

"ARTISTIC LICENSE"

19TH CENTURY AMERICAN POSTAL FOLK ART

Postal folk art is collected today based mostly on its artistic merit. However, it was never intended to be 'art for art's sake' at the time of its creation. Instead it evolved out of various Post Office Department (P.O.D.) orders, most notably on July 23, 1860 whereby the use of a townmark to cancel a stamp became illegal. As a result, many postal employees, particularly in those offices too small to receive obliterating devices from the P.O.D., initially resorted to using an inked quartered cork. However, the practice of producing more artistic carvings using the ever-present penknife on cork and wood soon took hold and there was no looking back. This endeavor actually started in the 1850's, but the examples spread in variety and abundance into the 1860's and became almost innumerable in the 1870's and 1880's. It even lasted through the 1890's, although greatly diminished in quantity before ending because of the government's introduction of standardized cancelling devices to all post offices in the latter part of the century.

The vast majority of these fancy cancels, as they are often referred to by philatelists, were whimsical in nature with patriotism being one of the most popular themes. However a select few were created for a specific reason, whether it be a politically motivated opinion, recognition of an event, a postmaster's ego, a tribute to a slain president, an appeal for reconciliation after the Civil War or just some simple reflection of everyday life. With this in mind, the purpose of this exhibit is to narrow the focus down to a few of these types of cancels in order to bring awareness to their creators and provide a viewport into the daily lives of ordinary Americans during this era.



Profile of Abraham Lincoln

The earliest known use of this stamp is Aug. 17, 1861. This cancel is one of three off-cover examples certified as genuine by The Philatelic Foundation describing it only as "Man with a beard from Gouverneur, NY." No covers are recorded; the town of origin being deduced from a partial townmark on one of the examples. During this period, there were only two postmasters: Stephen B. Van Durzee (April 20, 1861 - May, 26, 1865) & George B. Winslow (May 27, 1865 - Mar. 2, 1883). This is the only fancy cancel recorded from Gouverneur by either Skinner & Eno, James M. Cole or Kenneth Whitfield.

PFC 502601
Ex-Newbury

JOHN W. HILL

WATERBURY, CT

POSTAL CLERK CIRCA 1864 - JUNE 7, 1869

POSTMASTER JUNE 8, 1869 - FEB. 7, 1886

MAR. 17, 1865: EARLIEST RECORDED FANCY CANCEL FROM WATERBURY



JOHN W. HILL
Originator of the
Waterbury Cancellations

April 13, 1834–October 12, 1921

Photo of John W. Hill courtesy of "THE WATERBURY CANCELLATIONS 1865-1890"
by Paul C. Rohloff. Published in 1979 by The Collectors Club of Chicago.

Hill's aforementioned dates of employment at the post office & the following information have been obtained from two additional sources:

First, "THE TOWN AND CITY OF WATERBURY, CONNECTICUT, FROM THE ABORIGINAL PERIOD TO THE YEAR EIGHTEEN HUNDRED AND NINETY-FIVE" edited by Joseph Anderson, D.D., Sarah Johnson Prichard & Anna Lydia Ward (Joseph Anderson & his wife are addressees on several envelopes from Waterbury adorned with various of Hill's creations). Published in 1896 by The Price & Lee Company. Second, two letters from Hill himself in responses to requests for information relating to Waterbury cancels. The letters are dated Jan. 15, 1919 & Mar. 20, 1920 respectively. This information supplements, and in some instances contradicts, information previously provided by Paul C. Rohloff.

Mr. Hill was the chief clerk to postmaster John J. Jacques prior to his appointment to postmaster. There was one additional clerk & an assistant during this time. Contrary to previous assertions, Hill continued to create quite a number of intricate pictorial cancels after his appointment. For the most part, they appear on the 1869 pictorial issue of stamps. However, the intricacy of most of his carvings did subsequently diminish quite dramatically. This was due not only in part to his increased duties associated with his appointment to postmaster, but also to the greatly increased business of the post office itself. For instance, during his last ten years of service, the registered letter system increased from less than five hundred to nearly ten thousand pieces per quarter. In addition, at the beginning of Hill's term, the total receipts from the sale of stamps, stamped envelopes and box rents were approximately \$10,000. At the close of his term, they had ballooned to almost \$30,000 and were increasing. This resulted in an increased number of clerks to eight by the end of his term.

