

Naval Covers Fakes, Forgeries and Frauds

A Compilation of Articles about Naval
Covers and Naval Cancellations



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Naval Covers Fakes, Forgeries and Frauds

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Editor**

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Introduction

In the United States, stamps for use as prepayment of postage on letters were first issued in 1847. Effective April 1, 1855, prepayment on domestic mail was made compulsory which act greatly facilitated the use of stamps on envelopes and parcels. It was not long afterward that people began collecting United States and foreign stamps with stamp dealers soon following this new hobby. And as stamp collecting gained in popularity, some saw the opportunity for profit by fabricating or counterfeiting the more expensive or desirable stamps and postal markings. Laws had to be developed and enforced to try to stymie counterfeiters and the public educated on how to detect faked philatelic items. While identification was an uphill battle, eventually, catalogs were developed to illustrate the various fakes and forgeries in circulation.

The situation has been no different with postal history. The unscrupulous determined that added markings or modified postmarks could handily change a plain vanilla cover into one of considerable value for sale to less knowledgeable or gullible collectors. Caveat Emptor applied equally to postal history items as to stamps.

The Universal Ship Cancellation Society (USCS) has been blessed with more than 12,000+ honest collectors to date. But the Society, too, has had its share of bad actors who preyed on less knowledgeable members. Over the years, the Society leadership has paid close attention to fabricated covers and, after thorough investigations, expelled members who were unable to live up to its standard of honesty. Unfortunately, thorough investigations take time, and bogus material circulated freely in the meantime. While senior or experienced members knew generally how to identify some of the faked material, the same could not be said of the average member.

In 2007, several incidents involving sales of bogus naval covers came to the attention of the Society directors; after a brief discussion, a decision was made to shine a light on all bogus naval cover material known or suspected to have been made during the seventy-five years of the Society's existence. Experts in certain areas were contacted, a schedule was prepared and a series of thirteen detailed articles, titled *Fakes, Forgeries and Frauds*, were prepared for inclusion in the Society journal, the USCS *Log*. Part one of the series appeared in the February 2008 issue, with the last included in the February 2009 *Log*.

As the articles appeared in print, they were also posted on the USCS web site at USCS.org where the full series may be accessed today. At the beginning of the process, a booklet containing the *Fakes, Forgeries, and Frauds* series was also planned for the convenience of naval cover dealers, researchers, members without access to the Internet, and members who simply wanted a reference copy of the series close at hand. Since the initial publishing, additional information has come to light, several parts of the series have been updated, and new articles included herein.

Appreciation is expressed to the individual authors of the series, to Richard D. Jones, *Log* Editor for formatting the articles for inclusion in this booklet, and to USCS Secretary, Steve Shay, for organizing publication of the booklet.

While we believe the series well documents bogus naval cover material, we recognize that something may have been missed along the way. Information additional to that contained herein is welcomed. Please contact Steve Shay, 747 Shard Ct, Fremont CA 94539.

R.D. Rawlins, USCS L-5490
December 2010

Naval Cover Fakes, Forgeries and Frauds

Part I

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Whether you collect Roman gold coins, genuine dinosaur bones or Army, Navy or Marine Corps medals, you will find that there are people out there willing to separate you from your money by pedaling bogus items for the real thing. After all, caveat emptor did not become part of our lexicon without good cause.

And, sadly, down through the ages, philatelists have not been exempt from shady characters. According to *Wikipedia* and other sources, Rowland Hill introduced the first postage stamp, the penny black, to the United Kingdom in May 1840. The stamp allowed the sender rather than the recipient to pay to send a letter, although prepayment was not then required. Other countries soon followed the UK and began issuing stamps and soon people began collecting these little bits of colored paper. And it was not long before those without scruples began to fabricate or fake copies of scarcer or more valuable stamps for the gullible to purchase. In fact, some forgers became very well known and proudly acknowledged their considerable efforts.

The practice even goes on today. The 12 November issue of *Linn's Stamp News* discussed a forged 41¢ flag coil stamp which is a remarkably good counterfeit. If an eBay source offers current flag stamps in volume at a steep discount, pass the offer by. You don't need the grief that would come from USPS postal inspectors if you are discovered using counterfeit stamps.

Societies quickly fought back to counter deceptive stamp practices by establishing services to examine valuable stamps and certify authenticity or declare them fakes, whichever applied. The services are not free, but are the only way that a collector can protect him or herself from paying good money for a faked stamp.

What about covers?

You are wondering by now what all that has to do with our hobby, naval covers. Well, deceptive practices are known with covers, too. Some years back, when I was *Log* Editor, a member sent me for a *Log* auction several 19th century covers with "Steam" or "Steam boat" markings such as were used on river and canal boats with mail contracts. I had read about fraudulent markings on that type of mail - a faker would apply a rubber stamp marking copied from a reference publication to an otherwise undistinguished letter thus increasing its value by many fold. I sent the covers to a friend who was a member of the American Philatelic Society (APS) Expertizing Service and told him that I would pay the

fee if there was any chance that the items were genuine. If not, I said to put them in the APES reference collection. The covers ended up in the reference collection, not surprisingly.

But what about modern material, post 1908? Well, that's the purpose of this article. Sad to report, but both USCS and non-USCS members have been involved in producing fraudulent naval covers, fortunately not many, just a handful. Whenever information of fraud came to light, USCS directors have invariably expelled the member and publicized non-member fraud. But memories fade and newer members don't always know what has gone before.

In recent months, the directors have had extensive discussions about the sale of fraudulent material to a member. The upshot has been a decision to run a series of eight or more monthly articles this year about fakes, forgeries and fraudulent naval covers. The individual articles will be authored by several of our expert members, along with contributions from those who also have knowledge in a particular subject. To the best of our ability, the articles will be factual, not rumor or dark suspicion. The series will then be collated into one volume so that the information is available in the future to members and non-members alike.

Some of the information to be presented in subsequent articles has been documented in previous *Logs*, the USCS *Catalog of U.S. Naval Postmarks* or the USCS *Naval Cover Cachet Makers' Catalog*. However, not every member has a run of the *Log* or a copy of those volumes and certainly few non-members do. So, we will include that information at the start of the series then proceed to questionable material, which is relatively unknown to the vast majority of our membership.

Definitions

For this series, the following definitions taken from the USCS *Catalog of United States Naval Postmarks* apply: **Fake** - a complete fabrication of a device that looks like a postmark but which was never used in the ship's post office. It is noted that not all fakes listed in the above mentioned catalog were deliberately made to defraud collectors. However, they will be listed in this series of articles simply for record purposes.

Forgery - a privately made reproduction of a genuine postmark. A forgery must be traceable to the original postmark from which it was made.

Conclusion

We believe this series of articles is an important service to our members and to all of philately. As we go along, if you have factual information to add, please do not hesitate to contribute that. We want the collective information on naval cover fakes, forgeries and frauds to be as complete and as accurate as possible.

Look for Part II of the series next month.

Originally published USCS Log February 2008 - Page 12

Naval Cover Fakes, Forgeries and Frauds

Part II

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John Gill's "Chapter No. 1" Cancel

John Gill was a USCS charter member, stalwart of the Old Ironsides Chapter #1 in Boston, a skilled artist, and a strong proponent of giving collector-made cancels to ships. He provided many such cancels over a period of perhaps 20 years, but the cancels we are to discuss here were all of the same design and were used during the year 1935. In later years, Gill worked for the Post Office Department as a railway mail clerk, but I believe at this time he was still struggling to find work like many men during the Depression.

The list of cancels we need to examine is not new. It was first published in Joe Hale's 1939 *Handbook of Naval Postmarks*, and is repeated on page xxx in the introduction to the current *Catalog of United States Naval Postmarks* under the discussion of Common Design cancels, illustrated as design CD-2. Incidentally, when transcribing the list, I left out two usages of the cancel. Go to your *Catalog* now and add listings for CORMORANT (Aug. 22) and R-14 (Aug. 13) (both are already listed under the ships themselves).

It all started innocently enough in March of 1935, when Gill arranged with the mail clerk in the destroyer MacDONOUGH, then under construction at the Boston Navy Yard, for a fancy cancel for the ship's commissioning. The original form of the cancel was a metal printing cut, and **Figure 1**, from Gill's own collection, shows the cancel printed from the cut along with Gill's cachet for the event. For most of the covers, however, Gill had a rubber stamp made from the cut, and the cancel was used freely on covers from other sponsors.



Figure 1: Common Design 2 (CD-2) original cut was made of metal and used for USS MACDONOUGH commissioning at Boston Navy Yard.

Gill liked the cancel, and after the ship was commissioned he cut the date and killer bar lettering from the rubber cancel, so it could be used on other dates (**Figure 2**), although I have no confirmed reports of additional usage. Then, remembering the variable-wording cancel that Roy Sherman had been using at the Mare Island Navy Yard in California (Common Design cancel CD-1), Gill cut the name out of the cancel as well and bought a kit of rubber letters, which he could use to spell out the name of any ship. He used the cancel that way for the first time on the destroyer MONAGHAN on 5 May, and again in TILLMAN on 12 May.



Figure 2: CD-2 rubber cancel with date and killer bar removed. Note the spacing of the killers are farther from the dial.

On 21 May, Gill traveled to Groton, Conn. for the launching of the submarine SHARK. There were covers to be canceled, of course, but Gill, like many other collectors of the day, preferred to have any Navy-related cover postmarked on a ship, not in a civilian post office. Gill, therefore, drove up to the Submarine Base and found a friendly welcome from the mail clerk in the submarine rescue vessel FALCON, which called the New London Submarine Base her home. FALCON had her own regulation postmark, of course, but Gill prevailed upon the clerk to use his variable-wording cancel on covers as well (**Figure 3**). Gill looked down the waterfront and saw other targets of opportunity -- the sub rescue vessel MALLARD, and the destroyer SEMMES, based in New London as a SONAR training ship. Quick conversations with their mail clerks soon produced more usages of the cancel.

But beyond them were even more attractive vessels, three old S-class submarines that hadn't had post offices in a decade. When a ship didn't have a post office, the commanding officer appointed a crewmember as Mail Orderly, thus giving him authority to pick up the ship's mail at the base post office. A Mail Orderly wasn't a Mail Clerk, however, and he certainly didn't cancel mail. Nevertheless, Gill set up his cancel for each of the three boats, perhaps clearing his conscience by asking for permission from the Mail Orderlies. He ran into a problem with S-12, however, because his kit only had one number

"2," so when he used that for the ship's name he couldn't use the current date, May 21. He therefore made the date May 30, traditional Memorial Day, and asked the Mail Orderly to hold the covers and mail them on that date. Apparently, the Mail Orderly couldn't be bothered, and promptly dropped them in the mail box. The local post office noticed the advance date and either overcancelled the covers, or backstamped them with the current date.

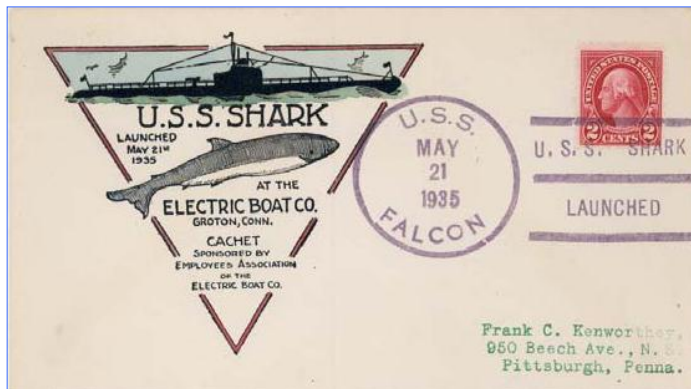


Figure 3: CD-2 USS FALCON strike for USS SHARK launching.

And here's where the first trouble with the usages of the cancel arises. Although reports say there was a problem, I'm uncertain just how the post office treated the covers, because all the S-12 covers I have seen are unaddressed and were not mailed. That was soon to become a problem with this cancel. Gill accepted stamped covers from collectors for his fancy cancel that he presumably mailed back directly, but most of the existing covers, especially those supposedly from ships with no post office, are unaddressed and never went through the mail.

Gill used the cancel on a few more ships in eastern New England in June and July, but in August, probably inspired by his experiences in Groton, set off on a long summer vacation trip down the East Coast, looking for as many opportunities to use his cancel as possible. He really hit pay dirt at the Submarine Base New London: the sub tender BUSHNELL, the submarine S-20, and no less than six old R-class boats. From there he drove to New York where he encountered a few destroyers and an old tug at the Brooklyn Navy Yard, along with the Receiving Ship SEATTLE. Across Manhattan on the Hudson River, he checked in with the Ford patrol boat EAGLE 48. On 16 August, he took the ferry to Staten Island, and there he found the gem of the trip, an old scow named BRIARCLIFF.

BRIARCLIFF was a wooden freighter ordered during World War I but never completed -- she had no engine or boilers. She was never commissioned, but was towed to the Navy anchorage at Tompkinsville and moored there as a floating warehouse and training facility for the New York Naval Militia. She even seems to have been used for a few social functions. As far as I can find, she had no crew. The reservists who trained aboard her lived at home, and if any

permanent maintenance staff were needed, they would have lived in the barracks ashore, where there was some heat in the winter. Gill was not to be deterred, however, and he quickly set her name in his cancel (**Figure 4**).



Figure 4: CD-2 USS BRIARCLIFF cancel is illustrative of the troubled usage of this device.

From there Gill continued on south -- it must have been quite a trip in the days before Interstate highways and reliable motels. He found more "rare ships" at the Philadelphia Navy Yard, the Washington Navy Yard, and Norfolk. His visit to Annapolis on the way back home revealed the former battleship WYOMING, now a midshipman training ship. A quick stop again at Philadelphia brought a tour of the old tug ALLEGHENY.

Once Gill returned to Boston, activity with the cancel slowed down. An unusual usage was on 14 September, for the dual launching of the destroyers CASE and CONYNGHAM (**Figure 5**). A bit of explanation is needed for the 24 September cancel from ARKANSAS (**Figure 6**). The killer bar wording refers to a "3 alarm fire" at the Boston Navy Yard post office. He returned to the Groton submarine base in October to lend the cancel to the submarines SHARK, whose post office had been authorized but whose commissioning had been delayed, and PORPOISE, whose postmark had not yet arrived. The final use was in December, aboard the cargo ship SIRIUS at Boston (**Figure 7**).



Figure 5: CD-2 marks dual launching of CASE and CONYNGHAM at Navy Yard - Boston.

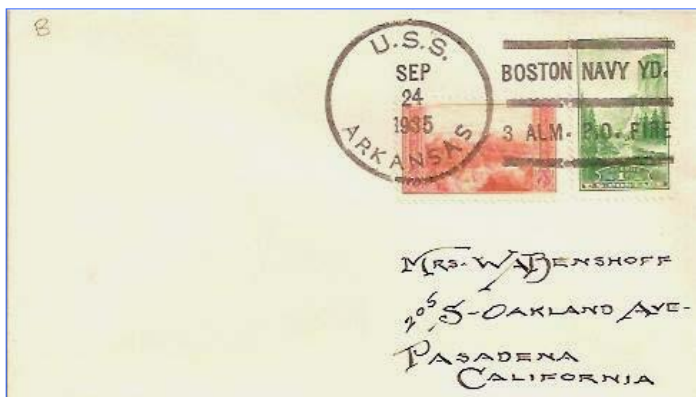


Figure 6: CD-2 USS ARKANSAS at Boston Navy Yard.

So what are we to make of all this? Some of the usages are certainly legitimate -- there was no regulation of the day that forbid the use of a privately-made postmark, and some versions were used on hundreds of covers that clearly went through the mails. Gill was also generous with his cancel, and at major events regularly allowed it to be used on the covers of other cachet makers. But the covers from submarines and other small craft with no post offices certainly weren't true postal cancels, and the majority of them never were actually mailed. Many of the August usages were also done in very small quantity, sometimes less than 50 covers. He did a total of 34 different covers on the trip, so the postage alone must have been substantial.

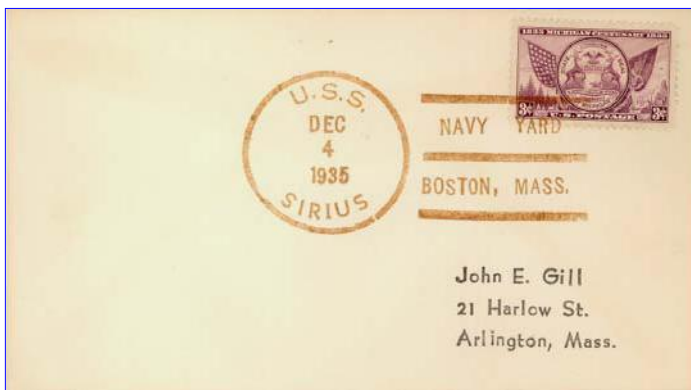


Figure 7: CD-2 USS SIRIUS 4 December 1935 was final usage of this cancel.

The main reason that people produce fakes and forgeries is to make money from them. In 1935, there wasn't much money to be made in the cover business. The standard charge for servicing your stamped cover was a penny, and there was little market for recent uncacheted covers, no matter how rare the ship. Gill did not advertise the covers for sale in the *Log*, although his friend Joe Hale offered a few in his auctions at 35 cents each. In his 1939 *Handbook*, Hale valued the "rare" BRIARCLIFF cancel at a mere 20 cents. Gill's goal seems to have been simply the thrill of creating a rare cancel that no one else had. If he got carried away and went overboard in doing so, perhaps we collectors can understand his motivation better than others.

It's also important to understand that in the 1930s the cancel was everything. If a ship didn't have a cancel, no one wanted a cover from it. Today we are happy with a ship's rubber stamp cachet, or return address corner card, even if the cover has to be postmarked at the base or a civilian post office. Very few collectors would have wanted a cover like that in the 1930s. It had to have a ship's cancel to be collectible. Gill understood this, and that's the market he served.

After the *Postmark Catalog* was published, I got a letter from Glenn Dye, a notorious faker of cancels (the letter wasn't signed but I know it was from him). Dye complained that his fancy cancels are listed as fakes, while John Gill's creations are listed as genuine. Part of the reason for this is intent -- Dye clearly was trying to deceive people to make money, while Gill was just having fun. But another reason is that Gill was one of the editors of the early editions of our *Catalog*. It's something to think about.

A complete set of these cancels is on display on our online Naval Cover Museum--

www.navalcovermuseum.org

Originally published USCS Log March 2008 - Pages 12-14

**Naval Cover Fakes,
Forgeries and Frauds**

Part III

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The Hobby Shop Covers

Timing is everything. Whether it's buying or selling in the stock market, throwing a football to a receiver in the end zone or firing at the target at skeet, you'll miss if your timing is off. And so it was in 1941 when the Hobby Shop at Sibley, Lindsay and Curr Company, a department store in Rochester, New York, decided to cover the fleet with covers postmarked in every ship of the battle fleet. The Hobby Shop planned to issue 250 cacheted covers postmarked on the ship's launch anniversary date with a cover for every ship in commission on 1 April 1941. The project was ambitious, to be sure; the chance of hitting the launch anniversary date for all 250 ships was slim to none. And, the war intervened eight months after the series started so, from then on, it was all downhill.

Here it should be noted that it is not clear if the Hobby Shop, located on the fourth floor of Sibley, Lindsay and Curr's department store, was a department of the store or a franchise operation run by an independent contractor. Certainly, the latter would not be as closely controlled as a store department and might be the situation in events which followed.

The Hobby Shop prepared a four page order form, **Figure 1**, approximately 3½" x 7" in size, which offered the 250 covers in the set for \$25. Because of the scope of the project, advance orders were required. The covers could be charged to a regular account, fully paid in advance but time payment was offered with a total cost of \$27.50. The series was planned for a full calendar year commencing April 1941. All envelopes would be 6 ¾ in size and have a uniform cachet. The 3½" x 3" cachet featured a blue border of stars with the Great Seal of the United States upper left, ship's name at the top, cut of the ship centered with the ship's statistics below in a contrasting color to the border. The informational pages of the order blank are shown as **Figure 2**. A typical cachet is included as **Figure 3**.

The Hobby Shop advertised that the covers would be addressed and sent to the recipient directly from the ship. Damaged or lost covers would be replaced at no cost.

The series began as announced with a SWORDFISH (SS 193) cover mailed to recipients postmarked with the ship's type 3(A-TBT) cancel. The cachet had a minor error, however; the launch date (1 April 1939) was missing from the cachet.

Covers from WASP (CV 7) with a type 6fp and YORKTOWN (CV 5) with a type 3(A-BBT) Pearl Harbor postmarks of 4 April 1941 followed so the series was off to a fine start. Covers arrived in May, June and July all directly from ships, but in June things began to fall apart.

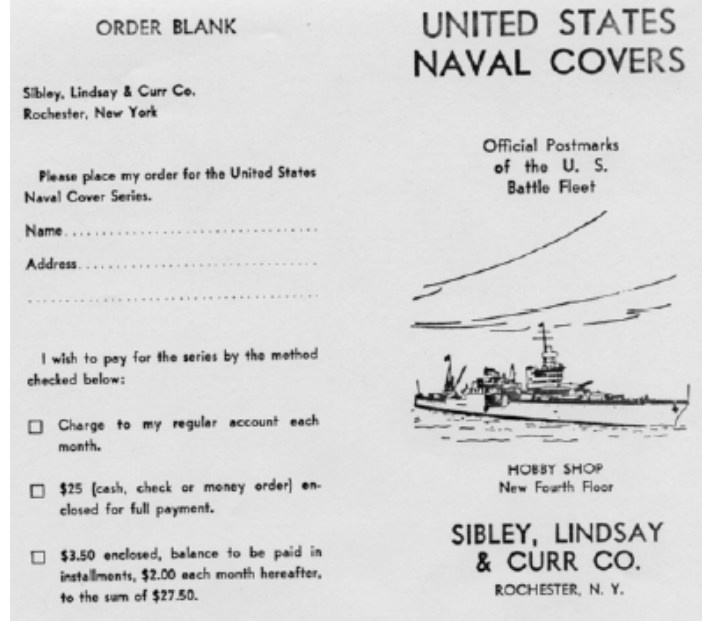


Figure 1: Front and rear panels of the Sibley, Lindsay and Curr Co. announcement page and order blank for the series of covers to be postmarked on all ships of the fleet in 1941-1942.

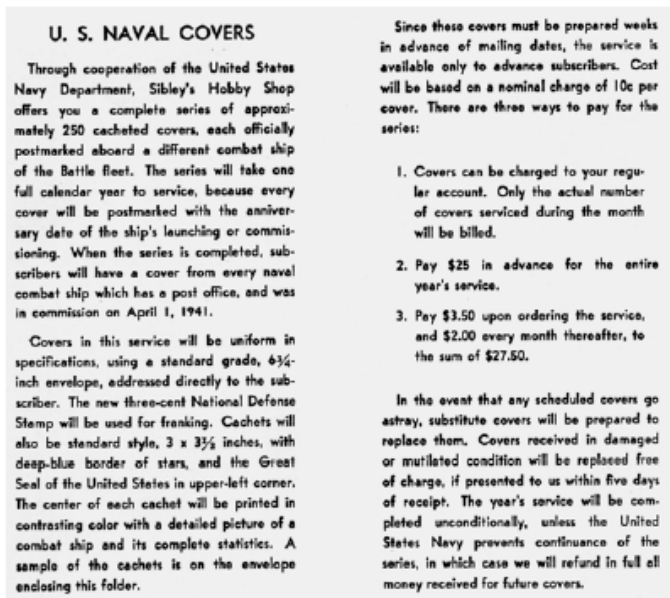


Figure 2: Middle panels of the brochure providing information on the series of 250 cacheted covers and details on payment.



Figure 3: Typical cachet for the series done in two colors. The border of stars is in dark blue with the center ship print and specifications in a contrasting color

In the Atlantic, ships were routinely on Neutrality Patrol with some actually being shot at by German submarines. Some ships put away their name cancels using instead the Locy Type z US Navy cancel. The Pacific Fleet was preparing for war with ships delivering war supplies to far-flung islands and submarines routinely making simulated war patrols. Postal clerks were not servicing large lots of covers quickly as they had been doing earlier. With the start of hostilities, censorship was begun, and the Navy Department directed postal clerks to cease servicing collector mail.

In July 1941, a new style of cancel, sort of a Locy Type 3, but somehow different, began appearing on Hobby Shop covers and *only* on Hobby Shop covers. Moreover, the covers with this new cancel were delivered to customers under cover rather than directly from the ship. The *Catalog of United States Naval Postmarks* (Postmark Catalog) identifies this cancel as Common Design 3 (CD-3), a Hobby Shop Fake Cancel. **Figure 4** illustrates an early Hobby Shop fake, probably the earliest one recorded. The dial has a flat spot upper right and a bump on top with a nick in the dial underneath and the spacing of U.S.S. is fairly narrow, but not as narrowly spaced as the “B” variant of the normal type 3. The end of the top killer adjacent to the dial is square while the ends of the center and bottom killers are cut at an angle leading away from the dial. There is a slot at the bottom of the dial so that the ship’s name can be changed. As with normal cancels, there are slots in the center for date and time information.

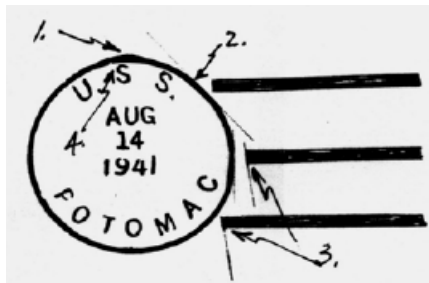


Figure 4: Illustration of the first cancel type (CD-3 in the Postmark Catalog) manufactured by the Hobby Shop mimicking a Locy Type 3 cancel issued by the US Navy to ships.

The cancel is a known fake since it appears on a variety of ship postmarks with consistent recognizable differences from the Navy issued Type 3: #1- bump on top of the dial, #2- flat spot upper right, #3- dial end of bottom two killers cut at an angle away from the dial, #4- nick on top of inner dial adjacent to middle “S” of USS. The drawing was made by Jim Russell (USCS H-692) analyzing the differences of this Hobby Shop cancel from a standard Locy Type 3. The CD-3 cancel was used on covers between 19 June 1941 and 26 March 1942.

Three months later, a variant of CD-3 appeared, designated CD-3a in the Postmark Catalog, **Figure 5**. In this, U.S.S. are widely spaced with the final “S” next to the top killer bar. The ends of the top and bottom adjacent to the dial are sharply slanted to match the dial. CD-3a was used on only 20 of the 109 documented covers; it is not

known why the Hobby Shop thought a second cancel device was needed. CD-3a did not replace CD-3; both continued in use to the end of the series.

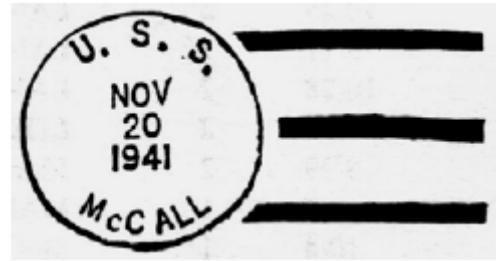


Figure 5: Illustration of the second cancel type manufactured by the Hobby Shop (CD-3a in the Postmark Catalog). This cancel has noticeable differences from the first type: a wider spacing of U.S.S. and a different angle of the killer bars adjacent to the dial. This cancel was used between 6 September 1941 and 6 February 1942.

There are a number of minor variants known with the CD-3 cancels: BALLARD has AVD/10 at the sides of the dial; PLUNGER has 179/P-8 similarly placed; PIKE, SKIPJACK and SPEARFISH have a U.S. Navy (Locy) z type dial with the ship’s names in the killer bars and NEW YORK has an open star in place of killer bars. The names of SEAWOLF and TRUXTUN are misspelled.

A fancy type cancel made its appearance on Hobby Shop covers in August 1941, **Figure 6**, identified in the Postmark Catalog as CD-3b. This cancel has three sub variants, with an open star, an “E” or a “2” in place of the eagle. A total of 14 covers are known with this fancy type cancel.



Figure 6: Illustration of a fancy type cancel (CD-3b in the Postmark Catalog) manufactured by the Hobby Shop and used between 22 August 1941 and 28 March 1942. Variants include: an “E”, a “2” or an open star substituted for the Eagle.

The Hobby Shop issued a special cover for the Roosevelt-Churchill High Seas meeting aboard USS AUGUSTA 9 August 1941 but the meeting was not announced publicly until August 14th or 15th when both parties were safely home. The AUGUSTA cancel is a CD-3 dated 15 August 1941, clearly a backdate, but the cachet is uniquely different, **Figure 7**. This exact same cancel was struck in POTOMAC dated 14 August 1941, which may also have been a backdate. However, on those dates the two ships were hundreds of miles apart and could not have both used the same cancel device.



Figure 7: The cachet for the Roosevelt-Churchill High Seas Meeting aboard USS AUGUSTA 14-16 August 1941. The AUGUSTA cancel is a CD-3 dated 15 Aug 1941, but the cachet is uniquely different from the balance of the series.

INDIANAPOLIS covers are known with an undated Rochester, New York machine cancel, probably a leftover cover used to mail a letter or advertisement.

Hobby Shop CD-3 fake postmarks are known for several British ships with a date of 12 May 1937, coronation day of King George VI. However, they were undoubtedly created in 1941 along with the other Hobby Shop fakes. The ships include: HMS COURAGEOUS, GLASGOW (misspelled), GLORIOUS, HOOD, LEANDER, RENOWN, REPULSE, RESOLUTION, REVENGE, RODNEY, SOUTHAMPTON and VALIANT. The cachet is a large line drawing of the ship, which covers most of the bottom half of the envelope with the ship's name printed in the upper left corner. The HOOD cancel is larger than the others with four long killer bars.

The ultimate proof that the British ship cancels are fakes is simply that the British Navy ships have never had post offices.

The Hobby Shop covers continued to be issued into 1942 with the last recorded for PREBLE on 8 March 1942. By that time, it must have been obvious to some that the markings were fakes.

Fortunately, a USCS member, Albert Schuster, of Brooklyn, New York missed some covers of the series, and wrote to the Hobby Shop to obtain replacements. Albert also queried the Hobby Shop about the apparently same cancel used on a great many of the covers. A Hobby Shop employee, Miss Ruth Henry, replied as follows:

“Those covers which you mentioned as having the same stamp (cancel) with different ship names and lettering were sent to us just as all other covers from the Navy Department. If there had been any change in the philatelic value of these covers, we would surely have been notified. All covers received through our service are absolutely genuine.”

This was, of course, a bold-faced lie, but it is possible that Miss Henry was just a clerk and was not aware of the truth of the matter. However, her statement clearly represents the position of Hobby Shop's proprietor in the matter.

It is interesting that no mention of these covers appeared in the leading naval cover publications of the period. Perhaps the editors of the USCS *Log* and ANCS *Navigator* did not want to publish what was competition or perhaps they were outraged at the high price of the Hobby Shop covers. Consequently, it was not until the 1950s when these covers began coming out of collections that questions were raised about the source of some of the cancels.

It turns out that Deane Bartley bought Al Schuster's covers with the complete set of Hobby Shop covers. In 1966, Jim Russell corresponded with Bartley about the covers and Bartley offered to send the set to Russell since they could not be sold (Bartley recognized them as fakes).

Jim subsequently wrote a summary of the Hobby Shop covers, apparently as an article for the *Log*. In this piece, Jim wrote:

“...Someone had ‘cancels’ made to resemble the cancels in use at that time. Only at the bottom of the dial there was a slot in which the name of any ship could be placed. If the name was short, the letter s were spaced to look like a type 3r. If the name was longer, then no space between letter and it appeared to be a type 3 cancel. What makes this a bit harder many of these covers do have the correct cancels from the various ships. If a person only glances at these cancels, they appear to be the real thing.”

“I do have more background on these. It appears a buyer was found who purchased all unsold covers, odd sets and even the uncanceled covers. I have been told they had a press run of 1,000 covers for each event. There was between 500 and 700 complete sets dispatched. They had between 300 and 350 advance subscriptions at \$25 each. The remaining covers being pencil addressed and returned to the Hobby Shop for later sale. Between 200 to 225 sets did get through.”

That's pretty much the story of the Hobby Shop faked cancels. The Postmark Catalog has a complete list of the fakes by ship name, cancel variant and date. Missing only is PHOENIX, a recent discovery and POMPANO. The USCS *Naval Cover Cachet Makers' Catalog* lists the known Hobby Shop cachets, irrespective of the legitimacy of the cancel. PHOENIX and NEW YORK are missing from that list. Images of a complete set of these covers may be seen in the online Naval Cover Museum--

www.navalcovermuseum.org.

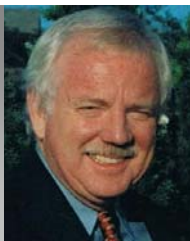
In summary, it's clear that Sibley's Hobby Shop perpetrated a fraud on cover collectors and got away with it. Perhaps no one complained to postal authorities, or if they did, with the war in progress the Post Office Department had bigger fish to fry. Perhaps the extent of the fraud did not really become clear until twenty-some years later when USCS members fully documented the faked cancels. Fortunately, the information has been available since then and, with this series, will become a part of the public record of the Hobby Shop fakes.

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Naval Cover Fakes, Forgeries and Frauds

Part IV

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Naval Ship Cancels of December 7, 1941

This investigative report of December 7, 1941 U.S. Navy ship cancels is part of the USCS *Log's* 2008 continuing series on Fakes and Forgeries. This report will address each of the known Pearl Harbor ship cancels of December 7, 1941; however, we will not discuss the shore stations or civilian postmarks of the period.

The Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941 is one of the most infamous dates in American history. Those of us who collect Navy cancels have long debated whether or not there was a naval cancel struck aboard any of the 95 ships in Pearl Harbor that morning with post offices aboard. There are of course ship cancels from ships that were indeed at Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. However, the question has always been whether or not they were legitimate, meaning not necessarily the cancel itself but was it struck on that Sunday, December 7th or pre-dated or post dated or in some cases be an outright fake, this article will address these issues.

My interest in Pearl Harbor goes way back as I was actually at Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, albeit only 4 years old, as my father was a Chief Radioman aboard USS PENNSYLVANIA (BB 38). PENNSYLVANIA was in drydock that morning and he was not aboard. The family remained at Pearl Harbor for the remainder of the war, my father was transferred to CINCPAC Staff and my mother took a job at the Pearl Harbor Naval Shipyard.

After searching a multitude of sources for this article both in the philatelic press and with other internet resources, it appears that this may be the first comprehensive study of December 7, 1941 Pearl Harbor U.S. Naval ship cancels ever presented in this manner.

Our focus of course is on the 101 US Navy vessels at Pearl Harbor on December 7 1941, of which only six lacked postal facilities. The Navy Department official list for ships at Pearl Harbor during the attack includes ships within 12 miles of the island of Oahu that were not actually within Pearl Harbor which was defined as the area inside the nets guarding the harbor entrance. An example using this criteria would be USS WARD (DD 139) which was credited with firing the first shot of World War II and the fleet tugs USS NAVAJO (AT 64) and USS KEOSANQUA (AT 38) which were near the entrance and USS VEGA (AK 17) which was at Honolulu.

Another list would be one that includes the 20 or so ships that were known to be en route Pearl Harbor or operating within the Hawaiian Islands. USS McFARLAND

(AVD 14 ex-DD 237) mentioned later in this article would be an example from this list.

Collectors approach collecting Pearl Harbor covers from many diverging views, some are unconcerned with the date of their cover as long as the ship was at Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, they consider dates from the mid-1930's to be acceptable. Others try to get dates as close to December 7, 1941 as possible, still others collect only postally used cancels rather than cancelled to order philatelic covers. It should be noted, that postally used cancels from the first week of December 1941 are considered quite scarce.

Some collect only December 7, 1941 naval cancels even though the ship may have been thousands of miles away, examples of the "not at Pearl Harbor December 7, 1941" group include USS WASHINGTON (BB 47), USS NORTH CAROLINA (BB 55), USS POTOMAC (AG 25), USS TUSCALOOSA (CA 37), USS MISSISSIPPI (BB 41), USS NEW YORK (BB 34), USS MONSSEN (DD 436) and others.

An important point should be made about the presence of a censor mark on any Pearl Harbor 1941 era cover. Navy censor marks are known to exist for at least one year before the attack on Pearl Harbor and were used with Atlantic convoy escort mail earlier in 1941.

Censorship at Pearl Harbor and in Hawaii was quite strict as battle damage information about the fleet was withheld even locally for days and weeks.

My own newspaper collection of the *Honolulu Star Bulletin* for the month of December 1941 reveals that it was not until after Navy Secretary Frank Knox's visit to Hawaii on 11 December, and his subsequent report to the nation on 15 December that any specific battle damage assessment was printed in the newspapers.

According to the US Office of Censorship Report issued at the end of the war, censorship of outgoing mail in Hawaii commenced on 13 December 1941.

This background on censorship is significant to our study as we know of cancelled covers dated 7 December to 12 December with censor marks. It seems reasonable to assume that mail with those dates may have been held for censorship and released after 13 December 1941.

