

## Arkansas Fancy Cancels 1929-1935

Born from a post office regulation designed to strengthen the Registered Mail system, the markings in this exhibit show the results of Postmasters and Collectors creating fanciful cancellations in the 1920's and 1930's for use from Arkansas.

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.



Turkey, Arkansas, November 1, 1929 → Chicago, Illinois "Tom Turkey facing left"

Arkansas had many small post offices with names that made them natural subjects for this kind of cancellation. A selection of these is presented here.

### 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 stationery 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 → Hartford, Connecticut.  
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, only 34 registered letters had been sent from Bear.



Bear, April 25, 1931 → Golva, Maryland

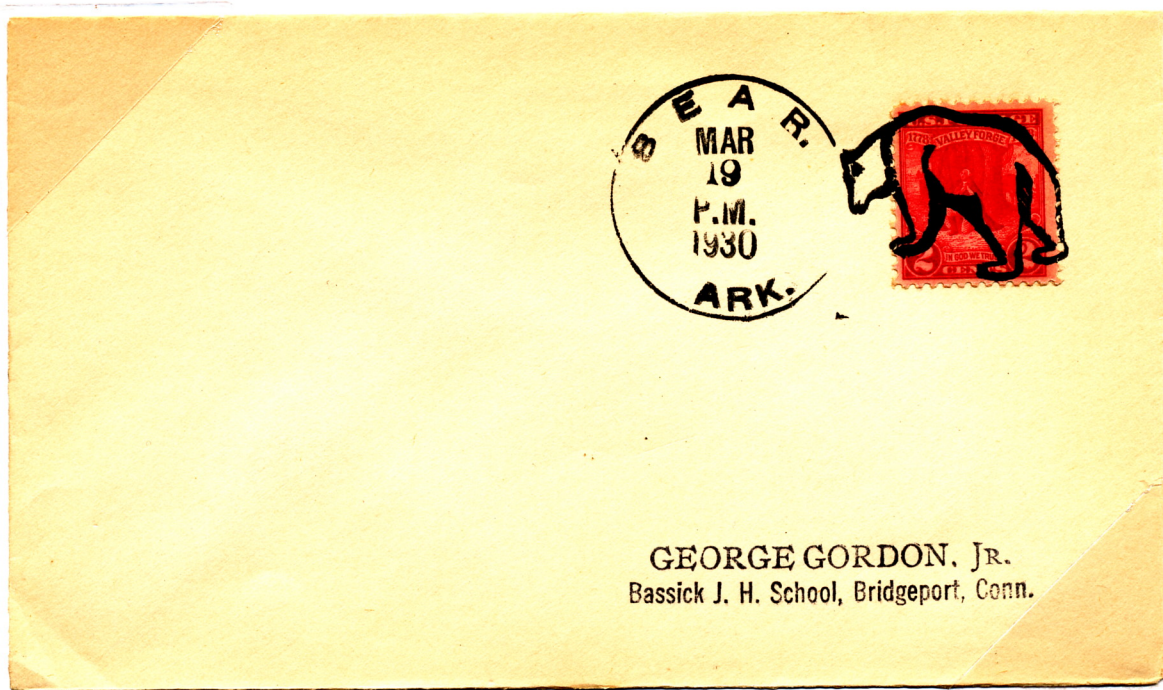
This is a registered cover, but also shows the town name on the front, which violates the Post Office Regulations for registered mail. Use of a single 17 cent stamp to pay the registration fee is very uncommon on these fancy cancel covers.





