



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

Vol. 36, No. 4, Whole No. 319, November 2021



*One hundred years ago – on October 12, 1921 – the brilliant creator of the classic, rare cancel adorning this cover, passed away. On page 85, we present a tribute to the artistic genius that was John M. Hill, Postmaster at Waterbury, Connecticut. Image courtesy Erivan Haub Collection.*

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## The United States Cancellation Club NEWS

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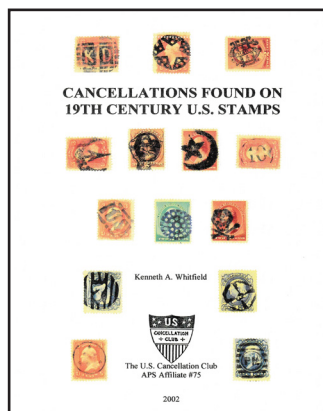
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## U.S. CANCELLATION CLUB - PUBLICATIONS



*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.



## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



A lot has happened since you last heard from me, back in May 2020. While the world has been dealing with the pandemic, your club's *NEWS* has been publishing some terrific articles and showcasing intriguing and beautiful examples of 19th century fancy cancels. A result of that is a growing membership list.

Being the end of the calendar year, it is now time to ask you to renew your USCC membership. This issue of the *NEWS* includes an insert just for that purpose. Please send in your dues without delay.

Also included in the *NEWS* is a ballot paper. An election should have happened in late 2020, but somehow it got overlooked. The ballot includes the slate of officers as recommended by the current board. You'll see that I have decided to step down as your president and now seek a vice-president's role – as much as I love being your president, I don't feel I have adequate time to commit to the job at the current juncture. Fortunately, an excellent candidate, **Larry Rausch**, has kindly offered himself for the role. Undoubtedly, he will be strongly supported by our always-eager editor, **Robert Conley**, who seeks the other vice-president's office. The incumbent, **Ernie Webb**, has decided the time is right for him to retire. Thank you, Ernie, for your many contributions. **Joe Crosby** has kindly offered to stay on as secretary-treasurer for a bit longer and **Roger Curran** and **Merritt Jenkins** again offer themselves as governors-at-large. Club stalwart, **Vince Costello** offers himself as a third governor-at-large. With his vast experience, Vince will be a welcome addition to the board. So, please complete the ballot and return it to Joe so he gets it before December 31, 2021. Why not send in your dues with the ballot and kill two birds with one stone? ■

## Our Unique Newsletter

And by the way:  
Please email us  
so you can  
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Newsletters  
packed with  
special offers!

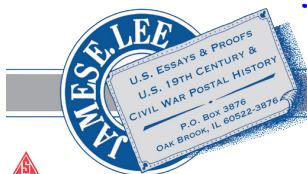


### How may we help you?

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## EDITOR'S NOTES



Greetings! This final issue of your *NEWS* for 2021 is, as was promised in August, another fat one. And we've also thrown in, at no extra cost to members, an Annual Dues Form and a Ballot Paper. Please, please, please, take just five minutes to deal with these today – and get them back to our esteemed Secretary-Treasurer, **Joe Crosby** as soon as you can. A little consideration now will save young Joseph a lot of time later on.

The articles in this November issue start on the facing page with a commemoration of the centenary of the passing of long-time Waterbury Postmaster John W. Hill – after which, **Bill Duffney** continues the Connecticut connection with the 1870s portion of his "Putnam Observations."

New York City Post Office guru, **Ardy Callender**, finishes up his solid-centered date stamps saga and yours truly chimes in on page 94, to talk about "Time-Out" cancels, a subject absent the *NEWS* for some two decades now. Club legend, **Roger Curran**, enters the fray on page 99, to discuss star cancels with a "10" in the center, all on Columbian issues out of Chicago. Page 101 sees Joe taking us briefly back to Connecticut – to Bridgeport and its reverse negative "JB" cancel – before your editor finds the time to respond to a query made sixty years ago and tell you about a strange-sounding town which probably had a faux-Leavitt machine cancelling device.

You're probably now thinking that surely the show is over. But wait, there's more! Your dues money takes you a long way. Ardy returns on page 104 to add a little to his earlier articles on NYPO's three-leaf-clover cancels and its handling of circular mail. Roger then presents a welcome return of his "Noted in Passing" column.

That, dear members, brings us to 108 pages for the year 2021. As for what's probably in store for you – should you elect to pay your dues on time – is a continuation of Bill's "Putnam Observations" along with a couple of articles from Ardy, one of which will likely be about ink! Joe is known to have several things on the back burner, and your editor continues to hound him to get one or two boiling again. Roger can always be counted on for something, and our probable future president, **Larry Rausch**, has a nice talk about ellipses to present. Your editor will, as usual, likely have a few discoveries to share and might just follow up on things like New Mexico, Lockport and "Time-Out" cancels. In the wash up, after another look at what's in the cupboard, your editor reckons you'll be seeing another 28 pages in the next issue.

So, pay your dues, send in your vote, then sit back by the fire with a cup of hot cocoa, and enjoy. See you all in 2022. Until next time, may your god go with you. ■

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## A Centennial Tribute to the Memory of John W. Hill, Postmaster, Waterbury, Connecticut

In 1917, the state of Connecticut conducted a Military Census, asking whether the respondent had any skills beyond his usual occupation - for example, could he drive an automobile, ride a motorcycle or a horse, operate a wireless, navigate coastal waters, know anything about machinery or steam/gasoline engines or telegraphy or boats. Eighty-two year old, six feet tall, 188 pound, John W. Hill said he could do none of those things – all he was good at was working in a post office.

We are fortunate that whittling was perhaps the only other field at which he excelled. One hundred years after his passing, arguably the most prolific and creative carver of fancy cancels the world has ever seen, has ensured his own immortality – through the thousands of surviving examples of his magnificent folk art creations, a few examples of which are seen here. Enjoy and marvel at them. May he rest in peace. ■



By Robert Conley. Portrait reproduced by kind permission of the *Waterbury Republican-American*. Head stone image courtesy William Duffney. Other images courtesy of Siegel Auction Galleries.

# Putnam Observations Beyond the Stars A Showcase ~ The 1870s (Part 3)

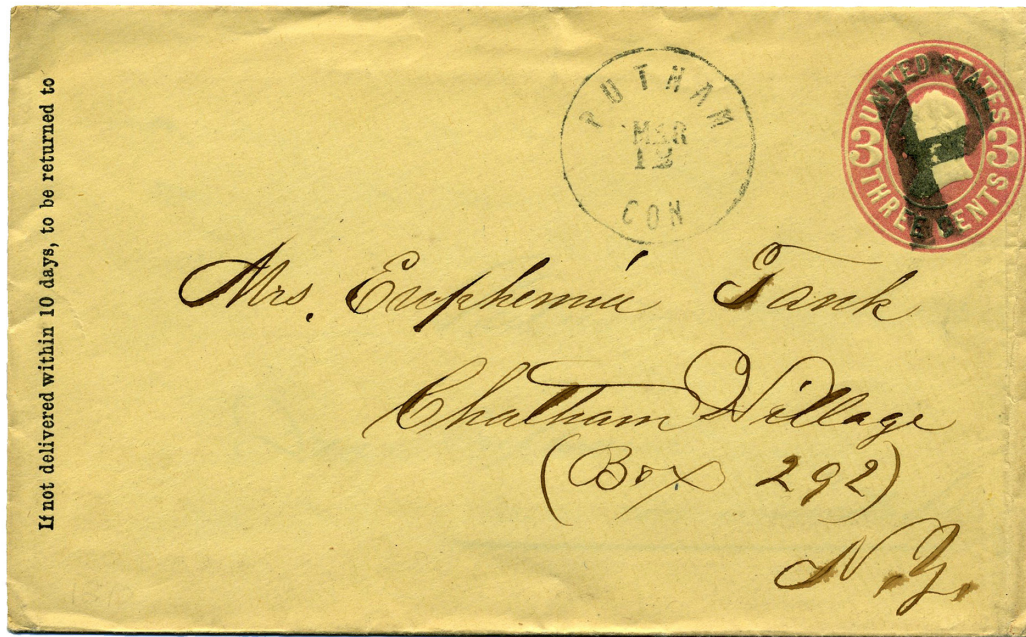
W.J. Duffney

Small Hollow 5-Pointed Star JUL 23, (ca. 1870); Unlisted  
Circle of Six Arrow Heads JUL 22, (Enclosure 1870); Unlisted  
Circle of Eight Diamonds AUG 29, (ca. 1870); Unlisted  
Nesting Pyramids MAR 11, (ca. 1870); Unlisted (Reduced/Contributed)



