

## Arkansas Fancy Cancels 1929-1935

This exhibit explains the appearance and use of fancy cancels in the United States between 1929 and 1936, using covers mailed in Arkansas to illustrate the story.

In 1924 the Post Office department decreed that the name of the originating post office and date mailed was not to appear on the addressee side of registered mail. This was an attempt to improve the handling of Registered Mail and to make sure patrons got the Registry Service for which they had paid. Cancels used for Registry mail following this decree were generally concentric circles. Beginning in 1928, ingenious collectors began to request that 4<sup>th</sup> class postmasters use specially designed cancels, often related to the town's name, or to a special holiday. Because the 4<sup>th</sup> class offices salaries were tied to the amount of mail cancelled at the post office, the postmasters had an incentive to cancel as much mail as possible. For the next 8 years, until the practice was finally banned by Washington, several thousand fancy cancels were created all over America, by both collectors and by postmasters.



### Black Fork, Arkansas, Sep 15, 1833

Less than 10 examples of this marking have been reported.

Arkansas had many small post offices with names that made them natural subjects for this kind of cancellation.

#### Exhibit Plan:

- Explanation of the cancel system, Proper and Improper Registration Usage. First Class usage.
- Cancels used over a period of time from the same office. Variations on a theme.
- Cancels created for a specific holiday or event.

#### Items of special interest:

- **Bear Arkansas side view** – one of two examples seen by the exhibitor
- **Usage of fancy cancels on postal stationary and postal cards**, which are unusual
- **Only example of Arkansas fancy cancel used on an airmail letter** seen by the exhibitor.



# Registration usage is the correct purpose for these cancels

(Bear), October 19, 1929  
Three quarters view of a Bear from behind.

This is the correct usage of these cancels, with only the cancel, plus the registration marking on the face of the cover. Note that in October, 1929, only 34 registered letters (Registered No.) had been sent from Bear in the proceeding 10 months.



Bear, April 25, 1931

This is a registered cover, but also shows the town name on the front, which violates the Post Office Regulations for registered mail. Use of a single 17 cent stamp to pay the registration fee is very uncommon on fancy cancel covers.



Note Registered No 68 by April 1931. May reflect increased use of the fancy cancels, since Bear was still a 4<sup>th</sup> class post office



First Class uses were cheaper but did not show intended registry purpose.

Bear, March 9, 1930 → Bridgeport, Connecticut



Bear, January 13, 1930



Bear seen directly from the side. This is one of two examples of this marking seen by the Exhibitor



Markings used for a period of time

"56" closed well formed numerals

(Fifty Six), September 17, 1929 → Chicago, Illinois

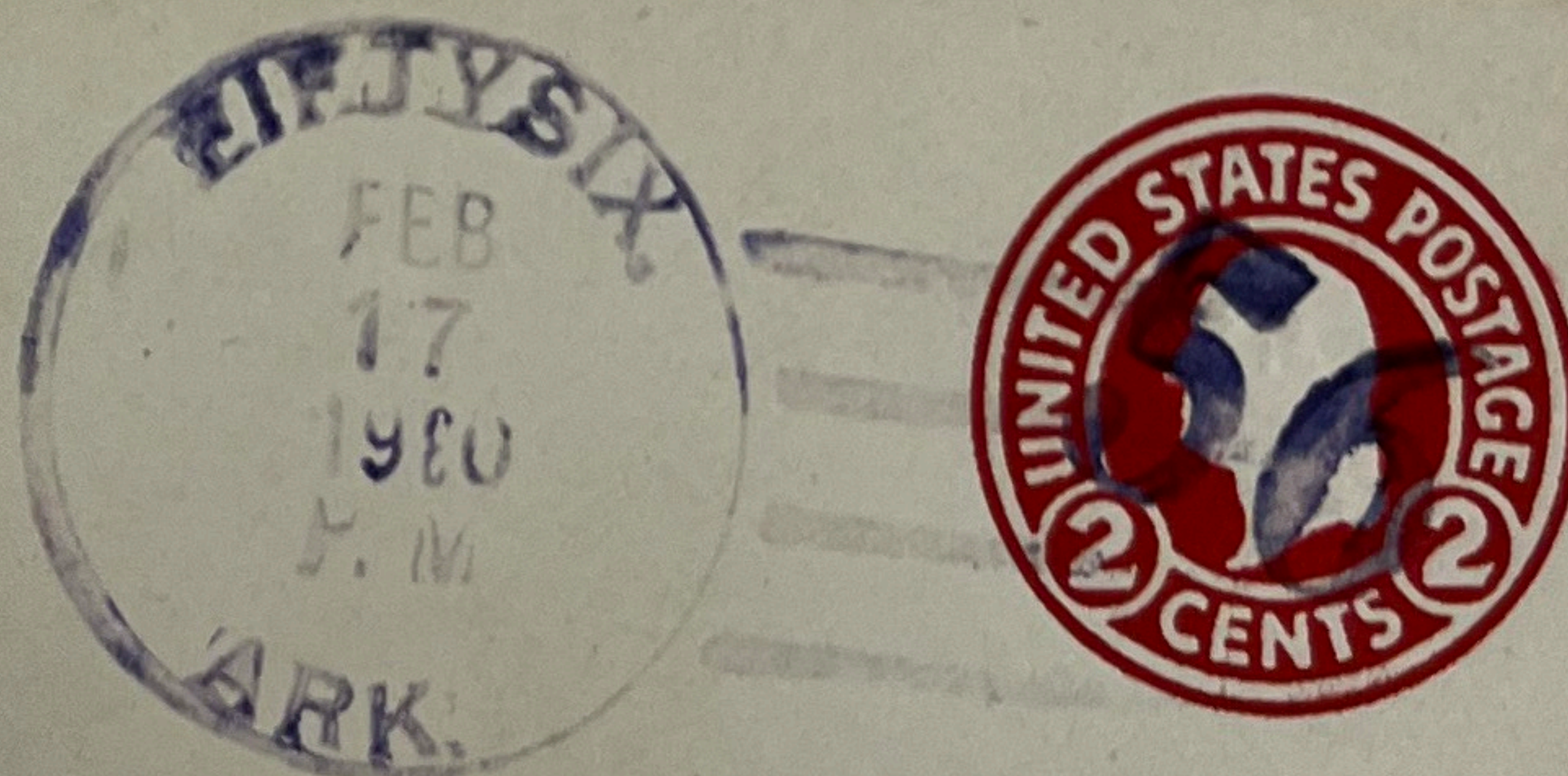
Intended usage, registered with all Post Office identification on the back. Note pair of Type II 2 cents.



