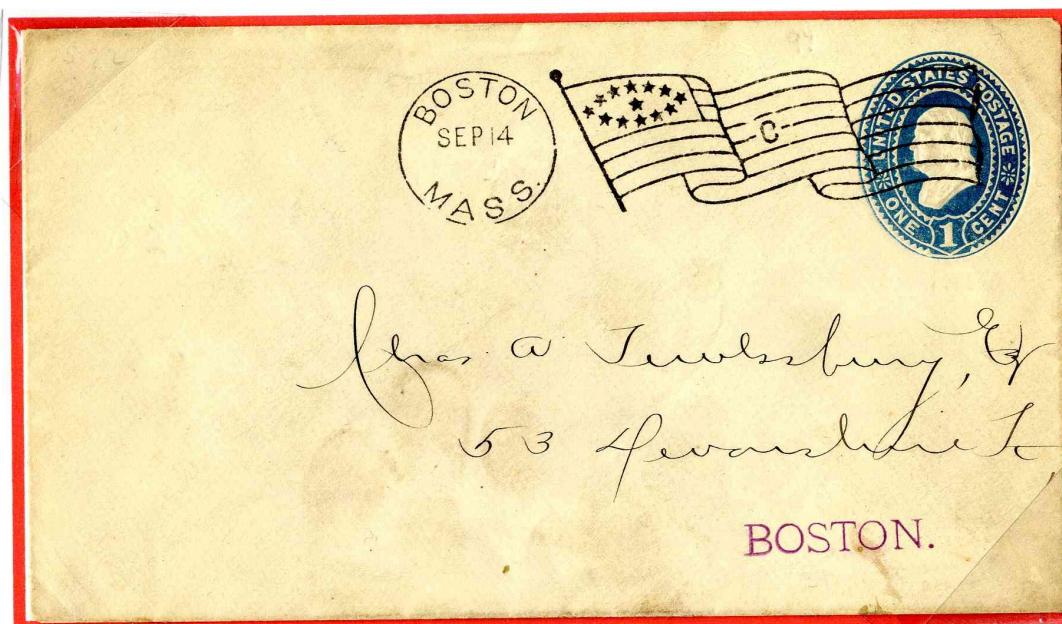
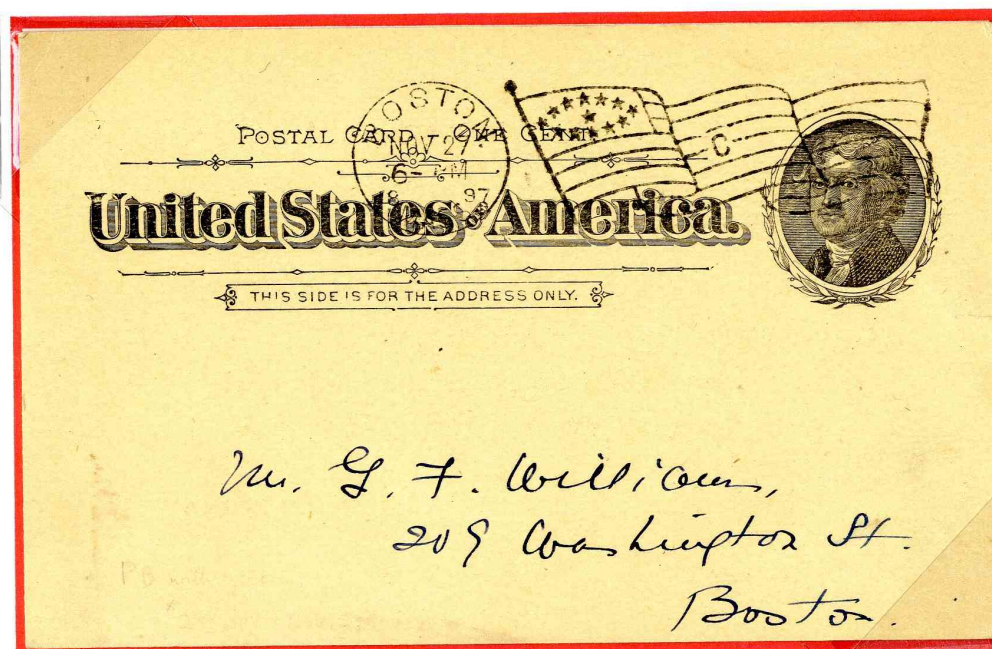


As with other flag dies, mixing the top and bottom halves of different types of dials produced errors.



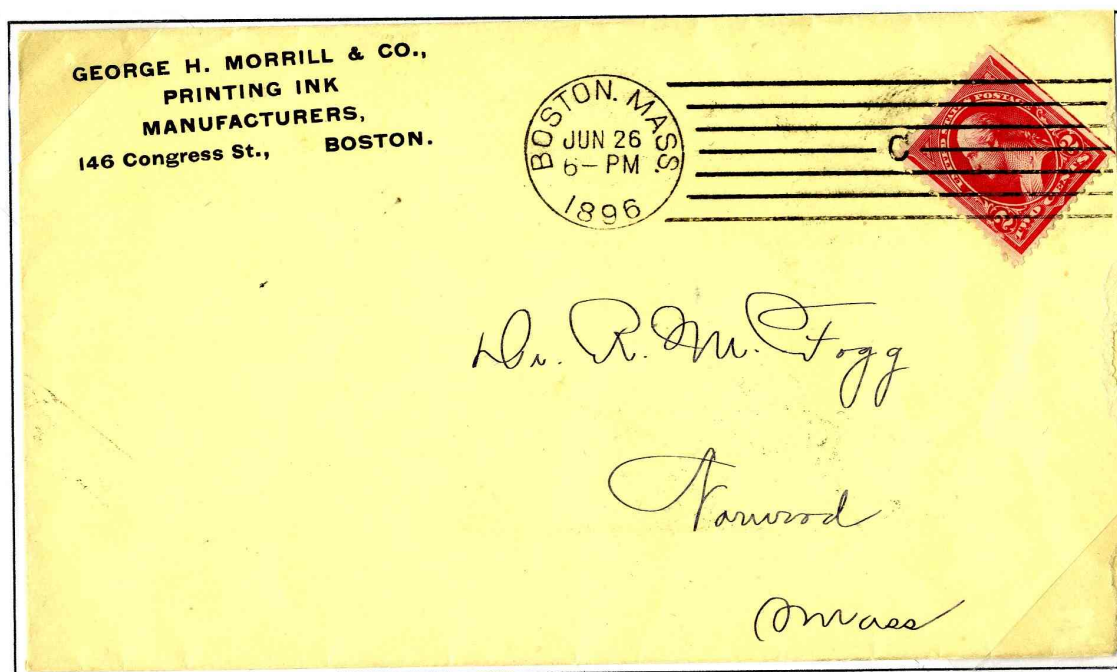
Top half of American Type B dial with bottom half of Imperial dial. Error lacks the year date.
In use: August 19 to September 14, 1897. **Latest recorded date of use**



Top half of Imperial dial with bottom half of American Type B dial. No data omitted or duplicated, but regarded as an error. *In use:* November 11 to December 31, 1897

Imperial Test Cancels

For about six weeks prior to their introduction of the involute flags, the Imperial company ran tests with a seven-bar canceller. The existence of these cancels suggests that three as-yet-unidentified cancels are also Imperial products.



