

POSTMARKS & CANCELLATIONS

... an Overview

PRESENTATION TOPICS

- Postmarks
- Cancellations
- Handstamps
- Machine Usage
- Collecting Ideas
- Reference Materials

POSTMARKS

A **postmark** (aka datestamp) is a postal marking made on a letter or package indicating the date that the item was **accepted by the postal service**. Many formats exist.



CANCELLATIONS

A **cancellation** (or **cancel**) is a postal marking applied to a postage stamp or a piece of postal stationery indicating that the item has been used. The primary purpose of cancels is to **prevent the reuse of stamps**.



POSTMARKS AS CANCELS

The terms **cancel** and **postmark** are used interchangeably. A prime reason is the use of postmarks directly on the stamp.



STAMPLESS ERA POSTMARKS

The first postmark (called the "Bishop Mark") was introduced by English Postmaster General Henry Bishop in 1661. It showed only the date and month of mailing.

The format of the Bishop Mark changed during the 1700's. Can you guess the dates on the postmarks below?



1661



Early 1700's



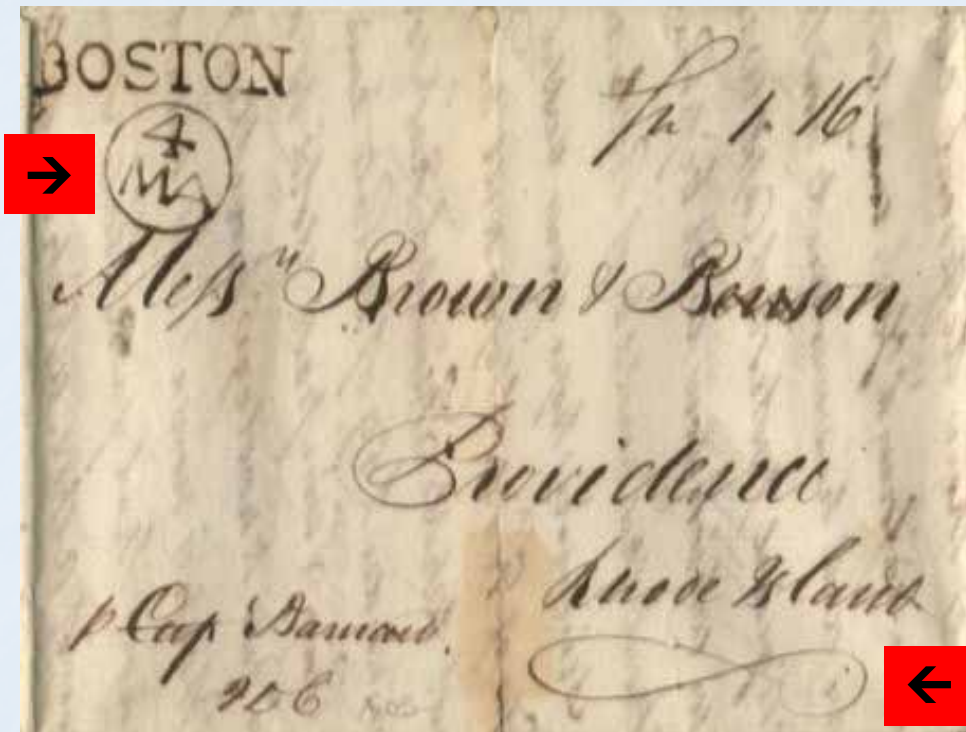
Late 1700's

FRANKLIN MARK

During colonial times, American postmarks included the Franklin Mark shown on this letter from Boston to Providence.

The Franklin Mark is similar to the Bishops Mark. The 8-cent postal fee is handwritten at the bottom of the letter.

Fees ranged from 8-25 cents and were based on number of pages and distance.