The Postmarks

The postmark portion of this article will focus on three areas:

- I. A brief overview of previously written Pearl Harbor December 7, 1941 articles and first week of December 1941 cancels.
- II. The eight known December 7, 1941 US Navy ship cancels at Pearl Harbor, listed alphabetically and illustrated.
- III. Ships en route Pearl Harbor within the Hawaiian Island chain with December 7, 1941 cancels, also illustrated.

I. Overview:

There has not been an overabundance of information written about Navy cancels at Pearl Harbor in December 1941. The most pertinent article we could locate was in *The American Philatelist* (the Journal of the American Philatelic Society) dated December 1991; in fact, it was the cover story for the 50th Anniversary of the attack on Pearl Harbor issue. It was a two page feature called "A Philatelist at Pearl" and centered around a LCDR Lester M. Merritt and a series of covers that were addressed to him and his family that were all dated December 7, 1941. The cover illustrated on the cover of the magazine was a Naval Air Station Pearl Harbor station cancel dated December 7, 1941.

That particular cover and cancel received a certificate from the Philatelic Foundation in 1991 confirming that it was of "genuine usage". The article of course did not address the issue of when the cancel may have been applied and it was hard to explain why Merritt might have mailed a handful of covers to be hand-stamped at 0700 on Sunday morning. An interesting development to keep in mind when one reviews the other LCDR Merritt covers from USS HULBERT and USS McFARLAND later in this article.

LCDR Merritt was stationed with COMSERVPAC (Commander Service Force, US Pacific Fleet) and was on Ford Island during the attack. LCDR Merritt, from Columbus, Ohio was an ardent philatelist, USCS member and active in many Ohio philatelic organizations.

Other individuals have written in *Linn's Stamp News* (December 1971), *Western Stamp Collector* (December 1975) and in the *USCS Log* over the years, often just listing the December 7, 1941 ships with known cancels without much comment about their authenticity or lack thereof. USCS member Captain Robert W. Murch, USNR did indicate in one of his contributions that "fake" covers exist from USS TENNESSEE dated December 7, 1941.

The first week of December 1941 produced several interesting cancels. A USS AYLWIN (DD 335) cancel dated 3 December 1941 on a large mailgram penalty envelope is shown as **Figure 1**.

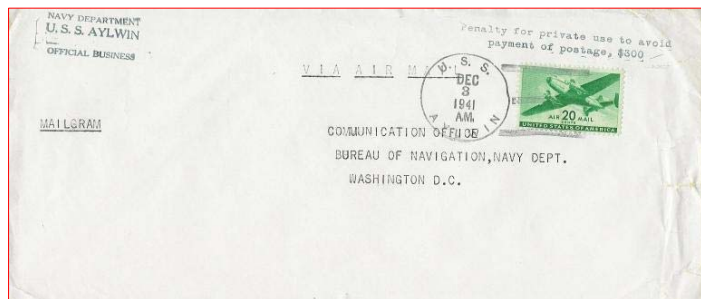


Figure 1: MAILGRAM Penalty envelope with USS AYLWIN corner card dated 3 December 1941.

Frank Hoak collection.

This cover left Hawaii in the last Clipper mail, which departed on Friday, 5 December 1941. USS AYLWIN, berthed at buoy X-18 is famous in Pearl Harbor history as the ship that an Ensign with a total of eight months at sea took command as the most senior officer aboard that morning. Ensign S. Caplan, USNR had the ship open fire at 0758 with the main battery and with proper orders in hand, got underway at 0828 to conduct war operations for the next 36 hours.

The 6 December 1941 USS NEVADA (BB 36) cover shown as **Figure 2** was originally written about in the June 1967 *USCS Log* by the late well-known writer and exhibitor Don McPherson. It is addressed to USCS member Royal Hendricks who had indicated that the cover was salvaged and mailed on 9 February 1942; it was delivered to him the next day. There is only speculation as to why the cover did not leave the ship on 6 December.

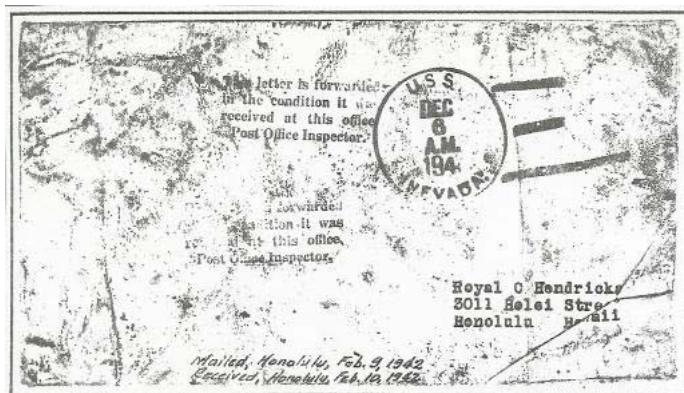


Figure 2: USS NEVADA cover forwarded to addressee in the condition it was received at Honolulu. Image provided by James Myerson.

USS OKLAHOMA (BB 37) was originally written about in the July 1965 *USCS Log* by the late Captain Herb Rommel, USN when he was the Commanding Officer of the Naval Station, Washington DC. It was during this time period, that he was able to visit the Smithsonian Institution and obtain two strikes of the recovered handstamp dated 6 December 1941. One of those examples with his signature is shown here as **Figure 3**.



Figure 3: One of two strikes made by Captain Herb Rommel from the recovered handstamps now in the Smithsonian. From the author's collection.

II. DECEMBER 7, 1941 Cancels

USS ARIZONA (BB 38)

The most famous of all the Pearl Harbor ships, USS ARIZONA on December 7, 1941 took hits from one torpedo and eight bombs, one of which penetrated a power magazine and the resultant explosion completely wrecked her with the loss of 1177 personnel. The United States Navy, in two hours and four minutes, has lost three times as many men (2113) as it had lost by enemy action in all of the Spanish-American War and World War I combined.

As noted previously, cancels from the first week of December 1941 are scarce, the ARIZONA type 6ep December 2, 1941 cancel is shown here as **Figure 4**.



Figure 4: USS ARIZONA cover with Type 6ep cancel dated 2 December 1941. Image provided by Curtis R. Kimes.(9714).

USS BREESE (DM 18)

BREESE was anchored in Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941 and by 0757 had opened fire on Japanese planes; she received no material damage from the attack.

The late Don McPherson had two copies of this USS BREESE cancel on an exhibit page many years ago. One of these is shown as **Figure 6**. The current location of the BREESE cancels are unknown at this time. They were the product of Leslie Miller at Pearl Harbor; the comments written on the covers suggest that there were only two done. Mr. Miller awkwardly writes on one of the covers, “These two covers all that exist L- as of this date are last of ships regulation cancel”, “Censor goes into effect tomorrow Leslie” and “keep these covers”. The possibility of these cancels being struck that day is extremely remote but no specific information has been located.



Figure 6: Cover from USS BREESE with two strikes of the cancel on 7 December 1941.

USS HULBERT (AVD 6)

HULBERT was moored at the Sub Base that morning and in her Report of Battle dated 8 December 1941 noted that, “HULBERT is believed to the first ship in the fleet to open fire”.

According to the 1 April 1941 NAVY DIRECTORY, USS HULBERT was under the Command of LCDR James M. Lane shown in the return address of **Figure 7**. The addressee is LCDR Lester Merritt who was mentioned earlier. It would appear that LCDR Merritt had a hand in this cancel and the USS McFARLAND (AVD 14) which will be reviewed later in this article.

The Naval Censor mark on this cover and the one on the McFARLAND cover show the identical initials “GF”. The HULBERT cancel was used as an illustration in a STAMPS magazine article in the 1970s and was most probably postdated by LCDR Merritt.

USS PENNSYLVANIA (BB 38)

PENNSYLVANIA was in drydock with two destroyers on December 7, 1941.

PENNSYLVANIA cancels in **Figure 8** are grouped with other cancels dated in 1943 and 1944; the cover is from USS ABSD-2 (Advance Base Sectional Dock) which.



Figure 5

Shown as **Figure 5**, this illustrates the unskillful attempt at a fake, using a 1950's Type 2t(nu) type cancel as a guide to making a poor fake. The sharp eyes of Dave Kent noticed this fake on eBay recently and had it removed before a sale could be completed.



Figure 7: USS HULBERT cover with December 7, 1941 cancel from the Frank Hoak III collection.

seems to confirm the postdating of the December seems to confirm the postdating of the December 7, 1941 cancels. Three varieties of the Type 9 cancel and a Type 7d cancel from PENNSYLVANIA are shown. Postdated examples from PENNSYLVANIA are more unusual than the relatively common example from USS SHAW and USS SCHLEY.



Figure 8: USS ABCD 2 corner card on cover with a variety of USS PENNSYLVANIA cancels. Contributed by Dave Green.

USS RALEIGH (CL 7)

RALEIGH was moored at berth F-12, on the east side of the North Channel at Pearl Harbor when the Japanese made their attack and took the first torpedo of the attack at 0755. RALEIGH sustained significant damage and was in danger of capsizing at one point during the attack.

Two examples of the December 7, 1941 RALEIGH Type 6ep postmark have been studied and neither of the two have censor marks. One featured in the February 2004 *Log* (Figure 9) has been verified by RALEIGH crewman A.F. Partch in a 1995 letter to USCS Member Steve Henderson in which Mr. Partch indicates that he mailed the letter on Saturday, 6 December 1941 with the understanding that it was to be dated the next day (December 7) then sacked to be taken ashore on Sunday. He received the letter back a few days later from the Naval Mail Clerk.

The other known RALEIGH cancel was illustrated in USCS Member Larry Wendell's Pearl Harbor Study Group newsletter in the late 1980s. It was hand addressed to Napa,

California and the return address was "S.L.S. Box C, USS RALEIGH c/o Fleet PO Pearl Harbor". The cancel appears legitimate and we would conclude that it was in the same category as Mr. Partch's and both were pre-dated for Sunday, December 7, 1941.



Figure 9: USS RALEIGH (CL 7) cover believed to have been pre-dated for 7 December 1941. Contributed by Steve Henderson.

USS SCHLEY (DD 103)

SCHLEY was moored in nest undergoing overhaul in Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. The SCHLEY cancel Figure 10 was most likely the work of the ships Naval Mail Clerk, Albert Bellavance, SM1c whose name appears on a 9 February 1941 letter to a USCS member in Massachusetts and on this example of the December 7, 1941 cancelled cover. Another SCHLEY cover dated December 7, 1941 was noted by a well-known USCS member in Connecticut that it was received "under cover" on 1 December 1945. Additional examples researched for this article show other well-known USCS members were recipients of this SCHLEY backdated cancel.



Figure 10: USS SCHLEY 7 December 1941 cover is one of several known back-dated examples. From the author's collection.

USS SHAW (DD 373)

SHAW was in drydock YFD-2 at Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941 and took three direct bomb hits causing fire throughout the ship. At 0925 the order to abandon ship was given.

In a copy of a letter dated 24 January 1981, Alan C. Hawkins, the Navy Mail Clerk aboard SHAW on December 7, 1941 stated that he did not cancel any mail that day as the post office was destroyed in the attack. Mr. Hawkins also stated in his letter that the post office was not re-opened until January 1942 when he was released from the hospital.

All of the dozen or so known SHAW covers (**Figure 11**) have two things in common, one is that all the cancel strikes are directly on the stamp with red ink and the other is the name William R. Welch of Seattle, Washington is stamped on the reverse side of each cover. USCS records indicate that he was a member at about this time.

Deanne Bartley, a very well known collector of his day had the habit of noting his “received date” on the covers reverse side, his copy of the SHAW cancel indicated it was received in March 1942.



Figure 11: Common among the USS SHAW cancellations is the red ink and the cancel directly on the stamp. From the author’s collection.

USS TENNESSEE (BB 43)



Figure 12: USS TENNESSEE (BB 43) Type 6 duplex fake cancel is attributed to Glenn Dye.

TENNESSEE was moored starboard side to a pair of concrete mooring quays near Ford Island and only was hit by two bombs and with emergency repairs departed on 20 December 1941 for Puget Sound Naval Shipyard. Then **Log** Editor Bob Rawlins wrote about the TENNESSEE fake cancel in the February 1995 **Log**.

It is now well established that the fake TENNESSEE Type 6 duplex postmark **Figure 12** was the creative work of Glenn Dye of New Jersey, Dye featured a TENNESSEE Type 6 cancel dated December 7, 1941 for sale in his 1948 sales publication. Later this year in the **Log**, more information will be written about Glenn Dye.

III. Ships En route Pearl Harbor or within the Hawaiian Island Chain on December 7, 1941.

USS McFARLAND (AVD 14 ex-DD 237)

McFARLAND (**Figure 13**) was operating out of Pearl Harbor and conducting anti-submarine maneuvers off the island of Maui.

The cover from McFARLAND is addressed to LCDR Merritt of whom we mentioned previously, the return address “Lt. Comdr. J.L. Kane” coincides with the **1941 NAVY DIRECTORY** listing for the Commanding Officer USS McFARLAND a “Joseph L. Kane”.



Figure 13: USS McFARLAND cover has same addressee as the USS HULBERT cover. Note the same Censor initials on both covers.

USS CHESTER (CA 27)

CHESTER (**Figure 14**) was returning from Wake Island with Vice Admiral Halsey in ENTERPRISE as part of special Task Force 8 that was about 215 miles west of Hawaii. The Task Force was scheduled to arrive in Pearl Harbor on 6 December, but was delayed due to poor weather en route. There was much griping among her crew at the loss of a Saturday night liberty in Hawaii.

This postally used cover has a hand written return address of “Ensign J. Scatchard USS CHESTER, Pearl Harbor T.H.”, his duty assignment could not be established.



Figure 14: USS CHESTER was returning from Wake Island and was delayed by poor weather.

USS ENTERPRISE (CV 6)

USS ENTERPRISE (CV 6) was also in Task Force 8 and launched 18 Dauntless scout bombers on December 7th for Pearl Harbor, of these, four were shot down. ENTERPRISE was the most decorated ship of World War II earning 20 battle stars.

Figure 15 illustrates a creatively prepared ENTERPRISE cover from a crewman to his family back home.

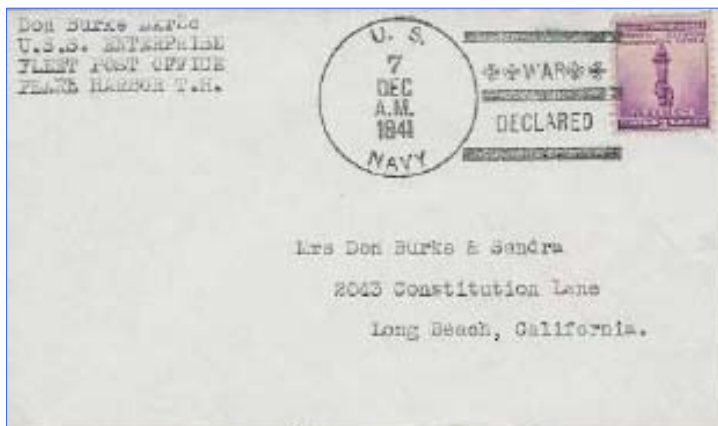


Figure 15: USS ENTERPRISE cover with WAR/ DECLARED in the Killer Bars.

Summary

While it is certainly possible that other Pearl Harbor ship cancels from December 7, 1941 will surface in the future, at this time we can conclude that there were no ship cancels legitimately struck on December 7, 1941. It does appear that the USS RALEIGH cancels shown were legitimate but pre-dated and the other ship illustrations shown in this article dated December 7, 1941 were post

dated. Some may have used the actual ship's cancel as in the case of the covers for SCHLEY, HULBERT, CHESTER, ENTERPRISE and McFARLAND while others such as ARIZONA and TENNESSEE were outright fakes.

Authenticity of the cancels for BREESE, PENNSYLVANIA, and SHAW can not be conclusively established, nevertheless they all were back dated.

While the vast majority of the December 7, 1941 cancels from the Pearl Harbor ships were creatively inspired, they were produced in small numbers and still attract strong interest from Pearl Harbor collectors around the world.

Special thanks to these USCS members for their contributions of research information for this article. Dave Green, Paul Helman, Steve Henderson, Dave Kent, Randy Kimes, Bob Rawlins, Jim Myerson and Larry Wendell, Founder of the USCS Pearl Harbor Study Group.

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**Naval Cover Fakes,
Forgeries and Frauds
Part V**

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Fred Karcher Vietnam Covers

Frederick L. Karcher, Jr., USCS 4426, had a rather checkered career in the USCS culminating in his mention in this series. Fred joined the USCS in June 1962 while living in Brooklyn, New York, and later moved to Millis, Massachusetts where he was member of the Old Ironsides Chapter # 1. He eventually became the chapter cachet director and identified the cacheted covers he produced for the chapter with “Old Ironsides Chapter” or “Chapter One” and FLK sponsor. After a time, OI chapter members realized that Fred was not providing any proceeds to the chapter treasury from chapter cover sales and politely told him to stop using the chapter name and number as sponsor in the future. Thereafter, Karcher identified his sponsored covers with a number of logos -- Boston Naval Group, BNG, Narragansett Group or NNG when he lived in Bristol, Rhode Island and FALKON covers after he moved to Milford, New Jersey.

Fred Karcher's life was cut short in 1982 by heart failure and his extensive collection, estimated at over a million covers, was purchased by a group of USCS members who were astonished to find evidence of significant fakery. They destroyed tens of thousands of covers, which they deemed fraudulent saving only examples for the record. Unfortunately, some of Karcher's fraudulent covers - the Vietnam era ones, were thought to be legit and came onto the market in the late 1990s.

Karcher left records which shed light on how he obtained the Vietnam era covers. He apparently learned from public records when ships were to deploy to the Western Pacific. While he did not know when the ships would actually be in the war zone, his solution was to send pre-franked covers, 25 at a time, with a letter of instructions to the mail clerk (he never asked for anything, only gave strict orders). His cover letter had numbered paragraphs instructing the navy mail clerk in essence to: (1) hold the covers until you are in the combat zone (2) place your personal return address stamp on each cover and sign it to validate the frank (a few mail clerks actually did this), and (3) return the covers in the large SASE that Karcher provided, not through the mail.

We may wonder why any mail clerk would comply with such orders, and it is likely that the third paragraph is the answer --the postal clerks who returned his covers viewed them as mere souvenirs and not real pieces of mail because they always went back under separate cover. Incidentally, many mail clerks refused to service the covers and returned them uncanceled. The general reasons given for returning

the unserviced covers were: (1) the Navy's limit is 5 per person, (2) we are not in the combat zone and (3) your free frank is not valid.

Although Karcher was later involved with forged postmarks, the postmarks on the Vietnam covers are all believed to be genuine. Nevertheless, the covers themselves are not true postal history and are fraudulent in the fact that “Free” mail was authorized solely for personnel in the war zone, not for collector-inspired covers.

When I first saw the Karcher Vietnam covers being sold on the Internet and in dealers’ boxes, my suspicions were aroused on two levels: first, many were addressed to Karcher and second, the “Free” frank on covers postmarked on different ships was obviously written/printed by the same hand. I accumulated two dozen of the covers and checked sources available on the location of the ships on the postmarked date. I found that two thirds could not be placed in the war zone; some ships were in R&R ports in Hong Kong or Japan, some were at Subic, Philippine Islands and one ship had returned to her home port in San Diego on the postmark date. Data was not available on the balance of the sample, but the preponderance of evidence was against their authenticity. Actually, very few ships were stationed in Vietnam. Most were based at Subic (which was not in the combat zone) and shuttled back and forth to the gun line, usually only staying there for two or three weeks before returning to Subic. And while on the gun line, the crews were busy conducting war operations, often at general quarters, certainly not on a pleasure cruise. Doubtless, the postal clerks were not inclined to spend time servicing souvenir covers for a collector.

The word was put out by various means that the Karcher Vietnam era covers were not what they purported to be and the covers slowly were removed from sale. I purchased a small amount to get them out of circulation and Stewart Milstein culled the sales circuits to remove whatever he found. Currently, I have a sample file of 281 of Karcher's Vietnam covers, an analysis of which provides a good picture of his activity.

**Analysis of a 281 sample of Karcher's
Vietnam-related covers**

Karcher annotated his Vietnam (VN) covers in two ways: “Free” and “Free Combat Zone” written or printed in the upper right part of the cover. The two markings actually provided something of a timeline for his work. He started with the “Combat Zone” marking, transitioned to just “Free” in 1969 and pretty much used “Free” in 1970 and afterward.

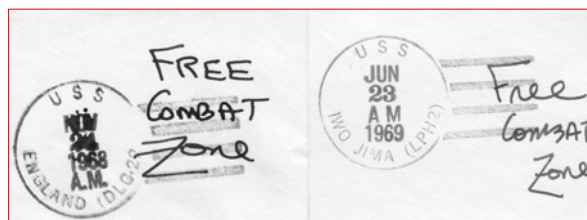


Figure 1: Examples of Karcher's “Free Combat Zone” hand frank.



Figure 1a: Two examples of Karcher's "Free Combat Zone" hand frank

The earliest covers received the "Free Combat Zone" marking, with the earliest postmark in the sample 18 October 1966 and the latest 2 May 1971. The date distribution in the sample is as follows:

1966- 1; 1967- 6; 1968- 18; 1969- 31; 1970- 1; 1971- 4 (all from the same ship, same date); total 61.

- In addition, there were 13 covers (mixed dates) either with a corner card or hand return address by the PC
- There were also 3 covers with "Free Combat Zone" marking but no cancel
- Total sample of "Free Combat Zone" covers -77

"Free" marking



Figure 2: Examples of Karcher's "Free" frank, although slightly different in format, all were obviously done in the same hand.

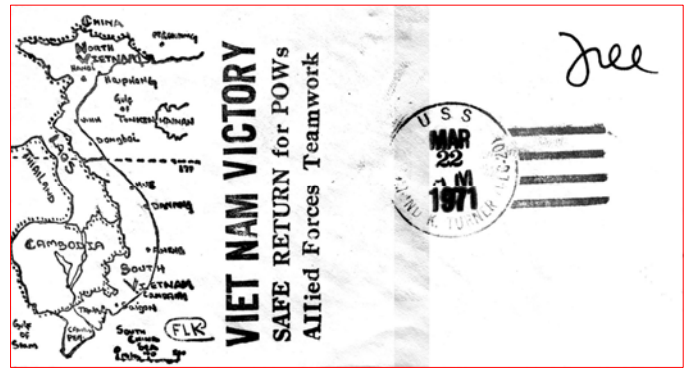


Figure 2a: Typical example of Karcher "Free" frank Vietnam cover with Vietnam rubber stamp cachet

-The earliest cover in the sample simply marked "Free" was dated 23 Jan 1968. The date distribution for these covers is as follows:

1968- 2; 1969- 11; 1970- 76; 1971- 23; 1972- 23; 1973- 7; 1974- 3 with the latest date 23 Apr 1974, total 145.

-In addition, there were 31 covers (mixed dates) either with a corner card or hand return address by the PC.

-There were also 28 covers with "Free" but no cancel, Figure 3.

-Total sample of "Free" covers – 204.



Figure 2b: Example of Karcher's "Free" frank Vietnam cover showing reuse of an earlier cover, this one with an Old Ironsides sponsored logo.

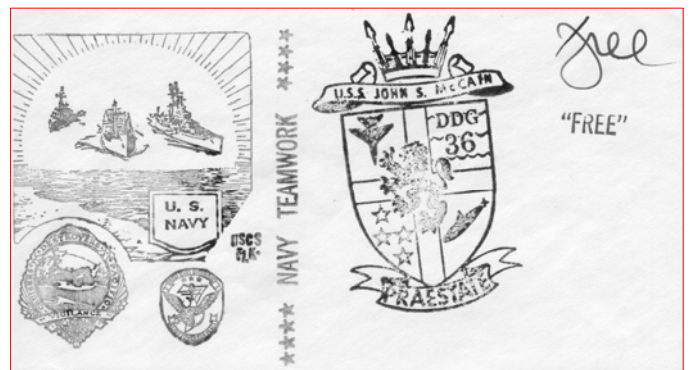


Figure 3: Example of Karcher Vietnam "Free" frank cover not serviced by ship. However, postal clerk did add the ship's rubber stamp cachet.

I note that: 89% of the covers in the sample actually were postmarked by the PC and 15% of the covers received some sort of return hand or rubber stamped marking from the PC beside the cancel.

A total of 5 covers in the sample with no “Free” or “Free Combat Zone” were franked with stamps but had insufficient postage, three with 1 cent, one with five cents, one with 6 cents. These all were postmarked and delivered without any postage due marking.

Not all the covers in the sample were from front line warships. A sprinkling of tender (AS), repair ship (AR), attack transport (APA/AKA) and even some ARL covers with a “Free” type marking were cancelled. Clearly these ships never were on the gun line and, other than the ARL, most likely were not in waters contiguous to the war zone. At best, they would be been in Subic Bay or some other similar location not eligible for “Free” frank.

The cachets were mostly Vietnam or war related, **Figures 4, 5, & 6**. However, there were cachets for 25th Anniversary of D-Day, Battle of Leyte Gulf, MacArthur, Eisenhower and a paste-on of Okinawa invasion. It seems that Karcher used whatever was on hand in addition to his VN specific cachets. The most plentiful cachet was on the VN map with various hand stamps on or with that cachet, **Figure 7**. Many cachets were rubber stamped but there were a goodly number of thermograph cachets.

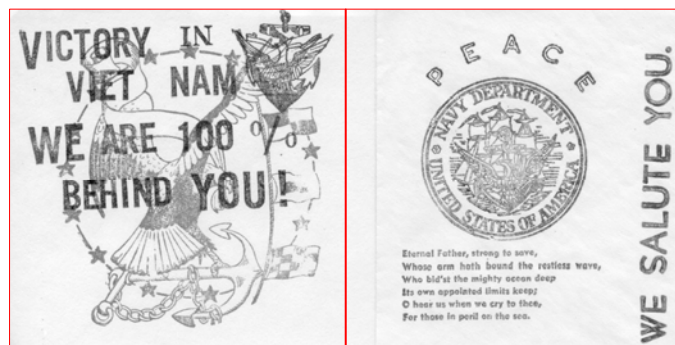


Figure 6: Additional examples of two frequently found Karcher Vietnam cachets.

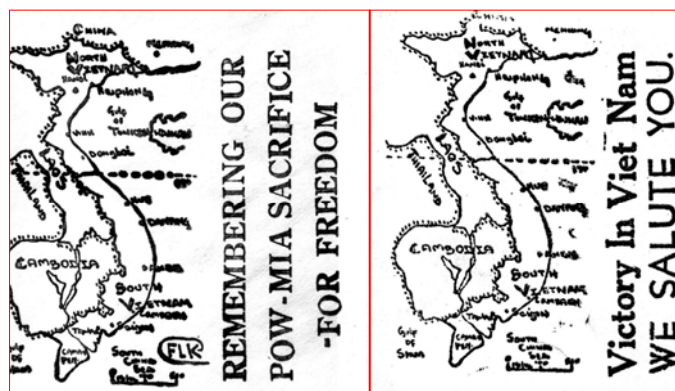


Figure 7: Two examples of most often seen Karcher Vietnam cachets with the Vietnam map augmented by a two or three line rubber stamp wording.

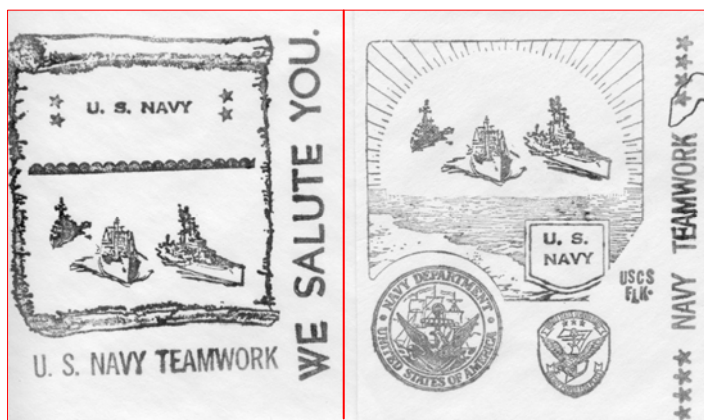


Figure 4: Examples of two frequently found Karcher Vietnam cachets.



Figure 5: Two more examples of frequently found Karcher Vietnam cachets.

Bottom Line

I'm reasonably certain that Karcher Vietnam covers are in collections somewhere, purchased before word was circulated that they are frauds. When the collections are sold, the covers will again surface. Hopefully, with publication of this series, potential purchasers should have the necessary information available to make an informed decision. If you have such covers in your collection, do everyone a favor and mark them “Fraudulent” in ink on reverse. We all owe it to our successors to keep the record honest.

Resource

Appreciation to Dave Kent for the description of Karcher's methods in obtaining his cancels. Dave also believes that on the covers with 1-cent stamps and no apparent postage due collected, those were also returned under separate cover, so the deficiency in postage was not apparent.

On the Website

The complete series of *Naval Cover Fakes, Forgeries and Frauds* has been posted on the USCS website.

**Naval Cover Fakes,
Forgeries and Frauds**

Part VI



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Frederick L. Karcher:

A Legacy of Fake and Fraudulent Naval Postmarks

The USCS *Log* articles by John Young concerning the 1976 International Naval Review (“INR”) and Operation Sail (“OPSAIL”) (*Log* July 2008) and by Bob Rawlins (*Log* June 2008) addressed only two parts of the Fred Karcher problem. No sponsor of naval covers created such an extensive and expansive stock of questionable postmarks as did Karcher from the late 1960s through his premature death in the early 1980s. While Bob Rawlins explored the authenticity of Karcher’s Vietnam ‘free mail’, this article considers postmarks that he created or altered for use on covers he sponsored. Karcher’s Vietnam ‘free mail’ covers are fairly easy to recognize: his covers bear similar handwritten notation of “Free” or “Free Combat Zone”, Karcher’s gaudy cachet with raised thermographic printing, were almost inevitably mailed to him. Taking Bob Rawlins’s thesis to its logical conclusion, those who believe that all philatelic “Free Mail” is *per se* fraudulent are on notice by merely looking at the face of the cover that the mail was not sent by a Sailor for personal use. Those who do not accept the *per se* rule still are on notice of the nature and origin of the cover even if the precise location of the ship within the war zone cannot be established without research. Importantly, this series of articles about fakes and frauds deals almost exclusively with covers created by sponsors for sale and resale at a profit not covers created by collectors for their personal collections.

Figure A is a Karcher “Combat Zone Free” frank postmarked on board USS WEDDERBURN (DD 684) Type 2(n+) dated 15 January 1968 with a “postage due 6 cents” rubber stamp and ink marking immediately below. The cover bears the typical raised ink thermo cachet, Karcher’s rubber stamp return address in Mount Top, PA and his hand written “Free Combat Zone” frank in lieu of postage.

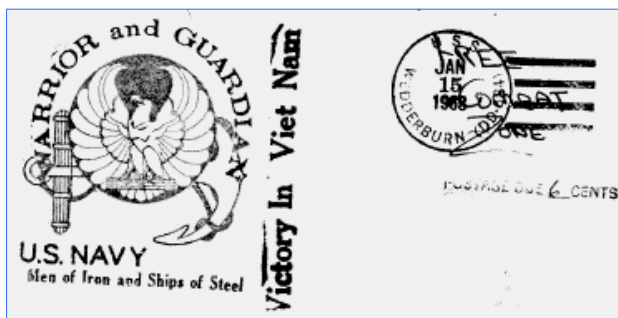


Figure A: USS WEDDERBURN (DD 684) cover.

The ship was not in a combat zone on 15 January 1968. The *Dictionary of American Naval Fighting Ships* (DANFS) discloses that: “WEDDERBURN reached San Diego on 6 October [1967] and began the normal post-deployment stand down. In mid-November, she resumed normal operations in the southern California operating area. That routine continued until she began repairs at Long Beach on 19 April 1968. She returned to San Diego on 24 May and resumed normal operations out of her home port. WEDDERBURN embarked upon the final western Pacific deployment of her

career on 30 September....” Perhaps this is as close to a legitimate Karcher cover as could exist. Did WEDDERBURN’s postal clerk properly add the “postage due” notation since he was aware that the ship was off southern California and not in the war zone on the date he postmarked Karcher’s covers?

During the early 1970s, Karcher moved to Millis, MA from which he routinely visited the Cruiser Destroyer Force ships homeported at Newport, RI. He had access to many post offices and many of the Atlantic Fleet ships, which had served off Vietnam. Thus, Karcher was able to get postmarks from these ships and often sponsored covers using their cancels for shipbuilding events.

There is substantial credible evidence that Karcher created his own postmarks for ships based upon proof provided by some of the four USCS members who purchased his estate. The estate contained nearly four dozen rubber stamp postmarks for U.S. naval ships during the period of the late 1960s through the time of Karcher’s death. Most of those postmarks were incomplete, bearing only the circular portion of the cancels, not the killer bars, and generally not having dates within the circles.

Dave Kent has reported: “Obviously Karcher had a ‘base’ cancel with just killer bars and the slots for a date, because many of the cancels I have are only the dial. Unfortunately, the killer bars are often an important part of a forgery, because they are usually irregular and show signs of retouching (usually caused by ‘erasing’ the stamp from a Xerox copy with Witeout) ... I believe the only complete cancel there was was the DALE forgery reproduced in the *Catalog*. ... I have never kept any of the forgeries myself, and I need to ask others what they can offer to help illustrate the article. ...”

Ultimately, we could uncover many more fraudulent cancels and backdated covers made by Karcher in addition to the known fraudulent cancels discussed in this article if we were to carefully examine the killer bars in other Karcher sponsored covers. Karcher was a regular user of rubber stamps to manufacture his printed cachets as well as the fraudulent postmarks discussed in this article. Additionally, genuine postal cancelling devices, with handles were found in his estate. At least one of these, the

HALSEY Type 9 postmark, was improperly removed from the ship’s post office. Further research and information may disclose many other examples of fake or fraudulent postmarks manufactured or used by Karcher.

Moreover, Karcher created 170 sets of backdated, fraudulent ship postmarked covers for submarine events with dates starting in the 1950s. This is discussed in Part C. He used cancellations from 19 ships, only one of which, USS FULTON (AD 19), was reported to have fraudulent postmarks. **Figures 19 and 19a.**

We know the names of 12 of the 19 ships whose postmarks were fraudulently used by Karcher in creating this set of 170 event covers but the names of the remaining seven ships need to be uncovered and their postmarks analyzed. None of the 170 nuclear submarine covers are known outside the collections of the original purchasers of the Karcher estate.

There is the need for the study of Karcher event covers for surface ships as well to confirm the extent and nature of fraudulent postmarks.

Attached are illustrations of 43 fraudulent postmarks created by Karcher and three probably stolen cancels all found in his estate when it was purchased by four Nathan Hale chapter members a quarter century ago. What is most troubling about these postmarks is the fact that they span a broader era than the timeframe normally ascribed to Karcher's misdeeds. The DE and DLG cancels must pre-date 1 July 1975 when the ships' designations were changed to FF on one hand and on the other to CG or DDG. Some of the cancels concern events in the 1960s, particularly ships that were deployed to combat operations off Vietnam. If we were to add the additional 18 ships with postmarks Karcher used to cancel his nuclear submarine event covers then the total would reach about 60 ships with known fraudulent and backdated postmarks with dates reaching back to the 1950s. Karcher had forged or stolen postmarks from nearly 10% of all U.S. warships with post offices and the fleet's nadir during the Carter administration. Karcher distributed his covers with cachets marked "Old Ironsides Chapter," "FLK," or "Narragansett Naval Group." What is most confusing and troublesome is that legitimate postmarks and covers may exist with the same dates from the same ships. The evidence uncovered now implicates only covers bearing Karcher's cachets. Covers from the same ships or with base or tender postmarks by other sponsors and individuals are not considered suspect. This analysis is strictly limited to Karcher sponsored covers. Importantly, non-Karcher covers and postmarks from the same ship, even with the same dates, are not in issue.

Immediately following is a discussion of documented forged cancels created by Karcher for use on naval covers with dates ranging between the late 1960s and his death in 1982. Many of the fraudulent postmarks had no dates or could have dates installed; many also did not have killer bars but only the circular portion of the cancelling device. Since evidence of the fraudulent postmarks was discovered in the Karcher estate, we now know that the following 43 postmarks were created by Karcher and have been described by the *USCS Catalog of U.S. Naval Postmarks* (Kent, David A., editor in chief, 5th ed. 1997) (hereinafter "*Postmark Catalog*") as fraudulent cancels. The page references following each Figure refer to the pages in the *Postmark Catalog* where the fraudulent cancels are discussed.

**Part A:
The Known Rubber Stamp Matrix of 43 Postmarks**

Figure 1 is the undated Type 2t(n+) postmark for USS BOSTON (CA 69) which must have been between 1 May

1968, the date she was redesignated from CAG-1 to CA-69, and the disestablishment of her post office on 2 February 1970 and her decommissioning on 5 May 1970. *Postmark Catalog* p. B 16.