Imperial test cancel. *In use:* May 25 to July 8, 1896

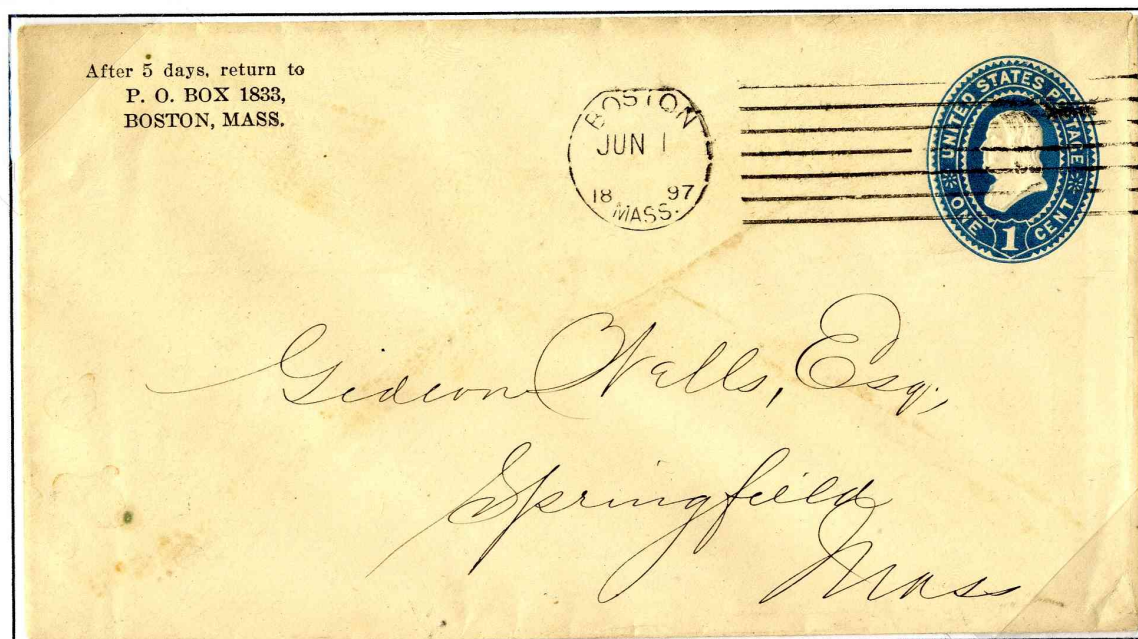
IMPERIAL OR NOT?

Three varieties of a seven-bar canceller are known from Boston in a very few copies with dates ranging from 1896 to 1898. Only two examples are known on first class mail, making precise dating difficult. The seven-bar cancellers are found with three different American dials: a Type D in 1896, and two different Type B dials in 1897 and 1898. While the use of American dials would seem strong evidence that the cancels are products of the American Postal Machines Company, that company never used a seven-bar canceller. The Imperial seven-bar test canceller leads some to believe these are Imperial machines. For the time being, the parentage of these cancels is best regarded as a mystery

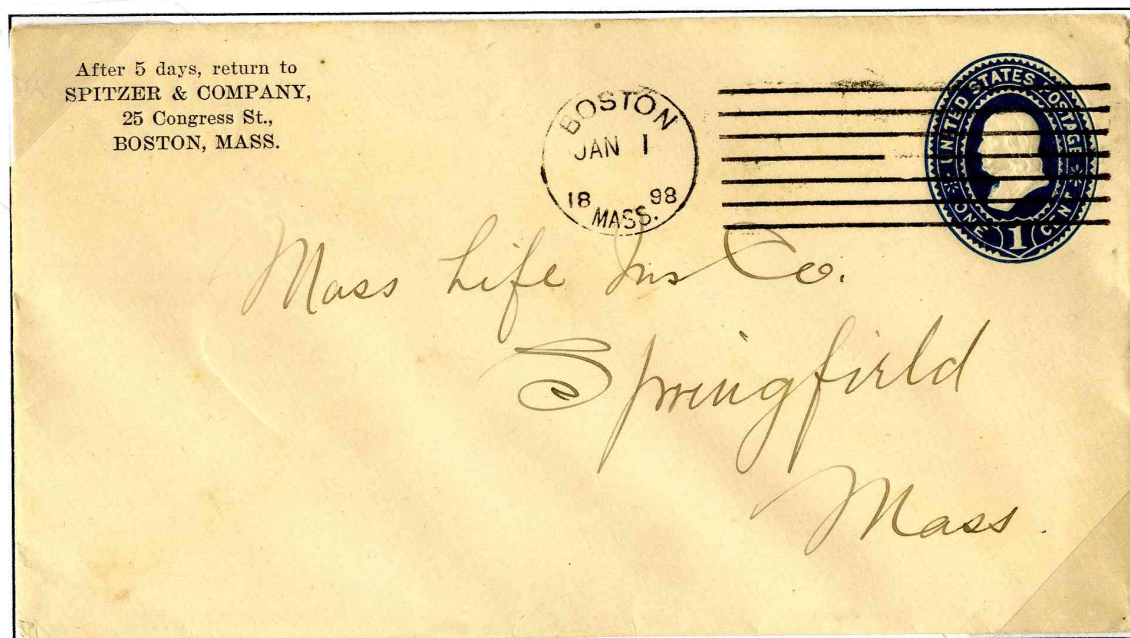


The few known copies of the unattributed cancel from 1896 are all third class usages.
Even an approximate usage period is unestablished

Only two of the varieties with an American Type B dial are known with first class usages, but the third class covers are not infrequently seen with a month and day in the dial.