First class use  
Fifty Six, June 18, 1934  
→ San Francisco,  
California



M. H. SPIES  
127 S. Water St.  
DECATUR, ILL.  
A.A.M.S. 429



Fifty Six,  
Feb 17, 1830 →  
Decatur, Illinois  
Fancy Cancel  
Usages on  
Standard  
embossed  
envelopes  
are unusual.

M. H. Spies  
127 S. Water St.  
Decatur  
Ill.



Markings used for a period of time  
"56/ARK"

Fifty Six

Fifty Six, April 27, 1930 → Indianapolis, Indiana



"56 Crude Numerals"

Fifty Six, April 28, 1934 → Atlantic City, N.J.





Markings used for a period of time  
"56 Open Numerals"  
Fifty Six, June 7, 1930



The existence of the many varieties of the "56" cancel illustrated in this exhibit, used in so short a period of time, reflects the fact that different collectors were creating these cancels and sending them to the postmaster to apply to their sent-in envelopes.

"Tom Turkey facing left"  
Turkey, November 1, 1929



Note the Low Registered No. of 18 in November 1929



Markings used for a period of time

Figure Five/Forty Four

“5 large well formed filled numeral”

Figure Five, May 26, 1933 → Chicago, IL



“44 well formed filled numerals”

Forty Four, December 28, 1929 → Chicago, Illinois

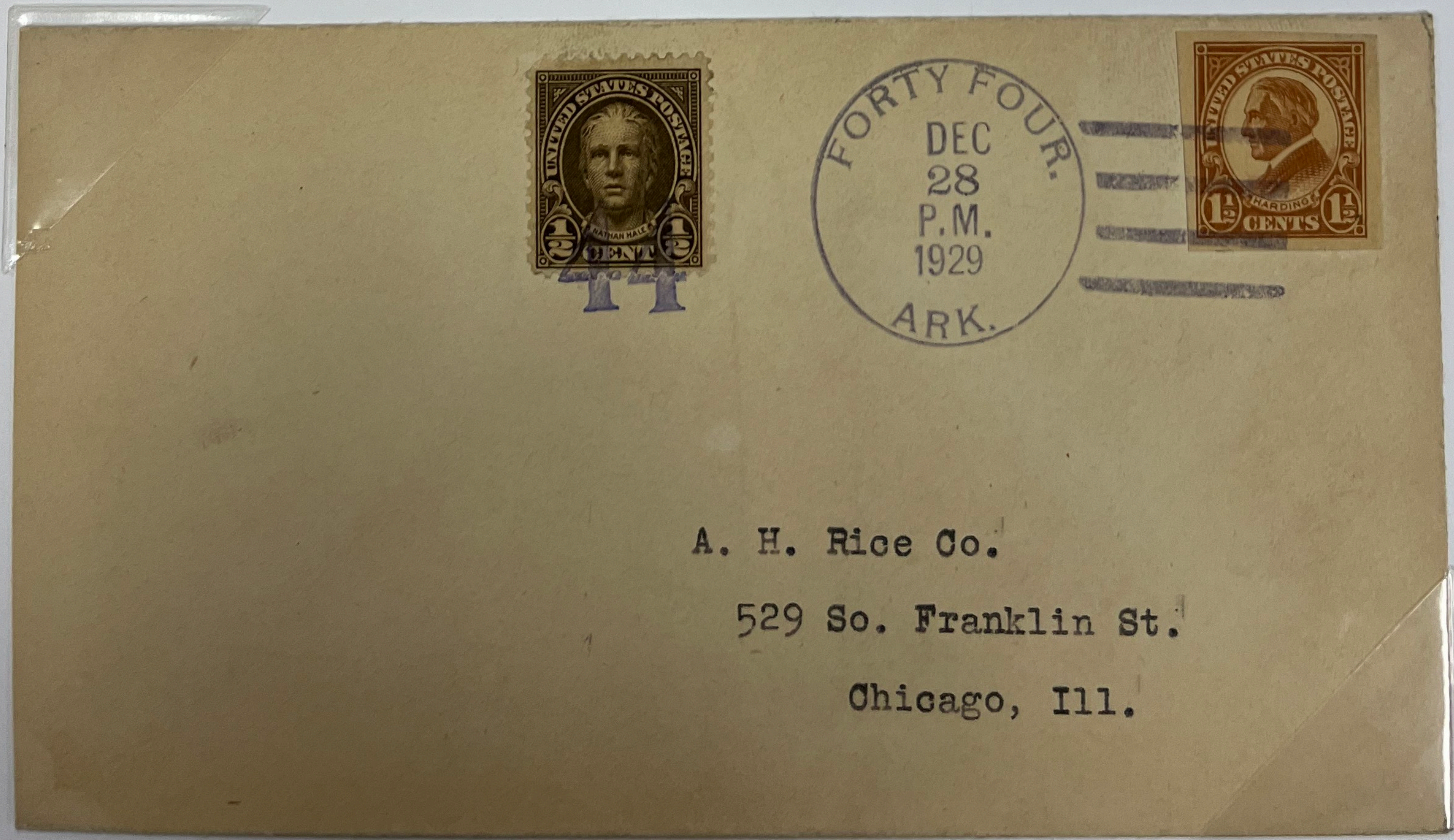




Figure Five

Markings used for a period of time

"5 Open Numeral in Serrated Circle" . 18 cents reflects 1<sup>st</sup> class increase to 3 cents + 15 cents registry fee.

Figure Five,  
May 8, 1933 →  
Atlantic City,  
New Jersey



"5 Solid figure, no circle" First Class uses.

