

# AMERICAN POSTAL FOLK ART

## NEW ORLEANS 1870'S-1880'S

In 1840, New Orleans ranked as the third-largest city in the nation. With a population of 102,193, it was the largest city in the South and the fourth-busiest port in the world. In the mid-1800's, the highest concentration of millionaires in America could be found between New Orleans and Baton Rouge. Their wealth came largely from sugar plantations, which depended on the labor of thousands of enslaved African Americans. Indeed, New Orleans harbored an entire enslaved society as well as the nation's busiest slave marketplace throughout the antebellum era of 1803-1861.

This all changed with the onset of the Civil War whereby Union troops captured New Orleans in May of 1862 and occupied the city for the remainder of the war. A racially integrated Reconstruction era government subsequently sought to establish civil rights for the emancipated slaves. However, after the end of Reconstruction in 1877, white supremacist forces steadily regained control which resulted in continued racial subjugation and segregation that would continue for a century to come. Regardless, New Orleans never again regained its domination of western trade in the postbellum era.

This is the backdrop for the time period during which the subject matter of this exhibit emanated. These New Orleans fancy cancels, as they are referred to by philatelists, have been documented on cover as early as 1875. However, the bulk of the recorded examples occurred between 1877 and 1882 inclusive. James M. Cole has positively identified 127 different fancy cancels from New Orleans during this time frame in his book "Cancellations and Killers of the Banknote Era 1870-1894" (1995). Kenneth A. Whitfield has positively identified an additional 32 fancy cancels in his book "Cancellations Found on 19th Century U.S. Stamps" (2002 edition) while Dan Richards and the late Hubert Skinner have recorded a quite few additional fancy cancels that were previously unknown or not attributed to New Orleans.

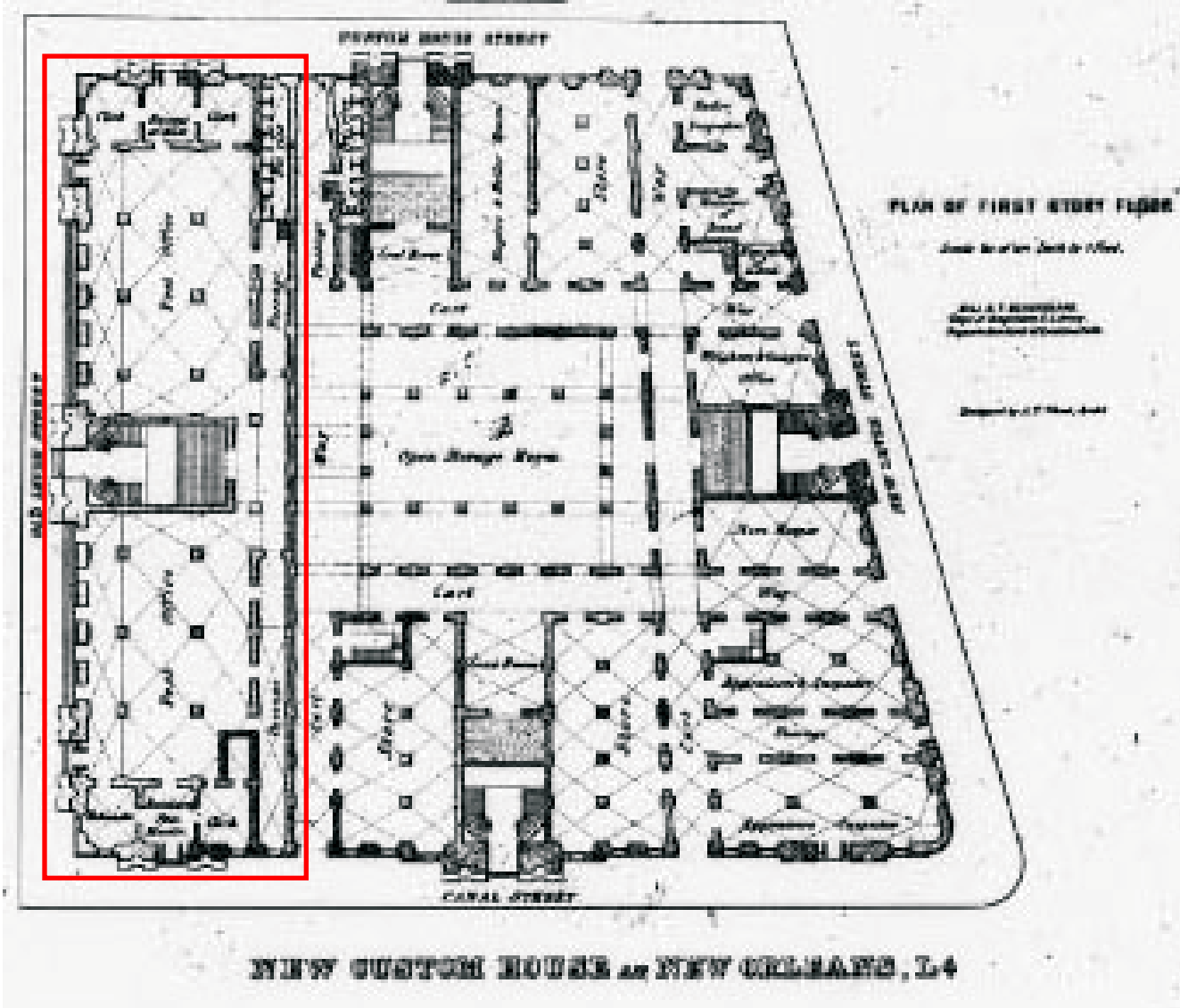
Notwithstanding the brief local history and commentary interspersed throughout the exhibit, the main purpose is to display a few representative examples of these wonderful artifacts of American folk art from New Orleans.