JOHN W. HILL

WATERBURY, CT

MORTAR & PESTLE CANCELS

IN RECOGNITION OF LEAVENWORTH & DIKEMAN'S DRUG STORE

According to Paul C. Rohloff, these cancels are reminders of John Hill's visits to Leavenworth and Dikeman's drug store next to the Waterbury post office. Every time a new shipment of corks arrived Hill was allowed to look them over and select the most dense to whittle his cancelling devices. Rohloff has identified a total of three varieties. The recorded dates range from May 4, 1867 through July 18, 1869.



Dated Oct. 10, 1867

One of four recorded covers.

Two other similar type mortar & pestle cancels are known from Waterbury, this being the rarest type.



Dated Jun. 15, 1869

Not more than 8 on-cover examples known according to Paul C. Rohloff. An underestimate after the discovery of the Chase correspondence.

PFC 232825

Ex-Houser & Griffenhagen

JOHN W. HILL

WATERBURY, CT

AJ + SKULL & CROSSBONES IN TOMBSTONE CANCEL

A POLITICAL STATEMENT

John W. Hill, the Waterbury postal clerk and later the postmaster, was also a political pundit. This cancel, which shows a skull & crossbones & "AJ" initials on a tombstone, expressed his opinion on Andrew Johnson's end of term as president on Mar. 4, 1869. Johnson was a deeply unpopular president who was impeached on Feb. 24, 1868. The House of Representatives cited eleven articles of impeachment, with all but two articles based on his alleged violation of the Tenure of Office Act whereby he removed Edwin Stanton from the office of Secretary of War without the consent of Congress.



Postmarked Mar. 29, 1869

One of ten covers recorded by William T. Crowe.

Used between March. 26 & April. 8, 1869.

Ex-Rohloff, Eubanks, Boker & Haub

He also expressed his political sentiments during the controversial election campaign of Rutherford B. Hayes in 1876 whereby he was elected through the Compromise of 1877 which was an informal, unwritten deal that settled the intensely disputed election. During this time period, Hill carved "185" to indicate the number of electoral votes needed for election. In addition, his "HAYES" cancel is one of the few existing political campaign cancellations ever used. During that same year after he had been inaugurated, President Hayes reappointed Hill as postmaster. Tracings of both of these cancels are shown below courtesy of "THE WATERBURY CANCELLATIONS 1865-1890" by Paul C. Rohloff. Published in 1979 by The Collectors Club of Chicago.

HAYES

185

DUDLEY FOX
HOCKANUM, CT
RUNNING FOX CANCEL
AN ALLEGORICAL REPRESENTATION OF THE POSTMASTER'S SURNAME
Postmaster May 12, 1865 - Nov. 27, 1867.



A new discovery.
Acquired from Robert A. Siegel Auction Galleries, Sale 1106 (June 25, 2015)
Postmarked Aug. 24, 1866.

The following information is derived from a philatelic biography "Dudley's Fox" by Connecticut postal historian William J. Duffney.

Dudley Fox was a silversmith, a trade which requires skills more than adequate to create this type of folk art. The Hockanum Running Fox cancellation was used during his two and a half year tenure as postmaster. Mr. Duffney had recorded seven covers and ten off-cover varieties of this cancel before the discovery in 2015 of this cover along with three other previously unrecorded covers.

According to Mr. Duffney, Isaiah Baker, Jr. (whose wife was a second cousin to Dudley Fox) responded to a 1920 inquiry from collector J. Arthur Ritchie regarding the running fox cancel as follows: "Mr. Fox had a fad of using the head of a fox whenever he could and Mrs. Baker recalls very distinctly his cutting the fox on pieces of cork, striking same on a pad of black ink and cancelling stamps on envelopes. She knows that they quickly wore out, or the eyes of the fox would fill, and he was very fussy about having that clear; so that new ones were frequently made, always on cork, and the old ones would be lying around and finally thrown away."

