

# U. S. War Department Official Stamps 1873-1884

In 1873 the United States Congress, in an attempt to curb abuses of the free-franking privilege, passed legislation requiring the Executive Branch and its eight subordinate Departments to use special stamps. These were designed and manufactured by the Continental Banknote Company. The War Department issue (as did all but one of the other Departmental emanations) used the vignette of the contemporary "Large Banknote" series of regular stamps, with a new frame containing the Department's name. It was printed in cochineal red--- to represent the color of dried blood.

Although use of stamps by the other Departments diminished after penalty envelopes were authorized in 1877 and their scope expanded in 1879, the Army in typical military fashion continued to requisition large quantities until Congress abolished Official stamps in mid-1884.

This exhibit encompasses the design and production of the War Department issue, the various post-production die and proof emanations, the Special Printing with its SEPCIMEN errors, the rich variety of fancy and fort cancellations of the period, and interesting examples of the surprisingly small number of surviving covers. Items of special interest include:

- ¶ Continental designer Claxton's unique model for the War Department stamps
- ¶ Full panes/sheets of the 1c, 2c, 3c, 6c, 10c, 12c, 15c, 24c and 30c values
- ¶ The only recorded examples of SEPCIMEN errors on the 12c and 15c values
- ¶ The earliest documented usages of the 1c, 2c and 6c values
- ¶ Kicking Mule cancellations on all values, including two of the three known covers
- ¶ Fort cancellations on covers and stamps from 36 forts in 12 states and territories
- ¶ The only two surviving covers franked with the 7c stamp
- ¶ Two of the three surviving covers/parcel fronts franked with the 24c stamp
- ¶ Two of the three surviving covers/parcel fronts franked with the 90c stamp
- ¶ The only two known War Department covers to Japan



## Post-Production Die Proofs II: the "Goodalls"

Several sets of die proofs were prepared in the years following production of the War Department stamps. In 1879 President Albert G. Goodall of the American Banknote Company, successor to the Continental Banknote Company, ordered sets of small die proofs for display purposes.



*The "Goodall" die proofs were printed in five colors on India paper*

## Design and Die Preparation



[ABOVE] Model for War Department stamps by Continental designer Joseph Claxton, who drew the frame in pencil and wash around a cut-out vignette, numeral and value tablet from the regular issue 3c stamp.



[BELOW] Continental had scarcely two months to engrave and print 92 different Official stamps. To save time, transfer rolls were made from the dies for the regular issue, and the frames burnished away so that the vignettes, numerals and (sometimes) value tablets could be used for new dies. So-called "regressive" essays.



## Production Trial Color Die Proofs

For a time, Post Office officials considered printing Official stamps in the same colors as the regular issue. It was soon recognized that mail clerks would have difficulty in distinguishing between the two, and the idea was abandoned.



*Large proofs of the dies of the 1c, 2c and 3c values in the colors of the corresponding regular issues. The 3c War Department die also was used to test a brown color for the Executive series*

## Production Die Proofs



*Die proofs in black, pulled by Continental to examine the quality of the engraving. The smaller 3c die proof is on glazed card*

**Production Plate Proofs**



*Proofs in black on India paper were pulled by Continental to check the quality of plate preparation. Only the 1c, 2c, 6c and 12c values are known. The large 6c and 12c proofs are hybrid (plate proofs sunk under pressure on card)*





**Post-Production Die Proofs I: Presentation Book**



*Selected pages from a gilt-edged presentation book prepared in 1878  
by Continental for Government officials and other favored individuals*



**Production Die Proofs in the Selected Color**



*Large die proofs in the final cochineal red color, probably prepared by Continental prior to printing the stamps.*

*Die Proofs in the Selected Color*



## Post-Production Die Proofs IV: The "Panama-Pacifics"

In 1915 the Bureau of Engraving and Printing used the Continental dies to prepare a display for the Panama-Pacific Exposition in San Francisco. Four sets were pulled; the Government kept one and gave three to H. M. Southgate in return for Pan-American inverts missing from its collection.



*The Panama-Pacific die proofs were printed on soft yellowish wove paper*

## Post-Production Cardboard Plate Proofs I

Five generally-recognized issues of cardboard plate proofs were distributed between 1879 and 1894, primarily by Congressmen as gifts to their constituents. They can be distinguished by color and thickness.

### 1879 Printing



### 1885 Printing



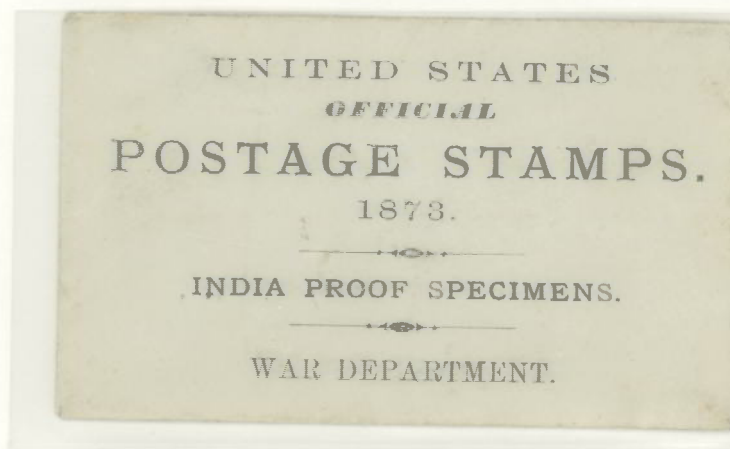
*India Paper Plate Proofs*



*The successor American Banknote Company furnished several printings of India paper plate proofs in subsequent years to government officials and other favored individuals*

## Post-Production India Paper Plate Proofs

Sets of plate proofs on India paper were distributed by the Post Office Department to newspapers and other periodicals as "new issue" announcements.



*Envelope in which the proofs were distributed*



**1890 Printing**



**1893 Printing**



**1894 Printing**





## Post-Production Cardboard Plate Proofs II: The "Atlantas"

Printed for the Government by the American Banknote Company in panes of 100, in each of five colors, for display at the 1881 Atlanta International Cotton Exhibition



PRINTED BY THE  
CONTINENTAL BANK NOTE CO. NEW YORK

No. 87



PRINTED BY THE  
CONTINENTAL BANK NOTE CO. NEW YORK

No. 86



PRINTED BY THE  
CONTINENTAL BANK NOTE CO. NEW YORK

No. 81



PRINTED BY THE  
CONTINENTAL BANK NOTE CO. NEW YORK

No. 89



PRINTED BY THE  
CONTINENTAL BANK NOTE CO., NEW YORK

*No. 60*



PRINTED BY THE  
CONTINENTAL BANK NOTE CO., NEW YORK

*No. 102*



PRINTED BY THE  
CONTINENTAL BANK NOTE CO., NEW YORK

*No. 79*



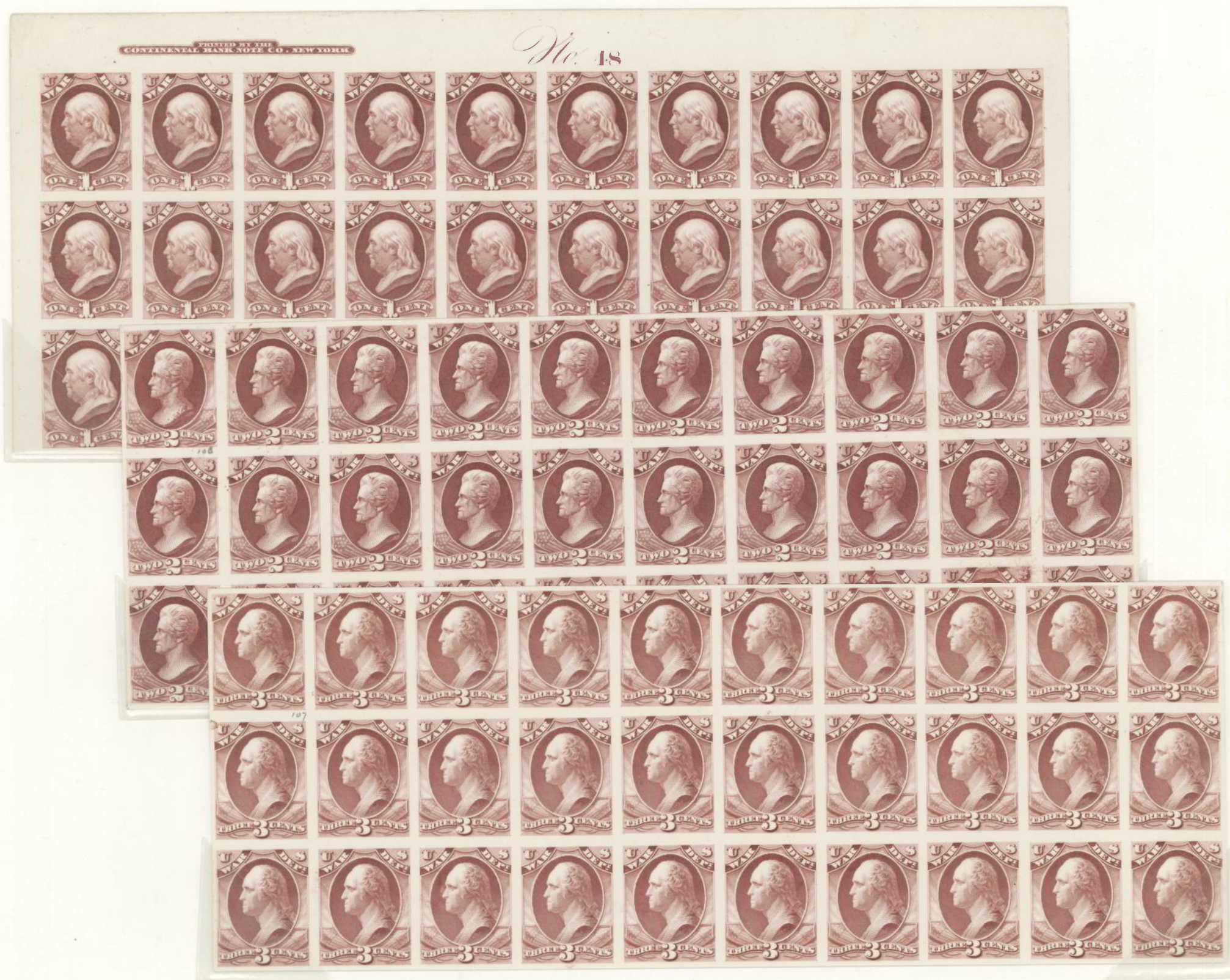
PRINTED BY THE  
CONTINENTAL BANK NOTE CO., NEW YORK

*No. 54*



## Post-Production Cardboard Plate Proofs III: the "Crawfords"

In 1905 James Ludovic Lindsay, 26th Earl of Crawford, acquired complete India paper and cardboard proof sheets of almost every stamp issued by the United States from 1847 to 1893. The sheets were divided in 1972. These blocks of 30 are one of the larger remnants. At one time thought to have come from the 1893 printing, it is now believed that they are products of a little-known sixth printing for the Atlanta Exposition of 1895.



### Post-Production Die Proofs III: the "Roosevelts"

In 1904 the Bureau of Engraving and Printing, which was in possession of the Continental dies, prepared 85 presentation books containing proofs of all stamps issued by the United States until that time. They were given by favor of President Theodore Roosevelt to Senators and friends of the Post Office Department.



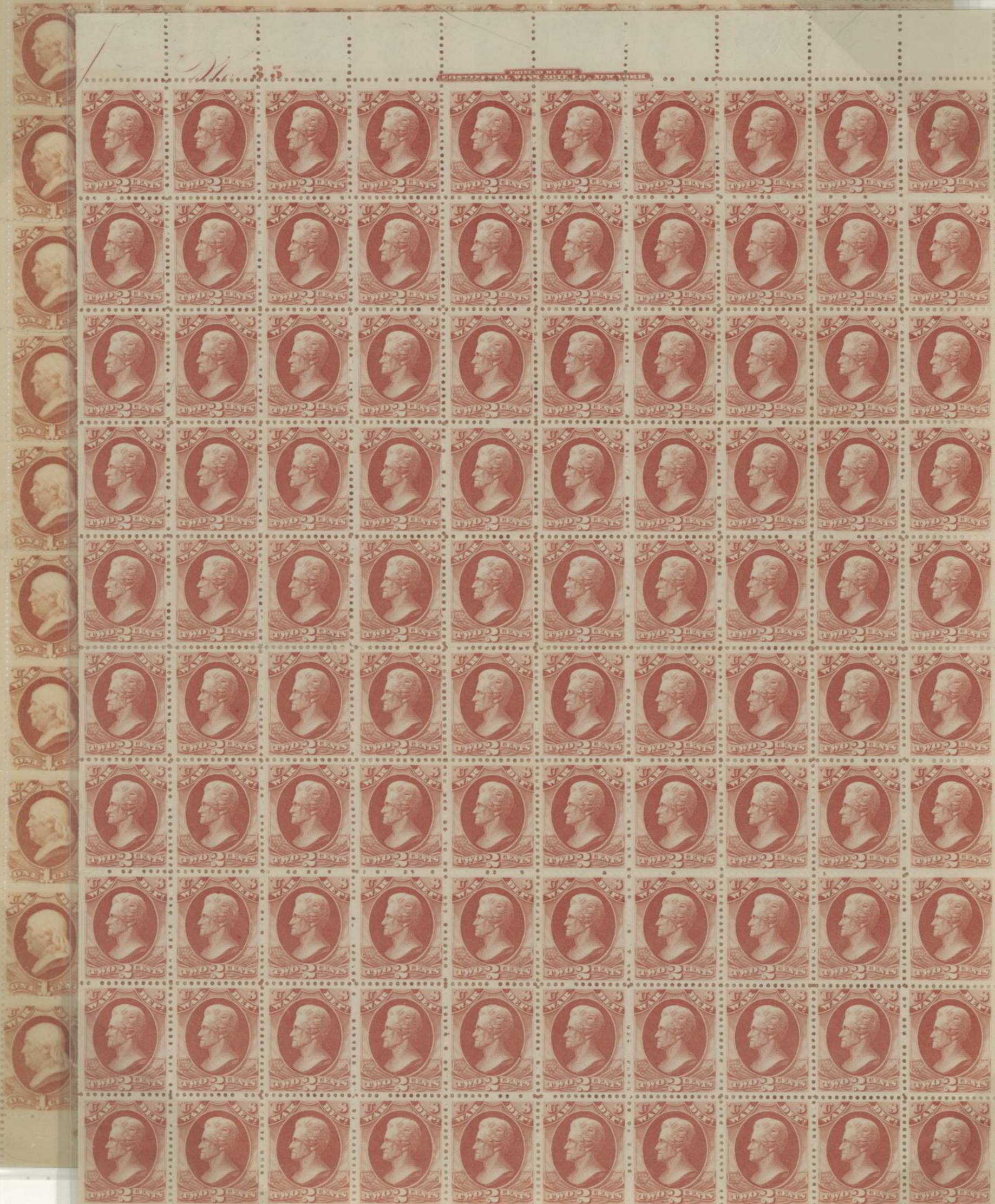
*The "Roosevelt" die proofs were securely glued to gray cardboard pages*

Sheet of 1c and Pane of 2c Stamps, Printed by the American Banknote Company on Soft Porous Paper

PRINTED BY THE  
CONTINENTAL BANK NOTE CO. NEW YORK

PRINTED BY THE  
CONTINENTAL BANK NOTE CO. NEW YORK

PRINTED BY THE  
CONTINENTAL BANK NOTE CO. NEW YORK



*Handwritten mark*

*Handwritten mark*



Pane of 3c Stamps, Printed by the American Banknote Company on Soft Porous Paper



Sheet of 6c Stamps, Printed by the American Banknote Company on Soft Porous Paper

No. 60



PRINTED BY THE AMERICAN BANKNOTE COMPANY, NEW YORK

No. 60

Sheet of 10c Stamps, Printed by the American Banknote Company on Soft Porous Paper



PRINTED BY THE AMERICAN BANKNOTE CO., NEW YORK

79

Sheet of 12c Stamps, Printed by the American Banknote Company on Soft Porous Paper



PRINTED BY THE AMERICAN BANKNOTE CO. NEW YORK

No. 51

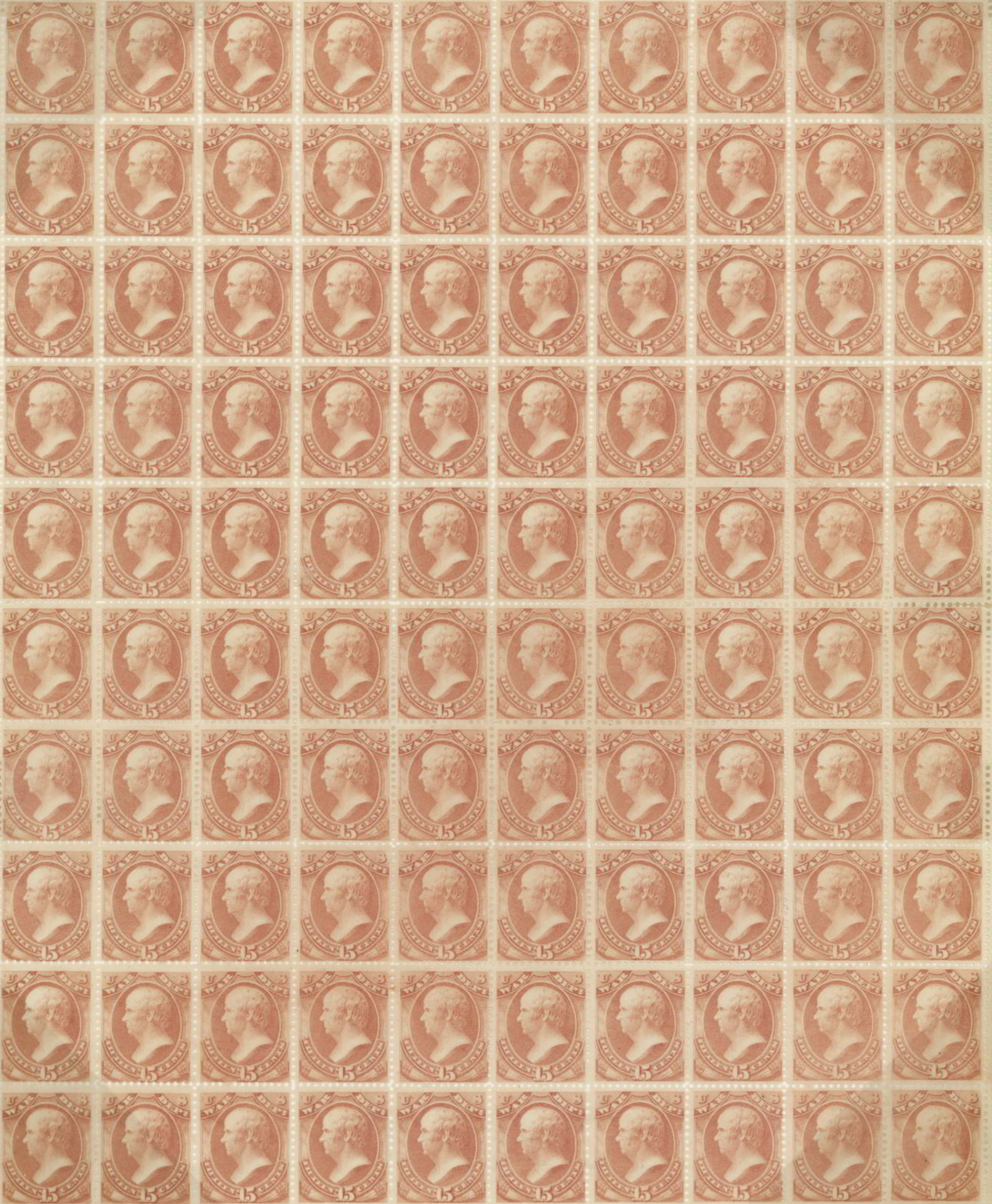
PRINTED BY THE AMERICAN BANKNOTE CO. NEW YORK

No. 51

Sheet of 15c Stamps, Printed by the Continental Banknote Company on Hard Paper

PRINTED BY THE  
CONTINENTAL BANKNOTE CO., NEW YORK

No. 87

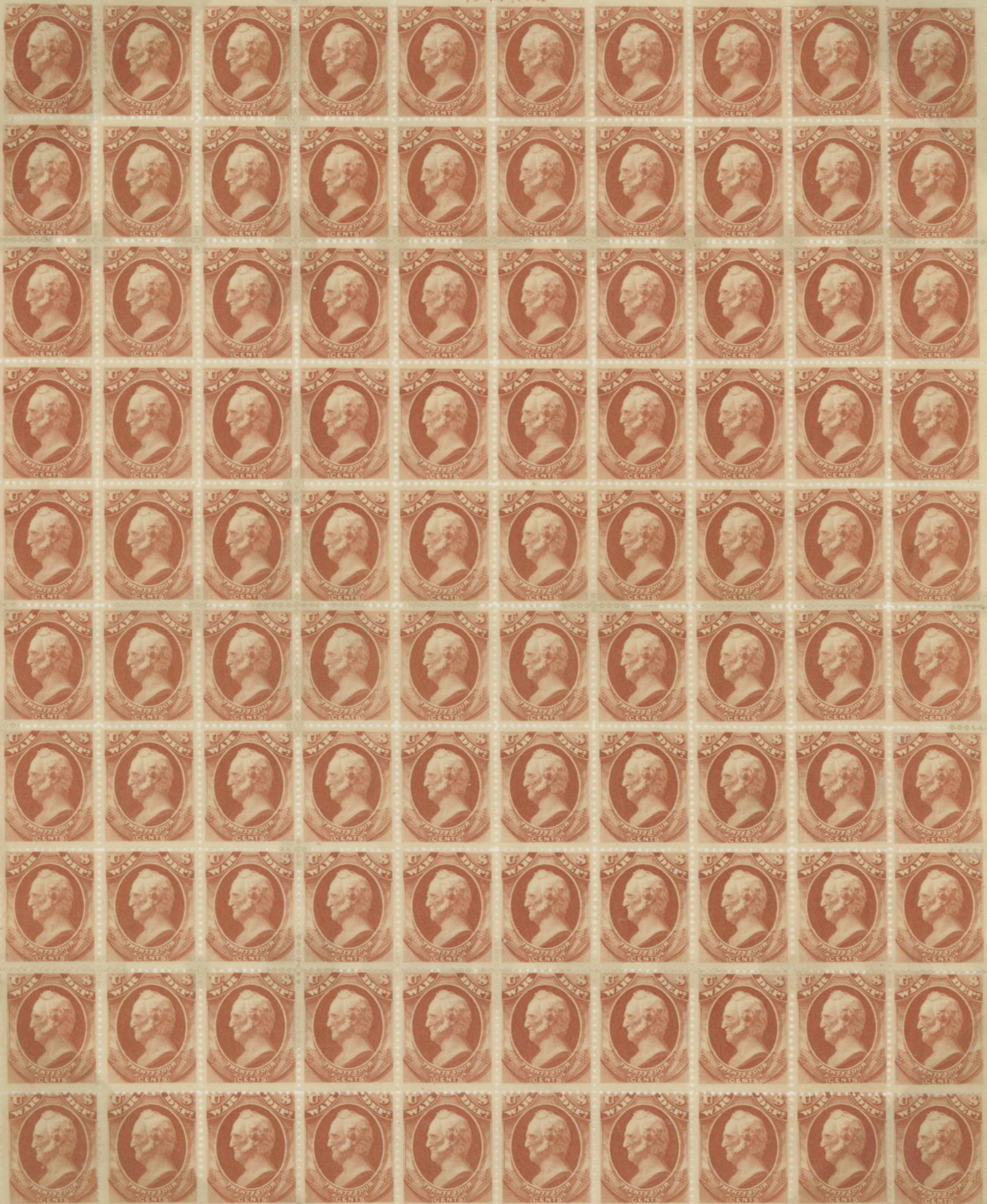


PRINTED BY THE  
CONTINENTAL BANKNOTE CO., NEW YORK

No. 87

Sheet of 24c Stamps, Printed by the Continental Banknote Company on Hard Paper

No. 86



CONTINENTAL BANK NOTE CO. NEW YORK

No. 86

Sheet of 30c Stamps, Printed by the Continental Banknote Company on Hard Paper



PRINTED BY THE CONTINENTAL BANKNOTE CO. NEW YORK

No. 81

No. 591

PRINTED BY THE CONTINENTAL BANKNOTE CO. NEW YORK

No. 81

2

Plate Number Multiples of 7c and 90c Stamps, Printed by the Continental Banknote Company on Hard Paper



*Complete sheets of the 7c and 90c values are not known to have survived*



## The 1875 Special Printing: SEPCIMEN Errors

A Continental typesetter's error caused the overprint in sheet position 21 to read "SEPCIMEN." Only one to three examples of this error are known for the eight values which sold poorly.