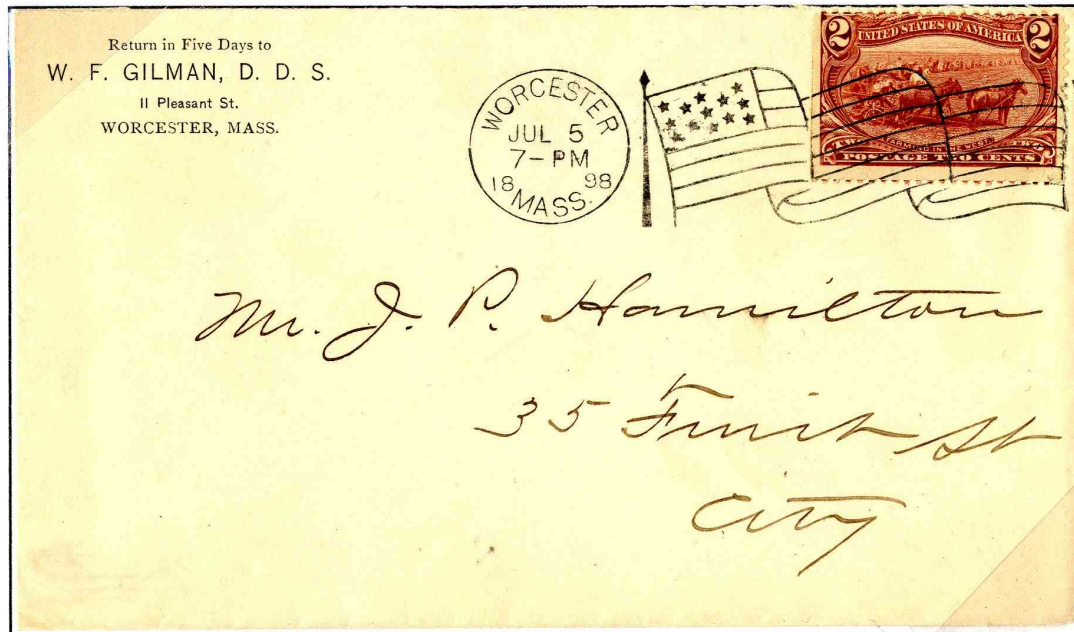
1897 dial known from several months during the year. Probably intermittent all year



1898 variety **earliest date of use.** Latest record use January 14, 1898

ACME SUPPLY COMPANY

The Acme Supply Company cancels were not used in Boston. However, Martin Van Buren Ethridge was also a principal of Acme; and Acme products imitated and have been confused with those of Imperial and American. The installed machines may well have been refurbished American machines.



Acme flags have two types, marked by the point where top line after first fold meets the first fold. Only city using both types was Worcester



The Post Office contracted for forty-two Acme machines, but only twenty were deployed. Some thirty varieties are recognized, largely because the dials for 1898 and 1899 are substantially different.



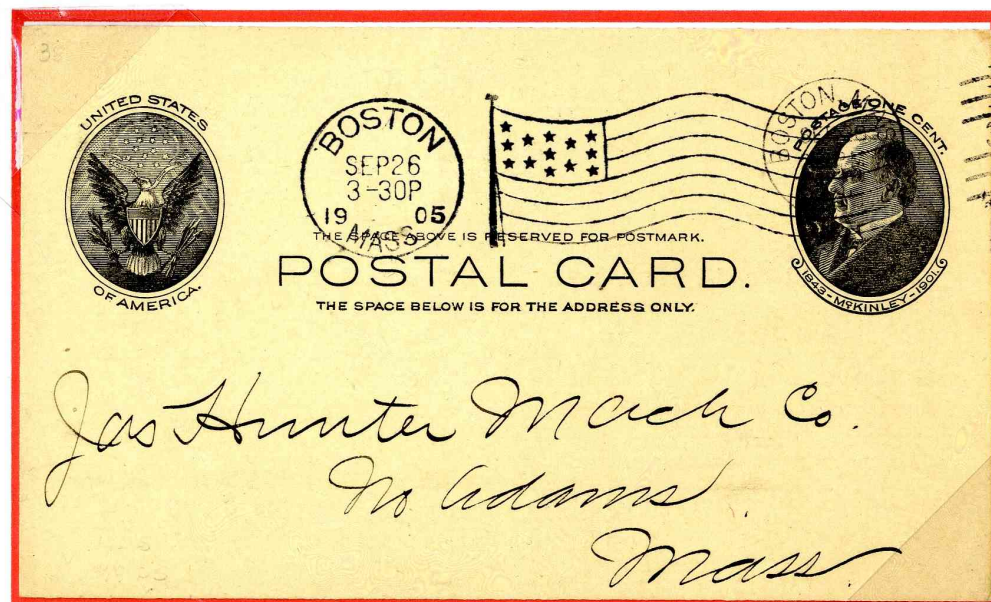
One of ten cities with both 1898 and 1899 uses. The 1898 dial similar to American Type B dial



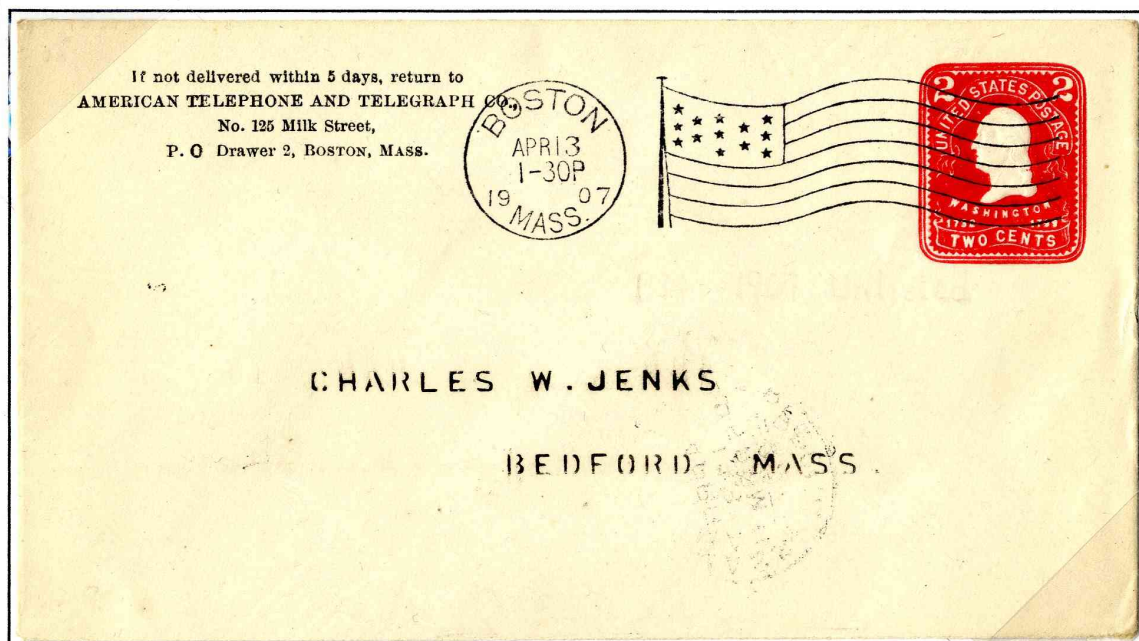
1899 dial with same format, but type and numbers sizes similar to Imperials