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

Fifty Six

"56" closed well formed numerals

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

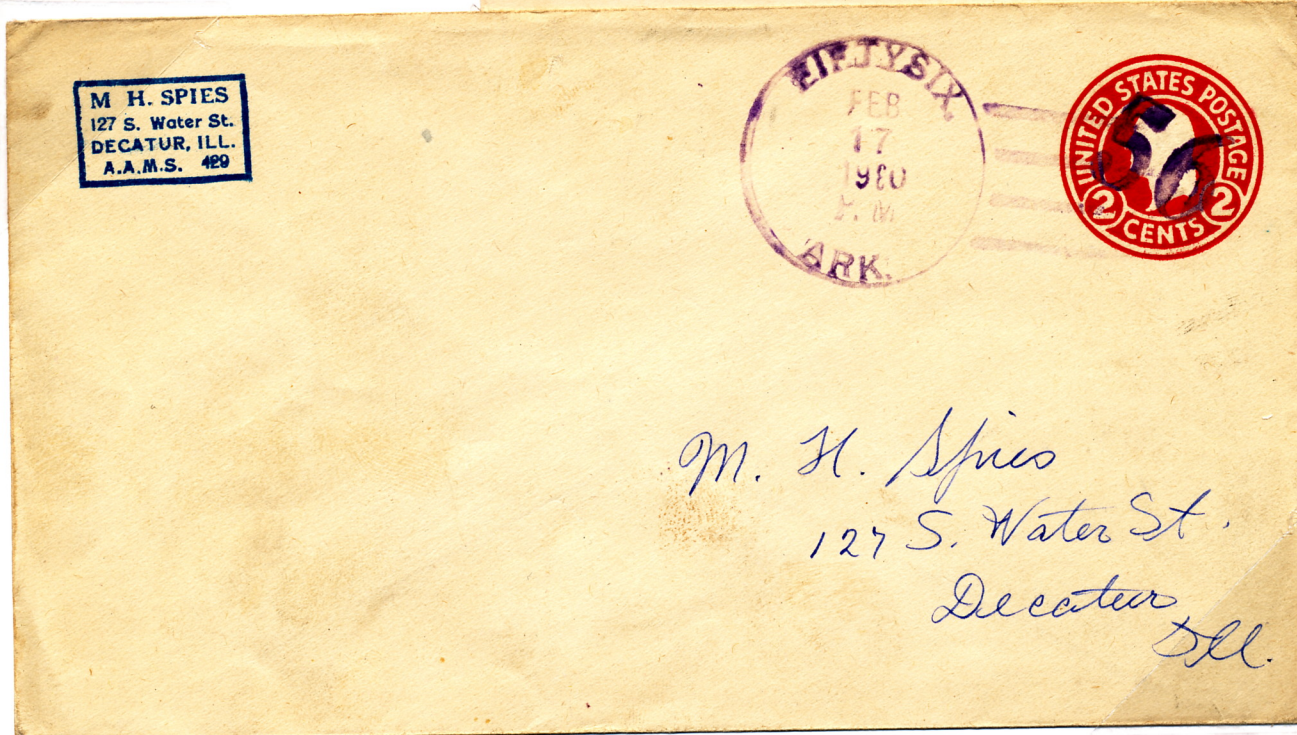
Intended usage, registered with all Post Office identification on the back. Note pair of Type II 2 cents.



First class use

Fifty Six, June 18, 1934

→ San Francisco,  
California



TANK  
ANOOGA  
SCO, CALIF.