*All but the 1c and 2c values are from the 1939 "Framingham Find"--- a complete set of War Department SEPCIMEN errors in a large picture frame with other 1875 Special Printings. The 12c and 15c values are the only recorded examples of this error*



Sheet of 1c Stamps, Top Row and Selvage Clipped Off, with SEPCIMEN Overprint Error in Position 21



# Plate, Printing and Perforation Varieties



*Double impression*



*Paper fold*



*smashed plate  
left pane position 12*



*Imperforate pairs*



*"Pale 3" left pane  
position unknown*



*Plate flaw UL 3c  
right pane pos 11*



*Short transfer UR  
15c position 74*



*Scratched plate 3c  
left pane position 2*



## The 1875 Special Printing

As were the Special Printings of regular Banknote issue stamps, those of the Official stamps were on sale to the public at the 1876 Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia, and from the Office of the 3rd Asst. Postmaster-Genl. from March 27, 1875 until July 15, 1884. Unlike the Special Printings of the regular issues, they were overprinted SPECIMEN to prevent their use on mail by the public. This made them unpopular, so that scarcely more than a hundred each of eight of the eleven values were sold.



*Slightly over a hundred each of the 3c, 6c, 10c, 12c, 15c, 24c, 30c and 90c values were sold*

## Fancy (and other) Cancels

The period when War Department stamps were used was the hey-day of what are today called "fancy cancels." Early in the period, the obliterator ("killer") portion of the duplex canceller in common use was a short-lived insert hand-carved from cork, but by 1877 vulcanized rubber duplex cancellers were commercially available and widely adopted.

### Pictorial Killers



*Kicking Mule*  
(Pt. Townsend,  
Neah Bay WA)

*Hat*  
(Danbury CT)

*Mug*  
(Galena IL)

*Honeycomb*  
(Ft. Leavenworth)

*Cross*  
(New Orleans)

*Indian Head*  
(Forts Keogh  
and Bridger)



*Eagle*

*Easter Lily*

*Shoe Fly*

*Spur*

*Padlock*

*Wheel of Fortune*



*Masonic Emblem*

*Boot*

*Shield*



*Pumpkin*

*Leaf*  
(Washington)

*Anchor*



*Stars*

Negative Letters



*Boston, Portland & elsewhere*

*Savannah*

Positive Letters



*Pittsburgh Ft Leavenworth*

Negative Numerals



*New York City, Boston, Portland & elsewhere*

Positive Numerals



*Cincinnati blues / DC 3-ring target, 2-ring barred / Philadelphia 4-ring target / NYC & others barred oval Bottle stopper*

Miscellaneous (Not All Fancy, But Nice)



*Wells, Fargo*

*(Drag)boat*

*Cheyenne  
River  
Agency*

*Patent  
Paper-  
Cutter*

*Ft Cummings  
and elsewhere*

*Compass  
points*

*New Orleans*

*NYFM  
transit*

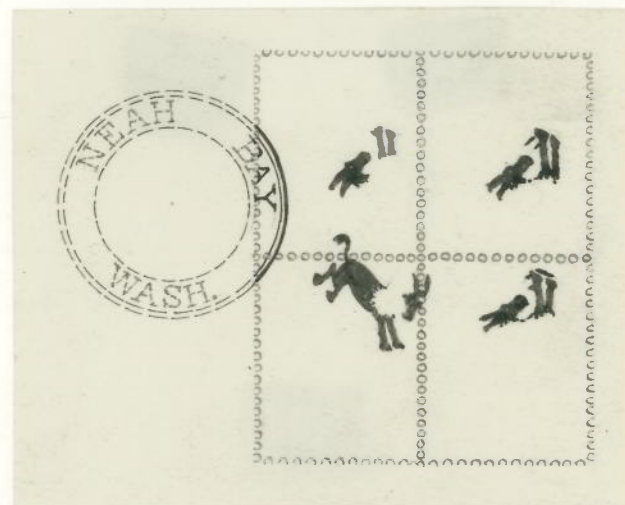
## The Kicking Mule Cancel

The most celebrated cancel on Banknote issues, made by the the Kicking Mule vulcanized rubber killer sold by the Klinkner Company, was applied to War Department stamps by the postmasters of Port Townsend (1880-1884) and Neah Bay, Washington (1883-1884).



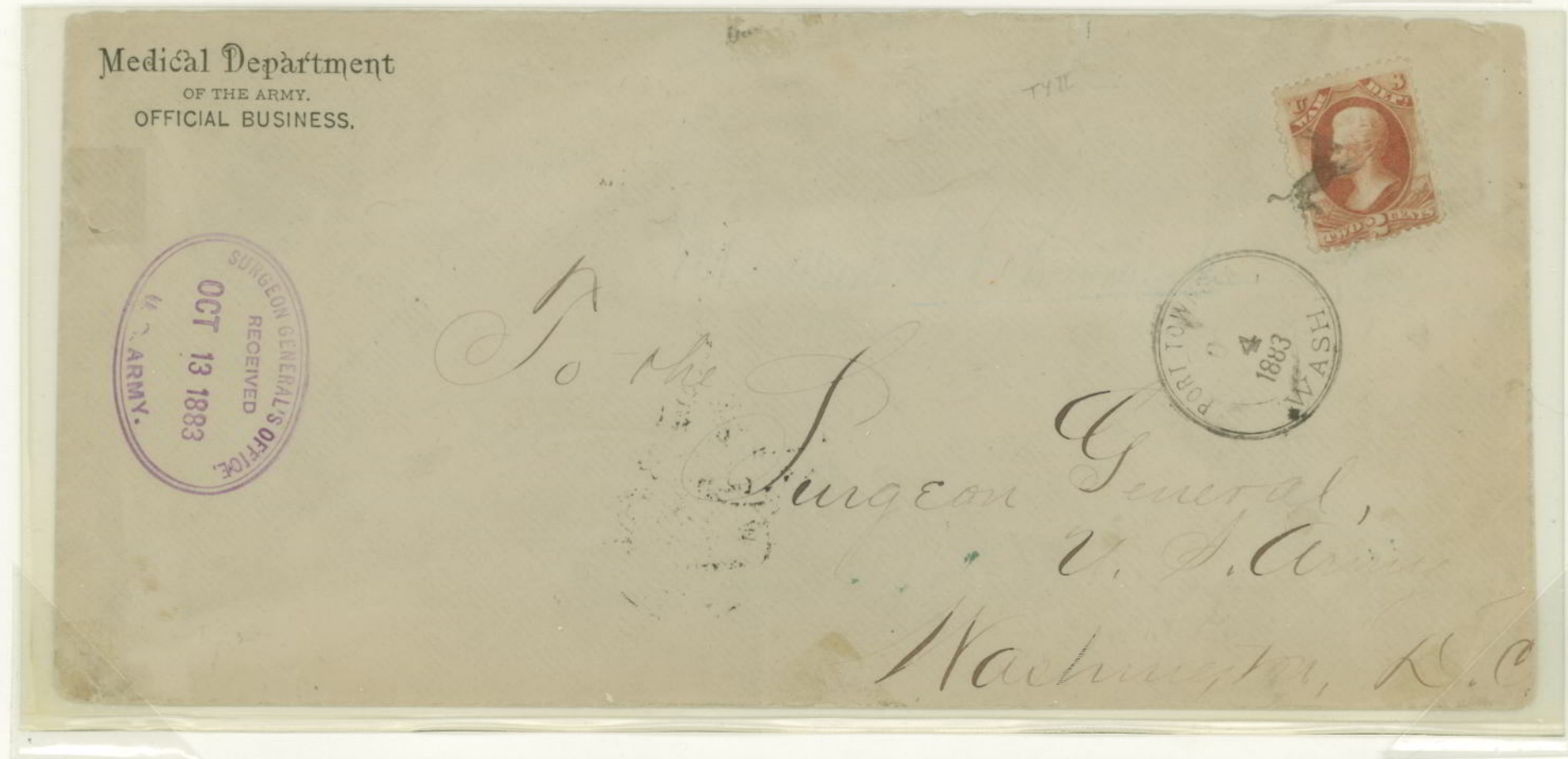
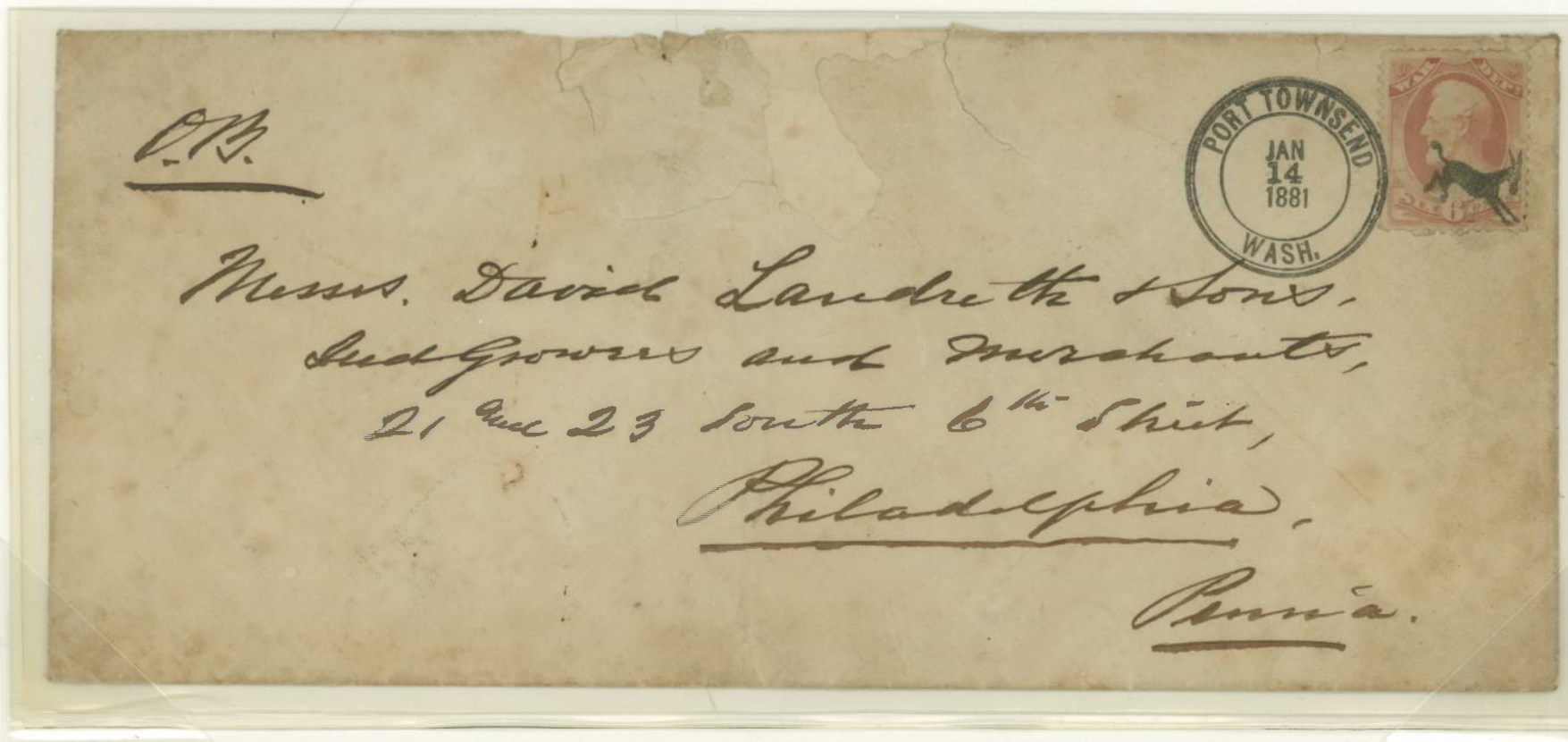
*A complete series of War Department stamps cancelled by Kicking Mules. The 7c and 90c values are the only known examples*

*Postal regulations mandated that a killer, not the circular datestamp, be used to cancel stamps. If there were more than one stamp, Postmaster Learned would cancel the leftmost in the normal horizontal fashion, then cancel the remainder by turning the canceller at right angles so that only a mule "standing on end" hit the stamp. This is the largest known piece with Official stamps cancelled by Kicking Mules*



*The Neah Bay postmaster cancelled the bottom left stamp in the usual fashion, then tipped in the Mule killer on the other three stamps, so as to avoid obliterating them with the attached circular datestamp. The only recorded block of Official stamps with a Kicking Mule cancel*





Port Townsend Postmaster Learned acquired two Kicking Mule tandem cancellers from the Klinkner Company. Type I, with a sans-serif "Wash," cancelled the 1881 cover. Type II, with a serified "Wash," cancelled the 1883 cover. Two of the three known franked Departmental covers with Kicking Mule cancels

## Fort Cancells

Most of the 30,000 men of the U. S. Army during the period of use of War Department stamps were stationed at forts in the Midwest and West to protect wagon trains, railroads and settlers from Indian attack. Surprisingly few fort covers survive. Had fort postmasters always adhered to postal regulations and cancelled stamps with the tandem killer and not with the circular datestamp, we would have no evidence of the origin of the detached stamps.

### Arizona Territory

#### Fort Apache



#### Fort Bowie



#### Fort Grant



#### Fort Huachuca



#### Camp/ Fort Thomas



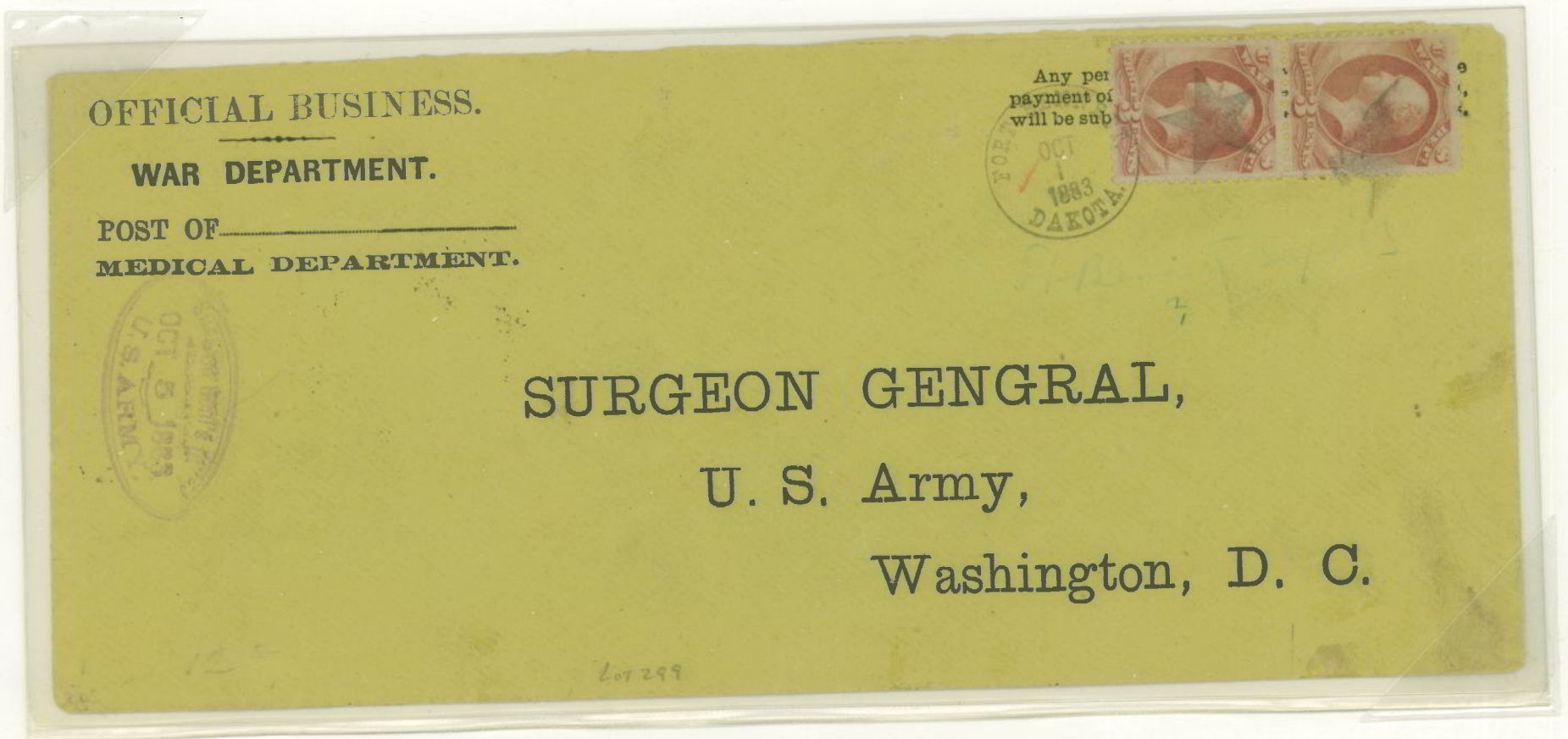
Colorado Territory

**Fort Lewis**



Dakota Territory

**Fort Bennett**



*First day of reduced first class 2c per half ounce rate*

**Fort Bennett**



**Fort Buford**



**Fort Hale**



**Dakota Territory (cont.)**

**Fort Meade**



**Fort Stevenson**



**Fort Sully**



**Fort Totten**



**Fort Yates**



**Indian Territory**

**Fort Sill**



**Fort Sill**



**Fort Reno**



**Fort Supply**



**Kansas**

**Fort Cancels**

**Fort Leavenworth**

WAR DEPARTMENT,  
Headquarters Department of the Missouri.

OFFICIAL BUSINESS.

Any person using this envelope to avoid the payment of postage on private matter of any kind, will be subject to a fine of Three Hundred Dollars.



“ARMY AND NAVY JOURNAL,”

No. 245 Broadway, N. Y.



**Fort Dodge**



**Minnesota**

**Fort Snelling**



Captain John J. Clague  
S. P. M. B. B.  
Helena  
Montana



Montana Territory( cont.)

**Fort Keogh**



**Fort Maginnis**



**Fort Shaw**



Nebraska

**Camp/ Fort Robinson**



*Possible illegal personal use of Official stamp*

Nevada

**Fort Halleck**



Missouri

**Jefferson Barracks**



Montana Territory

**Fort Assinniboine**

**Fort Benton**



**Fort Custer**

Medical Department  
OF THE ARMY.  
OFFICIAL BUSINESS.



Fort Custer Sept 1883  
Surgeon General U.S.A.  
Washington, D.C.



New Mexico Territory

**Fort Bayard**



**(Fort) Craig**



**Fort Cummings**



**Fort Stanton**



**Fort Wingate**







## Used Blocks

The Starnes-Lanphear census of used Departmental blocks emphasizes their scarcity. Of the War Department issue, only the 12c value has more than ten examples recorded, and most have less than four examples.



*The only surviving War Department cover franked with a block of stamps. Major General Hunt had been Chief of Artillery in the Army of the Potomac*



*Used blocks of the high values. The 24c and 90c blocks are the only ones recorded*

## New Orleans Cut Cork Killers

Postal clerks in New Orleans carved hundreds of short-lived cork obliterators during the Banknote era. Most, but not all, were varieties of geometrics, both symmetrical and asymmetrical.