Figure Five, May 5, 1934 → Indianapolis, Indiana

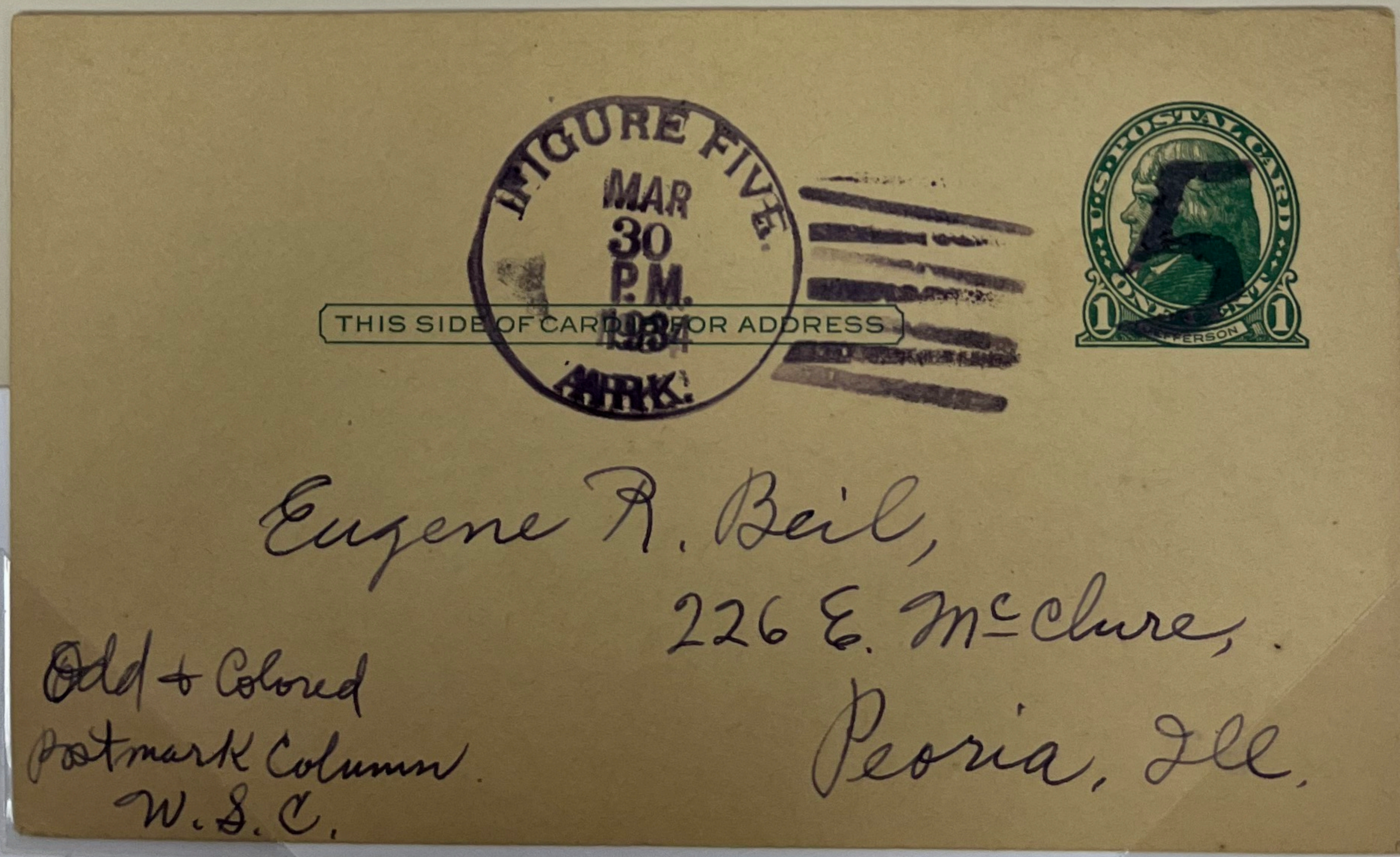
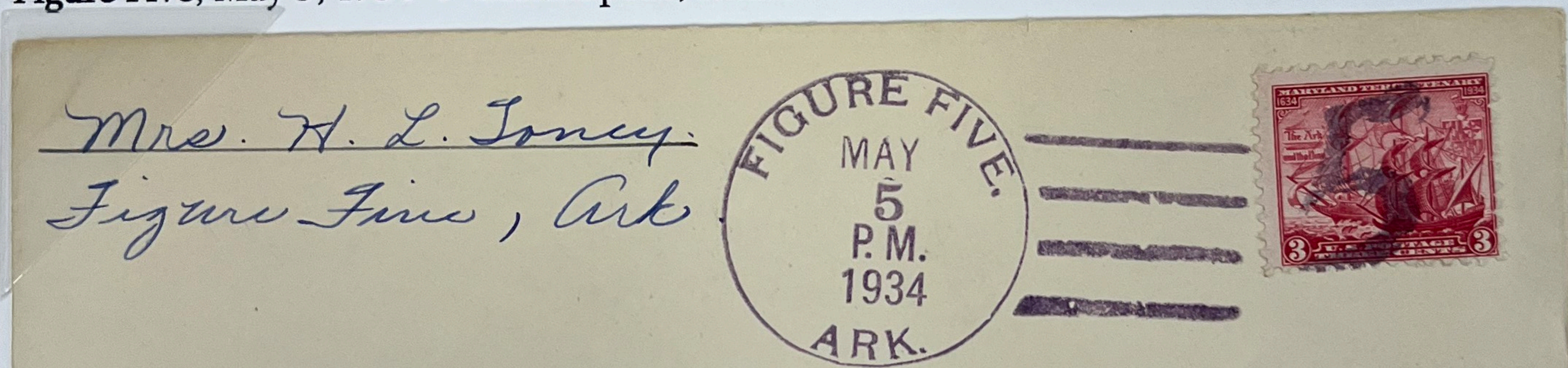


Figure Five,  
March 30, 1934 →  
Peoria, Illinois  
Usage on postcard  
is unusual. The  
postmaster got no  
revenue from this.