New Orleans U.S. Customs House + Post Office  
423 Canal Street

Photo taken in 1892 from the intersection of Canal St. And North Peters St.  
The Post Office occupied a portion of the first floor from 1860 to 1916.

# New Orleans U.S. Customs House + Post Office Floor Plan



The Post Office occupied a portion of the first floor (highlighted in red rectangle) from 1860 to 1916 (area highlighted by red rectangle in the floor plan above). The entrance was from Decatur St.

New Orleans Geometric Cancel  
New Orleans Post Office Official Business Envelope Used Privately



Postmarked June 4, 1877

James M. Cole Designation GEN-2

One of many similar type of New Orleans intricate geometric cancels.

John M. G. Parker was the Acting Postmaster in early May of 1862 when the Union troops occupied New Orleans. He was also the Postmaster from April 6, 1875 to July 18, 1878. As a result of my review of over 700 covers the collection of in Dan Richards, the bulk of these New Orleans fancy cancels were created between 1877 and 1882 inclusive. However, some have been recorded as early as the beginning of 1875.

Parker was one of four postmasters during this time period. Since New Orleans was a large city, his duties as postmaster surely must have demanded at a lot of his time. Therefore, it is unlikely that he or any of the other postmasters during this period created any of these very numerous cancels. It is highly probable that they were carved by one or more of the postal clerks.

The aforementioned postmasters and their dates of tenure were as follows.