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



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

Fifty Six, June 7, 1930 → South Bend, Indiana



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.



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

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

Figure Five/Forty Four

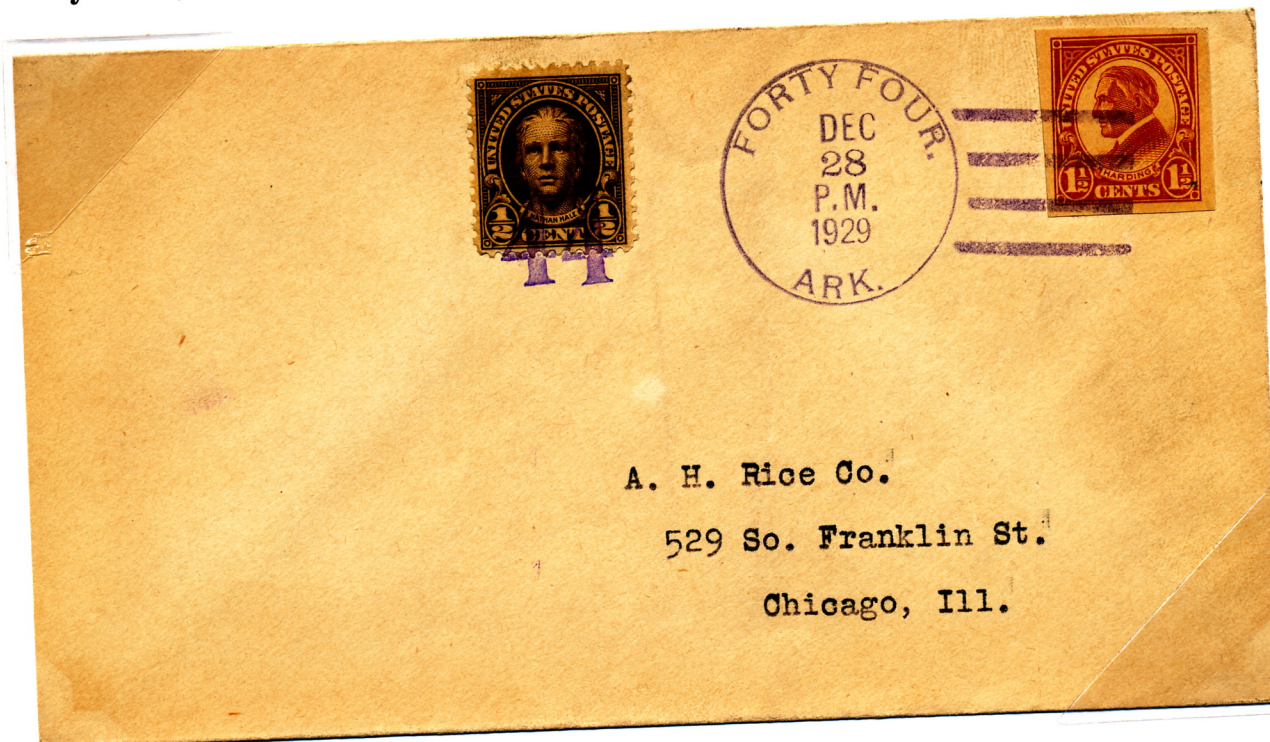
“5 large well formed filled numeral”