Figure 2 is the undated USS SHANGRI LA (CVA 38) Type 2(n+) postmark. *Postmark Catalog* p. S 19. This postmark should have pre-dated her redesignation as CVS-38 on 30 June 1969. Admittedly, some ships continued to use postmarks with their old designations after the change of designator.



Figure 3 is the USS NEW JERSEY (BB 62) postmark Type 2(n+) dated 6 April 1968, the date of her recommissioning for service in Vietnam which lasted barely one year. *Postmark Catalog* p. N 5.



Many of the fraudulent postmarks from Karcher pre-date 1970 and involved ships that deployed to Vietnam. Other Karcher-made postmarks seem to be from Bicentennial International Naval Review and Operation Sail in 1976. On 4 July 1976 President Gerald R. Ford, the last of four consecutive World War II naval reserve officers to serve as Commander-in-Chief, reviewed the fleets of the world and tall ships in New York. Karcher's postmarks for USS DALE (CG 19) (**Figure 4**), USS CONSTITUTION (**Figures 5, 5a and 5b**) USS SAVANNAH (AOR 4) (**Figure 6**), and USS MOUNT WHITNEY (LCC 20) (**Figure 7**) all suggest use on the bicentennial date. The *Postmark Catalog* p. D 1 indicates by illustration, that a forged Type 2(n+) is known to exist with the 4 July 1976 date for DALE. The same authoritative source indicates that two of the postmarks for the Boston-based USS CONSTITUTION are of questionable lineage implying that they were limited to Karcher sponsored covers. Page C 24. The USS SAVANNAH July 4th Type 2(nu) postmark also is listed in the *Postmark Catalog* p. S 14 as a forgery. The MOUNT WHITNEY 4 July 1976 Type 2(n) postmark is listed as a forgery in the *Postmark Catalog* p. M 25.

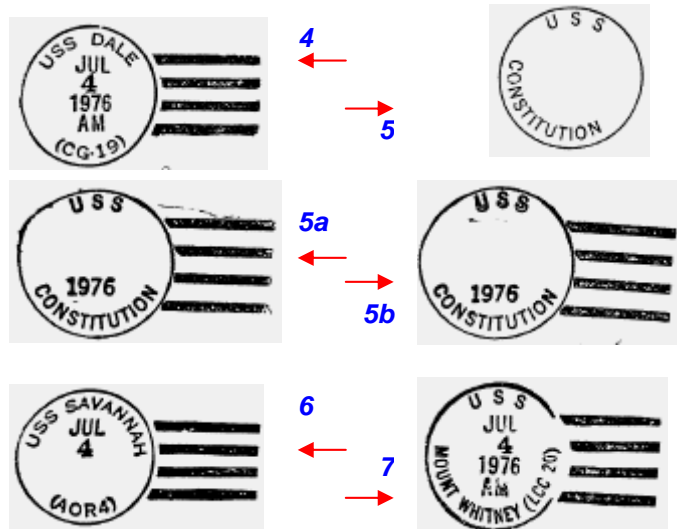


Figure 8 is the 31 October 1972 Type 2(n) last day postal service cancel from USS ARCTURUS (AF 52). *Postmark Catalog* p. A 15.



Figure 9 is the undated USS AUSTIN (LPD 4) Type 2(n) error postmark. *N.B.* The opening parenthesis is missing before the designator and hull number at the lower right of the dial (the 5-4 o'clock position). In addition, the "L" in the designator in the dial appears to be higher and thicker than the other two letters "PD." *Postmark Catalog* p. A 23.



Figure 10 is the Type 2(n+) USS ALYWIN (DE 1081) undated postmark. This postmark would have been in use between her first day postal service on 18 September 1971 and her redesignation as a FF on 1 July 1975. *Postmark Catalog* pp. A22-24.



Figure 11 is the Type 2(n+) USS BLAKELY (DE 1072) undated postmark. This postmark would have been in use between her first day postal service 18 July 1970 and her redesignation as a FF on 1 July 1975. *Postmark Catalog* p. B.



Figure 12 is the Type 2(n+) USS BREWTON (DE 1086) undated postmark. This postmark would have been in use between her first day postal service 8 July 1972 and her redesignation as a FF on 1 July 1975. *Postmark Catalog* p. B 19.



Figure 13 is the undated USS CHARLES H. ROAN (DD 853) Type 2 (n+) postmark. Two Type 2(n+) postmarks were used by the ship between 1962 and her decommissioning in September 1973. *Postmark Catalog* p. C 11.



Figure 14 is the undated USS CHILTON (LPA 38) Type 2 (n+) postmark. Two Type 2(n+) postmarks were used by the ship between 1969, when her designator was changed from APA to LPA, until her decommissioning in July 1972. *Postmark Catalog* p. C 16.



Figure 15 is the USS DAHLGREN (DLG 12) Type 2(n) postmark dated 4 February 1972, the date of the initial disestablishment of her post office prior to decommissioning for modernization. A legitimate Type 2(n+) postmark was used by the ship on her LDPS. *Postmark Catalog* p. D1.



Figure 16 is the undated USS FARRAGUT (DDG 37) Type 2(n+) postmark. Her designator was changed from DLG 6 to DDG 37 on 1 July 1975 and she served under that designation until her



decommissioning in October 1989. *Postmark Catalog* p. F 2.

Figure 17 is the undated USS FORRESTAL (CV 59) Type 2(n+) postmark. Her designator was changed from CVA 59 to CV 59 on 1 July 1975 and she served under that designation until her redesignation as AVT 59 4 February 1992. *Postmark Catalog* p. F 7.



Figures 18 and 18a are the undated USS FORT SNELLING (LSD 30) Type 2(n+) and 2(n+u) postmarks. *Postmark Catalog* p. F 7.



Figures 19 and 19a are the undated USS FULTON (AS 11) Type 2(n+) and 2(n+u) postmarks. *Postmark Catalog* pp. F 10-11.



Figure 20 is the undated USS FURSE (DD 882) Type 9ft postmark. *Postmark Catalog* p. F 11.



Figure 21 is the undated USS GRAHAM COUNTY (AGP 1136) Type 2t(nu) postmark. Her designator was changed from LST 1136 to AGP 1136 on 1 August 1972 and she served under that designation until her decommissioning in February 1977. *Postmark Catalog* p. G 11.



Figure 22 is the undated USS GRANT COUNTY (LST 1174) Type 2(n) postmark. She used that style of postmark from 1972 until her decommissioning in January 1973. *Postmark Catalog* p. G 11.



Figures 23 and 23a are two undated USS HALSEY (DLG 23) Type 2(n+) postmarks. Her designator was changed from DLG 23 to CG 23 on 1 July 1975 and she served under the DLG 23 designation from her initial commissioning on 20 July 1963 and her recommissioning on 16 December 1972 at Bath, Maine until her redesignation. *Postmark Catalog* p. H 2. In addition, it is known that Karcher attended the recommissioning ceremony and that the XO of HALSEY reported missing postal equipment and that a USPS investigation was conducted of the individuals who were present in the ship's post office that day. See following discussion concerning the ship's Type 9 postmark illustrated below as **Figure 38**.



Figure 24 is the undated USS JOSEPHUS DANIELS (DLG 27) Type 2(n+) postmark. Her designator was changed from DLG 23 to CG 23 on 1 July 1975. The closing parenthesis is either weak or missing. *Postmark Catalog* p. J 7



Figure 25 is the Type 2(n+) USS KIRK (DE 1087) undated postmark. This postmark would have been in use between her first day postal service 9 September 1972 and her redesignation as FF on 1 July 1975. *Postmark Catalog* p. K 6.



Figure 26 is the undated USS LA SALLE (LPD 3) Type 2t(n+u) postmark. *N.B.* The “P” is missing in the designator “LPD.” The ship used the designation LPD 3 between her commissioning on 22 February 1964 and her redesignation on 1 July 1972. *Postmark Catalog* p. L 1.



Figure 27 is the Type 2(n+) USS LOCKWOOD (DE 1064) undated postmark. This postmark would have been in use between her first day postal service 5 December 1970 and her redesignation as FF on 1 July 1975. *Postmark Catalog* p. L 11.



Figure 28 is the Type 2(nu) USS MEYERKORD (DE 1058) undated postmark. This postmark would have been in use between her first day postal service 28 November 1968 and her redesignation as an FF on 1 July 1975. *Postmark Catalog* pp. M 15-16.



Figure 29 is the undated USS MISSISSINEWA (AO 144) Type 9ef postmark. *Postmark Catalog* p. M 18.



Figure 30 is the undated USS NASHVILLE (LPD 13) Type 2(n) postmark. *Postmark Catalog* pp. N 1-2.



Figure 31 is the Type 2(n) USS OUELLET (DE 1077) undated postmark. This postmark would have been in use between her first day postal service 17 December 1972 and her redesignation as an FF on 1 July 1975. *Postmark Catalog* pp. O 7-8.



Figure 32 is the Type 2(n) USS ROARKE (DE 1053) undated postmark. This postmark would have been in use between her first day postal service 22 November 1969 and her redesignation as an FF on 1 July 1975. *Postmark Catalog* p. R 11.



Figure 33 is the undated USS SAN BERNARDINO (LST 1189) Type 2(n+) postmark. She used that style of postmark from her commissioning on 27 March 1971. *Postmark Catalog* pp. S 7-8.



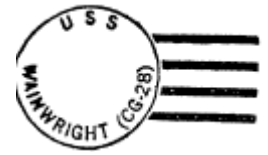
Figure 34 is the 10 June 1972 USS SIMON LAKE (AS 33) Type 2t(n+u) postmark. This coincided with the launch date of TUNNY. She used that style of postmark from 1969 onward. *Postmark Catalog* p. S 22.



Figure 35 is the undated USS VALCOUR (AGF 1) Type 2(n) postmark. She was redesignated as AGF 1 on 15 December 1965 and decommissioned on 15 January 1973. *Postmark Catalog* p. V 1.



Figure 36 is the undated USS WAINWRIGHT (CG 28) Type 2(n) postmark. Her designator was changed from DLG 28 to CG 28 on 1 July 1975. *Postmark Catalog* p. W 2.



Part B:
The “Genuine Cancels Attached to Handles”

Figure 37 is the 22 February 1964 First Day in commission Type 2(n+) cancel from USS LA SALLE (LPD 3) with killer bars attached.

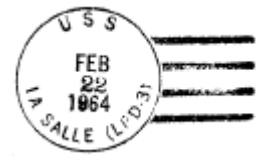


Figure 38 is the Type 9 postmark from USS HALSEY (DLG 23) with only the date “16” in the circle. See discussion of Figures 23 and 23a above. Karcher and America Chapter member Larry Briend attended the recommissioning of HALSEY at Bath, Maine on 16 December 1972. The ship’s executive officer, LCDR R.A.K. Taylor, USN, became involved in the investigation of the loss of one or more of the ship’s postmarks. In turn, US Postal Inspectors commenced an investigation and attempted to discover which person who had access to the ship’s postmark on the recommissioning date took the postmark. Briend credibly denied involvement in the theft. The recovery of the Type 9 postmark in Karcher’s estate, a decade after the incident, conclusively implicates him in its removal from the ship.



Figure 38: USS HALSEY (DLG 23) Type 9

Figures 39 and 39a are Type 9 cancels from the Groton post office. **Figure 39** is a cancellation device with the handle still attached dated 16 January 1977. The date coincides with the death of Rear Admiral Daniel V. Gallery, U.S. Navy (Ret.). **Figure 39a** is an undated type 9 for the Groton, CT Submarine Base Station "USPO" which was reported as one of the copies of cancels in Karcher's rubber stamp matrix.



Figure 39



Figure 39a

Part C:

Known Fraudulent Backdated Submarine Covers

One of the most knowledgeable scholars of naval postmarks is David A. Kent long-serving president of Nathan Hale Chapter. He is the editor of the *Postmark Catalog*. Dave was one of the four chapter members who purchased the covers from the Karcher estate. Following is his description of a third and largest known aspect of the Karcher fakes and fraudulent covers, expanding the scope of the fraudulent postmark dates on Karcher's covers back to the 1950s.

"[T]he main reason for all these forged cancels wasn't to make covers from those ships, but rather to make fake 'event' covers -- keel layings, launching, and so on. One of the first things Frank Hoak found when he first looked at the accumulation was thousands of obvious fakes. Of course, we destroyed most of them, but we kept a few sets as evidence. I will attach a scan of just three of them. I dug out what I have and counted 170 different nuclear submarine 'events' covers of his, all obvious fakes. They have 'postmarks' from 19 different ships, FULTON (AS 11) being the most common (53). Others include CHARLES H. ROAN (DD 853), BARRY (DD 933), DIAMOND HEAD (AE 19), VOGELGESANG (DD 862), CADMUS (AR 14), JOHN WILLS (DE 1027), JOHN R. PIERCE (DD 755), EDWARD MCDONNELL (DE/FF 1043), DYESS (DD 880) and GLOVER (AG 163/AGDE 1/AGFF 1/FF 1098). The covers as we found them were in bundles of generally 35 each, neatly wrapped in plastic and obviously being stored for the future. I know that Karcher once told someone that after we all died he would really go into business. Although our own personal interests were in submarines, I believe Karcher also made fake event covers for a number of surface ships. I don't have any of those, just the submarines, and although we destroyed all the submarine covers, it is possible that Jack Howland let some of the fake surface events get into circulation. Incidentally, the 'FAKE/BACKDATED' rubber stamp obviously was not on the original covers. Stan Honeyman added it to all of the examples we kept just in case any got out. I still have the rubber stamp if you ever need one.

"Karcher needed lots of stamps to make these fakes, and we found hundreds and hundreds of 3, 4 and 5-cent commemoratives in his estate as well. Most people use ordinary definitive stamps on Navy covers, but it's hard to find old mint definitives -- few people save them, but many

people save commemoratives. That's why he generally used commemoratives instead.

"By the way, there were four of us in the partnership that acquired his estate -- Frank, Jack, Stan Honeyman and me. We needed that many partners both to finance the purchase, and to provide the manpower to sort out and dispose of the material. Because there was so much stuff (it filled a 24-foot U-haul truck), it is possible that in the process we missed getting some more of the fake cancels, or that we accidentally discarded some of them in all of the flotsam and jetsam that we handled. The same goes for accidentally letting some of the fakes get out."

At a bare minimum there must have been about 6,000 submarine event covers (170 x 35) but it is highly likely that there were many times that number with Karcher bundling his covers in small groups for efficient sub packaging. Again, we have been told that there were about one million covers in Karcher's estate and presumably a significant number were the obvious fakes and frauds, which were "thrown in the garbage" literally and figuratively. Few, if any of the submarine event covers Dave Kent discussed have been seen regularly in dealers' stock, on eBay, in the *Log Auctions*, or otherwise available for sale.

Of the 19 different ships with postmarks involved in the "mother lode" of 170 nuclear submarine events, we now have identified 12 ships (11 in the narrative quoted above and a 12th in the accompanying illustrations) with questionable postmarks but seven ships have yet to be named. Of this group of 19 ships with postmarks, only a single ship is reported to have fraudulent postmarks according to the *Postmark Catalog*. Thus, there was no readily available public source for collectors or scholars to help determine the legitimacy of postmarks on the covers sponsored by Karcher for nuclear submarine events. Dave Kent recalled specifically that they uncovered 10,269 cacheted and stamped envelopes ready to be postmarked with fake and backdated cancels. The number of cacheted and canceled fraudulent covers in Karcher's estate remains unknown.

Following is a discussion of the postmarks of the 12 identified ships used by Karcher for postmarking his 170 nuclear submarine events. Additional ships and further details should be made available by individuals who have access or records relating to the Karcher estate.

1. USS FULTON (AS 11) discussed in **Figures 19 and 19a** above was known to have two fraudulent postmarks, Type 2(n+) and 2(n+u). *Postmark Catalog* pp. F 10-11. See discussion of **Figures 19 and 19a** above.
2. USS CHARLES H. ROAN (DD 853) POD 12 SEP 973 and LDC 21 SEP 1973. *Postmark Catalog* p. C 11.
3. USS BARRY (DD 933) POD 1982 and LDC 5 NOV 1982. *Postmark Catalog* p. B 5.
4. USS DIAMOND HEAD (AE 19) POD FEB 1973 and LDC 10 MAR 1973. *Postmark Catalog* p. D 7.
5. USS VOGELGSANG (DD 862) POD unknown and LDC 21 FEB 1982. *Postmark Catalog* p. V 5.
6. USS CADMUS (AR 14) POD 30 SEP 1970 and LDC 14 SEP 1971. *Postmark Catalog* pp. C 1-2.

7. USS JOHN WILLS (DE 1027) POD 30 JUN 1972 and LDC 14 JUL 1972. *Postmark Catalog* p. J 6.

8. USS JOHN R. PIERCE (DD 753) POD 31 MAR 1973 and LDC 2 JUL 1973. *Postmark Catalog* p. J 5.

9. USS EDWARD MCDONNELL (DE/FF 1043) POD 15 AUG 1988 and LDC 30 SEP 1988. *Postmark Catalog* p. E 3.

10. USS DYESS (DD 880) POD 31 MAR 1971 and LDC 27 FEB 1981. *Postmark Catalog* p. D 13.

11. USS GLOVER (AG 163/AGDE 1/AGFF 1/FF 1098) POD 25 MAY 1990 LDC 11 JUL 1990. *Postmark Catalog* p. G 9.

12. USS GRAND CANYON (AD 28/AR 28) POD 5 AUG 1978 and LDC 1 SEP 1978. Her designation was changed to AR 28 on 12 March 1971. *Postmark Catalog* p. G 11.

Dave Kent also has commented that the cancels used by Karcher on the 170 nuclear submarine events found in the estate do not necessarily appear to be fraudulent but rather seem of higher quality and clarity suggesting that they may have been genuine postmarks. At least three known legitimate USPS postmarks were found in Karcher's estate. Dave Kent concluded that it is probable that the cancels used on these sets were either, "very high quality forgeries" or made by "stolen" postmarks. The third possible option is that Karcher had the cooperation of Postal Clerks on board the ships to apply their then-legitimate cancels to his event covers with the requested dates, with or without cachet, and hand them back. This third possibility would have required either a clerk entrusting his cancels to Karcher or a postal clerk willing to insert 'dates' and 'years' decades before the date and cancel old stamps not of the current first class postage rates.

Dave Kent "studied the postmarks on the 170 nuclear submarine event covers" which were backdated. He concluded that these covers, found in the Karcher estate, "all look very good. None of the obviously touched-up killer bars that you usually see on forgeries, and the impressions are sharp and clear rather than the usual fuzzy appearance of forgeries (given that he was using a mediocre quality rubber stamp pad). I would therefore assume that the cancels were either stolen or happen to be very high quality forgeries. I don't have the time to check all of them right now against the forgeries that I have, but the FULTON [it's a 2(n+)] looks very close to the forgery, except that the forgery is only the dial, no killer bars."

It may never be possible to determine if Karcher had genuine postmarks for 18 of the 19 ships whose postmarks were found on submarine event covers or if he had "very high forgeries." Dave Kent noted: "The problem with the forgeries/stolen cancels is that Stan Honeyman took them, and when Stan died they became mixed up with the hundreds of molds and matrixes for the rubber stamp cachets that Stan made to donate to ships. Bill Everett ended up with all that material, and I'm not sure he ever thoroughly researched all the boxes of material for any stray cancels that might be hiding in the bottom of the boxes."

Figure 40 is part of a cover marking the launching of SKIPJACK (SSN 585) postmarked on board USS BARRY

(DD 933) dated 26 May 1958 with a Type 2(n+) cancel, the date of the actual event.



SEADRAGON (SSN 584) postmarked on board USS GRAND CANYON (AD 28) with a Type 2t(n+) cancel dated 16 August 1958, the date of the actual event.

Figure 42 is a cover marking the launching of SWORDFISH (SSN 579) postmarked on board USS BARRY (DD 933) with a Type 2(+) cancel dated 27 August 1957, the date of the actual event. 1

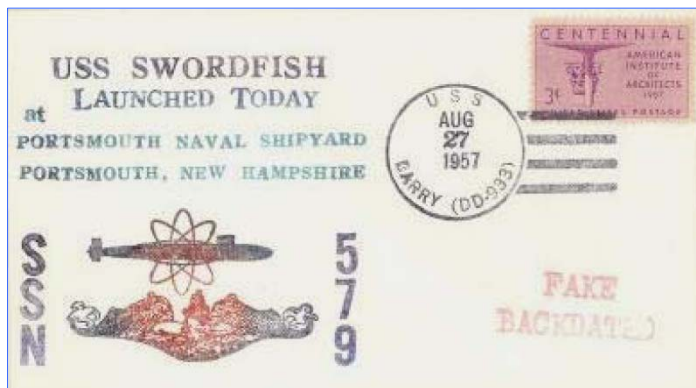


Figure 42: USS SWORDFISH Launching cover by Karcher. Compare with Barry cancel in Figure 40.

While the two BARRY postmarks are nine months apart in both postmarks the day, month, and years are "two blocked to the left" but the "date, month, year" orders are different. She used that type of postmark between her initial commissioning in 1956 and initial decommissioning in 1967 and again from 1978 to her final decommissioning. BARRY is currently a museum ship at the Washington Navy Yard.

We now have established that Karcher had access to at least 62 different postmarks to use on his covers (43 known frauds, one misappropriated USS HALSEY, plus the additional 18 cancels used for his nuclear submarine events). Fifty-six of the ships' postmarks used by Karcher for his fake and fraudulent covers are discussed in this article; six more ships need to be named in public from the list of 19 ships used by Karcher to obtain postmarks for his nuclear submarine event covers. The period of Karcher covers with fake or fraudulent postmark dates spans more than two and a half decades from the mid to late 1950s to the early 1980s. While this newly disclosed evidence of the expansive extent and nature of the Karcher fakes and frauds and the apparent motive for these covers has come to light it does not preclude, but in fact compels, the probability that there are further abuses to be found by study of Karcher cancels. Dave

¹Figures 40 through 42 courtesy of David A. Kent.

Kent’s warning about the probability that Karcher made covers for surface ships is worth considering carefully and mandates that further study and investigative reporting. Moreover, this evidence leads to the conclusion that all Karcher covers bearing hand stamp postmarks (Type 2) should be considered questionable.

At the risk of saying something in defense of systemic illegal activity, it must be appreciated that Karcher was interested in providing ships’ postmarks for his covers. He could have used fraudulent backdated generic shore side postmarks. Alternatively, he could have sponsored pictorial postmarks, although that fad would arise after Karcher’s death. Perversely, if he had avoided backdated covers, then he could have had legitimate shore side pictorial postmarks and the postal service would have paid for the rubber stamp postmarks.

**Part D:
The Theft of Other Chapter’s Artwork**

Thirty plus years ago, the limited action by the USCS Board to preclude Karcher from advertising covers as a USCS member or chapter had little effect, if any, on deterring his activities. There are literally hundreds of thousands of Karcher covers still in existence. Some collectors attempt to divine the “chaff” from the “wheat.” A more simplistic approach is to presume that all Karcher covers are suspect and thus devoid of collecting value. The ancient Roman legal maxim, “false in one, false in all,” applies.

The cachets on the face of many Karcher covers were the result of his theft of artwork, not merely recycling old cuts and designs of earlier sponsors, Karcher literally converted the artwork of another USCS chapter and incorporated it into his cachet designs.

Unlike most collectors, Karcher had a profit motive in the hobby. It is hard to understand how anyone could imagine earning substantial money from creating covers that sold for between a quarter and half a dollar in the late 1960s and 1970s, even when postage was less than a dime. Nevertheless, it is clear that Karcher was in the volume business and created more than a million covers. He also understood that a cachet was necessary to the production and sale of his product. His cachets were self-printed using raised ink print and a series of colors. Rather than paying for a professional printer and art work, Karcher cobbled together his cachets and printed them using a rubber stamp impression instead of a steel plate as would have been used by most lithographers or a block cut used in letter press. To save expense, he would include numerous cuts on the same plate and then literally cut each piece out of the rubber. It would be similar to the practice he probably employed to create his rubber stamp cancels. Then he would arrange the rubber stamp “pieces of the puzzle” to create a cachet to be printed on the covers.

In 1970 or 1971, I first encountered Karcher at a major stamp show in New York City. America Chapter of USCS had just been formed and was in the process of creating its first covers. Karcher suggested an easy fix to the chapter’s problems. He already was established and was willing to personalize covers for the chapter, including adding the

sponsor’s tag line on the bottom face. Initially, he provided a limited number of covers for some early KNOX-class DE commissionings in Boston or Newport. The relationship developed and we discussed how to expand it. The chapter agreed to work with Karcher, allowed him to print our future covers, and entrusted our artwork to him for use in chapter cachets. Together we attended a number of DE commissionings in the Boston area and occasionally met in Providence to visit ships in Newport, then the home of Cruiser Destroyer Force Atlantic. The relationship inevitably soured when Karcher breached his agreement and failed to print chapter covers with cachets incorporating the artwork provided. He was full of words and excuses but failed to deliver. America Chapter returned to local commercial printers, some better than others.

The relationship further fell apart when Karcher and America Chapter member Larry Briend attended the recommissioning of USS HALSEY (DLG 23) at Bath, Maine. The two serviced covers in the ship’s post office and the accommodating postal clerk allowed them to apply their own cancellations. Subsequently, Postal Inspectors interviewed Briend in connection with allegations that the ship’s cancelling devices disappeared during the time he and Karcher were in the post office on HALSEY’s recommissioning day. Briend vehemently denied removing the cancels but believed that Karcher may have placed them in his brief case. No charges were brought against Briend. Despite his many other human failings, Larry Briend would not likely have taken the postmark and he was thoroughly frightened by the interrogation. In any event, the Type 9 from HALSEY was found in Karcher’s Estate. **[Figure B.]**

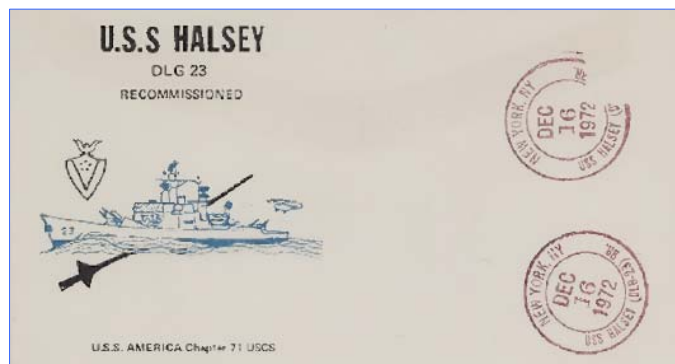


Figure B – USS AMERICA Chapter cachet for HALSEY recommissioning with Type 9 cancellations.

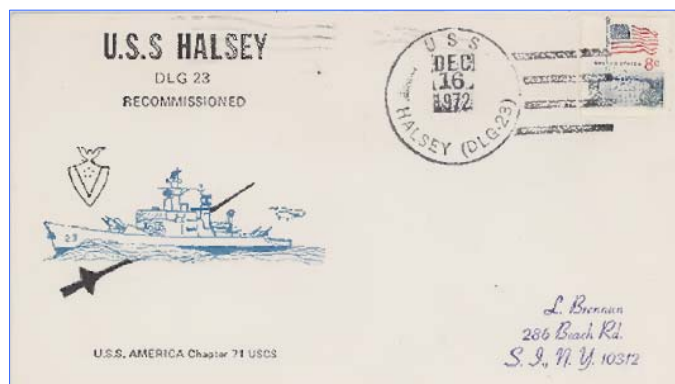


Figure C – USS HALSEY recommissioning with Type 2.

Not only did Karcher fail to deliver the agreed printed cachets incorporating the chapter's artwork, but he refused to return the original drawings.

Complaints were ignored. Ultimately, Karcher returned the original artwork in damaged condition but kept one or more rubber stamp matrixes from which he cut America Chapter drawings to incorporate into his garish cachets. He used the commissioning pennant with the hand printed wording "Commissioning" below in many of his FDC covers. Likewise, he used a bow on sketch of a nuclear attack boat in a building dock for some of his SSN launch covers. **[Figure D]**.

In the long history of navophilately there have been many noble and honorable sponsors and collectors but there have been occasional aberrations as documented by this series of articles. In the case of Karcher sponsored covers, as the Romans aptly said, "Buyer beware" – "*Caveat Emptor*".



Figure D

Originally published USCS Log July 2008 - Pages 12-18

**Naval Cover Fakes,
Forgeries and Frauds**

Part VII

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Fraudulent Covers of Ron Reeves

Ronald Reeves joined the USCS in 1968 as member # 6225. His cover producing days appear to have begun around 1979. Reeves provided a wealth of information to the society, as he was dogged about verifying dates of ship events and sharing this information with the society and other cover sponsors. He did his covers from Jasper Street in the Kensington section of Philadelphia and later at West Collingswood Heights NJ, using a P.O. Box in Mt. Ephraim NJ. Reeves used a Kelsey letterpress to do most of his printing, although some covers can be found with rubber stamp cachets. His printed cachets can be identified with his numbering system, the letter R followed by the number of the cover, such as R-275 (Christening USS MITSCHER (DDG 57), postmarked at Pascagoula MS on 15 May 1993). Some of his early events have the number rubber stamped on the reverse, an example; RON'S No. 63. Not all of the covers produced by Reeves have fraudulent postmarks applied. I have reviewed many covers that are postmarked, both with USPS post office cancels and with U S Navy shipboard cancels that are genuine.

However, it is very evident that the majority of the covers he produced do have fraudulent postmarks. Below is a list of known shipboard postmarks that Reeves made. One cover shown in this article is a fraudulent postmark applied to a cover that may have been acquired by Reeves from another cover producer (Beck) and had the postmark added later, sort of "add-on" cancels.

Ship postmarks:

| | | |
|-----------------|---------|-----------|
| ALBERT DAVID | FF-1050 | 2tnu |
| BADGER | FF-1071 | 2-1(n+) |
| BADGER | FF-1071 | 9-1(n+u) |
| BELKNAP | CG-26 | 2-1a(n) |
| BELKNAP | CG-26 | 2t(n+u) |
| BUNKER HILL | CG-52 | 2-2t(n+) |
| BUNKER HILL | CG-52 | 9-2(n+) |
| CAPE COD | AD-42 | 2-1(n) |
| CAPE COD | AD-42 | 9-2(n+) |
| CLARK | FFG-11 | 2-1n |
| CLARK | FFG-11 | 9-1nu |
| COCHRANE | DDG-21 | 9-1 |
| COMTE DE GRASSE | DD-974 | 2-1(n+) |
| COMTE DE GRASSE | DD-974 | 9-1(n+u) |
| COOK | FF-1083 | F (C102a) |
| CROMMELIN | FFG-37 | 2-1(n+) |
| CURTS | FFG-38 | 2-1(n) |
| DOWNES | FF-1070 | 2-1(n+) |

| | | |
|-------------------|----------|---|
| | | |
| DOWNES | FF-1070 | 9-1n+u |
| ESSEX | LHD-2 | F (E-39) |
| ESSEX | LHA-2 | F (E-39a) |
| FULTON | AS-11 | 9-1(n+u) |
| HALYBURTON | FFG-40 | 2-1(n) |
| HAYLER | DD-997 | 2-1(n+) |
| HEPBURN | FF-1055 | 2-1(n+) |
| HEPBURN | FF-1055 | 9-1(n+u) |
| HUE CITY | CG-66 | 2-2t(n+) |
| HUE CITY | CG-66 | 9-2(n+) |
| IOWA | BB-61 | 2-1(n) |
| JARRETT | FFG-53 | 2t(n+u) |
| JARRETT | FFG-53 | 9(n+u) |
| JOHN L. HALL | FFG-32 | 9-1(n+u) |
| LEXINGTON | AVT-16 | 2-1(n+) |
| LEXINGTON | AVT-16 | 9-1(n+u) |
| LYNDE McCORMICK | DDG-8 | 9-1(n+u) |
| McCLUSKY | FFG-41 | 2-1(n+) error (McCluskey) |
| MEYERKORD | FFG-1058 | 2-1t(n+) U S Navy at bottom |
| MEYERKORD | FFG-1058 | 9-1(n+u) |
| MISSOURI | BB-63 | 2-1(n+) |
| MISSOURI | BB-63 | 9-1(n+u) |
| MOBILE BAY | CG-53 | 2-1n |
| MOBILE BAY | CG-53 | 9-1(n+u) |
| MOOSBRUGGER | DD-980 | 2-1(n+) |
| MOOSBRUGGER | DD-980 | 9-1(n+u) |
| MOUNT WHITNEY | LCC-20 | 2-1(n+) |
| NEW JERSEY | BB-62 | 2-1(n) |
| NEW JERSEY | BB-62 | 9-1nu |
| PHILIPPINE SEA | CG-58 | 2-1(n+) |
| PHILIPPINE SEA | CG-58 | 9-1(n+u) |
| PROTEUS | AS-19 | 2-1(n+) |
| PROTEUS | AS-19 | F (P-50b) |
| PROTEUS | AS-19 | 9-1(n+u) |
| REID | FFG-31 | 9-1(n+u) |
| ST. LOUIS | LKA-116 | 2-1(n+) |
| ST. LOUIS | LKA-116 | 9-1(n+u) |
| SARATOGA | CV-60 | 2-1(n+) |
| SCOTT | DDG-995 | 2-1(n+) |
| SCOTT | DDG-995 | 9-1(n+u) |
| STEPHEN W. GROVES | FFG-29 | 2-1(n) |
| STEPHEN W. GROVES | FFG-29 | 9-1(nu) |
| SWORDFISH | SSN-579 | 2-1n |
| TATTNALL | DDG-19 | 2(n+) |
| THACH | FFG-43 | 2-1(n+) |
| THACH | FFG-43 | 9-1(n+u) |
| TICONDEROGA | CG-47 | 2-1(n+) |
| TICONDEROGA | CG-47 | 9-1(n+u) |
| TISDALE | FFG-27 | 2-1(n+) error should be Mahlon S. Tisdale |

| | | |
|--------------|---------|----------------|
| TISDALE | FFG-27 | 9-1(n+u) error |
| VALLEY FORGE | CG-60 | 2-1(n) |
| VINCENNES | CG-49 | 2-1(n) |
| W. S. SIMS | FF-1059 | 2t(n+u) |
| W. S. SIMS | FF-1059 | 9-1(n+u) |
| YORKTOWN | CG-48 | 2-1(n) |
| YORKTOWN | CG-48 | 9-1(nu) |

A total of 72 ship postmarks are known fraudulent at this time. This is not a complete list, as more will no doubt be discovered in the future.

Chapter Member, Navy Shipyard Employee

Reeves was a member of Stephen Decatur Chapter and an early cachet director of the chapter. It is unknown how many covers he serviced as cachet director, nor if any of those bore fraudulent cancels. Such covers usually had rubber stamp cachets or wording, and were not printed. Many of the events were for ships entering the Philadelphia Naval Shipyard (“Welcome to Philadelphia”), where Reeves worked as a civilian employee of the yard. He also covered many ships visiting Philadelphia’s Penn’s Landing. He had access to every ship that came into the yard and Reeves serviced many covers aboard these ships. He was also “helpful” to several chapters and cover sponsors with his cancels, and these fraudulent cancels are to be found on covers from several chapters, both on the east and west coasts. Reeves was also a key figure in many shipboard fancy cancels. He had access to many postal clerks. He would suggest fancy postmarks for various events, secure permission in writing and present the ship’s postal clerk with the T-F fancy cancels. Some were anniversaries, some commissionings, decommissionings and holidays. Most of these will be found listed in the catalog of postmarks. Since he had permission from the ships to do these fancy cancels, they are not considered fraudulent cancels and are listed as T-F in the cancel catalog.

USPOD/USPS Post Office cancels listed below are known to have been made by Reeves:

- Bath ME 04530, four bar (like T-2)
- Bremerton WA Naval Base Sta. USPS, all purpose cancel (like T-9)
- Camden NJ, all purpose cancel (like T-9)
- Charleston SC Naval Base Br USPO, all purpose cancel (like T-9)
- COMPHIBRON TWO MLSG, four bar cancel, (like T-2)
- COMPHIBRON TWO MLSG all purpose chop (like T-9)
- Groton CT 06340 (four bar cancel, like T-2)
- Honolulu HI Submarine Base Sta USPO, all purpose cancel (like T-9)
- Honolulu HI Submarine Base Sta. USPS (like T-9)
- Jacksonville FL Mayport Navy Station USPO, all purpose cancel (like T-9)
- Key West FL 33040 four bar cancel (like T-2)
- New Orleans LA 70113 (like T-2 without bars)

- Newport News VA USPO, (like T-9)
- Norfolk VA Fleet Br. USPO, all purpose cancel (like T-9)
- Norfolk VA 235, (like T-2 without bars)
- Norfolk VA USPO, all purpose cancel (like T-9)
- Pascagoula MS 39567 four bar cancel (like a T-2)
- Pascagoula MS USPO All purpose cancel (like T-9)
- Pascagoula MS pictorial “Ship Christening Station”
- San Diego CA 92110 three bar cancel
- San Pedro CA USPO (like T-9)
- Silverdale, Bangor WA 98315, Four bar (like T-2)
- U S Naval Base Station Philadelphia PA 19112 (like T-9)

A total of 23 Post offices, stations and branches that are known fraudulent at this time.