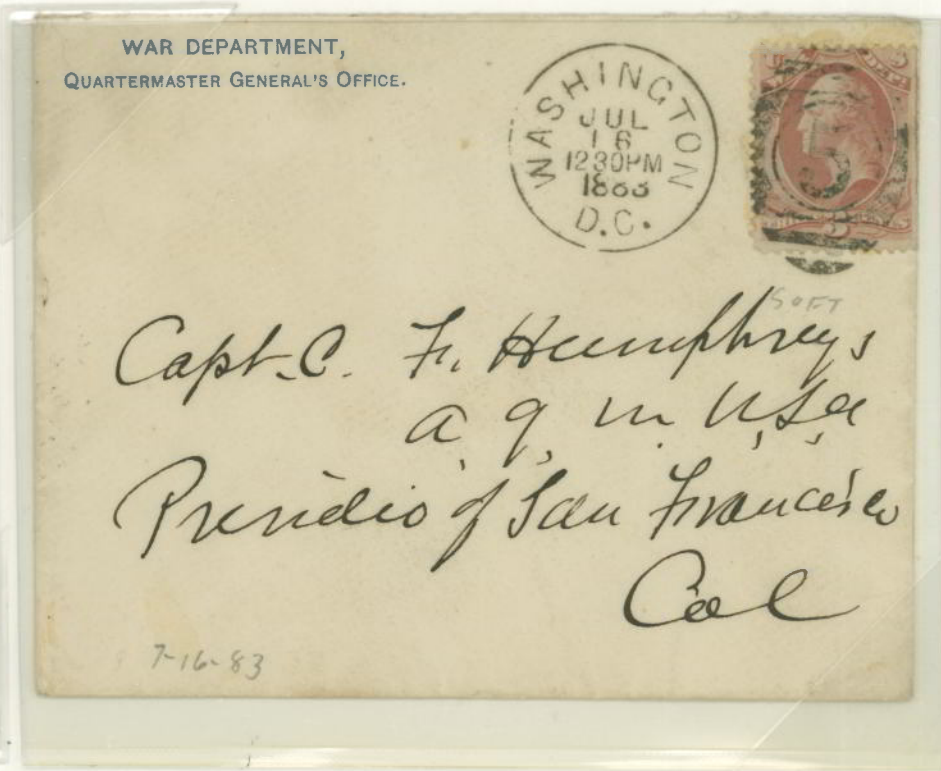
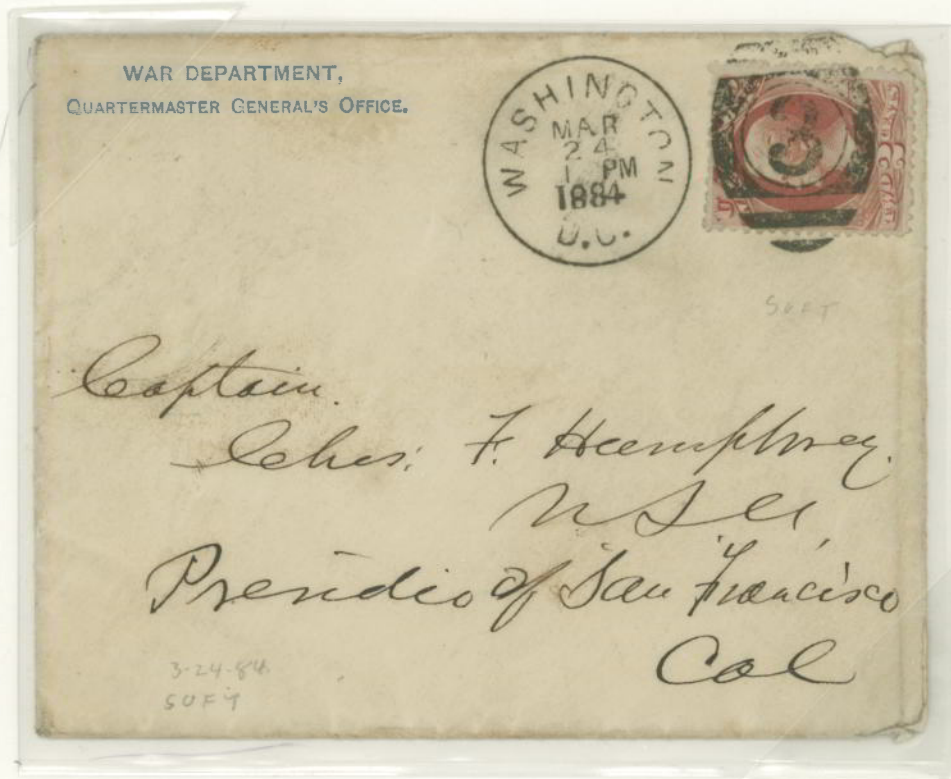
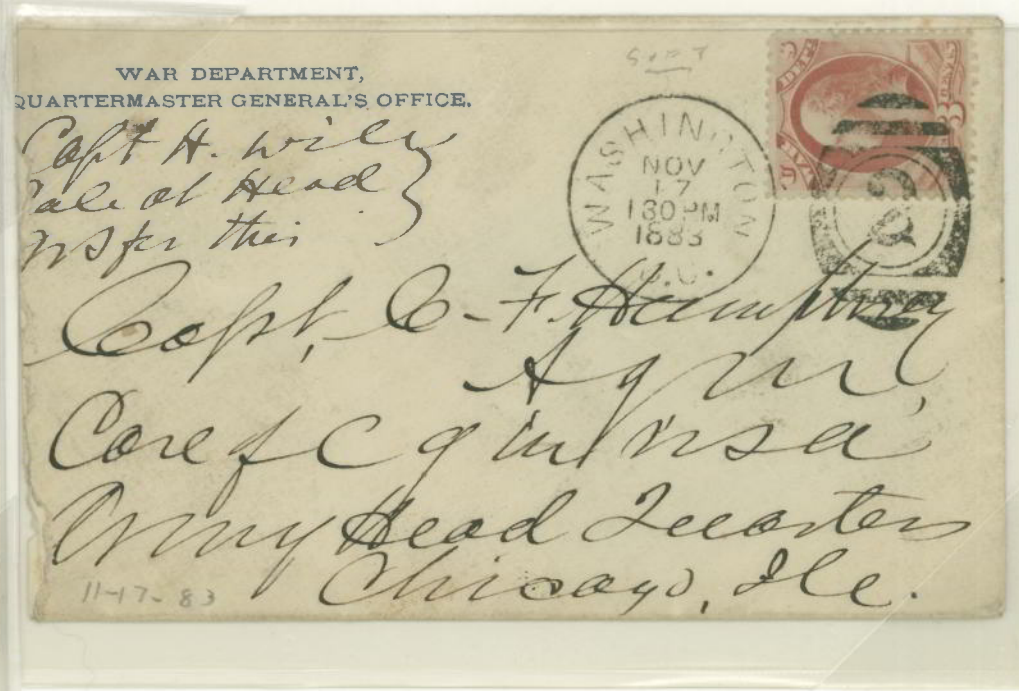
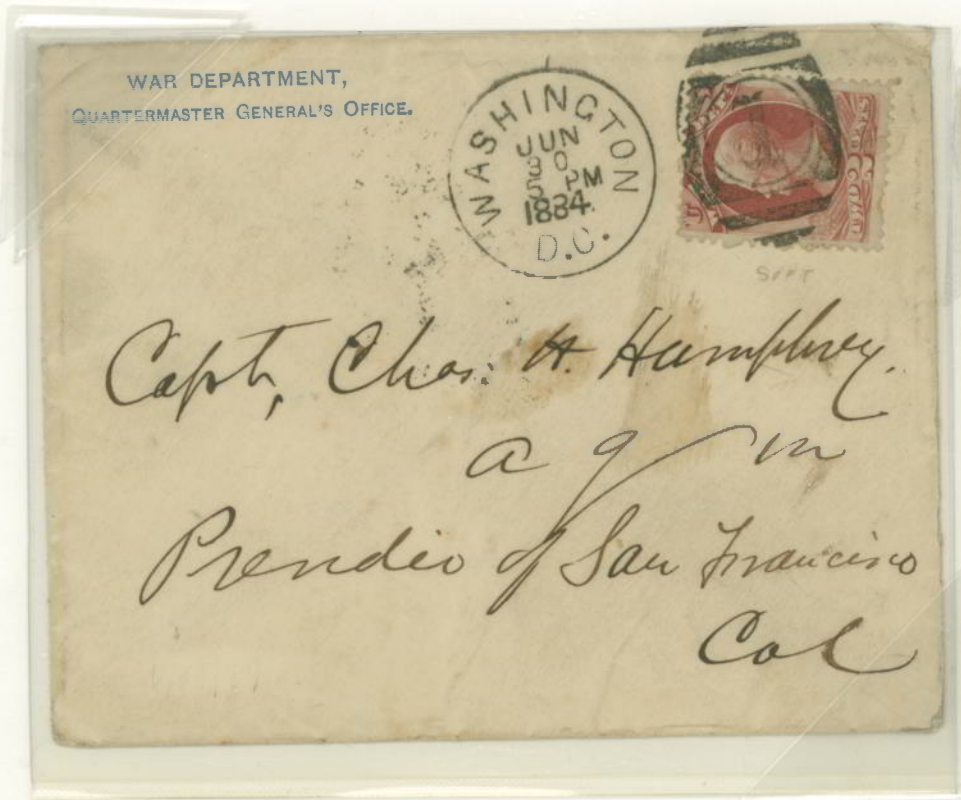


*A fancy cut cork killer obliterates the 6c stamp on a double-weight cover to Mississippi from Department of the Gulf Headquarters in New Orleans*



**THREE-RING TARGET KILLERS** were applied to War Department stamps in the 1880-1884 period. They were numbered 1 through 6 to identify the clerks using them.

The address on the bottom cover is written in the hand of Commanding General William Tecumseh Sherman



**"FISHTAIL" NUMERAL KILLERS** (named for the split, curved ends on some numerals) were applied to War Department stamps during the period 1882-1884

## Washington D. C. Killers

In the early years of the Departmental stamp era, clerks at the Washington D. C. post office used steel duplex cancellers with replaceable, short-lived carved cork killers. Red ink was used on local mail, and non-fugitive violet ink during a 1878 trial of ink for use with commercial vulcanized rubber killers.



*pentagrams  
(July 1873)*

*geometric  
(Aug 73)*

*lattice  
(Mar 74)*

*geometric  
(Mar 74)*

*crossroads  
(Apr 74)*

*circle of Vs  
(Apr 74)*



*circle of wedges  
(1874)*

*leaves  
(Oct 74)*

*local agent,  
RR station*

*local mail*

*ink trial  
(1878)*



*Carved cork "snowflake" canceller (April 1879). The year did not appear routinely in the Washington circular date stamp until later in 1879*

OFFICIAL BUSINESS.



*Mr R Saw Fort Marcy Sept 83*

*Surgeon General U.S. Army  
Washington*

*J. C.*



OFFICIAL BUSINESS.

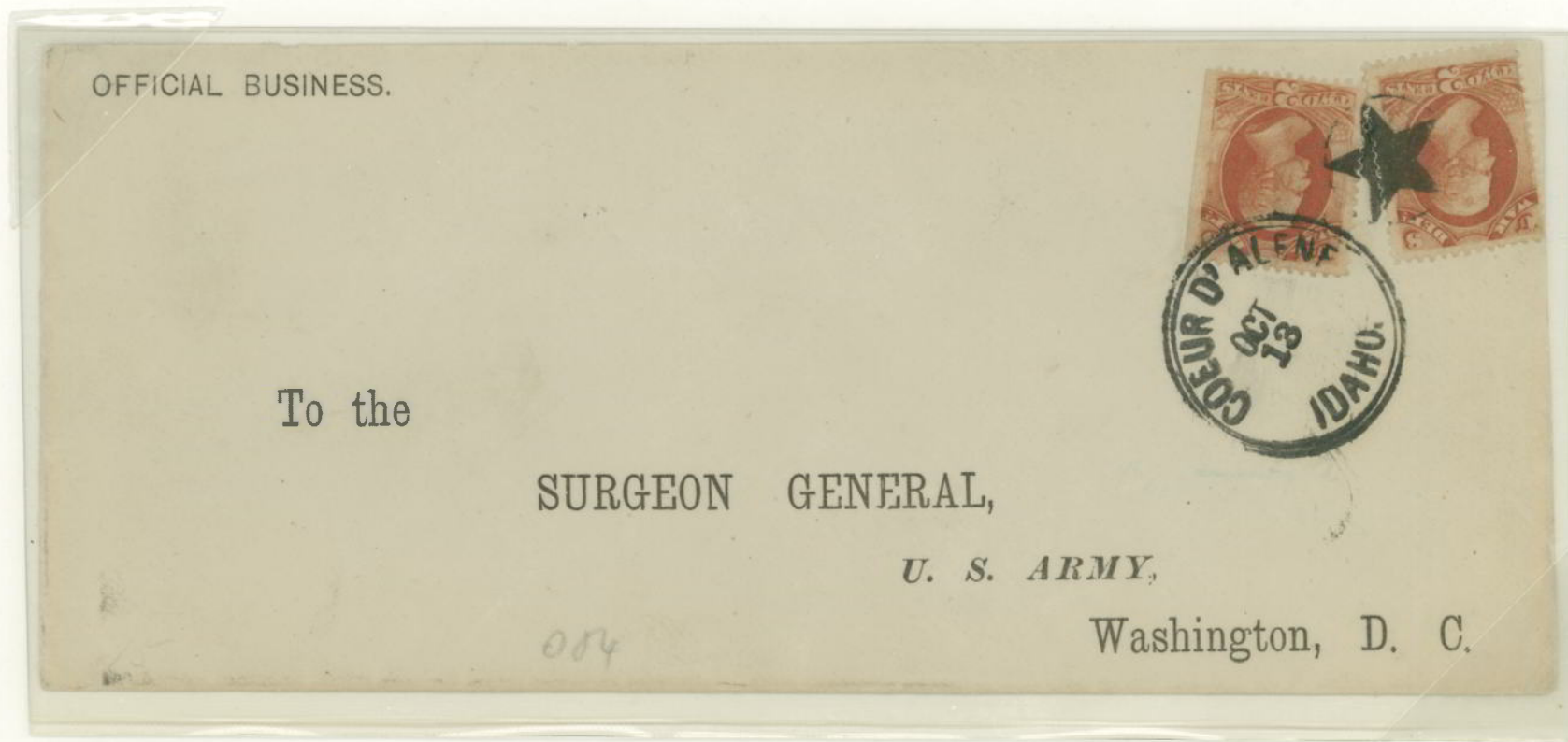
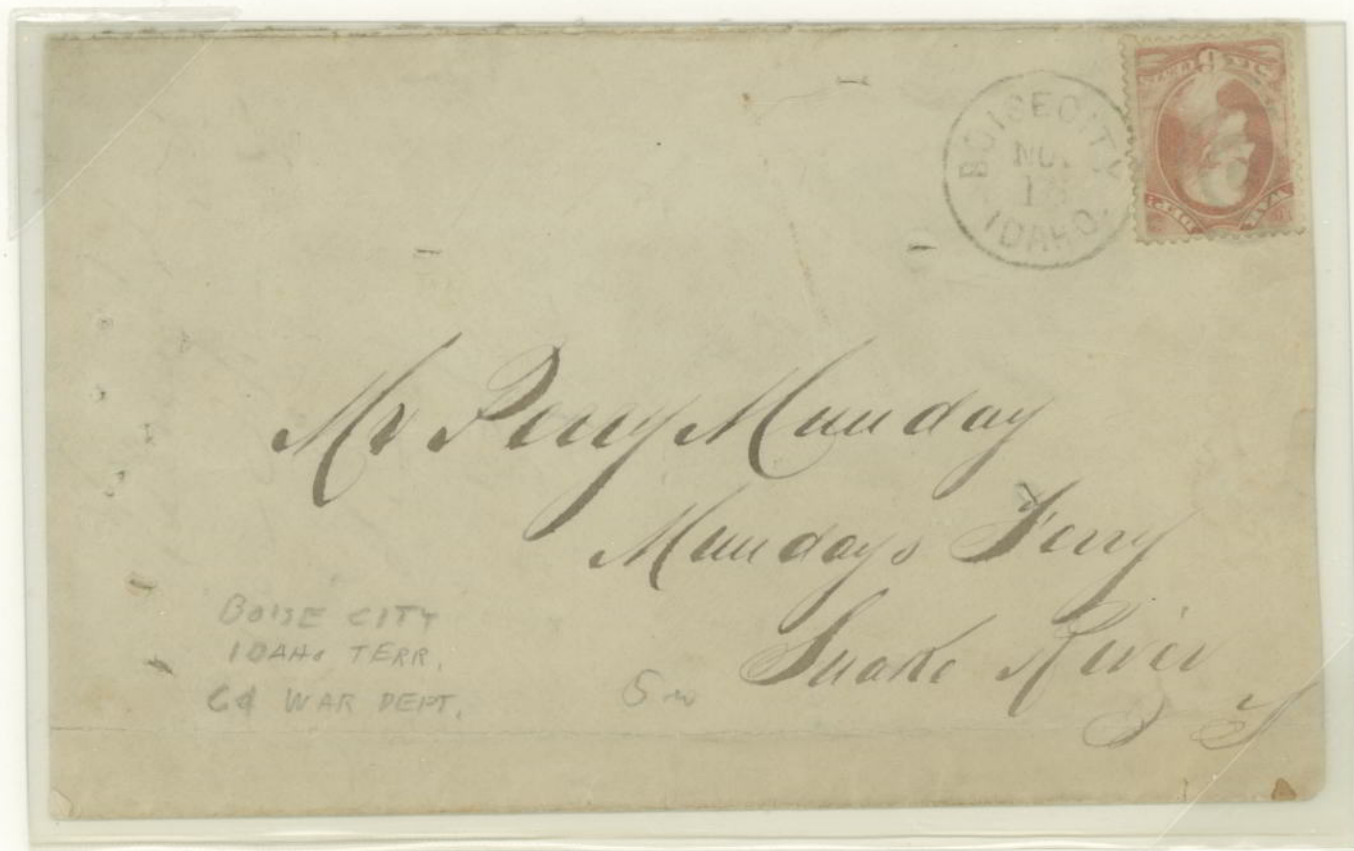
*Mr R Saw Fort ~~Douglas~~ Sept 83*



*Surgeon General  
U.S. Army  
Washington - D. C.*



*Santa Fe, N. M. T. was the post office for Fort Marcy, and Salt Lake City, U. T. the post office for Fort Douglas. Both covers, containing monthly medical reports, were received by the Surgeon General's Office on the same day and docketed by the same clerk*



*Boise City, Id. T. was the post office for Fort Boise. Coeur d'Alene, Id. T. was the post office for Fort Coeur d'Alene*



## Territorial Cancels

During the period of use of War Department stamps, ten territories remained in the American West (nine, after Colorado achieved statehood in 1876). Most of the surviving non-Fort cancels and covers from this vast area emanated from towns whose post offices serviced nearby Army posts which lacked their own mail facilities.