THE AMERICAN COMPANY'S BOSTON TESTS

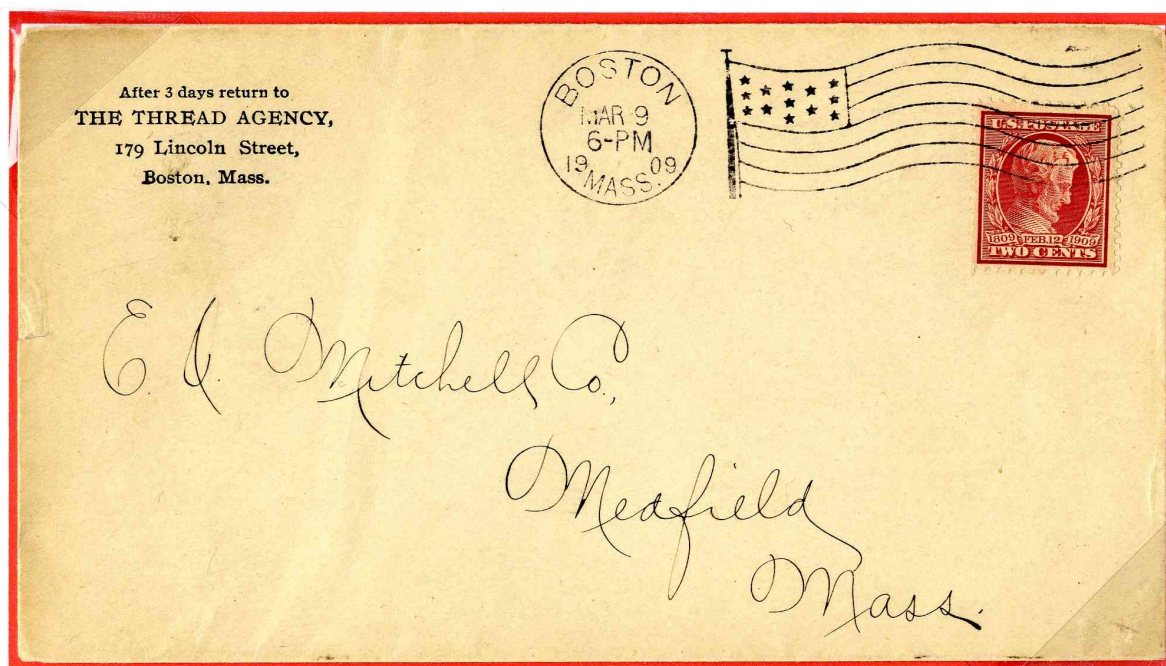
As a rule the machines provided by the American Postal Machines Company to the Boston Main Office carried a die space for a number or letter. From 1905 to 1920, however, Boston had a number of machines without a die space. Most usages were brief, some only days, but a few were on hand for months or even years. Thirty-four such machines have been identified, and, in view of the rarity of most of them, more may yet be discovered. These machines probably were being tested before going to smaller offices, and most can be traced to other locations after brief appearances in Boston. The only other city with a similar record was Washington, D.C., where testing was clearly involved.



The earliest Boston no-diespace flag recorded. **The discovery copy** (1973). One other identically-dated copy since found. Machine in Macomb, Illinois by October 5, 1905



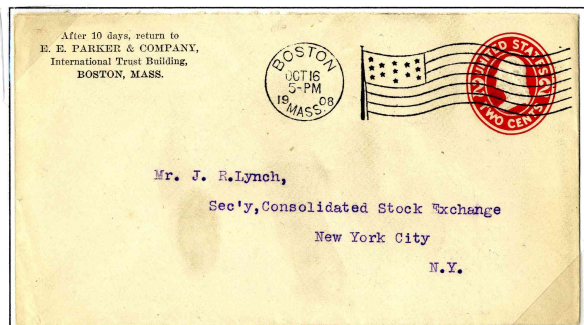
Labeled as Boston's earliest no-diespace flag when found in 1971. In Winnetka, Illinois later in 1907



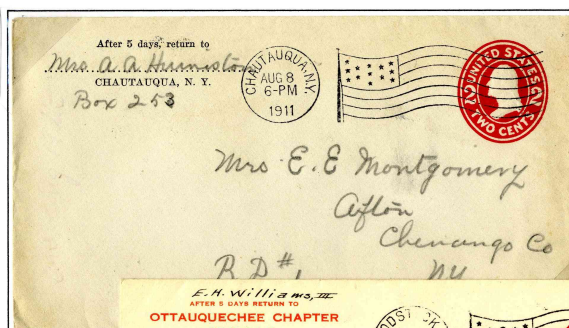
Most recently discovered Boston no-diespace flag, first reported in 1991. **No other copy known**

The Movements of a Machine

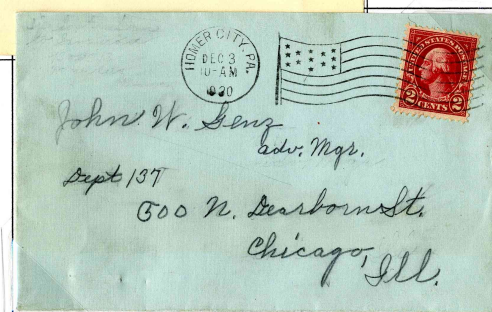
A brief use of a no-diespace flag in Boston was usually followed by life in a succession of smaller post offices. This flag die was in constant use for twenty-seven years. Its very distinctive pattern of stars makes identification of later uses much easier than usual.



