came up with the idea of combining the date stamp with the obliterator to make a single instrument that could accomplish both tasks in one stroke. Dix contacted his hand stamp maker, Edmund Hoole, to produce a "duplex" handstamp by attaching a "blotter" to the side of a regular handstamp. Hoole provided a number of devices which were first used in NYPO's domestic department on August 8, 1860, as seen in Figure 1. For a few weeks after the introduction of the new duplex, un-duplexed cancellations continued to be used including adhesives cancelled solely by the date stamp (Figure 2) and a mix of un-duplexed date stamps with various types of grids (Figure 3).



Figure 1



Figure 2



Figure 3

The date stamp portion of the new duplex consisted of the “old design” large 33mm circular datestamp previously employed by the department throughout the 1850s. The “blotter” or cancelling element was a small seven-bar grid which varied in size and shape – the outline of the grids ranged from round to more elliptical. Although sometimes lacking, most devices included the year date within the date stamp. It is reasonable to assume the “blotter” element was composed of some type of metal – as a durable, long lasting obliterator was required for the large volume of mail handled by the NYPO.

The latest known use of New York’s first duplex as recorded by the author is shown here as Figure 4. The cover is franked by a 3¢ rose pink variety of the 1861-1866 Regular Issue. Dated October 25, the date stamp and oval shaped obliterator tie the stamp at the bottom. Although the date stamp is not year-dated, a year of 1861 can be established as a cover mailed a year earlier in October, 1860 would be franked with a 3¢ 1857-1861 Issue adhesive and as to be discussed below, a totally different duplex device was employed in October, 1862. Both pink and rose-pink varieties occur primarily in the mid-1861 period as well as the rose and dull red stamps which later became the workhorse of the 1861-1866 Issue.

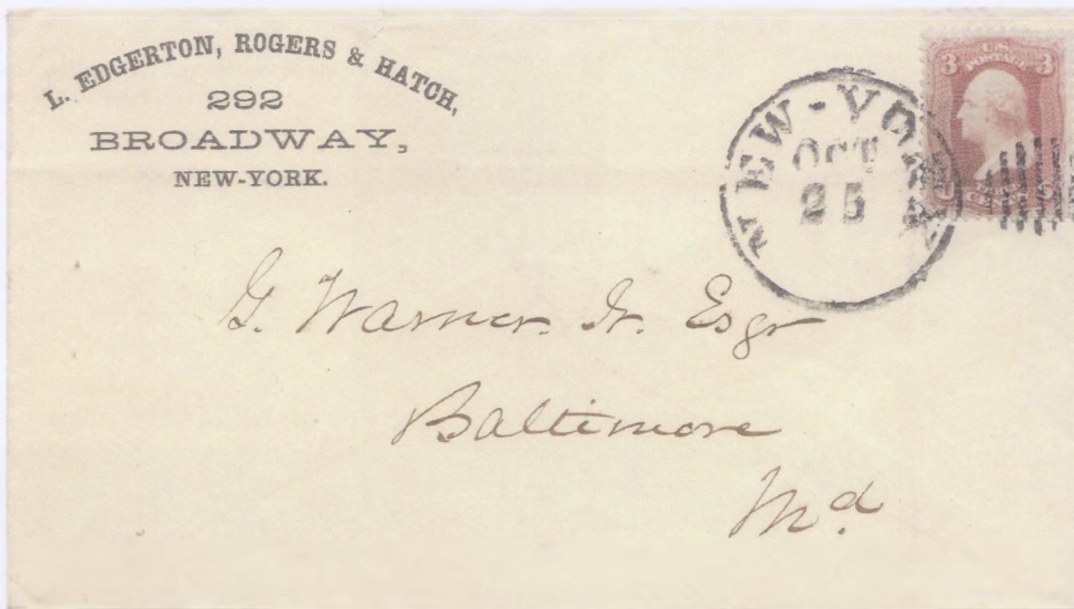


Figure 4

In late 1861, a new design of duplex was introduced in the NYPO domestic department. It consisted of a four-ring target duplexed to a 25 mm double ring date stamp, seen in Figure 5. The device was probably manufactured by Edmund Hoole as he held the USPOD contract at the time (1859-1863) for providing postmarking devices to first class U.S. cities eligible for governmental postmarks. The target “killer” became one of the most common cancellations used by other cities into the 1880s.