DUDLEY FOX HOCKANUM, CT

RESIDENCE + POST OFFICE + CANCELLATION VARIETIES



Dudley Fox's home (built in 1853) and Silverware Workshop (built in 1852) as they appeared in 2010. The post office was located in his house and some of the chores related to postal duties were shared with his wife Clarinda while he spent time working in the silver shop. His compensation for his entire period as postmaster was only approximately \$75.



Figure 1



Figure 2



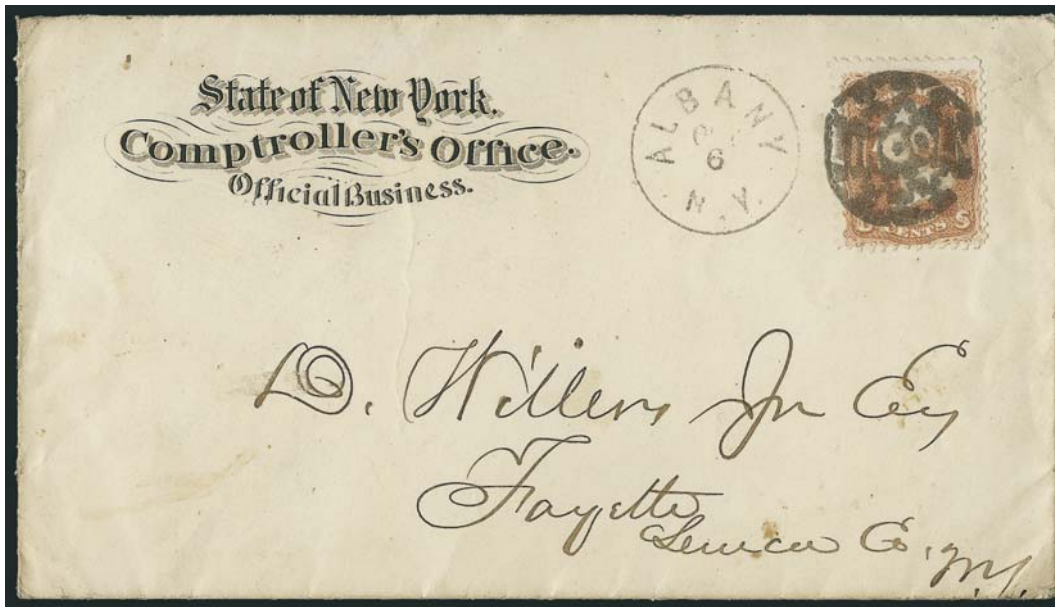
Figure 3



Figure 4

The tracings shown in Figures 1 through 4 represent an attempt by various philatelists to document the varieties of the Running Fox cancellation that have been recorded. They come from several sources and are shown here courtesy of an article by Roger Curran published in the U.S. Cancellation Club News Vol. 24, Number 5, Whole 230, Winter 1999.

GEORGE DAWSON
ALBANY, NY
LINCOLN IN STARS CANCEL
A MEMORIAL TO SLAIN PRESIDENT ABRAHAM LINCOLN
Postmaster Mar. 27 1861 - Aug. 4, 1866.



The New York State Comptroller in 1865 was Thomas Hillhouse. Both he and Dawson were ardent pro-Union Republicans. One of 18 recorded covers in the Ernie Webb census, all of which are postmarked in October of 1865, approximately 5-1/2 months after Lincoln's assassination. Dawson also created several other similar type patriotic designs, each with 13 stars representing the first 13 states in the union.

Ex-Klein.

The following information is derived from an article by Ernie Webb published in the U.S. Cancellation Club News Vol. 32, Number 1, Whole 290, February 2014.

After President Lincoln's assassination on Apr. 15, 1865 Secretary Stanton began planning for 12 separate funerals to be held from Washington, D.C. to Springfield, IL with the procession transported by train which consisted of nine rail cars with the most elaborate car reserved for mayors, the honor guard and Robert Lincoln, the president's oldest son.