Source: *Mathew Bennett Auctions*

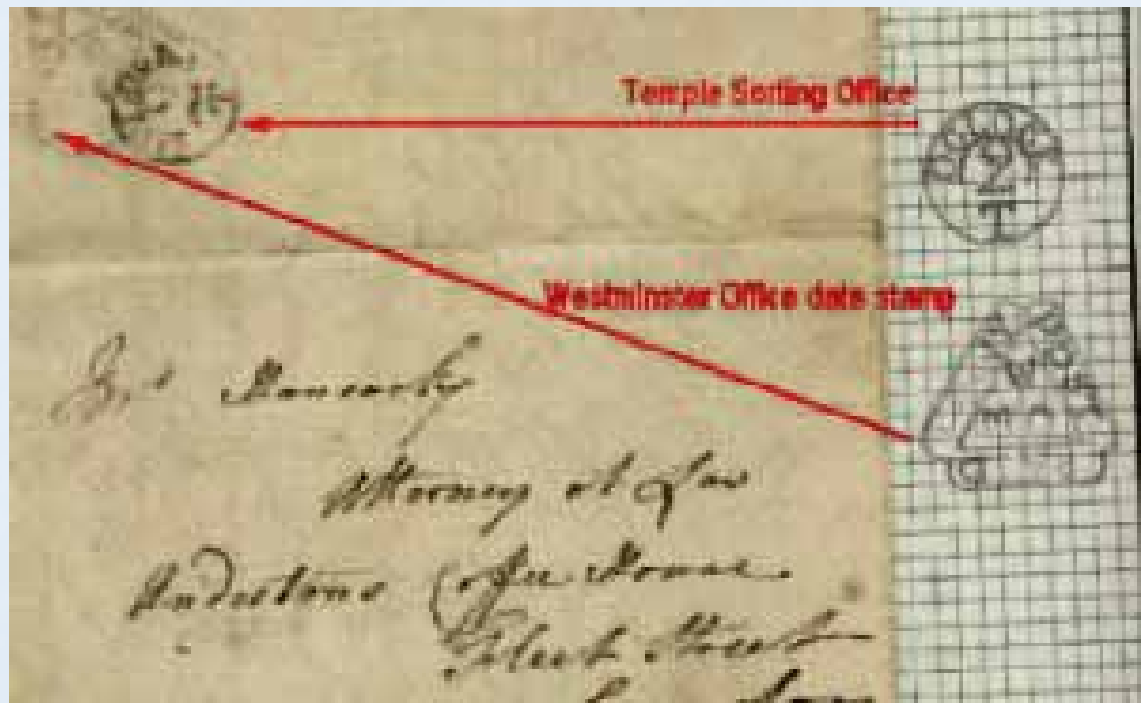
EARLY SERVICES

In 1680 William Dockwra founded the **London Penny Post**. This service introduced several ideas (including local service, identification of processing locations and time stamping) that are used to this day.



Costs:

1p within London
2p up to 10 miles



Source: www.earsathome.com (1700's cover)

BRITISH FREE FRANKING

In 1652, members of Parliament, the Clergy and some other nobility were given the privilege of posting letters for free.



The postmaster would stamp the letter with a red FREE stamp to indicate its special postal status.



U.S. FREE FRANKING

Most U.S. states provided for stampless letters to be mailed free either **to or from a Postmaster** (up to 1/2 ounce). Many government officials also used the free franking privilege.



EARLY CANCELS

The **Maltese Cross** was the first postal marking employed for the cancellation of postage stamps issued in 1840. Other countries soon followed with their own stamp cancellations.



GB Maltese Cross Cancels



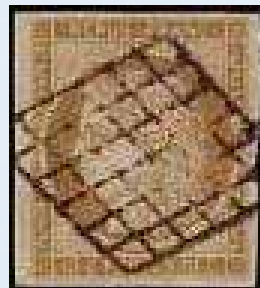
US 'Paid'



Town Cancel & Pen Cancel



COGH Triangle



France Grille



Bavaria Wedges



New Brunswick Grid

CORK CANCELS

Post offices used **cork bottle stoppers dipped in ink** to cancel stamps. These tended to blot out the entire stamp making it difficult to check the denomination.

The clerks began to carve grooves into the cork and notches out of the outer edges, making semicircles, quarters, etc.



U.S FANCY CANCELS

The carving process sparked the creativity of clerks across the country. Soon, thousands of designs appeared, ranging from shields to skulls to stars, geometrical shapes, animals, plants, and devils with pitchforks.



Wedge Circle



Blue Leaf



Devil Mask



Maltese Cross

HANDSTAMPS

HANDSTAMP DEVICES

The first handstamp devices were usually carved from cork or wood by the Postmaster. In the 1860's, **metal die and metal duplex** postmark devices appeared. Handstamp devices had removable slugs so that the month, day, year and time could be changed.



Metal Die Handstamp



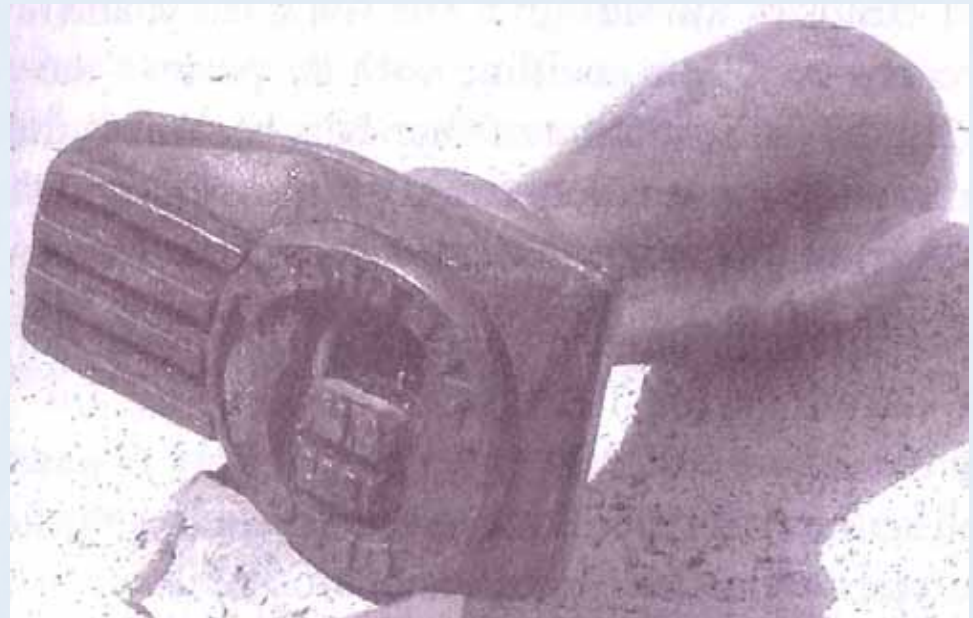
Duplex Handstamp

HANDSTAMP USE

Small post offices used two handstamps: one to postmark the letter, and the other to cancel the stamp. Busier offices used **duplex handstamps**. Rubber handstamps, used for Doanes, were introduced in the late 1890's.



RMS / R.P.O. Handstamp



4-Bar Rubber Handstamp

TOWN CANCELS

This is an early type of datestamp cancel found mostly on 19th century stamps and covers. The city, month and day are always present, but notice the **absence of a year**.