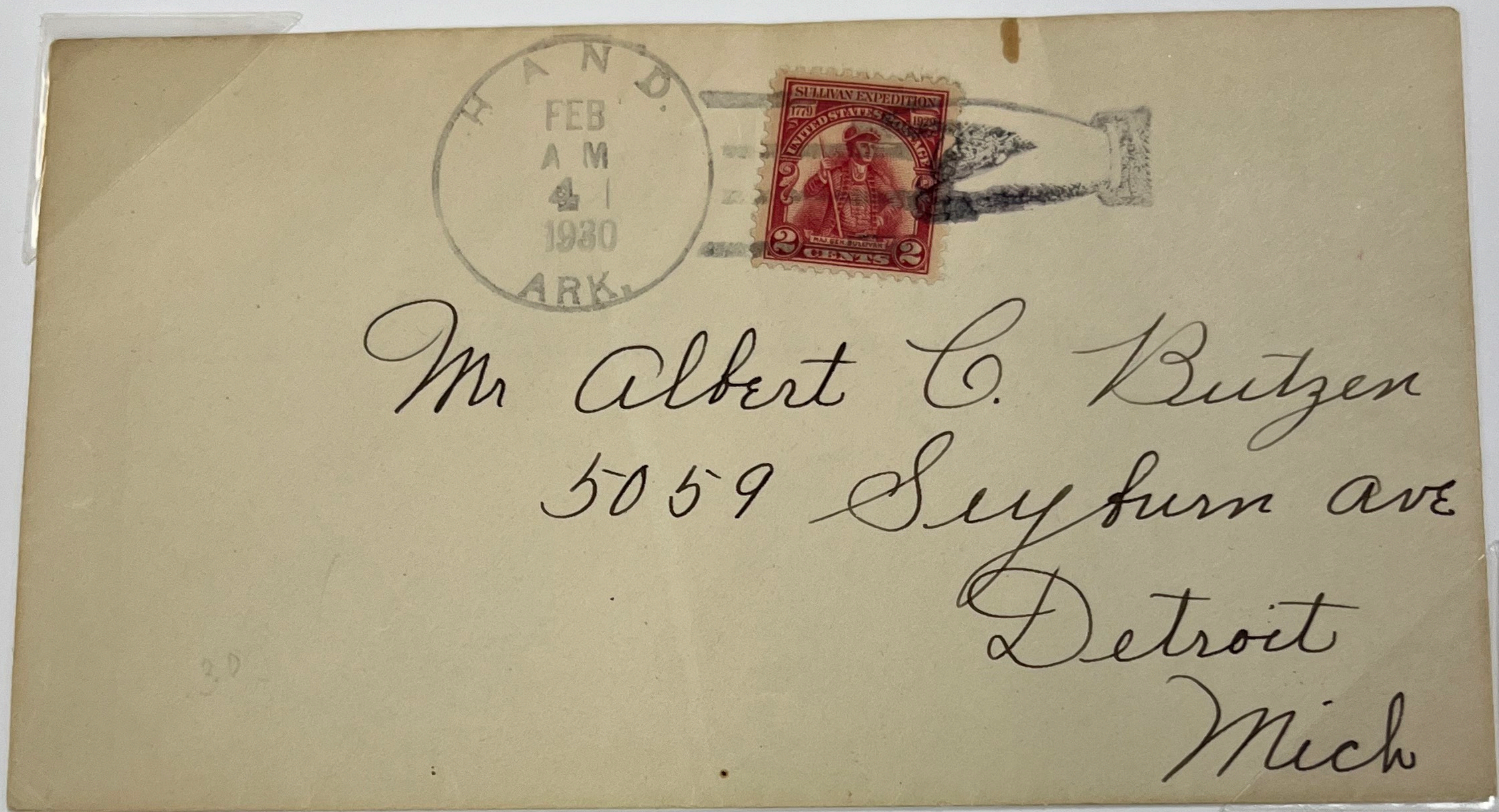


Markings used for a period of time

Hand

“Pointing Hand with Sleeve cuff”

Hand, February 4, 1930 → Detroit, Michigan



Hand, February 11, 1930 → Detroit Michigan

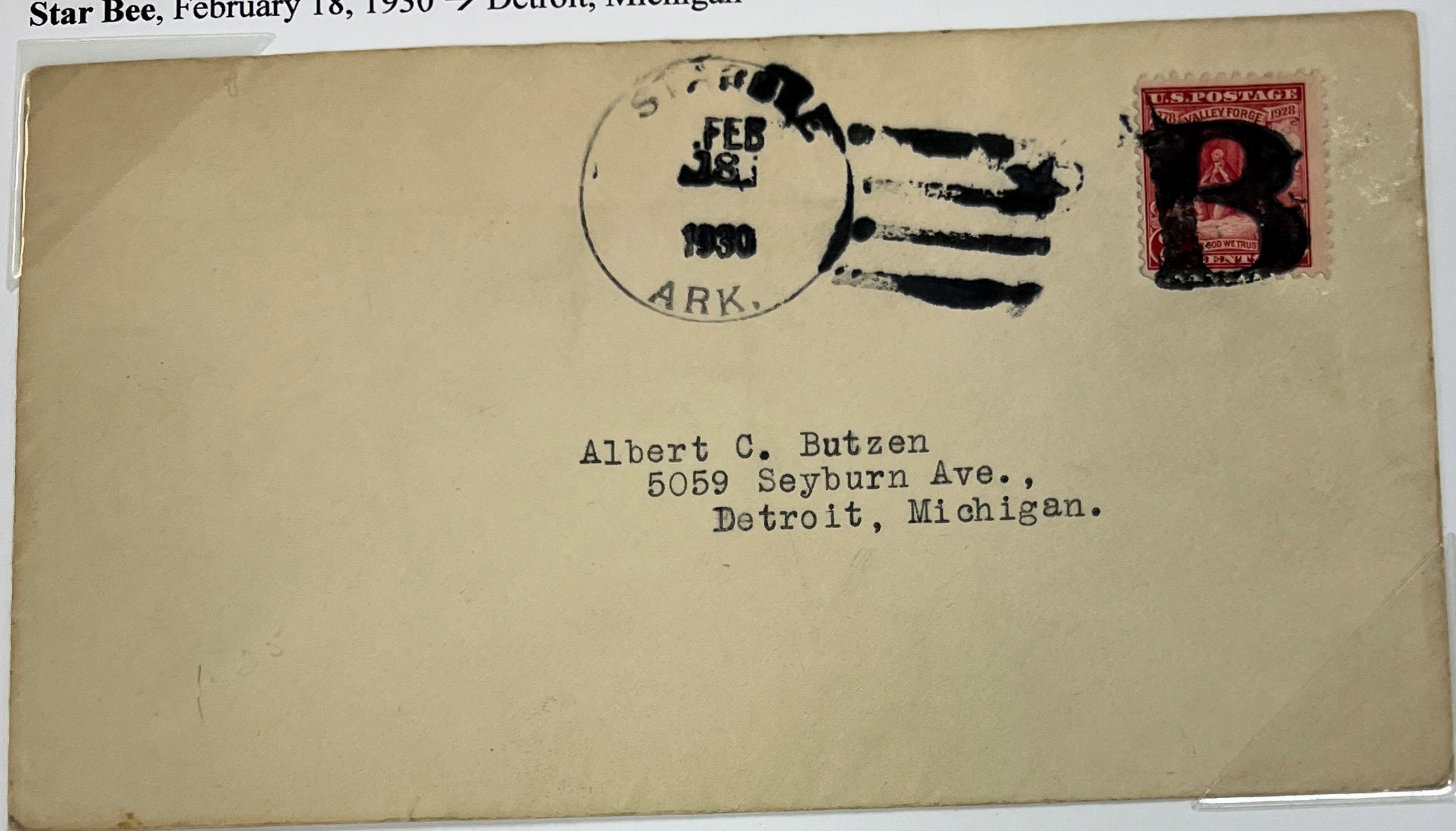




Markings used for a period of time

“Small Star Plus a large B”