Among the stops were Baltimore, Harrisburg, Philadelphia, New York, Albany, Buffalo, Cleveland, Chicago and lastly, Springfield. Dignitaries got on and off the train throughout the journey. Among them was George Dawson, the Albany postmaster who was appointed by President Lincoln. He rode the train through the state of New York to the Ohio border. The train reached Springfield on May 3rd, 1865 where the president was laid to rest.

Shortly afterwards, the city of Albany held a Grandest Flag Presentation Ceremony in conjunction with the July 4, 1865 celebration. General Grant and many of the generals of the Army of the Potomac attended. There was an elaborate publication printed for the celebration. It was printed by Weed, Parsons & Company. George Dawson was the editor of the publication and part owner of the company at the time.

GEORGE DAWSON

ALBANY, NY

CANCELLATIONS DURING HIS TENURE AS POSTMASTER

4507 	5007 	5056 	5057 	5058 
61 Albany, N.Y. "Lincoln" B	61 Albany, NY B "USA" & 13 Stars	Various P.O.'s See Revision List	61 Albany, NY B "US" & Stars	61 Albany, NY B "US" & Stars
5060 	5061 	5091 	 PT-US 53 1861 Albany, New York	 PT-E 12 1861 Albany, New York
61 Albany, NY B "US" in a Shield	61 Albany, N.Y.	61 Albany, NY B "US"	☒	☒
1838 	1783 	1751 	2257 	1284 
Various P.O.'s See Revision List	61 Albany, N.Y. B Clover Leaf	61-70 Albany, NY B Clover Leaf	61 Albany, N.Y.	61 Albany N.Y. B Shield
2639 	2497 	 PO-An 25 1861 Albany, New York	 LC-OK 23 1861 Albany, New York	 PS-O 22 1861 Albany, New York
61	69 Albany, N.Y.	☒	☒	☒

Tracings provided courtesy of "United States Cancellations 1845-1869" by Hubert Skinner & Amos Eno, and "Cancellations Found On 19th Century U.S. Stamps" by Kenneth A Whitfield.

JOHN W. FOSTER

EVANSVILLE, IN

SHOO FLY CANCEL

POSTMASTER APR. 5, 1869 - FEB. 2, 1873

This is the earliest of one of eleven covers recorded in the Barany census, six of which are part of the Daddow correspondence. The year date on all of these covers appears to be 1870 because only three months (April, May & June) are documented, with two of the covers franked with ungrilled National Bank Note stamps. The other covers are franked with 1869 Pictorial issue three cent stamps with the exception of one with a ten cent F grill stamp & the example shown here on postal stationery (both probably late uses).

