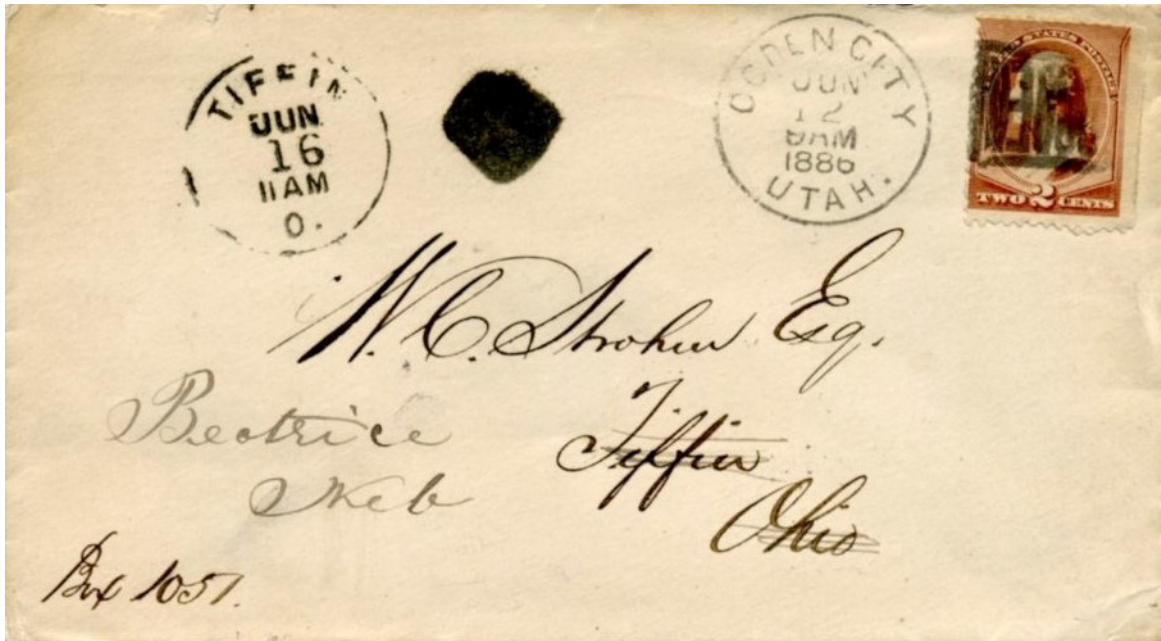




# *U.S. Cancellation Club* **NEWS**

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*This 1886 Ogden City, Utah cover, bound for Tiffin, Ohio carries a killer which is extremely unusual – it includes the town's name in full! John Valenti tells us more, starting on page 26.*

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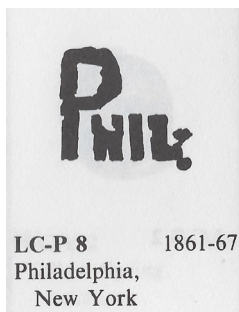
## 19th Century Town-Named Hand Carved Killers

*John Valenti*

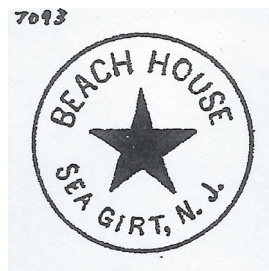
Since the advent of postage stamps in 1847, killer devices have been applied to cancel the adhesives. In the early years, especially after the introduction of the 1851 issue adhesives, stamps most frequently were canceled by just the town postmark bearing the town name, state and a date. This practice effectively ended with the Post Office Department's July 23, 1860 P.L. & R. publication requiring the use of a separate handstamp to cancel the stamps, reflecting the P.O.D.'s general dissatisfaction with the use of the postmark to kill the stamp. This prohibition led to the duplexing of killers to postmarks as a single handstamp.<sup>1</sup> So, we arrive at this separation of the town name from the stamp killer. The objective of this article is to explore examples where the killer itself incorporates the name of the town.

The major cancellation references (Skinner-Eno<sup>2</sup>, Cole<sup>3</sup>, and Whitfield<sup>4</sup>) list multiple examples of hand-carved killers where a town's initials (single and multiple) have been incorporated into the killer. However, I find in these references and others no examples where the entire town name appears in the killer. The closest example of a complete town name that I discover in Skinner-Eno is LC-P 8 "Phil" from Philadelphia, Jefferson county in upstate New York, seen in Figure 1. Whitfield also lists an interesting advertising killer, illustrated in Figure 2, that incorporates a full town/state name, BEACH HOUSE, SEA GIRT, N.J., yet the mailing town is Spring Lake, New Jersey.

Then we have examples of multiple-letter town name abbreviations: illustrated in Figures 3, 4 and 5 respectively are cancels from from Hyde Park, Massachusetts (Cole ML-44), San Leandro, California (Cole ML-230) and Albert Lea, Minnesota (Whitfield 5276).



**Figure 1**



**Figure 2**



**Figure 3**



**Figure 4**



**Figure 5**

As a dealer in 19th century cancellation material, I have viewed thousands of covers and off-cover stamps and discovered only two examples where the stamp killer contains the town name (excluding the killers used on 3rd and 4th class mail, such as Cole killers VL-1 through VL-72 and others, which are typically applied in simplex format, that is, without postmark).

The first example, shown on the front cover, is a cover with an unusual town-name killer (enlarged killer detail in Figure 6). The cover bears a Scott #210 postmarked June 12, 1886, Ogden City, Utah (DPO Weber County, 1854-1888), to Tiffin, OH, forwarded to Beatrice, NE. The killer tying the stamp at first appears to be a simple boxed grid. Closer examination, however, reveals that this "grid" is in fact the city name OGDEN (inverted) expressed in tall and narrow letters within the box. It is easy to understand how this city-named killer has avoided detection by collectors.

Secondly, we have something from the small town of Hika, Wisconsin (DPO Manitowoc County, 1858-1954), with an 1880 population of 1,590. It is on a UX7 postal card postmarked June 14 (1883) to Sheboygan, WI, detail shown in Figure 7.



Figure 6



Figure 7

The Hika town name sits atop a grid killer. The italicized letters “IKA” are clear, but it appears that the letter “H” has mostly broken away from the killer. A rapid deterioration of a killer such as this is not surprising given that the lettering is unprotected along the top edge.

I suspect that there are more hand-carved town-name killers from the 19th century that remain to be discovered. Any reader with additional information on this topic is invited to contact the *NEWS* editor. All such information will be attributed in any future updates in the *NEWS*. ■

**References:**

1. Richard B. Graham, "Postmarks and Postmarking Devices of the Banknote Era", p. 4, in James M. Cole, *Cancellations and Killers of the Banknote Era, 1870-1894* (U.S. Philatelic Classics Society, Columbus, OH 1995)
2. Hubert C. Skinner & Amos Eno, *United States Cancellations, 1845-1869: Unusual and Representative Markings* (American Philatelic Society, State College, PA 1980)
3. James M. Cole, *Cancellations and Killers of the Banknote Era, 1870-1894* (U.S. Philatelic Classics Society, Columbus, OH 1995)
4. Kenneth A. Whitfield, *Cancellations Found on 19th Century U.S. Stamps* (U.S. Cancellation Club, Lewisburg, PA 2002)




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