Star Bee, February 18, 1930 → Detroit, Michigan



Star Bee, February 21, 1930 → Detroit, Michigan





Markings used for a period of time

Tomato

“Tomato with capital T in the center”

Tomato, December 18, 1933 → Atlantic City, New Jersey  
Purple Cancel



Tomato, December 30, 1933 → Atlantic City, New Jersey  
Blue Cancel



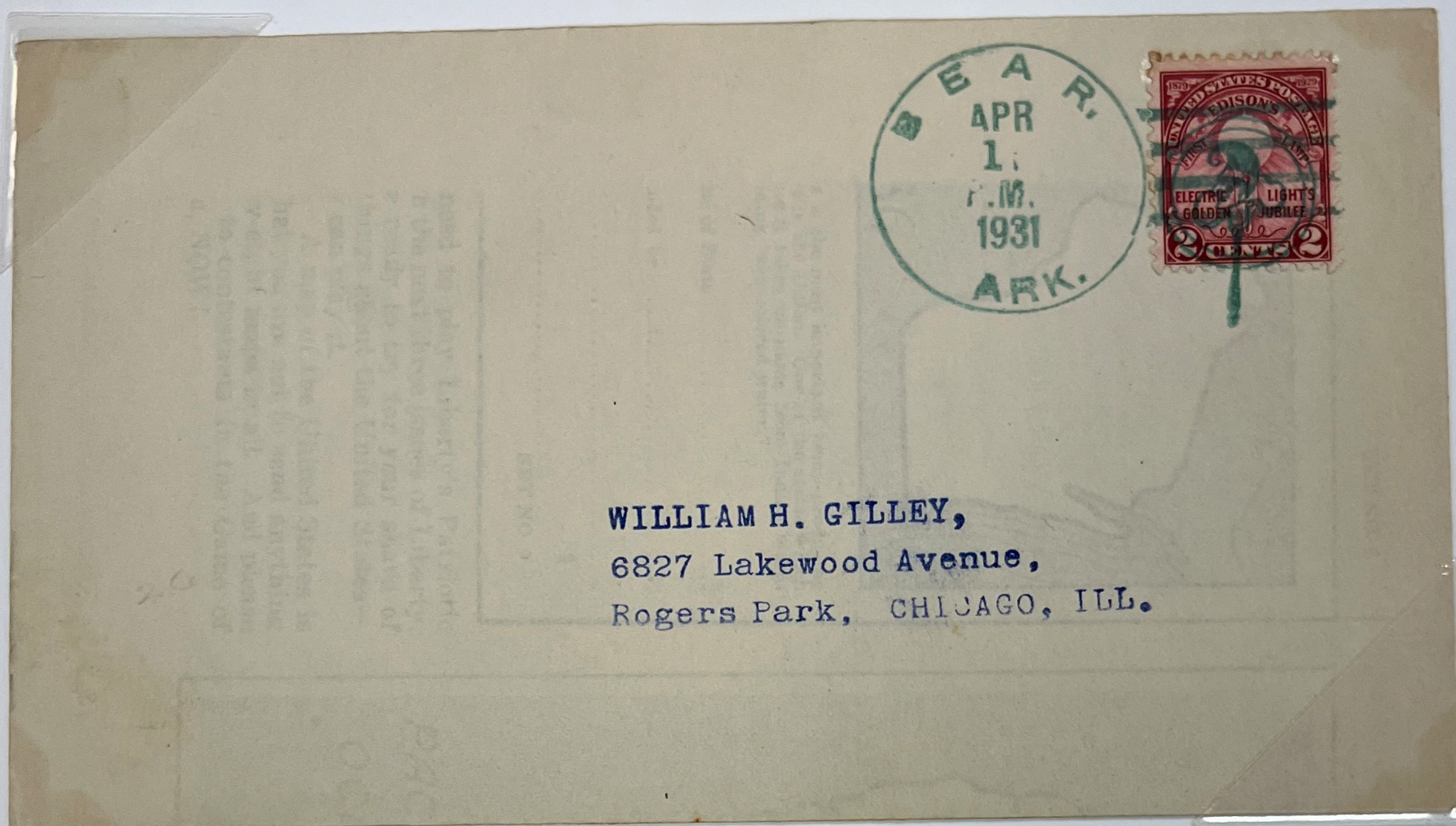