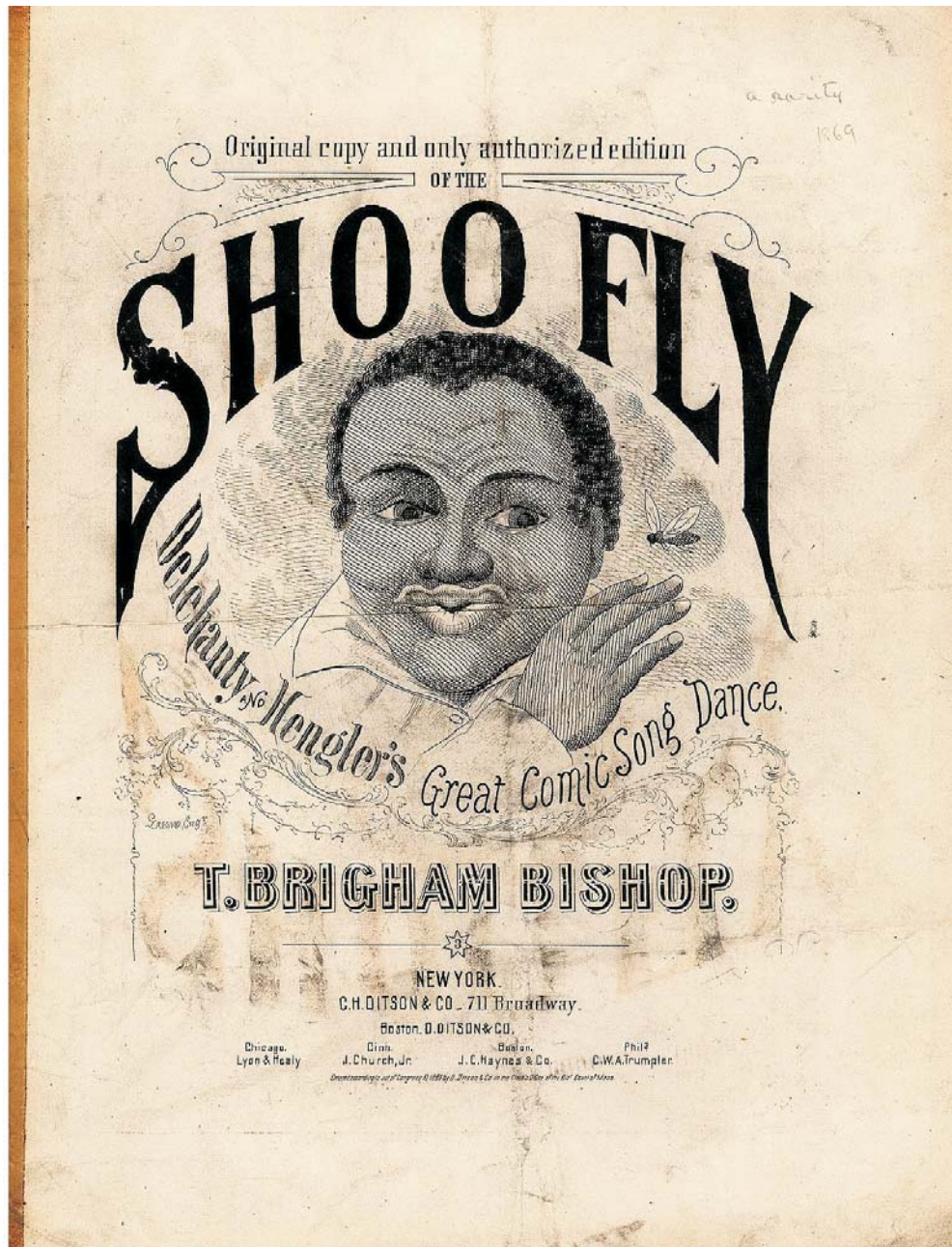


Several types & designs of this cancel are known from different towns (some with origins unknown). The idea for this cancel developed from two sources: 1) A very popular contemporary cheap package candy similar to that shown below; & 2) An old song "Shoo Fly Don't Bodder Me," which was popular among African-Americans at the time.

Ex-Knapp
PFC 359571



"SHOO FLY, DON'T BOTHER ME"



"Shoo Fly, Don't Bother Me" was first published in 1869 by White, Smith & Perry. It has remained popular to this day. It is not entirely clear who wrote it, but Thomas (T.) Brigham Bishop is often given credit. According to him, he wrote the song during the Civil War while assigned to command an African-American company (Company G) of soldiers when one soldier remarked to another "Shoo fly, don't bother me." The song was reportedly "pirated" from Bishop, and he made little money from his endeavor. Other sources credit Billy Reeves (lyrics) and Frank Campbell or Rollin Howard with song. The first group to popularize the song was Bryant's Minstrels in 1869-1870 (from Wikipedia).

HARRY COX NICHOLS

ANN ARBOR, MI

AN ATTEMPT AT POST OFFICE SECURITY

POSTAL CLERK 1880'S

Due to a series of thefts sometime in the 1883-84 period, Jerome C. Knowlton, the Ann Arbor postmaster required that each postal clerk provide his own separate & distinct handstamp to cancel mail. This allowed every piece of mail passing through the Ann Arbor post office to be traceable (from a column by Wm. W. Reynolds in Stamps, A Weekly Magazine of Philately). Harry Nichols was one of those postal clerks. He carved at least five other similar types of cancels with either his initials or name. Charles Bender was one of the other known postal clerks. Two types of cancels bearing his initials have been recorded by Robert H. Schoen.