Looks a lot nicer than a cork cancel.



Looking for an image of a town cancel handstamp !

DATESTAMP CANCELS

This is the most widely collected cancellation with **many styles**. The format and sequence of Month (MM), Day (DD) and Year (YY or YYYY) varies. For instance, Month can be numeric, roman numerals or an abbreviated word.



OTHER DATESTAMP SHAPES

There are many other datestamp shapes in addition to the circular (CDS) format. These include ovals and other geometric figures. Mail processing information varies.



Split Rectangle



Oval



Hexagon

Looking for images of other handstamp devices !

CONTEMPORARY CANCELS

Most datestamp collectors prefer contemporaneous cancels for their used stamp collection. What does this mean?



The cancel on this 6-cent U.S. Wright Bros. stamp is perfect! However, the stamp was issued in 1949 and was cancelled in 1976.

The used copy of the 20-cent Netherlands stamp is preferable to datestamp collectors. It was issued in 1982 and has a 1983 postmark cancel.



POSTMARK CALENDARS

Some countries do not use the Gregorian calendar as a basis for their postmark dates. Here is a Japanese stamp (Scott #2161) issued on January 13, 1994.

The CDS postmark shows a date of February 3, 1998. Fairly contemporary usage, especially for a definitive.



CDS Format YY-MM-DD

JAPANESE TRADITIONAL DATE

Wait a minute . . . here is another stamp for the SAME issue with a CDS cancel date of 7.12.13. Is the year 1907 or 2007?



Not at all . . . the stamp on the right is postmarked with a Japanese traditional date based on the Emperor's reign.

EMPEROR'S REIGN

For Japanese traditional dates, the postmark year is based on the number of years that the current emperor has reigned.

Era Name	Emperor	Begin Date	End Date
Meiji	Mutsuhito	September 8, 1868	July 29, 1912
Taisho	Yoshihito	July 30, 1912	December 24, 1926
Showa	Hirohito	December 25, 1926	January 7, 1989
Heisei	Akihito	January 8, 1989	Present



Using the table, we know that the '7' in the CDS postmark indicates the 7th year of Emperor Akihito's reign (or 1995). Since the stamp was issued in 1994, the usage is very contemporary!

KILLER CANCELS

This is a broad category including many formats and types. Basically, it refers to a cancel that covers much of a stamp's design for the purpose of preventing reuse of the stamp.



Barrel Obliterator Duplex



Triplex Cancel (with Shoe-Print Killer)



Concentric Ring



Target



Lozenge



Grid

DOANE CANCELS

Doane cancels were the result of the U.S. Post Office's early attempts to **improve postmark legibility** by issuing rubber duplex handstamps. The numerals indicated the annual compensation of the Postmaster.

This is a popular collecting area with over 23,000 unique Doane cancels identified



Type 1 Doane Cancels have 5 bars. Approximately 1,600 handstamp devices were delivered to Post Offices from Aug. 28, 1903 until Sep. 28, 1903.

DOANE CANCELS

The name "Doane" is in honor of **Edith Doane**, a postal historian who became interested in these cancels and first published her results in 1978.



Type 2 Doane Cancels have 4 pairs of thin lines. About 17,500 handstamps were distributed to Post Offices from Sep. 29, 1903 until June 30, 1905.



Type 3 Doane Cancels have 4 thick bars. Approximately 12,000 handstamp devices were used from July 1, 1905 until Fall 1906.

4-BAR CANCELS

Sometimes referred to as the **fourth type of Doanes**, the 4-bar handstamp devices were made of rubber and are characterized by a circular postmark section, along with a "killer" of four short horizontal bars. **No numbers** are present in the bars.



Type 4Aa 4-Bar Cancels are 14mm from the top to the bottom of the bars. Letters are tall and slender, and the A is pointed.



Type 4Ab 4-Bar Cancels are 14mm from the top to the bottom of the bars. Letters are shorter and broader with a flat top A.

4-BAR CANCELS

4-Bar cancels started at the height of the postcard "craze" (circa 1906-08) and were mostly used at smaller post offices.



Type 4B 4-Bar Cancels are 20mm from the top to the bottom of the four killer bars.

Use of 4-Bar cancels continued throughout the 20th century and can still be found on today's mail.



MACHINE USAGE

CANCEL MACHINERY

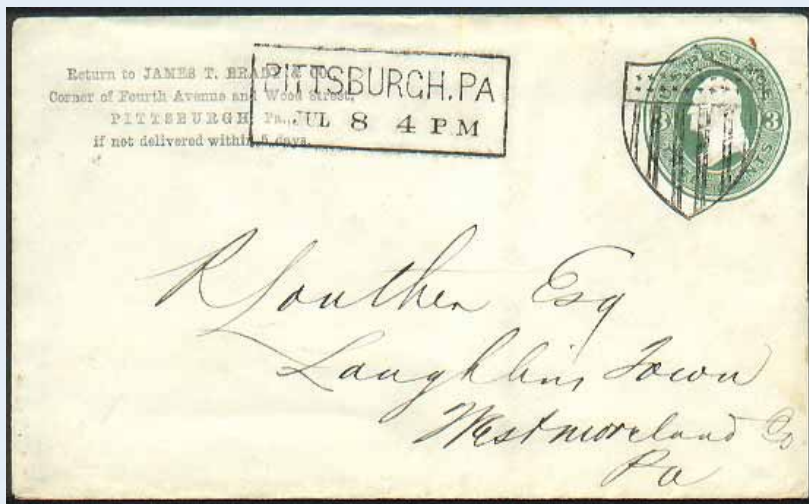
The **British Round Circle Cancel Machine** (1860's) featured steel and other hard metal die construction and allowed changes to the day, month and year. Initially, impressions were sharp when the machines were new, but gradually wore down over time.