P

Large Hand Cut 'P'  
MAR 12, (Enclosure 1870); Unlisted



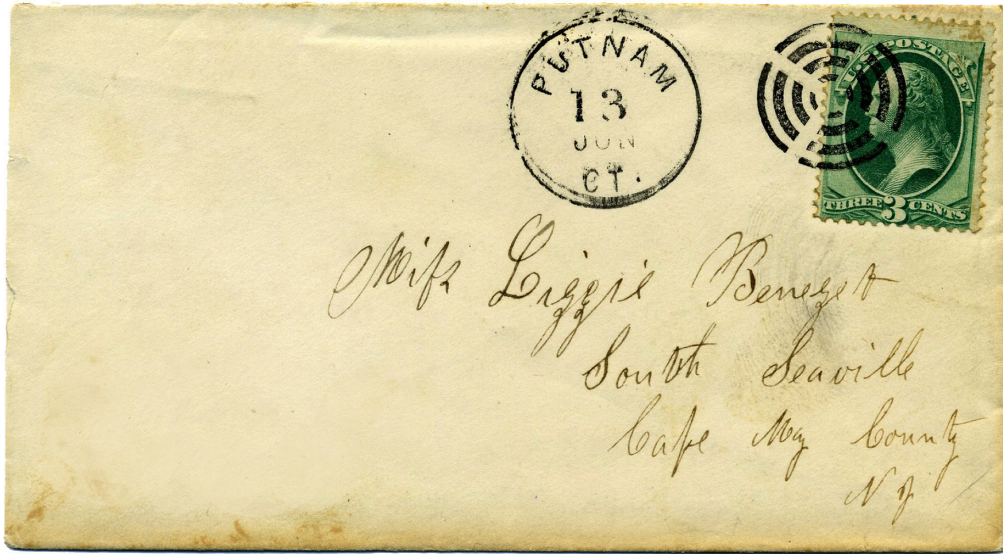
P

Printers Style 'P'  
May 13, (ca. 1871); Unlisted



**Segmented Targets**

- 4 Segments Target JUN 13 (ca. 1874) Duplex; Unlisted
- 8 Segments Target MAR 26 (KnYr 1874-5) Duplex; Unlisted





**Smaller Geometrics**

Geometric Boxes SEP 7, (Docketed 1872; Unlisted (R. Curran Collection))

Bow May 26 (Docketed 1875); Unlisted

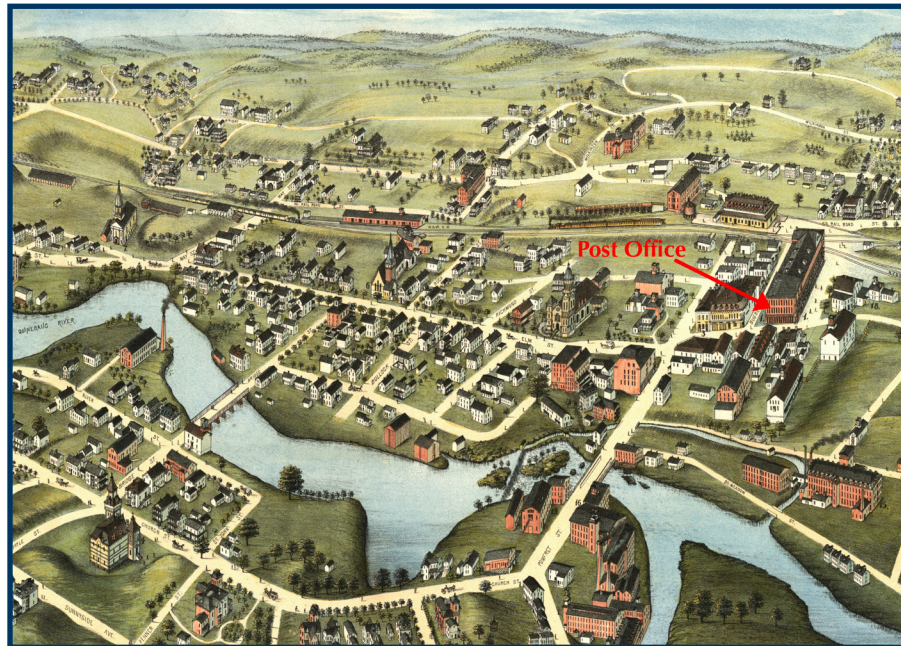
Bow May 11 (ca. 1875); Unlisted

Crude Geometric AUG 23 (ca. 1875); Unlisted



**Colorful Targets & 'US' in Circle**  
 Target SEP 20, 1877; Unlisted  
 4 Segmented Target DEC 6, 1878; Unlisted  
 'US' in Circle OCT 18, 1879; Whitfield #5071





Detail of Putnam Map of 1877 Printed by J. Knauber & Co. (Library of Congress)



Late 19th Century Putnam Post Office Square from a glass negative.  
(Aspinock Historical Society of Putnam)

*End of Part III.*

### Solid-Centered Postmarks/Datestamps Used as Cancellation Devices - Part III

*Ardy Callender*

An interesting cancellation used by the Kansas City Post Office is shown as Figure 29. Unfortunately, the cancellation is partially struck off the cover and only the words "nsas City" are visible, just inside the outer ring. The 31mm-diameter cancellation possesses a central core which is composed of a five-ring target. The size and shape of the central core suggests that the device may not have been a re-purposed older datestamp but a newly-fabricated device.

The unsealed, all-over ad cover for *The Kansas City Times* is franked by a 1¢ 1881-1885 American Banknote Issue adhesive. The author kindly requests any club member with a complete strike of the cancellation to send a copy to the author c/o the editor.

A second example of the centrally-located five-ring target cancellation is shown as Figure 30. Originating in Hamilton, Ohio, the undated/unsealed circular rate ad cover has an attractive corner card for Black & Clawson, Builders of Machinery, printed at upper left. The 1¢ 1879 American Bank Note adhesive is tied towards the bottom by a smudged cancellation in which the five internal rings are barely perceptible. It seems the ink formula employed was disproportionate, lacking in lampblack with larger amounts of linseed oil, resulting in a light, smeared appearance. The presence of oil staining around the outline of the adhesive on the inside of the envelope supports this conclusion. Like the Kansas City cancellation, the diameter is 31mm.