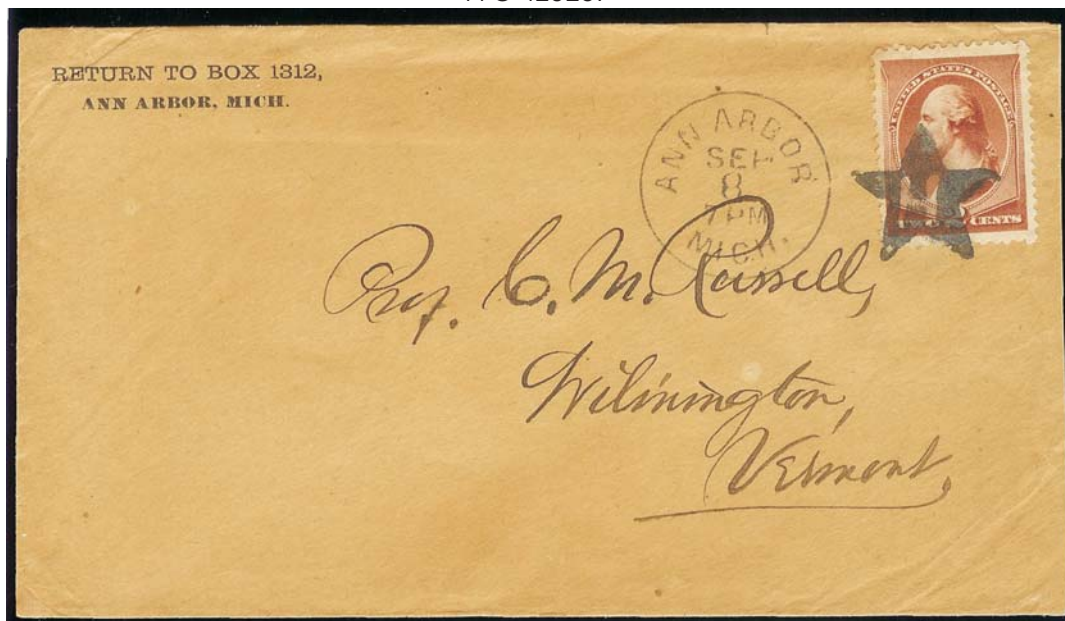


"I AM HARRY NICHOLS"

One of 15 covers recorded by Robert H. Schoen
used between Dec. 3 & Dec. 31, 1884