Looking for an image of the
British Round Circle Cancel Machine !

Early U.S. MACHINERY

1863: The **McAdams Mechanical Stamper Machine** required two postal clerks to operate. One clerk positioned the letter, the other applied the postmark and cancel.



Source: *PA Postal History Society website*



Source: *eBay Auction*

1872: The **Pittsburgh Experimental Rapid Canceling Machine** applied the postmark and cancel using a set of rollers. The machine Inventor and manufacturer are unknown

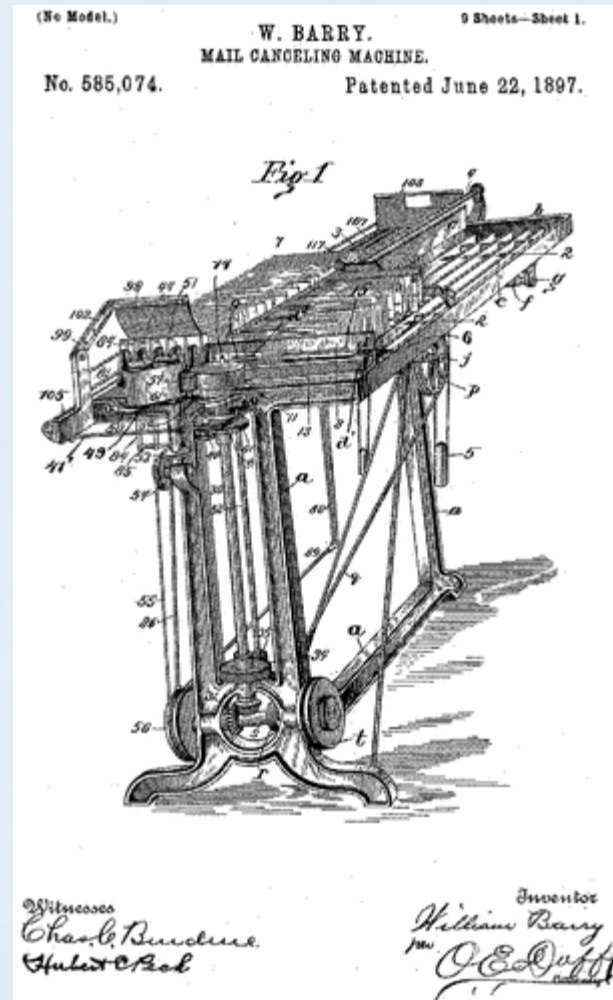
Looking for an image of both machines !

U.S. MACHINERY

After **Thomas Leavitt** developed the first successful U.S. postmarking machine in 1876, more than 20 companies entered the field. Only six survived by the 1920's.

Postmarks from these machines were usually circular. The cancel formats varied, but all included bars or lines.

Pictured at the right is **William Barry's Mail Canceling Machine** which was patented in 1897.



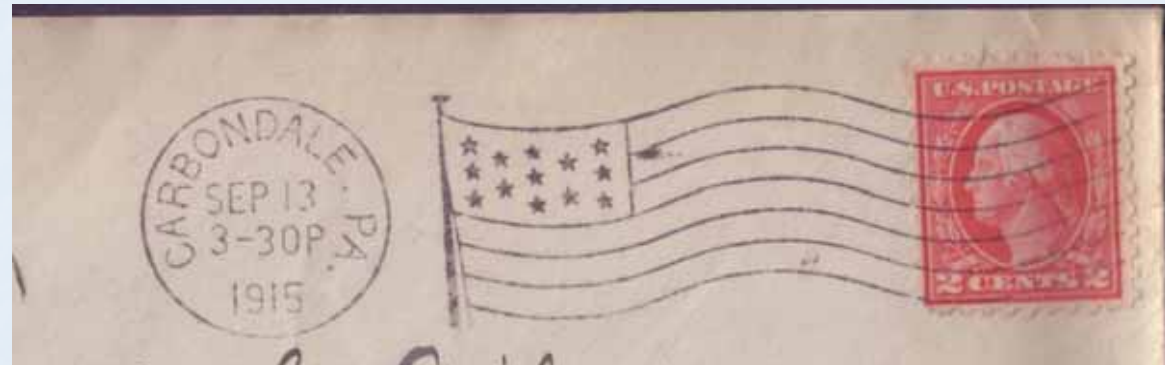
Looking for images of other machines !

Source: *About.com website*

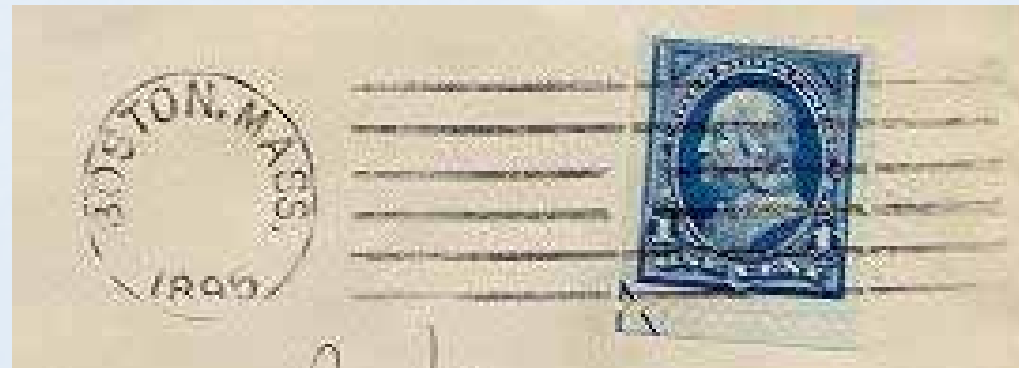
U.S. MACHINE CANCELS

Nearly all machine-cancellation devices apply both postmark and cancellation simultaneously. The circular postmark on a machine cancel is sometimes referred to as a **dial**.

