

Postal Markings of Waterbury, Connecticut (1865-1890)

Purpose: The purpose of this exhibit is to display handmade cancellations created by John W. Hill while he worked at the post office in Waterbury, Connecticut from 1865 to 1890.

Scope: It is estimated that 8 or fewer examples still exist on cover for approximately 75% of his designs. No attempt is made to be all inclusive.

Treatment: This exhibit is arranged in alphabetical order by subject. This exhibit has been created to show selected examples of a variety of different subjects he chose to carve.

In the early days of the United States mail there was no standard for postmarks. Post office workers were free to deface postage stamps as they wished. This is an exhibit of the postal cancellations created by John W. Hill when he worked at the post office in Waterbury, Connecticut from 1865 to 1890. He carved cancellation devices from apothecary corks he acquired from the nearby pharmacy. He carved whatever struck his fancy such as: flowers, stars, initials, numbers, leaves, rosettes and various other symbols. Sometimes he made special occasion cancellations such as a heart for Valentine's Day. Carved cork does not hold up well. When the edges broke off of a device he would discard it and carve a new one. Some devices were used for several days and then set aside for a year or more before being used again. All of his devices were lost in a fire which destroyed most of downtown Waterbury in 1902.

The most authoritative reference book on Waterbury cancellations is The Waterbury Cancellations 1865-1890 by Paul C. Rohloff (1979). His cancellation illustrations are used in this exhibit. William T. Crowe has done an exhaustive unpublished study of Waterbury cancellations. At one time his personal collection exceeded 600 covers. His census numbers are used in this exhibit.

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John W. Hill	Hearts	Shamrocks
Before 1865	Leaves	Stars
Arrowheads	Letters	Shields
Crossroads	Numbers	Purchased Devices
Geometric Designs	Objects	End of Fancy Cancellations
Grids and Grills	Rosettes	