October 16, 1908, latest documented use in Boston. In use: portions of September and October 1908

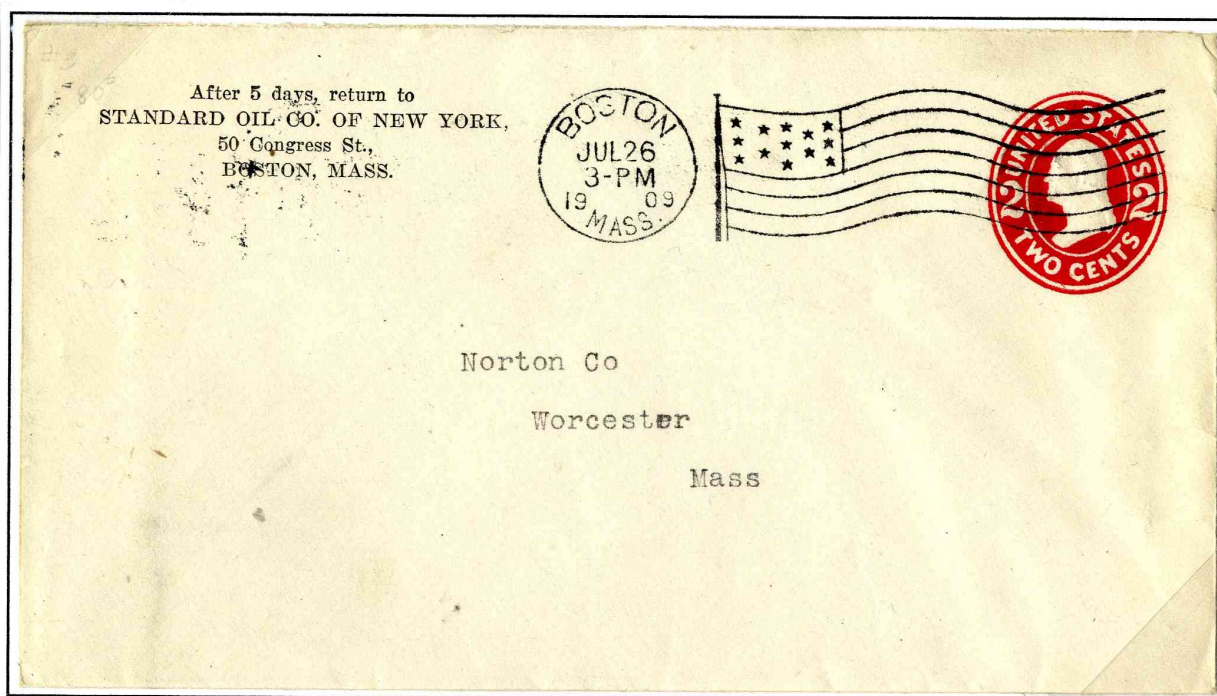


Transferred to Chautauqua, New York (1909 to 1921), then Woodstock, Vermont (1921 to 1926), and finally Homer City, Pennsylvania (1926 to 1935)

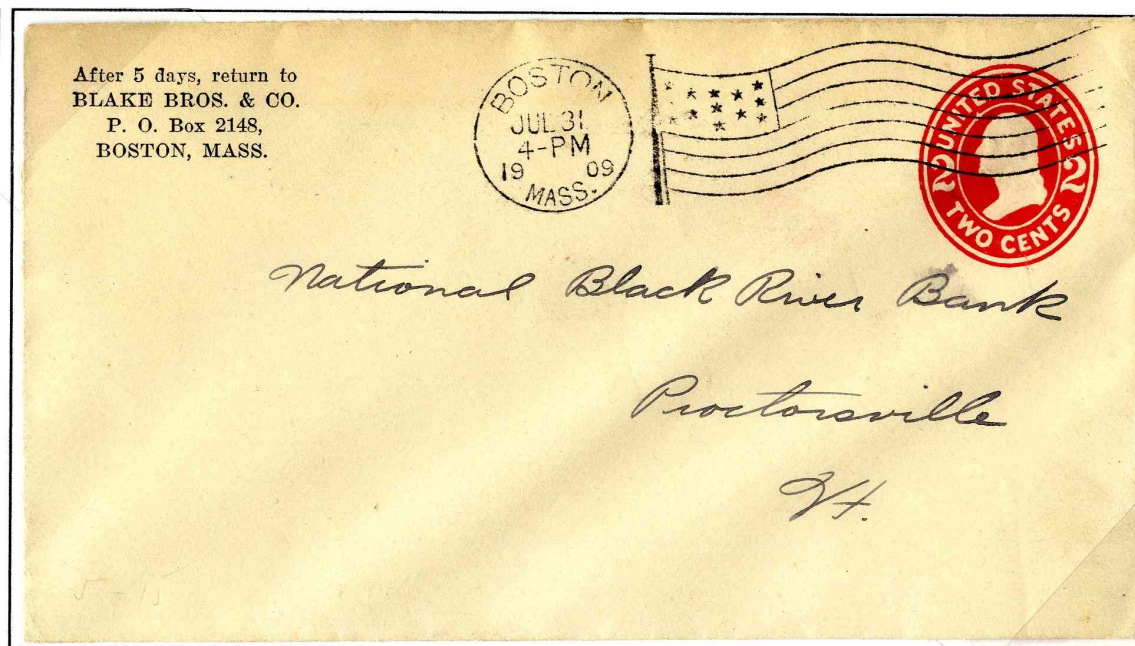


The Summer of 1909

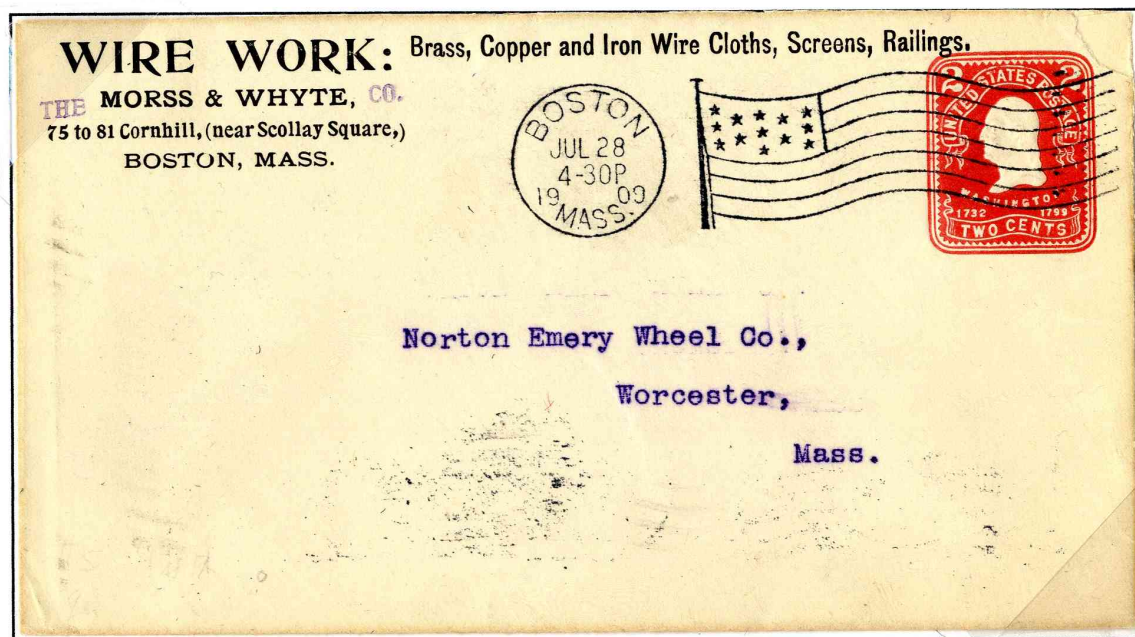
Eight different no-diespace flag dies yielding nine varieties appeared in July and August of 1909, and many of these saw usages over several weeks. The explanation for this unmatched activity is unknown.