**American Flag
1894 - 1920's**

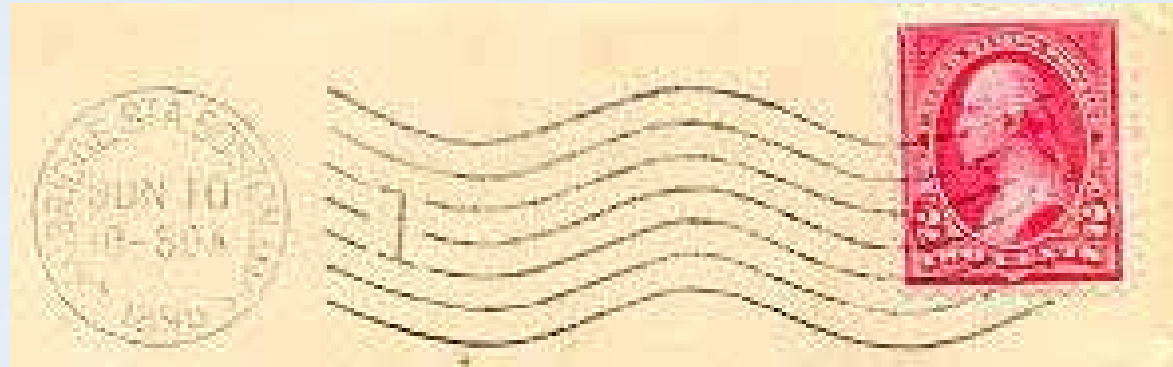


**American
1909 - 1920**



U.S. MACHINE CANCELS

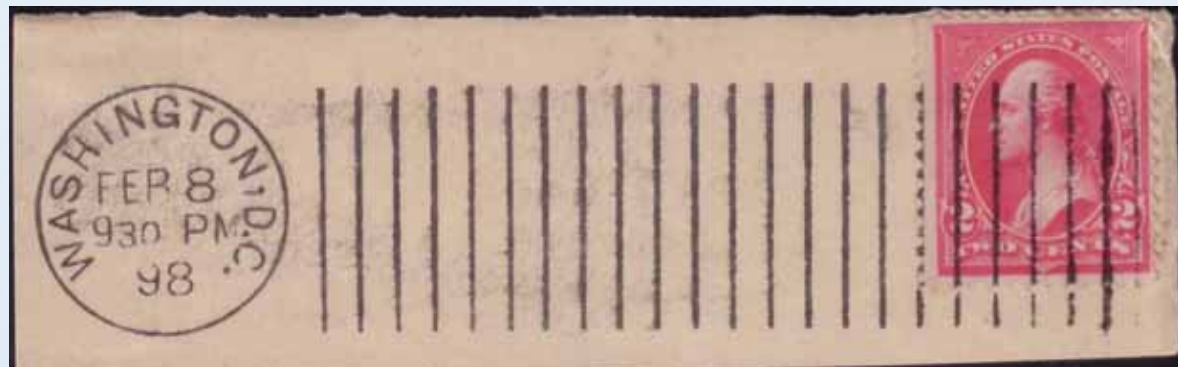
Barnard
????