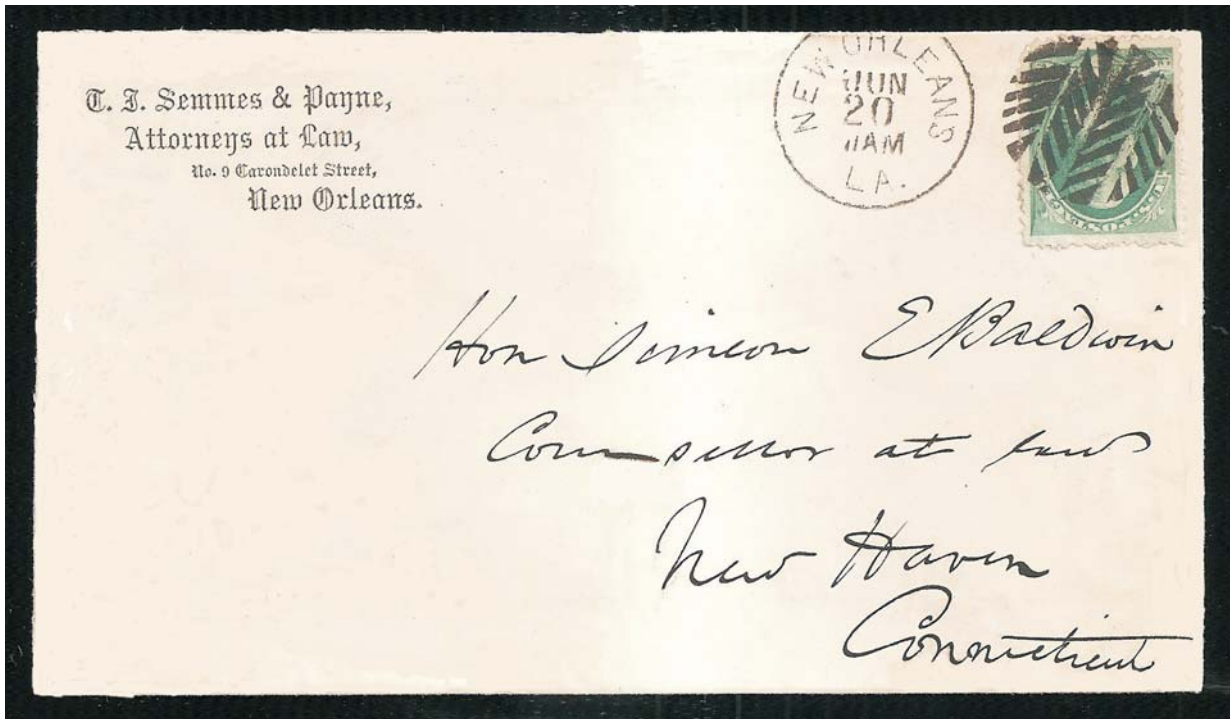
Charles W. Ringgold (March 1, 1873 to April 5, 1875)

John M. G. Parker (April 6, 1875 to July 18, 1878)

Algemon S. Badger (July 19, 1878 to February 18, 1879)

William L. McMillen (February 19, 1879 to March 1, 1883)

## New Orleans Geometric Cancels



Postmarked June 20, 1882

Unlisted by James M. Cole & Kenneth A. Whitfield



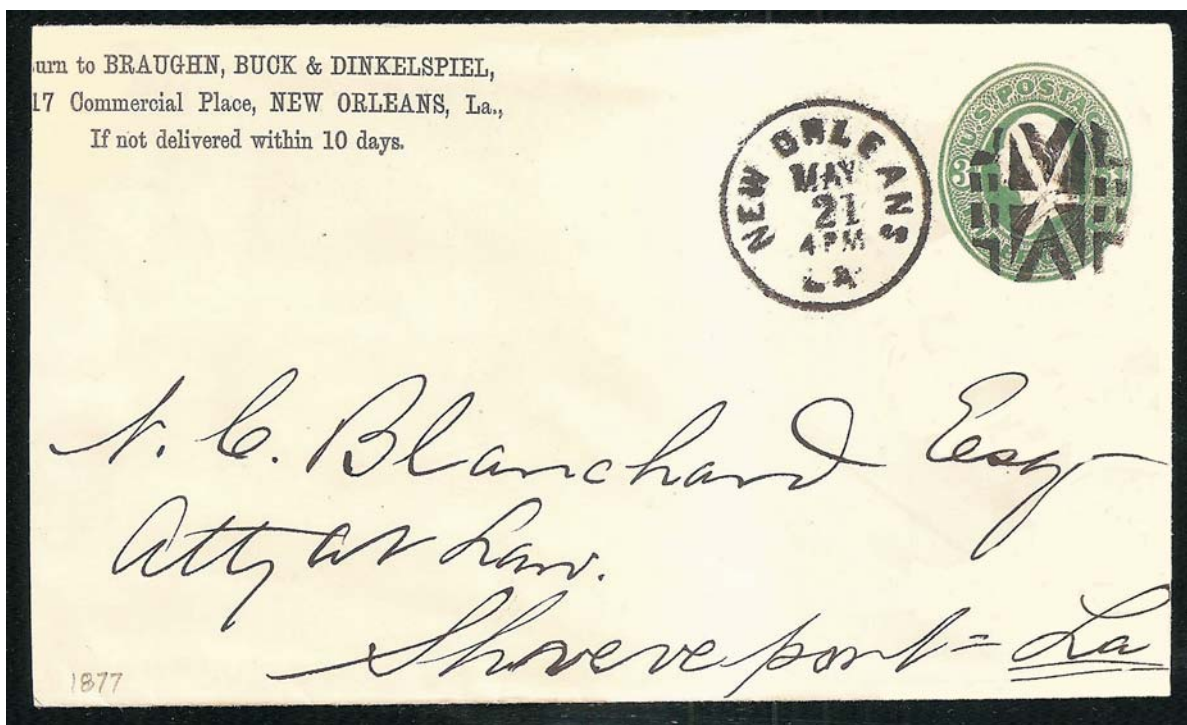
Undetermined year date

Unlisted by James M. Cole & Kenneth A. Whitfield

One of many similar type of New Orleans intricate geometric cancels.