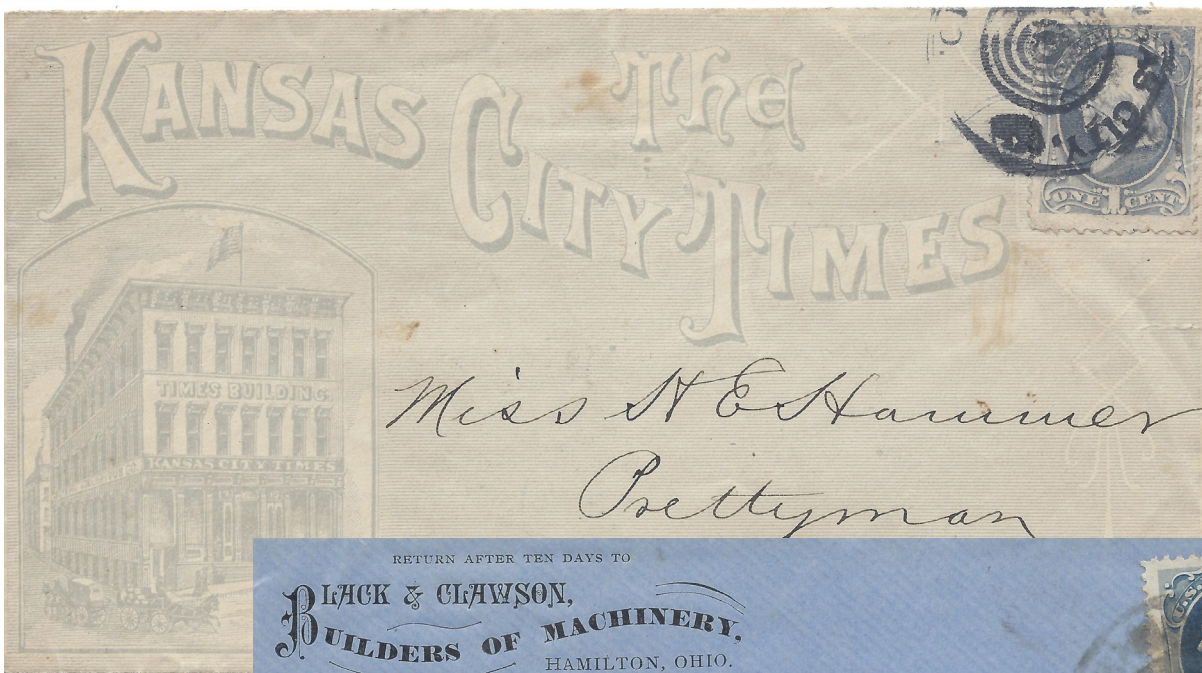


Figure 29

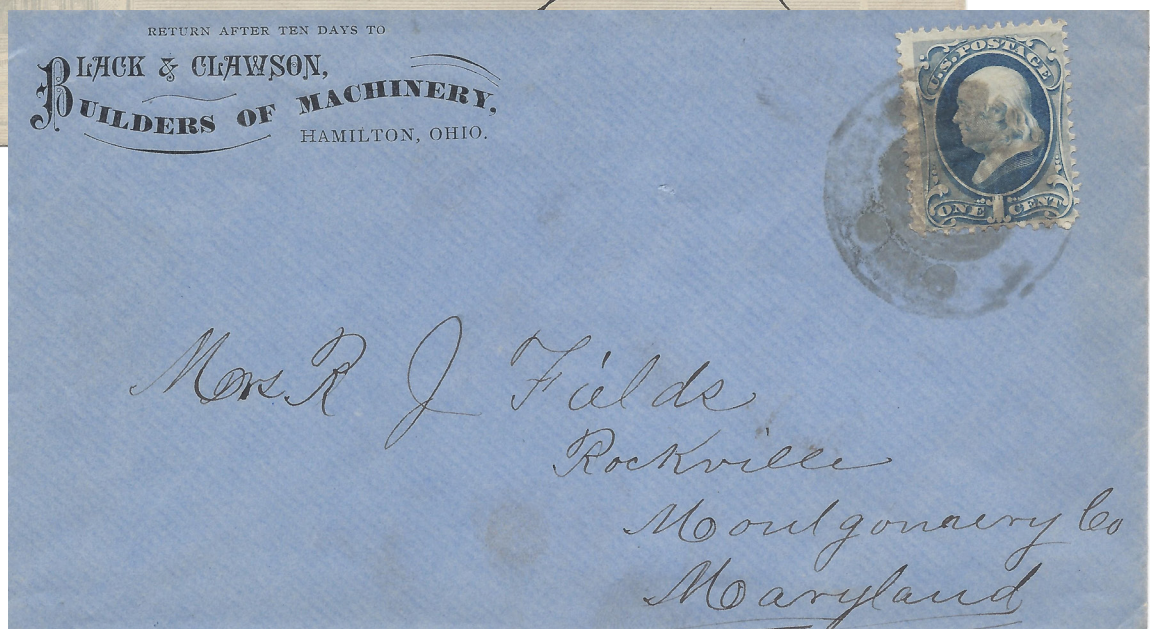


Figure 30

The final three cancels discussed share one major element in common – an octagonal outline. All are 25mm across and have city names with thin lettering. This includes a cancellation from Annville, Pennsylvania (shown in Figure 31) which possesses a single square block at the center – the two others (Deposit, NY and Moorestown, NJ) have four small segments centrally located. Sent to the Postmaster, Canal Lewisville, Ohio, the circular rate cover has a corner card for Sunbeams Publishing Co. The 1¢ ultramarine 1894 First Bureau stamp is tied by a clear strike of the octagonal postmark with a heavy central square.

One of the other two covers with an octagonal border is shown as Figure 32. Originating in Moorestown, New Jersey, the somewhat worn ad cover for various types of fruit contains a dated promotional flyer (1883). It is addressed to Mr. B Book, Tiffin, Ohio with a receiving backstamp dated 15 October, 1883. Sent at the unsealed circular rate, the 1¢ 1881-1885 American Bank Note stamp is tied by the octagonal postmark with four small segments at the center.

The final example is from Deposit, New York and was also furnished by Roger Curran and has previously been seen in the NEWS<sup>6</sup>. Also measuring 25mm across, the cancellation was struck on a 1¢ 1881-1885 American Bank Note Issue stamp (Figure 33). The central square segments are well defined and a bit larger than the ones from Moorestown. Due to their similarities, it is likely that all three octagonal cancellations were produced by the same contractor.



Figure 31

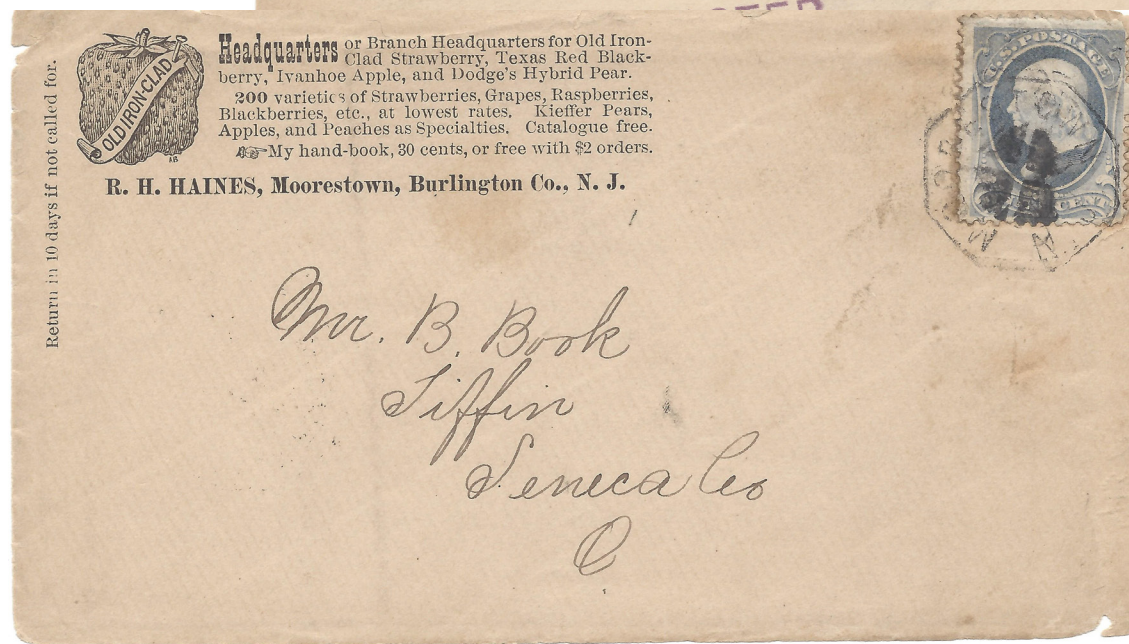


Figure 32



Figure 33

I wish to thank both Roger Curran and John Donnes their helpful insights and cover images from their collections. ■

**Endnotes**

6. Curran, Roger D, *U.S. Cancellation Club News*, August, 2001, pg. 112.

## Time for Another "Time-Out" Update

Robert L. Conley

The last time your *NEWS* looked at "time-out" cancellations was in the year 2000. For those readers who need reminding, time-out cancels were effectively triplexes, with a CDS on the left, an ellipse obliterator on the right and a time notation in between.

Your author admits to having been blissfully unaware that these time-out cancels even existed until his research on another subject crossed their path. Time-outs are well under the radar, probably because they were used in only a handful of post offices – confirmed sightings are known for Northfield, Connecticut; Williamstown, Massachusetts; Lockport, New York; and Racine, Wisconsin – in various periods between 1881 and 1898. Mention has previously been made of time-out cancels from Roxbury and Saranac, both in New York state – the validity of these is discussed further below.

USCC member, Gilbert Levere provided a census table in 1999 and a supplement a year later. In the preparation of this article, many new examples have been uncovered. This article aims to properly illustrate an example of each known time-out cancel, discuss doubtful claims made previously, to provide an updated, consolidated census table, and to seek new examples currently in the hands of readers. To manage these multiple tasks, each post office is discussed separately below.

### Northfield, Connecticut

Figures 1 & 2 provide two examples of the Northfield time-out cancel. Table 1 shows the 13 known strikes from Northfield, all being of the same 24mm-diameter CDS and 9-bar ellipse as seen in the tracing in Figure 3. Although there are quite a few still in existence, it is hard to find scans of them or new examples – all those listed in the Table come from the 1999 census and 2000 supplement.