Barry
1895 - 1909

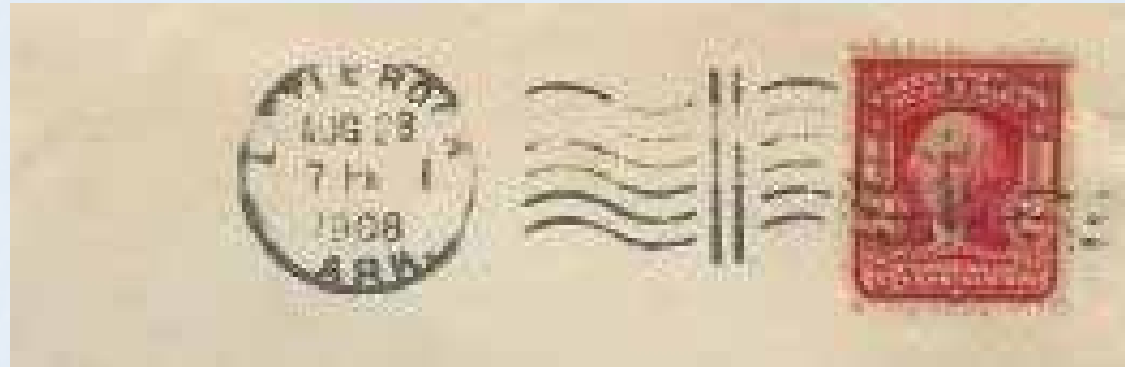


Barr-Fyke
1897 - 1905

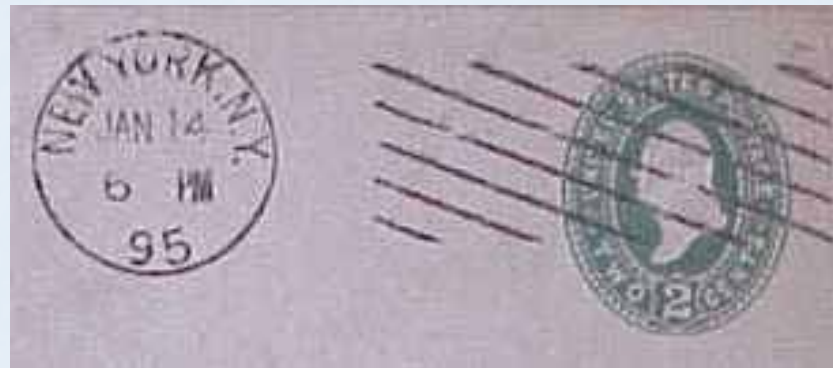


U.S. MACHINE CANCELS

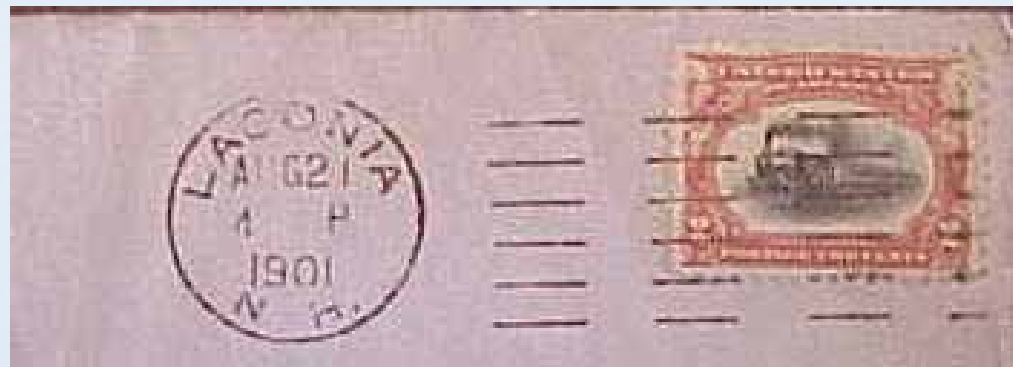
Columbia
1900 - 1920's



Constantine
????

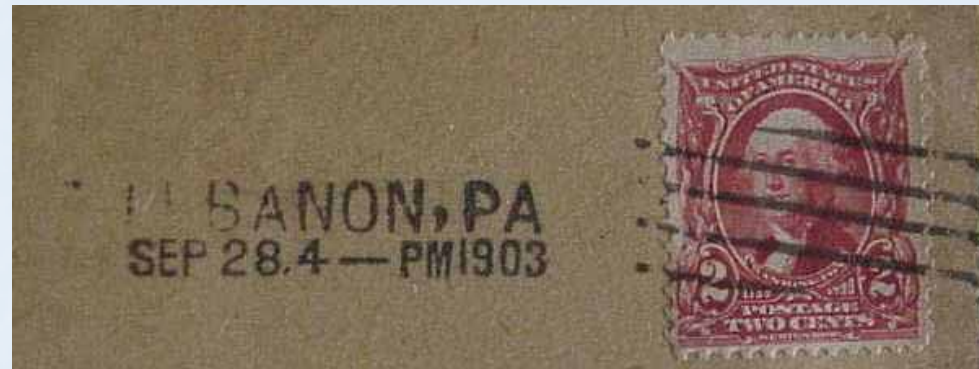


Doremus
1899 - 1920



U.S. MACHINE CANCELS

Hampden
1898 - 1905s



International
1888 - Present



Leavitt
1876 - ????

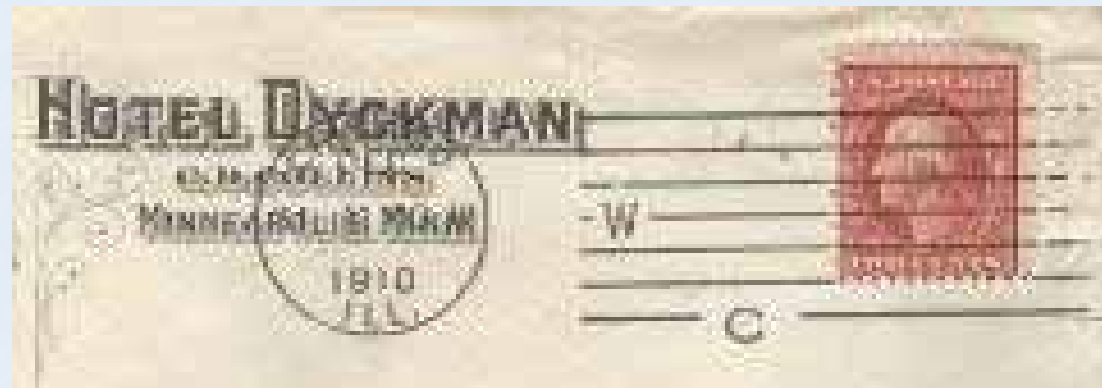


U.S. MACHINE CANCELS

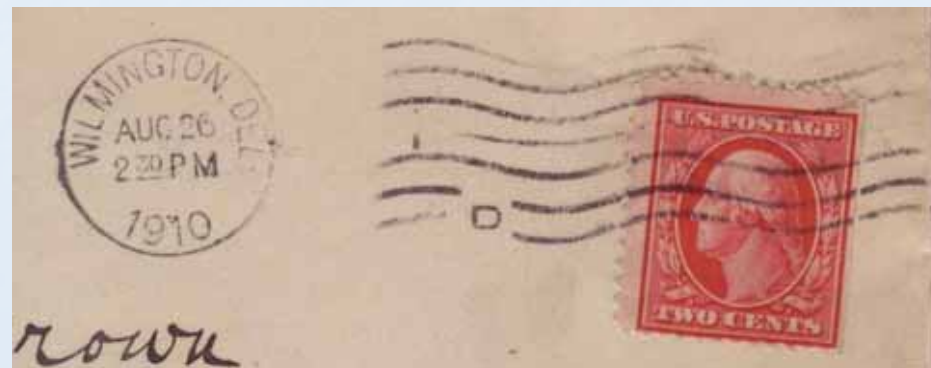
Perfection
????