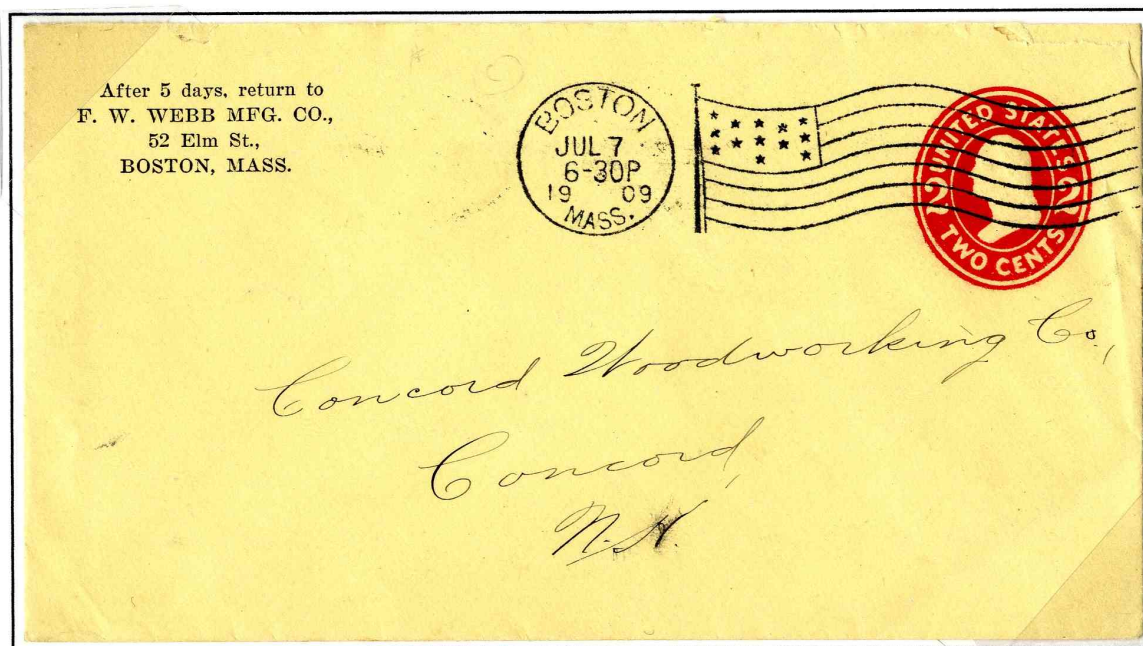
The first 1909 machine. *In use:* About July 3 to August 2, 1909