Figure 1 (courtesy of Roger Curran)

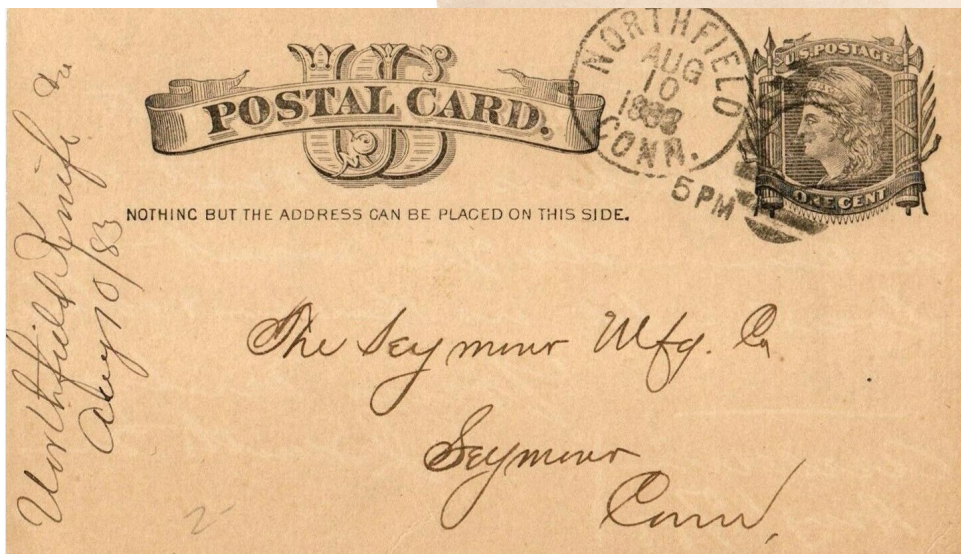


Figure 2 (sourced from eBay, seller unknown)

CIRCULAR DATE STAMP

ELLIPSE

DIAL	DATE	TIME	BARS	RING	INSERT	NEW?
24mm	16-Apr-81	11AM	9	yes	none	no
"	18-May-81	4PM	9	yes	none	no
"	25-Jun-83	5PM	9	yes	none	no
"	10-Aug-83	5PM	9	yes	none	no
"	06-Mar-85	10AM	?	?	?	no
"	30-Jan-85	10AM	9	yes	none	no
"	14-Apr-85	10AM	9	yes	none	no
"	16-Apr-85	5PM	9	yes	none	no
"	10-Aug-89	5PM	9	yes	none	no
"	12-Feb-90	5PM	9	yes	none	no
"	13-Feb-90	5PM	9	yes	none	no
"	11-Feb-90	5PM	9	yes	none	no
"	07-Jul-90	5PM	9	yes	none	no

Table 1

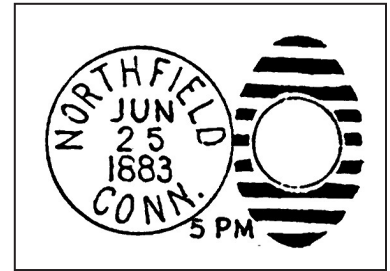


Figure 3

Williamstown, Massachusetts

Until now, only three strikes from Williamstown had been reported. Quite a few more have since been located, and Figures 4 & 5 show two examples. Table 2 lists 18 surviving strikes. A tracing of the cancel is seen in Figure 6.



Figure 4 (author's collection)

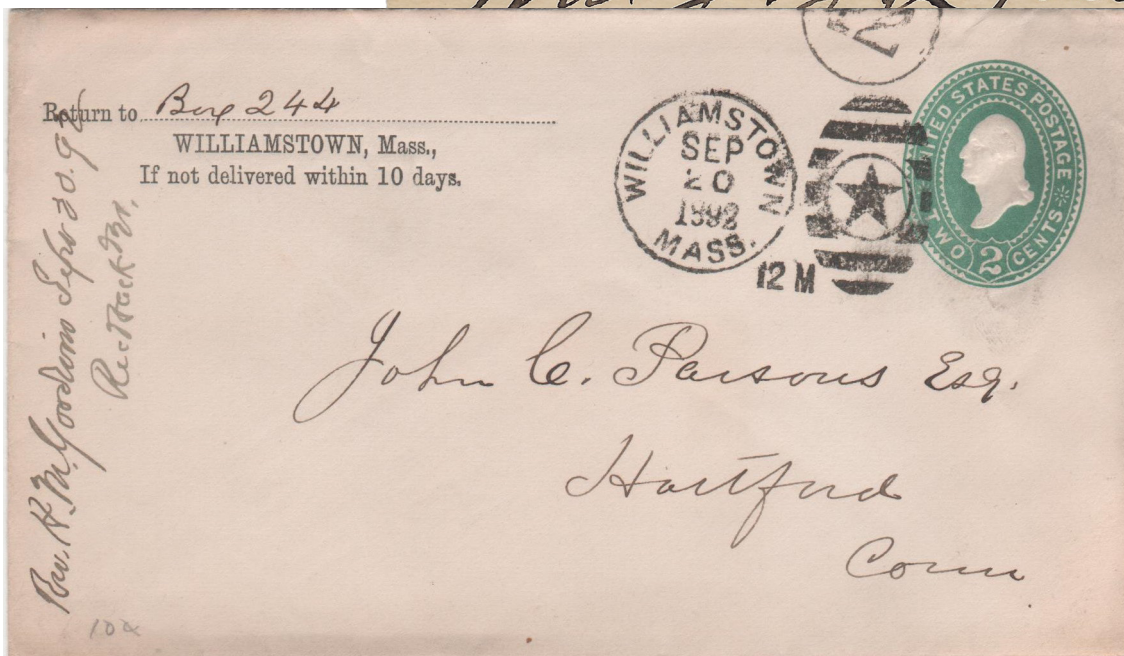


Figure 5 (courtesy of Kelvin Kindahl)

CIRCULAR DATE STAMP

ELLIPSE

DIAL	DATE	TIME	BARS	RING	INSERT	NEW?
24mm	17-Sep-91	9AM	7	yes	star	yes
"	23-Sep-91	12M	7	yes	star	yes
"	05-Nov-91	9AM	7	yes	star	yes
"	19-Mar-92	8PM	7	yes	star	yes
"	13-Apr-92	4PM	7	yes	star	yes
"	21-Apr-92	9AM	7	yes	star	yes
"	19-Sep-92	12M	7	yes	star	no
"	20-Sep-92	12M	7	yes	star	yes
"	12-Dec-92	7AM	7	yes	star	yes
"	08-Jun-93	5PM	7	yes	star	yes
"	03-Aug-93	12M	7	yes	star	yes
"	19-Sep-93	12M	7	yes	star	yes
"	05-Apr-94	12M	7	yes	star	yes
"	20-Jan-98	5PM	7	yes	star	yes
"	25-Feb-98	6PM	7	yes	star	yes
"	08-Jun-98	9AM	7	yes	star	no
"	12-Jun-98	7AM	7	yes	star	yes
"	20-Nov-98	5PM	7	yes	star	no

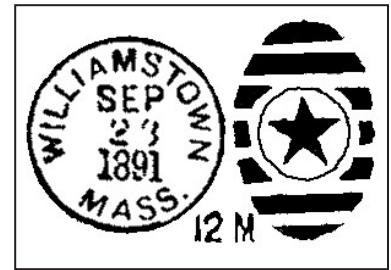


Figure 6

Table 2

Lockport, New York

Unlike the two previous post offices, Lockport had two different time-out devices, as illustrated in Figures 7 & 8. Table 3 includes four new strikes. Tracings are provided in Figures 9 & 10.



Figure 7 (author's collection)

Figure 8 (courtesy of Roger Curran)



CIRCULAR DATE STAMP

ELLIPSE

DIAL	DATE	TIME	BARS	RING	INSERT	NEW?
26mm	20-Apr-81	12M	9	no	L	yes
"	13-May-81	12M	9	no	L	no
"	17-May-81	8AM	9	no	L	no
"	20-May-81	2PM	9	no	L	no
"	17-Jun-81	5PM	9	no	L	no
"	03-Feb-82	2PM	9	no	L	no
"	13-Feb-82	7PM	9	no	L	yes
"	22-Feb-82	2M*	9	no	L	no
25mm	17-Jul-82	12M	11	yes	US	no
"	29-Jul-82	5PM	11	yes	US	yes
"	12-Aug-82	7PM	11	yes	US	no
"	15-Aug-82	12M	11	yes	US	no
"	18-Aug-82	12M	11	yes	US	no
"	01-Sep-82	12M	11	yes	US	no
"	09-Oct-82	7PM	11	yes	US	no
"	03-Nov-82	5PM	11	yes	US	no
off cover	Scott 186	?	11	yes	US	yes
off cover	Scott 207	?	11	yes	US	no

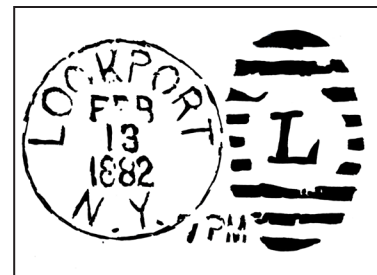


Figure 9

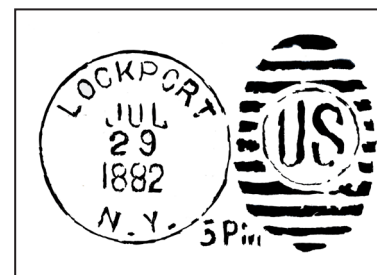


Figure 10

Table 3

\* "2M" is not a valid time notation – it is missing the "1" which would otherwise have shown the correct time as "12M". This may have been an oversight by the clerk, or it was due to damage from at least 10 months of use – the entire device was replaced within a few months.