Time Marking
(Cummins)
1905 - 1920's



Universal
1909 - ????



MODERN MACHINERY

Today's mail is sorted and postmarked by large and complex machines like the **Automatic Facer-Canceller (AFC)**.

The AFC uses ultraviolet light to **detect the phosphorescent coating** on the stamps, then positions the mail item and applies the postmark.

Less labor intensive, very fast, but not as caring as a well struck postmark from a postal clerk's handstamp!



Source: *Siemens.com website*

COLLECTING IDEAS

DELIVERY SYSTEMS

Some collectors prefer stamps or covers that were processed outside of the official government postal department.



The **Railway Mail Service** (13,000 R.P.O. markings) and the **Highway Post Office** (410 routes) were successful operations during the 1940-50's.



Naval covers are sought by many philatelists. **U.S. Army Postal Service** (now APO) covers are also in demand. Both are found in dealer's \$1.00 boxes.



All images cropped from covers.

DATESTAMP CANCELS

One of the more popular collectible areas are datestamps. You can collect a range of dates, a particular year (like your birth year) or any combination you want.



Here are some stamps from my 4-position CDS year collection.
I am trying to obtain each year from 1900 to 2000.

PICTORIAL CANCELS

A pictorial cancel contains an image that commemorates or highlights an event. This 1945 piece shows the victory bells pictorial cancel used after the end of World War II.



The perfin G indicates that the stamp was used by the city of Glasgow.

How's this for a collecting idea: the cancels match the stamp's topic!



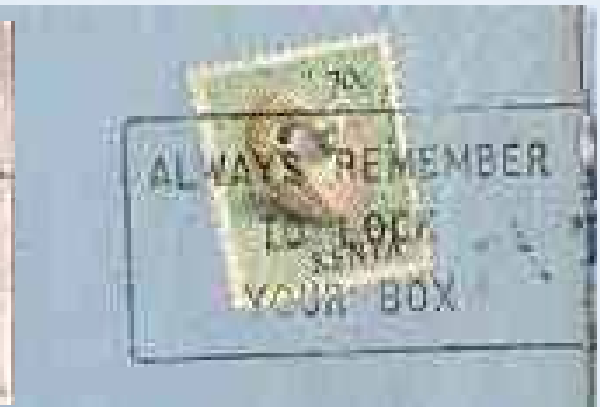
EVENT / COMMEMORATIVE CANCELS

Similar to pictorial cancels, this type usually contains an image with text highlighting or commemorating an event.



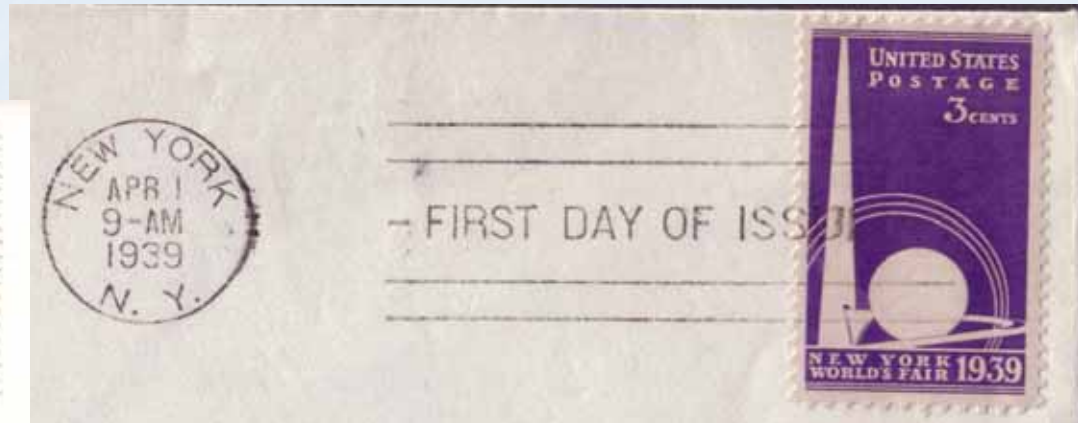
SLOGAN CANCELS

Slogan cancels, which may contain a pictorial image, first appeared in the 1890s to advertise the Pan-American Exposition in Buffalo. The USPS uses slogans extensively.



FIRST DAY CANCELS (FDC)

First Day covers usually have an official identification as part of the postmark or cancel. This may not be the case on older issues.



CANCELLED-TO-ORDER (CTO)

CTO's are postage stamps that are cancelled by the issuing postal administration before being sold to stamp collectors or dealers. The stamps are **not used for mail delivery**.

CTO cancels are applied to unsold sheets. Stamps are usually cancelled four at a time resulting in a corner cancel. Usually the gum is still present.



Some CTO cancels look like a regular CDS or Date type. This Netherlands semi-postal (Scott #B3) with this cancel is noted in Scott's as a CTO.