How were the postmarks produced?

These fraudulent postmarks were “manufactured” by Reeves, through a simple process of making the cancels first by having a die made of the original cancel, then making it on a rubber stamp making machine. The original cancel would of course have to be “cleaned” of the postage stamp that was copied with the cancel, and the application of white out corrected this problem. There are companies who manufacture zinc printing dies, mounted on wood. These dies are many times used for printing on a letterpress. The same dies can be used to make a rubber stamp. First, a reverse impression of the die is “embossed” into a matrix board. This matrix board is then used in a process of applying uncured rubber to the matrix, then placing it into a stamp-making machine. It is heated, and then pressure is applied. The uncured rubber, with pressure and heat applied, will cure and produce a rubber stamp of whatever the impression was in the matrix board, thus a copy of the postmark wanted. However, in most cases, the stamp made does not have the crisp appearance of an original postmark, and many times consistent imperfections will show on the impression made. This was evident in Pascagoula and Bath post office cancels. I am in possession of the matrix board used in this process; the zinc dies mounted on wood have been destroyed. Examples of several of the matrix boards are shown below.



Matrix shows Silverdale Bangor WA 98315, Bath ME 04530, Pascagoula MS USPO and Jacksonville FL Mayport Navy Station USPO

Expulsion of Ronald Reeves from USCS Membership

Numerous reports of fraudulent postmarks on covers produced by Reeves surfaced for a number of years. The then editor of the postmark catalog, Jim Russell, admonished him on several occasions and each time he was warned he vigorously stated he would no longer make any fraudulent cancels. However, he continued, even after several more verbal warnings even from members of the board of directors of the society. On or about 19 March 1997, Reeves was expelled from membership in the USCS. He denied any wrongdoing and soon after provided what he presented as evidence that one of the reported fraudulent cancels, was not fraudulent, and still in the hands of the U S post office employees at Bath ME. Reeves had asked the clerk at Bath ME provide him with strikes of what appeared to be eight hand cancels that the clerk had access to, then provided these strikes as evidence that the reported fraudulent cancel was in fact in the custody of the clerk. Unfortunately, for Reeves, our society president at the time, Paul Huber, called the post office to check on the cancels provided by Reeves as his "evidence". The clerk mailed the original piece of paper with the original strikes on, however only seven cancels appeared on the page and the Reeves fraudulent cancel was not on the original. However, it did appear as a eighth cancel on the photocopy presented by Reeves as his proof of his innocence. Both the original sheet of paper provided by the USPS in Bath and the thermograph fax paper copy from Reeves to which he added the fraudulent postmark are in the archives of the USCS. The original is scanned and shown here as well as the altered document below it.



Original document verifying cancels on hand at Bath post office



Altered document provided by Reeves as his "proof", note additional postmark applied

Known Ron's Cachets "R" covers with Fraudulent Postmarks

Covers were produced with numbers R-1 through R-286 from information contained in his price lists and notes from 1996. However, a check of a few updated lists indicated he may have issued numbers up to R-290. Those same price lists also show "special" covers, numbered as "Ron's #1 through Ron's #87". These "special" covers varied in subject from First Day of Issue for stamps, to Papal visits and various naval ship events. This series is apparently different from those listed below. I did not have any of these "special" covers to examine.

- R-26 LDC HENRY B. WILSON DDG-7 San Diego 10-2-89
- R-28 LDC FARRAGUT DDG-37 10-30-89
- R-29 LDC CLAUDE V. RICKETTS DDG-5 Norfolk VA 10-31-89
- R-30 LDC LAWRENCE DDG-4 Norfolk VA Fleet Br. 3-30-90
- R-31 LDC JOSEPH STRAUSS DDG-16 Honolulu HI Submarine Base Sta 2-1-90
- R-32 LDC JOHN KING DDG-3 Norfolk VA Fleet Br 3-30-90
- R-34 LDC CHARLES F. ADAMS DDG-2 Jacksonville FL Mayport Navy Sta 8-1-90
- R-37 Deact. JACK SSN-605 USS Fulton 9-12-89
- R-40 Deact. GLENARD P. LIPSCOMB SSN-685 Norfolk VA 235 12-14-89
- R-42 Deact. SCCULPIN SSN-590 Norfolk VA Fleet Br. 11-3-89
- R-43 50th Anniv. PRAIRIE AD-15 (actual ships T2 & T-9 on cover) fraudulent Camden NJ pmk. added 12-9-89
- R-46 Deact. DANIEL WEBSTER SSBN-626 Charleston SC Naval Base Br 8-30-90
- R-47 Deact. HADDO SSN-604 San Diego 5-18-90
- R-48 Deact. QUEENFISH SSN-651 Honolulu HI Submarine base Sta 9-21-90
- R-49 Deact. SEA DEVIL SSN-654 Charleston SC Naval Base Br 2-8-91
- R-52 LDC COCHRANE DDG-21 10-1-90
- R-55 Chris. HAYLER DD-997 Pascagoula MS 3-27-83
- R-56 LDC TATTNALL DDG-19 Ships T-2 and Jacksonville FL Mayport Naval Station
- R-60 LDC SAMPSON DDG-10 Jacksonville FL Mayport Naval Station
- R-60 (number duplicated) FDC TICONDEROGA CG-47 1-28-03 T-2
- R-64 Deact. JOHN MARSHALL SSN-611 Norfolk VA 11-23-91
- R-70 Deact. SAM HOUSTON SSN-609 Honolulu HI Submarine Base Sta 2-1-91
- R-71 Deact. TINOSA USS Fulton 5-10-91
- R-73 Keel CG-50 Pascagoula MS 4-14-83
- R-76 Chris. YORKTOWN CG-48 4-16-83
- R-78 LDC DAHLGREN DDG-43 Norfolk VA Fleet Br. 7-31-92
- R-79 LDC PREBLE DDG-46 Norfolk 11-15-91

- R-81 Chris. VINCENNES CG-49 4-14-84
- R-82 Keel CG-51 Bath ME 8-31-84
- R-82 (Number duplicated) LDC BENJAMIN STODDERT DDG-22 Honolulu HI Submarine Base Sta 12-20-91
- R-83 LDC WADDELL DDG-24 10-1-92
- R-87 Deact. GUITARRO SSN-665 San Diego 9-13-91
- R-90 Comm. YORKTOWN CG-48 7-4-84
- R-90 (Number duplicated) Operation Desert Storm Cachet LDPS MISSOURI BB-63 T-2, T-9 2-28-92
- R-92 Keel CG-53 Pascagoula MS 6-5-84
- R-94 Keel CG-54 Pascagoula MS 11-15-84
- R-95 Chris. VALLEY FORGE CG-50 Pascagoula MS 9-29-84
- R-96 Comm. VINCENNES CG-49 7-6-85
- R-97 Comm. VALLEY FORGE CG-50 1-18-86
- R-99 Keel CG-55 Pascagoula MS 3-18-85
- R-100 Chris. BUNKER HILL CG-52 Pascagoula MS 4-13-85
- R-101 Keel CG-52 Pascagoula MS 1-11-84
- R-106 Chris. MOBIL BAY CG-53 Pascagoula MS 10-12-85
- R-107 Keel CG-56 Pascagoula MS 7-22-85
- R-112 Chris. ANTIETAM CG-54 Pascagoula MS 4-19-86
- R-114 Chris. LEYETE GULF CG-55 Pascagoula MS 10-11-86
- R-116 Keel CG-57 Pascagoula MS 3-3-86
- R-119 Comm. BUNKER HILL CG-52 9-20-86
- R-121 Keel CG-58 Bath ME 4-14-86
- R-122 LDPS CLARK FFG-11 8-15-85
- R-127 Chris. SAN JACINTO CG-56 Pascagoula MS 1-24-87
- R-128 Keel CG-59 Pascagoula MS 10-13-86
- R-130 Keel CG-60 Bath ME 7-7-87
- R-133 Chris. LAKE CHAMPLAIN CG-57 Pascagoula MS 4-25-87
- R-135 Keel CG-61 Bath ME 8-25-87
- R-136 Chris. PHILIPPINE SEA CG-58 Bath ME 7-12-87
- R-138 Keel CG-62 Pascagoula MS 6-24-87
- R-141 Keel ESSEX LHD-2 Pascagoula MS 3-20-89
- R-142 Keel CG-63 Bath ME 12-23-87
- R-143 Chris. WASP LHD-1 Pascagoula MS 9-19-87
- R-144 Chris. PRINCETON CG-59, Pascagoula MS 10-17-87
- R-145 Keel CG-64 Bath ME 8-17-88
- R-146 Chris. GUNSTON HALL LSD-44 New Orleans LA 6-27-87
- R-148 Chris. NORMANDY CG-60 Bath ME 3-19-88
- R-149 Keel CG-65 Pascagoula MS 7-18-88
- R-150 Chris. MONTEREY CG-61 Bath ME 10-23-88
- R-151 FDC PRESERVER ARS-8 Norfolk VA 235 9-26-87
- R-152 Chris. ESSEX LHD-2 Pascagoula MS 3-16-91
- R-153 FDC PHILIPPINE SEA CG-58 Legitimate cancel applied on wrong date (7-4-89) additional cancel applied (fraudulent) 3-18-89 T-2
- R-154 Chris. CHANCELLORSVILLE CG-62 7-23-88
- R-155 FDC PAIUTE ATF-159 Norfolk VA 9-30-88
- R-156 Comm. PAPAGO ATF-160 Norfolk VA 9-30-88
- R-157 Comm. CONSERVER ARS-39 Honolulu HI Submarine Base Sta 9-25-89
- R-158 Chris. COMSTOCK LSD-45 New Orleans LA 1-16-88
- R-159 LDC SARGO SSN-583 Honolulu HI Submarine Base Sta 2-26-88
- R-162 Keel CG-66 Pascagoula MS 2-20-89
- R-165 LDC ANDREW JACKSON SSBN-619 Charleston SC Naval Base Sta 8-31-89
- R-166 Keel ARLEIGH BURKE DDG-51 Bath ME 12-14-87
- R-168 Keel CG-67 Bath ME 8-11-89
- R-169a Comm. NORMANDY CG-60 12-19-89
- R-170 Keel CG-68 Pascagoula MS 8-21-89
- R-171 Chris. COWPENS CG-63 Bath ME 3-11-89
- R-173 Chris. TORTUGA LSD-46 New Orleans LA 6-18-88
- R-175 LDC SCULPIN SSN-590 Newport News VA 8-3-90
- R-178 Keel DDG-52 Pascagoula MS 2-26-90
- R-179 KL KEARSARGE LHD-3 Pascagoula MS 5-5-90
- R-181 LDC BONEFISH SS-582 Charleston SC Naval base Br 9-28-88
- R-187 LDC JAMES MONROE SSBN-622 Bremerton WA Naval Base Sta 9-25-90
- R-188 LDC HENRY CLAY SSBN-625 Charleston SC Naval base Br 11-2-90
- R-189 Chris. RUSHMORE LSD-47 New Orleans LA 5-6-89
- R-191 Chris. GETTYSBURG CG-64 Bath ME 7-22-89
- R-193 Keel JOHN C STENNIS CVN-74 Newport News VA 3-13-91
- R-194 Keel CG-69 Pascagoula MS 5-30-90
- R-195 LDC BARB SSN-596 Bremerton WA Naval base Sta 12-20-89
- R-197 Chris. ASHLAND LSD-48 New Orleans 11-11-89
- R-199 Chris. CHOSIN CG-65 Pascagoula MS 10-14-89
- R-201 Keel LSD-49 New Orleans LA 4-15-91
- R-203 Keel CG-70 Bath ME 3-6-90
- R-204 Chris. HUE CITY CG-66 Pascagoula MS 7-21-90
- R-205 Keel DDG-53 Bath ME 8-8-90
- R-206 Launch ARLEIGH BURKE DDG-51 Bath ME 9-9-89
- R-209 Keel DDG-54 Bath ME 2-12-91
- R-213 Lau. SUPPLY AOE-6 San Diego CA 92110 10-6-90
- R-214 Chris. SHILOH CG-67 Bath ME 9-8-90
- R-215 Chris. ANZIO CG-68 Pascagoula MS 11-10-90
- R-215 (number duplicated) Keel RANIER (misspelled) AOE-7 San Diego 92110 5-31-90

- R-216 Chris. ANZIO CG-68 Pascagoula MS 11-10-90
- R-217 Keel DDG-56 Bath ME 9-3-91
- R-218 Keel CG-71 Pascagoula MS 11-19-90
- R-219 Keel BOXER LHD-4 Pascagoula MS 4-1-91
- R-222 LDC GLENARD P. LIPSCOMB SSN-685 Bremerton WA naval Base Sta 7-11-90
- R-224 Keel CG-72 Pascagoula MS 4-22-91
- R-225 LDC BARBEL SS-580 Honolulu HI Submarine Base Sta 12-4-89
- R-228 LDC TINOSA SSN-606 Bremerton WA Naval Base Br 1-15-92
- R-230 Chris. JOHN PAUL JONES DDG-53 Bath ME 10-26-91
- R-233 Keel CG-73 Pascagoula MS 11-20-91
- R-236 Chris. VICKSBURG CG-69 Pascagoula (pictorial) MS 10-12-91
- R-237 Keel ARCTIC AOE-8 San Diego CA 92110 12-2-91
- R-240 Keel DDG-55 Pascagoula MS 6-17-91
- R-242 LDC FULTON AS-11 T-9 9-26-91
- R-245 Keel DDG-57 Pascagoula MS 2-10-92
- R-247 Chris. CAPE ST. GEORGE CG-71 Pascagoula (pictorial) MS 4-11-92
- R-249 Keel DDG-58 Bath ME 3-24-92
- R-253 Keel DDG-59 Pascagoula MS 7-27-92
- R-255 Chris. STOUT CG-55 Pascagoula MS 10-24-92
- R-256 Chris. KEARSARGE LHD-3 Pascagoula MS (pictorial Chris sta) 5-16-92
- R-258 Keel DDG-60 Bath ME 4-25-92
- R-263 Chris. LAKE ERIE CG-70 Bath ME 7-13-91
- R-268 Chris. CURTIS WILBUR DDG-54 Bath ME 5-16-92
- R-269 Chris. VELLA GULF CG-72 Pascagoula (pictorial) MS 7-25-92
- R-270 Chris. JOHN S. McCAIN DDG-56 Bath ME 9-26-92
- R-272 Keel LSD-50 New Orleans LA 70133 11-8-91
- R-273 Lau. RANIER (misspelled) AOE-7 San Diego CA USPO 9-28-91
- R-274 Chris. LABOON DDG-58 Bath ME 2-20-93
- R-275 Chris. MITSCHER DDG-57 Pascagoula MS 5-15-93
- R-276 Chris. PORT ROYAL CG-73 Pascagoula (pictorial) MS 12-5-92
- R-281 Keel DDG-61 Pascagoula MS 1-4-93
- R-282 Keel DDG-62 Bath ME 2-9-93
- R-283 Chris. BOXER LHD-4 Pascagoula MS 8-28-93
- No number: LDC HERMITAGE LSD-34 Norfolk VA 235 10-2-89
- No number LDC PETREL ASR-14 Charleston SC Naval Base Br USPO 8-27-91

A total of 139 covers are listed above, produced as Ron's Cachets with known fraudulent cancels. All were done on a letterpress.

Recent discoveries:

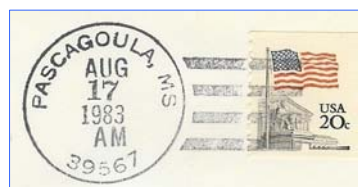
No number USS HARPERS FERRY LSD 49 Christening 1-16-93 New Orleans LA 70113 stamped on reverse Ronald Reeves Cover No. 2 of 2. Appears to be a computer generated cachet of ships crest.

Guide for Checking Your Covers

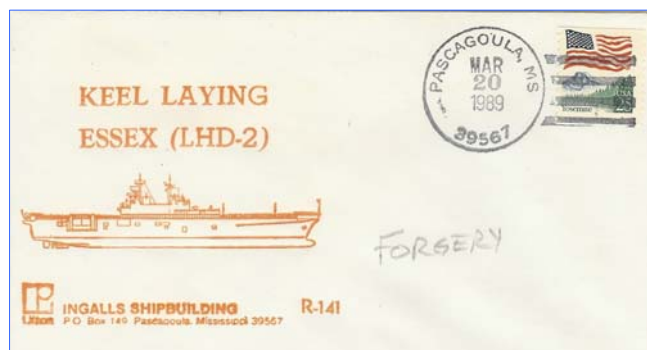
Several telltale indicators found on Reeves fraudulent cancels: At times a split in the numeral "9" or "8" in the daters on the cancels. It appears in both Bath and Pascagoula cancels on various events. Additionally, and much more noticeable in the Pascagoula MS four bar cancels, it is easy to spot most of these. If you look between the "O" and "U" at the top of the strikes you will see a dot. It will not appear in at approx. 9 o'clock on the outer circle of the dial. legitimate cancel. As for Bath ME, a notch appears on these



Fraudulent postmark from Pascagoula (note dot between O and U)



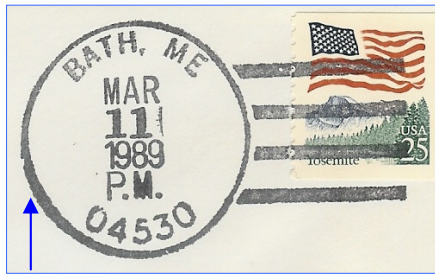
Legitimate postmark from Pascagoula



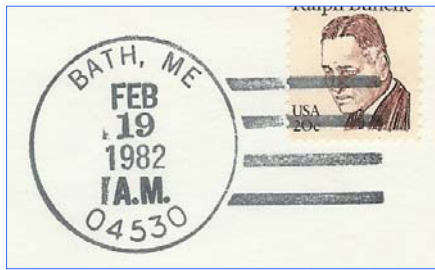
Reeves cover R-141 with fraudulent four-bar cancel from Pascagoula MS



Reeves cover R-179 with fraudulent all purpose Cancel from Pascagoula MS



Fraudulent postmark from Bath ME (note nick at approx. 9PM on the dial)



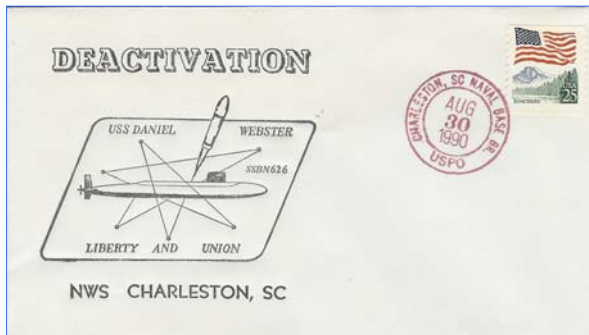
Legitimate postmark from Bath ME



Reeves R-166 with fraudulent Bath ME postmark



Reeves cover # R-179 with fraudulent Pascagoula all purpose cancel.



Reeves cover # R-46 showing use of fraudulent Charleston SC Naval Base Sta. all-purpose cancel

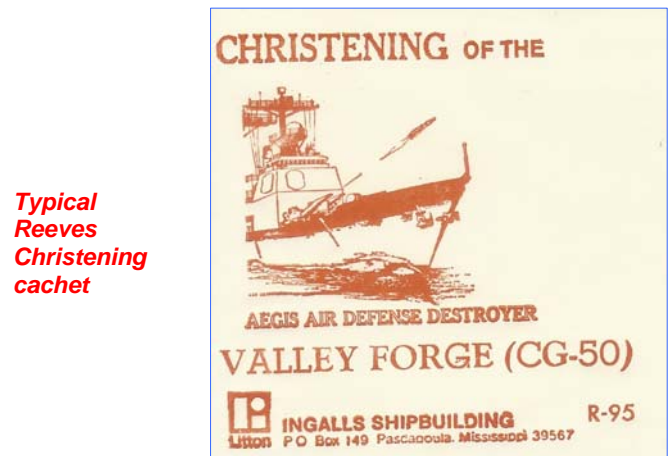
I have examined numerous Reeves cover numbers that had ship postmarks, and it appears that not all of his shipboard postmarks on cover were fraudulent. It is possible that he had some cancelled aboard and did additional covers with fraudulent cancels. More research in this area is needed. An example is R-160 LDC USS SWORDFISH (SSN 579) 6-2-89. A cover was examined and the cancel appears to be legitimate. However, there is proof that a fraudulent cancel was made by Reeves. All covers examined with machine cancels were found to be legitimate.



Reeves cachet R-160 with what appears to be a legitimate shipboard postmark, but a postmark documented as being compromised by him



Typical Reeves keel laying cachet



Typical Reeves Christening cachet

The list of known fraudulently postmarked Reeves covers totals 140 found to date. Many more covers are out there that are not on this list.



Unnumbered Reeves cachet with fraudulent Norfolk VA 235 postmark



Reeves cachet #R-256 shows usage of fraudulent Pascagoula MS pictorial "Ship Christening Station"

R & G Cachets - Ron Reeves and George Newman cachets

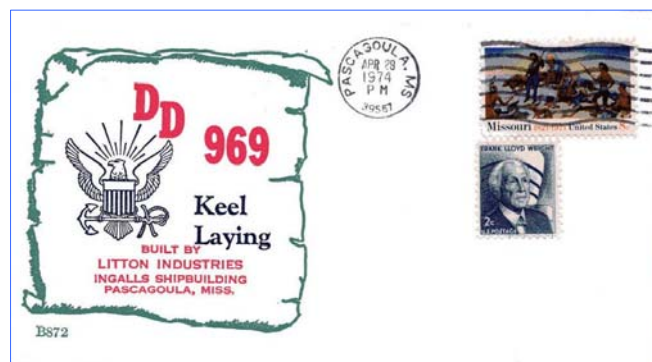
Ron Reeves also cosponsored a series of cachets with another USCS member, George Newman of Southampton PA. They issued the covers under the name RG Cachets. They covered a period of 1973 to 1979. The covers I have seen have the cover number printed as part of the cachet. The covers were printed by a professional printer, not by Reeves on his letterpress. I have reviewed 54 of these covers for fraudulent postmarks. I did come across one of the covers, which is shown below. It has the fraudulent Honolulu Sub Base postmark dated 1 December 1989. I suspect this was serviced much later than it was printed, considering it has two corrective labels attached, one changing the date in the cachet to 1989 and a second label changing the location from San Diego to Pearl Harbor, plus several stamps to match the postal rate when it was finally cancelled.



RG cachet #A16 with fraudulent Honolulu Sub Base postmark.

All of the other R-G Cachets that I reviewed have legitimate cancels, many with machine postmarks, some with meter impressions from Pascagoula MS (Ingalls Shipbuilding meters) and a few with shipboard cancels for commissionings. Except for the covers shown here, I don't have any reason to suspect the RG cachets.

Recent Finds



This is the actual Beck B872 serviced cover



Beck cachet B872 with a Reeves fraudulent postmark

Above is interesting cover that recently surfaced on eBay, a Beck cachet (B872) for the Keel Laying of USS PETERSON (DD 969), with a counterfeit Reeves cancel for Pascagoula MS. One can only speculate how this came about. A scan of the cover has submitted to Owen Murray, an expert on Beck covers. It was the first Beck cover he had seen with a counterfeit cancel. It is known that Morris W. Beck was not able to get all of his 1000 numbered cachets serviced. Several fell through due to various reasons. Some collectors contacted him in later years seeking these printed but un-serviced covers. Apparently, Mr. Beck gave away various event covers without cancels. This may account for this fake Reeves cancel on a Beck cover.

Please contact this writer if you have any additional covers that you suspect, so the society can have a complete list of these fraudulent covers.

Another recent find is a cover with a "modern era" computer generated cachet for the Christening of USS HARPERS FERRY (LSD 49). The cover is cancelled with a Reeves counterfeit postmark of New Orleans LA 70113. This cover does not have an "R" number on it. It is back stamped "Cover No. 2 of 2 Ronald Reeves."



Computer generated christening cachet with ship's logo on cover with fake New Orleans cancel.

Yet, another event date to recently to come to light is from Honolulu HI Submarine Base Sta., dated 19 November 1987. The date is the deactivation of USS SWORDFISH (SSN-579). This counterfeit cancel is shown below. I have not seen an example of this on a Reeves cover yet.



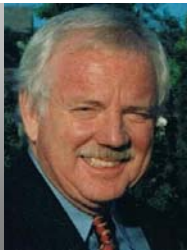
Fake Honolulu Sub Base Sta. cancel.

Thank you to those who contributed to this article. A special thanks to Greg Ciesielski, Larry Brennan, Bob Rawlins and Paul Huber and an unnamed source who provided many covers with counterfeit cancels, covers purchased directly from Reeves.

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**Naval Cover Fakes,
Forgeries and Frauds
Part VIII**

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U.S. Space Recovery Ship Cancels & Charles Riser

In the continuing series of Naval Cover Fakes, Forgeries and Frauds, this chapter involves the strange case of Charles R. Riser of Bowie, Maryland and his 1974 Federal Grand Jury indictment for mail fraud which specifically involved the fraudulent use of the naval cancels from seven US Navy ships which were all involved at the time with the United States Space Program as recovery ships.

Before addressing the details of how Riser proceeded with his illegal activities and how the space cover collecting community brought him down, we should review the space program and the attraction for Riser to consider forgery of these naval cancels.

The US Navy involvement in the space program was massive. According to Don Blair and his excellent publication *Splashdown! NASA and the Navy* (ISBN 1-56311-985-4) published in 2004, 236 different ships participated in 32 manned spacecraft splashdowns from the first, named Freedom 7 on 5 May 1961 through the Apollo-Soyuz Test Project on 24 July 1975. If one counts the several repetitive ship appearances in splashdown activities over the 15 years, there were some 459 appearances.

This article will also review and compare two space events, the first manned event Mercury-Redstone 3/Freedom 7 on 5 May 1961 with USS LAKE CHAMPLAIN (CVS 39) as the recovery ship and CDR Alan Shepard aboard Freedom 7 as the astronaut. The second will be the Mercury-Atlas 7/Aurora 7 on 24 May 1962 with M. Scott Carpenter as the astronaut and recovery aboard USS INTREPID (CVS 11).

USS LAKE CHAMPLAIN (CVS 39) 5 May 1961

The main focus of recovery ship naval cancel collecting is the USS LAKE CHAMPLAIN (CVS 39) cancel with a date of 5 May 1961 (Figure 1). This particular cover carries certificate #37590 dated 23 June 1979 from the American Philatelic Expertizing Service.



Figure 1: USS LAKE CHAMPLAIN cancel and 4-line cachet.

Opinions vary widely on the number of cancels and types of cancels produced that day. The original estimate from a journalist aboard for the recovery estimated the number at about 44; however, with a crew of several thousand aboard plus visiting dignitaries it is hard to believe that only 44 cancels were struck that day.

“Freedom Seven” was Commander Alan Shepard’s choice for the name of America’s first manned effort into space as he felt “Freedom” was patriotic and “Seven” because it was the seventh Mercury capsule produced. The flight duration was 15 minutes and 28 seconds reaching an altitude of 116.5 statute miles and velocity of 5,134 miles per hour. It covered a distance of 303 statute miles and was recovered at 9:49 am on 5 May 1961. The capsule is now on display at the United States Naval Academy at Annapolis, MD. LAKE CHAMPLAIN was one of 10 ships in the recovery fleet and CDR Shepard was plucked from the ocean by Marine helicopter squadron HMR (L)-262 out of New River, North Carolina.

Shepard went on to Apollo 14 (and golf on the moon) to retire as a Rear Admiral in 1974. He passed away in 1998 at the age of 74.

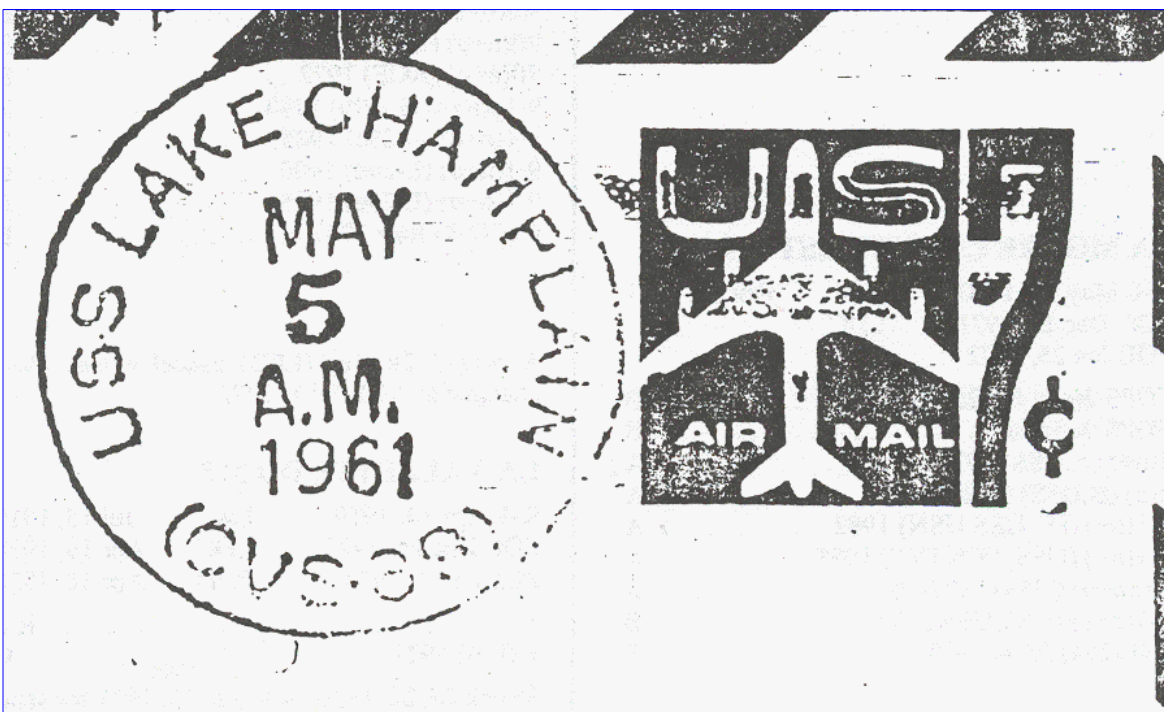
The value of the LAKE CHAMPLAIN 5 May 1961 cancel has remained strong over the years and a Harmer-Schau/APS auction in 2007 had a final sale price of \$2600 (the fake cancel of the same date realized \$300 at the same auction).

In 2002, a different auction company listed the 5 May 1961 cancel for auction at an estimated \$3500-\$5000, a few days later it was withdrawn when they realized it was a Riser fake cancel. In that same auction, a USS RANDOLPH (CVS 15) cancel of 21 July 1961(Gus Grissom/Mercury 4) was estimated at \$1500-\$2500. It too was withdrawn from sale when identified as a Riser cover.

The LAKE CHAMPLAIN cover (Figure 2) was used in the Riser case as evidence, the INTREPID cover (Figure 5) was not. Both of these covers were obtained by the writer in 1979 in an auction lot of about 20 similar covers when they were sold by a reputable New Jersey space cover dealer who marked all covers on the reverse side with a statement to the fact that they were fraudulent.



Figure 2: Riser faked USS LAKE CHAMPLAIN cover. See chart shown as Figure 3 for comparison points.



SPACE RECOVERY FORGERY

On May 5, 1961 LAKE CHAMPLAIN served as the prime recovery ship for Mercury astronaut Alan Shepard's historic first trip into space. Only a handful of covers were aboard the ship for the event. The scarcity of these covers, coupled with the subsequent growth in collecting this type of cover, led at least one dealer, Charles Riser, to produce fake cancellations. Shown here is an enlarged copy of the Riser fake, along with distinguishing characteristics of his fake cancel, used as evidence during his prosecution.

| Characteristic | Fake | Genuine |
|-----------------|--|-----------------------------|
| Y of MAY | Incomplete or top right has bulge | Complete |
| 5 under MAY | To the left of the bottom of A in May | Directly under the A of May |
| A of LAKE | Short left leg | Same size as right leg |
| 1's of 1961 | Uneven and not the same | Perfect match |
| 1961 and CVS-39 | Possible dot between 1 of 1961 and CVS-39 | No dot |
| 5 of date | Possible dots before and after | No dots |
| Stamps | Government stamped envelopes, Scott UC-26 or UC-33 | Various |

Due to ink and pressure variables, not all characteristics may be present on all covers.

(Courtesy American Philatelic Expertization Service.)

Figure 3: January 1975 "ASTROPHILE" by Lester E. Winick and Dr. Reuben A. Ramkissoon. As shown in Catalog of US Navy Postmarks on page L-2

The article concludes with the details of the United States Government’s case and subsequent conviction of Charles Riser.

USS INTREPID (CVS 11) 24 May 1962

Two months after John Glenn became the first American to orbit the earth, LCDR Scott Carpenter in Aurora 7 launched on 24 May 1962 at 7:45 AM for a flight of 4 hours and 56 minutes making 3 orbits around earth at 17,549 miles per hour, a total distance of 76,021 statute miles.

USS FARRAGUT (DLG 6) was the first to reach Carpenter who overshot the landing point by about 250 miles; eventually, an HSS-2 helicopter from USS INTREPID retrieved him from the sea. Carpenter went on to become an “aquanaut” and was active in the Navy’s SEALAB project. He is now 83 years old and lives in his home state of Colorado. The capsule was picked up by USS JOHN R. PIERCE (DD 753) and is now on display at the Museum of Science and Industry in Chicago.

The authentic INTREPID cancel of 24 May 1962, a Type 2 (n) is shown as **Figure 4**. Riser’s effort is shown as **Figure 5**.

A web site that specializes in space cover information and provides detailed information on astronaut signatures, (www.collectspace.com) indicates that there are no known autopen examples of Scott Carpenter’s autograph.

Note that the cachet on the Riser cover uses the initial “M” (for Malcolm) as does the signature in the real cover, the letter “M” does not appear on the Riser cover autograph. Carpenter’s rank on Riser’s cachet shows “Cdr.” (O-5) at the time of this flight he was a LCDR (O-4).

Higher prices on selected US Naval Recovery ship cancels are generally due to the strong collecting interest by space cover collectors and the few number of cancels available from earlier missions.

Primary and secondary recovery ships cancels for the most part are fairly common as very large numbers were produced. So called “Captains covers” (those with the Commanding Officer’s printed signature) and autographed covers raise the prices a bit but are still reasonable in price. The much higher priced cancels are the aforementioned LAKE CHAMPLAIN and RANDOLPH plus the 20 February 1962 USS NOA (DD-841) which was the back-up recovery ship from John Glenn in Friendship 7 (Mercury-Atlas 6) when the prime recovery ship USS RANDOLPH was too far away to make the recovery and the 16 March 1966 USS LEONARD F. MASON (DD-852) when Gemini 8 landed in the Pacific Ocean rather than in the Atlantic Ocean as planned.

So it is not too surprising to see which cancels were among those that Charles Riser selected for his fake series of recovery ship cancels.

A Philatelic Detective Story...

Thirty-three years ago in 1975, Sean Marsar of Bethpage, New York wrote an article for *The Western Stamp Collector* called “A Philatelic Detective Story” in which he outlined how he discovered the antics of Charles Riser.

As I was researching material for this article, I decided to telephone Sean Marsar in New York and update his 1975 article, which I had yellowing in my space cover file.

Sean related that he had begun his dealings with Riser in November 1973 when he started buying space covers from Riser who was then a space cover dealer. When his first package arrived, Sean was a bit surprised to notice that all the recovery ship cancels were on US Government printed air mail envelopes. A few months later he came upon a dealer of postal stationery stock located on Long Island N.Y. who mentioned to Sean that a space cover dealer, Charles Riser had purchased 700 blank envelopes of the 6 and 7 cent airmail variety. The news “hit me like a ton of bricks” Sean related and he decided to immediately contact the U.S. Postal Inspectors. The Government proceeded to mark 95 blank envelopes with a mark that would only show up under ultraviolet light.

In March 1974, Marsar received a Gemini 8 recovery cancel from USS LEONARD F. MASON, he checked the cover under the special light and there was the coded marking.

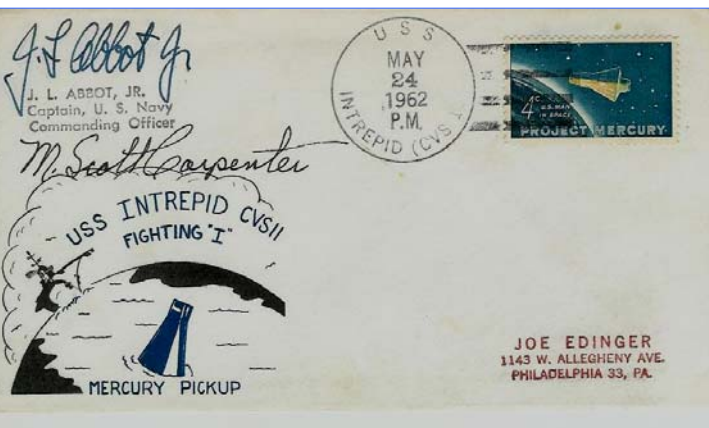


Figure 4: USS INTREPID (CVS 11) Aurora 7 authentic cover.