*Apache Pass, AT  
(Camp Apache)*

*Baggs, WyT*

*Salt Lake City, UT  
(Camp/ Fort Douglas)*

*Santa Fe, NMT  
(Fort Marcy)*

*Bismark, DT  
(Camp Hancock)*



*Rock Creek, WyT  
(rail terminus, Fort  
Fetterman, DT)*

*Tucson, AT  
(Camp Lowell)*

*Cheyenne, WyT  
(Fort D. A. Russell)*

*Port Townsend,  
WashT  
(Fort Townsend)*

*West Las Animas,  
CoT (beginning,  
Santa Fe Trail)*

Texas

**Fort Concho**



**Fort Davis**



Wyoming Territory

**Fort Bridger**



**Fort McKinney**



**Fort Fred Steele**

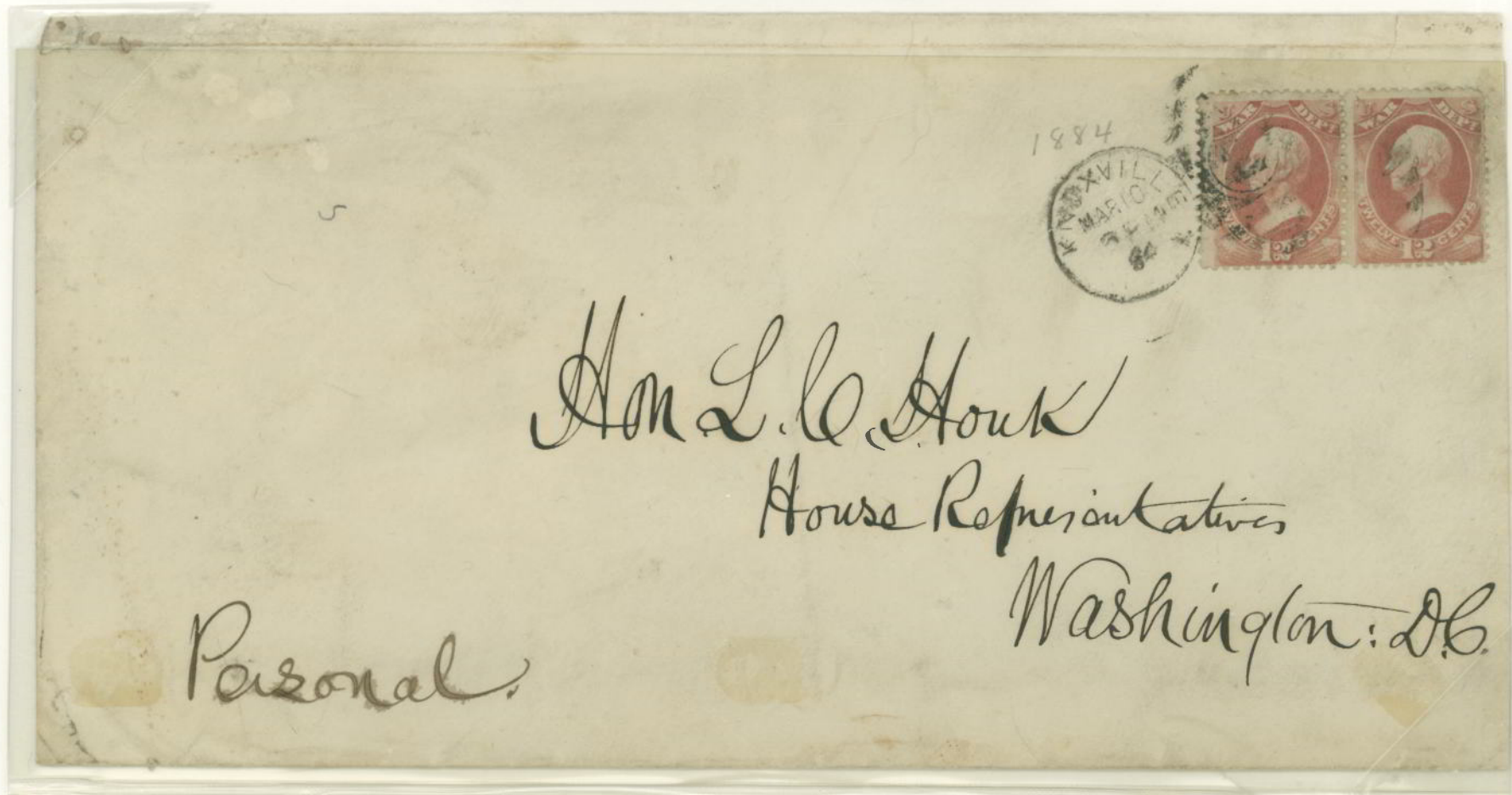


**Fort Washakie**

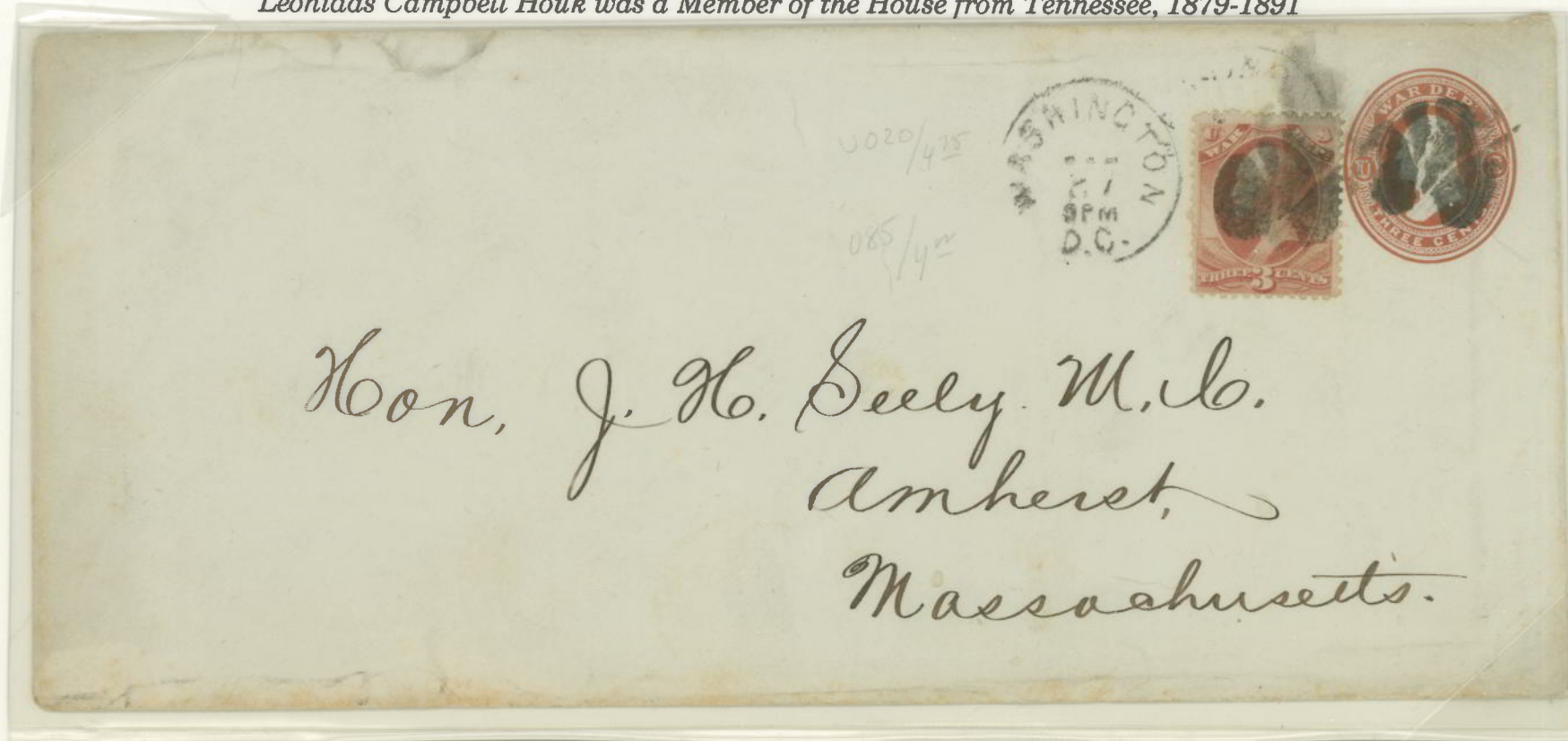


*Package front piece from undecipherable Fort  
franked with nine 7c, one 30c and one 90c stamp*

Departmental Mail to Congressmen



*Leonidas Campbell Houk was a Member of the House from Tennessee, 1879-1891*



*Julius Hawley Seely(e) was a Member of the House from Massachusetts for one term, 1875-1877. He left to become President of Amherst College*



McDowell, A. T. was the post office for Fort McDowell. Prescott, A. T. was the post office for Whipple Barracks, Headquarters of the Department of Arizona

HEADQUARTERS DEPARTMENT OF THE COLUMBIA.  
VANCOUVER BARRACKS, W. T.  
OFFICIAL BUSINESS.



The

"ARMY AND NAVY JOURNAL,"

New York C

Medical Department  
OF THE ARM'  
OFFICIAL BUSINESS.



(See EB 648)  
Capt. M. P. Stevens  
The Surgeon General

U.S. Army.

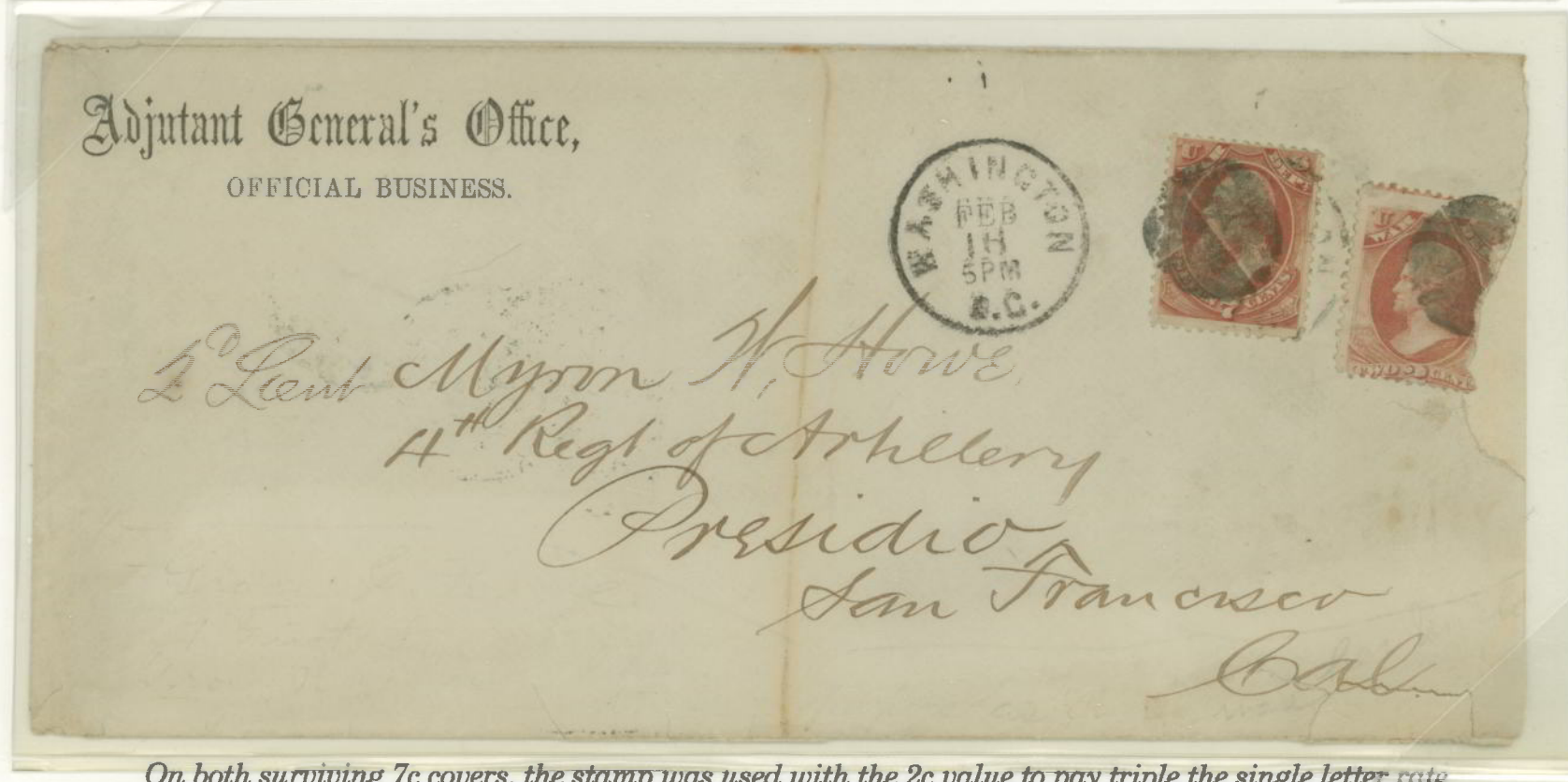
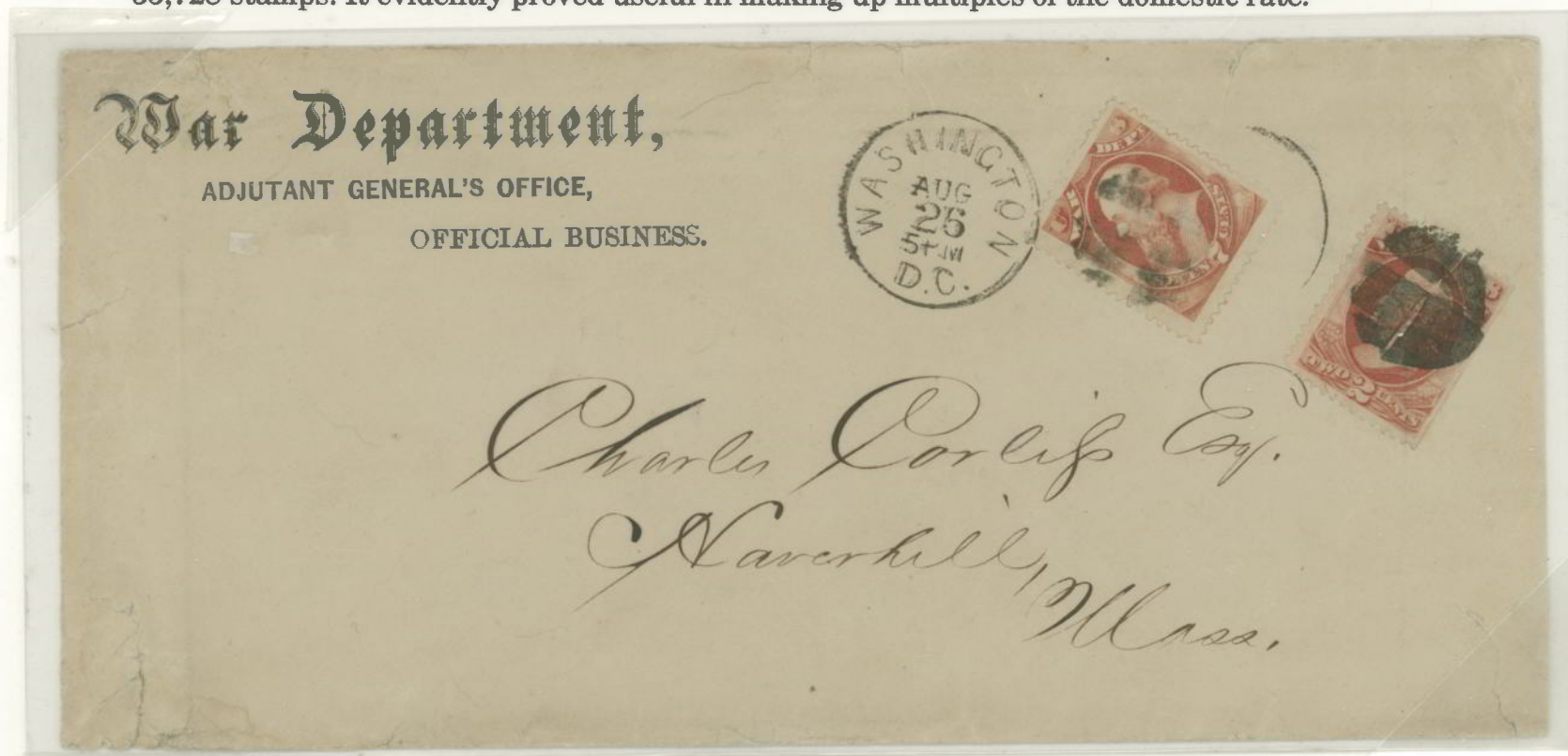
Washington D.C.



Vancouver, W. T. was the post office for Vancouver Barracks, headquarters of the Department of the Columbia. The top cover was mailed at the 1c/two ounces rate for printed matter

## The Only Two Recorded 7c War Department Covers

The 7c War Department stamp was issued in 1873 to pay the single letter rate for the Prussian closed mail, and for mail to Denmark, Hungary and Luxembourg. Two years later, the stamp was made obsolete by the 5c G. P.U. rate. Remarkably, not a single cover to a foreign country exists from any of the four Departments which were issued a 7c stamp. Regardless of its obsolescence, the War Department requisitioned the 7c value every year from the Stamp Agent, for a total of 55,728 stamps. It evidently proved useful in making up multiples of the domestic rate.



On both surviving 7c covers, the stamp was used with the 2c value to pay triple the single letter rate

## Replacement of Stamps by Penalty Envelopes

In 1877 the replacement of stamps by a penalty notice on envelopes was authorized by Congress for mail from Departmental headquarters in Washington to field offices. In 1879 their use was extended to mail between all government offices. In 1884, penalty franking on governmental mail to private citizens was authorized, ending any further need for Departmental stamps. During this entire period the War Department was slow to replace stamps with penalty envelopes, and continued to requisition and use many more stamps than were required.

Official Business.

U. S. A. MEDICAL DEPARTMENT.

War Department,

ARMY MEDICAL BOARD.

*Any person using this envelope to avoid the payment of postage on private matter of any kind, will be subject to a fine of three hundred dollars.*



Major Chas. B. Whisey  
 Post Surgeon  
 Columbus Barracks

Official Business.

U. S. A. MED. DEPARTMENT.

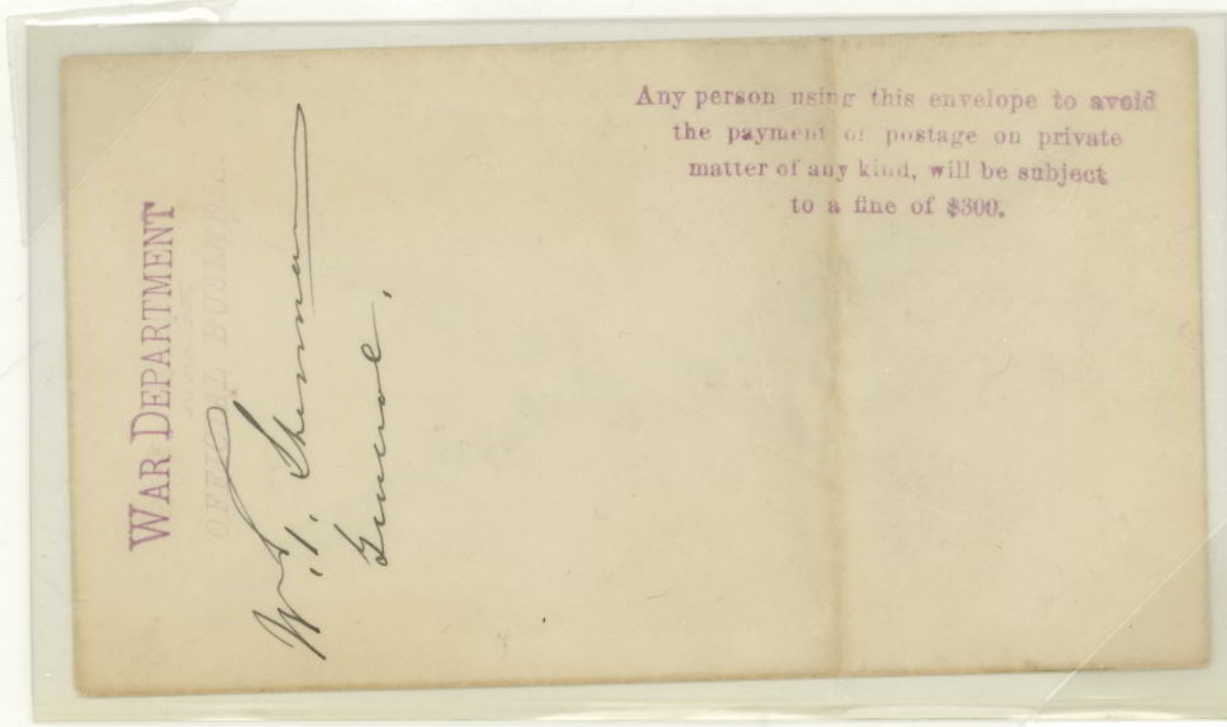
War Department,



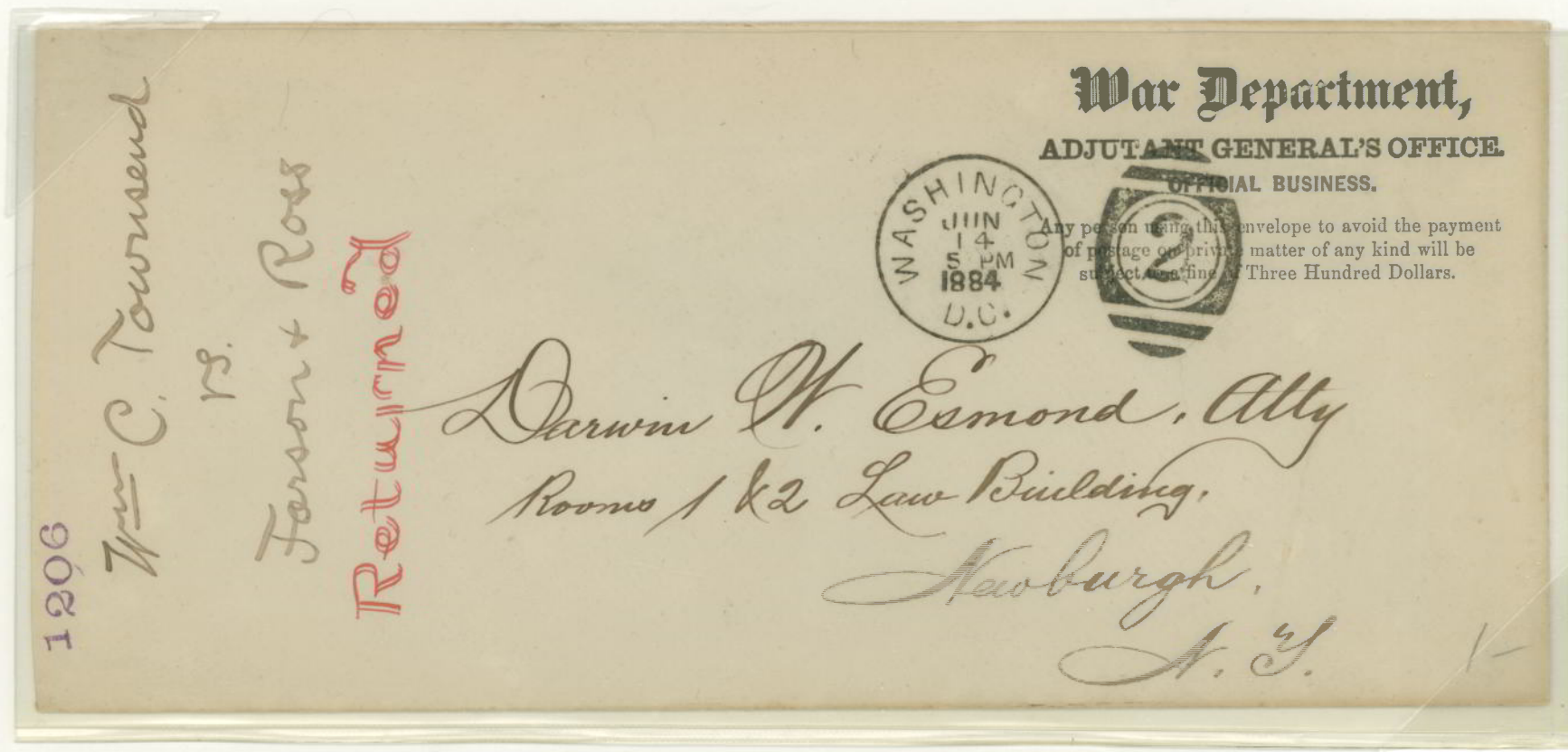
*envelope of postage of any kind is subject to a fine of three hundred dollars.*

Andrew Fort Winfield Scott  
 Dept B  
 Surgeon General  
 U. S. Army  
 Washington, D. C.

*Examples of stamps used when the penalty envelopes to which they were affixed would have sufficed. The top cover (June 1879) is from a Medical Department office in New York City to a Post Surgeon at Columbus Barracks; the bottom (October 1883), from a Medical Officer at Fort Winfield Scott to the Surgeon General in Washington*



General Sherman and his staff were particularly slow in adopting penalty envelopes --- no penalty covers mailed from his office are known. This envelope with a handstamped penalty notice, signed by Sherman sometime before he resigned his command late in 1883, is one of two known unused ones



Although mail from field offices to private citizens required stamps until July 5, 1884, similar letters from Washington needed to bear only a penalty notice



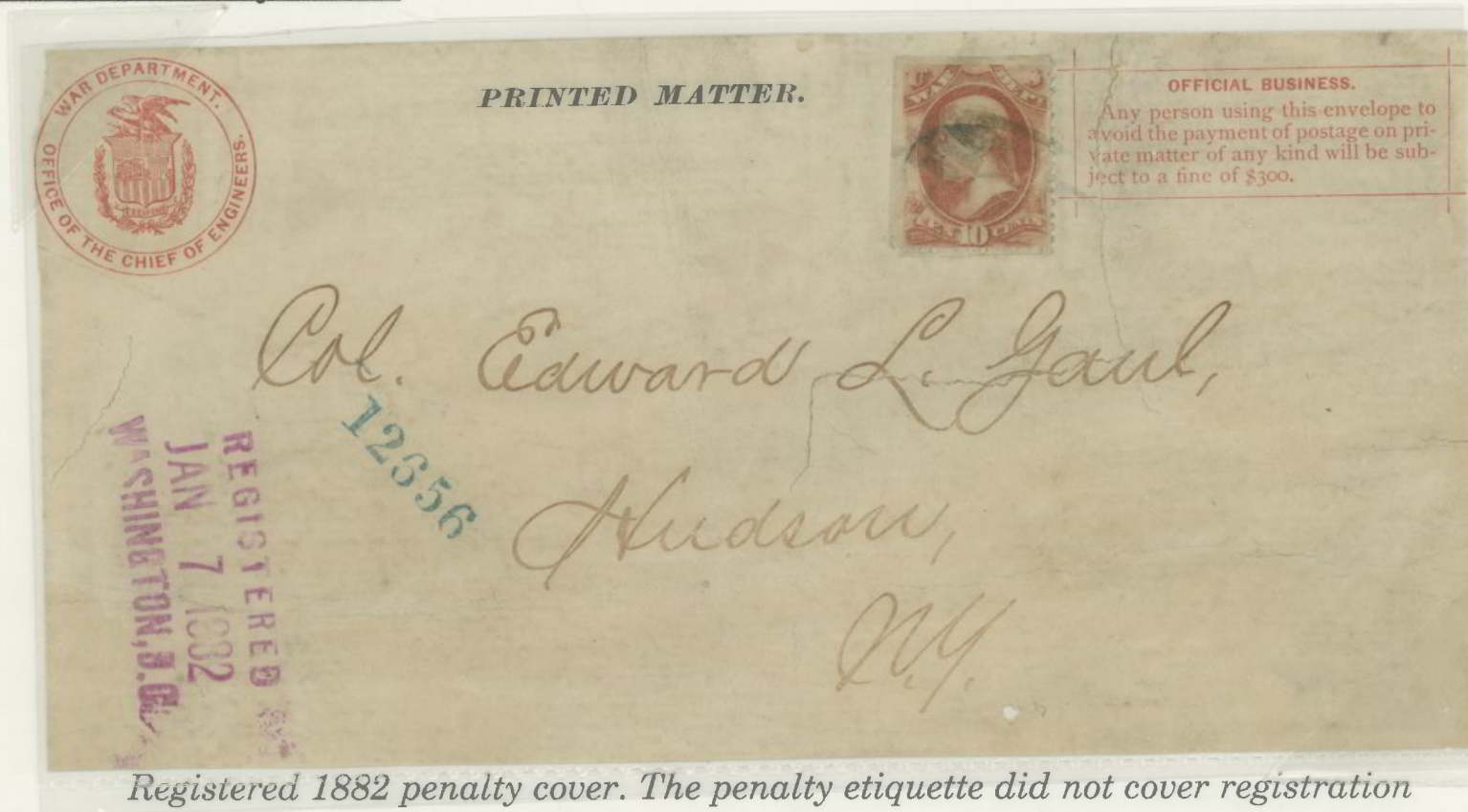
**ADDENDA**  
**(acquired after exhibit mounted)**

**Cover to Europe**



October 1882 cover to Vienna franked with 6c War Department stamp. It reached its destination, although official stamps were not valid for international mail after April 1, 1879.