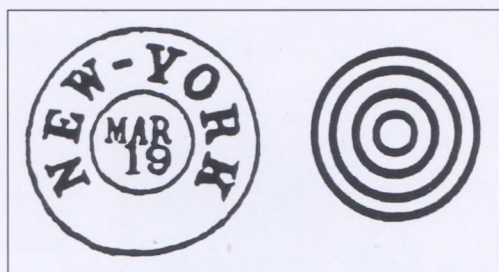


Figure 5

New York City appears to have been the first to duplex the target with the date stamp. Earlier in the 1860s, smaller post offices had begun utilizing targets as oblitors. These targets however were not duplexed with date stamps but were simplex devices. The simplex example shown here as Figure 6 exhibits wide spacing between the target and the datestamp indicating two devices were employed. Dated February 14, 1861, the reduced Nesbitt postal entire was sent from Ripon, Wisconsin. The date stamp is of the old 32mm style used during the 1850s. The target is larger than NYPO’s marking and possesses five rings instead of New York’s four.

The target duplex was in use by NYPO’s domestic department for approximately a year. Originally, the date stamp included simply month and day annotations. However, sometime in June 1862 a year date was added, centered at the bottom between the two rings. Accordingly, covers dated prior to June 1862 are difficult to date unless docketed or containing correspondence.

The earliest example of a New York target duplex recorded by the author is October 26, 1861, shown in Figure 7. Although the postmark is not year dated, the cover is docketed at the upper left in 1861. Often the inner ring of the date stamp appears missing or absent but is a result of a being poorly struck. The cover in Figure 7 appears to be missing the inner ring but a small portion is visible above the "Oct" date slug. The cover's docket states "Williams & Hoag, Rect Sep 21st 1861." It is unclear why the docket is dated some five weeks prior to the date stamp although it may be a reference to previous business correspondence.

Like New York City's 33mm with attached "blotter" device, the target duplex was fashioned out of metal (iron or brass). One of the issues with metal devices was that ink does not adhere adequately to the metal, resulting in light or weak strikes. For this reason, New York's target duplexes were abandoned in late October 1862. The latest example recorded by the author is October 11, 1862, seen in Figure 8. The 3¢ 1861-1866 Regular Issue adhesive was applied sideways and tied by both the 4-ring target and date stamp.



Figure 6



Figure 7



Figure 8

The cancellation which replaced the target duplex was discussed in a previous *NEWS* article by the author in 2016.<sup>1</sup> The onset of the Civil War produced a shortage of hard money (coins), and on July 17, 1862, President Lincoln signed a Bill which the public believed monetized postage stamps – stamps were now currency. The result was a great effort by many people to wash and reuse stamps with light cancellations. On October 9, 1862, Abraham Wakeman, the postmaster of New York at the time, responded with a new cancellation that actually cut into the surface (and sometime the contents of letters) of the adhesive. Known as “cutters”, these devices were employed for about a month, and later replaced with a duplex device with a cork or boxwood canceling element – the earliest recorded by the author is October 27, 1862. Cork and boxwood obliterators absorbed more ink and did a better job “killing” the adhesives and preventing reuse of the stamps.

Anyone with earlier examples of target duplexes from any post office (prior to October 26, 1861) is asked to contact the author through the USCC *NEWS* editor.

Endnotes:

1. Callender, Ardy, “An Examination of the New York City ‘Cutter’ Cancellations and a New Find,” *U.S. Cancellation Club NEWS*, Whole No. 300 (August 2016), pp. 41-51.

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### Noted in Passing

*Roger D. Curran*

The November 2020 *NEWS* reported new late dates for the Washington “fishtail” ellipses. Until recently, the latest recorded date was November 11, 1885. Several months ago, Jim Stedman reported a June 9, 1887 example and Dennis Schmidt noted one from January 17, 1887. Both covers were illustrated in the November issue. Now we have a new late date submitted by member C.A. Stillions – July 11, 1887. See Figure 1.