Racine, Wisconsin

For whatever reasons, the few surviving time-out cancels from Racine are generally unclear or incomplete – two better-than-average impressions are seen in Figures 11 & 12. A partial tracing is seen in Figure 13. Table 4 lists the known data for each reported strike to date. Half of the ten listings come from the 2000 supplement – five are new reports.



Figure 11 (author's collection)

Figure 12 (author's collection)

CIRCULAR DATE STAMP

ELLIPSE

DIAL	DATE	TIME	BARS	RING	INSERT	NEW?
24.5mm	19-Feb-83	8PM	8	yes	R	yes
24.5mm	26-Jul-83	8PM	8	yes	R	yes
24.5mm?	02-Sep-85	11AM	8	yes	R	yes
"	05-Jan-86	11AM	8	yes	R	no
"?"	13-xxx-86	1PM	?	yes	?	yes
"	18-Dec-86	11AM	8	yes	R	no
"	18-xxx-87	7PM	8	yes	?	yes
off cover	Scott 207	?AM	8	yes	R	no
off cover	Scott 210	10AM	8	yes	R	no
off cover	Scott 213	?	8	yes	R	no

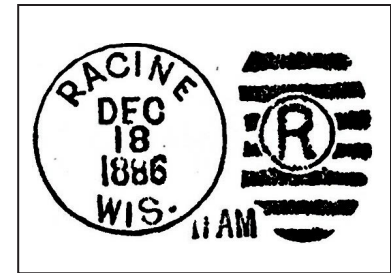


Figure 13

Table 4

\* Reported in 2000, but not seen. Provisionally listed, pending confirmation.

**Roxbury, New York**

Two April 1882 strikes from this post office were shown in the USCC NEWS of Fall 1999. These are illustrated again, at higher resolution, in Figure 14.



Figure 14 (courtesy of Roger Curran)

Readers will note that these Roxbury strikes differ from the time-outs shown for the earlier-mentioned post offices in three key characteristics: Firstly, the killer is a 4-ring target, not an ellipse; secondly, the time notation is not an integral part of the triplex; and thirdly, the contents of the CDS are of an entirely different style. But, perhaps most tellingly of all, unlike all the others, the Roxbury cancels are used as receiving marks!

It was once suggested that the "11AM" was a part of the triplex but it fell out and was applied separately on April 4. It was also theorized that the April 8 "11AM" had been replaced to its normal position however had been installed upside-down. Your author respectfully suggests that it is much more likely that the "11A.M." impressions are from a foreign device. Until a valid time-out cancel emerges from Roxbury, one considers it as being out of the time-out "club."

**Saranac Lake, New York**

The Fall 1986 issue of the NEWS reported a sighting of a time-out cancellation from Saranac, NY, with an "S" in the circle of the ellipse. It was said to be dated August 23, 1887. However, no tracing or photograph has ever been made available to confirm this report.

Seen in Figure 15 is a new-found time-out cancel from Saranac Lake, NY, dated August 4, 1888. The two impressions overlap at about 90 degrees, cancelling a bisected Scott 216 on a piece of magenta-colored cover. A consolidated tracing of the time-out cancel is seen in Figure 16.

The report of an 1887 strike from 35 years ago is probably genuine (apart from the missing "Lake") but it would be beneficial to see photographic evidence thereof. Only the possible 1887 and the illustrated 1888 strikes are known. See Table 5.



Figure 15 (author's collection)

CIRCULAR DATE STAMP			ELLIPSE			
DIAL	DATE	TIME	BARS	RING	INSERT	NEW?
?	23-Aug-87	?	?	yes	S	no
24.5mm	04-Aug-88	3PM	11	yes	S	yes

\* Provisionally listed, pending confirmation.

Table 5



Figure 16

Readers are asked to review their collections for more time-out cancels and to send scans to [uscceditor@mail.com](mailto:uscceditor@mail.com). Any discoveries will be mentioned in the *NEWS*. All emails are promptly acknowledged. ■

**References:**

- Curran, Roger D., "Handstamps with a Difference" *USCC NEWS*, Spring 1986, pp.19-20.
- Curran, Roger D., "Time-Out Update" *USCC NEWS*, Fall 1986, p.59.
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- Levere, Gilbert J., "A 'Time-Out' Run Down" *USCC NEWS*, Summer 1999, pp.100-101.
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- White, Arthur, "Noon Revisited" *USCC NEWS*, Summer 1996, p.68.

**Star Cancel With "10" in the Center**

*Roger Curran*

A number of years ago I acquired the 4c Columbian stamp shown in Figure 1. The reason, of course, was the unusual cancel. Within the past year or so another example was acquired, this on a 2c Columbian – see Figure 2. I believe I've seen at least one other example and perhaps one or two beyond that. While not recalling what stamp or stamps were involved, if not Columbians I think I would have remembered that.



Figure 1



Figure 2

This star with "10" cancel has not been reported in the literature as far as I know. Recently a cover appeared on the internet that identifies the origin – see Figure 3. This registered cover entered the mails at Chicago's Northwest Station on September 16, 1893. The adhesives, of course, are all Columbians. In 1893, first-class mail in Chicago was postmarked and canceled largely by machines. An exception was registered mail. Registered mail involved the use of handstamped postmarks that were not duplexed to a canceling element, thereby requiring separate cancelers. The star with "10", of course, is such a cancel.

The World's Columbian Exposition, celebrating the 400 year anniversary of the discovery of North America by Christopher Columbus, ran from May 1 through October 31, 1893. The Post Office Department issued sixteen commemorative stamps on January 1, 1893 relating to Columbus and his historic voyage. Seeing the Figure 3 cover led to some speculation about possible circumstances surrounding the use of this star cancel. Might it have been that the Northwest Station decided to cancel Columbian stamps during the Exposition with a distinctive cancel? And if so, what would be the relevance of the number "10"?



Figure 3

I checked with Len Piskiewicz, author of *Chicago Postal Markings and Postal History*, the authoritative reference on that subject, about the star cancel. He kindly provided a scan, seen in Figure 4, of a registered cover dated November 20, 1891 from the Northwest Station that bears a similar star cancel, albeit a star that doesn't appear to have a "10" in the center. Len advised that most Chicago mail in 1893 used Columbian stamps and it is hard to find a cover without them. So I assume now that the cancel is not associated just with Columbian stamps but rather would have been used on whatever stamps were on the covers. Also, it would seem doubtful that there is any reason to believe that the cancel would have only been used during the Exposition. Finally, inclusion of the number "10" in the cancel was probably just a happenstance situation with the "10" having no intended significance.



Figure 4

If readers can report additional Chicago covers that bear on the use of the star with "10" or related cancels, you are encouraged to contact the editor. ■

The Reverse Negative "JB" Cancel of Bridgeport, Connecticut

Joe Crosby

Figure 1 shows the Cole listing of a "Reversed JB" cancel, seen on 1879 issues, but with no attribution as to its origin. Whitfield has a similar listing, seen in Figure 2, that does not do a very good job of illustrating what the marking really looks like and likewise offers no attribution.



Figure 1

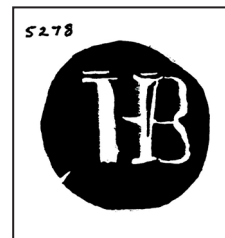


Figure 2

Figure 3 is a Scott UX4 postal card from Bridgeport, Connecticut, with a near perfect strike of this particular marking. The fancy nature of the "B" is shown in both of the prior tracings, but the fact that it is a reverse or mirror image of the letters "JB" is made clear when you view it on a transparent tracing, as seen in Figure 4.