Ex-Knapp & Hale

PFC 423207



Negative letter 'H' in star

Ten other covers recorded by Robert H. Schoen

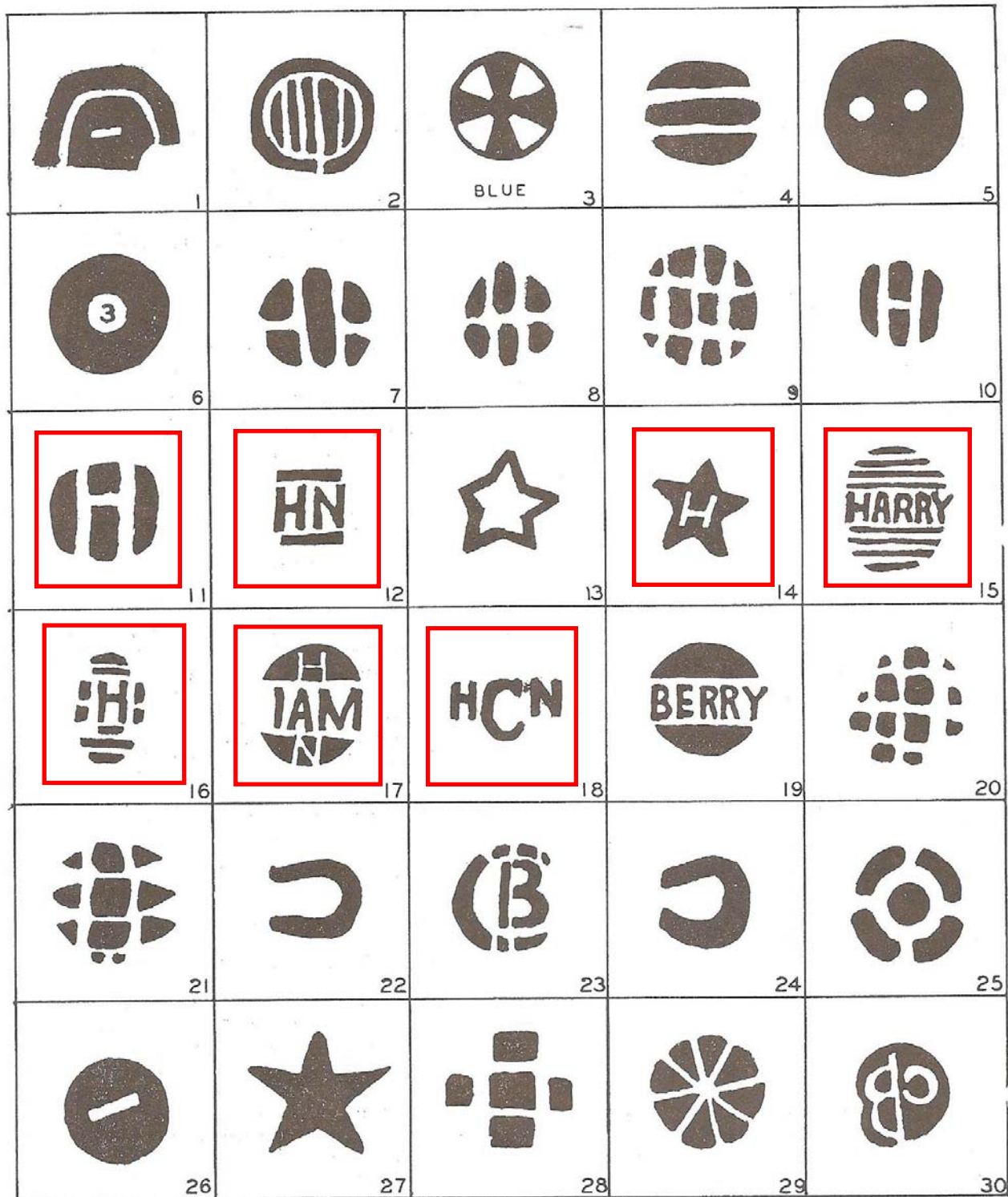
This Sept. 8 usage is earlier than the recorded usages between Sept. 28 & Nov. 19, 1884

PFC 423209

HARRY COX NICHOLS

ANN ARBOR, MI

CANCELLATIONS DURING HIS TENURE AS POSTMASTER



The tracings shown (from Ann Arbor from 1878 through 1887) are courtesy of an article by Robert H. Schoen published in the U.S. Cancellation Club News Special Fiftieth Anniversary Issue, 2001. Those highlighted in red are attributed to Harry Cox Nichols.

JOSHUA E. JOSSELYN

SOUTH HANSON, MA

STEAM LOCOMOTIVE

POSTMASTER DEC. 5, 1881 - April 10, 1901



One of 19 examples, including one cover and one on piece, in the Barany census.
The post office was located in the South Hanson railroad station serving the Old Colony Railroad.
PFC 363480

Although Josselyn was postmaster for almost 20 years, only one other cancel has been recorded from South Hanson during this time period - a letter 'E' in a concentric broken rectangle used in 1890.

OLD COLONY RAILROAD STATION SOUTH HANSON, MA



*Fred Flannigan - Crossing Tender
at So. Hanson Depot (Main St.)*



Two contemporary pictures of the Old Colony Railroad Station in South Hanson, MA where the post office was located (courtesy of the Hanson Public Library).

JOSIAH PICKETT

WORCESTER, MA

AN APPEAL FOR RECONCILIATION AFTER THE CIVIL WAR

POSTMASTER AUG. 3, 1866 - MAR. 2, 1887

The following information has been obtained from two sources: First "The Worcester of Eighteen Hundred and Ninety-eight," edited by Franklin Pierce Rice, published by F.S. Blanchard & Company in 1899, and second, from his obituary.

