

# Is this America's Most Beautiful Cancel?

by Chris H. Bailey

Cancels on stamps are often a personal like or dislike for many collectors. Some love them, some hate them, some collectors try to acquire different styles of cancels and even collect cancels from specific towns. The beauty or ugliness of cancels are truly in the eyes of the beholder.

As for myself, I prefer stamps without cancels as many of them obscure the beauty of the stamps. Early American stamps often had hand-made cork cancels. Although interesting, they often covered much of the stamps, obliterating the image and, in my personal opinion, the beauty of the stamp. In some instances, a desired stamp is just so costly, I will have to settle for a cancelled stamp, although I try to find a well centered, lightly cancelled example. Unfortunately in some instances of the more costly stamps such as \$1 to \$5 Columbians or \$1 to \$5 Canadian Silver Jubilee are rare because few were printed or used as when 1 or 2 cents sent a letter, these high value stamps were often used on large parcels and received very heavy cancels.



Figure C1

If an uncancelled example without gum is available, I am happy to acquire it rather than a cancelled example. I am somewhat mystified by many collectors being more concerned about the back of a stamp than the front. Do I care if the gum was lost because it went through the mail and missed being cancelled or got stuck on an album page and had to be soaked off? Not really. Nor do I care if it has spent part of its life in a former collector's album and now has a light hinge scar or even the remains of a non-peelable hinge. I feel "mint, unhinged" values have been primarily created by stamp dealers to inflate prices. With today's technology, I have little doubt "mint, unhinged" has inspired some unscrupulous crooks to develop methods of removing cancels and re-gumming stamps that might not fool the experts but would fool most of us.

In spite of my general dislike of cancels, some years ago I actually purchased an early United States stamp just for its cancel [Figure C1]. The stamp is not very valuable and, in fact, not in perfect condition. But the cancel reminded me of a stained-glass window often seen in ancient cathedrals.

It the most beautiful cancel I had ever seen. Have you seen a more beautiful one?

[Editor's note: An attempt to identify the geometric cancel shown as Figure C1, resulted in a lot of near misses. Three different references pieces in my library could not identify the pattern. Most likely the cancel came from New York City – which was well known for the fancy cancels used during the later parts of the 1800s. I have serious doubts that the cancel device was made from cork, but rather from metal of some nature. The detailed nature of the cancel could not be captured with a cork device.



Figure C2

One of my specialized collections involves the Edison issues of 1929 (654-655-656). I am always on the hunt for interesting material to add to this collection. Some years ago, at a local show I found this stamp [Figure C2] with the wonderful shield cancel – for the grand sum of \$10. While this cancel like the geometric was not found in any of my reference books, I will have to go along with the note on the purchase card – attributing the cancel to Stuart, Florida. If I ever could find enough material, I would love to create a page of special cancels for this specialized collection.]

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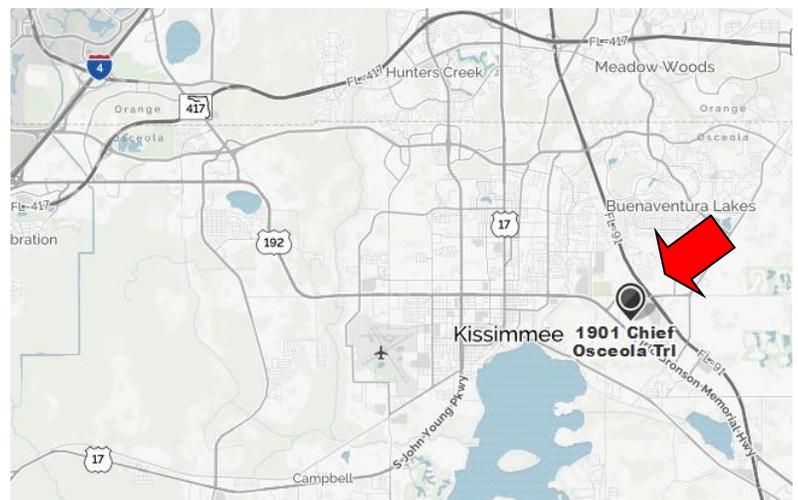
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