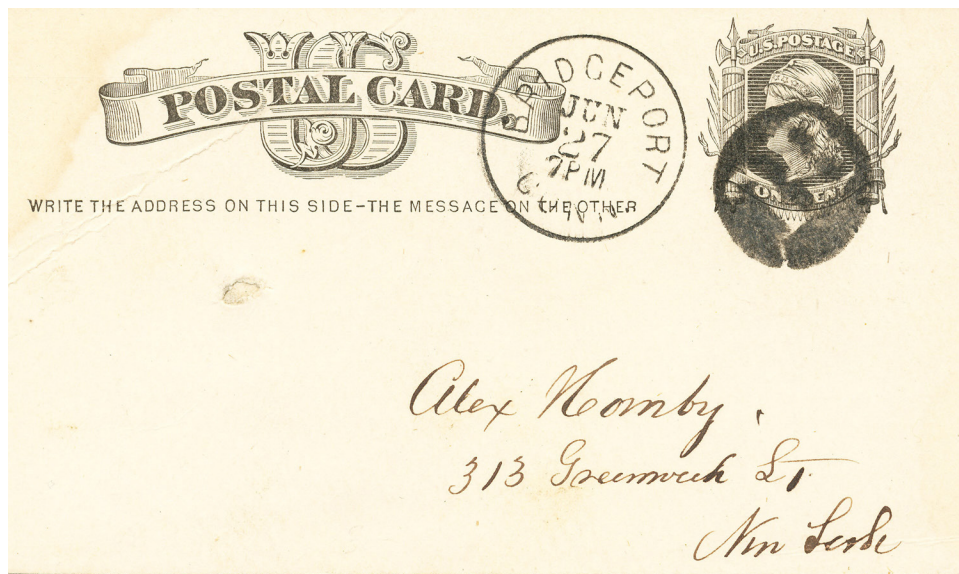


Figure 3

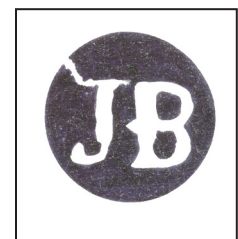


Figure 4

(Tracing by John Donnes)

So who was in the post office in Bridgeport in or after 1879 with the initials "JB"? The *Official Register of the United States* for 1879 (*OR*) only lists postmasters, and J.W. Knowlton was the postmaster in Bridgeport in 1879. Postal Clerks were not listed in the *OR* until 1881 – in that *OR*, we see Knowlton is still postmaster and he has eight men, including John W. Bowen and J.B. King working as Postal Clerks. The "JB" cancel could be attributed to either one. King's annual compensation was \$540.00 as compared to John Bowen who got by only \$348.00.

The following *OR*, in 1883, reveals that J.W. Knowlton is still the postmaster and he had 12 postal clerks in his employ. Significantly, J.B. King is now shown as Joseph B. King and is still making \$540.00, and John W. Bowen has gone. None of the other clerks have the "JB" initials.

So, I am guessing it is J.B. King as whose initials are used on this distinctive killer. Anyone with earlier or later uses are requested to report them to the author at [joecrosby@cox.net](mailto:joecrosby@cox.net) and our editor. Later uses in 1883 would nail this issue down for good. ■

References

Cole, James, M. *Cancellations and Killers of the Banknote Era 1870-1894*, The U.S. Classics Society, Inc., 1995.  
 Whitfield, Kenneth A., *Cancellations Found on 19th Century U.S. Stamps*, U. S. Cancellation Club, 2010.  
*Official Register of the United States*. National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, DC

## The Zylonite, Massachusetts Machine-Style Cancel

Robert L. Conley

The cover seen in Figure 1 is a recent addition to your author's collection – the odd name of the post office and on the corner card, the unusual cancel, and the high probability of there being an interesting story, were all too intriguing and impossible to ignore.

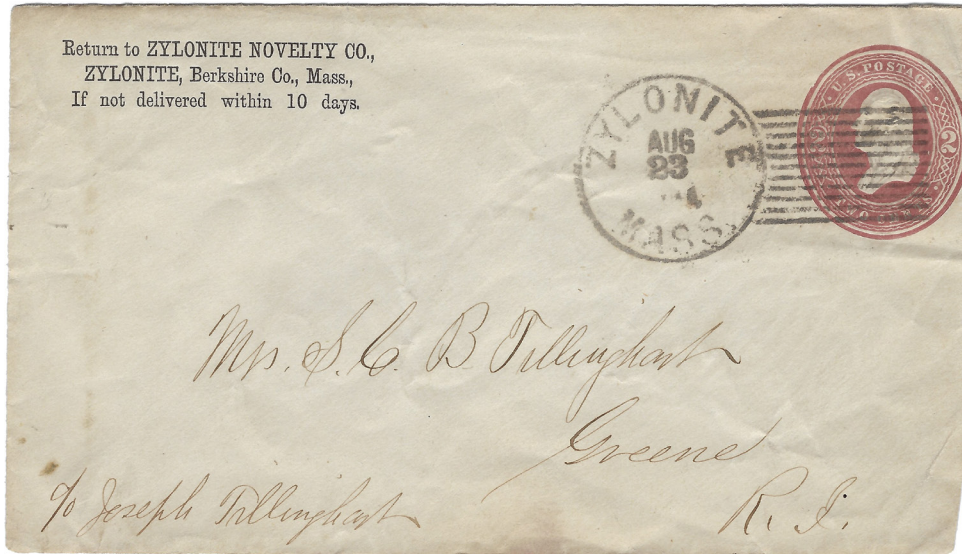


Figure 1

This Zylonite, Massachusetts, cancel is not listed in the major references. However, in the March 1961 issue of the USCC NEWS, Frank Stratton reported a Zylonite cancel which he believed was a hand stamp – and he compared it to a Leavitt machine cancel. The crude tracing of that (hand?) stamp is reproduced here in Figure 2. Mr. Stratton noted that his dateless cancel was on a cover with a receiving backstamp dated November 22, 1887. The cover in Figure 1 cannot be year-dated, but we can at least determine that it was canceled in August of 1886 or later.

A tracing from the Figure 1 cover is seen in Figure 3. The two tracings show 11 narrowly-spaced horizontal bars, much like an early machine cancel might have – Figure 4 is an example of a genuine Leavitt machine cancel. One opines that the Zylonite cancels are from the same device – a hand stamp – but the dating mechanism was removed (or broken) between the strike in Figure 2 and that shown in Figure 3.

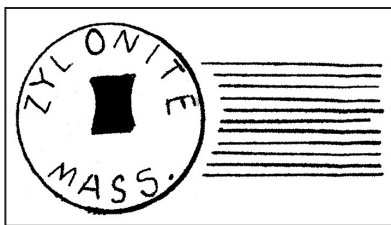


Figure 2

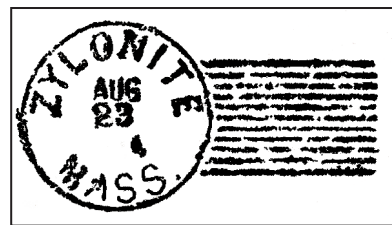


Figure 3

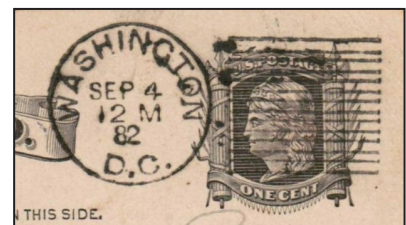


Figure 4

Mr. Stratton also mentioned that he could not find the location of Zylonite or anything about it. Given that sixty years have since passed and we now have the internet and a world of information at our fingertips, one can readily furnish many facts about Zylonite and its history.

In 1881, the American Zylonite Company (AZC) was formed by Dr. Emil Kipper, a German chemist, and a Mr. L. L. Brown. AZC built a factory abutting the south side of the boundary between the towns of Adams and North Adams, in far northwestern Massachusetts, on a site between the railroad and what is now State Route 8 – this area was then given the name Zylonite.

AZC manufactured cellulose nitrate plastic products made of zylonite, which looks to be very similar, or identical, to bakelite. Brown was a significant shareholder in AZC and was invested in a number of other unrelated manufacturing businesses. The American Zylonite Company was very prosperous, and by 1885, it had nearly 500 employees, producing such items as hand mirrors, combs, hair brushes, piano keys, billiard balls, jewelry, spectacle frames and novelty items. It was so successful in fact, that a post office was opened in November 1885 – even though there was already a post office at Adams, just two miles to the south, and another in North Adams, a similar distance to the north.

All was going very well for AZC and the company town of Zylonite, until a major competitor, The Celluloid Company, won a patent suit against it and was awarded a sizable financial judgement against AZC. At the same time, there was a bank failure relating to another business which caused some concern to Brown. As a result of these two unfortunate events, the American Zylonite Company was forced out of business. Production ceased on January 18, 1891.