**Registered Penalty Cover**



Registered 1882 penalty cover. The penalty etiquette did not cover registration

**ADDENDA**  
**(acquired after exhibit mounted)**

*Fort Cancels*

**Arizona Territory**

**Fort Grant**



**New Mexico Territory**

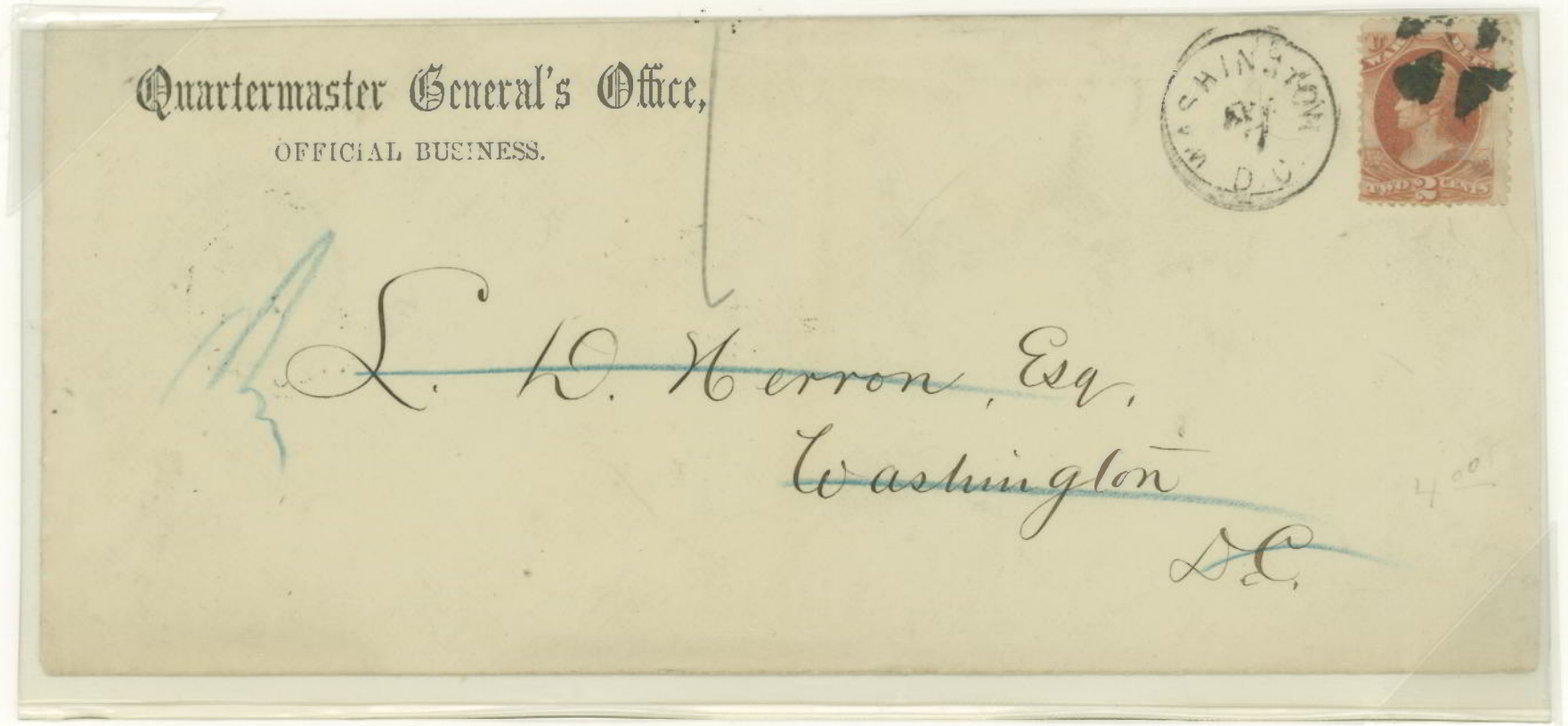
**Fort Union**



**Fort Cummings**

## The Local Letter Rate

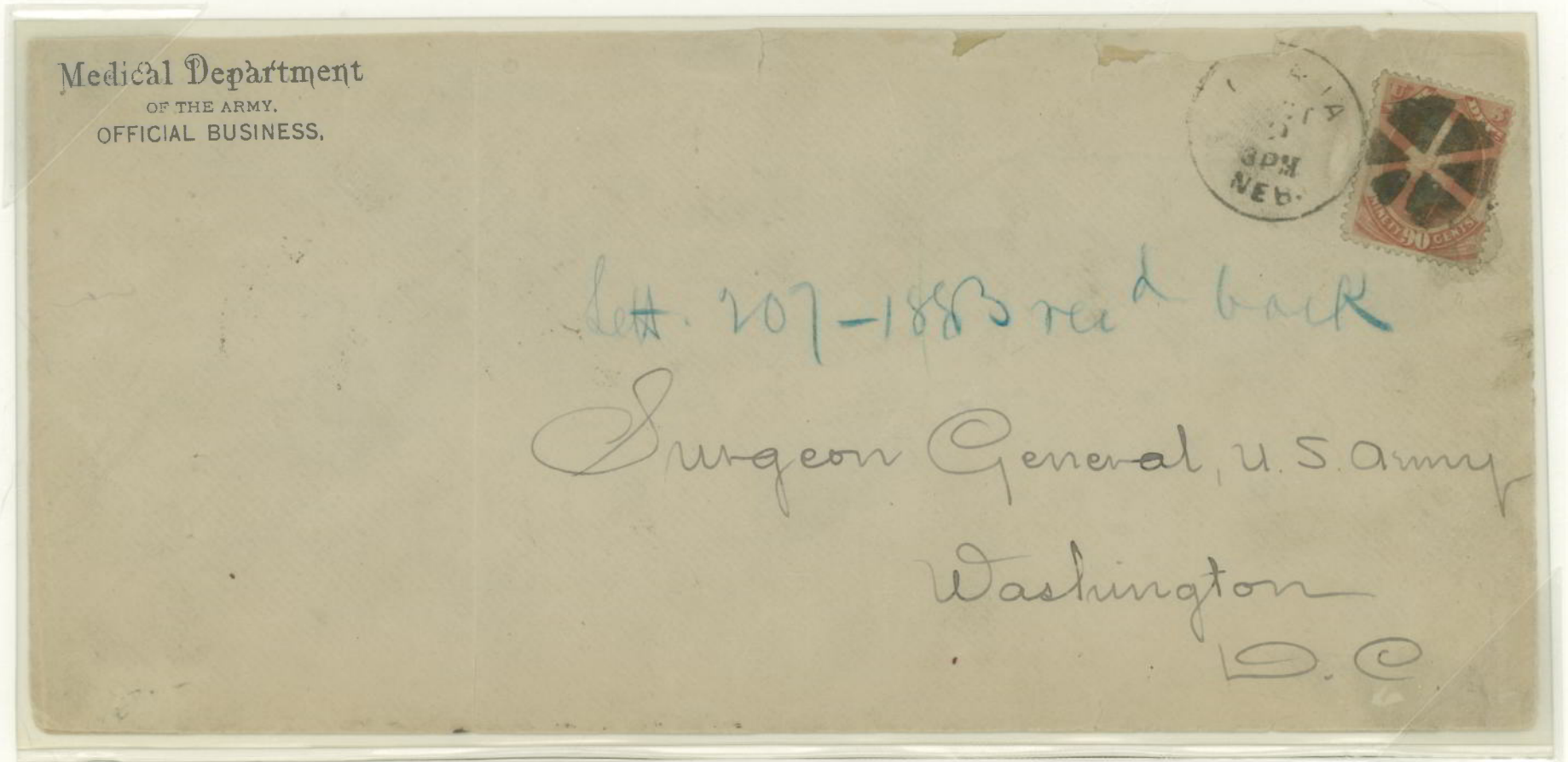
The postal rate for letters sent locally was 2c per half-ounce during the period when these covers were mailed



The double-weight letter is the EDU (Oct 17, 1873) for the 2c War Department stamp

## The 90c War Department Stamp on Cover

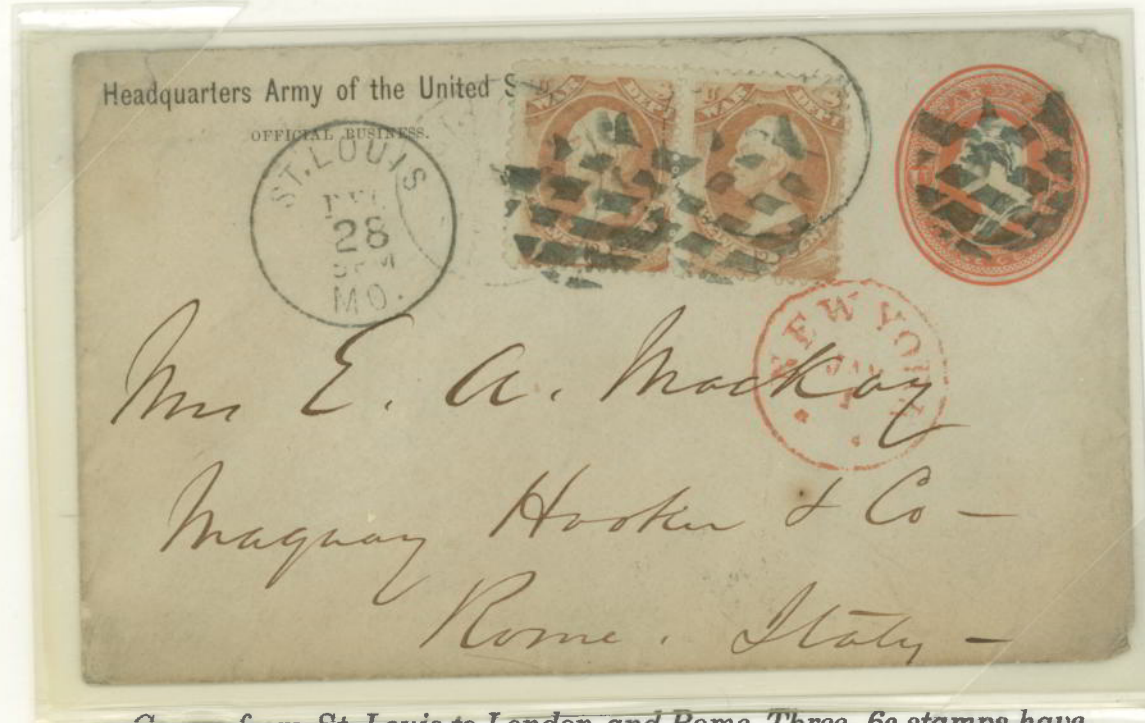
The 90c War Department stamp was issued in 1873 to pay specific high international rates, and (like the 7c stamp) was made obsolete two years later by the 5c per half-ounce G.P.U. rate. Nevertheless, the Department requisitioned the 90c value every year, for a total of 48,172 stamps, indicating that it was useful in mailing heavy parcels. Only three covers have survived-- the full cover and parcel front on this page, and a similar Mobile parcel front in another collection.



*The parcel front also represents one of three surviving 24c War Department covers*

## Covers from Commanding General Sherman to Europe

In 1874, Commanding General William Tecumseh Sherman moved the Headquarters of the United States Army from Washington to his home town, St. Louis, to lessen what he considered undue interference by Grant's Secretary of War William Belknap. Headquarters returned to Washington in 1876, after Belknap was convicted for taking kick-backs from Army suppliers. These covers were sent by Sherman from St. Louis in late 1875 and early 1876 to a lady making the Grand Tour of Europe.

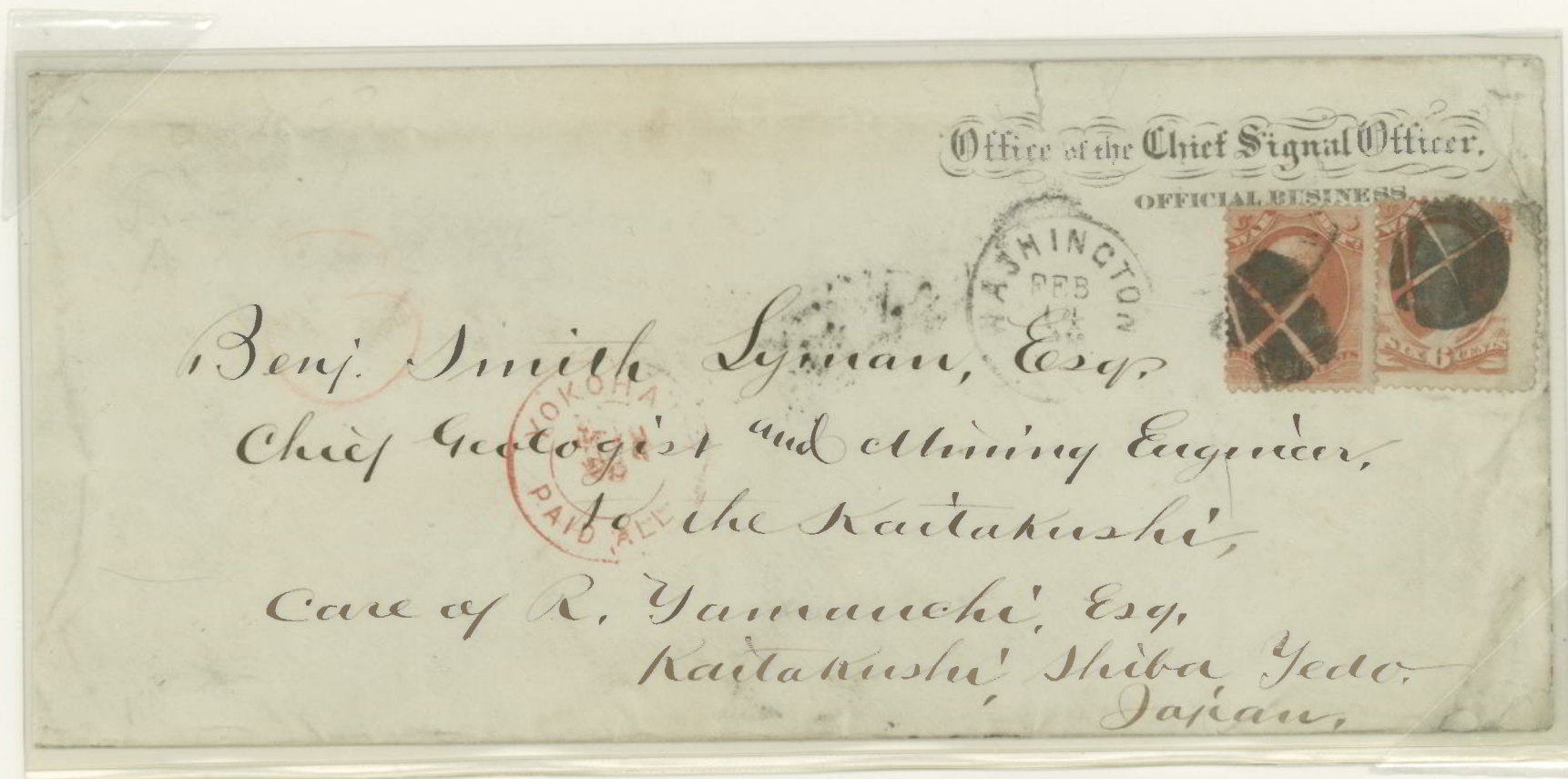


Covers from St. Louis to London and Rome. Three 6c stamps have been added to the 3c stamped envelope to London to (over)pay four times the G. P. U. rate of 5c per half-ounce. Two 12c stamps have been added to the 3c stamped envelope to Rome to (over)pay five times the G. P. U. rate

## Covers to Japan

Less than a dozen covers to foreign destinations bearing War Department stamps have survived, a paucity partly explained by the fact that official stamps were not valid on U. P. U. mail after April 1, 1879. This cover and the one on the next page are the only recorded covers with War Department stamps to Japan.

The addressee, Benjamin Smith Lyman, an American consulting geologist, was Chief Geologist to the westernizing Japanese government between 1873 and 1879. He worked principally for the Kaitakushi, an agency overseeing the colonization and the development of natural resources on the northern island of Hokkaido.



*February 1876 cover from Washington to Yedo (Tokyo) franked with a 30c and a 6c War Department stamp to pay triple the 12c/half-ounce treaty rate. It reached the U.S. postal station in Yokohama in late March, probably via the Transcontinental Railroad to San Francisco, then on the transpacific steamer S. S. China to Japan*

*One of five known War Department covers bearing 30c stamps*



May 1876 cover from Washington to Yedo (Tokyo) franked with a pair of 24c War Department stamps to pay quadruple the 12c/half-ounce treaty rate (although reduced to 5c the previous month). It reached the U.S. postal station in Yokohama in late June on the S.S. Colorado, then took nine more days to reach Lyman 25 miles away in Yedo. An Imperial Post official translated the address into Japanese on the back of the cover for the benefit of the local postman, then applied his seal

One of three recorded War Department covers or parcel fronts bearing 24c stamps

## Earliest Documented Usages

All but two of the 92 Official stamps were available at the Washington headquarters of the various Departments on July 1, 1873, the first day they could be used. Yet only four first day usages have been recorded, emphasizing the brutal attrition rate for Official covers. Some Departmental EDUs are dated well into the next year.

In addition to the covers below, the earliest documented usage of the 2c War Department stamp (October 17, 1873) is found on the Local Letter Rate page of this exhibit.



(TOP) Earliest documented use (March 7, 1874) of the 1c War Department stamp. Congressman Stephens had been Vice-President of the Confederate States

(BOTTOM) Earliest documented use (October 24, 1873) of the 6c stamp. Both envelopes are the free-frank variety which Departmental stamps made obsolete



## Printed Matter Rate

In addition to the two surviving pre-G.P.U. international mail covers, high value War Department stamps are found on heavy domestic letters and parcel fronts. The parcels usually transported printed material, mailed at the low printed matter rate of 1c per two ounces, or 10c per bound volume of documents. There was no weight limit on mail from any of the Departments (U.S. Postal Guide, Jan 1876, p. 19; April 1876, p. 60).



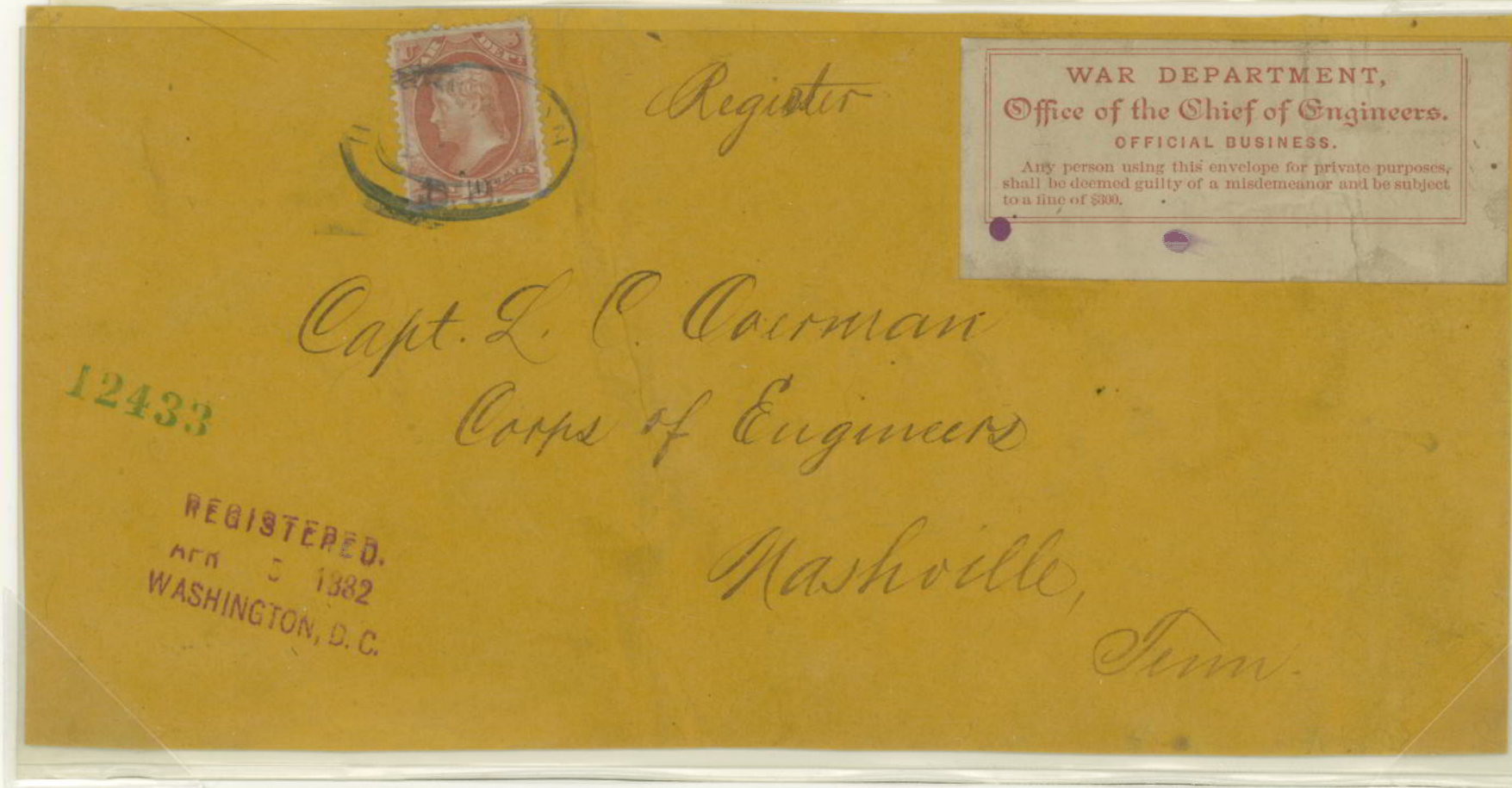
*Parcel front franked with two pairs of the 30c War Department stamp. The addressee, John W Kline, was a well-known Philadelphia collector of coins, medals, and numismatic literature. His relationship to John Wanamaker, the department store magnate who later became Postmaster General, is obscure.*

*One of five recorded 30c War Department covers, and the only one bearing more than one 30c stamp*



*Four 15c War Department stamps frank a parcel front from Washington to New York City. The Department's Chief Clerk certified that the package contained only printed material. One of two recorded 15c War Department covers*

Registered Covers



Important documents, when not transported by courier, were sent by registered mail. The fee during the 1873-1884 period of use of Departmental stamps was 10c in addition to regular postage. The penalty etiquette on the bottom envelope did not cover registration

## Fancy (and Other) Cancellations on Postal Stationery

The rich variety of fancy cancels seen on War Department adhesives is not duplicated on surviving postal stationery. On the other hand, some strikes are known only on stationery cut squares or entires.