REMAINDERS

Remainders are stocks of stamps unsold at the time that an issue is declared obsolete. In past years, countries have sold remainders at substantial discounts from face value. These stamps were normally marked with a distinctive cancel.



Stamp dealers often purchased remainders for use in packets.

PRECANCELS

Precancels may be defined broadly as stamps that have been **canceled before being affixed to mail matter**. Stamps can be imprinted by hand or by mechanical means.

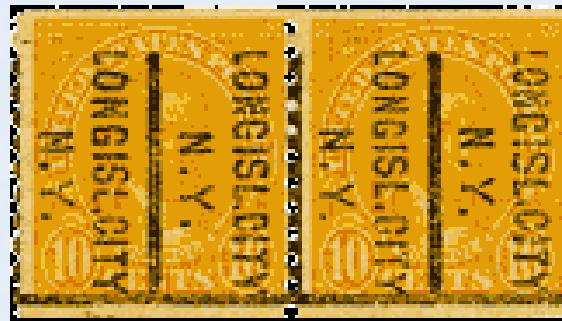
U.S. precancels are classified into four main **categories** with the City Types and Bureaus having multiple styles and types:



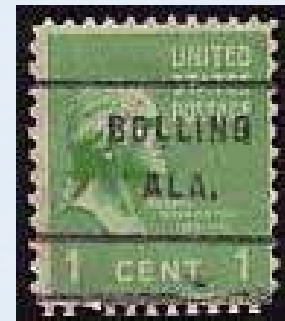
Pioneer
(pre-1890)



Classic
(1890-1903)



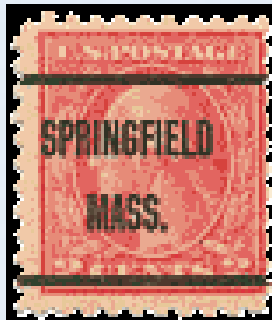
City Types (Locals)
(1903 on)



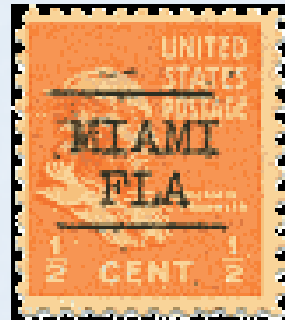
Bureau Prints
(1923 on)

U.S. PRECANCELS

There are about **9500 Bureaus** and an unknown number of Locals. Other variables like styles and type of printing create a huge field for investigation. Here are some U.S. examples.



Experimental



Mimeograph



Bureau (Integral)



National Type



Local (Bars)



Local (Lines)



NYPO



Battleship

FOREIGN PRECANCELS

France began to issue precancels in 1853 by affixing stamps to blank newsprint and running them through the presses. Other countries have issued precancels for over 100 years.



Belgium



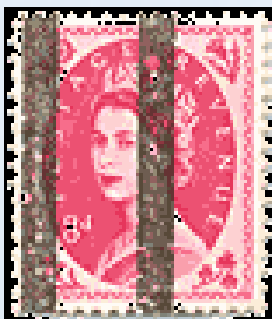
Canada



Danzig



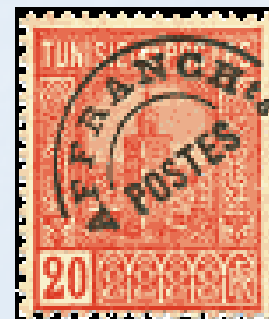
France



GB (Training)



Hungary



Tunisia



Venezuela

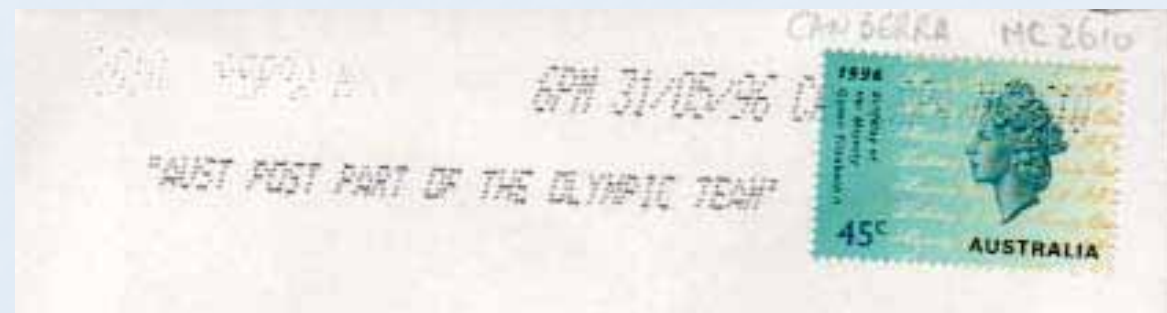
SPRAY-ON CANCELS

Many countries now use Spray-on cancels which are applied when ink is sprayed through a special printer head onto the envelope or postcard.



In the U.S., **3-digit zip areas** are used instead of 5-digit zip codes. How many different zip areas exist?

Here's one from Australia for the 1996 Olympics.



FORGERIES & FAKES

Sometimes cancellation devices or methods are employed to create used stamps. Candidates include stamps from remote places or those in use for only short periods.



Fake Grid



Fake CDS



Faked Lined Cancel



Counterfeit w/Fake Cancel



Fake Precancel

REFERENCE MATERIALS

- Internet Sites
- Publications
- Societies & Organizations

THANK YOU, THANK YOU ...



THANKS to ALL who helped !!!