The Celluloid Company subsequently acquired the assets of AZC, and the fate of Zylonite was sealed when the equipment was moved to the buyer's Newark, New Jersey operation and some of AZC's former key personnel were hired and sent away. The Zylonite Post Office limped along until it closed in February 1897.

Ever since AZC's closure, the site has been occupied by a long succession of paper manufacturers – up until at least 1999. While its current purpose is unknown, the site still operates in some capacity to this day.

All that needs to be asked now is whether anyone has another Zylonite cancel to share – and whether anyone has any knowledge of other hand stamps looking like machine cancels. ■

#### References

Stratton, Frank B., "Zylonite," *USCC NEWS*, March 1961, p. 66

*Plastics Distributor & Fabricator Magazine*, Sept/Oct 1999, LaGrange, IL

*Record of Appointment of Postmasters, 1832-Sept. 30, 1971*; Roll #: 121; Archive Publication #: M841 National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, DC

#### WHAT'S NEW?



HANDMADE OBLITERATORS WITH YEAR DATES WERE NOT UNCOMMON DURING THE 1870S AND 1880S, ALTHOUGH THEY WERE USUALLY COMPRISED OF ONLY THE LAST TWO DIGITS – FOUR-DIGIT YEARS WERE MUCH SCARCER. IN FACT, WHITFIELD AND COLE EACH LIST ONLY ONE INSTANCE OF AN "1879" CANCEL. SHELBYVILLE, ILLINIOS IS NOT KNOWN FOR ITS FANCY CANCELS, BUT THIS ONE MAKES A THIRD "1879" EXAMPLE.

## New York City's Three-Leaf Clover Cancellation & NYPO Postal Procedures - Corrections and More

*Ardy Callender*

My "New York City's Three-Leaf Clover Cancellation & NYPO Postal Procedures" article in the November 2020 issue of the *NEWS* attracted a few comments, some of which are mentioned here.

Nick Kirke pointed out that the 1866 cover with two strikes of a red three leaf clover gracing the cover of the issue did not come from New York City but actually originated in Newark, New Jersey! Close inspection of the poorly-struck date stamp reveals the letters 'NE--ARK' just visible, tying the 2 cent Blackjack adhesive. Figure 1 shows an enlarged portion of the cover confirming Nick's astute observation. Additionally, the NYPO foreign mail department did not employ duplex cancelling devices at this time – note that the obliterator in this case was duplexed to the datestamp. Similarly, there are two strikes of the date stamp; a NYFM cover would generally possess only one. While it was certainly an unfortunate error, I feel in good company as the spectacular cover was misidentified by at least two major auction houses before I came onto the scene.

John Valenti apprized me of two other three leaf clover cancels used by the NYPO Domestic Department. The earliest was employed by New York City Station D and is shown here as Figure 2. The local rate cover is paid by a 2¢ Blackjack (F grill), tied at upper right by a beautiful strike of a three leaf clover in blue.



Figure 1

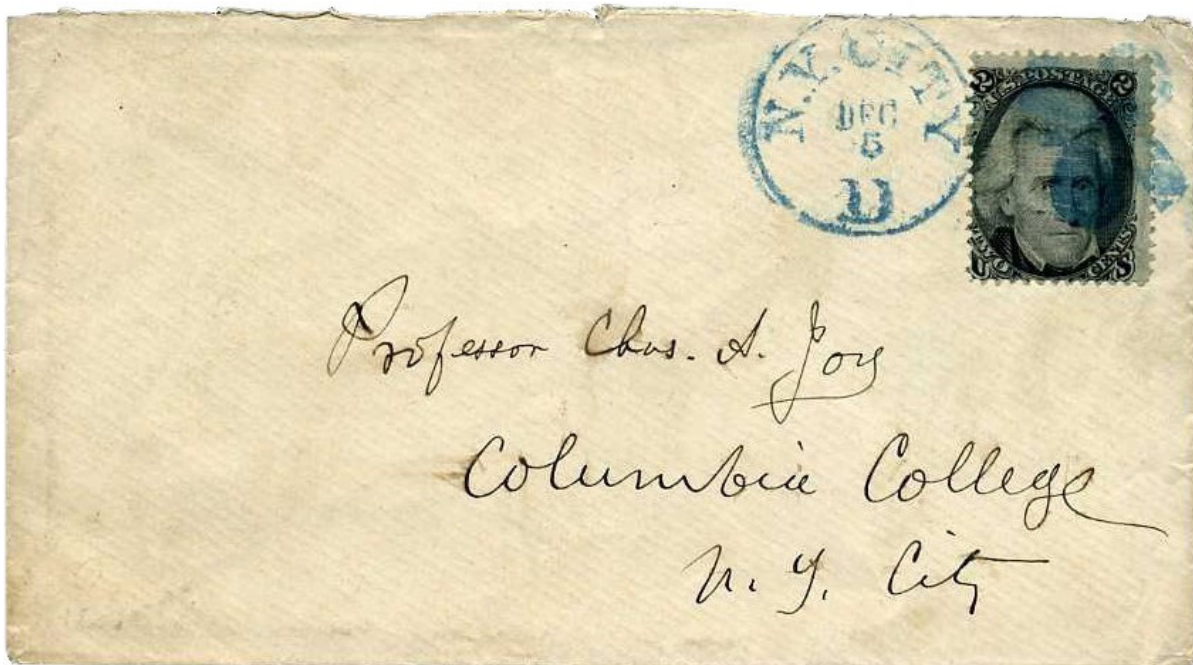


Figure 2



The other three leaf clover cover provided by John is shown as Figure 3. Cancelled on November 17, a 3¢ 1869 Pictorial Issue adhesive is tied at the upper right corner by a clear strike of a three leaf clover in black. Both of these cancellations are quite rare and appear to have avoided mention in the usual literature.



Figure 3

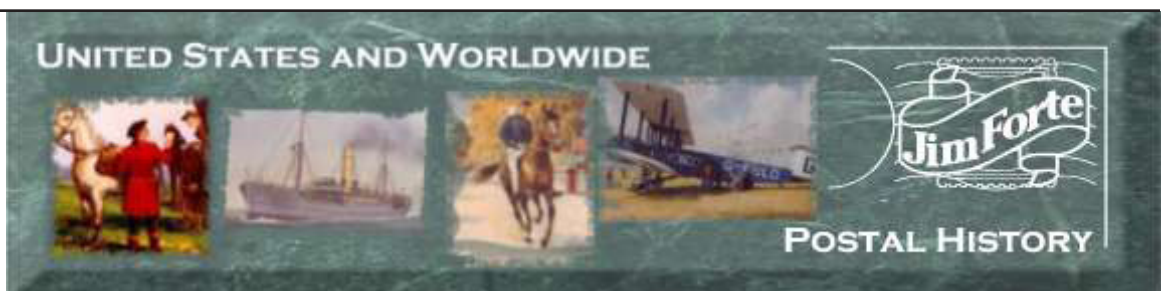
Both John Valenti and Victor Kuil expressed interest in my comments about the NYPO’s handling of domestic vs. foreign rate circular mail. The timeframe discussed in the article encompassed a period in which all mail was handled at NYC’s Middle Dutch Church Post Office (1845-1875). The original post office was very cramped, even after several additions in 1862, 1868 and 1870. Throughout the whole of the changes, the Circular Department remained in the same location – centrally located on the ground floor, combined with the Newspaper Department. Other departments moved from downstairs to upstairs (Domestic Department in 1870) and into the outer additions or wings (Carrier, Registry and Foreign Departments). Therefore, as the Circular Department remained in one location, the process of handling circular rate mail remained pretty much unchanged; as witnessed by the cancellations during this period.

However, when the post office moved to the City Hall Park Post Office on August 28, 1875, the method of handling of circular rate mail changed. This was due primarily to the physical location of the Circular Department as well as the increased space and manpower in the new post office. As they were then in separate locations, the Circular Department was no longer combined with the Newspaper Department. With increased floor space, circular rate mail was now sorted first on tables located on the Broadway side of the post office. Separate drops for both domestic- and foreign-bound circular rate mail were placed in the adjacent lobby walls. Mail was canceled and placed in appropriate pigeonhole boxes. Thus, both foreign- and domestic- bound circular rate mail now received different cancellations.

