



U.S. Philatelic Classics Society

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Article: The United States-British North America Cross-Border Mails:
Their Unique Aspects, Peculiarities and Markings, Including Cancels
Designed to Kill Postmarks

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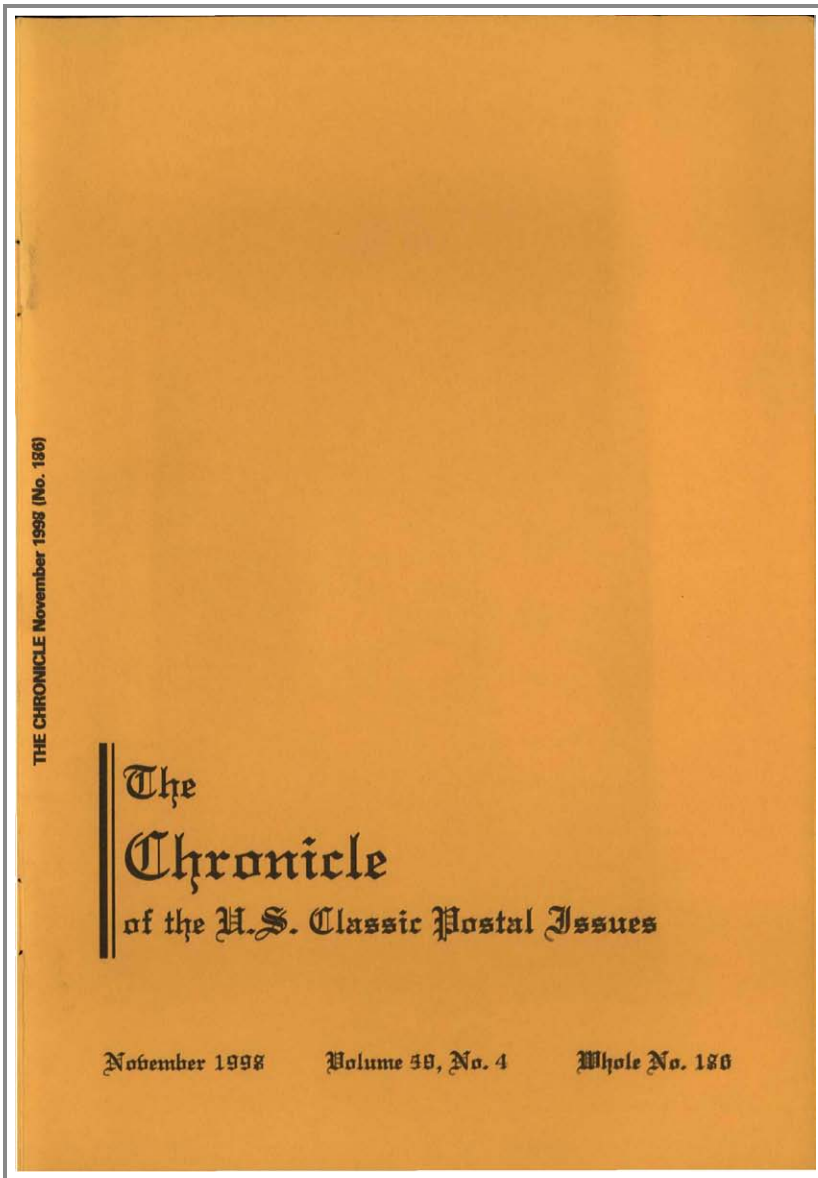


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Back Cover

THE UNITED STATES—BRITISH NORTH AMERICA
CROSS-BORDER MAILS: THEIR UNIQUE ASPECTS, PECULIARITIES AND
MARKINGS, INCLUDING CANCELS DESIGNED TO KILL POSTMARKS
HUBERT C. SKINNER

(Continued from *Chronicle* 179:191)

II. Obliterators Designed to Kill Postmarks

The earliest obliterating device intended to cancel adhesive postage stamps and to prevent their re-use, the red Maltese cross which was struck on the Penny Black, the world's first adhesive issue, was designed and used in Great Britain in 1840. In the United States, the earliest obliterators for adhesives date to 1842 *et seq.* (see *Chronicle* 167:171-178; 168:241-245; 169:27-28; and 170:85-88). These handstamped obliterators replaced penstrokes and handstamped townmarkings used initially to cancel early adhesives.

Very little has been written previously about cancelling devices designed and intended to obliterate postmarks such as handstamped paids and rates. Some of these consist of closely spaced diagonal bars or concentric circles which when carefully struck over the previous postmarks render them virtually unreadable, thus functioning as extremely effective "killers". Several such devices were used at United States and Canadian exchange offices to obliterate paid markings on "paid to the Lines" letters originating across the border and prepaid to the lines (see Figure 7).