Hotel Corner Card of the second incarnation of the St. Charles Hotel. The original hotel opened in 1837 and was destroyed by fire on January 18, 1851. The second hotel opened in January of 1853; but, it also burned down on April 28, 1894.

# New Orleans Geometric Cancels



Postmarked May 21, 1877  
Unlisted by James M. Cole & Kenneth A. Whitfield.



Undetermined year date  
Unlisted by James M. Cole & Kenneth A. Whitfield.

# New Orleans Geometric Cancels



Undetermined year date  
Unlisted by James M. Cole & Kenneth A. Whitfield.



Undetermined year date  
Unlisted by James M. Cole & Kenneth A. Whitfield.

New Orleans Geometric Cancels



Postmarked June, 11, 1877  
James M. Cole Designation GEN-19



Postmarked July 3, 1877  
Kenneth A. Whitfield Designation 2096

New Orleans Geometric Cancels



Postmarked June 24, 1878  
Unlisted by James M. Cole & Kenneth A. Whitfield.



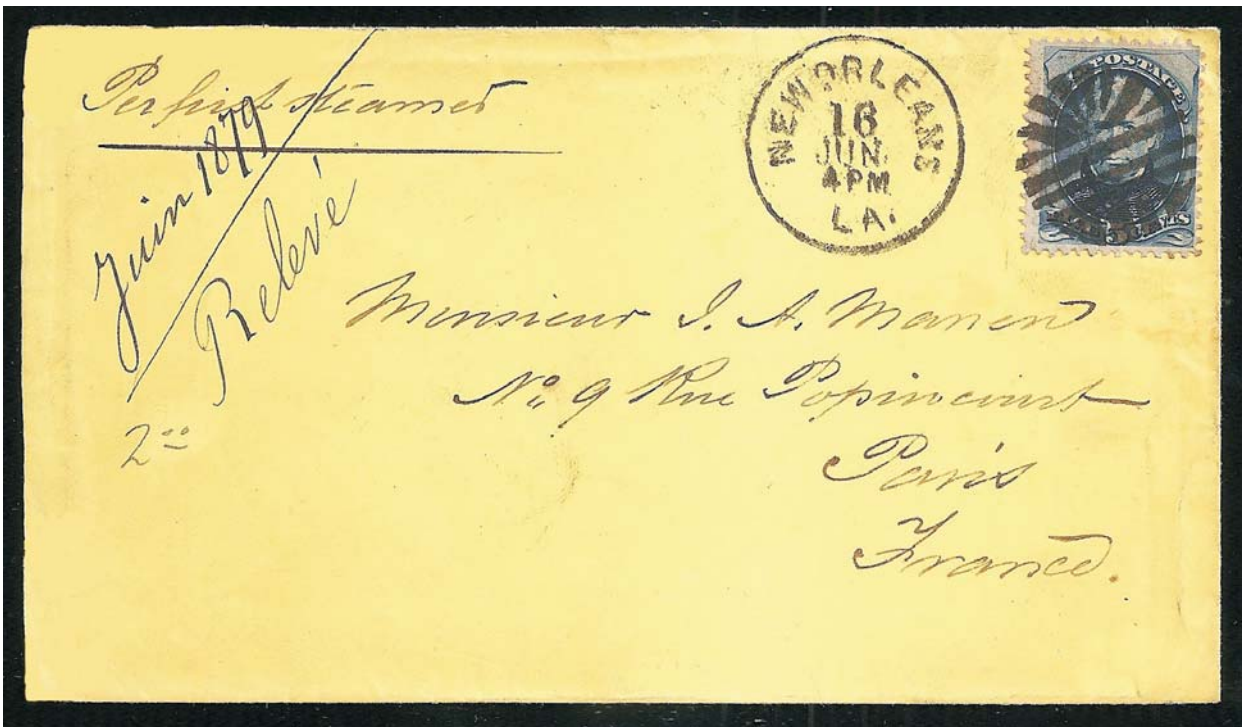
Postmarked November 25, 1878  
Unlisted by James M. Cole & Kenneth A. Whitfield.