Mr. Stillions noted that the two strikes in the November issue differed from one another in a significant way – the June 9 ellipse tilts slightly to the right in terms of its relationship to the CDS, whereas the vertical axis of the January 17 ellipse aligns well with the CDS. This led him to make a quick study of his fishtail covers with “2” ellipses. He photocopied them on tracing paper and then laid them over one another on his lightbox. Eight aligned well with the CDS including the July 1887 example. Two others matched one another but had a definite tilt. This study led Mr. Stillions to conclude that the strikes on the covers in the November *NEWS* were applied by two different handstamps. Ellipse cancels are known with very pronounced variations from the straight up position, most notably the first ellipse set from Boston, and in that case it appears the duplexed ellipses would slide around in the handstamp. But that is not at all the norm, of course, and I don't believe that would be the case with the “fishtails”.



Figure 1

Mention will be made here of the current earliest reported fishtails to see if these dates can be moved back. For the 8-bar ellipse, the earliest use is November 15, 1882 and for the "barrel" version with two bars above and two below, it is November 14, 1882. Who can report earlier dates?

The November NEWS also discussed the first handstamp issued by the U.S. Post Office Department that duplexed postmarking and canceling elements. It was noted that the earliest reported marking from such a handstamp was dated June 27, 1863 and originated from Norfolk, Virginia, but the cover was not illustrated. An image can now be shown – see Figure 2. And while on the subject of these duplexes, Figure 3 shows a look-alike marking from Springfield, Ohio that is similar, even down to the apostrophe before the year date numerals. This is, however, a smaller marking, the CDS having a 28mm CDS diameter as opposed to the 29-30mm diameter seen for the government issue. The color of the canceling ink, incidentally, is ultramarine.



Figure 2

Figure 3

The card in Figure 4, addressed to Nashua, New Hampshire, entered the mails at Boston on August 17, 1881. It arrived at Nashua the same day and was then forwarded to Marblehead, Massachusetts where it was received on August 18. What caught my attention was the Nashua cancel at the top left corner of the card. There is an interesting and unusual ellipse cancel from Hyde Park, Massachusetts, used as far as I know only during the mid-1880s, that is possibly similar – see Figure 5.

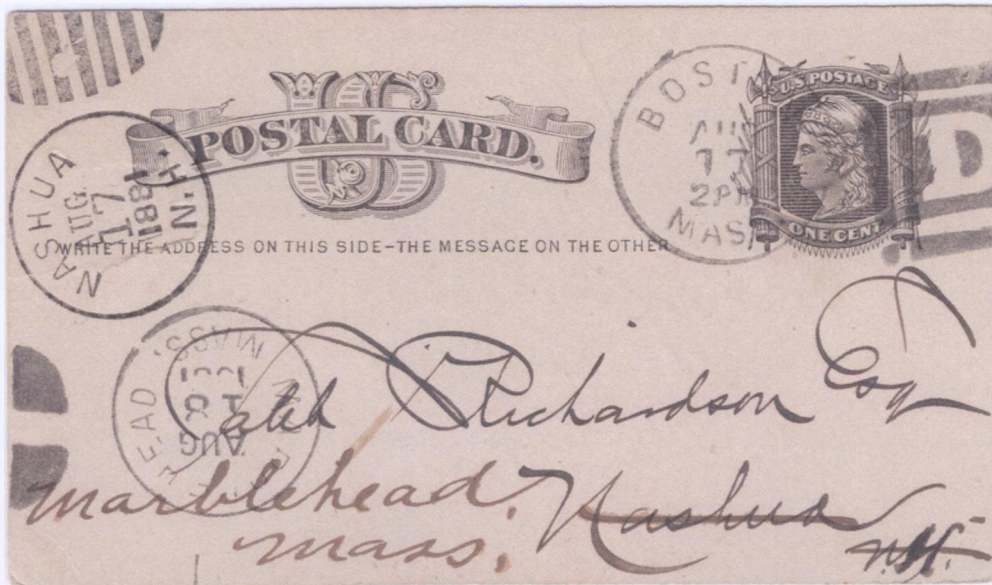


Figure 4



Figure 5

Could it be that what looks like a blank circle in the Nashua cancel is part of the cancel design? And would it be matched with a similar blank circle on the other side? The fact that such a cancel hasn't been reported from Nashua, and would likely have been used quite a bit earlier than the Hyde Park cancel, makes me suspect that the blank circle was a happenstance circumstance, possibly caused by some foreign matter stuck to the canceler face. If readers can show examples of the Nashua ellipse with without blank circles, that would, of course, be very helpful.