Markings used on a single day

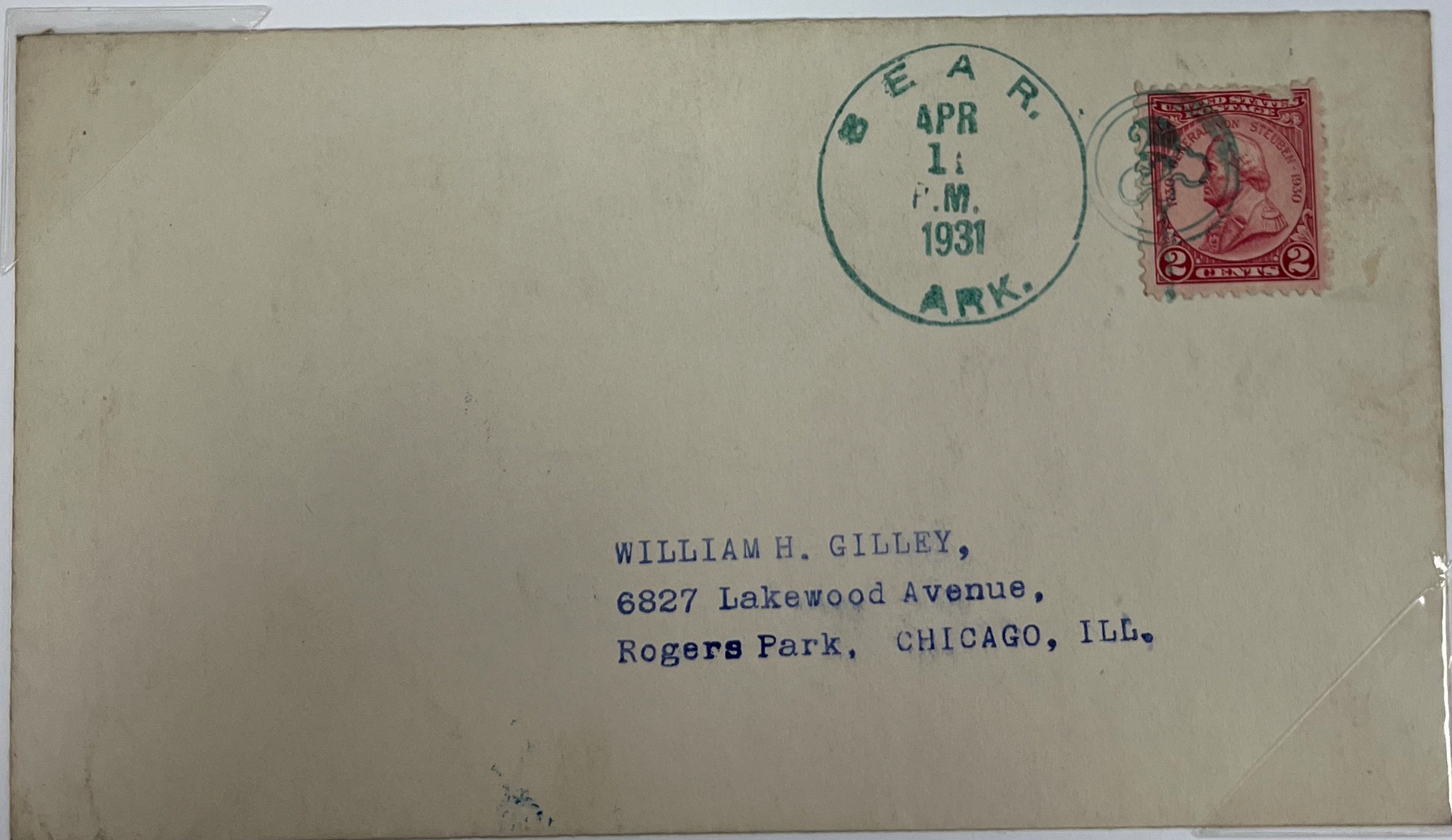
Bear, April Fools

“Fools Head under a Magnifying Glass”

Bear April 1, 1931 → Chicago, Illinois



Bear April 1, 1931 → Chicago, Illinois



The covers addressee probably sent this device to the Postmaster

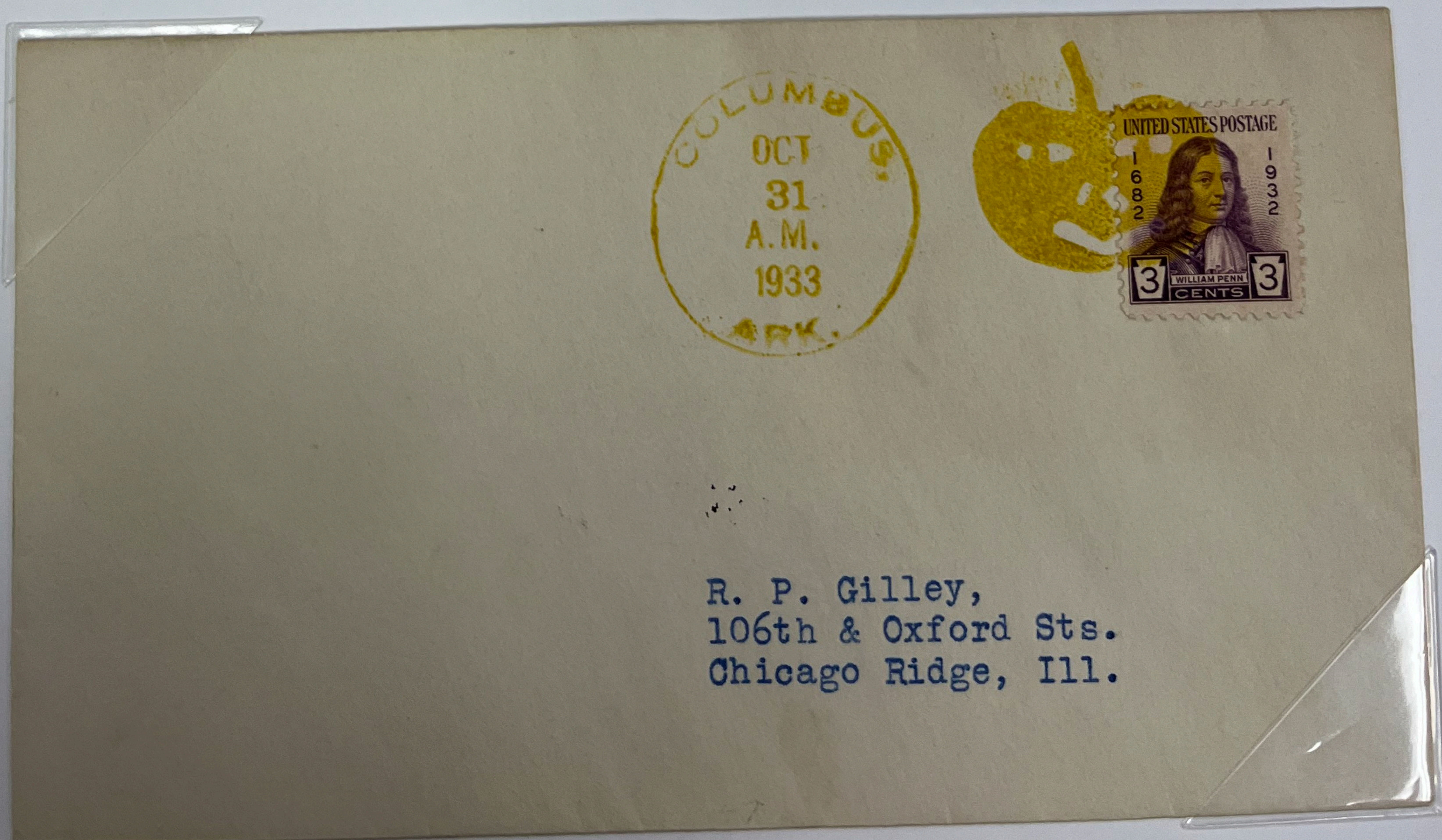


Markings used on a single day

Columbus, Halloween

“Pumpkin in Yellow”