Early on (largely before 1850), the manuscript or handstamped paids on many "paid to the Lines" letters were marked out with single penstrokes—straight, wavy or in the form of a series of loops (see Figure 8). The necessity of "converting" paid letters to unpaid letters at the exchange offices achieved added impetus after 16 November 1847 when Canadian postmasters could no longer collect the United States portion of the postage and, thus, all letters, incoming and outgoing, had to be prepaid to the lines. Handstamped obliterators used to cancel postmarks are noted on cross-border letters as early as mid-January 1849, several months before prepayment became optional once again (14 May 1849). The

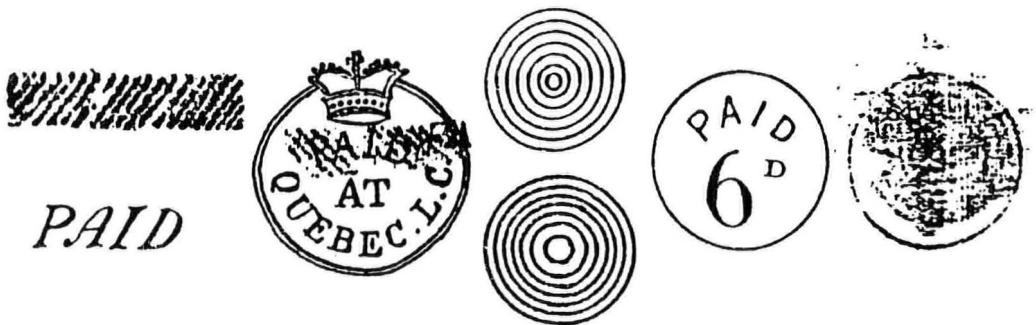


Figure 7. Examples of the canceling devices designed to cancel and obliterate postmarks. At the left is a 7x30 mm rectangle of slanting bars crafted to fit neatly over the straight-line PAIDs (Roman or Italic) commonly applied to covers of this period and beneath it is shown one of the Canadian Italic PAIDs; next, a similar but smaller bar grid used to cover and cancel the PAID in the upper part of a Canadian crown circle; next, two circular targets formed of closely spaced concentric circles and intended to obliterate circular rate marks such as the "PAID/6D" in circle shown at the right which is effectively obscured by an overstruck circular target.