*Skull and Bones*



*U. S. Monogram*



*One of three recorded complete strikes of the South Hanson, Mass. locomotive, on the indicium of a 3c Plimpton envelope*



*Masonic*



*Rooster*

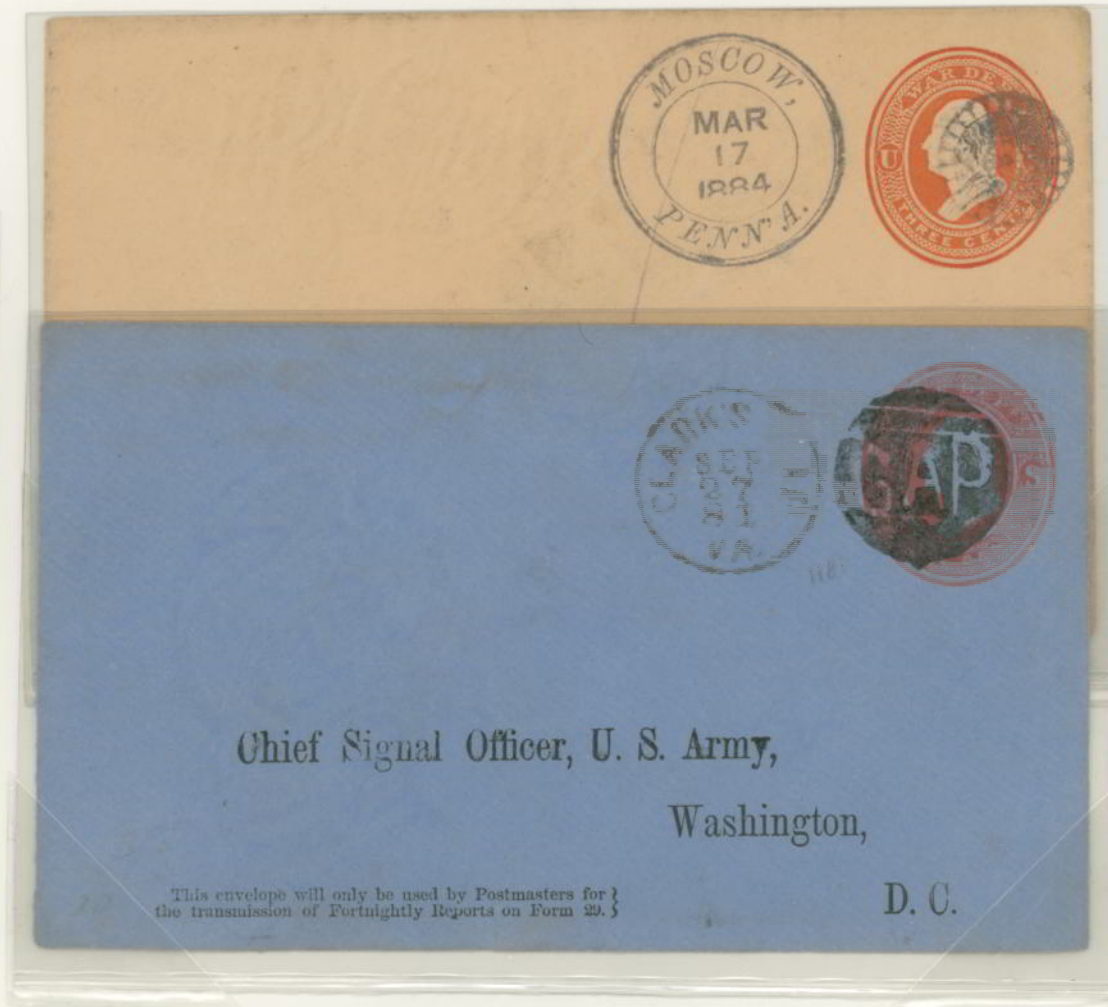
Fancy (and other) cancels on postal stationery



*Pinwheel*



*Pinwheel*



*TOP: Pinwheel killer  
BOTTOM: Negative Gap*

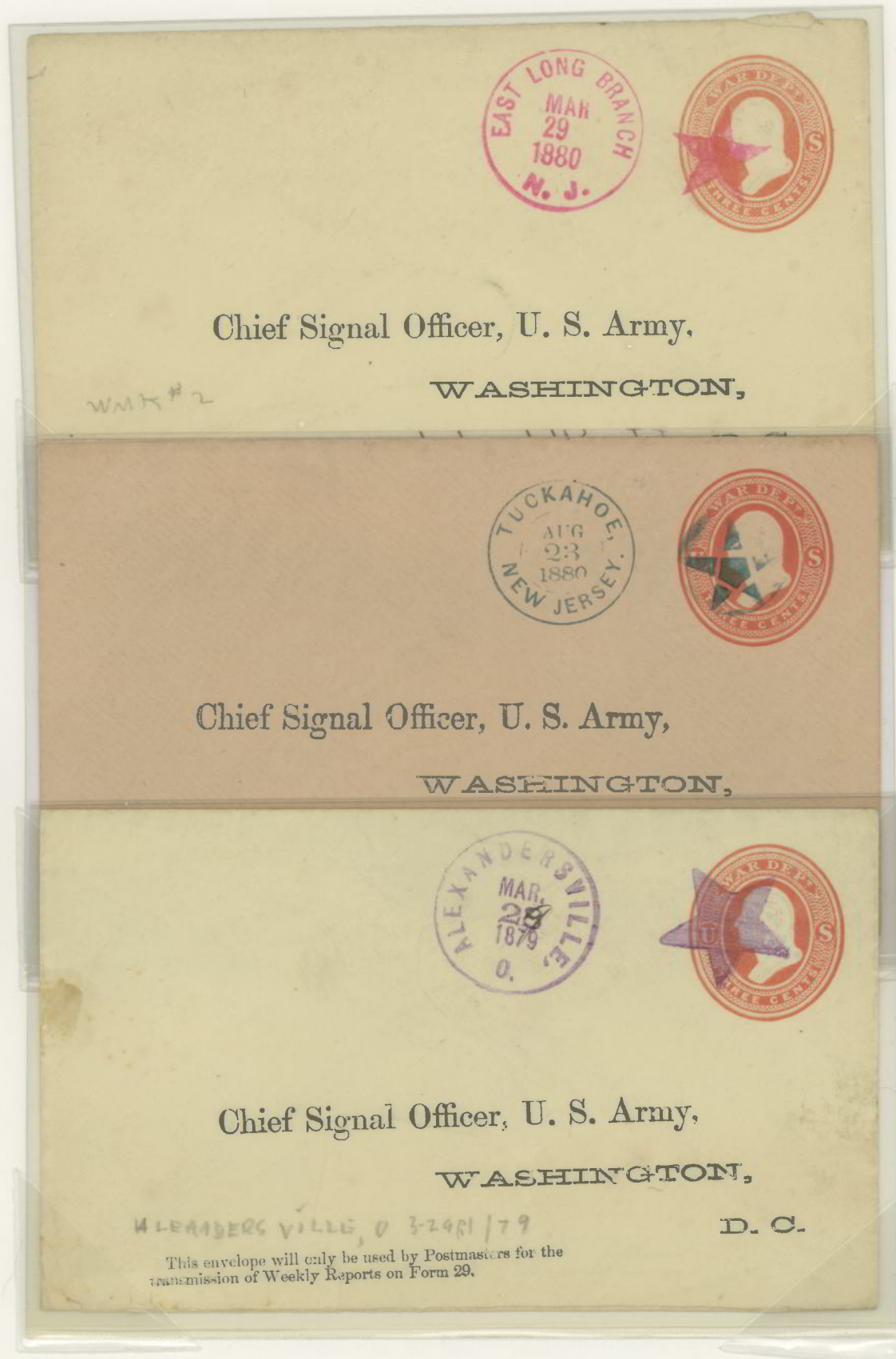


*Numeral*

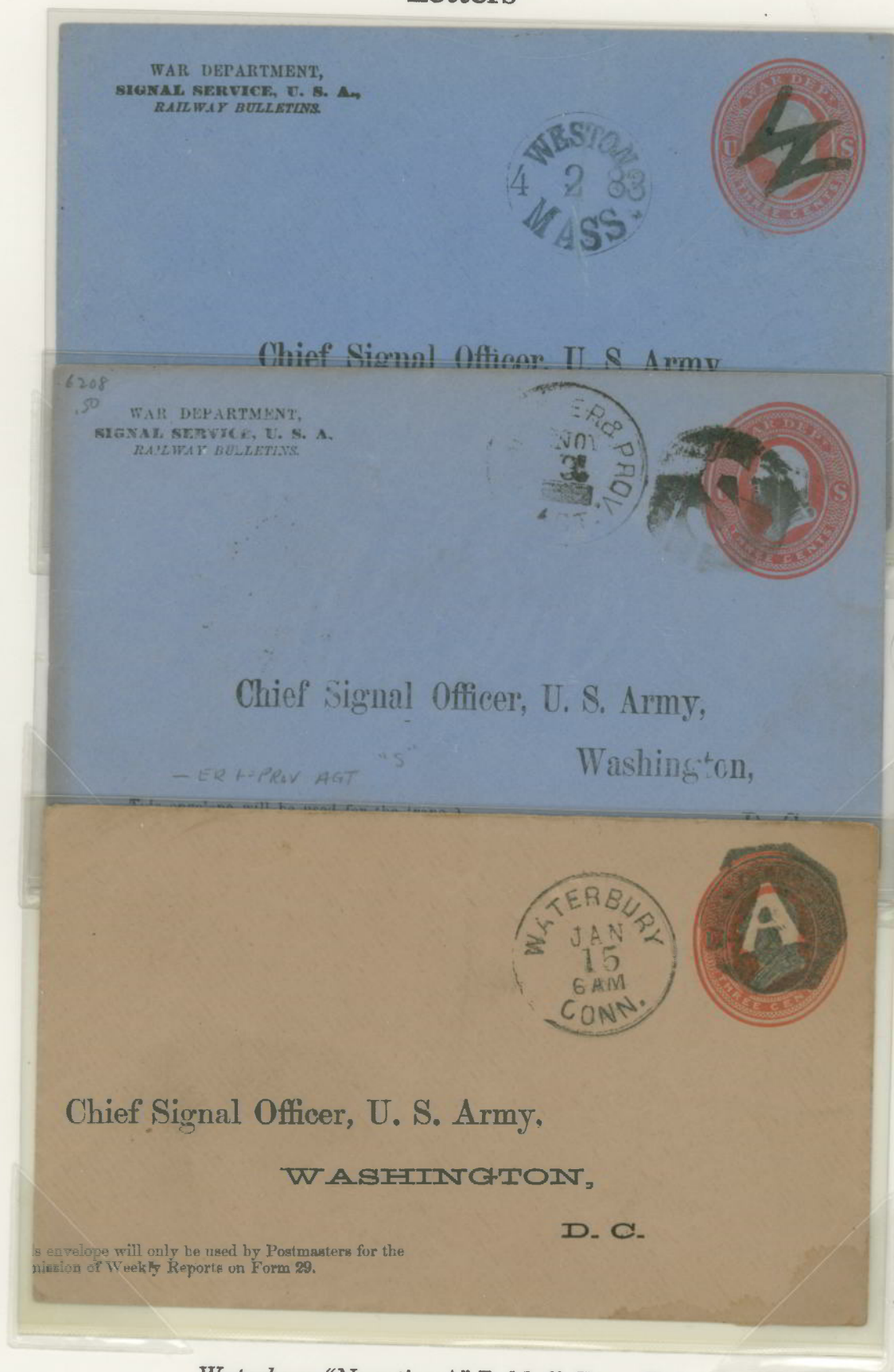


*(18)77*

Stars

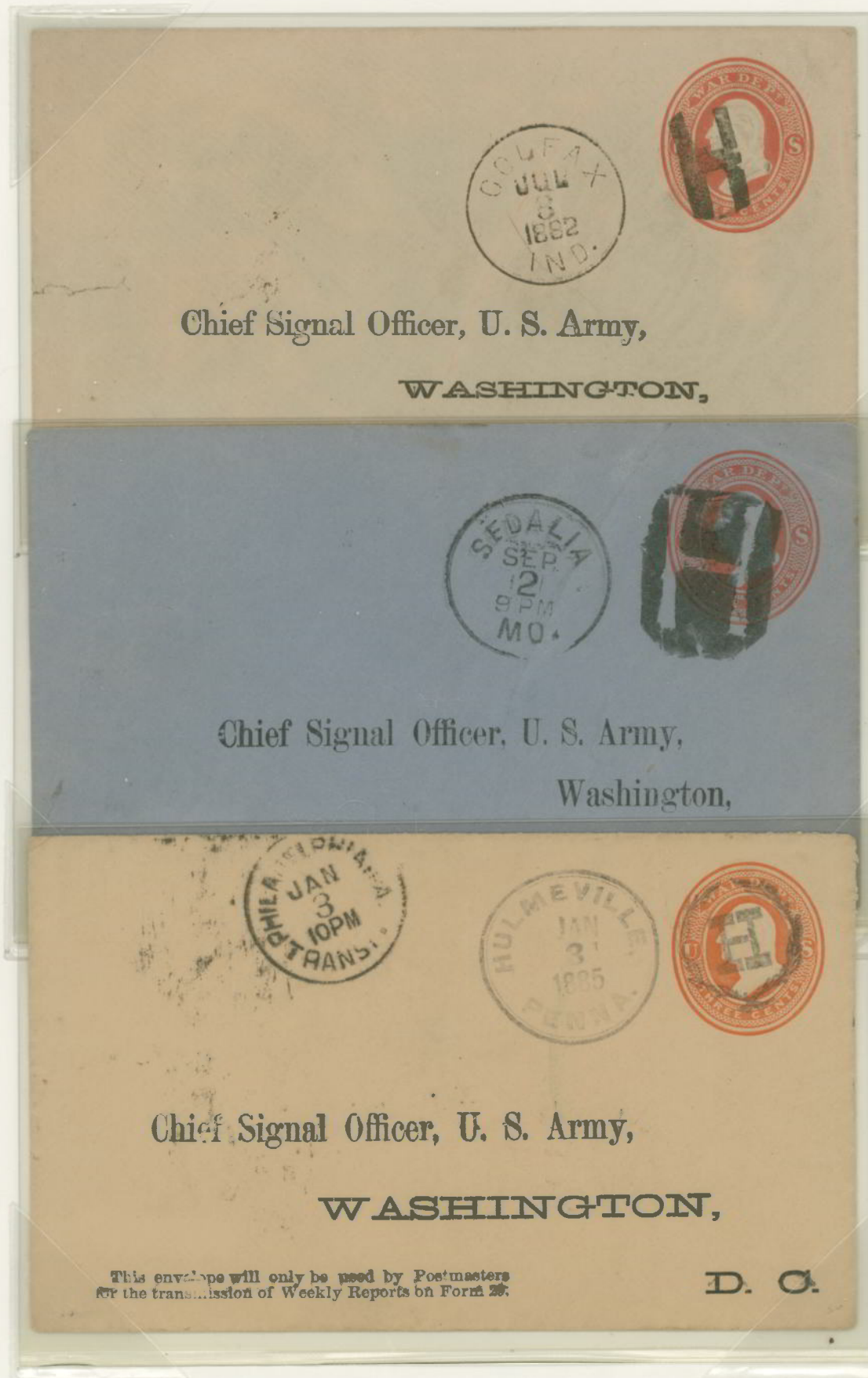


Letters



Waterbury "Negative A" Rohloff Type K-4

Letters



Chief Signal Officer, U. S. Army,

WASHINGTON,

Chief Signal Officer, U. S. Army,

Washington,

Chief Signal Officer, U. S. Army,

WASHINGTON,

This envelope will only be used by Postmasters  
for the transmission of Weekly Reports on Form 28.

D. O.



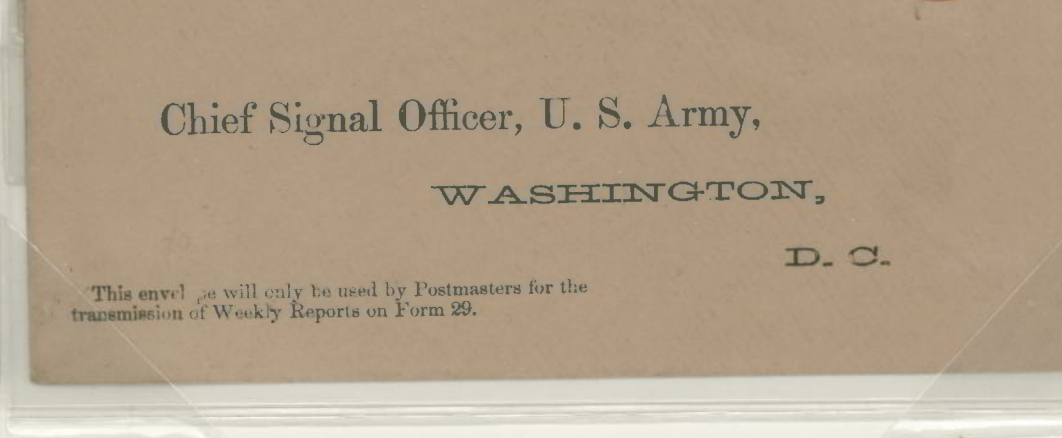
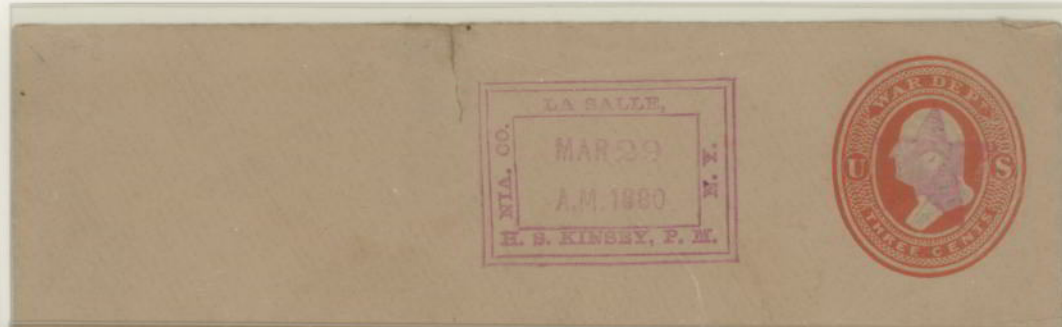
## Postmaster and County Cancellations on Postal Stationery

Small town postmasters whose yearly receipts were too low to warrant the government providing them with cancelling devices turned to commercial suppliers, who offered a variety of vulcanized rubber duplex cancellers. Some ordered sets with their names and/or counties included in the circular date stamp.