Columbus, October 31, 1933 → Chicago, Illinois  
Sent to two different collectors



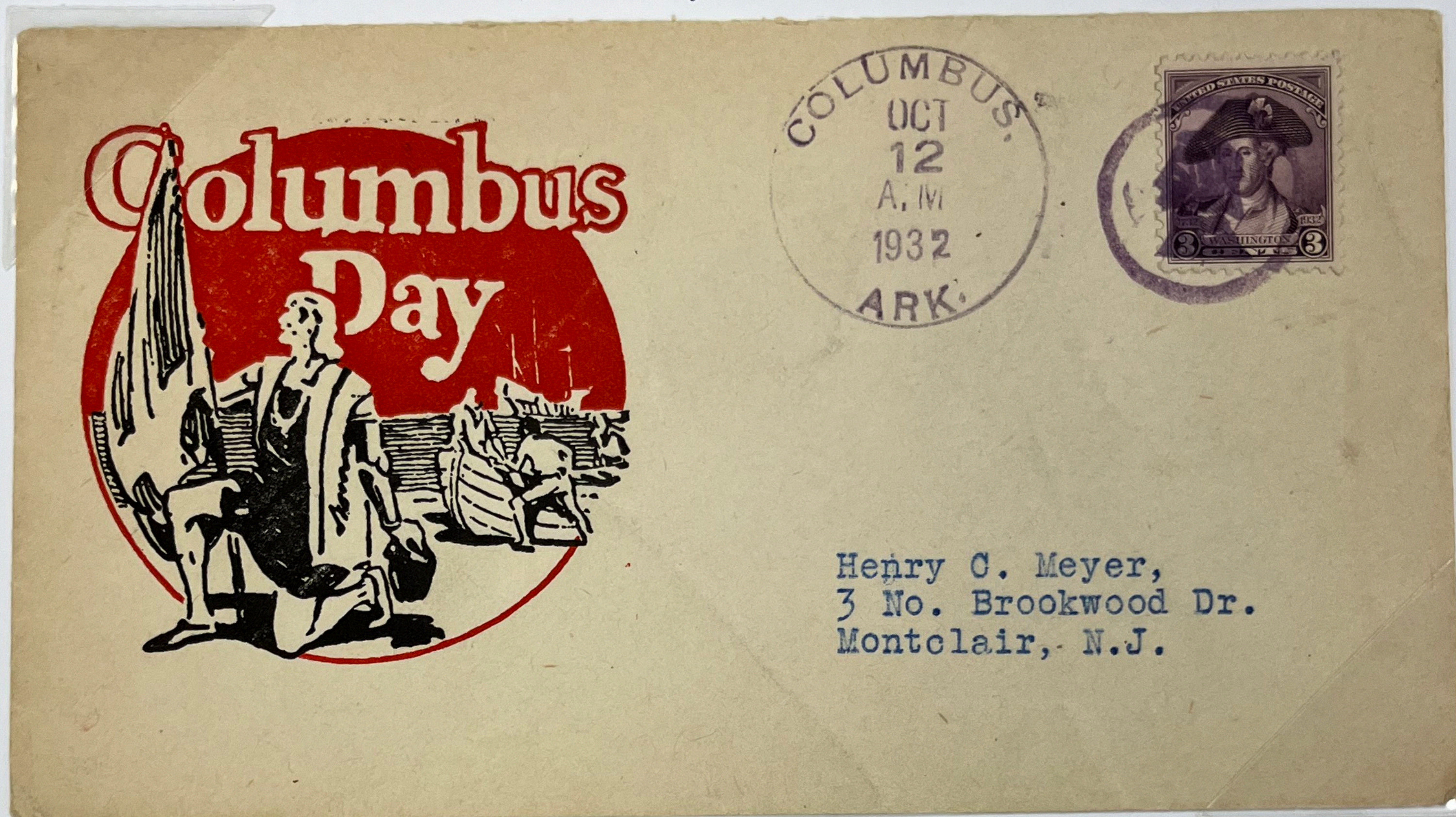


Markings used on a single day

Columbus, Columbus Day, 1932

“Columbus small head in circle”

Columbus October 12, 1932 → Montclair, New Jersey



“Columbus small head without circle”