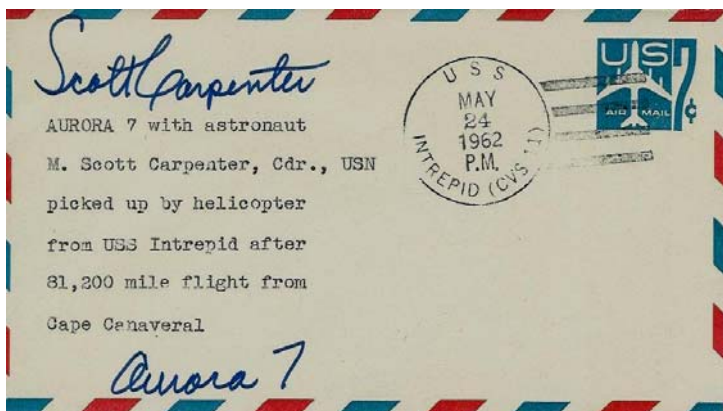


Figure 5: Charles Riser version of the Aurora 7 cover. See points for verification below.

The INTREPID cancel was not a part of the case against Riser but was obtained with the other fraudulent covers in 1979.

He forwarded his findings to Lester Winick of Homewood, Illinois who was then the President of the Space Topics Study Group (an affiliate of American Philatelic Society and American Topical Association).

Under the direction of Les Winick and on behalf of the Space Unit and collectors everywhere, the evidence that Sean Marsar had provided, specifically fourteen U.S. space covers were presented in evidence by the US Government against Charles Riser. The fourteen ship cancels used in evidence were from USS LAKE CHAMPLAIN (CVS 39), USS DECATUR (DD 936), USS LA SALLE (LPD 3), USS L. F. MASON (DD 852), USS NOA (DD 841), USS RANDOLPH (CVS 15) and USS STORMES (DD 780).

An excellent study of the material submitted to the government was published as a supplement to the January 1975 *ASTROPHILE* by Lester E. Winick and Dr. Reuben A. Ramkissoon. An example of their work is shown in the USCS *Catalog of US Navy Postmarks* on page L-2 and is shown on page 13 as **Figure 3**.

On 11 March 1975, Riser pleaded guilty to mail fraud and was given four years probation. This may be the only known case in which a person was convicted of forging US Naval cancels. Riser confessed to faking 51 US space covers (it should be noted that he also faked non-naval covers) and the US Postal Inspectors kept 14. Since he had purchased over 700 blank envelopes of the 6 and 7 cent variety that leaves a large number unaccounted for, most probably unwittingly in cover collections and postal history dealer boxes around the world.

The Name

The *Freedom 7* spacecraft was delivered to Cape Canaveral FL on 9 December 1960 on *Freedom 7* capsule #7, and it had been given special attention at the factory since it was selected for the first manned suborbital flight in October 1960.

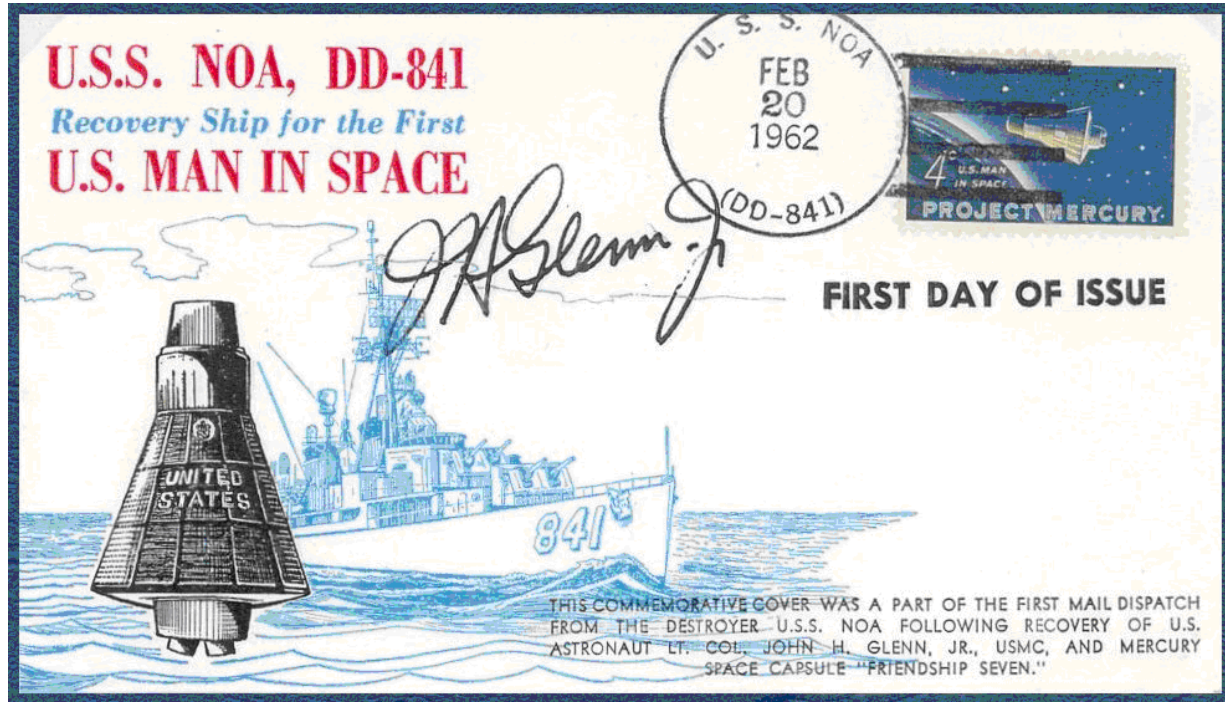
Alan B. Shepard, Jr. was riding on Redstone MRLV-7 and in Mercury spacecraft #7. In all subsequent Mercury flights, the number 7 was appended to the astronaut-chosen spacecraft/mission name and call sign, in honor of the fact that there were [7 original Mercury astronauts](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/7_original_Mercury_astronauts).

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Freedom_7



Freedom 7 and Aurora 7 commemorative patches.

Mercury/Atlas 6
USS NOA (DD 841) Mercury Commemorative Stamp



Significant Comments

1. Navy's Chief of Information Rear Admiral *D.F. Smith, Jr.* stated there were no Project Mercury stamps aboard USS NOA on 20 February 1962 when the destroyer recovered the space capsule.
2. USS NOA returned to port on Washington's birthday on 22 February 1962. The next day, the Project Mercury stamp was available.
3. The postal clerk stated, "The stamps did not reach the ship until the 23 of February. Those special envelopes with the ships picture and capsule, plus a small number with printed cachet 'First U.S. Orbital Flight/John H. Glenn, Jr. USMC/Space Craft Friendship 7', all dated February 20, were stamped only for the crew and their loved ones or whoever they choose to send them to." He was later tried by a court-martial.
4. 300 backdated covers exist with the Project Mercury stamp postmarked on 20 February 1962. In addition, 24 covers exist with red cancels.
5. Approximately, 1500 covers of the type above exist with the Project Mercury stamp and postmarked 23 February 1962.
6. Genuine covers **do** exist postmarked on 20 February 1962 on USS NOA with a 4-cent definitive issue US stamp.

Conclusion

1. **Any recovery ship cover with 20 February 1962 postmark and a Project Mercury stamp is a backdated cover.** This holds true for Navy, ship, or privately cacheted covers.
2. The only available outlets for the Project Mercury commemorative stamp on 20 February 1962 were 305 cities across America. No ships were included in the pre-distribution for the Project Mercury stamp.

Reference

Donald Schultz, "Project Mercury Stamps Aboard The John Glenn Recovery Ships" *Astrophile*, Vol. XIV No. 5, May 1971: 31- 32.
 Torchy Hoerschgen. "USS Noa Mercury Stamp Cancels Revisited" *Astrophile* Vol. XXXII No. 1; January, 1988: 20 - 21.

With this message, I am transmitting to Richard Jones an electronic copy of the page on backdated NOA's from the ATA/APS Space Unit's *Study of Suspect Space Covers* copyright 2001, second edition, compact disk, by Paul C. Bulver. Reprinted by permission of the Space Unit and Paul C. Bulver.

**Naval Cover Fakes,
Forgeries and Frauds**

Part IX

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Glenn Dye Covers

Another major player in our pantheon of cover fabricators is Glenn Dye of Wildwood, New Jersey. Dye adds another black chapter of the few individuals who, for whatever reason, chose to fake covers to deceive collectors.

We don't know a lot about the early Glenn Dye. The first cover in his file has a thermographed cachet for launch of USS PICKING DD-685 at Staten Island, New York, bears a rubber stamp notation on reverse: "Cacheted By: ANCS 2208, RCD 328, Glenn W. Dye, USN," **Figure 1**. The cover is unfranked, has a type 3z cancel of 1 June 1943 and is addressed to Olive Mackay of Oakland, a very active collector. In all likelihood, this cover was backdated since the precise sponsor notation on reverse did not come into use until about a year after the postmark date. Dye was not accepted into the American Naval Cancellation Society (ANCS) until August 1943, sponsored by A.A. Christensen, and had to have become a Registered Cachet Director (RCD) sometime after that. As a matter of fact, RCD status was not given to cover sponsors until they had demonstrated to the satisfaction of the Cachet Directors Council that the sponsor lived up to RCD standards demonstrated by actually providing covers for which they had received payment. The RCD program was terminated with #329 given to Morris W. Beck who began his naval cover sponsorship in the early 1940 timeframe.

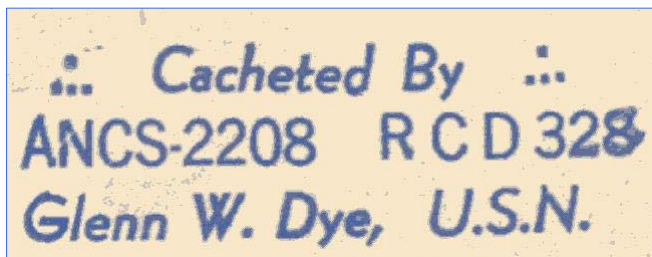


Figure 1: Although this cachet identification was stamped on the reverse of this 1 June 1943 cover, Dye did not routinely begin using both the ANCS and RCD ID's until mid 1944. This is one indication that the cover was cacheted and postmarked about a year after the launch of USS PICKING.

When Dye joined the ANCS, he listed his military station as Receiving Ship, U.S. Navy Yard, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania and his naval rating as F/2c (Fireman second class). Between August and September 1943, Dye sponsored event, holiday and patriotic covers with printed cachets and Type 2z* cancels and assorted Type 9 cancels from Wildwood Navy branch and Cape May Naval Air Stations. These were identified on reverse with his rubber stamp and International Cover Guild (ICG) number 367, **Figure 2**. It is not known when Dye joined the ICG.

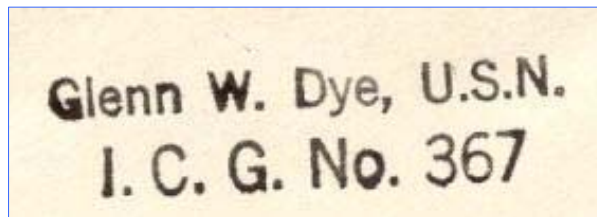


Figure 2: Dye's first covers bore only an ICG number as sponsor identification. This particular cover with a Type 2z cancel dated 2 September 1943 was a patriotic with a buy more war bonds theme.*

USCS records show that Dye joined the USCS in September 1943 with D.C. Bartley as his sponsor. His USCS number was A-2254 with "A" indicating that he was in the military. Dye gave his address as 5200 Arctic Ave, Wildwood, New Jersey and his military rate as F/3c (Fireman third class). This is perhaps born out by a Navy Day cover mailed to Alex Hesse, USCS 163, with a Naval Training Station Bainbridge, Maryland printed cachet and an International Cover Guild (ICG) cachet on reverse, **Figure 3**. Also on reverse was Dye's rubber stamp information block identifying this as cover #34 of 50 issued along with his ANCS and ICG numbers.

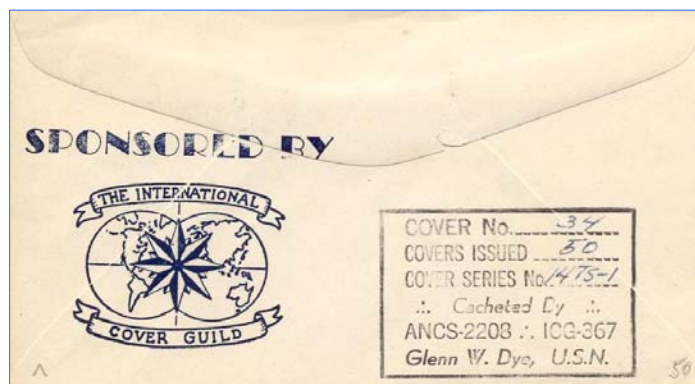


Figure 3: Reverse of a Navy Day 1943 cover sent to Alex Hesse, an early member of the USCS, with both ANCS and ICG numbers in the sponsor ID block. Dye numbered each cover, noted the number issued and assigned a series number to the cachet.

In March 1944, Dye was stationed aboard YMS-111 and by June of that year, was postmarking his covers with his fancy rubber stamp cancel illustrated as Y-6 and noted as a "fake," **Figure 4**, in the *Catalog of US Naval Postmarks* (hereafter *Postmark Catalog*). This cancel was stamped in red for D-Day, 6 June 1944, with Dye's sponsorship rubber stamp on reverse using both his ANCS and RCD numbers. A month later, Dye produced an Independence Day thermograph cacheted cover with the fake cancel in blue dated 4 July 1944.

In December 1944, Dye was stationed aboard USS LCI(L)-552, still as F 2/c. By that time, he was servicing covers for collectors as Grey Cover Service, 5200 Arctic Ave, Wildwood, NJ. In January 1945, Dye was aboard LCI(L) 36 at the Naval Amphibious Base at Little Creek, Virginia and, in April, received a letter from Dr. Harry Kretzler, USCS 55,

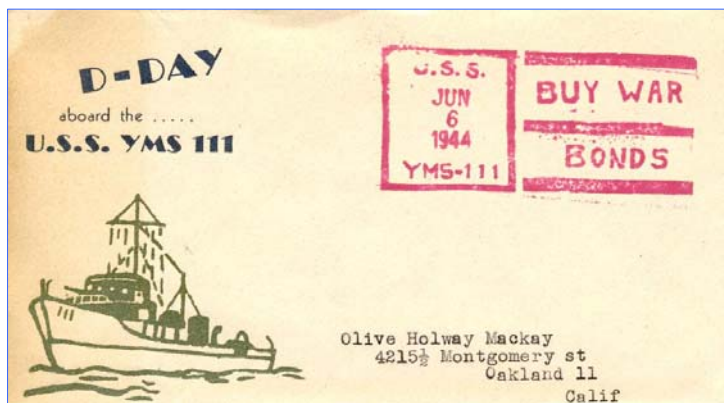


Figure 4: D-Day cachet with a rubber stamp fancy cancel made by Dye. Cover is obviously backdated. Dye's sponsor block is on reverse noting 34 covers issued.

addressed to Dye aboard that ship. In October 1945, Dye received a letter from Jim Russell, USCS 692, who would later edit the *Postmark Catalog*. Dye was apparently discharged from the service in December 1945.

After his discharge, Dye had access to the Philadelphia Navy Yard as a former sailor and apparently visited ships in the yard in overhaul or being prepared for the Reserve fleet. He appears to have made friends with Postal Clerks to have his covers serviced and either purloined or was given cancelling devices of a number of ships. He used these to backdate covers for specific events such as V-J Day, Tokyo Bay, 7 December 1941 and for holidays and ship anniversaries. His use of purloined cancel devices came to the attention of USCS directors and Dye was expelled from the USCS in 1952 for faking naval covers.

Meantime, Dye continued with the ANCS and the July 1946 ANCS *Navigator* announced that he had been elected President with 44 votes out of 79 cast. Dye soon came to verbal blows with Harlan W. Miller of Lawrence, Kansas, who had published the *Navigator* and kept the ANCS alive through the war years. Miller published his last issue in December 1946.

Ted Harrington, ANCS #170 (USCS #1694) was named to replace Miller but, to the author's knowledge, did not actually produce any further issues of the *Navigator*. Instead, in 1947 Glenn Dye began issuing the ANCS *Log*. In his first undated edition of eight pages, 5½" x 8" in size, Dye recapped the problems with Miller and asked for donations to continue publishing. Subsequent editions of the ANCS *Log* were even smaller, 4½" x 6". In one edition, he illustrated the original Locy type chart for the benefit of his members. In February 1947, Dye changed the name of his publication back to the ANCS *Navigator* and, in 1948 changed it again to *The Wheel Watch*, **Figure 5**. In one undated edition of the latter, he illustrated a number of cancels including questionable and faked ones.

Dye's arrogance can be seen in a *Wheel Watch* memo provided by Dick Morain. In the memo "to all interested parties," Dye referenced an article in the November 1946 USCS *Log* in which John Gill discussed new Locy Types 10 and 11 cancels and talked about a Type 7 machine cancel with

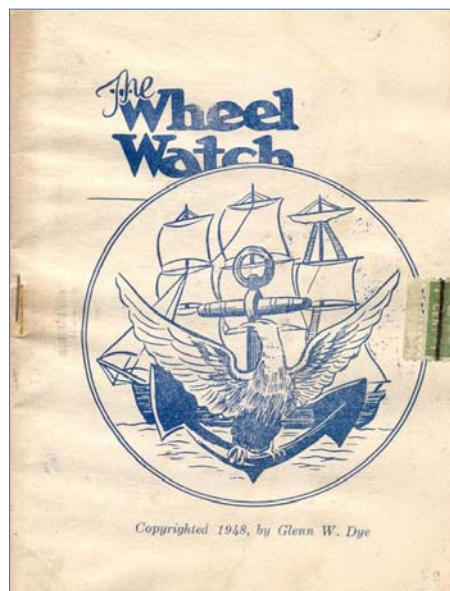


Figure 5: Cover of Dye's last publication, *The Wheel Watch*. The TENNESSEE Type 6 cancel dated 7 September 1941 is illustrated in this issue, indication of a Dye product.

a branch number in the dial. Dye stated that the system that John Gill suggested will not serve the purpose and "I deem it is time that I stepped in and took a hand in helping to square away a deplorable system." Dye then goes on to state "as ANCS First Vice President" he is designating the Locy type 2# and 9# cancels as types 22 and 29 respectively and the type 7 with the branch number in the dial as a type 27.

Further proof of that arrogance was given in President's Paul Helman's message on page 5 of the August 2007 *Log*. President Helman recalled articles in 1952 *Logs* noting that, in January 1952, Dye had written the USCS claiming to hold the copyright of the Locy system. Then President Capt. Herb Rommel responded with a no-nonsense letter basically telling Dye where he could go. Perhaps Dye knew the USCS was about to lower the boom on him, but his bluster failed to save him.

Glenn Dye cacheted, serviced and sold a lot of covers over a multi-year time frame. The real problem is determining which are valid and which are bogus. We believe that he laid hands on legitimate cancel devices, which he may have been given or stolen. With a genuine cancel device in hand, it would have been easy to backdate his cacheted covers. His cachet style is readily recognizable and he identified his cachets with a rubber stamp block on reverse so there is little question about provenance. He offered covers for sale at seven for \$1 in his first issue of the ANCS *Log*. So we know he was in the business of selling covers. The rubber stamp on reverse of covers in the author's file indicates that he made as few as 44 covers and as many as 185 with an average of 100 per issue. Glenn Dye - Grey Cover Service - covers do exist in quantity.

Following is a partial listing of faked covers attributed to Glenn Dye. Numbers in parenthesis are the cancel identification as illustrated in the USCS *Postmark Catalog*: Some of the covers will be illustrated separately. Postmark of those that are not are shown in **Figure 13**.

BENNION (DD 662), Commissioned, Ty 3 Dec 14, 1943 unlisted, probably backdated, **Figure 6**

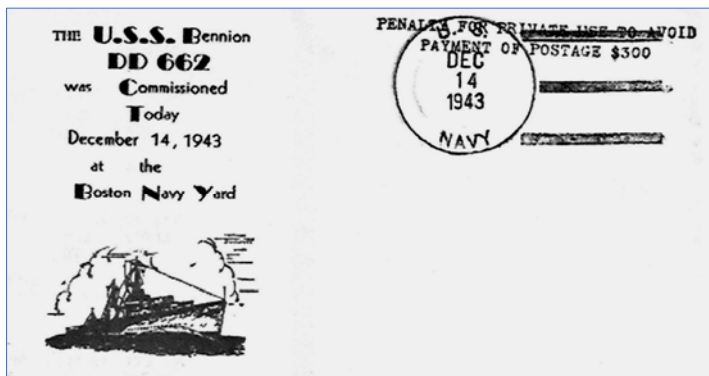


Figure 6: A backdated cover with Dye's sponsor ID on reverse. The Type 3z cancel is thought to have been stolen and used to create other Dye fabricated covers. Cover courtesy of Paul Huber, USCS 8004.

FARGO (CL 106) LDPS, Jan 6, 1950 (F-47) and (F-47a) FRANKLIN D ROOSEVELT (CV 42) launch Apr 29, 1945, backdated, fancy cancel illustrated under LAKE CHAMPLAIN (CV 39) noted as fake. **Figure 7**

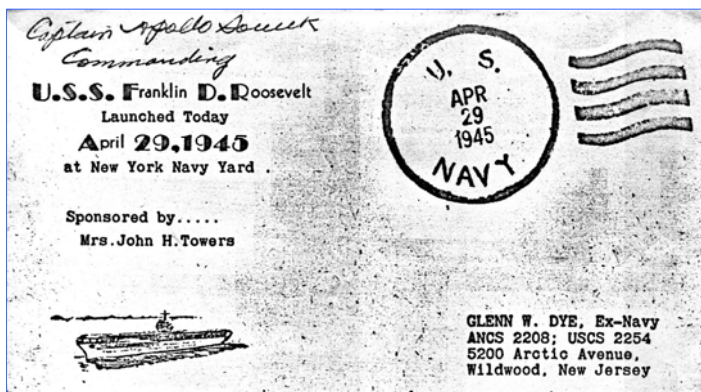


Figure 7: Scan of a photocopy of a cover with Dye sponsor identification on reverse. The cover shows his lack of research for a fabricated cover. FDR was christened MIDWAY when she was launched and not renamed until a few weeks after Roosevelt died. The Glenn Dye rubber stamp fancy cancel is listed in the Catalog of United States Navy Cancels under LAKE CHAMPLAIN because it is more often seen on those covers. This cover is a badly flawed fabrication.

JOHN J SHEA (DM 30) Ty 2(n) Sept 30, 1944 unlisted but this cancel was issued until October 1945; cancel obviously backdated. **Figure 8**

MAURY (DD 401) Decommissioned, Oct 19, 1945 (M-105) MISSISSIPPI (EAG 128), Type 3 Apr 10, 1946 with ANCS/1935-1946 in kb, **Figure 9**

MISSISSIPPI (EAG 128) various Ty 2 and Ty3 with 1946 dates may be faked (stolen cancel device)

MOHAWK (WPG 78), Dec 25, 1946 (M-38)

NIOBARA AO-72, Sept 2, 1945 (N-36) and Oct 27, 1945 (N-36a)

PHOENIX (CL 46), June 14, 1940 versions after 1945 (P-23)

PURDY (DD 734), July 1, 1946, **Figure 10**

ROI (CVE 103), Oct 27, 1945, (R-53)



Figure 8: Another Dye cover with flawed information. The date in the postmark is actually the date for commissioning of USS SHEA (DD 750). The ship was not designated DM-30 until 30 November 1944 and the name was not JOHN J. SHEA but SHEA. This is likely another fabrication made with a stolen postmark. Cover courtesy of Paul Huber.



Figure 9: Fifty covers were issued with this cachet and probably stolen postmark. The Postmark Catalog states "The T-3 dated April 10, 1946 with 'ANCS/1935-1946' is definitely a fake.

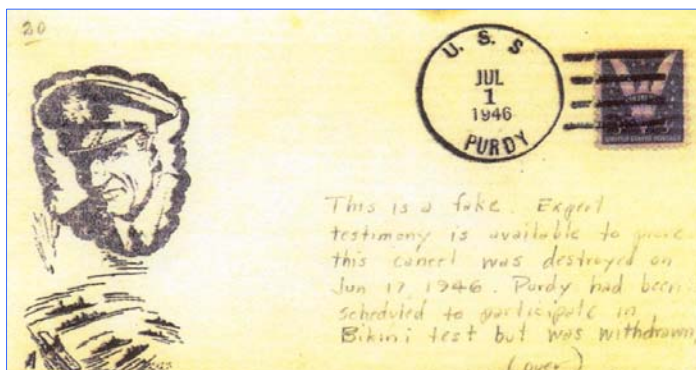


Figure 10: PURDY (DD 734) was scheduled to participate in the Bikini Test but was withdrawn. At the time this fabricated postmark was prepared with the Bikini cachet and the date of the first bomb drop, the ship was in the Boston Naval Shipyard. The note on the cover indicates this is a Glenn Dye product. Cover courtesy of Dick Morain, USCS 10310.

SEER (AM 112), Oct 27, 1945, (S-92)
 TENNESSEE (BB 43), Ty 6 Dec 7, 1941 (unlisted), **Figure 13**
 TENNESSEE (BB 43), Ty F Nov 4, 1945, (T-38)
 WILKES BARRE (CL 103), Ty F Sept 2, 1945 (W-27b) with 3-cent commemorative stamps, colored printed cachets, no censor mark and no address
 WILKES BARRE (CL 103), Ty 9 efu and Tokyo/Bay or Navy/Day 1945 (**Figure 11**) as killers
 WILLIAMSBURG (AGC 369), May 3, 1946 (W-54)

both the handwriting and address as Dye's and the USCS president directed the secretary to return the application with a refund check. Dye denied that he had submitted the application but cashed the check anyway. So ends the naval cover story of Glenn Dye. However, after 1952 he continued servicing first day of issue covers, prepared cachets for space, historical, inaugural and naval events and joined the Precancel Society.

Glenn Dye covers present a conundrum - are the cancels fake or not? In some cases it's clear, but less so in others. Are there more fakes and frauds than listed and illustrated? Probably so. The best advice is to treat Dye and Grey Cover Service covers with caution.

Appreciation to Richard Hoffner, Paul Huber, David Kent and Dick Morain for providing portions of the information and scans used in this article.

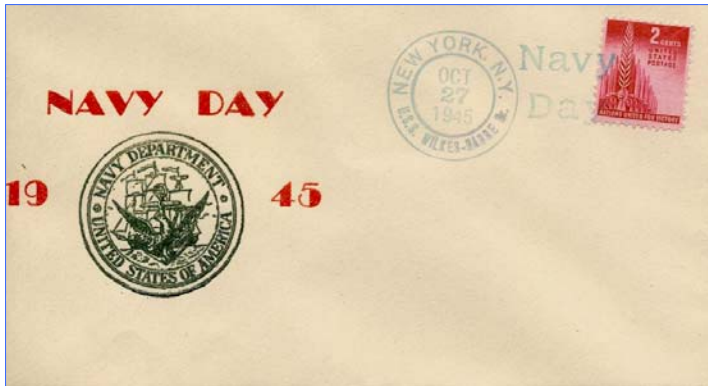


Figure 11: Dye's sponsor block on reverse indicates that 30 covers with this cachet and fabricated postmark were prepared. The Postmark Catalog indicates this cancel and the one with TOKYO BAY in the killer bars are believed to be fake.

There is some indication that PROVIDENCE (CL 82) type 2, 2#, 9ef(nfu) and 9# cancel devices, **Figure 12**, may have been given to Dye or stolen by him. Those cancels with 1946 dates may be suspect. There is also indication that a Type 2 cancel device from USS WILKES BARRE (CL 103) may also have been stolen by Dye. A Tokyo Bay cancel with 2 September 1945 and line cachet of Mt Fuji is thought to be a Dye product.

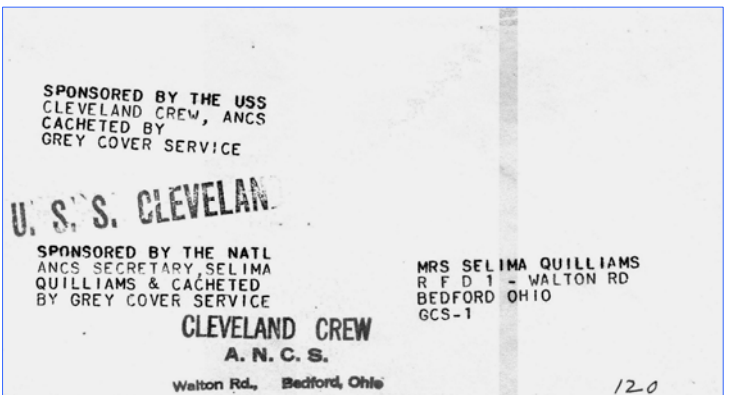


Figure 12b (reverse): Rubber stamp on reverse indicates this cover sponsored by Grey Cover Service. Cover and card courtesy of Dick Morain.



Figures 12a (front) & 12b (reverse): Christmas cachet and PROVIDENCE postmark, thought to be stolen. Rubber stamp on reverse indicates this cover sponsored by Grey Cover Service. Cover and card courtesy of Dick Morain.

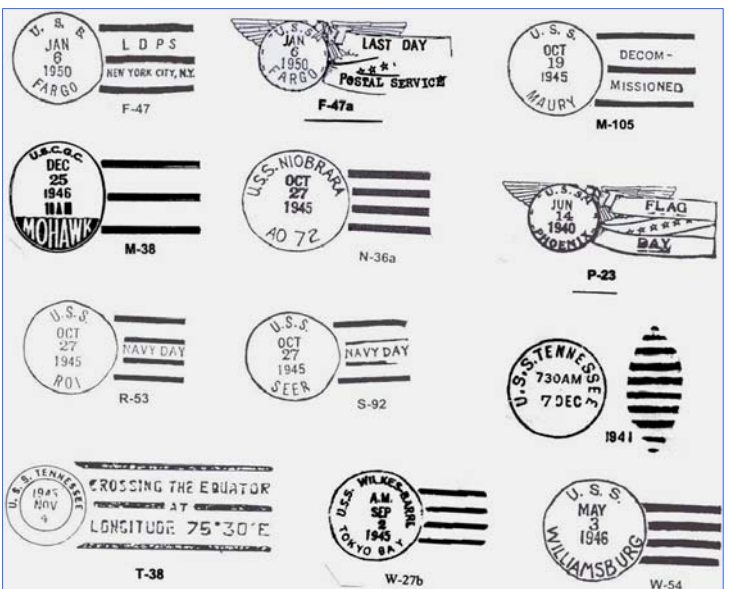


Figure 13: Postmarks illustrated in the Postmark Catalog with illustration number. These are among the postmarks thought to have been fabricated by Glenn Dye and used on his Grey Cover Service covers. The full story of Dye's fakes is probably not yet known.

In 1984, Dye attempted to rejoin the USCS using the name C. Post, an abbreviation for Dye's local post named "Cadillac Local Post." The then USCS secretary recognized

**Naval Cover Fakes,
Forgeries and Frauds
Part X**

*John Young (L-8219)
146 North Lincoln Street
Pearl River, NY 10965-1709*



Glenn Dye Covers Continued

Glenn Dye's fourth cover (**Figure 1**) was a patriotic "Keep 'Em Flying!" cachet with "Free" franking, posted at Cape May Naval Air Station on August 20, 1943 (type 2z* and type 9 cancels.) His penned corner card to Deane Bartley indicates that he was aboard YP 334 assigned to the Naval Air Station. Dye used the same post office to have Navy Day 1943 covers (**Figure 2**) cancelled. Here, he used a battleship printer's cut which appears on other Dye covers postmarked in CALIFORNIA (GCS #126) and two NEW YORK (not back-stamped). The latter covers have a type 3z cancel that show no thin lines, either above or below the bars. The battleship's 1945 cancel is listed as a type 3z (TTT) cancel. These NEW YORK covers have another Dye unlisted fake cancel.



Figure 1: Deane Bartley sponsored Dye's USCS membership shortly after receiving this cover.



Figure 2: Dye produced 47 Navy Day covers, postmarked at Cape May Air Station.

In the beginning, Dye back-stamped his cover with a boxed Grey Cover Service (GCS) cachet. It contained dotted lines that recorded Cover No., Covers Issued and its Serial No. Only one problem, his series has no a particular order.

Cachets by USCS-2254

RCD-328

| GCS# | Name | Date | Type |
|------|------------------|-------------|---|
| 108 | PHOENIX | 27 OCT 1945 | 3 (A-BOT) Reverse has Fake (P-23) 1945 |
| 111 | LANDER (APA 178) | 2 MAR 1946 | 2(n) FDPS name cancel |
| 113 | MISSISSIPPI | 22 FEB 1946 | 2(n) <i>USCS catalog has notation that type 2(n) cancel has a slightly flattened bottom and side of the dial may be a forgery.</i> |
| 117 | TUSCALOOSA | 17 MAR 1946 | 2(n) LDC 13 FEB 1946 POD 1 APR 1946 |
| 118 | MISSISSIPPI | 17 MAR 1946 | 2(n) same as above |
| 123 | SAN FRANCISCO | 27 OCT 1945 | 6 |
| 126 | CALIFORNIA | 27 OCT 1945 | 3 (A-BTB) NAVY/ DAY |
| 127 | CALIFORNIA | 14 NOV 1945 | CAPE TOWN/ S. AFRICA |
| 136 | WILKES-BARRE | 6 JAN 1946 | 2(n) FDPS |
| 142 | PRINCETON | 18 NOV 1945 | Unlisted |

(Figure 3)

USCS catalog lists commissioning covers with Type 2(n) and Type 9ef(nu) cancels.

A cover (Figure 4) has Type 9 cancel. Has an error, the N appears to be X in PRINCETON



Figure 3: GCS#142 was done sometime after Dye's discharge, using Type 9 cancel with killer bars.

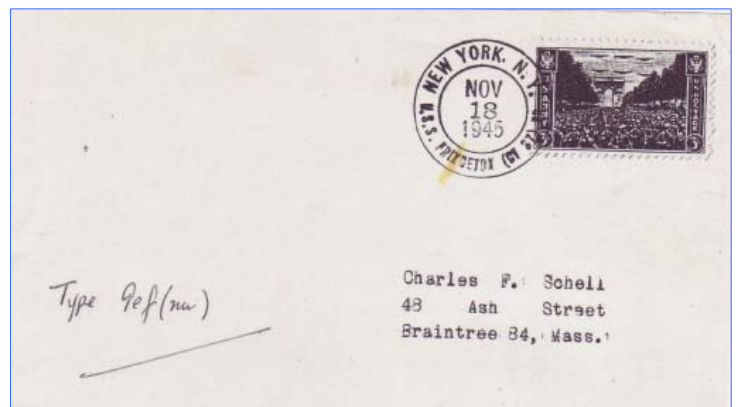


Figure 4: Photocopy of Type 9ef(nu) cancel used on genuine commissioning covers.

| GCS# | Name | Date | Type |
|------|-----------------|-------------|--|
| 145 | WILKES-BARRE | 14 MAR 1946 | 2(n) & 9efu Enroute to East Coast- Panama Canal |
| 149 | PRINCETON | 27 OCT 1946 | 2(n) |
| 152A | YANCEY (AKA 93) | 29 MAR 1946 | P (Y-1), 9efu |
| 154 | TENNESSEE | 4 NOV 1945 | Fake (T-38) |
| 156 | PRINZ EUGEN | 15 MAR 1946 | Fake type 3z Cachet by ANCS 2208RCD 328 |
| 148 | PRINCETON | 19 APR 1946 | 2(n) Nat'l Aviation Day |
| 161 | PASSUMPSIC | 4 APR 1946 | Unlisted (Figure 5) |
| 162 | PASSUMPSIC | 10 APR 1946 | 2(n) |
| 167 | ST. LOUIS | 14 APR 1946 | 2(n) USCS Catalog mentions covers with cancel after 23 May 1946 are fakes |
| 168 | AUGUSTA | 18 APR 1946 | 2(n) |
| 175 | PURDY | 25 JUL 1946 | Fake P (P-86) |
| 176 | MISSISSIPPI | 10 APR 1946 | 3 ANCS/ 1935-1946 Notation in USCS catalog this cancel is a fake and other 1946 dates may be fake |
| 177 | CALIFORNIA | 7 AUG 1946 | 2(n) |
| 181 | NEW YORK | 30 JUN 1946 | Unlisted (Figure 6) Smartcraft's Operation Crossroads covers has type 3 (A) cancel with wording BIKINI/ ATOLL in killers, dated JUN 30 P.M. 1946 in dial. |

the ANCS and then placed an advertisement announcing his appointment as cachet director for the Grey Cover Service (*Navigator*, April 1946).