Figure Five, May 26, 1933 → Chicago, IL



“44 well formed filled numerals”

Forty Four, December 28, 1929 → Chicago, Illinois



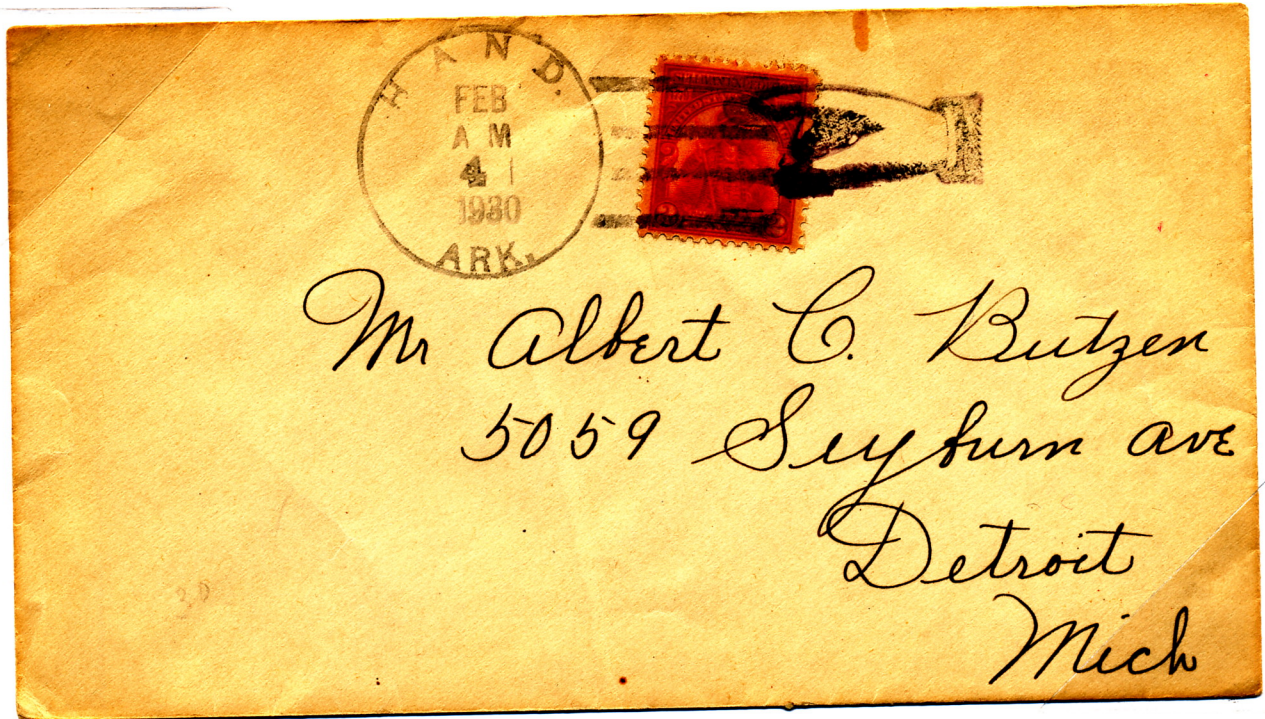


Markings used for a period of time

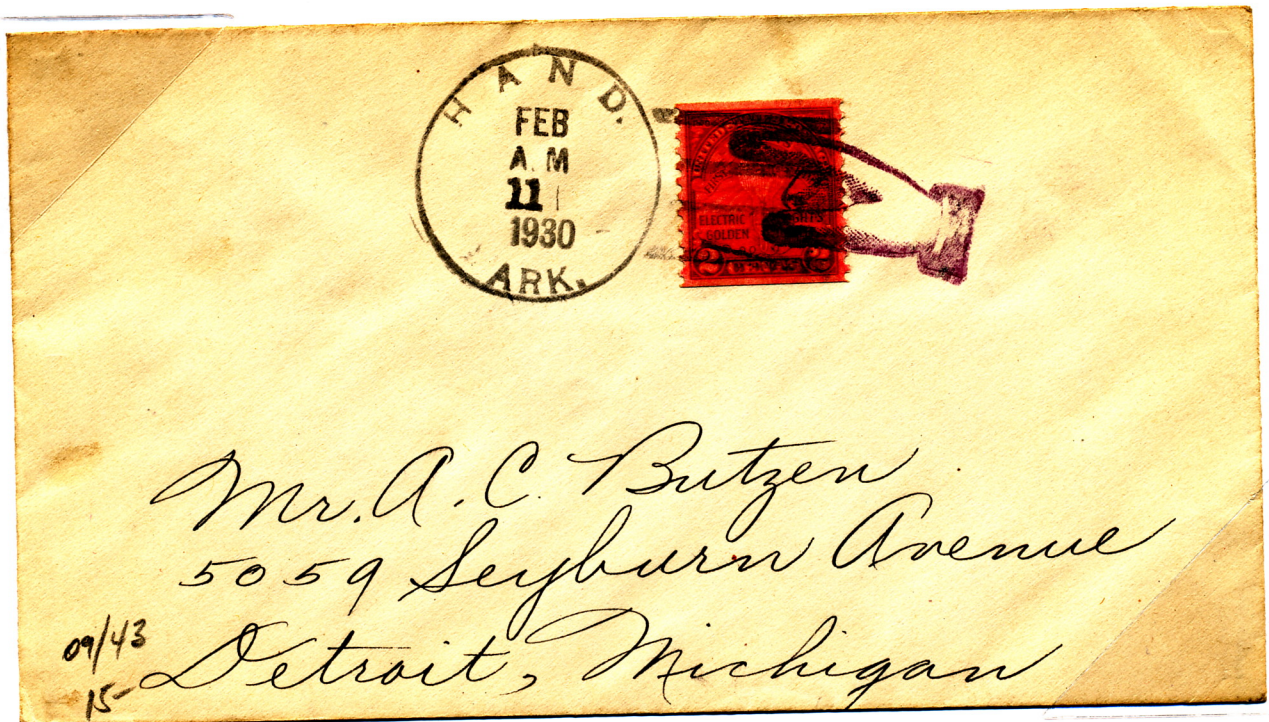
Hand

“Pointing Hand with Sleeve cuff”