Columbus October 12, 1932 → Grand Rapids, Michigan



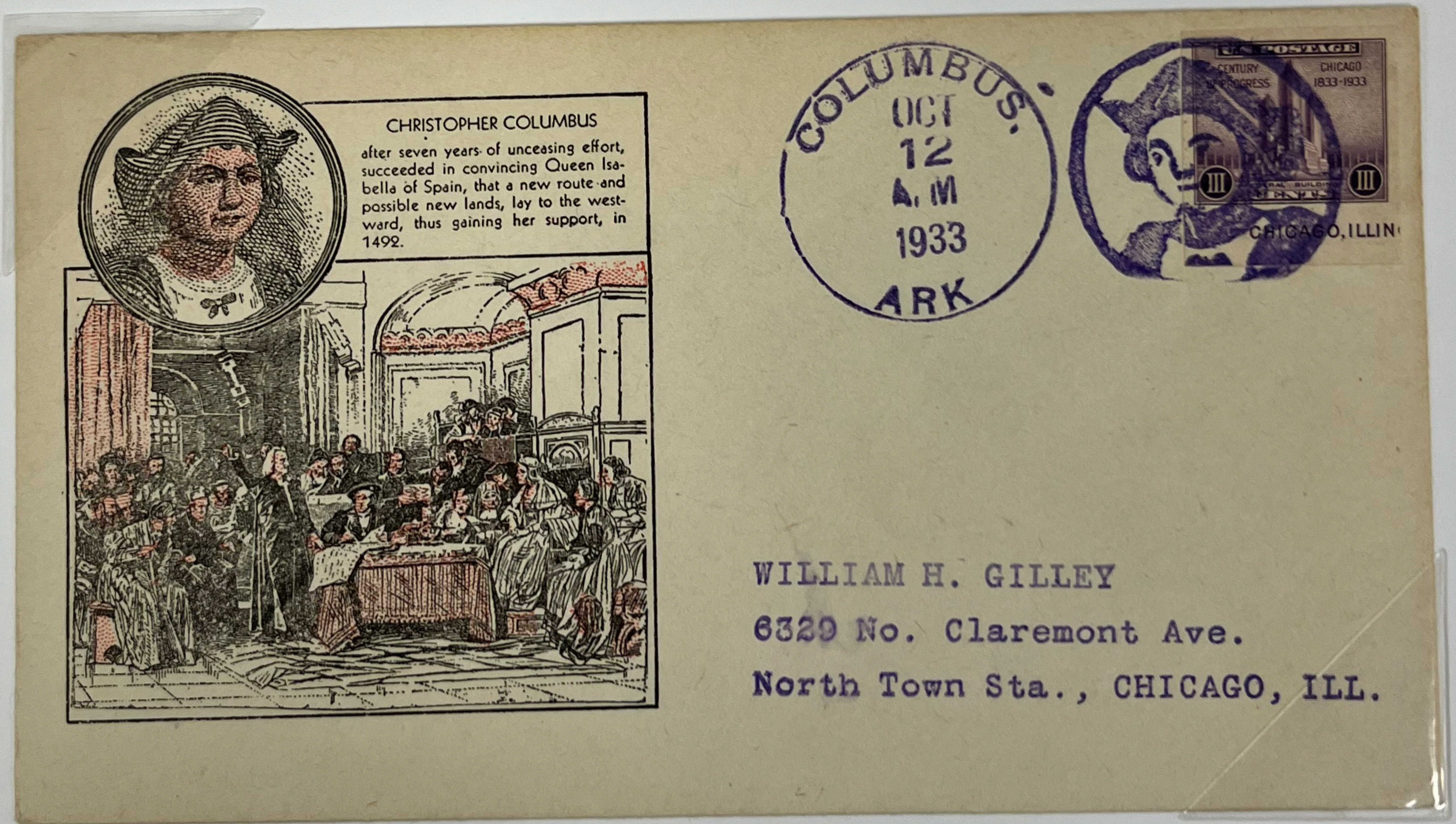


Columbus, Columbus Day, 1933

Markings used on a single day

“Columbus, Large Head in Circle”

Columbus, October 12, 1933 → Chicago, Illinois





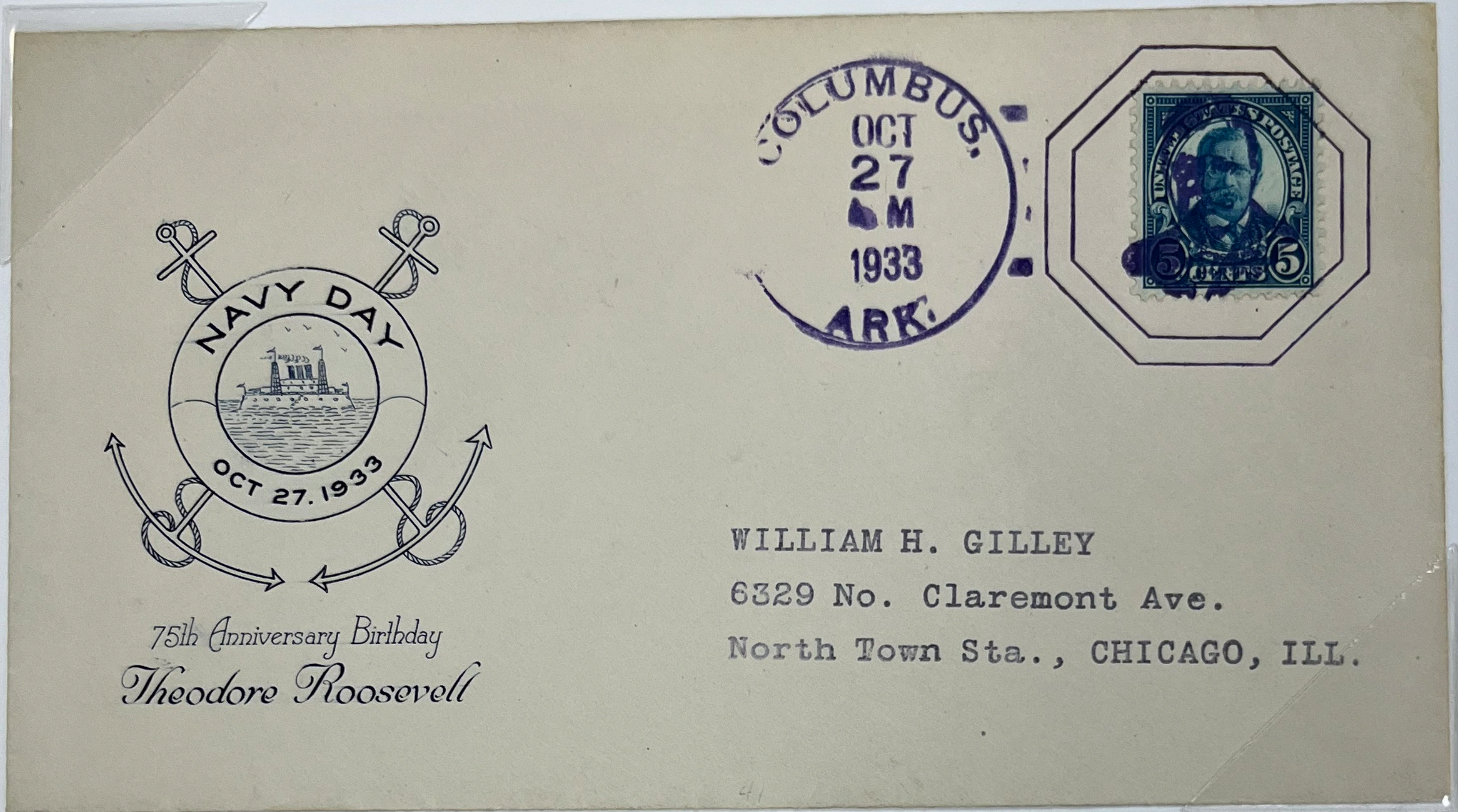
Markings used on a single day

Columbus, Navy Day/Turkey, Thanksgiving

"Theodore Roosevelt Head"

Columbus, October 27, 1933

Roosevelt had been Secretary of the Navy before becoming President



"Tom Turkey facing right"

Note this is a different cancel than the one on page 6 of the exhibit.

Turkey,  
November 28,  
1935



Note: This is the only airmail use of an Arkansas Fancy Cancel seen by the Exhibitor

In 1936 the Post Office Department banned further use of these fancy cancels