In the same issue, its editor (Harlan Miller) announced receiving several covers from the Grey Cover Service: TENNESSEE 4 NOV 1945 (#154), Crossing the Equator; AUGUSTA 29 MAR 1946, Death of John Tyler; CHANDELEUX 28 MAR 1946, Flag, 16th Fleet and WILKES BARRE 12 MAR 1946 (#145), Arrive Balboa, CZ. ANCS Secretary Selima Quilliams wrote that she received four covers from Glenn Dye, including ROI (CVE 103) commissioning covers (6 JUL 1944).

The couple of issues of the *Navigator* have an advertisement for Grey Cover Service (Dye) selling covers 15 cents each or seven for a dollar. Available are covers from carriers, cruisers and other ships having some connection with the Philadelphia Navy Yard. The list included: LAKE CHAMPLAIN, WILKES BARRE, FARGO, PRINCETON, ARCTIC, ROI, MISSISSIPPI, ex-PRINZ EUGEN, SOLOMONS, SAN FRANCISCO, SOUTH DAKOTA, TUSCALOOSA, YANCEY, CALIFORNIA, TENNESSEE and CLAXTON.

Dye announced his intention to run for the ANCS Presidency which appeared in Marshall Hall's column in *Our Navy* magazine (July 1946). Columns were written at least two months in advance. The next month, Hall acknowledged receipt of several Dye covers: namely known fakes Type 3z cancels denoting the return of USS STEWART from Japanese captivity and fake unofficial of first day of the Tennessee stamp (Scott #941) aboard TENNESSEE. A comparison of two covers (Czubay vs. Dye) reveal differences in the date, time group in the dial of both cancels and thinner killer bars in the Dye cover.

A search of the *Navigator* reveals that the Brooklyn Crew met at the home of Mike Sanders (5/18/46) and that Dye was a guest at the meeting. He took the floor and declared himself a candidate for ANCS Presidency. Dye was nominated by the Crew and presented the Brooklyn Crew with a very rare cover (1 of 35) that was put up for auction with the proceeds to be turned over to the crew's treasury. The penalty envelope cover (Figure 7) was won by Wesley Dreher for \$2.50. A similar cover brought \$3.50 at a New Haven's USCS Chapter#48 meeting (4/28/46). It mentions that 35 such penalty covers were cancelled on 7 December 1941.

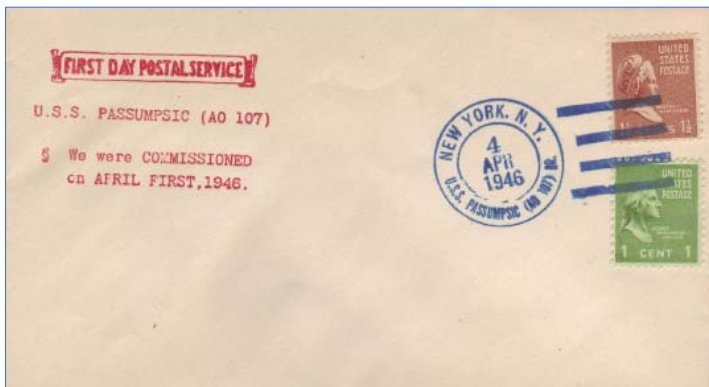


Figure 5: GCS #161 was done by Dye with another Type 9 cancel with killer bars.

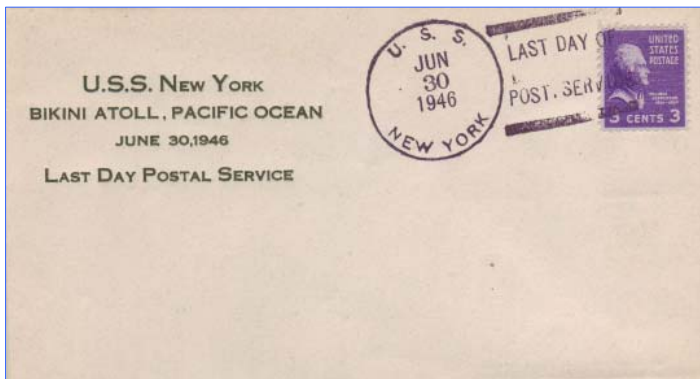


Figure 6: GCS #181 documenting battleship's last day of postal service with a fake cancel.

What is interesting about Dye is that after his discharge from the Navy, he immediately renewed his membership in

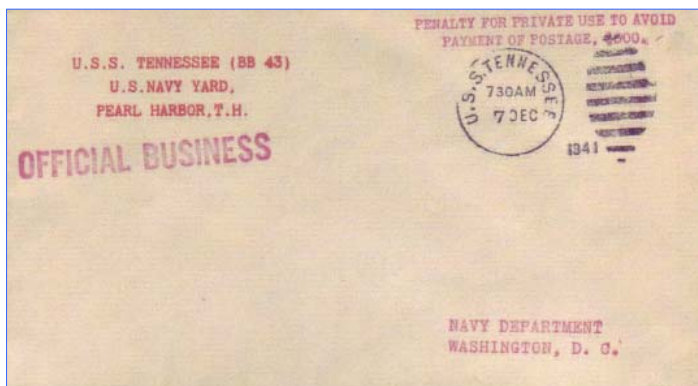


Figure 7: Courtesy of Carl Ganong.

The Type 6 cancel was probably stolen from the battleship while she was at the Philadelphia Navy Yard. She arrived there (12/7/45) after spending decades in the Pacific.

What else is wrong with the cover? It has a three-line corner card denoting Navy Yard, Pearl Harbor, Territory of Hawaii. Most pre-war mailing addresses for ships at Pearl were routed via Fleet Post Office, San Francisco or San Diego. Even regular printed penalty envelopes had both locations.

The two-line cachet penalty warning against private use was used by Dye on two other covers: BENNION (DD 662) commissioning cover, type 3z cancel (12/14/43) and LAKE CHAMPLAIN (Figure 8), posted with the carrier's type 2 (n) and type 9 BR #15552 cancels on 4 DEC 1945. The latter has Dye's corner card and carrier's embossed seal.



Figure 8: Dye used the same "penalty" franking that appears on TENNESSEE 7 December 1941 cover.

Another duplicate usage by Dye was the two-line cachet NAVY DEPARTMENT/ WASHINGTON, D.C. appears on a Grey Cover Service cover (Figure 9) documenting the launch of USS YFB 26 (3/17/44) at Cape May, NJ. The reverse has Dye's 4LK/ NAVY DEPARTMENT/ U.S.S. YMS 111/ c/o POSTMASTER/ NEW YORK, N.Y. I wonder who was Helen Ryan?

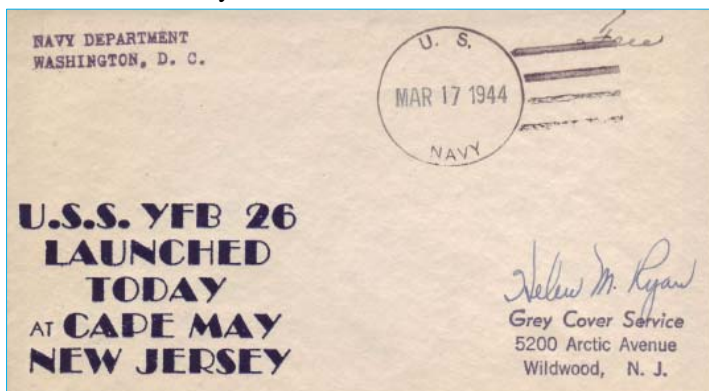


Figure 9: Dye documents launching of a ferry boat or launch (YFB 29) on St. Patrick's Day.

This is the same Motor Minesweeper (YMS) that Dye produced the fake cancel (Y-6) which have been used on covers documenting Independence Day 1944 (GCG #66), launch of destroyer escort CROSS (7/4/44) and D-Day

(6/6/44) aboard the USS YMS 111 (GCS #57). The reverse has markings indicating that Glenn Dye produced the covers.

Dye failed to back-stamp some event covers with his "boxed" identification cachet documenting the launching of BON HOMME RICHARD (4/29/44), RANDOLPH (10/9/44) and FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT (4/29/45). What's the difference between Dye covers and other cachet sponsors? Well, Czubay and Mike Sanders are machine canceled because of prohibition set by the Chief of Naval Operations (May 1942). Mail clerks were forbidden to cancel covers for philatelists. Dye's covers lack postage stamps and have variety of "Z" cancels, some known to be fake i.e. LAKE CHAMPLAIN (Dye's last ship).

A cover (Figure 10) documenting the launching of HAYNESWORTH (DD 700) at Kearny, NJ was sent by Glenn Dye (aboard YMS 111) to Ray Milling (aboard YMS 110), posted at Cape May, NJ (4/15/44) with Cape May Naval Frontier Base's type 2z* cancel. The cancel was identified in Dye's own handwriting. The reverse has the Grey Cover Service's corner card and appears to be genuine, as it has free franking with the sender's identity.

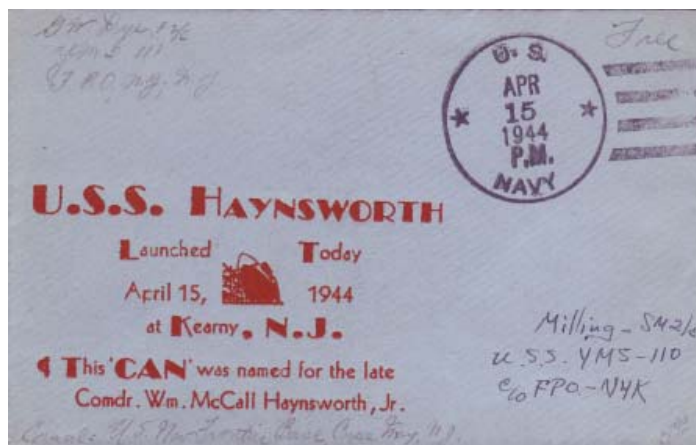


Figure 10: Dye sends destroyer event cover to fellow collector, Ray Milling.

Dick Morain was kind enough to send along scan's of Dye covers in his collection which helped identify missing numbers in the Grey Cover series. Dick informed me that he did some research on the fake PURDY cancel (P-86) used on Dye's Bikini Test covers Dick found that the destroyer PURDY (DD 734) was undergoing overhaul in the Boston Navy Yard (June- December 1946). The cancel appears to be another type 2 cancel with ship's name in lettering from "Grip-Line" rubber type kit. In fact, the lettering is similar to the letters found in fake cancels of ROI (R-53), SEER (S-92) and FARGO (F-47, F-47a). A cover (Figure 11) that is back-dated (9/9/43) with fake cancel (A-29a) is franked with Italian Social Republic stamps. The stamps were overprinted in 1944.

Another piece of evidence provided by Dick was a copy of Dye's newsletter *The Wagon Wheel* that depicts strikes of Type 2# and Type 9# 15839. It is dated 12 DEC 1946. Dye was trying to compete with John Gill in the numbering of different new type cancels, Type 22 and Type 29 respectively.

Both cancels are from USS PROVIDENCE (CL 82) and are believed to be given to Dye by the cruiser's mail clerk. Cancels were used on Christmas 1946 cachet, sponsored jointly by Grey Cover Service (Dye) and ANCS Cleveland Crew (Selima Quillams). Another interesting observance in Dick's three 1946 Christmas covers is that all three are franked with the same "Win the War" stamp. Dye liked using three-cent stamps. Guess, it legalized the covers!



Figure 11: Dye's attempt to deceive collectors with another fake cancel that is franked with foreign stamps.

After winning the ANCS presidency, Dye got into an argument with *Navigator* publisher, Harlan Miller over Dye's referring to ANCS members as comrades, rather than mates. Miller quit publishing in December 1946. Then a fancy MOHAWK (M-38) cancel caused a controversy, as whether it came through the mails. Marshall Hall's last column (May 1947) wrote that he received his MOHAWK cancel in the open mail, but later Dye wrote that he co-sponsored the fake cancel. (see *Hooligan News*, October 2008).

Marshall Hall passed away in April 1947 (Figure 12) and Dye was appointed the *Our Navy* columnist. His first "Cancel & Cachets" column appeared in July 1947. A reading of his articles reveals that Dye knew many a mail clerk aboard ships in Philadelphia Navy Yard. Just like his father, a Navy Yard electrician during the war- Dye had a "Press Pass" that helped to get access to ship and cancels. Some probably gave him cancels, as the ships were being placed in the 16th Reserve Fleet. Remember cancelling devices came in sets of four. Who would miss a cancel? Even, if one was stolen!

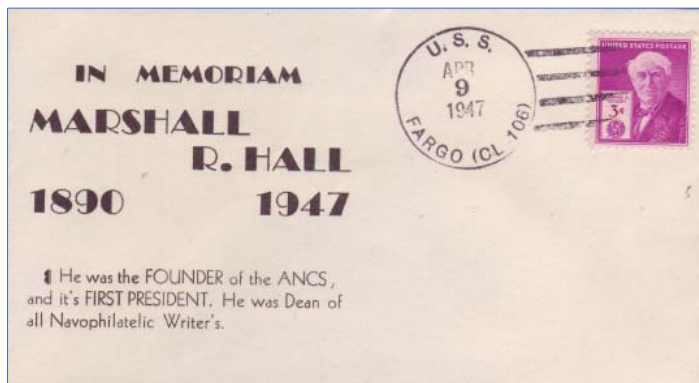


Figure 12: Notice the break in the top of the dial above 'U'. Dye used this stolen/r fake Type 2 cancel (1946-50).

Dye used the *Our Navy* column to inform readers on cancels and cachets. The monthly column started to educate readers on the "Locy" system of cancel classification. The column (8/47) depicts two cancels- EAGLE ONE (Type 3) and SOLOMONS (Type 2n). One problem! The escort carrier (CVE 67) was decommissioned 15 MAY 1946 and had her post office discontinued 7 MAY 1946.

Dye had a working relationship with many of the mail clerks who were mentioned by name in his column. Many of his holiday (Navy Day and Christmas) covers appear to have genuine cancels, but many have been identified as fakes. One wonders why he did so many. I can't believe it was money! Dye sold them, seven for a dollar or fifteen cents each. His writings denote some jealousy of the rival USCS and their recognition of John Gill's fancy cancel (1945-46). He constantly refers to the cancels as "Boston" products. Whatever the reason, Dye left evidence both in his articles and his advertisement (Figure 13) which appeared on the back page of the *Navigator* (August 1946). The list includes fake cancels i.e. N-1 NIOBRARA (N-36, N-36a), T-2 TENNESSEE (T-38), M-7 MAURY (M-105) and Y-2 USS YMS 111 (Y-6).

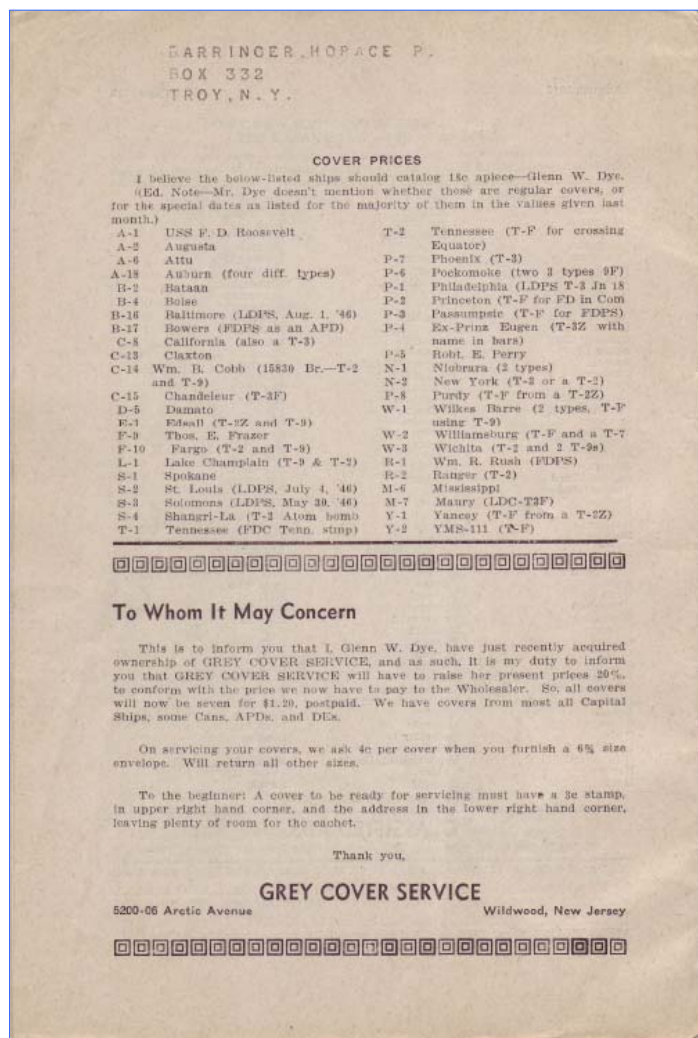


Figure 13: ANCS Navigator page.

If you look at some fake cancels i.e. NIOBRABA, WILLIAMSBURG (W-54), MATTABESSET (M-86) and CGC McCULLOCH (M-88) there's a similarity in the type of lettering used by the maker. Dye mentions the yacht's provisional cancel (W-54) was used to commemorate President Truman's birthday (5/8/46) in his column (May 1948) and Marshall Hall acknowledged receiving the provisional cancel. The next month, Dye discussed the NIOBRARA cancel and its usage at Tokyo Bay and Navy Day - where the location was replaced with ship's classification and number. He provided a copy of the Toyko Bay strike (2 SEP 1945) for the column.

Dye's thermo-printed 1946 Navy Day cachet (**Figure 14**) depicts a destroyer within boxed chain border and King Neptune (upper-right), posted with a remake of HONOLULU 1940 fancy (H-77b) cancel. The original cancel has wording FLAGSHIP- CRUISERS (above) and BATTLEFORCE- U.S. FLEET (below) of the bamboo-type killer bars. Note: HONOLULU had her post office discontinued 1 JUN 1946. Dye used an addressograph machine on covers to his subscribers. Apparently, Tracy Porter was Grey Cover Service subscriber No. 93! Any other Dye cover collectors out there?



Figure 14: One of two printed cachets used by Dye for Navy Day 1946.

As we get deeper into the study of fake cancels, we wonder why anyone would take the time and energy to dupe unsuspected collectors. After the war, both the Navy and Coast Guard started to down-size with ships and personnel. The naval cover collector had just started to get new Type 2(n) cancels with the ship's name - then the ships were being decommissioned or placed in reserve.

Back in 1995, I mentioned Dye in my column "Hooligan News" concerning a fancy STORIS (S-67) cancel. Weeks later, I received a penned response from Glenn Dye:

10 JUN 1995

Greetings,

I note you mention of me, which was highly inaccurate, in a recent column. STORIS, the Coastie Cutter was planned to go out on date given by the Navy Mail Clerk, himself.

Since those columns were written two months in advance- we could not take it back afterwards!

About the other, you had some officers (USCS) that hated my guts because I got the job in "Our Navy" when Marshall Hall died- so they cut my throat! But, wow, Dye is alive.

*Sincerely,
Glenn Dye*

Along with the note were several pages of then recent first day covers. It appears that Dye still had one of his fancy cancels-five decades later. He used it on NORMANDY first day cover (6 JUN 1994) with the date 6 JUN 1944 as a cachet. I just obtained a cover (**Figure 15**) that has a cancel on his "free" mail which is unaddressed and has incomplete address in his penned corner card. The same 22 FEB 1945 strike appeared in Dye's March 1948 *Our Navy* column where he said it was used by LCI Flotilla One or LCI (L) 36.



Figure 15: Dye had possession of this Fancy cancel for nearly five decades.

Dye continued to produce covers i.e. first day of issue, historical and naval events into the 1950s. Some covers had other fake cancels including: SHANGRI LA (S-37a), MINDORO (M-31f and M-31g), SAIPAN (S-115) and WRIGHT (W-44d and W-44h). Guess Dye liked carriers! As Bob Rawlins wrote, "...the real problem is determining which cancel is valid and which are bogus." Remember, as a columnist, Dye became friendly with mail clerks and had access to the ships. This could have led to acquisition of old and new cancels.

I wish to thank Dick Morain, Carl Ganong and Ned Harris for sharing Dye covers in their collection. Just as a point of interest, Dick informed me that Glenn Dye was still alive and living in Newark, OH. A name-check on the web reveals an 87-year old Glenn Dye still resides there. Mr. Dye, if you happen to read this column, kindly contact me at the above address. I would gladly write your explanation!

References

USCS Catalog of US Naval Postmarks 5th Ed. 1997

This section was originally published in USCS Log November 2008 – Pages 13-17

**Dye's Desire to Outdo Others
Navy Day and Coast Guard Covers**

**Additional material from Hooligan News
USCS Log October 2008**

In June 1935, Deane Bartley wrote about the 1934 Navy Day covers – nine had a fancy cancel, 42 ships used colored cancels, 52 ships used location between the killers, and 64 ships had NAVY DAY and locations between the killers. Bartley's collection numbered about 375 covers posted on 27 October 1934.

There were over twenty USCS chapters, each servicing covers for members only. Only two chapters did not sponsor Navy Day cachets - Old Ironsides Chapter #1 and the Locy Chapter #9. Usually cachets were free to USCS members, but they were charged a forwarding fee (one penny, per cover). Most of the covers bore printed cachets by each chapter's cachet director. Most of the cacheted covers were produced in 1934, but there are some later add-on cachets.

Glenn W. Dye USCS #2254 ANCS #2208

An example of add-on cachet appears on Navy Day, 1934 (Figure 1) posted aboard light cruiser USS RICHMOND (CL 9). Originally mailed by Herbert Mc Cullough for a Navy Day cancellation, it appears this cover went directly to the ship. The thermograph printed cachet was done by the Grey Cover Service (Glenn Dye), as indicated by reverse where he left his fingerprint and corner card (Figure 2).



Figure 1: USS RICHMOND Navy Day 1934 cover.

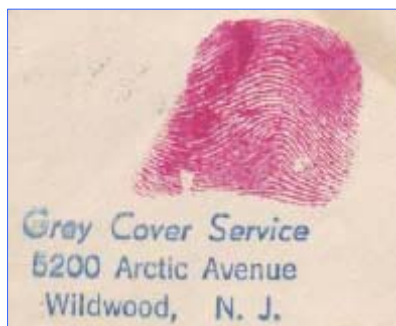


Figure 2: Reverse of the USS RICHMOND cover above with Dye's print and corner card.

The cachet depicts a newer 10,000-ton cruiser rather than the four-stack "OMAHA" class cruiser. Its artist was M. Fay Muridge, who did artwork for both USCS chapters and ANCS crews (1938-48). She did a lot of work for Deane Bartley and some of her artwork was reproduced by Alex Hesse for use on his post-war Farragut Chapter #3 covers. Glenn Dye used the same cruiser cachet cut again for his cover (Figure 3) posted aboard USS PHOENIX (CL 46) on Navy Day 1945.

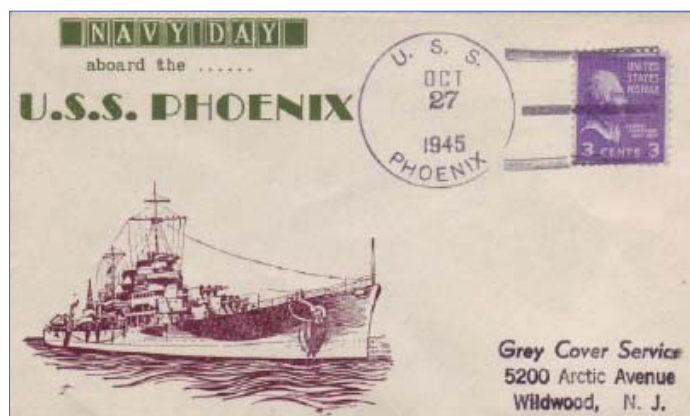
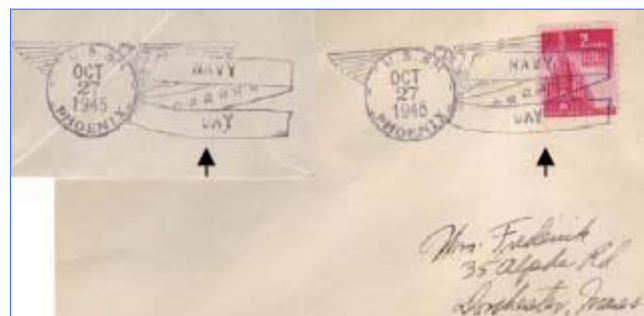


Figure 3: Glenn Dye used the same cruiser cut for the 1945 Navy Day cachet for PHOENIX

This cover has Dye's boxed cachet that identifies GCS #108 (11 of 38 made) but it has fancy cancel (P-23) sideways on the reverse. The fancy cancel was originally used on Flag Day 1940. The USCS *Catalog of Postmarks* mentions its 1945 usage, as probably being fake. A second cover addressed in Bill Frederick's own handwriting has the fancy cancel, but note the difference in wording NAVY/DAY in the banners (Figures 4-5). See how the letters line up!



Figures 4 and 5: Reverse of cover 3 is shown in upper left as comparison to Frederick cover -- alignment of Navy and Day differs.

The same fancy cancel (F-47a) was used by Dye for Last Day Post Office aboard USS FARGO (CL 106) in January 1950. He removed wording PHOENIX and replaced with larger letters FARGO in the dial. He used same size letters in Fake cancel (F-47). In his *Our Navy* column (March 1950), Dye displays all three fake FARGO LDPS

cancels. He took over writing the “Cancels & Cachets” column upon the death of Marshall Hall in July 1947. Cover (Figure 6) shows reverse of FARGO LDPS with two Dye fake cancels.



Figure 6: Reverse of USS FARGO Last Day Postal Service cover with faked cancels. Note the letter size difference in the Fancy cancel.

Dye returned to civilian life after serving four years in the Navy. A letter which appeared in JAN-FEB 1945 Log written by F 2/c Glenn W. Dye revealed that he was 23 years old (Born in Wildwood, NY on August 21, 1921). He wrote that he was less than three years in the Navy, suggesting that he enlisted just after the attack on Pearl Harbor. When written (prior to 11/15/44), Dye was in North Africa, aboard USS LCI (L) 36. He would become a plank owner aboard USS LAKE CHAMPLAIN (CV 39) and participate in bringing home the troops from Europe during Operation Magic Carpet.

Once discharged, Dye started producing his thermograph covers. His style can be identified by the lettering and printer’s cuts, even without the boxed Grey Cover Service cachets on the reverse. In the latter part of 1946, he failed to back-stamp most of the fake covers as can be seen on some fake Coast Guard cancels i.e. MOHAWK and LILAC.

An article by LCDR Robert Murch that appeared in Ted Harrington’s series of newsletters (1947 Naval Cover News) alerted collectors that some “cover pirates” were providing unauthorized cancels or manufacturing covers of interest. In the article entitled “Sailing Under False Colors” mentions two covers: 1) the fancy MOHAWK cancel 25 DEC 1946 with CAPE MAY/ NEW JERSEY in killer bars 2) USS TENNESSEE Type 6 cancel, dated 7 DEC 1941.

The MOHAWK fancy cancel (M-38) appears to have usage on Christmas Day 1946, but it appears without wording or with words MERRY CHRISTMAS (33 covers) or CAPE MAY/ NEW JERSEY in the killer bars. This cancel was alleged to have been used aboard the 165-foot Coast Guard cutter, MOHAWK (WPG 78) that was homeported in Cape May, NJ. It should be noted that Dye resided in Wildwood, NJ only seven miles from the Naval Air Station, where he spent his first years in the Navy.

My collection includes all three variations. Collectors John Von Losberg and Bob Matthews sent postcards for the MOHAWK cancel. Both cards are cancelled without any wording (Figure 7) in black ink. A thermo-printed Coast Guard envelope (Figures 8-9) has cancel with wording CAPE MAY/ NEW JERSEY between the killers. The reverse has stamped cachet depicting a Mohawk Indian (stamped twice, once in purple and again in black. He also applied a fake cancel without any wording.



Figure 7: MOHAWK cancel without killer bar wording.



Figure 8: MOHAWK cancel with CAPE MAY/ NEW JERSEY in killer bars..



Figure 9: Reverse of cover 8 shows Mohawk Indian and fake cancel without killer bar wording.

Dye’s mimeographed Christmas cachet (Figure 10) was canceled with fake (M-38) cancel in magenta with MERRY CHRISTMAS between the killers. Somewhere in my notes, Dye wrote that only 33 covers were produced with the holiday words. Reverse has no other markings or cachet.

Bob Murch only wrote of two examples of the fake cancel - one without wording and the other mentions the cutter's location. He warned collectors to beware of the covers as he contacted the cutter's skipper who told him the following :

"... You are informed that this vessel does not have a post office and therefore no letters are cancelled with a MOHAWK. The enclosed so called MOHAWK postmark is apparently made by a rubber stamp..."



Figure 10: MOHAWK fake cancel with MERRY/ CHRISTMAS in the killer bars.

Several years ago, Rich Hoffner sent me a copy of Murch's article and a Xerox copy (Figure 11) a Glenn Dye card depicting fake cancel (M-38) with the Cape May location between the killers. The same cancel appears in Dye's column in *Our Navy* (DEC 1948).

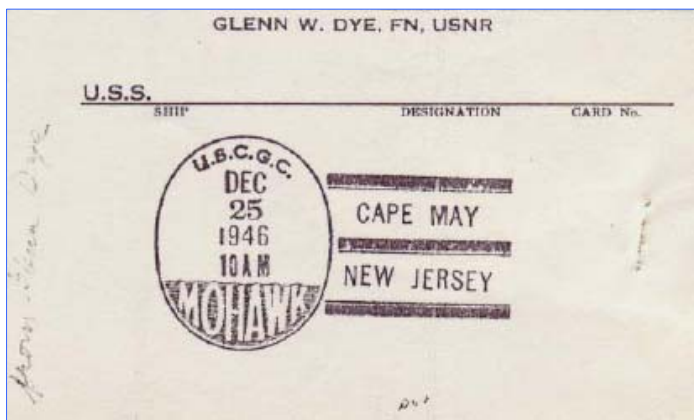


Figure 11: Dye's sample strike card showing the MOHAWK cancel with CAPE MAY/ NEW JERSEY in killer bars.

Dye wrote in this column "Lt. Comdr. Svenson, USCG, commanding of the USCGC MOHAWK at the time removed the cancel from the ship about the 12th of the following month, and it is known that there are less than 300 covers with this cancel applied. This writer considers himself fortunate in having one cover from this ship, and it definitely was received through the open mails"

Only one problem! Dye later wrote a note that was enclosed in one of my covers. Upon opening the cover, I found the penned note that he admitted co-sponsoring the

fake cancel. According to information, MOHAWK had a post office aboard while she operated with the Greenland Patrol - established 7 September 1942. This information was supplied by Dave Kent who forwarded copy of a letter found by Russ Carter (1999).

Another fake cancel (L-48) can be attributed to Glenn Dye. This cover (Figure 12) identifies Tracy Porter, Buffalo NY as Grey Cover Service subscriber #93 and the stamp was killed with an alleged cancel aboard the Buoy-tender, LILAC (WAGL 227). This cancel appears to be have been a Type 2z cancel (removed word NAVY) and substituted letters CGC LILAC in the dial. Note: same style of lettering used in FARGO cancel.



Figure 12: USCGC LILAC fake cancel (L-48).

Caveat Emptor! Let the buyer beware since he buys without recourse.

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**Naval Cover Fakes,
Forgeries and Frauds**

Part XI

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Back Dates

The postal service has always prohibited backdating mail by which I mean applying an earlier than the current date on a postmark. Backdating opens the door on all sorts of frauds, small and large, so the practice has correctly been prohibited. Still, the facts clearly indicate that backdating has taken place in our hobby. I think this was more prevalent in the 1930s timeframe when many mail clerks were members of the USCS, the ANCS or both and worked closely with naval cover sponsors. It's not something of which we can be proud but is certainly something which we want to highlight in this series. **Figure 1** is a cover in memory of aviatrix Amelia Earhart who, along with her navigator, Fred Noonan, were lost at sea in the southwest Pacific as she was completing her attempt as the first female pilot to fly around the world. The US Navy sent a number of vessels to search in the vicinity of Howland Island for a life raft or debris indicating a crash. None was found. The cover has a nicely printed cachet of Earhart and a blue type 3 (AC-TBT) postmark from USS SNAPPER (SS 185) dated 2 July 1937. The only problem is that SNAPPER's post office was not established until 15 December 1937 and she would not have received her postal materials until shortly before then, certainly not five months in advance. The postmark is clearly backdated. The cover sponsor is unidentified but Scott Goatley, USCS 1510, was the mail clerk in the submarine. Doubtless, he was working with someone else to create this attractive but fraudulent cover.



Figure 1: Printed cover with memorial cachet for Aviatrix Amelia Earhart, lost at sea in July 1937 while attempting a round-the-world flight. The cover bears a fine blue type 3(AC-TBT) postmark from USS SNAPPER (SS 185). Since SNAPPER's post office was not established until 15 December 1937, it is clear that the postmark was added well after the fact.

One of the most egregious cases of backdating took place in connection with the USS SQUALUS (SS 192) disaster. The story of SQUALUS has been well documented. The ship was commissioned 1 March 1939 at the Portsmouth (NH) Naval Shipyard and sailed on the morning of 23 May for the 19 in a series of sea trial tests near the Isle of Shoals. Unfortunately, the main induction valve was fouled and did not shut fully, the after portion of the ship flooded and SQUALUS sank to the bottom in 40 fathoms (240 feet) of water. Thirty-three survivors were rescued in the first use of the McCann diving bell and, after months of difficult salvage operations, SQUALUS was lifted to the surface, towed to port and dry docked on 15 September 1939. After the ship was dewatered, a shipyard worker reportedly found the ship's cancelling device in the Yeoman's office and used it to create backdated covers. **Figure 2** is dated 23 May, the date the ship sailed on sea trials, **Figure 3** is dated 13 September the day the ship was drydocked. The yard worker made a mistake not uncommon in such cases. Both covers bear the 3¢ Panama Canal 25th Anniversary stamp issued 15 August 1939. Clearly that stamp would not have been available to the SQUALUS postal clerk on May 23rd. Even had the ship not sunk, the fabrication was exposed by the selection of this stamp.



Figure 2: An uncacheted cover with a USS SQUALUS (SS 192) postmark of 23 May 1939, the day on which she sank in an accident. The stamp issued for the 25th anniversary of the opening of the Panama Canal was not issued until 15 August 1939 providing a clear indication that the postmark was backdated.



Figure 3: Cover with printed cachet and SQUALUS postmark of 13 September 1939 both noting drydocking of USS SQUALUS after months of salvage effort. The ship was not dewatered until several days later, so it is clear that the cancel was backdated. This cover apparently traveled through the mails to an address in Kansas City, Missouri.

It is not known if the yard worker sold the covers or gave them away. However, **Figure 3** bears a faint address to a post office box in Kansas City, Missouri, which could support either hypothesis. Whichever the case, the theft was apparently discovered and the cancel device recovered. The quantity of covers circulated is unknown, but has to have been small for neither date can readily be found in dealer's boxes. And I have never seen either one advertised on eBay. My guess is that not more than ten or so of each cover exists today.

SQUALUS was decommissioned, refurbished and renamed SAILFISH. A backdated cover adds yet another chapter to this tale. **Figure 4**, a cover with thermograph cachet by Walter Czubay, NCS 1, USCS 997, ANCS 707, was prepared for commissioning of USS CARDINAL (AM 67), a mine sweeper conversion, on 1 November 1940. However, the cover bears a common type 3r (A-BTT) red postmark of USS SAILFISH (SS 192) dated 8 December 1941 with killer bar notation "TAPS FOR/THE JAPS." December 8, 1941 happens to be the date, Manila, Philippine Islands time, when the Japanese attacked the Cavite Naval Station with devastating effects. Can you see the mail clerk cancelling covers with the crew at battle stations while bombs were falling from the sky?



Figure 4: Walter Czubay cacheted cover for commissioning of USS CARDINAL (AM 67) on 2 November 1940. The USS SAILFISH (SS 192) postmark of 8 December 1941 with killer bar notation TAPS FOR/THE JAPS marks the date of the Japanese attack on Manila, Philippine Islands at which time, SAILFISH was proceeding to her war patrol station. This postmark has been seen on other Czubay cacheted covers prepared earlier and unrelated to the start of World War II. That this postmark is backdated is not in question.