As a Colonel in the Union Army, he commanded the 25th Massachusetts Regiment and participated in several of the most important battles of the war. He was severely wounded on June 3, 1864 at Cold Harbor, VA where he led his regiment into battle after being deserted by the other regiments of the brigade. They were almost annihilated, sustaining a 73 per cent combined loss of killed and wounded. He subsequently was given the brevet of Brigadier General and retired from military service in January, 1865. He obtained a position in the Boston Custom House at the end of the war before being appointed postmaster of Worcester.



Postmarked Dec. 6, 1880
PFC 445085

Brigadier General
Josiah Pickett

According to Robert J. Trachimowicz, this postal card is one of fewer than 25 on-cover examples. The Dec. 6, 1880 date is also the earliest known use of this cancel. The latest use is February 15, 1881.

It has been theorized that the design of this cancel represented an attempt to calm the ill feelings that existed between the north and south almost 16 years after the end of the Civil War. Another theory links this cancel to a number of Civil War illustrated patriotic covers which show variations on the theme of "clasped hands" and words such as "constitution" above them. Yet another theory traces the basis of this design to the American presidential campaign of 1868 which pitted Ulysses S. Grant and Schuyler Colfax against Horatio Seymour and Francis P. Blair, Jr. A similar design appeared on the spine of a book written by James D. McCabe in 1868 which was a campaign biography of Seymour and Blair. To further this theory, a piece of music called "Seymour and Blair's Campaign March" had on its front page an illustration of two shaking hands with a wreath and the word "Union" below them.

JOSIAH PICKETT WORCESTER, MA CANCELLATIONS DURING HIS TENURE AS POSTMASTER

<p>555</p> <p>70 Worcester, Mass. Masonic - Odd Fellows B North South Shaking Hands</p>	<p>557</p> <p>70 Worcester, Mass. Odd Fellows B N.S. Shaking Hands</p>	<p>627</p> <p>61/69 Worcester, Blue/B MA, Union Soldier's Cap</p>	<p>747</p> <p>75 Worcester, MA B Gymnastic Symbols</p>	<p>1357</p> <p>70 Worcester, Mass. B Shield</p>	<p>7114</p>
<p>1654</p> <p>70 Worcester, Mass. B Leaf</p>	<p>1559</p> <p>70/79 Worcester, B MA, Leaf</p>	<p>1715</p> <p>Various P.O.'s See Revision List</p>	<p>1996</p> <p>70 Worcester, MA B Triangle</p>	<p>2265</p> <p>81 Worcester, MA B Geometric</p>	<p>2475</p> <p>75 Worcester, MA B Cross</p>
<p>3413</p> <p>70 Worcester, Mass.</p>	<p>3916</p> <p>70 Worcester, Mass. 3/12/81</p>	<p>3926</p> <p>70 Worcester, Mass. 1/15/81</p>	<p>3524</p> <p>70 Worcester, Mass.</p>	<p>5439</p> <p>70 Worcester, MA, "A"</p>	<p>5523</p> <p>70 Worcester, Mass.</p>
<p>5525</p> <p>79 Worcester, B MA, "B"</p>	<p>5526</p> <p>75-79 Worcester, B MA, "B"</p>	<p>5541</p> <p>70 Worcester, Mass.</p>	<p>5569</p> <p>70 Worcester, MA, "C"</p>	<p>5570</p> <p>70 Worcester, MA, "J"</p>	<p>5786</p> <p>78 Worcester, MA B "K"</p>
<p>6165</p> <p>75-81 Worcester, B MA, "S"</p>	<p>5946</p> <p>70 Worcester, B MA, "W"</p>	<p>5941</p> <p>70 Worcester, Mass.</p>	<p>6357</p> <p>70 Worcester, Mass.</p>	<p>6370</p> <p>83 Worcester, B MA, "1"</p>	<p>6433</p> <p>70 Worcester, B MA, "4"</p>

Tracings provided courtesy of "United States Cancellations 1845-1869" by Hubert Skinner & Amos Eno, and "Cancellations Found On 19th Century U.S. Stamps" by Kenneth A Whitfield.