Hand, February 4, 1930 → Detroit, Michigan



Hand, February 11, 1930 → Detroit Michigan





Markings used for a period of time

Starbee

“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



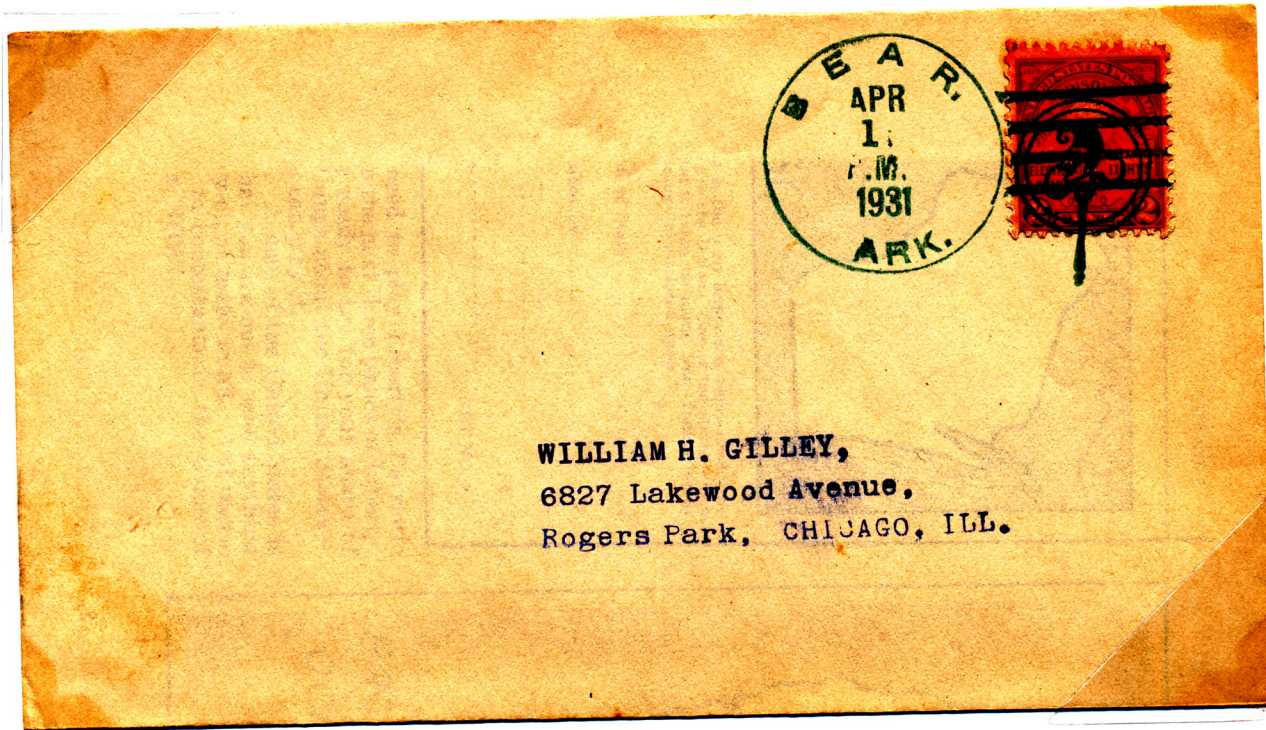