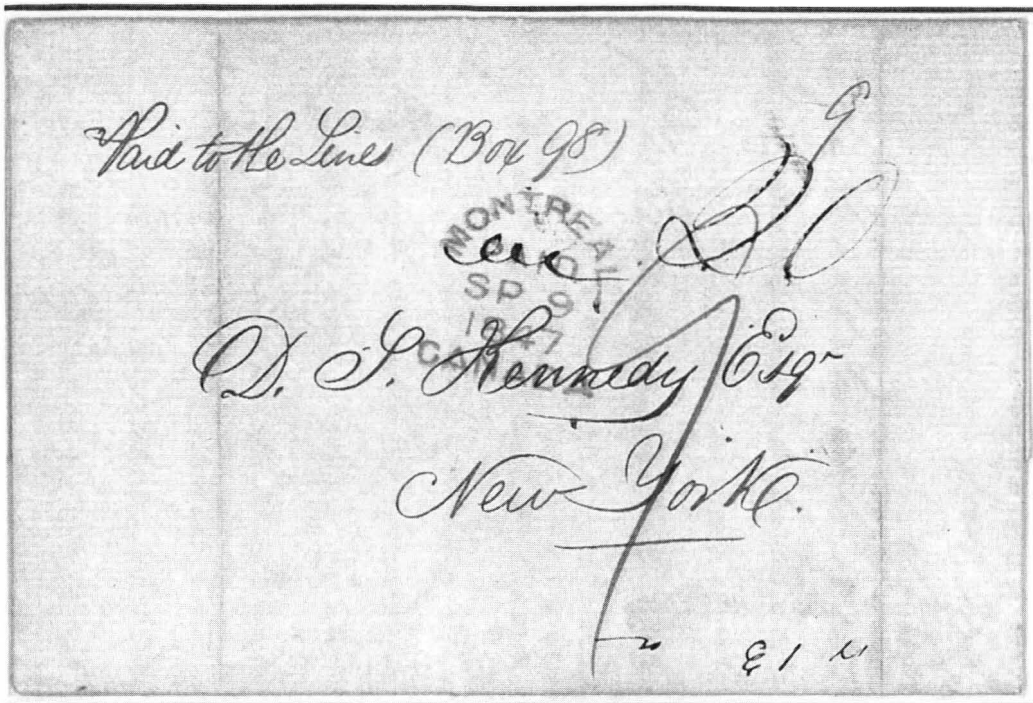


Figure 8. A double-weight folded letter from Montreal to NYC, endorsed "Paid to the Lines" and struck with the well-known Montreal "tombstone" postmark in red dated "SP 9/1847"; the "PAID" in the upper portion marked out with looped blue penstrokes matching the manuscript "20," indicating 20¢ U.S. postage due on a double rate letter. The manuscript "9" represents the Canadian portion of the postage for a double letter (which was charged to "Box 98"). Evidently, the letter was transported in a closed mail bag from Montreal to NYC as it was marked and rated at New York City.



Figure 9. A single-weight folded letter from Montreal to NYC, endorsed "Paid to Lines" and struck with the double-arc Montreal postmark in red dated "JA 18/1849"; the hand-stamped Italic "PAID" in red and the manuscript "Paid" in the endorsement are over-struck with the 7x30 mm slanting bar grid which fully obscures the handstamped marking. The boxed "10" in red represents the U.S. postage due on delivery and the manuscript "4 1/2" represents the prepaid Canadian postage. The letter was exchanged at Highgate, Vermont, on "JAN 20" [1849].



Figure 10. A single-weight folded letter from Quebec City to "Cuttings Ville," Vermont. It bears the double-arc "QUEBEC/AP 18/1850/L.C." postmark and the "PAID/AT/QUEBEC.L.C." crown circle. The "PAID" in the upper part of the crown circle is obliterated with a slanting bar grid in black; all other markings are struck in red. The pre-paid Canadian postage was "11½" pence [Currency] for a distance between 200 and 300 miles; it has a "MONTREAL/AP 20/1850/L.C." transit marking in red on the reverse side. The letter was exchanged at "HIGHGATE/APR/23/Vt." and rated with a boxed "5" for the U.S. postage due.

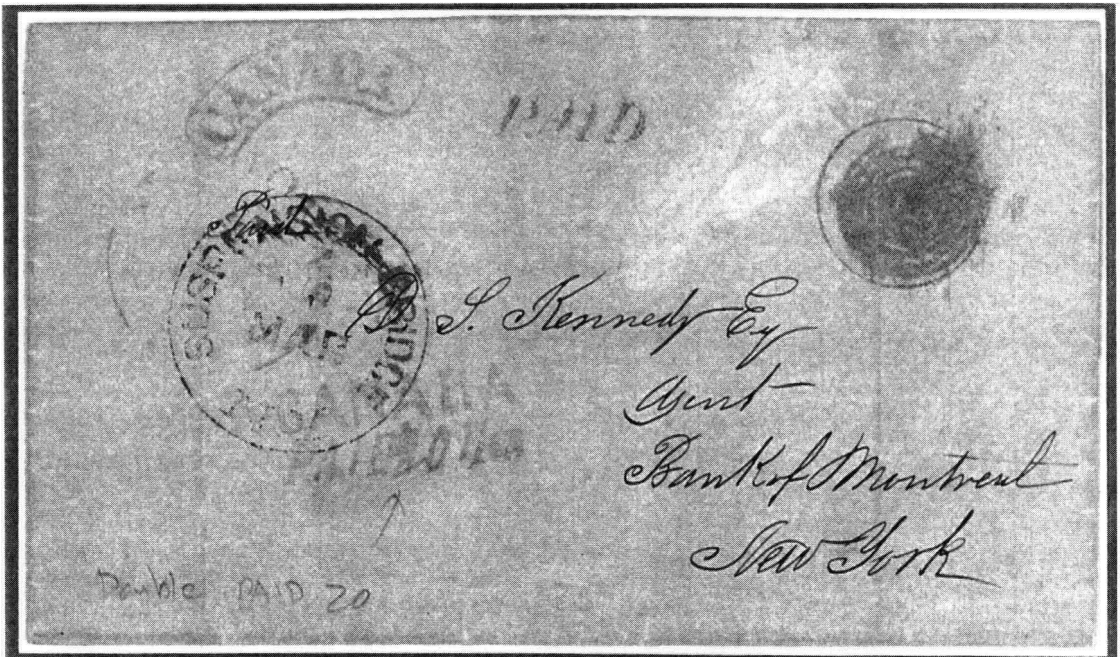


Figure 11. A double weight folded letter from St. Thomas, U.C., to NYC. It is postmarked "S: THOMAS/FE 26/1853/U.C." and at first was rated incorrectly with the "PAID/6D" circular handstamp [= 10¢ U.S.] struck in red. This circular rate handstamp was obliterated with the closely spaced circular target killer overstruck in black, effectively obscuring the erroneous rate; all other Canadian markings are in red. It was then re-rated as a double-weight letter using the straight-line "CANADA/PAID 10 Cts" handstamp altered to "20 Cts" in red crayon, thereby correcting the rate. The letter was exchanged and post-marked in blue at "SUSPENSION BRIDGE/N.Y." on "1 MAR [1853]" and forwarded to D.S. Kennedy in New York.