*Postmaster and/or county cancellations on the small Plimpton envelopes supplied to postmasters for submission of weekly weather reports to the Signal Service*

Postmaster and County Cancellations



## Railroad Postmarks on War Department Postal Stationery

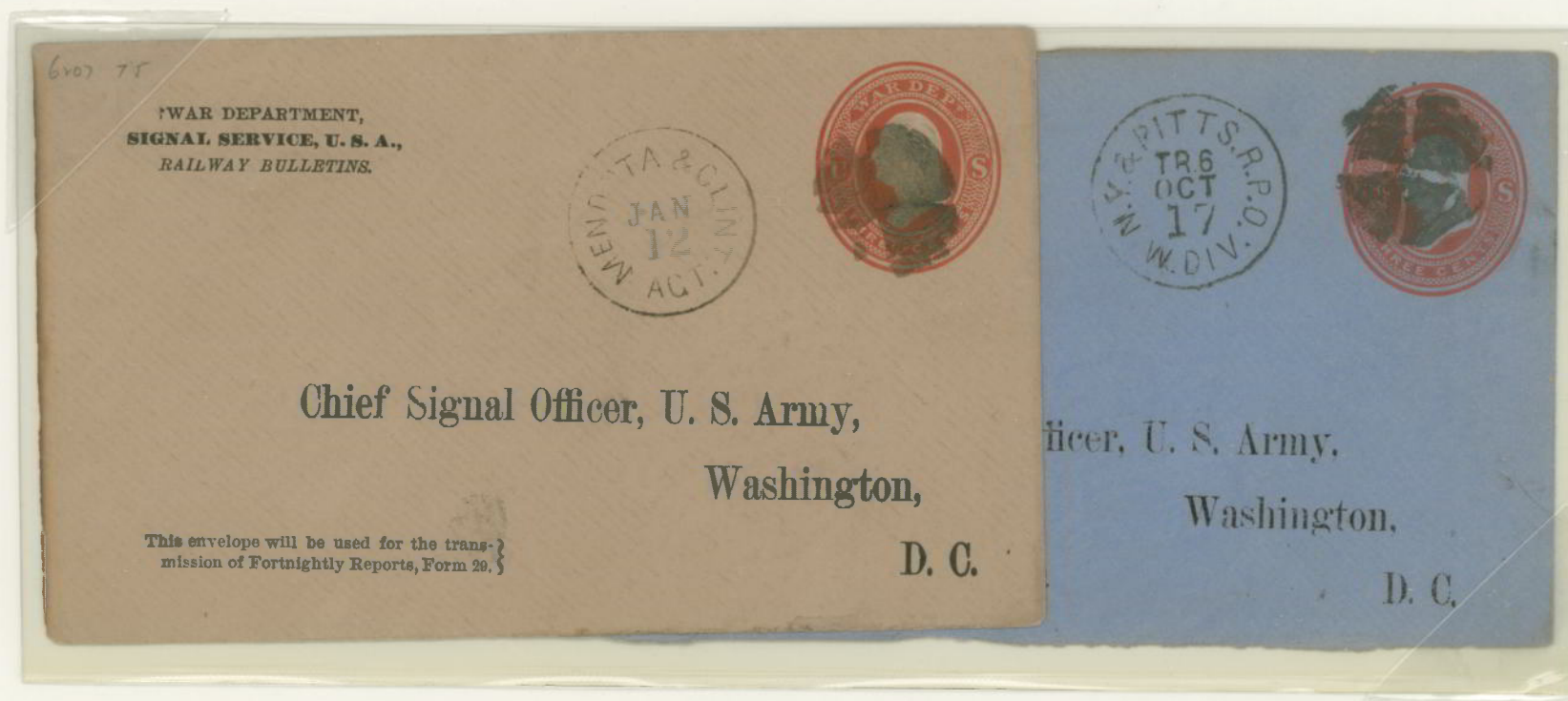
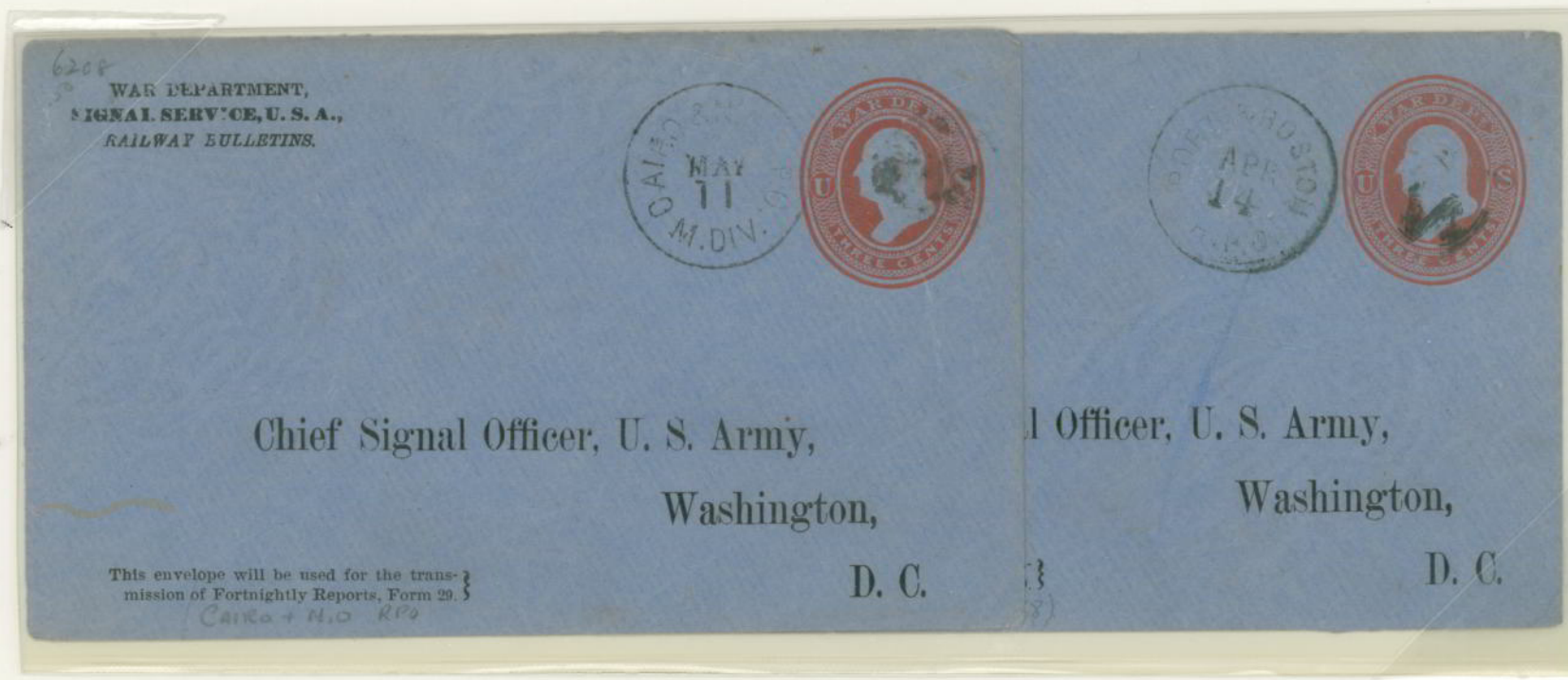
Station agents on many railroads were responsible for submitting periodic weather reports to the Signal Service in Washington. These were placed in pre-addressed stamped envelopes which were picked up and cancelled by Route Agents (Post Office employees) aboard passing trains.



*TOP: Newark & Shawnee (Ohio) R. P. O. [ Baltimore & Ohio R. R. ]*

*CENTER: Lock Haven & Harrisburg (Pa.) R. P. O. [ Pennsylvania R. R. ]*

*BOTTOM: Pottsville & Philadelphia (Pa.) R. P. O. [ Pennsylvania R. R. ]*



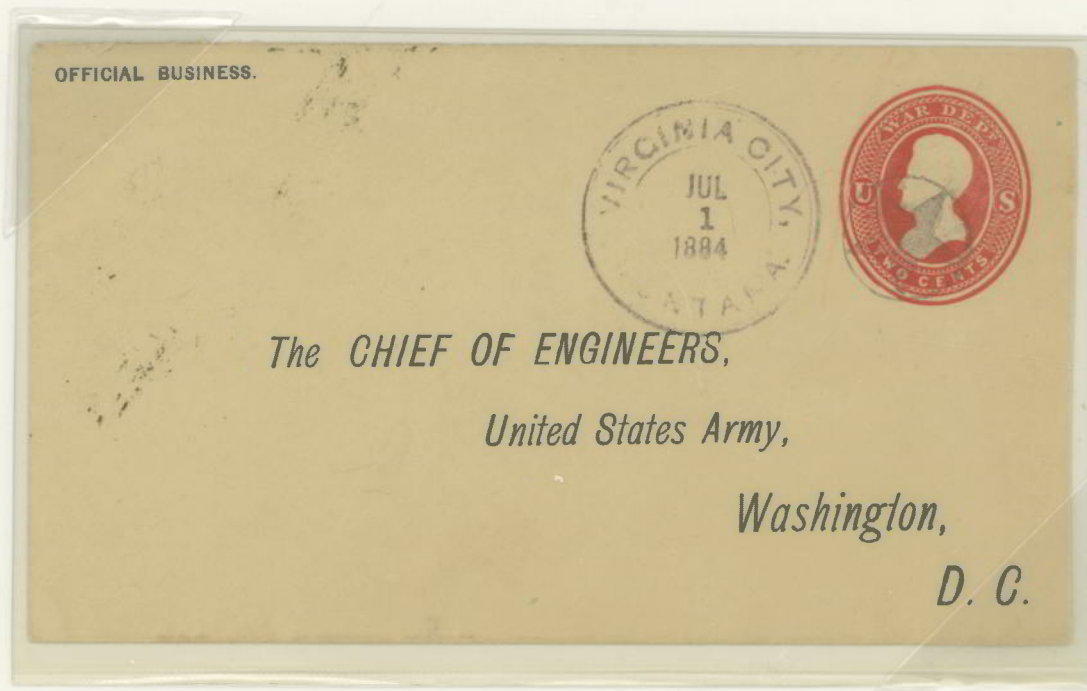
*TOP: Cairo (Ill.) and New Orleans R. P. O. [Chicago, St. Louis & New Orleans R. R.];*

*Portland (Me.) & Boston R. P. O. [Boston & Maine R. R.]*

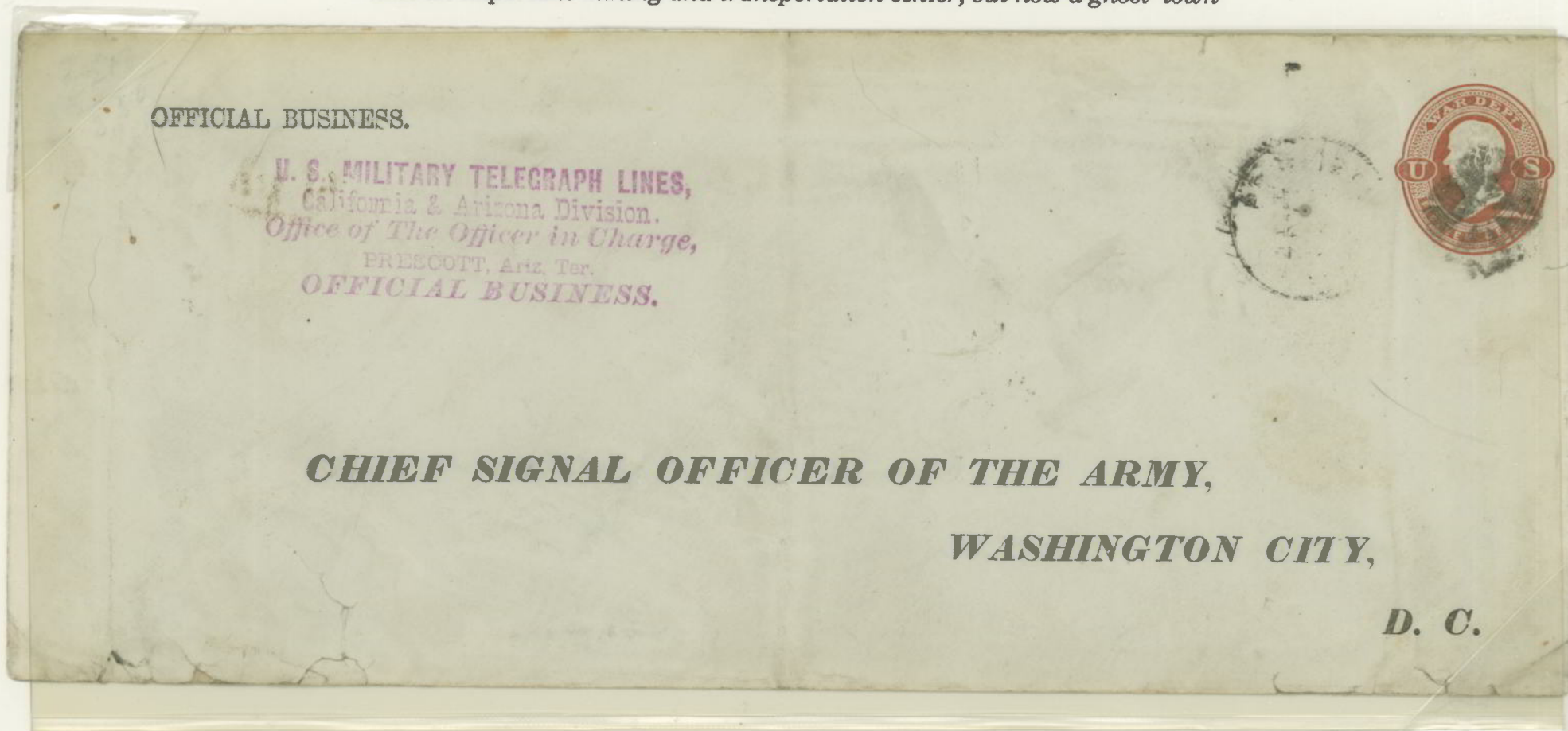
*BOTTOM: Mendota (Ill.) and Clinton (Ia.) R. P. O. [Chicago, Burlington & Quincy R. R.];*

*New York & Pittsburgh R. P. O. [Pennsylvania R. R.]*

## Territorial Use of War Department Postal Stationery



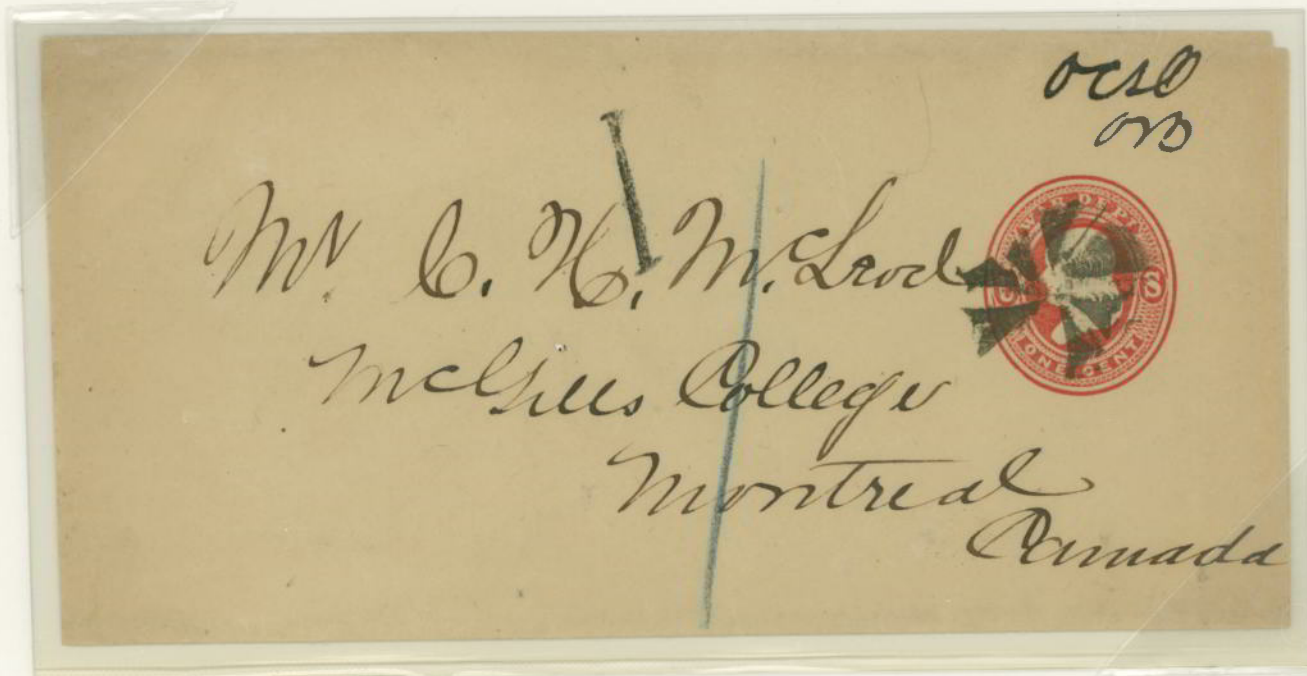
*Plimpton 2c red on cream cover mailed from Virginia City, M. T., at that time an important mining and transportation center, but now a ghost town*



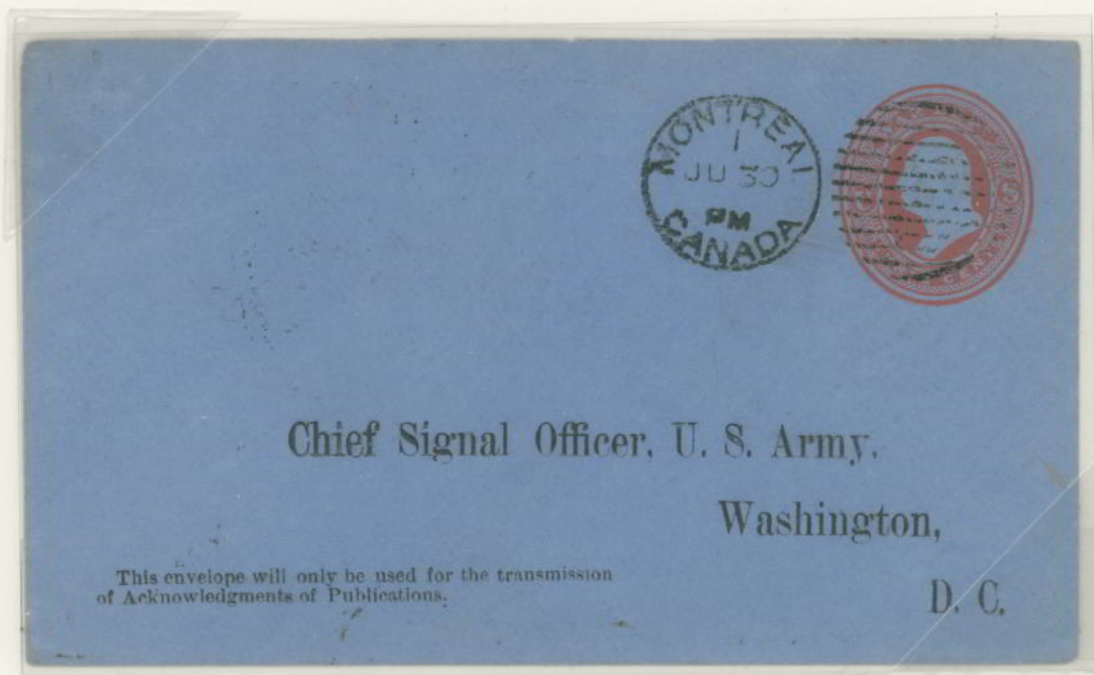
*Large 15c dark red on white Reay stamped envelope sent in May 1884 from Whipple Barracks, A. T.*

## Signal Service Mail to and from Foreign Countries

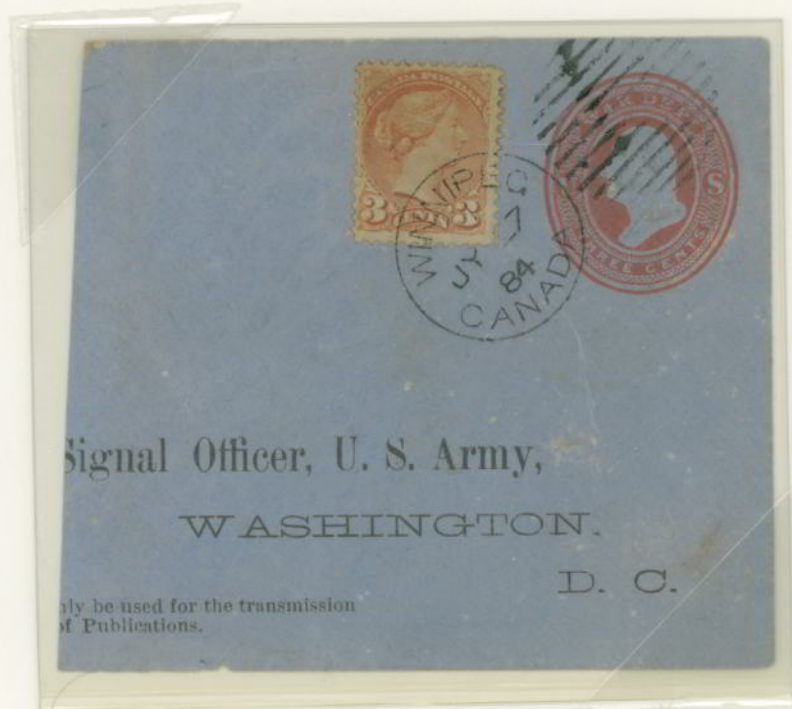
The Signal Service exchanged weather information with a number of foreign observers and governmental agencies. Very little of this correspondence has survived.