Markings used on a single day

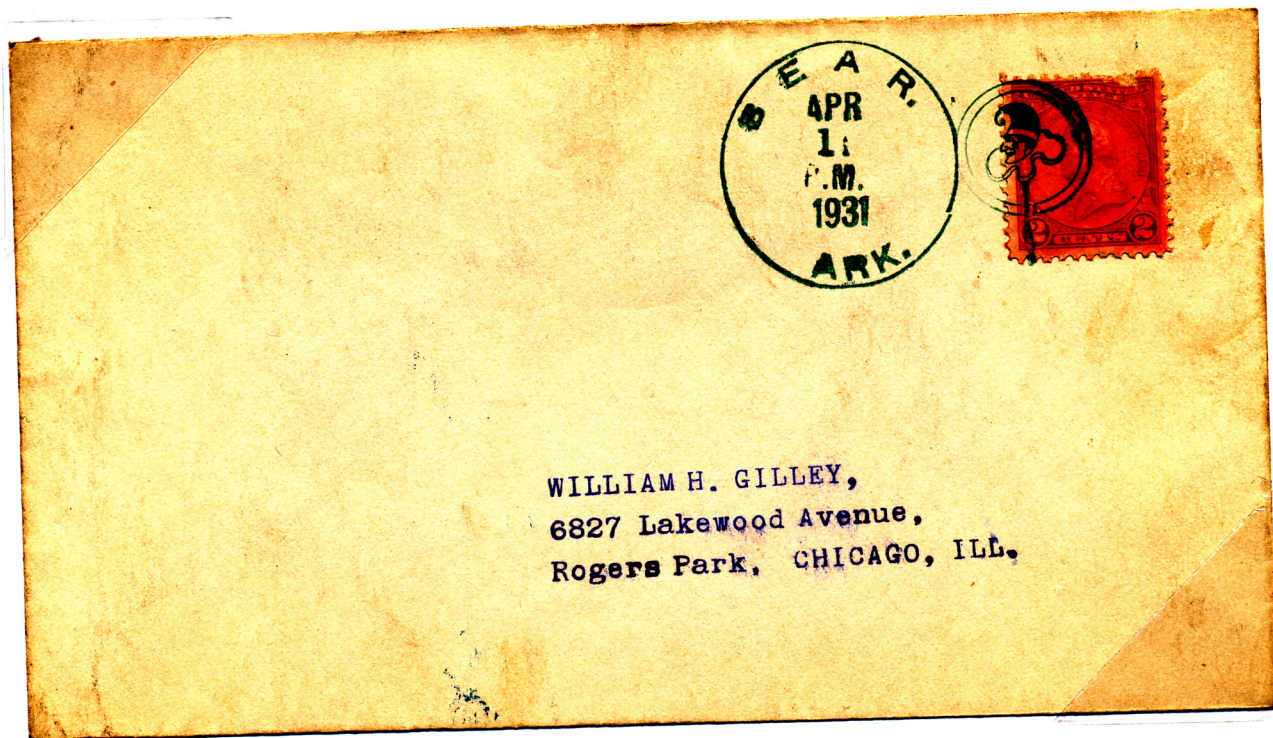
Bear, April Fools

“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

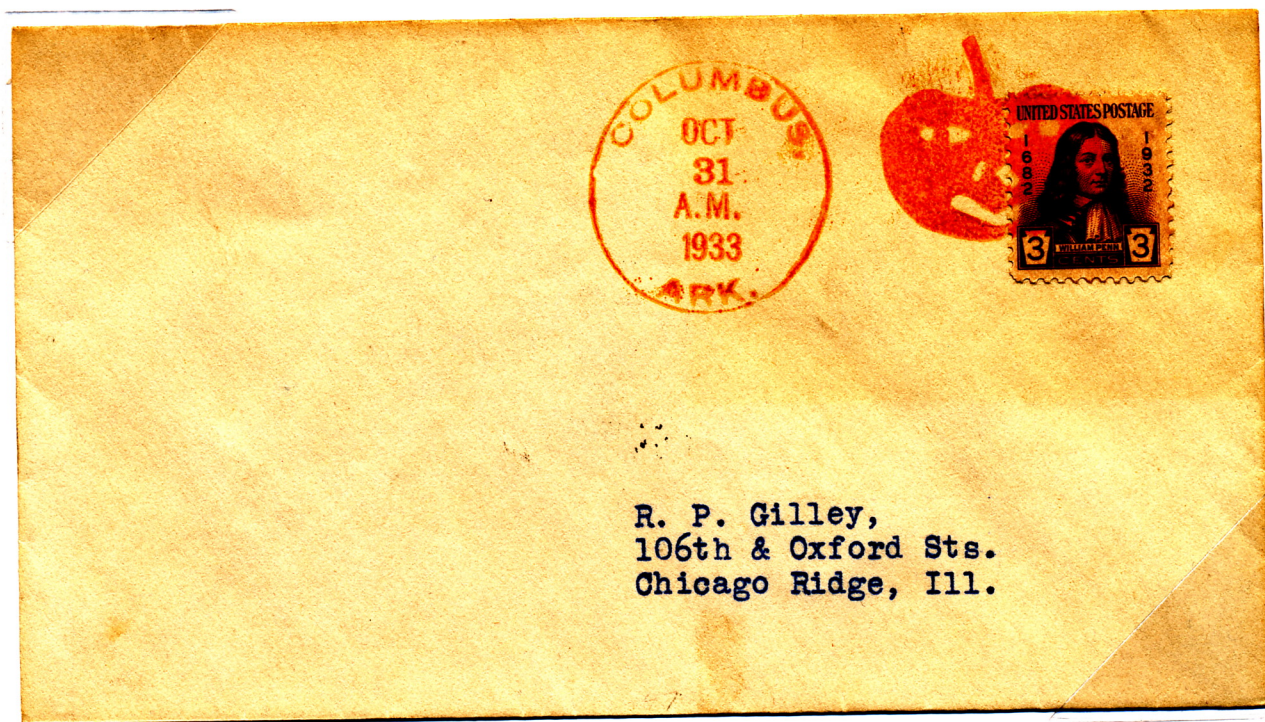


Markings used on a single day

Columbus, Halloween

“Pumpkin in Yellow”