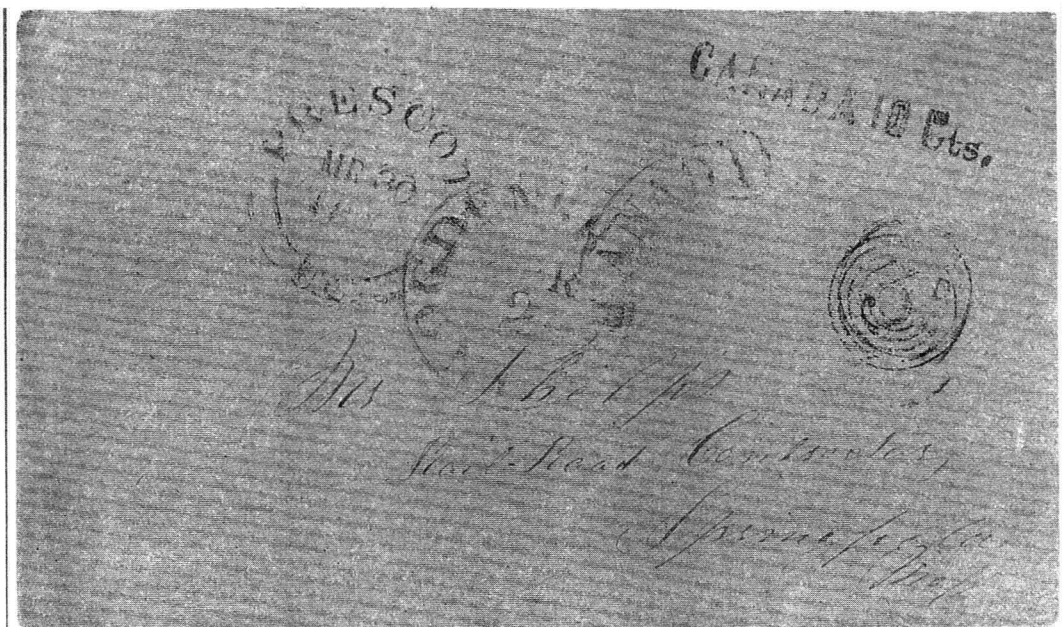


Figure 12. A cover enclosing a letter from Prescott, U.C., to the U.S.; all markings are struck in black. It is postmarked "PRESCOTT/MR 30/1853/U.C." and at first was rated incorrectly at three pence [due]. The error was corrected with a closely spaced target killer and re-rated correctly as "CANADA 10 Cts." It was exchanged at Ogdensburgh, N.Y., on "APR/2" and delivered to a railroad contractor in Springfield, Massachusetts.



Figure 13. A cover originally enclosing a letter from Huntington, Vt., to Canada East; all U.S. markings are struck in black. It was postmarked on "JUN/5 [1855]" at "HUNTINGTON/VT." and at first was rated in error at "PAID/3" with a circular handstamp which was canceled with a five-bar diagonal killer and replaced with "PAID" and "10" in circle handstamps representing the corrected rate. The cover was exchanged at St. John's, L.C., on "JU 6 [1855]" and backstamped with the transit markings of Dunham, C.E., on "JU 08/1855" and Frelighsburg, C.E., on its way to "St Aranond/Canady East" [pop. 50]. The ribbon-like country-of-origin marking struck in blood red at upper left center is one of the most attractive and sought after of the many varieties of "U. STATES" origin markings.

need for postmark killers diminished greatly on 6 April 1851 when the uniform combined rate (paid through) was adopted by the two countries. After this date, most examples noted of cross-border letters with obliterated rate markings or postmarks are incorrect rates or postmarks which are canceled and replaced with the proper rates or postmarks.

Other examples of obliterated postmarks

There are examples of postmarks which have been canceled or obliterated on letters from the domestic mails and the foreign mails, as well as those described here on cross-border covers. Many of these were done for the simple purpose of correcting an error made in rating or directing a letter. Others may result from curious circumstances, each of which represents an individual or even unique purpose. This writer intends to describe and illustrate such examples in a future article. If any reader has an interesting example to submit, we would very much welcome a photocopy of the item with any relevant description which can be provided.

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