# New Orleans Geometric Cancels



Postmarked June 2, 1880  
James M. Cole Designation GEN-20



Postmarked June 16, 1879  
Unlisted by James M. Cole & Kenneth A. Whitfield

New Orleans Concentric Geometric Cancels



Undetermined year date.  
Kenneth A. Whitfield Designation 2225



Postmarked December 26, 1879  
Unlisted by James M. Cole & Kenneth A. Whitfield.

New Orleans Masonic "Open Bible" Cancels  
The James M. Cole Designation GEN-59 displays 6 Bars in the cancel



Postmarked March 15, 1878  
James M. Cole Designation GEN-59 Similar (9 Bars)



Postmarked March 18, 1878  
James M. Cole Designation GEN-59 Similar (7 Bars)

New Orleans Geometric Cancels



Postmarked September 5, 1877  
James M. Cole Designation GEN-9

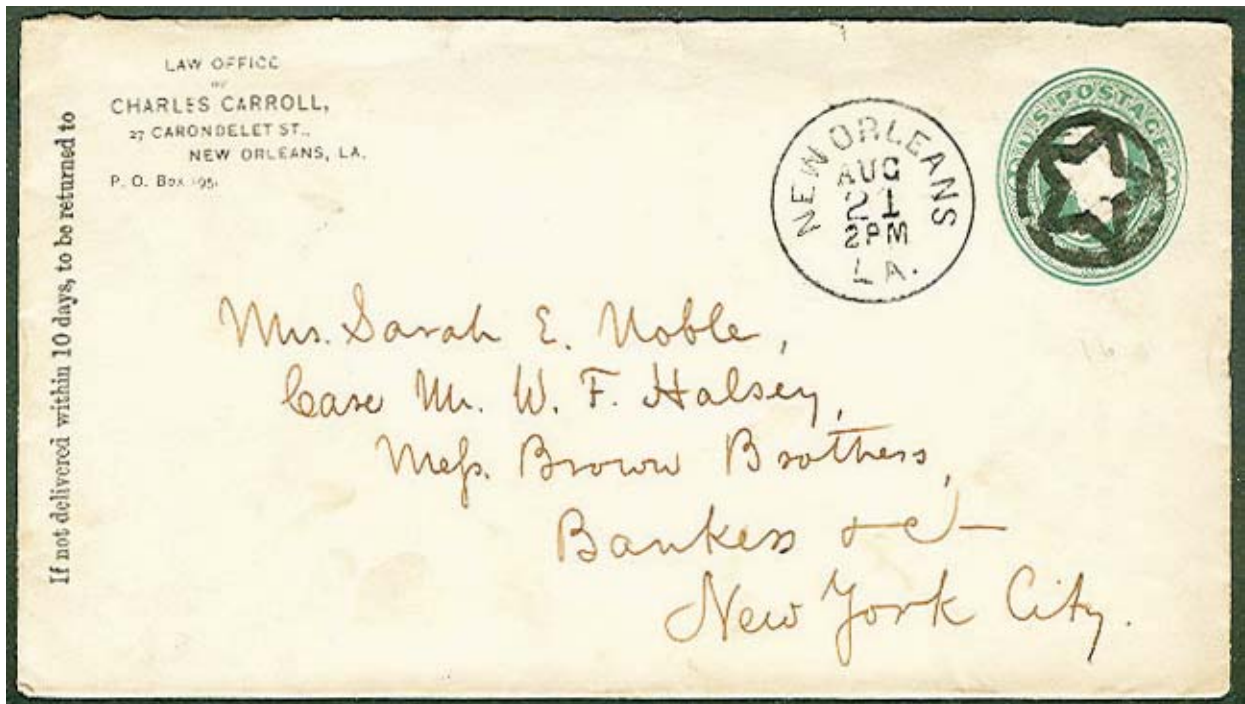
New Orleans Geometric Cancels



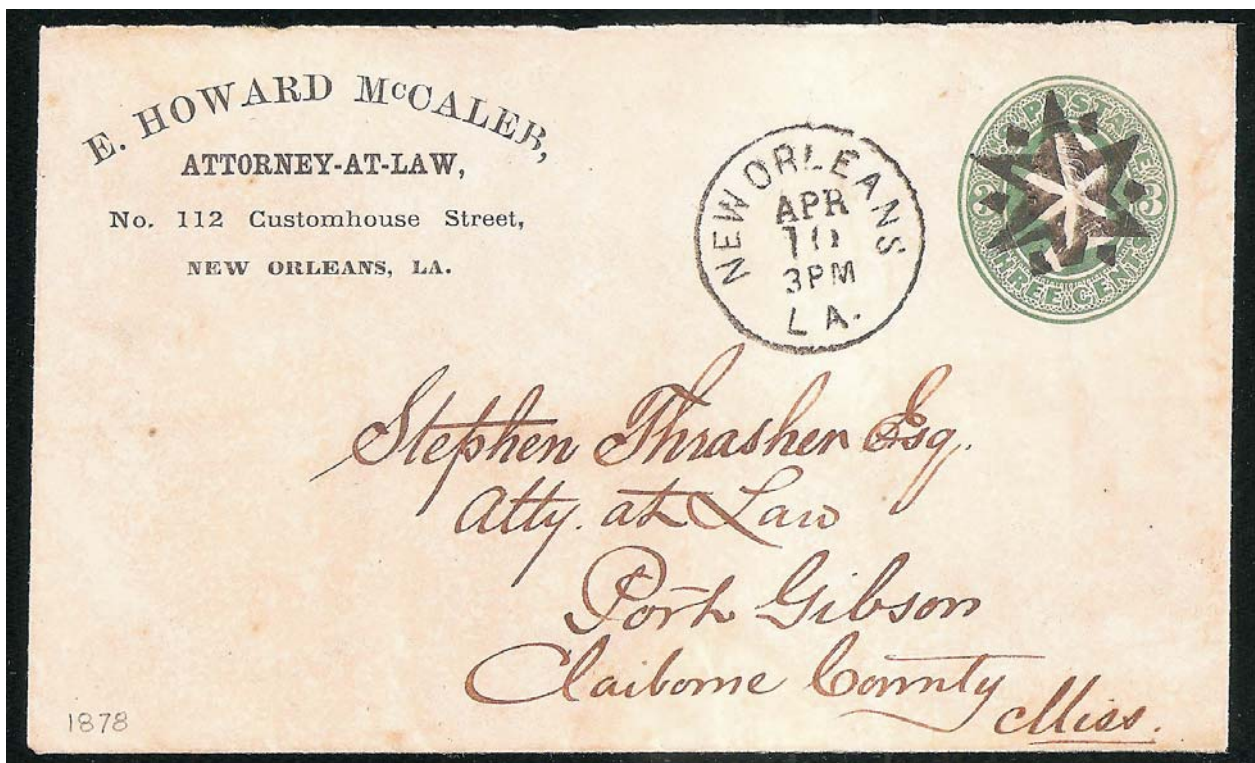
Postmarked July 12, 1876  
James M. Cole Designation GEN-7

# New Orleans Star Cancels

James M. Cole has identified 4 other star cancels.  
Kenneth A. Whitfield has identified 2 other star cancels.



Undetermined year date  
Unlisted by James M. Cole & Kenneth A. Whitfield.



Postmarked April 10, 1878  
Unlisted by James M. Cole & Kenneth A. Whitfield

## New Orleans Cross Cancels

Kenneth A. Whitfield has identified 2 other Christian Crosses & 1 other Maltese Cross cancels.



Postmarked June 16, 1877.  
Christian Croesses  
James M. Cole Designation CSU-9



Postmarked December 24, 1877  
Maltese Crosses  
Kenneth A. Whitfield Designation 2574.

New Orleans Shield + Year Date Cancels



Undetermined year date (probably 1879 or early 1880's use).  
Stamp is Scott #183 with earliest documented use of Aug. 19, 1878.  
Unlisted by James M. Cole & Kenneth A. Whitfield.  
Whitfield has identified 1 other shield cancel.



Postmarked January 31, 1880  
James M. Cole Designation YD-137  
No other year dates have been identified from New Orleans by either Cole or Whitfield.