Many thanks to Nick, John and Victor for their observations and learned counsel. ■

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## Noted in Passing

Roger D. Curran

The Boston cover seen in Figure 1 has several interesting elements. It was posted at 3:00 (surely P.M.) on June 4. From docketing on the back, we can establish the year to be 1878. Addressed to Cambridge, Massachusetts, located within the Boston postal district, the 2c local rate was applicable. However, the sender affixed a 3c stamp, thus paying 1c more than was necessary. There are two indistinct Cambridge Station postmarks – the first, dated June 4, 5PM on the back of the cover, indicating receipt at Cambridge, and the second, dated June 4, 6PM on the upper left of the front of the cover to indicate the time of forwarding back to the main Boston Post Office. A Boston receipt postmark was struck on the front of the cover dated June 4, 8PM. A handstamp that duplexed a CDS to a “Boston negative” cancel was used for this purpose. (This represents an early use of a Boston negative, as the earliest reported date is May 7, 1878.) A Boston carrier marking, dated June 5, 8AM was struck on the back of the cover with delivery to 15 Bowdoin Street, presumably following soon thereafter.

The “1” in three ovals cancel was discussed by Wilbur Davis, co-author of the seminal book *Boston Postmarks to 1890*, in the July 1952 *US Cancellation Club Quarterly* as follows:

“This cancellation ... with its town mark from Boston is very common. It occurs on covers with the 2c brown of 1875 and the 2c vermillion of 1875 and was apparently used only on local mail of the 2c rate. The type of town mark is unusual, having the hour denoted usually by one figure only, and appearing above the month and day date. In the oval cancellation only the figure 1 is used, denoting that it was used at the main Boston post office.”

The illustration of the cancel used by Mr. Davis is shown here as Figure 2. Readers interested in this cancel are referred to articles in the November 2004 and February 2005 issues of the *NEWS* which present more information and some atypical uses.

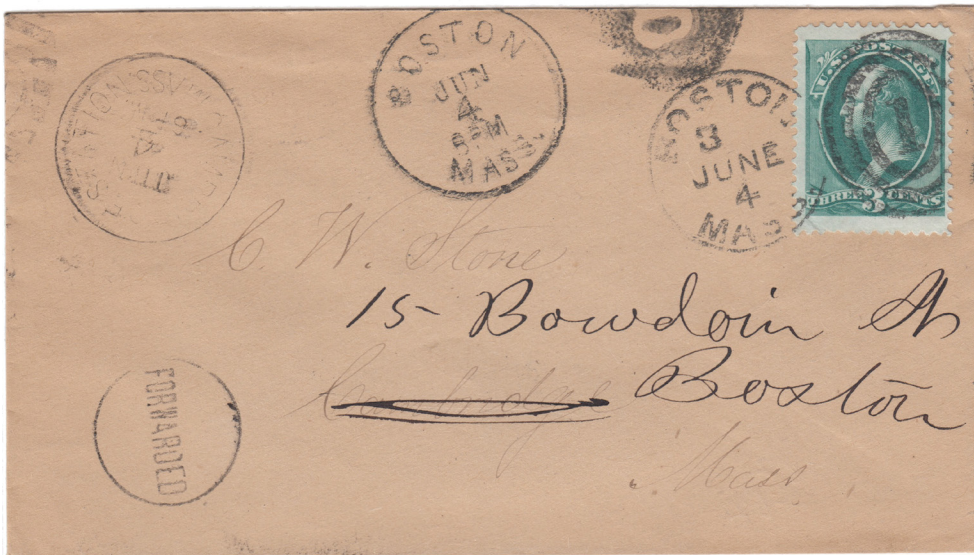


Figure 2

Figure 1

An associate of our editor submitted the image of the die plate shown in Figure 3 and asked for any information the Club might have about it. The Camp Thomas, Arizona Territory Post Office is a DPO that operated in Graham County from 1877 to 1883. The owner of the die plate reported that uses have been seen from July 16, 1880 to May 10, 1882. In the November 2013 *NEWS*, there is an article about a mechanical hand stamp that had been illustrated and discussed by Richard Small in the April 2013 Machine Cancel Forum. It employed an inked ribbon. An inscription on the handle refers to a May 12, 1874 patent granted to John Goldsborough, a well known Philadelphia dealer in postal hand stamps. Basically, the patent concerns the use of a die plate that is detachable from the hand stamp itself and this could be used in either mechanical or non-mechanical Goldsborough handstamps. Figure 4 shows a detached die plate illustrated by Mr. Small. Readers will note the design similarity between the plates in Figures 3 and 4. Note the dents and wear in the Figure 3 ellipse and CDS dies which strongly indicate that the metal used was not steel, but rather a softer metal. Steel would, of course, been more expensive and it stands to reason that a small post office, such as Camp Thomas, would not have ordered such. Figure 5 shows a Goldsborough advertisement for a handstamp with a detachable die plate which

I assume was the style of handstamp used at Camp Thomas. Ellipse cancels with a blank space in the center, such as that in Figure 3, are fairly common. A significant number of those cancels come from rubber faced hand stamps that, because of low cost, appealed to small town postmasters. Such postmasters didn't need ellipses with a series of numbers because they didn't have a series of stamping clerks. The November 2013 *NEWS* carried a brief article on ellipse cancels with blank centers and illustrated the cancels we see here as Figure 6.



Figure 3

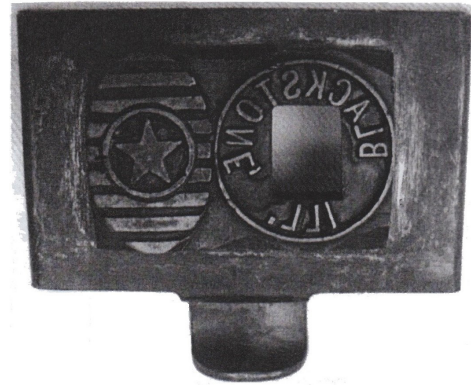


Figure 4

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Figure 5



Figure 6

The card in Figure 7 appeared on eBay earlier this year. Originating in Rosita, Colorado, the postal markings are interesting. The postmark was likely applied by a rubber-faced handstamp. The rectangular configuration and the purple ink color strongly suggest that. Although the letters don't have serifs, which is a frequent feature of these handstamps, such letters were less common in early rubber faced handstamps. A date of February 17, 1876 would be very early.

Our editor suggested that the cancel appears to have been produced by a roller cancel, and I agree. Roller cancels constitute an interesting but small category of 19th century U.S. cancels. The largest user of rollers in the Banknote era was New York City which used them to some extent on circular mail stamps – see an example at Figure 8. San Francisco used rollers to a very limited extent on Banknote era registered mail. Readers who can show additional 19th century roller cancels are encouraged to report them to the *NEWS*. ■



Figure 7

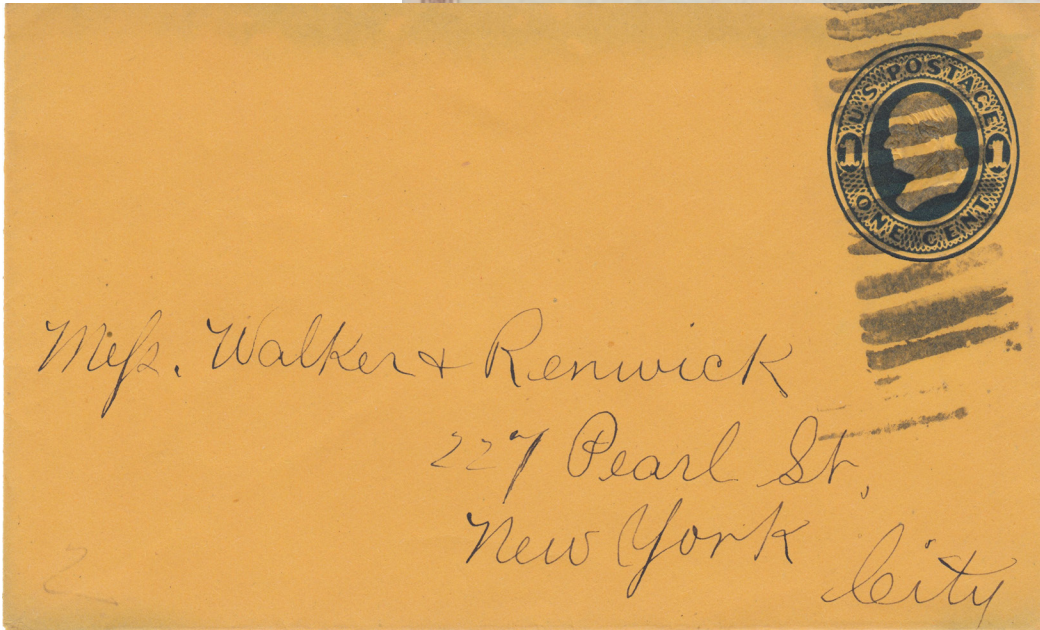


Figure 8

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