

Scarce Cover? by Josh Furman

Yes! Why?

Aha! It's not the stamp, or the circular date stamp, although the latter is important. It's the killer!
Perhaps a little review is appropriate.

One of the more fascinating aspects of American philately is the development of the way to prevent re-use of postage stamps. The accepted way is to mark the stamp in some way to indicate usage, either by scratching across it with a pen or somehow applying a blob of ink so as to mark it permanently as used. We call this cancelling the stamp. Some early obliterators were simply corks dipped in ink. Then creative postal clerks started carving images into their corks, so that the obliterators had designs to them, and the collecting of cancels began.



When the postal service decided that better tracking of mail was needed, and insisted on a date of mailing, the circular date stamp (CDS) was born. Now postal clerks needed to strike the envelope twice, once for the CDS, which had to remain legible, and once for the obliterator, commonly called the "killer". With the increase in postal volume, enterprising clerks and others began to work on devices that would apply two strikes at once to an envelope, simultaneously providing a CDS and a killer. This is called a duplex cancellation.

The most common design for the killer part of a duplex cancellation is an oval, first made of a series of bars in an oval outline. The next development was to put a circle in the center of that oval, and put some information in that circle. Sometimes that information, a simple letter or number, would identify the Post Office Branch or perhaps a particular clerk in a busy office.

Now look at the Scarce Cover again. You will see that it has a numeral duplex cancel with the number 3 in the circle in the ellipse. Both numeral and alphabet duplexes are quite common, so what is so special about this one? If you look closely you will find that the oval is split in two vertically. This split oval numeral 3 duplex was used only in Washington D.C. and only for about six months in 1885. Very few have been reported, hence a Scarce Cover.

The Cover Story

German Occupation of British Channel Islands

Part 1 – Guernsey

By Robert Fisher

The British Channel Islands are a scattered group of islands off the coast of France. The larger islands are Guernsey, Jersey, Sark, Herm and Aldernay. Most of the other islands are uninhabited rocks.



In June 1940 the British government decided to demilitarize the islands and offered residents the opportunity to evacuate to England. About 30,000 islanders did so, but others, reluctant to leave their homes and property, remained. The Germans carried out bombing raids on June 28, 1940, but ceased after broadcasts on the BBC announced that the islands were not defended. The German military began occupying the islands on June 30, 1940.

Until the occupation, the British postal system was responsible for the island mails. German authorities permitted the continued use of British postage stamps for inter-island mail, but since the source of stamps was cut off, there was soon a shortage of British postage stamps. On Guernsey, the Guernsey Press Co Ltd was contracted to design and print new Guernsey stamps. There were several printings of the ½d, 1d and 2½d stamps (thus creating many color varieties). In early 1942, French banknote paper was used to print the stamps. When gum was applied, a chemical reaction turned the paper blue. Guernsey occupation stamps were first issued on February 18, 1941 and were valid until April 13, 1946.



On May 9, 1945, the day AFTER victory in Europe had been declared, the islands were liberated when the 26,000 German troops surrendered unconditionally to British forces.