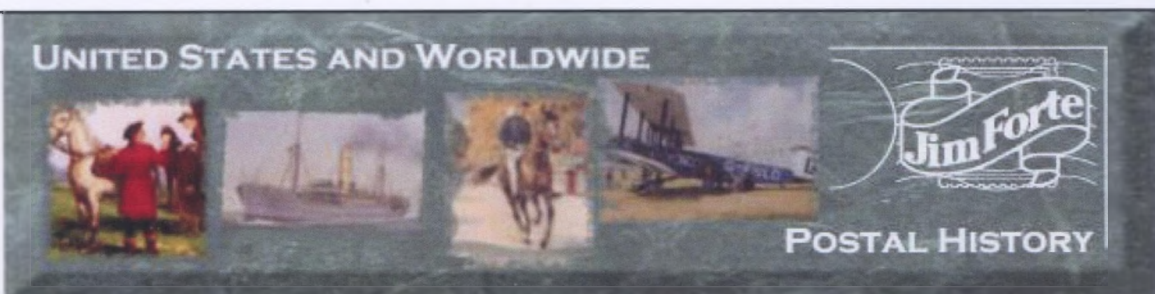


Figure 6

The post office at McLean, Illinois also used an ellipse with holes, as seen in Figure 6. It is noteworthy that Cole lists this cancel on 1883-issue stamps, indicating likely use well before the January 1891 cover illustrated here. ■

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## Punched Holes as Cancels

Roger Curran

A most unusual category of cancels is that composed of punched holes. These are precancels applied by local post offices and are found basically on the large numeral postage due stamps. Virtually all are on the early brown postage dues, used largely from 1879 - 1884. Examples are shown in Figure 1. The star was used at Binghamton, New York, the three connected circles from Westerly, Rhode Island, the heart from Baltimore, Maryland and the square from Farmington, Maine. These cancels illustrate the majority of the varieties that collectors encounter. All are decidedly scarce, at least. The Baltimore heart is the one most often seen.

Examples of punched hole cancels on newspaper stamps are shown in Figure 2. Newspaper stamps were not affixed to newspapers but rather to post office forms as a record of payment received for bulk mailings.

The book, *Silent Precancels* by David W. Smith (2016 edition), described by the author as a "catalog of lines, bars and cancel designs" is an excellent resource on U.S. precancels. (It is available, incidentally, from the Precancel Stamp Society.) Apart from the cancels on the due stamps illustrated above and two further varieties from Westerly, the only additional punched hole listed by Smith is from Batavia, Illinois found on Scott 557 and 563 stamps. Figure 3 shows an example from Smith who describes the cancel as a "control used for Postage Dues."



Figure 1



Figure 2



Figure 3

Several months ago, the 50c Columbian shown in Figure 4 appeared on eBay. A second example was subsequently noted, seen in Figure 5. Lot 20 in the November 13, 2013 Siegel auction sale 1055 was the stamp, shown here as Figure 6, described as "Likely used on a bundle of newspapers or other printed matter." With all these examples, it seems to this writer plausible indeed that these 50c Columbians could have been used provisionally to record payments for bulk mail postage, including for newspapers. If someone could report examples on an appropriate postal form, that would, of course, settle the matter.



Figure 4



Figure 5



Figure 6

Punched hole cancels are occasionally noted canceling postage stamps serving as revenue stamps, but that is a subject beyond the scope of this article.

Comments and information, sent to the editor, will be welcomed as well as reports of other punched hole cancels on U.S. postage or postage due stamps. ■