July 31. No other dates recorded

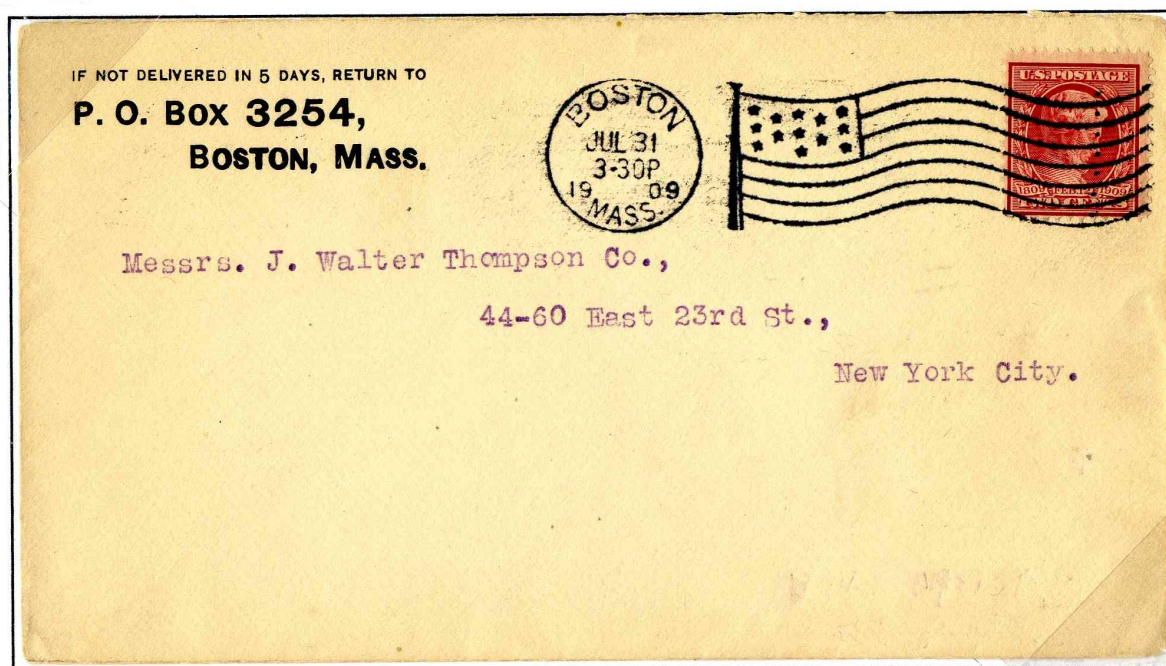


In use: About July 26 to August 27, 1909

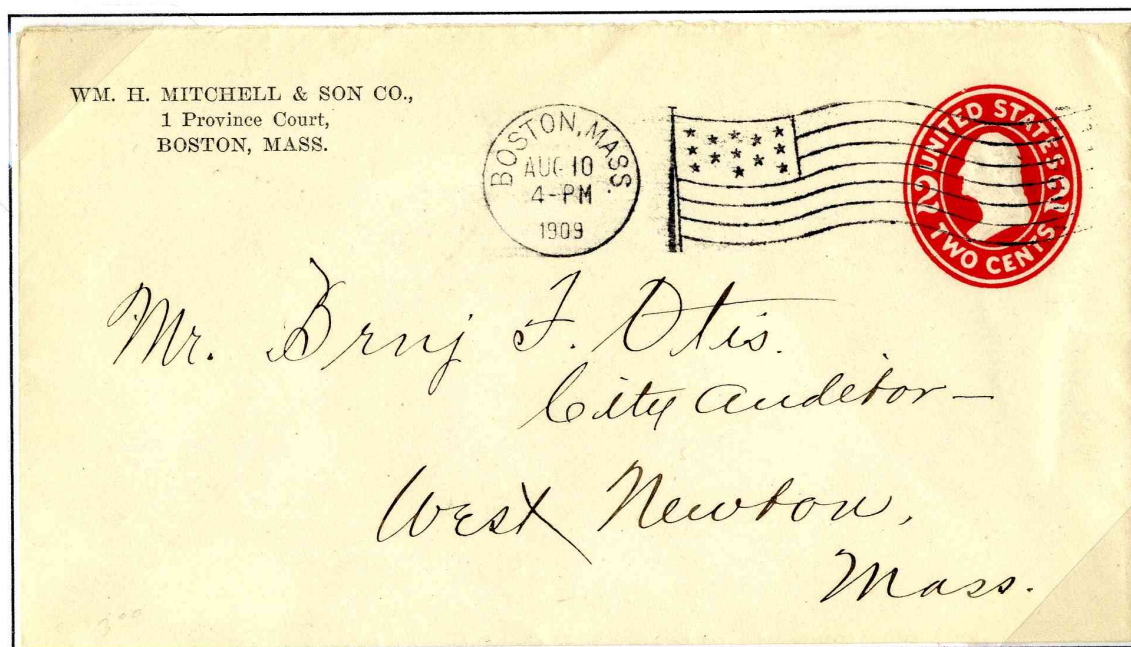


In use: About July 7 to August 9, 1909. In Nashua, New Hampshire before the end of 1909

This no-diespace flag die from the summer of 1909 is found with two different types of dials.

