

A Spectacular New York Foreign Mail Multiple

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Multiples, such as blocks and stamp strips, bearing strikes of New York Foreign Mail (NYFM) cancellations of the 1870s are quite scarce. Perhaps the largest is a “block” of 16 of the Scott 153 24¢ National issue (four separated horizontal strips originally forming the multiple, rejoined) canceled by multiple strikes of Weiss star killer ST-8P11, one of the more common NYFM fancy killers.¹ I write this article to make NYFM collectors aware of a spectacular, previously unreported multiple bearing one of the rarest and most unusual of NYFM killers, the negative letters “NYPO” representing the abbreviated words “New York Post Office,” categorized as Weiss RE-L4, tracing shown in Figure 1.²

Bill Weiss first identified the “NYPO” killer as NYFM in his late 1980s series of articles published in the *NEWS*.³ It was then included in his NYFM book⁴ where he pictures a cover to England bearing two Scott 147 3¢ stamps (posting date not noted but subsequently learned to be May 5, 1872) and an off-cover Scott 148 6¢ stamp.

Only two other covers with the RE-L4 cancellation have been reported. One appeared in auction in 1989,⁵ postmarked April 30, 1872 to Peru bearing two Scott 150 10¢ stamps and a single Scott 146 2¢ stamp; the other surfaced on eBay in 2004 (which I was fortunate to buy!) postmarked May 4, 1872 to France bearing Scott 139 10¢ grilled stamp. (Note, Weiss⁶ reports May 14, 1872 as the latest reported use for RE-L4 killer without citing a source. Given this killer’s scarcity and just three known earlier on cover usages, I find this date questionable). As a dealer, I have handled individual off-cover examples of the RE-L4 killer on 6¢, 7¢, 10¢, 12¢ and 24¢ values of National Banknote Company issue stamps.

The subject NYFM cancellation multiple is pictured in Figure 2. It is a magnificent, intact, block-of-4 of Scott 148 6¢ stamp each bearing VF inverted strikes of RE-L4. I discovered the block in a recent internet auction. Prior to the discovery of this block only a single other multiple canceled by RE-L4 has been reported, a strip of 4 Scott 147 3¢ stamps with three VF strikes of the killer.⁷ Given the nature and probable fragility of the killer’s design, the quality of RE-L4 strikes appear to have rapidly deteriorated. Most examples show incomplete impressions with a portion of the killer missing and letters filled in. The Figure 3 strike on Scott 149 7¢ stamp is typical with disappearing right and left margins and letter N filled in. The strike on the upper right stamp of the block is of exceptional quality and completeness. It clearly shows a negative period after the letters N, P and O. (If a period ever followed the Y, likely given its evidence after the other three letters, it must have quickly filled or worn away.) It appears that the RE-L4 design committed this unusual NYFM killer to a short life and considerable rarity. ■

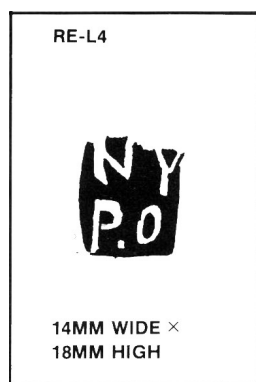


Figure 1



Figure 2



Figure 3

Endnotes:

1. Robert Siegel Auction Galleries, Sale 755, “Rarities of the World”, Nov 19, 1993, Lot 200. As noted in the catalog description, this “block” presumably paid postage on one large package. I have long speculated that the cancellations on this piece may actually have originated in the mail division that handled printed matter, merchandise and circulars rather than the foreign mail division. The ST-8P11 killer use on circular mail is well established by examples. Besides the strikes of the killer there are no other postal markings, such as exchange office postmarking, that would establish foreign mail division origin.
2. Weiss, William R., Jr., *The Foreign Mail Cancellations of New York City 1870-1878*, self published, 1990, p. 493.
3. Weiss, W. R., Jr., “NEW YORK FOREIGN MAIL CANCELLATIONS Unlisted Types”, *U.S. Cancellation Club NEWS*, Whole No. 195, (Winter 1988), pp. 10-11.
4. Ref. 2, p. 220.
5. Robert G. Kaufmann Auction Galleries, Sale 62, “The Patrick Henry Collection”, November 26-27, 1989, Lot 1349.
6. Ref. 2, p. 220.
7. Barwis, J. H., “The New York Foreign Mail Cancellation ‘NYPO’”, *U.S. Cancellation Club NEWS*, Whole No. 214, (Fall 1993), p. 1.