In mid 1941, several divisions of more modern submarines were transferred from San Diego and Pearl Harbor to the Philippines and based at Manila, P. I. to strengthen the Asiatic Fleet. SAILFISH, LCDR Morton Mumma, a unit of Submarine Division 22, arrived mid-1941. On 8 December, she was underway to her assigned patrol station when Japanese forces attacked. It is not known when E.C. McQuary, ANCS, the postal clerk, received a stash of CARDINAL FDC covers or cancelled them, but it had to be quite some time later. Mail for the P.I. was cut off at the start of the war. Most likely McQuary received a package of

covers from Czubay after the ship's third war patrol which ended in Australia. As a matter of fact, I have seen this postmark on other covers with different Czubay cachets. We can speculate that, as war began, Czubay gathered together whatever cover blanks he had on hand and sent them post haste to McQuary. It being war time, what did it matter if some covers were backdated with a patriotic slogan? There was a war on. Experienced collectors should not be fooled by this cover, but novices or non-naval cover collectors might be flummoxed by this fakery.

Most backdates are difficult to detect unless there is auxiliary evidence to prove that the postmark was applied sometime after the event had occurred. For example, naval covers postmarked December 7, 1941 are so scarce that covers with that date are almost surely backdated and must have other evidence to prove authenticity. Some years past, a non-USCS member sent a scan to the then USCS President who circulated the scan to several experts for opinion. The cover had a Type z cancel with a December 7, 1941 date and a corner card of a landing craft berthed in Pearl Harbor's West Loch. That the cover was backdated was obvious. The Pacific Fleet was not using Type z postmarks on December 7th and the landing craft did not have postal service or a permanently assigned crew. Unfortunately, we did not save the scan for file record purposes.

However, **Figure 5** contains the scan of a December 7, 1941 cover, which surfaced a year, or so after this article was published when; the owner, out of the blue, sent a scan to the author of this article. The cover, containing a Christmas greeting card, received a USS PENNSYLVANIA (BB 38) machine postmark dated Dec 7, 1941 and a "Passed by Censor" rubber stamp. The postmark is a legitimate ship cancel as opposed to one fabricated with a rubber stamp.



Figure 5: A Christmas greeting card sent to a family friend, postmarked at 10 a.m. on December 7, 1941. While PENNSYLVANIA was in drydock at the time of the Japanese attack, clearly mail would not routinely have been serviced later that morning. The censor mark, however, is the clue to indicate the cover was backdated since formal censorship was not initiated by the Pacific command until days following the attack. Scan provided by owner.

The son of the owner, who had sent the scan, had a plausible story concerning its provenance. The sender was a radioman serving in PENNSYLVANIA and the cover had been in possession of the recipient, a family friend, since December 1941. PENNSYLVANIA was in drydock at Pearl Harbor Naval Shipyard at the time of the Japanese attack. The owner's son posited that the ship had a minimum crew at the time, and the radioman had taken the weekend duty for a postal clerk, came on watch at 6 a.m., serviced the mail on hand, and bagged it for later delivery to the naval base shore post office for inclusion in the mail stream. While this all sounds reasonable, the cover has several noticeable flaws. Cancelling machines were used to service large rather than small quantities of outgoing mail and this device was set to 10 a.m., a time when the crew would have still been at general quarters struggling with the damage resulting from the attack. Nevertheless, even if those concerns could be explained away, the censor mark cannot. Censorship was not in effect in the Pacific Fleet on December 7, 1941 and only formally instituted some days later. Sealed covers would have been opened, read and resealed with censor tape, and the lack thereof on this cover is strong indication that the cover is a souvenir with a date applied days or a week later.

Contrived Covers

An issue which calls for a skeptical review is one which can be called "contrived covers." By that is meant a cover, which by its appearance makes one wonder if it had not been prepared after the fact, i.e., backdated. Two examples, both with Tokyo Bay 2 September 1945 postmarks are illustrated under this heading.

Figure 6 is a cover serviced by Archie Lance, ANCS 504. Electrician's Mate Lance was an active naval cover sponsor from 1938 to 1941. He received a commission during the war and was a Lieutenant serving in cruiser USS WILKES-BARRE (CL 103) in the surrender fleet at Tokyo Bay at war's end. The cover has a bordered envelope, a Tokyo postmark on Japanese franking and a Type 2 ship postmark on a pair of the Telegraph issue with first day of 24 May 1944. Now, WILKES-BARRE was among the ships which entered Tokyo Bay on 30-31 August 1945 and Lance might have acquired Japanese stamps in Yokosuka where the ship was anchored before the surrender. And he might have acquired the bordered envelopes and Telegraph stamps before the ship joined her task group at Ulithi in December 1944. But the overall look of the cover is, to me, contrived and smacks of backdating. As an officer and former cover sponsor, I expect he would have developed a close relationship with the ship's mail clerks.

Figure 7 appears to be a Lance inspired cover with overtones by Glenn Dye. This cover appears even more contrived with two Army-Navy issue stamps of 1937 and the Iwo Jima stamp issued 11 July 1945. That the latter stamp was available in the Western Pacific less than two months later is hardly believable. Both the four-cent Navy issue and Iwo Jima stamps were overstruck by the Tokyo Bay cachet, attributed to Glenn Dye, who we know was not on board a

ship in Tokyo Bay. There has been some speculation, not proven, that Dye was able to acquire a WILKES-BARRE post mark device when the ship was placed in reserve in Philadelphia Navy Yard in 1947. This contrived cover adds some credence to that speculation. In any event, a cover with a WILKES-BARRE Type two postmark of 2 September 1945 and the Tokyo Bay cachet pictured is definitely a Dye creation.

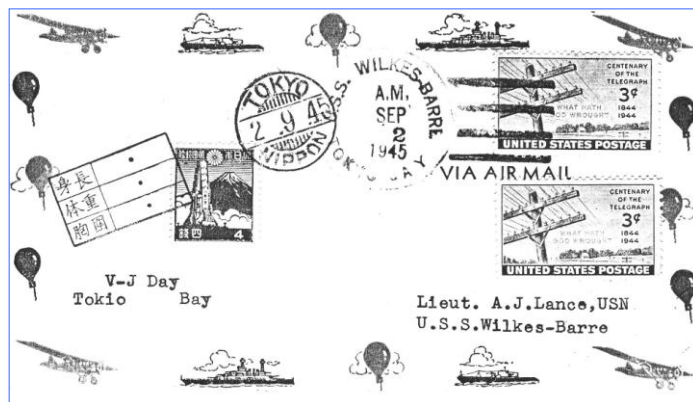


Figure 6: A WILKES-BARRE Tokyo Bay cover dated September 2, 1945, which, with its unusual cancels and franking, the author considers to be "contrived" and, thus, probably backdated. Photocopy provided by R.W. Murch, ANCS #99.

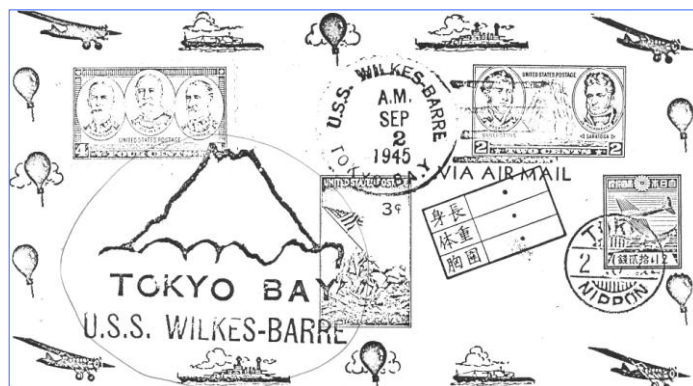


Figure 7: A variant of the figure 6 cover but with even more elements added to provide suspicion that the cover was prepared much later than the indicated date and location. Photo copy provided by R.W. Murch ANCS #99.

Surely, other backdated covers exist. The problem is obtaining evidence of the misdeed. If a reader has a story to tell, contact the author to add that information to this series.

Web site - <http://www.uscs.org>

USCS on FACEBOOK

Glenn Dye and First Day Covers

Norman Elrod, member of the American First Day Cover Society, added yet another dimension to the Glenn Dye fakes, this time for the first day of issue (FDOI) of the 3-cent dark violet issue of the Tennessee 150th Anniversary of Statehood stamp. Dye apparently acquired a number of cacheted blanks sponsored by Michael Sanders and Smartcraft and serviced the covers with a 1 June 1946 date, the first day of issue using a Type 2 cancel of USS TENNESSEE (BB 43).

Figure 8 illustrates a Sanders cover with the FDOI stamp and the TENNESSEE postmark. Although the cover is unaddressed, it has a General Delivery transit marking on reverse of the New York, NY, Church Street Station, an obviously illogical marking.

USS TENNESSEE completed her World War II service in Japanese waters in October 1945 and arrived at the Philadelphia Naval Shipyard for decommissioning on 7 December 1945. Her post office was disestablished 1 August 1946 and her postal material would have been either scrapped or returned to postal authorities at that time. The *Catalog of United States Naval Postmarks* indicates that the Type 6 duplex postmark apparently was stolen and used to make fake December 7, 1941 and other cancels (see Parts IX and X of this series). The Tennessee state FDOI covers provide additional evidence that the Type 2 cancel device was similarly purloined, most probably by Dye, and then used to service, perhaps backdating, those covers.

This suggests the possibility of additional Dye unofficial FDOI covers with the TENNESSEE Type 2 postmark.

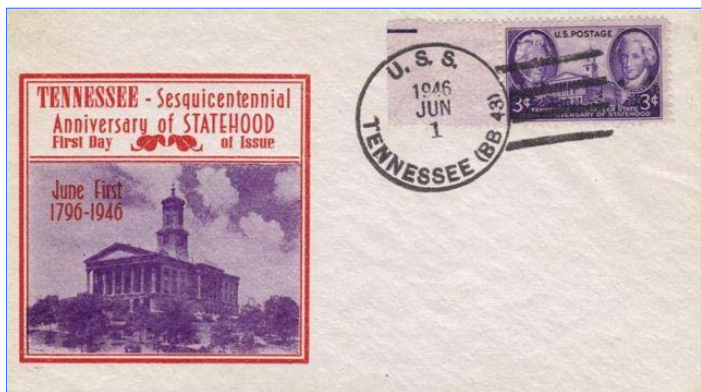


Figure 8: A Michael Sanders cachet on an unaddressed cover used for the first day of issue of the Tennessee Sesquicentennial stamp (Scott 941) with an apparently stolen Type 2 cancel from USS TENNESSEE (BB 43) then undergoing the lengthy process of decommissioning.



Figure 9: Reverse of the Figure 8 cover. The transit mark on reverse of the Church Street Station in New York, NY is evidence that the cover did not pass through the mail ending up in New York, NY. The back stamp is a bogus marking.

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**Naval Cover Fakes,
Forgeries and Frauds
Part XII**

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1931 Wilkins-Ellsworth Trans-Arctic Expedition

Although this series was intended to document fakers of U.S. naval covers, the forgeries done by A.C. Roessler in the 1931 time-frame surely were “nautical covers” and deserve mention. The Roessler faked covers can be found in dealers’ boxes and are often seen in eBay auctions. Quite often a seller does not know what he has and thus advertises the faked covers incorrectly. In point of fact, the Roessler fakes are scarcer than the genuine Wilkins covers and, on that basis, could theoretically command a somewhat higher price than the real thing.

Sir George Hubert Wilkins, MC, well known as an Antarctic explorer, logged many firsts in several expeditions to the Antarctic between 1920 and 1929. About 1926, he also turned his attention northward and, in 1930, in a striking *tour de force* secured use from the U.S. Navy of the soon to be scrapped submarine USS S-30 for an expedition to sail under the ice cap to the North Pole. In 1931, Wilkins with partner Lincoln Ellsworth, another polar explorer, began raising funds for the 1931 Wilkins-Ellsworth Trans-Arctic Expedition. In addition to grants and donations, the expedition offered collectors the opportunity to send covers, which would be mailed during the voyage at London, Bergen, Spitsbergen and from an unidentified port at the end of the expedition. The basic fee was 75 cents per cover for the first three legs, \$1 for the final leg with additional fees for registry service and autographs. The basic fee included cost of proper return postage for the service requested.

Wilkins’ submarine was modified for that purpose by Simon Lake in his shipyard and christened NAUTILUS by Lady Wilkins on 24 March 1931. NAUTILUS set sail for European waters 4 June 1931, broke down en route and spent a month in a British dockyard undergoing repairs. Eventually, NAUTILUS reached Spitsbergen departing 18 August for the North Pole. The expedition reached a point 450 nautical miles from the North Pole when a series of equipment failures caused Wilkins to abandon the attempt. NAUTILUS returned to Spitsbergen 6 September and then sailed for Bergen arriving on the 21st. In accordance with the terms of the agreement with the Navy, NAUTILUS was scuttled off Bergen 21 November 1931.

Covers which arrived at Expedition Headquarters in New York by the advertised deadline date of 1 May 1931

received an 8 May 1931 New York duplex postmark and were placed aboard NAUTILUS for the voyage. (A small number of later arriving covers were postmarked in New York and also made the trip). The expedition prescribed an addressing format that allowed it to overprint “To” and “From” notations with “From” and “To” to facilitate return of the cover to the sender. The cachet was simple: a starboard side view of the submarine in the ice pack with a representation of the aurora borealis in the background, **Figure 1.**

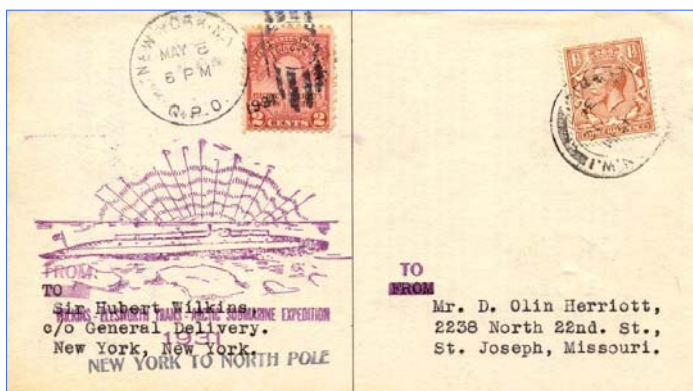


Figure 1: Typical 1931 Wilkins-Ellsworth Trans-Arctic Expedition cover, this one for the New York to North Pole leg mailed at the end of the voyage. This cover is in the prescribed format with Wilkins’ address on the left and sender’s address on the right. Expedition personnel overstamped “To” and “From” so that the sender’s return address is in the correct position on the right for return of the cover. Outgoing mail received a New York duplex postmark of 8 May 1931 before being placed aboard NAUTILUS for the voyage to the North Pole. Expedition personnel applied the expedition cachet and straight line stamp “New York to North Pole” and the correct UK franking for return. Covers for this leg were postmarked with a hand or machine cancel in various London postal stations between 1 October and 18 October 1931. Registered mail was postmarked 19 October 1931.

Expedition covers received one of four straight line stamps to identify the leg on which carried: New York to London, New York to Bergen, New York to Spitsbergen and New York to North Pole for covers carried throughout the entire trip. The voyage received a great deal of newspaper and radio coverage and covers continued to arrive at expedition headquarters long after the deadline. These were sent, uncanceled, under separate cover to Bergen, Norway where they met the ship. These covers were cancelled in Bergen, stamped with either a Bergen to North Pole or Bergen to Spitsbergen straight-line rubber stamp and placed aboard. It’s unclear what determined which covers would receive which of those two straight-line rubber stampings.

Two additional leg stamps were applied to a small number of covers, which met the ship in Spitsbergen: London to North Pole and Spitsbergen to North Pole. Of all the covers serviced, these markings are the rarest.

Expedition records indicate that 12,655 covers were serviced of which 2,704 were registered and 2,666 received an autograph of Wilkins or Captain Danenhower. The expedition staff was small and clearly overwhelmed by the amount of mail received. Covers for the first leg were serviced in a number of postal stations in London; both machine and hand cancels are known. Covers in Bergen and Spitsbergen received hand cancels. Covers for the final leg, New York to North Pole, were postmarked in London with either a hand or machine cancel dated between 1 and 19 October at various postal stations.

Albert C. Roessler (aka A.C. Roe)

Albert C. Roessler was a pioneer sponsor of first-flight, naval and first day covers from the dawn of aviation through the 1930s. Roessler was born in 7 April 1883, in Newark, New Jersey and died in obscurity on 26 January 1952, in Orange, New Jersey at the age of 69. He went out of business sometime in the 1940s. Roessler or "A.C. Roe" as he sometimes would write, was also a stamp collector and dealer who resided at 140 South Parkway, East Orange, New Jersey. His address commonly appears on covers that he had serviced. He published two newsletters, *Air Plane Stamp News* and *A.C. Roessler's Stamp News*.

In one of Roessler's newsletters *A.C. Roessler's Stamp News*, he stated that he was the exclusive agent for distribution of NAUTILUS covers. However, nothing has been found in expedition records to substantiate Roessler's claim.

In 1931, Roessler reported he had a number of dual serviced covers from 1928-1930 Wilkins-Hearst Antarctic Expedition and the 1931 Wilkins-Ellsworth Trans-Arctic Expedition in the NAUTILUS, **Figure 2**. These covers have a Falklands Islands one-penny (1p) King George V stamp, were postmarked 29 October 1928 with a Port Stanley, South Shetlands Islands hand cancel, bore a green or blue-green double-circle rubber stamp reading, "Wilkins Antarctic Expedition" in the outer ring and "Deception Island" in the center and were autographed by Wilkins and his pilot, C.B. Eielson. These covers are the first flight covers carried by an airplane in Antarctica. The covers originally had a rubber stamp address to A.C. Roe, Orange, New Jersey.

The dual expedition covers were originally serviced by Wilkins and were offered to Roessler for "as liberal as possible offer." There is no documentation that an agreement between the two was reached; in fact, the four-line overstamped expedition address would indicate that the expedition retained possession of the covers. The covers were cacheted with a black expedition cachet, postmarked on 1 June 1931 in New York, carried aboard NAUTILUS, stamped New York to North Pole and cancelled in London 3 October 1931. These covers are genuine in all respects and can be found in usual sources but at a fairly high price.



Figure 2: Dual serviced cover for first flight in Antarctica and first attempt by submarine to achieve the North Pole. The flight covers were serviced at Port Stanley 29 October 1928, bear a Deception Island double circle stamping in blue or blue green and Wilkins autograph and that of his pilot, C.B. Eielson.. The 1931 Trans-Arctic Expedition covers received a black expedition cachet, a New York duplex postmark of 1 June 1931 and a London 3 October 1931 hand cancel, many of which were poorly struck. The four-line expedition address stamp overstrikes the original address stamp of A.C. Roe(ssler). Expedition correspondence indicates that 150 such covers were dual serviced.

Faked Covers

Roessler evidently could not supply sufficient covers for the NAUTILUS voyage, so he produced his own cachet covers but for only two legs: New York to Bergen and New York to North Pole. Why he did not also produce covers for the two remaining legs - New York to London and New York to Spitsbergen - remains a mystery. None of the faked covers were ever carried aboard NAUTILUS.

Roessler produced three different cachets for his faked covers. The first was a reproduction of the expedition rubber stamp cachet. This facsimile is readily identifiable since the conning tower and portholes of the original are missing, **Figure 3**. This cachet is usually stamped in red ink whereas the genuine cachets were normally done in a magenta or purple shade.

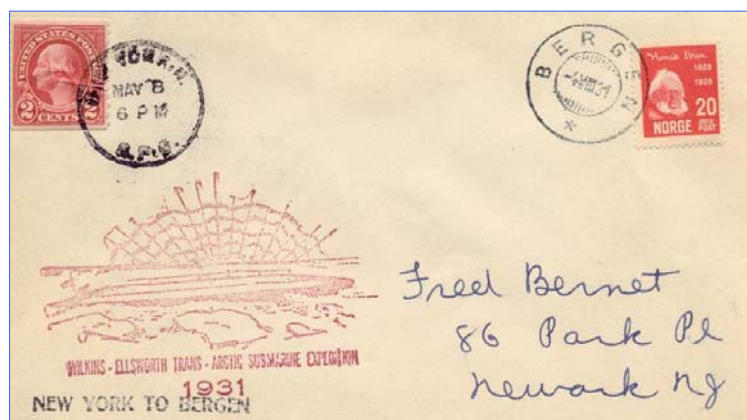


Figure 3: Fake Roessler 1931 expedition cover for NAUTILUS New York to Bergen leg. The facsimile cachet mimics the expedition cachet but is recognizable by the missing submarine conning tower and lack of portholes on the submarine. This cachet is struck in red ink whereas the expedition cachet is struck in a magenta or purple shade. The New York cancel is bogus and lacks the duplex killer. The Bergen postmark is also bogus. The addressee, Fred Bernet, is also an indicator of a Roessler fake of a genuine 1931 Trans-Arctic expedition cover.

The second cachet is printed in brown and shows Sir Hubert holding a mailbag, **Figure 4**. The third cachet, printed in black, shows a three quarters view of Wilkins head, **Figure 5**. Covers with the second and third cachets also have the replica expedition cachet.



Figure 4: Fake Roessler 1931 expedition cover for NAUTILUS New York to North Pole leg with brown printed cachet of Sir Hubert Wilkins holding a mailbag. The expedition facsimile cachet is also applied in red ink. Fred Bernet's address is printed on the cover in brown. The London postmark is bogus.

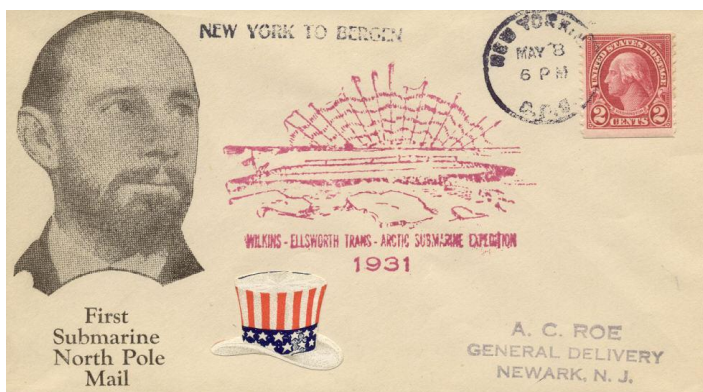


Figure 5: Fake Roessler 1931 expedition cover for NAUTILUS New York to Bergen leg with a cachet of three quarter's view of Sir Hubert's face printed in black. A red facsimile cachet has been added along with Roessler's return address stamp. Note that the cover lacks Norwegian franking and corresponding postmark.

Most of the faked leg covers have a typed address to Fred Bernet, 86 Park Place, Newark, NJ. Some covers have that address deleted with a typed replacement address for one of Roessler's customers and then forwarded under cover. In one case, however, Roessler simply added correct franking and mailed the cover to the customer.

The faked leg covers have a facsimile New York 8 May 1931 postmark but with a flawed cancel – the duplex killer is absent. The London replica machine cancel is also flawed having just a CDS but no wavy killer bar lines. The Bergen postmarks double circle hand cancels were faked as well, but the fakes are not readily distinguished from the real thing. In all cases, however, the bogus postmarks are fuzzy, not clear and sharp as are the real postmarks.

The faked cachets notwithstanding, it was the bogus New York postmark, which got Wilkins in trouble with postal

officials. Interestingly, his application of bogus London and Bergen postmarks did not violate any U.S. law.

Collectors lodged complaints when they realized they had been defrauded which resulted in Roessler's indictment. The *New York Times* of 31 January 1933 reported that, on 30 January 1931, "Albert C. Roessler, stamp collector and dealer, was arrested at his home 140 South Parkway, East Orange, N.J., on a bench warrant under an indictment by the Federal grand jury, charging fraudulent use of the mail. He was released on a \$1,000 bail taken out by the United States Commissioner A.L. Friedman. The government charged that Roessler entered into an agreement with George Hubert Wilkins, the polar explorer, thus giving Roessler exclusive rights to mail sent on the NAUTILUS. The NAUTILUS was the submarine used in 1931 by Wilkins on an Arctic exploration trip that failed. Finding a greater demand for stamps (covers) canceled on the trip than he could meet, it was charged that Roessler used a facsimile of a New York cancel mail that was never taken on the trip and he represented this as a genuine Wilkins trip mail."

Linn's Stamp News of 15 July 1933 reported a letter from Tom C. Cargill, U.S. Post Office Inspector, Elizabeth, New Jersey, stating that: "On 21 June 1933, Albert C. Roessler, 140 South Parkway, East Orange, N.J., appeared in Federal court in Newark, New Jersey, and pleaded guilty to two indictments; one charging the use of mails in furtherance of a scheme to defraud, and the other that he caused to be printed and did use prints (the New York cancellations) in similitude of obligations of the United States. Federal Judge Guy L. Fake (real name) imposed a sentence of one year and one day in the Atlanta Penitentiary on each charge, then suspended the sentence and placed Roessler on probation for three years."

Other Roessler Fakes, Forgeries, and Fantasies

Figure 6 is yet another example of Roessler's ingenuity. Despite all the Expedition's advanced publicity on the track NAUTILUS would follow, Roessler advised his customers in one of his newsletters that NAUTILUS would begin her voyage to the North Pole from Iceland instead of Spitsbergen and prepared covers for that contingency. The Reykjavik postmark of 27 August 1931 is genuine, but on that date NAUTILUS was nine days out of Spitsbergen and ready to abandon the effort to reach the North Pole.

In the initial planning stages, NAUTILUS and the dirigible GRAF ZEPPELIN were scheduled to meet in the Arctic and exchange mail. NAUTILUS was delayed by her mid-Atlantic breakdown and on 30 June 1931, the planned date of the exchange, was in a dockyard in Devon, England. Not to be deterred, Roessler prepared a bogus cover for this non-event also postmarked in Reykjavik, Iceland, **Figure 7**. Both **figure 6** and **7** covers are rare.

Figure 8, a European sized cover (9 cm x 16 cm) represents yet another rare Roessler cover sent recently by ASPP member Dave Larson. The cover was also advertised to his customers as a "special lot to be carried under an EXCLUSIVE arrangement with Sir Hubert Wilkins" and "NO OTHER DEALER has this privilege." While Roessler and Wilkins had had a cooperative arrangement concerning North

and South Pole flight mail during the mid to late 1920s, the two had parted company by 1931. Therefore, the cover of **Figure 8**, while very attractive, was essentially a figment of Roessler's imagination. The Newark, New Jersey postmark dated April 1931 seems to indicate that the envelope was used for incidental correspondence rather than true NAUTILUS polar mail.



Figure 6: Faked Roessler cover created for the end of NAUTILUS Arctic voyage postmarked at Reykjavik, Iceland 27 August 1931 addressed to Providence, Rhode Island (9 September), missent to Randolph, Vermont (10 September) and received at Vincennes, Vermont 11 September 1931. At no time during her voyage did NAUTILUS make a port call to Reykjavik.

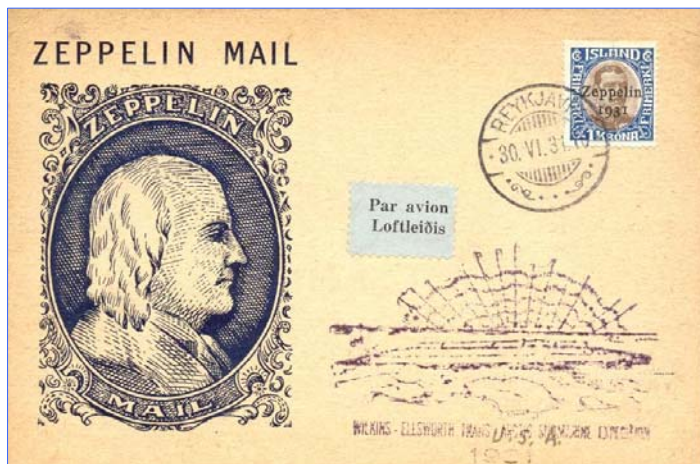


Figure 7: Bogus Roessler postcard with Zeppelin Mail cachet created for a scheduled mail transfer between submarine NAUTILUS and dirigible Graf Zeppelin in Arctic waters. However, NAUTILUS was delayed and the Arctic mail transfer was accomplished with Russian ship MALYGUIN. Nevertheless, Roessler produced this bogus card with his facsimile expedition cachet and a Reykjavik postmark of 30 June 1931. On that date, NAUTILUS was in a Devon, England dockyard.

In 1922, Newfoundland commissioned an engraved airmail stamp essay, printed by the company of De La Rue in shades of red-brown (imperforate) or in sepia with black or sepia with blue (perforated 14 x 13½). In 1931, Roessler offered an embossed lithographed stamp for sale in ads that were worded to promote the impression that it was the De La Rue essay. Roessler's forgery had a red-brown center

surrounded by a dark green frame. Apparently perforated 11, the stamp is in actual fact die-cut to produce a perforated edge. This is easily seen since the "perforations" have green edges.

Roessler overprinted (private precancel) a U.S. Scott 632, 1¢ Benjamin Franklin stamp with a two-line "Graf Zeppelin" overprint. Roessler had been inspired to make his creation by the U.S., Scott 646, 2¢ Battle of Monmouth (Scott 634, overprinted George Washington) stamp with a two-line "Molly Pitcher" overprint and the Scott 647 and 648, 2¢ and 5¢ Hawaii Sesquicentennial (Scott 634 and 637, overprinted George Washington and Theodore Roosevelt) stamp with a two-line "Hawaii 1778-1928" overprint. (Contrary to a myth, Roessler did not get in trouble with the government for this action; as noted earlier, it was the forged New York postmark on the faked 1931 Wilkins-Ellsworth expedition covers that got him arrested.)

Roessler thought the "Graf Zeppelin" overprinted stamp would dress-up a first return trip Graf Zeppelin flight cover from Lakehurst, New Jersey to Friedrichshafen, Germany. The flight covers were postmarked at Lakehurst, New Jersey on 28 October 1928 and Friedrichshafen, Germany on 1 November 1928. Roessler created a special postcard for the event and he overpaid the 53¢ rate by a penny, so his overprinted stamp was superfluous. Roessler reasoned that if his overprinted stamp wasn't valid for postage it didn't matter, because the other stamps paid the rate. Roessler offered these covers for sale for \$1. Roessler had under 500 of his "Graf Zeppelin" overprinted stamps left over so he offered them for sale as mint stamps for 10¢ each.

Roessler applied an overprint to U.S. Scott 649 and 650, 2¢ and 5¢ International Civil Aeronautics Conference stamps. The overprint states "Kitty Hawk" with "N.C." inside a circle. He printed this overprint with many varieties. Roessler said he had 50 covers with the 5¢ overprint stamp on it and cancelled at Kitty Hawk, North Carolina on 17 December 1928. He offered the covers for 50¢ each. The covers had a New York backstamp. He offered the 2¢ overprinted stamp on cover for 30¢.

It is widely acknowledged that Roessler was responsible for servicing covers for many aerophilatelic events, which would not otherwise have been documented philatelically. Nonetheless, his capers as noted in the foregoing diminish his stature among philatelists. Whether he was driven by greed or an egotistical need to be "first," he set a poor example and deservedly was punished.

Conclusion

This article completes the twelve article series of fakes, forgeries and frauds associated with naval/maritime covers. It was the intention of the USCS board of directors to shine a light on the shoddy practices of a few which have continued, to this day, to flummox unwary collectors. This series will be collated, placed on the USCS web page and made available in print. If readers have other examples of naval cover fraud, please bring them to the attention of Bob Rawlins, address above.

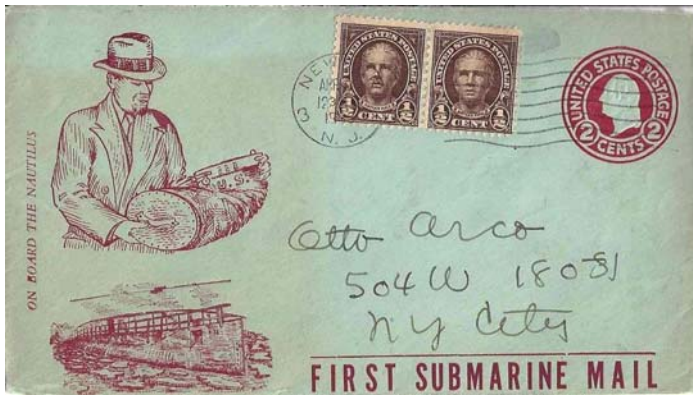


Figure 8: An attractive Roessler cover prepared for the NAUTILUS Arctic voyage and advertised to his customers as an “exclusive” item for his customers to be sent in addition to Expedition advertised covers. This envelope appears to have been used for incidental correspondence with a Roessler customer rather than an actual NAUTILUS carried cover.

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Naval Cover Fakes, Forgeries and Frauds, Part XIII

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Some Parting Thoughts

We thought we had finished with this series until I came across some odd covers while putting the finishing touches on the next volume of the *Catalog of United States Naval Postmarks*, which will cover receiving ships. Then I found still more covers that bothered me. I suppose there will always be a few covers that we don't truly understand, and whose status has to be considered questionable. Some, of course, are more obvious than others.

Consider, for example, these covers produced by a cachetmaker named D. R. Annis. The cancel (Figure 1) is little more than a crude drawing of the standard Type 3 cancel from the Brooklyn Receiving Ship.



Figure 1: Brooklyn Receiving Ship Type 3 on D.R. Annis covers. Note the 'E' in EXPLODES begins even with middle killer bar on front cancel, but begins with wingding on cancel on reverse side.

I've found three usages, all in April and May of 1937. Annis lived in Brooklyn, and getting genuine cancels on his covers was a simple matter of driving down to the Brooklyn Navy Yard, in the days when gas was a nickel a gallon. What's especially odd about the Hindenburg crash cover is that it has a genuine cancel on the back. In the 1930s, many cover sponsors gave fancy cancels to ships, but it would be hard to call this drawing "fancy." At the time, Brooklyn was home to many of the hobby's great cachetmakers, but Annis doesn't seem to have been part of the "in crowd," and I find no mention of him in journals of the time. I haven't seen this marking on any but his cachets.

Incidentally, collectors may suspect that commemorative Hindenburg crash covers are all backdated, but I believe that at least those from the Brooklyn Receiving

Ship are genuine and properly dated. The giant airship burned and crashed about 7:30 in the evening over in New Jersey, and the disaster was immediately reported on radio. Although I haven't been able to find it lately, I'm almost sure I've read contemporary reports from one of the cachetmakers about rushing down to the Yard and rousing the mail clerk from his evening routine to cancel covers, with cachets, of course, to be added later.

Another cancel that has always bothered me is this USS NEW YORK marking found on some event covers in the era around World War II. At first glance it looks like an ordinary Type 3 cancel, but there's something about it that just doesn't look right. (One collector once asked me how you tell that something "doesn't look right," and my answer is that when you've looked at a couple of million covers; you develop a sixth sense about cancels.) I have or have seen half a dozen covers with this cancel. The earliest is a December 1939 cachet by George Sadworth, one of the famed Brooklyn group of cachetmakers (Figure 2). Another pair of cachets with this cancel (Figures 3 & 4) looks very much like those produced by John Von Losberg and Mike Sanders, two more of the Brooklyn cachetmakers who made covers under the name Stanlos Cachet Service. John Young chronicled their work in an article in the December 2003 *Log*. A fourth usage appears on this February 1941 cachet by William Spader, who produced many covers for the construction of submarines at Groton, Conn. (Figure 5).



Figure 2: USS NEW YORK Type 3 cancel on Sadworth cacheted cover.



Figure 3: USS NEW YORK Type 3 cancel on John Von Losberg cacheted cov



Figure 4: USS NEW YORK Type 3 cancel on Mike Sanders' cacheted cover for Atlantic Charter Conference.

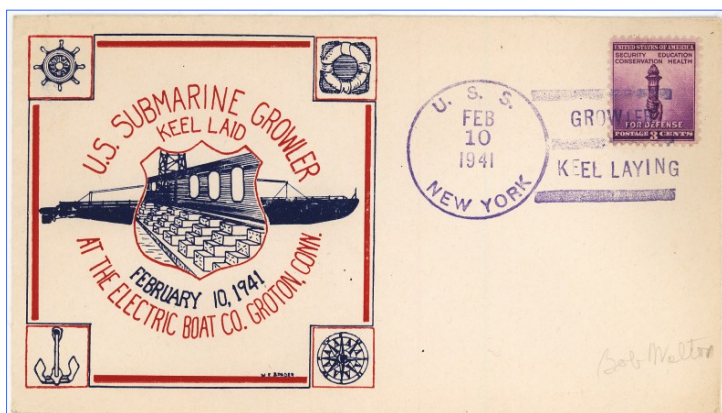


Figure 5: USS NEW YORK Type 3 cancel on William Spaders' cacheted cover for USS GROWLER Keel Laying at Groton.

Surprisingly, I also found an example of this cancel backdated to 1933 on eBay, the Internet auction site. The seller there described the cancel as “fake,” although I don't know who the seller was and I'm not certain how he decided it is a fake. This cover (Figure 6) appears to be listed in the 1986 *Nobel's Cacheted Presidential Inaugural Covers* catalog, but it is not illustrated and is not described as a fake there. Perhaps the seller assumed the cancel is a fake because he knows that Sanders didn't start using this style of cachet until several years after the date on the cover.