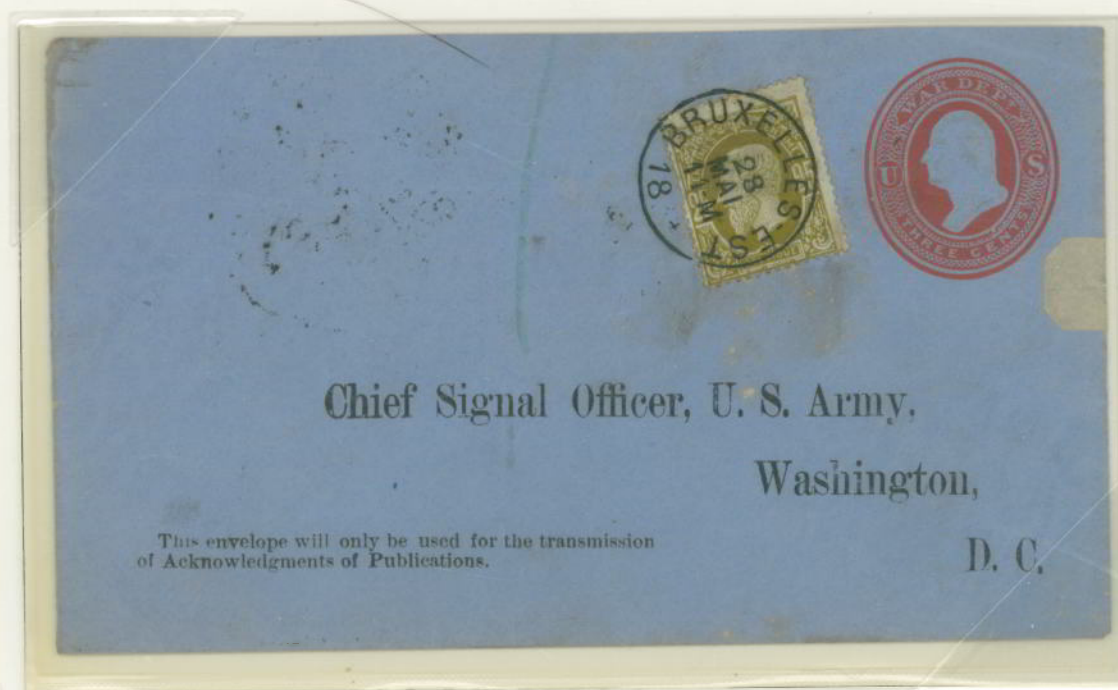
*An undated Reay 1c manila wrapper enclosed a publication sent by the Office of the Chief Signal Officer to an academic in Canada. Presumably it was dispatched before the U.P.U. prohibition of the use of official stamps on international mail went into force on April 1, 1879*



*A 3c Plimpton Acknowledgment of Publications envelope sent from Montreal to Washington in June 1884. The absence of Canadian postage went unchallenged by postal clerks in both countries*



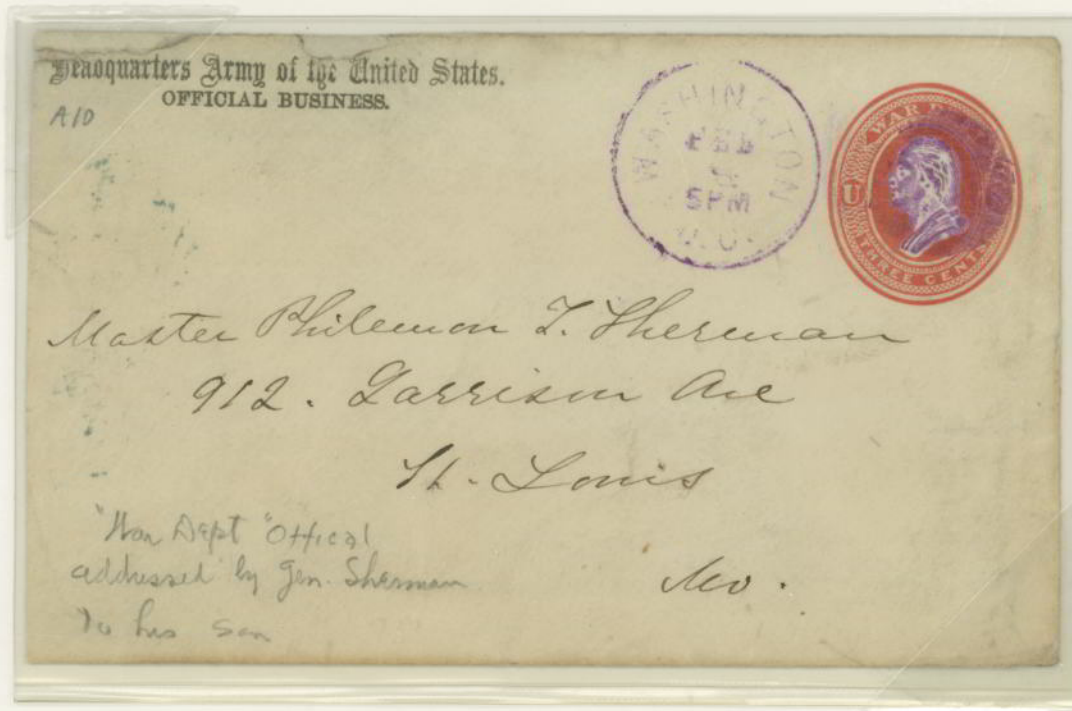
*Portion of a 3c Plimpton envelope mailed from Winnipeg, Canada to Washington on July 7, 1884. War Department postal stationery not being valid in Canada (and in any event by now obsolete) a 3c Small Queen was affixed to pay the postage to Washington*



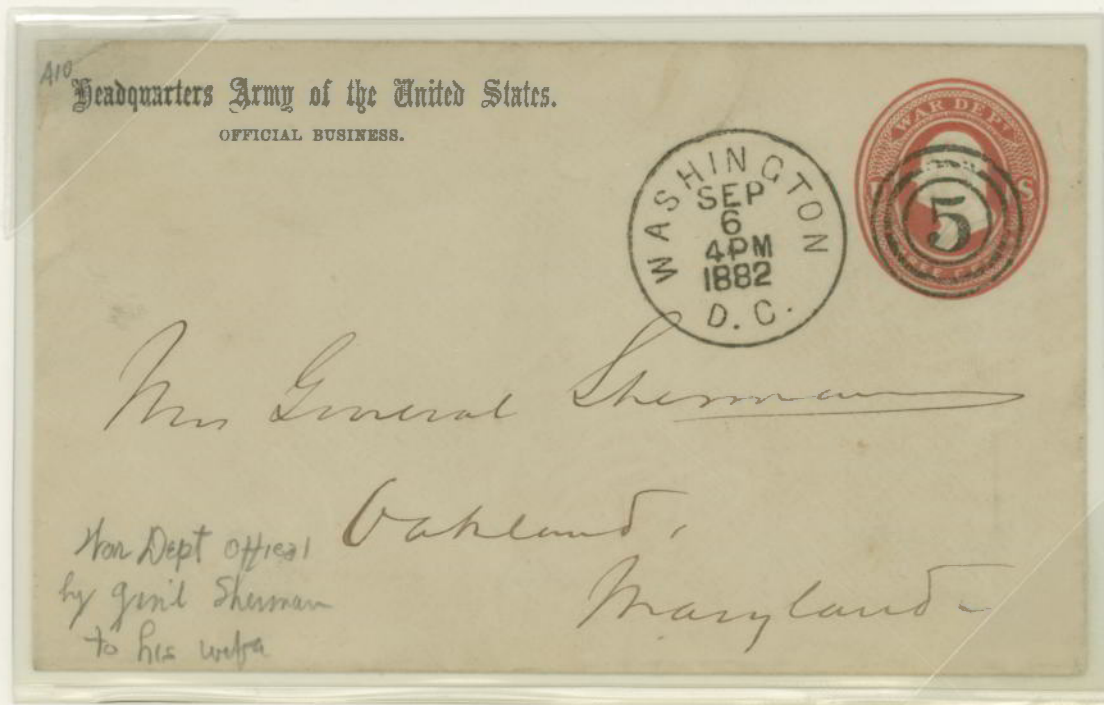
*A 25 centimes Belgium stamp paid the postage in May, 1884 to return a 3c Plimpton Acknowledgment of Publications envelope from Brussels to Washington*

## Postal Stationery Covers from Sherman's Headquarters to His Family

Most of the small number of surviving Sherman covers from this period are stamped envelopes with a Headquarters corner card. The General was not adverse to using them to mail personal letters.



Cover (probably 1879) to Sherman's youngest of eight children, born in 1867. The handwriting is Mrs Sherman's--- who evidently had access to her husband's official stationery

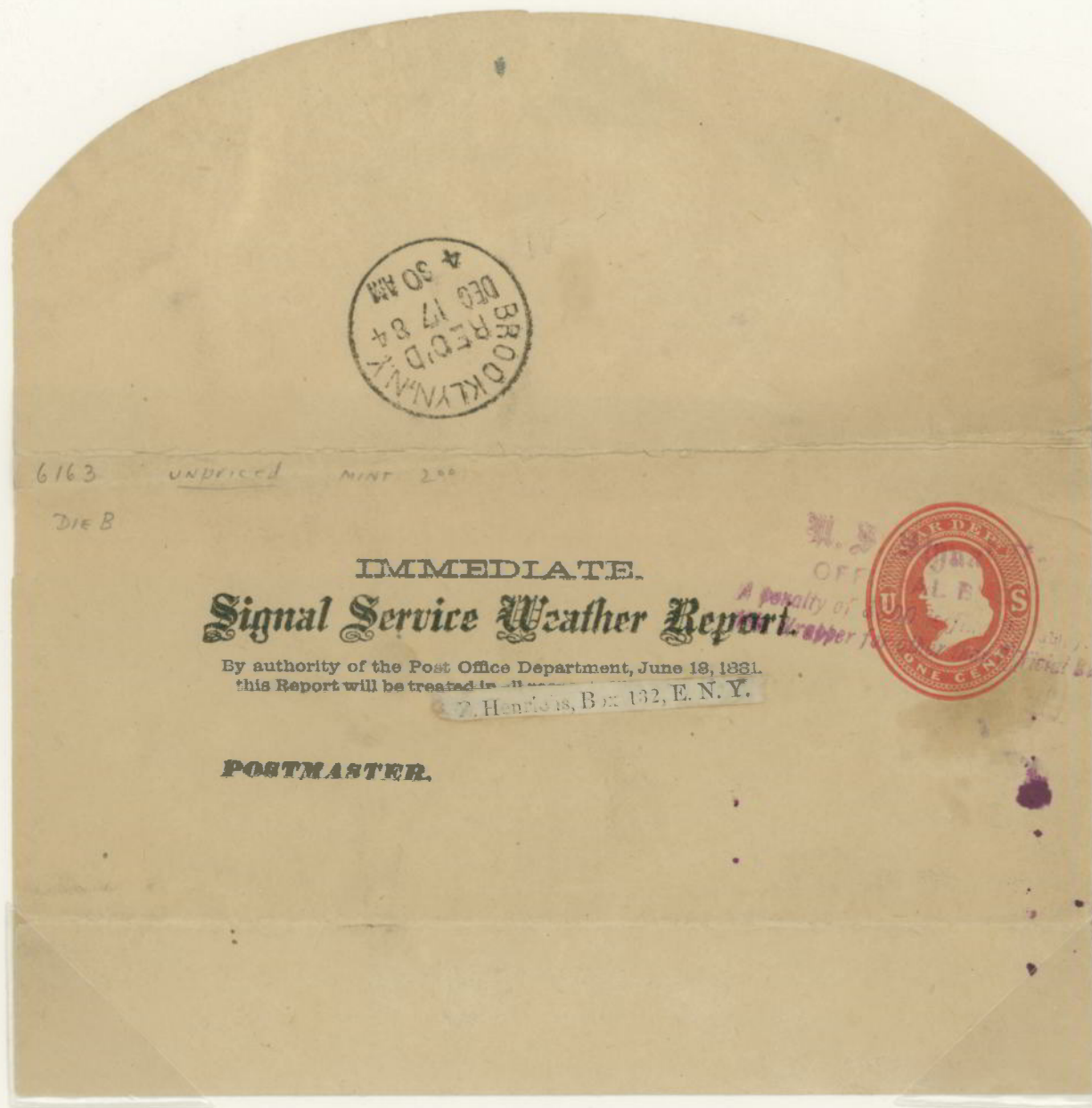


1882 cover, addressed in Sherman's hand, to his wife Ellen, who spent the Summer months in the relative coolness of the Maryland panhandle

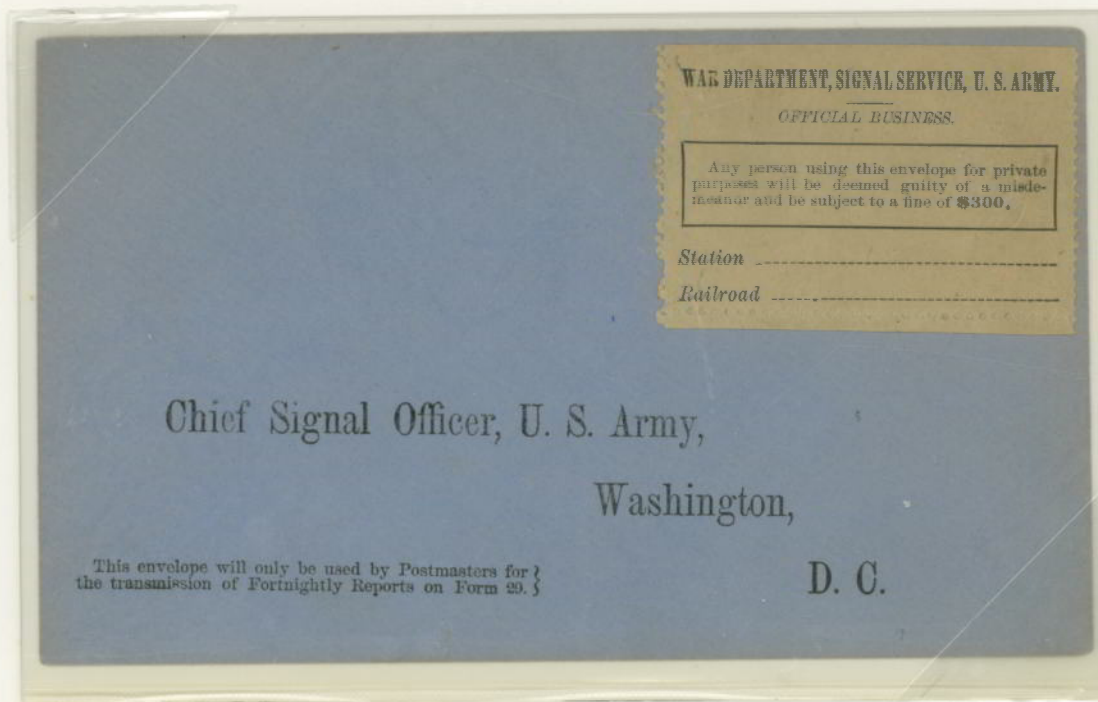


## The Transition from Indicia to Penalty Notices

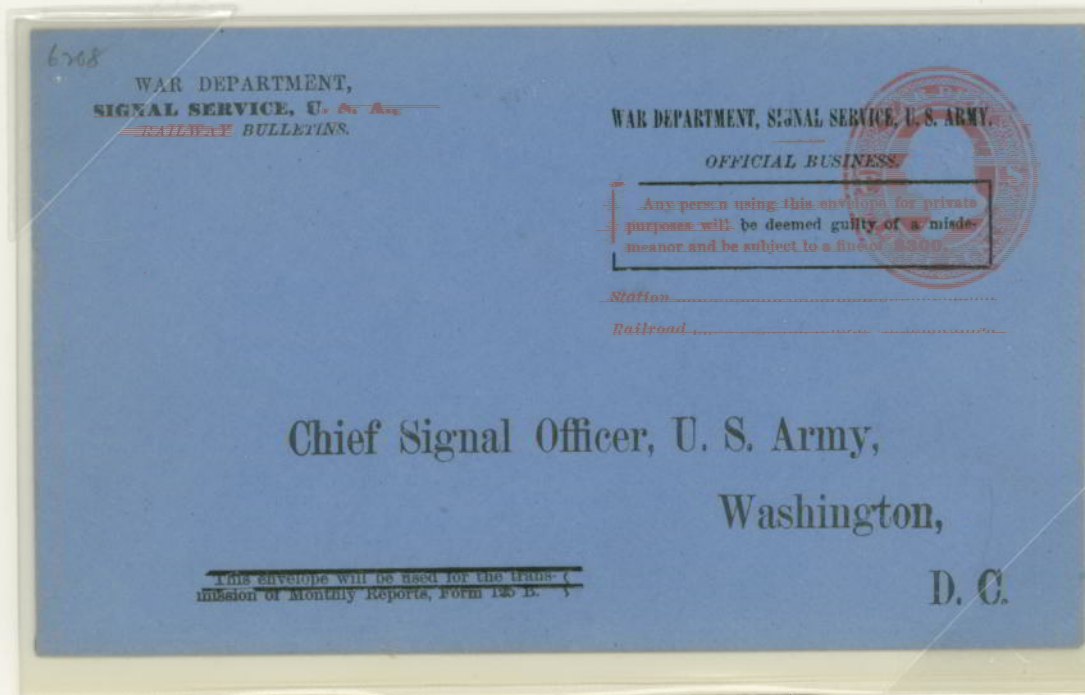
Although envelopes bearing penalty notices were authorized to replace its postal stationery as early as 1879, the War Department procrastinated, since a large stock of low-denomination stationery was on hand. More, in fact, were manufactured through early 1884.



*Locally-prepared handstamps with the penalty notice were used in a few locations to overprint the indicia of existing postal stationery. This Plimpton wrapper, with a handstamp applied by the Signal Service Office, was mailed late in 1884*



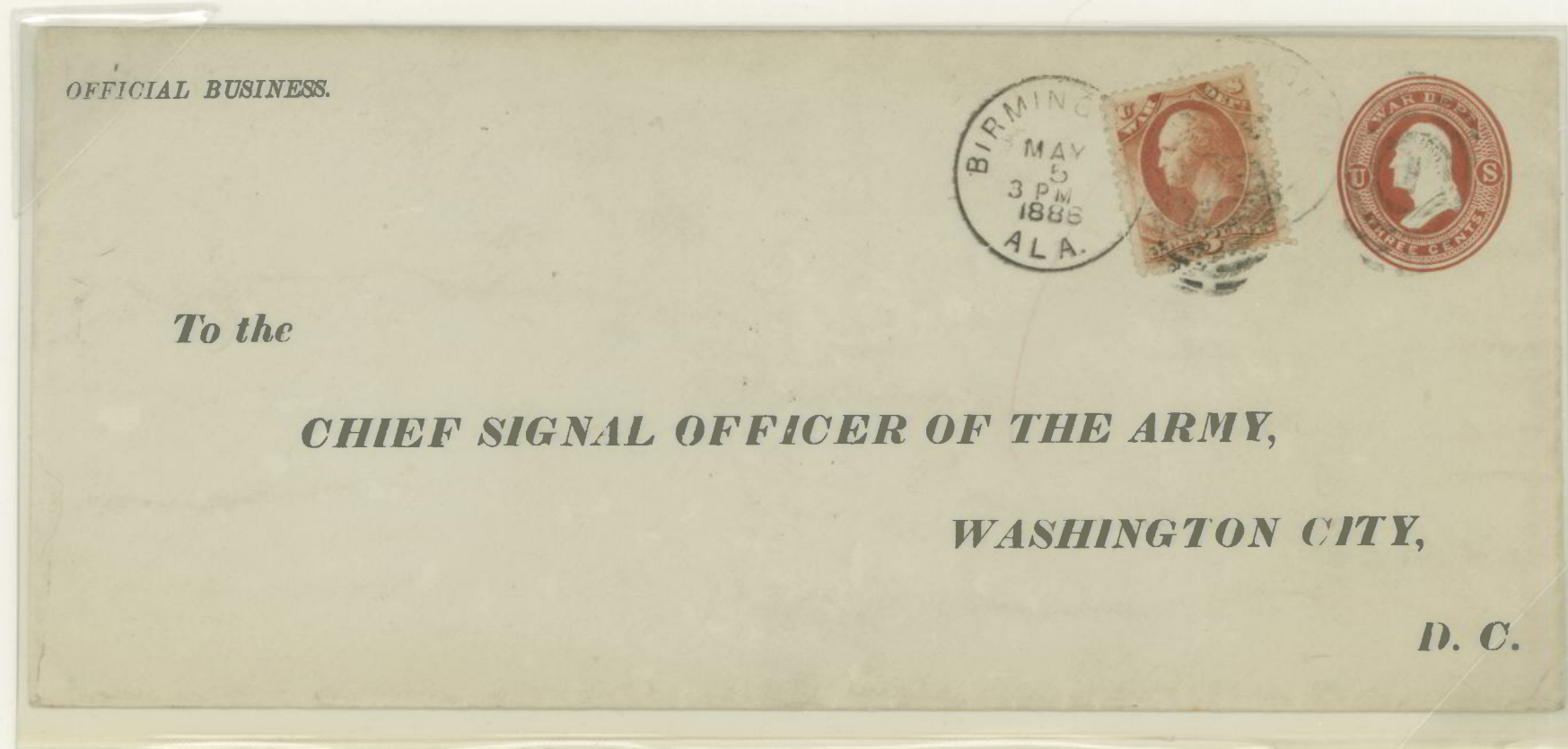
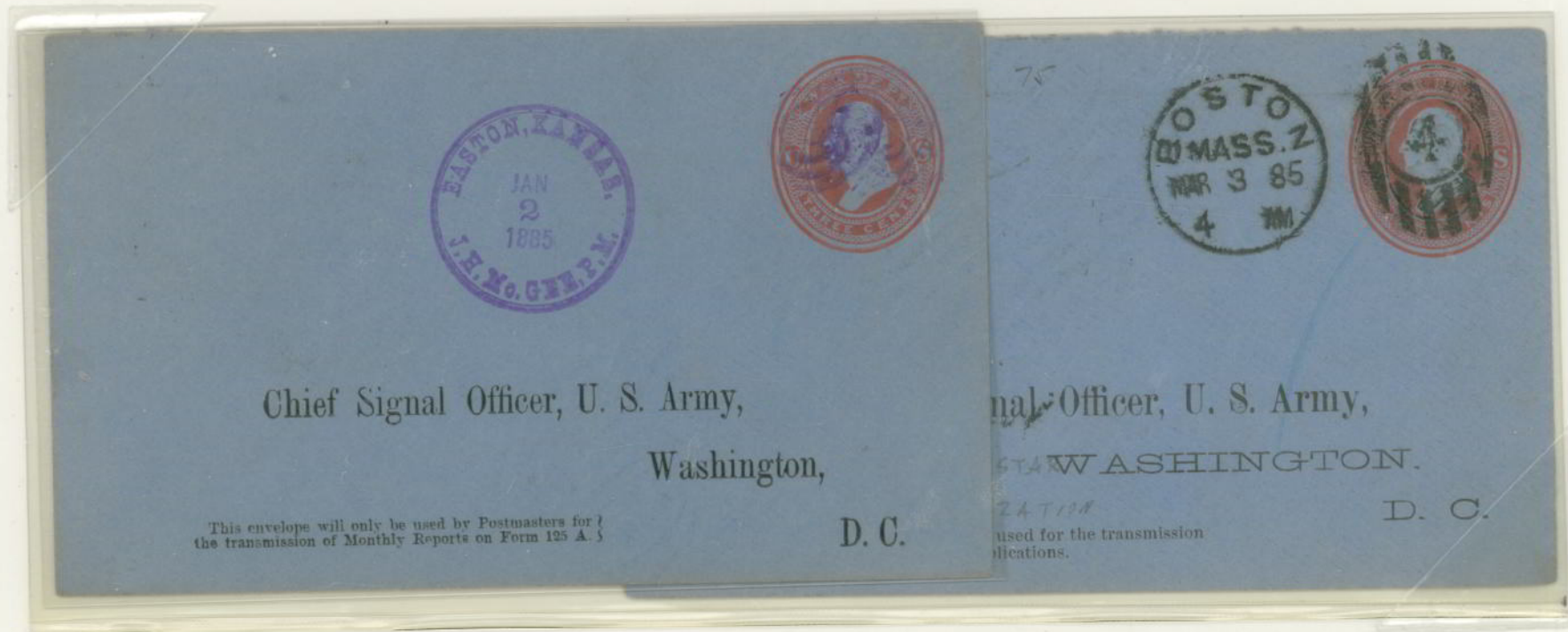
*Gummed, perforated stickers to be applied over the indicia of envelopes on hand were distributed by the Office of the Chief Signal Officer to various weather reporting stations as early as 1879. These are seen only on the small blue 3c Plimpton envelopes*



*Later, the bulk of the existing blue 3c Plimpton Signal Service postal stationery was shipped back to Washington, where it was overprinted with the penalty clause and returned to the originating stations*

## Late Usage of Postal Stationery

Correspondents continued to use obsolete preaddressed Signal Service stamped envelopes long after their validity expired on July 5, 1884. This practice evidently was tolerated by the Post Office.



*A 3c adhesive, equally obsolete, has been added to the large 3c dark red on white Reay envelope to pay for a triple-weight letter*