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



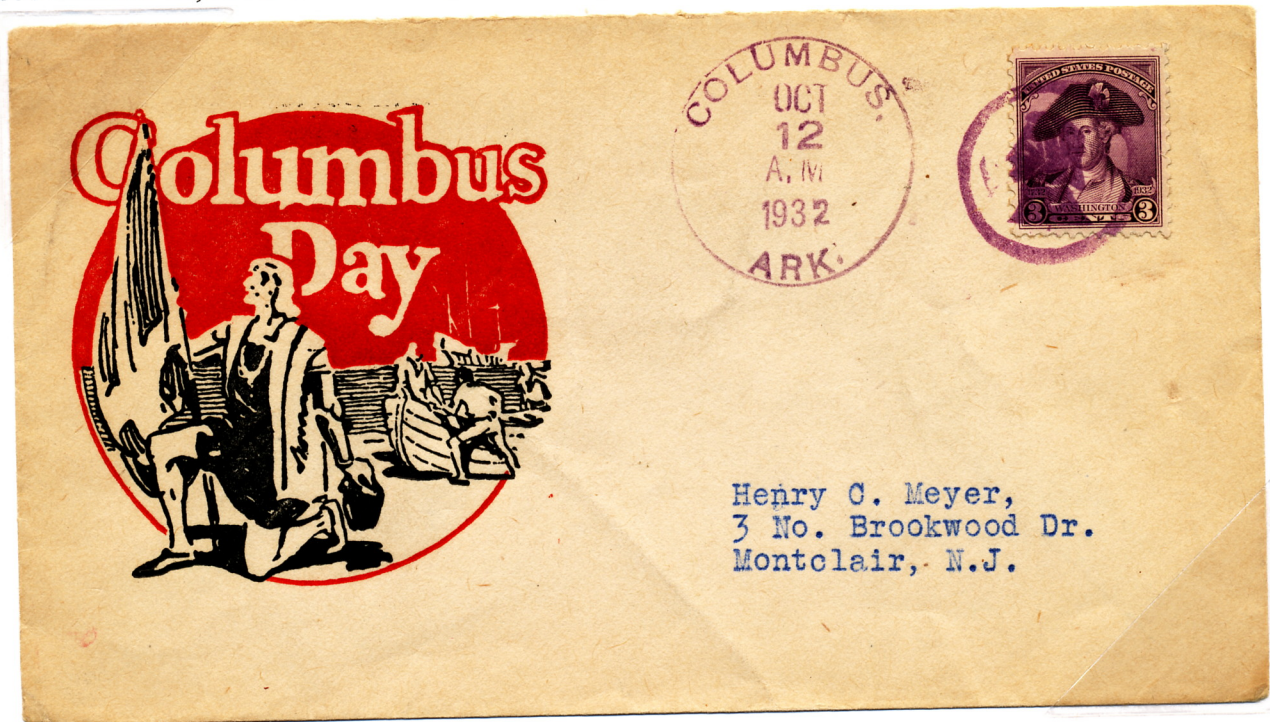


Markings used on a single day

Columbus, Columbus Day, 1932

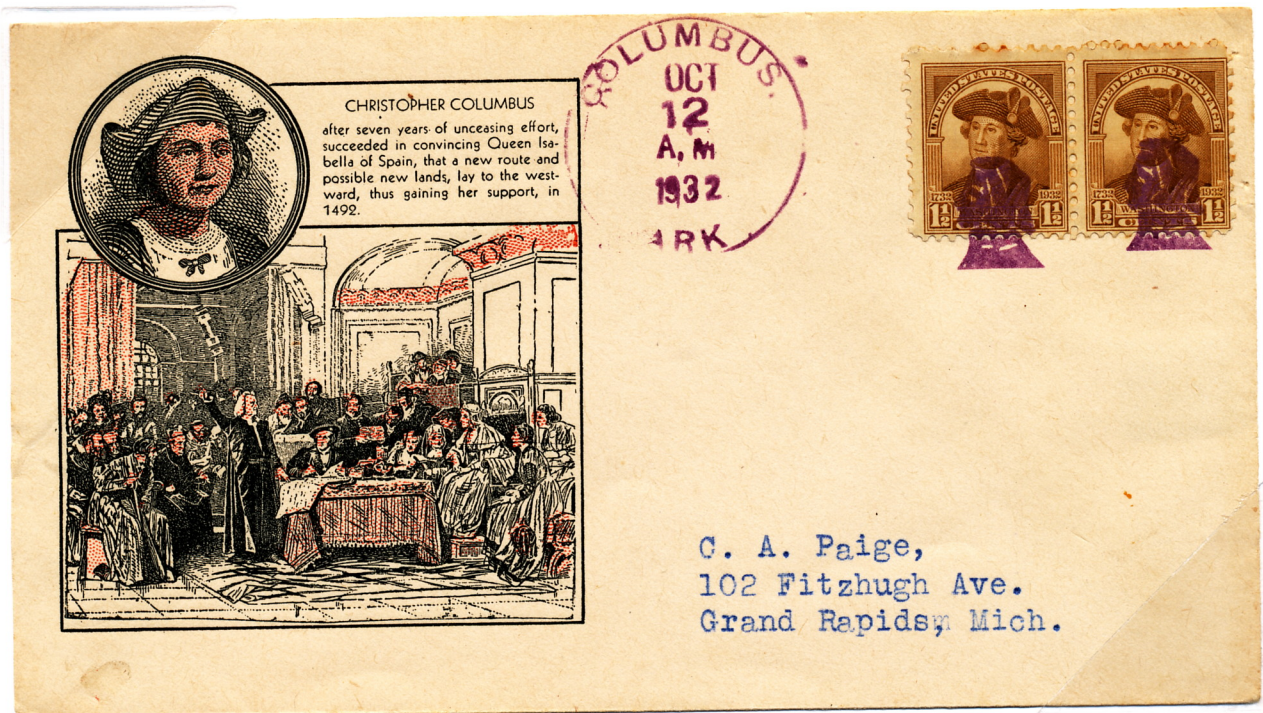
“Columbus small head in circle”

Columbus October 12, 1932 → Montclair, New Jersey



“Columbus small head without circle”