Figure 6: Backdated Sanders' cachet with USS NEW YORK cancel showing 1933 date.

The status of these covers might be clearer if we knew just where the battleship NEW YORK was when these covers were canceled. Unfortunately, the ship's official history is rather vague on her homeport after she returned to the Atlantic Fleet around 1937, although I suspect it was more likely Norfolk than Brooklyn. Her history does say that by mid-1941 she was assigned to the Atlantic Neutrality Patrol, and she sailed to Iceland in July. After that she became the station ship at Argentina, Newfoundland.

The Atlantic Charter meeting mentioned on the 9 August cover (Figure 4) did indeed take place off Argentina, but whether she was there at the time is not clear. The meeting between Roosevelt and Churchill was top secret, however, so this would have to be an “add-on” cachet, added to the cover later. However, I just can't believe that the mail clerk would dare to cancel even blank covers for such a secret event.

An unusual characteristic of Type 3 cancels of this period is a small thin line above or below the thick killer bars. On this cancel I can see a thin line above the top and bottom killers, but the center bar is always too poorly struck to show any detail. The last prewar cancel we list for NEW YORK is a 3(A-TBT), which may be this cancel. However, by the summer of 1941 all ships in the Atlantic were using 3z or Fz cancels, just “U.S. NAVY” without the ship's name. It was very difficult to make really good forged postmarks in those days, and despite the fact that these covers look suspicious, the cancels look pretty good. What might have happened is that someone among the Brooklyn cachetmakers acquired the genuine cancel from the ship and used it on covers. The Spader cover for USS GROWLER (Figure 5) presents a question: why did he use a cancel from a ship many miles away on this cover when most of his other covers in that period were postmarked either in Groton, or on a ship at the Groton submarine base? One possibility is that he missed the event, keel layings tending to be poorly publicized. However, he had a friend in Brooklyn who had a suitable postmark so when he found out the date, he sent his covers to the friend and requested this specific date for the cancel. The cover is unaddressed and was obviously not mailed.

Another problem with this cancel is that it is invariably struck in color -- various shades of red blue and light violet. The only colors of stamp pads used in post offices in that era were black and a distinctive shade of bright magenta. I do realize that there were many colored cancels during the 1930s, the results of collectors providing colored stamp pads to mail clerks. However, by the summer of 1941, there was just no opportunity for a collector to bring a colored stamp pad aboard the battleship.

It gets murkier. NEW YORK spent the last part of the war in the Pacific but returned to her namesake city for the gala Navy Day 1945 celebrations. I have covers from her there with a type 3 cancel but it's not this cancel. It's the 3(A-BBT) cancel that we say was first issued in 1938 (many mail clerks found prewar cancels in the backs of drawers when the war ended). Yet, I have a first day cover of the Merchant Marine stamp (26 February 1946) with our old suspect cancel.

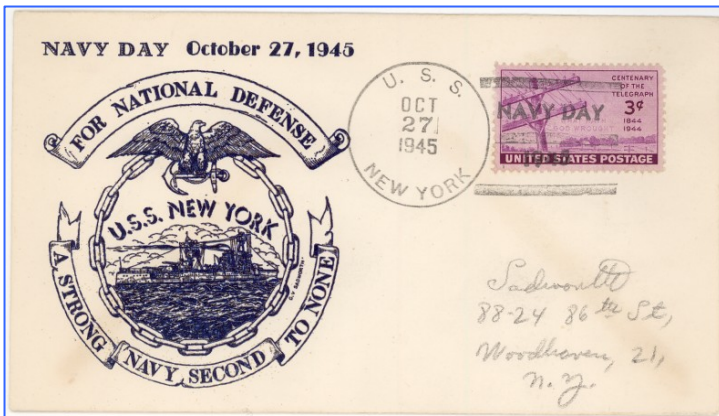


Figure 7: USS NEW YORK cancellation 27 October 1945 with Navy Day 1945 cachet.

Even more suspicious is a Smartcraft cachet (**Figure 8**) for the Bikini atom bomb tests with this cancel dated 30 June 1946. NEW YORK was there as a target ship but her crew, by then, was back at Kwajalein with their equipment. Our records say her last day covers have the standard postwar 2(n) cancel not this old one. Smartcraft cachets were the product of Ludwig Staehle and Staehle used Alex Hesse as his printer -- Alex was more than a great cachetmaker, he was also a professional printer. That puts the cover back in Brooklyn where we believe our cancel resided.



Figure 8: Bikini atom bomb test with Smartcraft cachet and suspect NEW YORK cancel. Scan courtesy of John Young.

All of the people involved with these covers are long gone, so I suppose we will never know the whole answer.

This series has been intended to help you identify fakes and Frauds, but as this discussion shows, the lines are not always that clearly drawn. What we really hope is that we've helped you develop that sixth sense about covers that will help you avoid disappointment in your collecting odyssey.

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Naval Cover Fakes, Forgeries and Frauds

Part XIV

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The John Gill “Facsimile” Cancels: Fakes or Fun?

As we wrap up the Fakes, Forgeries and Frauds series, we’ve had some discussions over a group of covers that I will call the “John Gill Facsimiles.” I have a hard time calling them fakes or forgeries, because I cannot see that John Gill ever intended to deceive anyone with them. Nevertheless, they are not real, and need to be explained.

John Gill was one of the early students of naval postmarks, and was also a skilled illustrator whose drawings of cancels we still use in our *Catalog of United States Naval Postmarks*. He provided the original drawings for the very first attempt at cataloging Naval postmarks, Joe Hale’s 1934 *Handbook of Naval Postmarks*, and the 1939 second edition. His drawings have continued to appear in succeeding editions of what we now call our *Catalog*.

The printing technology of the 1930s required that a metal printing plate be made of these illustrations, and apparently, Gill acquired these plates after the *Handbook* was published and used them to make “covers.” The postmark on the USS NOA cover in **Figure 1**, for example, is exactly the same as the illustration on page 59 of the 1934 *Handbook*. The postmark from USS PECOS (**Figure 2**) appears on page 66, and the USS TALBOT postmark (**Figure 3**) is on page 74. In the group of six covers in **Figure 4**, the USS SOLACE postmark is exactly as shown on page 122 of the 1939 edition, and although I haven’t been able to find the other cancels on that sheet, all are certainly reproductions and not genuine. The same is true of the FLUSSER postmark in **Figure 5**, although I cannot find its source off hand.

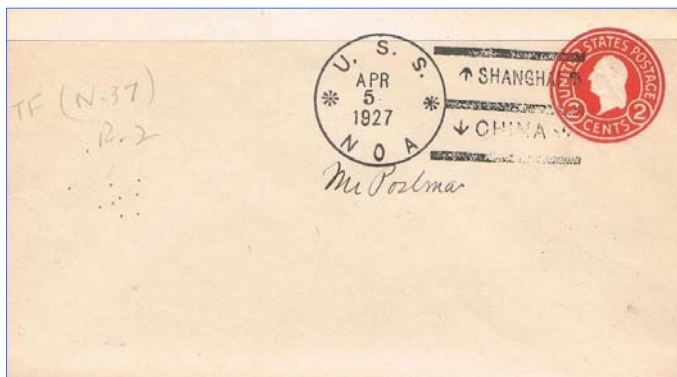


Figure 1: USS NOA cancel -- facsimile illustration.

Gill, however, didn’t try to hide the truth. On the back of most of these covers is the rubber stamp shown in **Figure 6**, my source of the rather old-fashioned word “facsimile.” However, not all of his faked covers have this marking, but there are other characteristics that alert us. Genuine

postmarks are made of rubber and have “soft” edges, and show wear after even a short period. Gill was working with metal printing plates, which have sharper edges and make very clear impressions. And no matter how skillful an artist may be, a hand-drawn design can’t be as perfect and precise as one made by a machine.



Figure 2: USS PECOS cancel -- facsimile illustration.

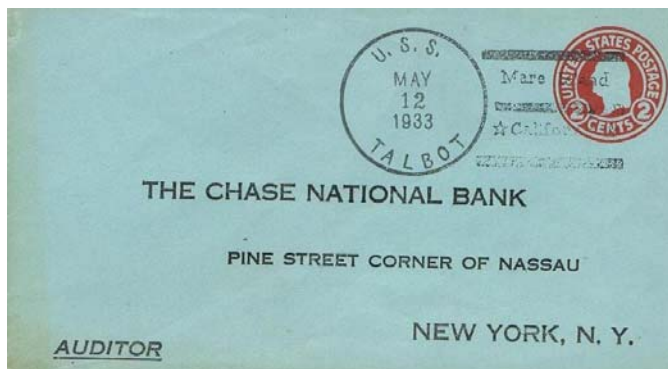


Figure 3: USS TALBOT cancel -- facsimile illustration from 1934 Handbook.



Figure 4: Group of covers with cancels believed to be John Gill reproductions made from metal printing plates.

Gill faced another problem in making the older facsimiles, one that faces all cover fakers. The problem is to obtain appropriate postage stamps for the period of the faked cancel. In his day, the market for naval covers was weak, and at times, the cost of a mint postage stamp from the early 1900s may have been more than the value of a naval cover made with it. One solution was to find an old picture postcard that slipped through the mail without a postmark, and apply his “cancel” to that. Another was government stamped envelopes with a preprinted address. In the days before Business Reply Mail, millions of these were sent out by businesses as a courtesy to customers, hoping they would respond with orders or payments. So many unused ones came on the market that at one time the *Scott Postage Stamp Catalogue* actually had three listings for stamped envelopes, unused, unused but with printed address, and used. The unused-but-printed envelopes sold at a discount from clean blank mint envelopes. Notice that many of the Gill facsimiles are on government stamped envelopes with printed addresses -- and that few of those businesses would expect to receive a letter from a ship. If you examine the envelopes, you find that the flap is not sealed and it shows no signs of having gone through the mail.

without a trace. She helped create the mystique of the Bermuda Triangle, and the Internet has spread even more speculation on the cause of her loss, with theories ranging from enemy sabotage to alien abduction.

John Gill caused a sensation in the late 1930s when he announced that he had found a cover from this ship. Obviously it would be the collector’s dream, but specific details on the cover are hard to come by. It was never pictured in the *Log*, nor has there been a detailed description of it -- in fact, we aren’t sure whether it was a full cover or a picture postcard, which is where most early classic Navy cancels are found. The Gill family reports that they no longer have the cover, it having disappeared long ago under mysterious circumstances.

Let’s trace what we do have documented about it. The 1939 *Handbook of Naval Postmarks* lists the cancel as a Type 1 postmark dated 1914. It was priced at \$2.00, about the highest price of any postmark listed (Gill and *Handbook* publisher Joe Hale were close personal friends). No further information about the ship was listed. In the 1952 Catalogue, published in a *Billig Philatelic Handbook*, the cancel was listed again, but this time with a year date of 1911. This edition reported that the ship was commissioned on 7 November 1910, and her post office was established on 20 February 1911. A post office closing date of 1 March 1918 is given, presumably the date of the last month-end report the Postal Clerk had sent in while they were still in port in Barbados. The cancel was now listed with a value of \$15.00, ten times the average value of other classic cancels. Gill provided a drawing of the cancel, the very first illustration in the discussion of cancel types. It eventually became featured in the explanation of the Locy Type Chart as the example of a basic Type 1 cancel (**Figure 7**).

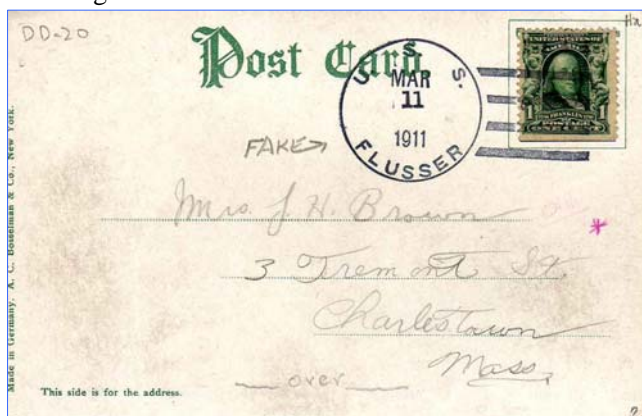


Figure 5: USS FLUSSER fake cancel on picture post card.

Only a handful of Gill facsimile covers exist, and most have his facsimile marking. If you’ve learned something from this series, you are not likely to be fooled by one.

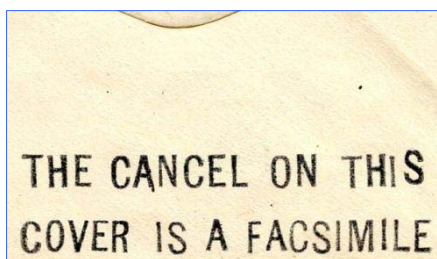


Figure 6: Rubber stamped notation found on the reverse of most John Gill facsimile cancel covers

USS CYCLOPS

While we’re discussing John Gill, I think it’s time to put to rest the legend of his famous cover from USS CYCLOPS. She was a collier, carrying coal as fuel for the fleet, and became one of the world’s most famous ships, partly because of her mythical name, but mostly because she set sail from Barbados on 3 March 1918 and vanished

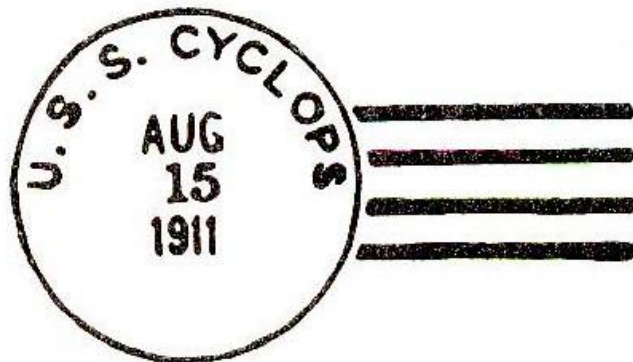


Figure 7: USS CYCLOPS Type 1 cancel illustration.

By the time Jim Russell re-edited the “C” section in the 1970s, the Navy had published ships’ histories drawn from official records. These were much better than the older privately published books, which were not always detailed and accurate. From the new official history, he found that when CYCLOPS was completed in 1910 she was not commissioned, but was placed In Service with a civil service crew and assigned to the Naval Auxiliary Service, the era’s equivalent of today’s Military Sealift Command. She had no armament. Crewing details are hard to confirm, but I believe

her crew at this time was no more than 150 -- coaling ship was hard work, but the crew of the ship being refueled did the work, not the crew of the collier. Most ships in this type of service did not have post offices. When the United States entered World War I, it was obviously necessary to arm every ship. Four 4-inch guns were bolted to her decks, which meant she needed gun crews and ammunition handlers. They also no doubt increased the number of watch standers and radio operators. This in turn meant an increase in the number of mess cooks, supply men and yeomen. When she left Barbados on her fatal 1918 voyage, she is listed as carrying 309 crew and passengers. Her official history reflects this upgrade, for she was placed in Full Commission on 1 May 1917, her crew sworn into military service.

With this new information available, Jim improved the ship's history to report the correct commissioning date in 1917, moving the 1910 "In Service" date to a footnote. He kept the 1911 post office establishment date, however, presumably to accommodate the cancel listing. Although the Type 1 cancel is still listed, it is assigned no value, showing that Jim already had doubts about its authenticity.

As we prepared to work on the Fifth Edition (published in 1997), rumors that the CYCLOPS cancel was a fabrication were too strong to ignore, so we turned to official postal records for more information. The original documents on Navy post offices that Gill and *Catalog* historian Joe Frayne found in the New York City post office in the early 1950s are gone, discarded as so much waste paper, I've been told. Frayne did transcribe the information he found, and the dates on his file card (which we still have) match the dates in the 1950 edition. There are other postal records, however. One is the *Postal Bulletin*, a then-daily journal that listed, at first, the appointments of Navy Mail Clerks, and eventually only the opening and closing of shipboard post offices. There is also a set of books titled the *Postal Guide*, annual yearbooks of postal regulations and information, which listed all post offices in the country, including military ones, as of the end of the fiscal year, then June 30.

Search as we might, we find no listing for CYCLOPS in the 1911 *Postal Bulletins*. She is also not listed in the *Postal Guides* during this period. We do, however, find a listing in a 1917 *Postal Bulletin* stating that a post office was authorized for CYCLOPS on 13 June 1917, shortly after she was commissioned. The only edition of the *Postal Guide* that lists her is the 1918 edition, ironically four months after she disappeared (the Navy did not officially list her as "lost" until that edition was already at the printers).

Just one cover has been reported from this brief nine-month period of postal service, a battered envelope now in the archives of the Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library and Museum in Hyde Park, NY. (**Figure 8**). It has a Type 3 postmark, which is what we would expect for this period of postal history.

So what are we to think? I believe that, at first, Gill made the cancel purely as a lark, an interesting experiment to

test his artistic skills. When someone pointed out that his 1914 year date seemed odd, since the standard cancel that year would have been a Type 3, not a Type 1, he changed the date to 1911, and then produced a drawing to prove it. It would also appear that the 1911 post office establishment date was pure fiction, to justify the cancel. Although many people have written about seeing the cover over the years, no full description of it has ever been published. It's been more than 30 years since anyone has seen it, and those that did tend to have a vague recollection that the cancel seemed too sharp, and it might have been on a piece of postal stationery, just like the facsimile covers that Gill made. I believe that we must accept the truth that the famed CYCLOPS cover, too, was made by Gill himself from a metal printing plate on an old unused stamped envelope.

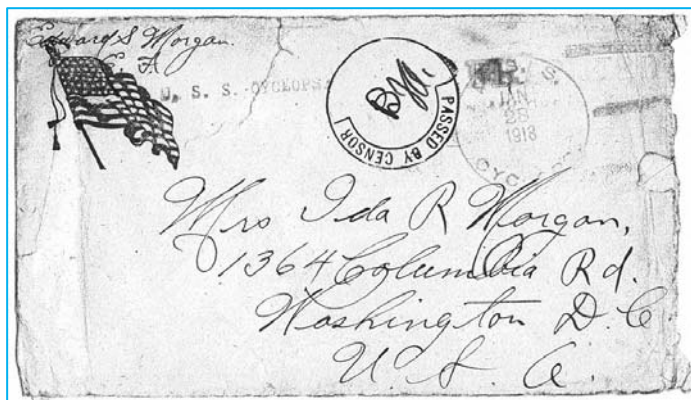


Figure 8: Recently discovered USS CYCLOPS Type 3 cancellation now in the Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library and Museum in Hyde Park, NY

It's hard to accuse Gill of fraud, because he never tried to sell the cover to anyone. As the legend of the cancel grew, I believe it began to gain a life of its own, until Gill himself began to believe that it was real. Perhaps it's almost appropriate that, just as CYCLOPS has become a mysterious legend, so has John Gill's "cover" from the famed ship.

Thanks to Chuck French, Frank Hoak, Jay Milewski, Jim Myerson, Bob Rawlins and Steve Shay for their advice and photocopies.

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Thanks to Marvin Barrash and Todd Creekman Captain, USN (Ret.)(USCS 12,037) for additional material on USS CYCLOPS Type 3 -- January 2011.

Naval Cover Fakes, Forgeries and Frauds

Part XV

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Navy Postmarks on the 1971 Postal Service Stamp

One of the more intriguing stamps for the first day cover collector is the Postal Service stamp (Scott 1396), issued on 1 July 1971 to note the establishment of the U.S. Postal Service as an independent government agency, successor to the old Post Office Department. Although official dedication ceremonies for the stamp were held in Washington, the stamp was issued simultaneously at every post office in the country, creating a true challenge for the first day cover collector, since the country then had some 40,000 post offices, stations and branches. The Postal Service produced an official cacheted envelope for the occasion (**Figure 1**), giving them away to anyone who would buy one of the new stamps and get a first day postmark on the cover. In fact, I was one of those who produced a private cachet for the stamp, on behalf of the New Britain Centennial Committee. One of the first to try to catalog all of the known covers for this stamp was Roy E. Mooney, whose *REM Catalog* is now maintained by David Wallman (www.remcatalog.com), although it doesn't appear to have been updated for a couple of years (my cachet is listed as REM070165EL).



Figure 1: First Day of Issue USPS cachet and stamp cancelled with USS CONSTITUTION (IX 21) Type 2(n+)(USS).

My interest soon moved on to Navy covers, but in 1983 I again encountered some unusual FDCs of the Postal Service stamp. In a partnership with three other collectors, we purchased the estate of the late Frederick L. Karcher, a cachetmaker who did business as FaLKon cachets, a play on his initials. Karcher had a poor reputation both as a businessman and for his rumored faked covers, and in fact by the late 1970s had been denied advertising privileges in most of the collectors' publications. We did indeed find many fake

and forged covers in his estate, destroying tens of thousands of them. However, I saved a small accumulation of FDCs of the Postal Service stamp for future reference, since I remembered hearing back in the 1970s that Karcher had been investigated for creating seriously backdated FDCs of this stamp aboard ships -- not backdated by a few days, but by more than two years.

At the 1973 USCS convention in Wisconsin a collector named James Ronnerud exhibited first day covers mailed aboard ship (I don't have a detailed description, but I believe it was mostly unofficals). He had only a few 7-1-71 covers. Karcher was there and told Ronnerud that he might be able to find some more FDCs of that stamp. A few months later, he sent Ronnerud a nice selection of FDCs all postmarked aboard ship. Ronnerud took them to a local USCS chapter meeting and showed them to **Martin Longseth** (USCS 3699), an expert in postmarks who regularly sent to ships for examples of their postmarks. Longseth became suspicious and believed that Karcher had made the covers in that summer of 1973, somehow backdating the cancels to 1971. Among other things, Longseth recalls that Navy postmarks of that period were apparently being made by at least two different manufacturers. Both used a different type kit for dates. Some of the Karcher 7-1-71 covers had a year slug which would not have been issued with that particular cancel. At least one or two ships had not yet been issued the particular cancel in 1971. And in a few cases, there were traces of red or purple ink in the "1971" of the Type 2 cancels. That's something that won't happen unless it had been previously used in a Type 9 cancel.

He wrote to many of the ships, asking if they still had records of where they were in July of 1971. While some were in the Boston Navy Yard, near where Karcher lived, others reported that they had been as far away as the Caribbean or the Mediterranean. Longseth wrote a report on his findings for the USCS Board meeting in October, 1974, with supporting documents. Unfortunately, no copy of this report was kept with the minutes of that Board meeting, and apparently it no longer exists. Incidentally, the only person still alive who was at that Board meeting is Longseth.

I, therefore, made a recent effort to research the same information, knowing that by now the Navy has given its 1971 ship's logbooks to the National Archives in College Park, Maryland. Russ Carter volunteered to help, and eventually he was able to see all but three of the logs in question. The following table tells where each ship was on 7-1-71.

I kept all of the 7-1-71 FDCs we found. There are 24 different ships, but no more than five from any one ship. The location list shows that some of those ships were in Boston on the first day, yet Karcher claimed in the 1974 Board meeting that he was in Newport News that day (I believe he worked for the company that then owned Newport News Shipbuilding). The key cover is the one from the aircraft carrier SHANGRI-LA (**Figure 2**), which was at the Boston Navy Yard being stripped for decommissioning. As you can

see from another Karcher cover in **Figure 3**, she closed out her post office 12 days later. By the summer of 1973, she had long since been scrapped and her cancelling machine returned to the Postal Service. That puts him in the Boston Navy Yard on 7-1-71, although it is possible that he convinced the mail clerk in SHANGRI-LA to backdate some FDCs when he arrived on the 12th to service Last Day Postal Service covers. The other cover that probably is genuine is from CONSTITUTION, which has been permanently based in Boston since 1934. Although there was a CONSTITUTION postmark in his estate, it was a plain cancel without the "IX-21" in the dial that we see in **Figure 1**. I believe this cancel remained aboard ship. Incidentally, although Karcher is known to have made forged Navy ship postmarks, all of the postmarks on these covers look genuine to me.



Figure 2: Karcher USPS cachet with misspellings "INAGURATING" and "JLUY" cancelled with USS SHANGRI-LA Type 7 and Type 9 cancels.



Figure 3: Karcher cachet for deactivation of SHANGRI-LA. Note Type 7 machine cancel is CVA 38 while Type 9 cancel is CVS 38 in both examples.

Here's how Longseth believed Karcher operated. He would go aboard ship and tell the postal clerk that he wanted to postmark a few covers. He would then complain that the typical ship's post office is too crowded and ask if he could borrow the cancel and find a place where he could spread out. Once out of the view of the postal clerk, he would remove the current date from the postmark, and insert the 7-1-71 date slugs he brought with him. After postmarking his covers, he would put the current date back in the cancel and

give it back to the postal clerk, who was unaware of what had happened. I don't believe any postal clerk would agree to backdate covers as much as two years, and besides they wouldn't have a 1971 year date slug any more, there being a custom in post offices of discarding old year date slugs at the end of the year, not so much to prevent fraudulent backdating but just to avoid accidental misdating.

The mistake Karcher made, of course, was not realizing that some of the ships he went aboard in 1973 had been many miles away from the U.S. in 1971 and could not have postmarked FDCs, even backdated by a few days (DAMATO, **Figure 4**, was in Athens, Greece). He of course denied any wrongdoing, but at the 1974 meeting, he did sign an agreement not to use the name of the USCS or the Old Ironsides Chapter in advertising (he had been Cachet Director for the Old Ironsides Chapter in Boston).

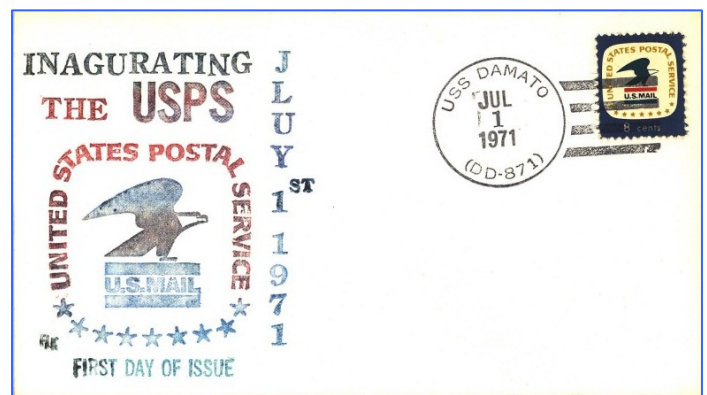


Figure 4: Karcher cachet with backdated USS DAMATO Type 2t(n+u) (USS) cancel.

It's tempting to believe that all of these covers were produced in 1973, after Karcher found that there was a market for them. However, the SHANGRI-LA cover could not have been made in 1973, for the postmarks were no longer available (in my experience, it is impossible to forge a machine cancel). His own cachet has several characteristics that make it distinctive -- in addition to the misspelling of "Inaugurating" and "July," the misalignment of the letters "NG" in that word, and the blurred impression of "FI" in "First." If he first made this cachet in 1971 and then reproduced it in 1973, it is very unlikely that these features would have come out exactly the same, yet they are like this on all his covers. Possibly, he had blank cachets left over from 1971 and used them in 1973, which might explain why he made relatively few total covers. The official USPS cachets were (and still are) readily available as unused envelopes.

The **REM Catalog** lists a number of other ships that were not in the Karcher accumulation. Of these, ALBERT DAVID, CONSTELLATION, ENGLAND, LEONARD MASON and VEGA were West Coast ships. CONCORD, FRANCIS MARION, INDEPENDENCE and STRIBLING were all based at Norfolk, and probably never wandered into Karcher's range. FULTON was permanently based at New London, Conn., readily accessible to local collectors. The

strangest is HARLAN COUNTY, which wasn't even launched until late July 1971 and was commissioned in April 1972. Obviously any covers from her have been backdated, but I have no idea who might have done it. No covers from any of these other ships were found in the Karcher estate. Incidentally, the section of the *REM Catalog* that lists ships also lists a number of overseas APOs and FPOs, all of which are obviously backdated, but not by Karcher.

It's no secret that the Postal Service has been officially backdating first day covers for dealers and servicers since the late 1930s, but in doing so they are simply continuing to do what could have been done on the actual first day had there been enough time and money for people to travel to the first day city. Backdating by a full two years, especially in a post office that could not have had the stamps on the actual first day, is a different matter. Despite the presumed legitimacy of the SHANGRI-LA and CONSTITUTION covers, my recommendation is to avoid any Karcher covers for this stamp, unless you are deliberately studying fakes and backdates.

All covers have Karcher cachets. Cancels from CONSTITUTION, DAMATO, DAVIS, FISKE, GARCIA, HARRY E. YARNELL, McCLOY, ROBERT K. HUNTINGTON, SEVERN, TRIPPE, VOGUE and WILLIAM R. RUSH also exist on official USPS cachets.

Originally published USCS Log February 2011 - Pages 18-20

7-1-71 First Day Covers Found in the Karcher Estate with the Ship's Location on That Day

| | |
|---------------------|---------------------------------------|
| BOWEN | Boston |
| CALOOSAHATCHEE | Boston |
| CHARLES H. ROAN | (Log not currently available) |
| CONSTITUTION | Boston |
| DAMATO | Athens, Greece |
| DAVIS | Boston |
| FARRAGUT | Boston |
| FISKE | at sea, Puerto Rico to Newport, RI |
| FORREST SHERMAN | at sea, Guantanamo Bay to Puerto Rico |
| GARCIA | Newport, RI |
| GLOVER | Newport, RI |
| GRAND CANYON | (Logs still classified) |
| HARRY E. YARNELL | (Logs still classified) |
| HUGH PURVIS | Boston |
| McCLOY | Newport, RI |
| MISSISSINEWA | Melville, RI |
| ROBERT K HUNTINGTON | Philadelphia |
| SEVERN | Newport, RI |
| SHANGRI-LA | Boston |
| TRIPPE | Newport, RI |
| VAN VOORHIS | Newport, RI |
| VOGUE | Newport, RI |
| WARRINGTON | Newport, RI |
| WILLIAM R. RUSH | Boston |

**Naval Cover Fakes,
Forgeries and Frauds**

Part XVI

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Karcher and OPSAIL '76

America's 200th Anniversary

The Fourth International Naval Review was held on July 4, 1976. It was held in conjunction with OPSAIL '76 for our Bicentennial celebration. President Gerald Ford watched the parade of 16 tall ships, foreign warships and assigned USN and Coast Guard units, which were part of a modern armada of more than fifty ships. The armada - cruisers, frigates, destroyers, patrol boats, and the aircraft carrier USS FORRESTAL (CV 59).

This armada had a rendezvous 200 miles off the New York coast (7/2/76) and in three columns proceeded towards the harbor, arriving at the Verrazano-Narrows Bridge (lower bay) on Saturday morning. Prior to entering the harbor, they formed a 20-mile ceremonial column led by USS WAINWRIGHT (CG 28) and proceeded to their Upper Bay and Hudson River anchorages. The tall ships made their rendezvous below the Throgs Neck Bridge, proceeded through Hell Gate and down the East River to their anchorage at Sandy Hook Bay (N.J) and Gravesend Bay, Brooklyn.

Philatelic Covers 1976

Unbeknown to me, there were individuals who were documenting the ships' visit to the "Big Apple" They were naval cover collectors like Larry Briend (USS AMERICA Chapter) and Stan Honeyman (Nathan Hale Chapter). Briend got the foreign markings, applied the "Lady Liberty" cachet (blue, magenta or red) and posted aboard the ship's post office. It was Honeyman who donated the cachets. They were free - no service charge. The collector only to send an SASE with thirteen cents postage! For those interested, get *USCS Data Sheet #19*, it lists all the warships that visited New York (1909-93).

Narragansett Bay Chapter #73 (Charles Birdy) handled covers (**Figure 1**) for the tall ships that were machine canceled in Newport RI. It appears that Fred Karcher may have had a hand with a thermo printed EAGLE cachet (**Figure 2**) and the stamped cachet given to the Coast Guard barque. It should be noted that EAGLE used two cachets that season, the second circular cachet (**Figure 3**) was donated by the Nathan Hale Chapter #68. Bill Everett #7248 did its artwork. Neither drawing has the Coast Guard racing strip!

The America Chapter produced a printed cachet (**Figure 4**) that depicts warships in New York Harbor. Note the Twin Towers and New York Skyline. The newly formed

USS KALAMAZOO Chapter #75 produced their first cachet (**Figure 5**), posted aboard its namesake on July 4, 1976. I would join the USCS nearly two years later. I started to develop a liking for naval event covers i.e. Fleet reviews, Fleet maneuvers, OPSAIL.



Figure 1: Operation Sail '76 cover with Newport RI machine cancel – cachet from T.S. NIPPON MARU.



Figure 2: USCGC EAGLE cachet and Newport RI cancel.



Figure 3: USCS Nathan Hale Chapter donated the EAGLE cachet shown above.

It is while chasing OPSAIL '76 covers that I found various type cancellations on the different covers. You have to look at the date, time group in the dial or the actual date. Looks like mail clerk aboard WAINWRIGHT posted INR covers on 7 July 1976.

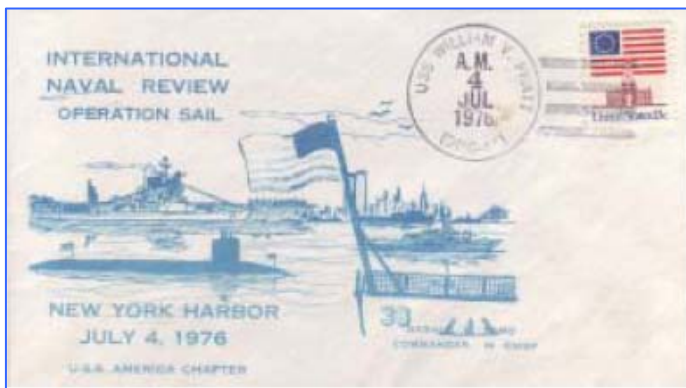


Figure 4: Printed cachet sponsored by USS AMERICA Chapter and cancelled USS WILLIAM V. PRATT.



Figure 5: Bicentennial cachet with USS KALAMAZOO Type 2 cancel July 4, 1976.

The “Old Ironsides” covers (Figure 6) were produced by Fred Karcher and cancelled with a forged Type 2n cancel. I don’t believe the cruiser’s mail clerk had time to cancel any mail on that date, especially with President Ford aboard the ship.

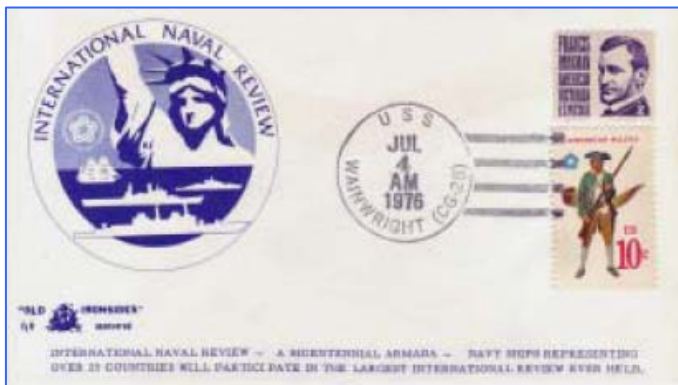


Figure 6: Old Ironsides Chapter cachet with forged USS WAINWRIGHT T-2 cancel

It was only after Karcher passed away that the USCS found out that he was producing fake or forged covers. While his “Free Mail” during the Viet Nam conflict is questionable by many, his tall ship covers posted aboard CONSTITUTION in June 1976 are fakes. While it appears some of the tall ship cachets are genuine. Karcher did print

the thermo Newport “Tall Ship 76” cachet on the envelopes and the circular cachet appears at different location on each cover. Here’s an example (Figure 7) posted with the fake cancel.



Figure 7: Fake USS CONSTITUTION cancel used by Karcher.

Among his collection were forged cancelling devices with names of naval ships i.e. AUSTIN, CONSTITUTION, DALE, FARRAGUT, FORRESTAL (CV 59), FORT SNELLING, MOUNT WHITNEY (Type 2n), SAVANNAH and WAINWRIGHT. At least two cancels (DALE and MOUNT WHITNEY) had the date 4 JUL 1976 in the dial, while SAVANNAH only had July 4th in its dial. Caveat emptor! Let the buyer beware since he (we) buys without recourse. In fact, I just learned that all destroyer-cruiser event covers by Ron Reeves were cancelled with fake city cancels (Bath ME and Pascagoula MS).

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For information about the USCS or current membership rates, visit www.uscs.org

USCS MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

I apply for membership in the Universal Ship Cancellation Society and agree to abide by the Philatelic Code of Ethics and the By Laws of the USCS.

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Membership year begins April 1st. Table below includes \$2.00 for registration/initial mailing.

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|-----------------|-------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------------|
| Apr, May, June | \$20.00 | \$38.00 | \$35.00 | -\$9.00 |
| July, Aug, Sept | \$16.00 | \$29.00 | \$27.00 | -\$7.00 |
| Oct, Nov, Dec | \$11.00 | \$20.00 | \$19.00 | -\$5.00 |
| Jan, Feb, Mar | \$25.00 | \$47.00 | \$43.00 | -\$11.00 |

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