Columbus October 12, 1932 → Grand Rapids, Michigan



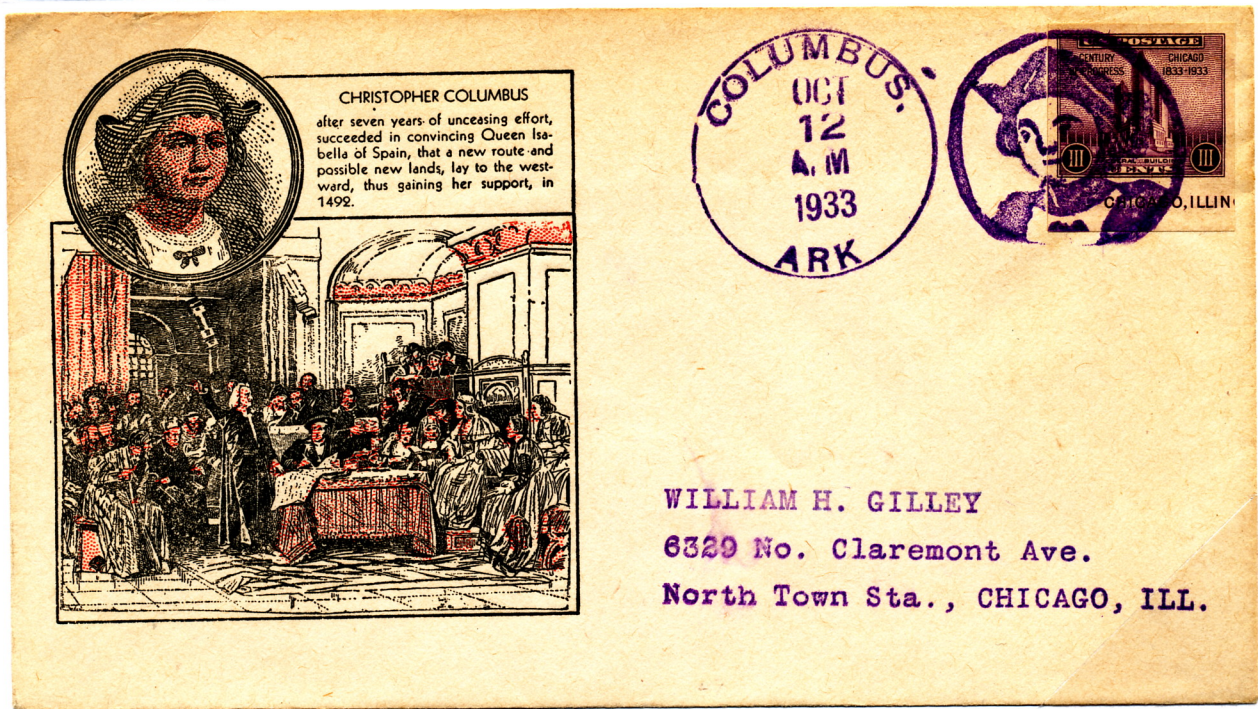


Markings used on a single day

Columbus, Columbus Day, 1933

“Columbus, Large Head in Circle”

Columbus, October 12, 1933 → Chicago, Illinois





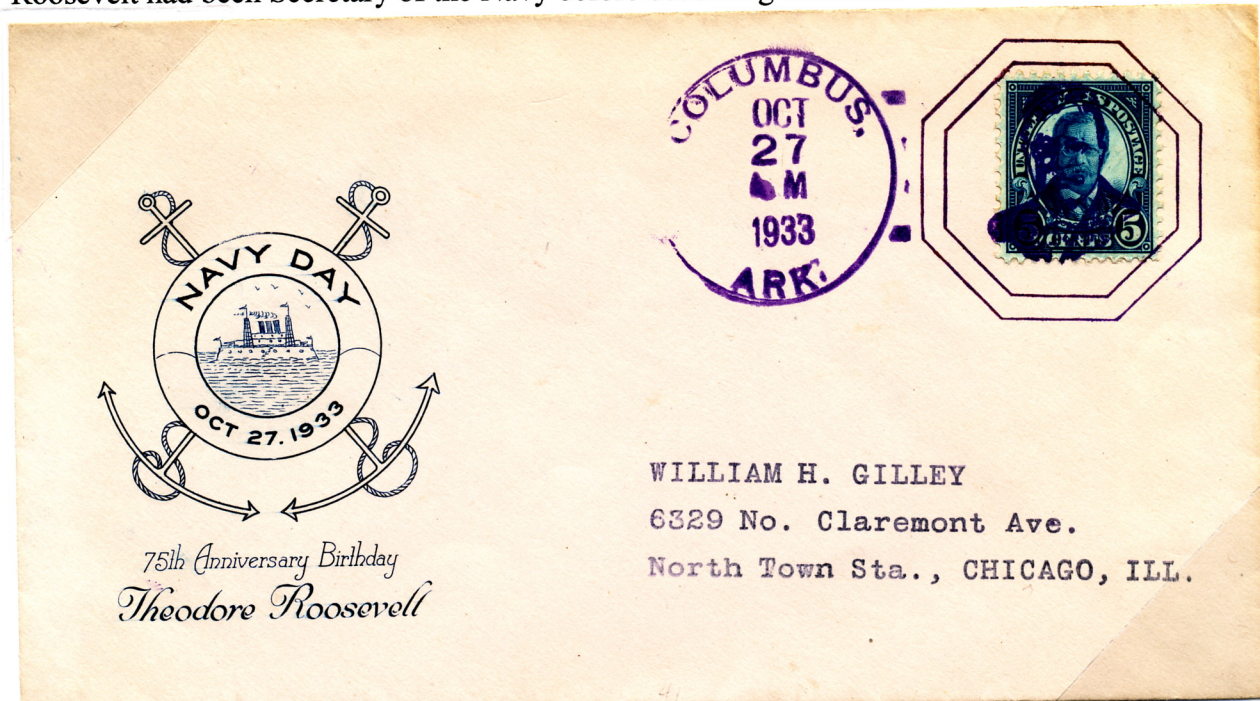
Markings used on a single day

Columbus, Navy Day/Turkey, Thanksgiving

“Theodore Roosevelt Head”

Columbus, October 27, 1933 → Chicago, Illinois

Roosevelt had been Secretary of the Navy before becoming President



“Tom Turkey facing right”

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

Turkey,

November 28, 1935

→Overland Park,  
Kansas



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