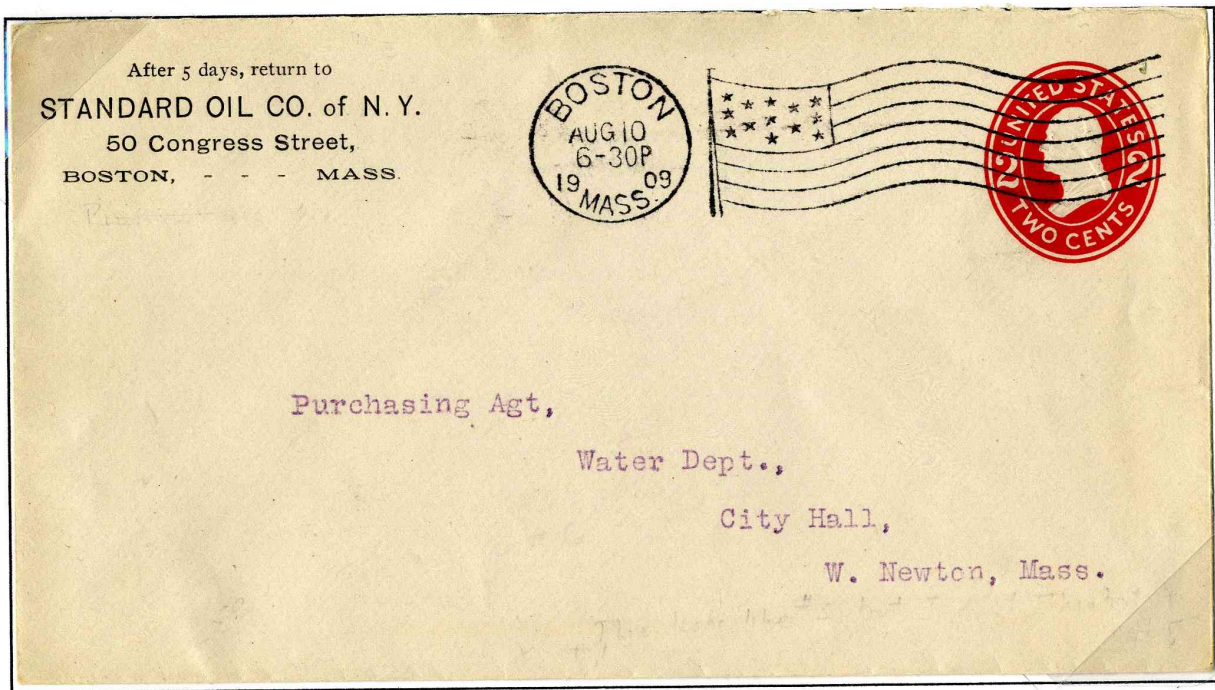


With split-year Type B dial. July 31, only date recorded

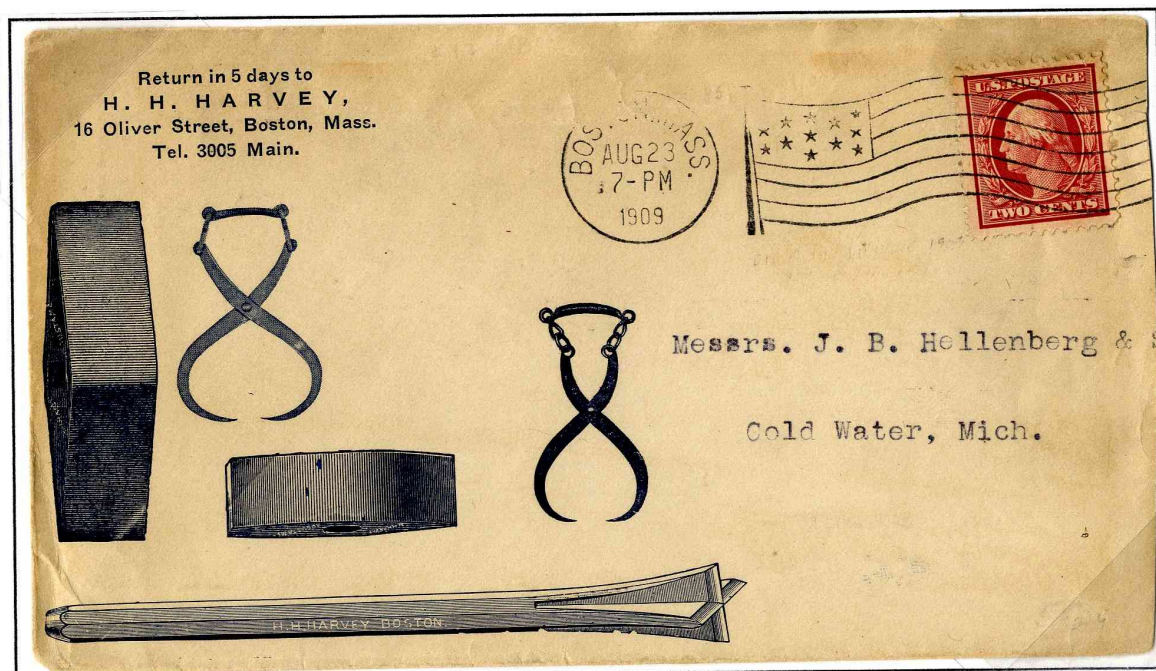


With Type A dial. In use: About August 6 to 27

Final two 1909 flags. The ninth variety, used with a Type D dial, is shown earlier as "a throwback."



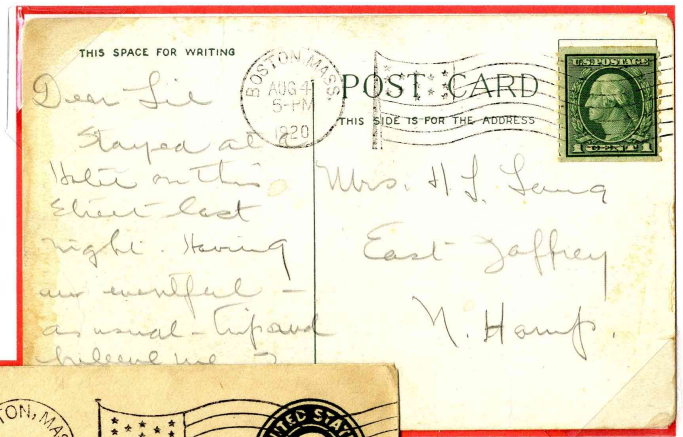
In use: About July 26 to August 19, 1909. In Pierre, South Dakota early 1910



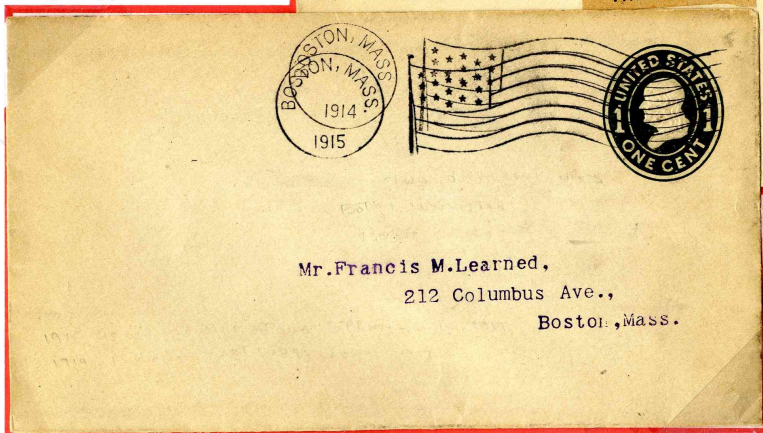
In use: About August 14 to 26, 1909

The Final Few

With no recent design innovations and no machines made after 1917, the no-diespace flags found in Boston from the end of 1914 to 1920 are unlikely to have been there for testing. Of the nine machines from this period these four saw extremely brief usage.



Final Boston no-diespace flag.
Two post cards reported, both
dated August 4, 1920



The only other example reported: the
accidentally-applied impression on the
reverse of this cover. Dates unknown

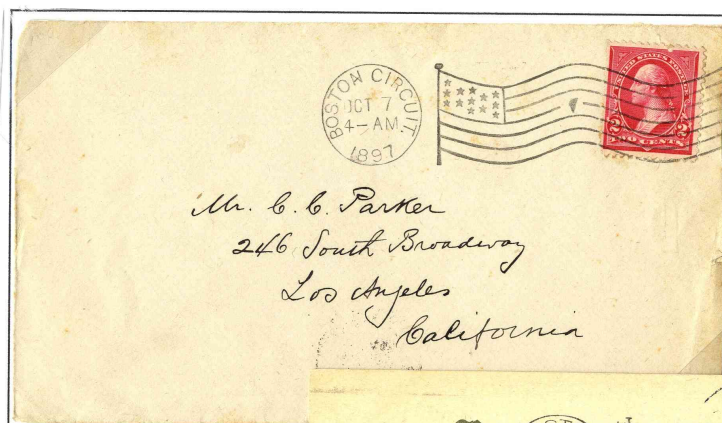
Double discovery cover (1975): two different dies, two different dates. Presumed to be December 1914 and January 1915. **No other copy of either die since reported**

THE STREET RAILWAY POST OFFICES OF BOSTON

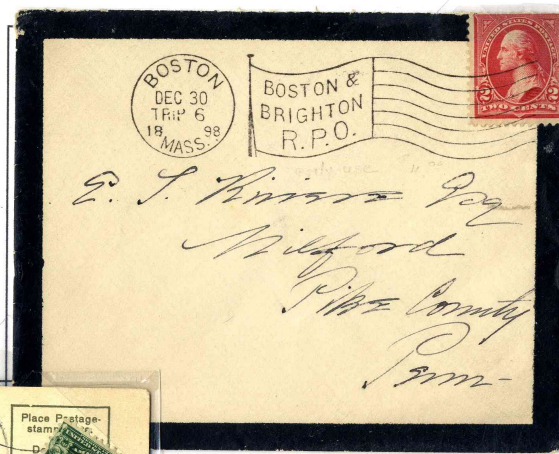
After successful experiments in St. Louis, Boston was among the first to inaugurate street railway mail service. The converted street cars were essentially small scale railway mail cars and operated in the early morning hours. The Boston Circuit R.P.O. began in June 1895 with two routes of 20 to 25 miles consuming a little over two hours. In mid-October 1895 the Boston Circuit, became the first to install a cancelling machine on a car. American flag machines were used exclusively in Boston and all of them were electric-powered machines.



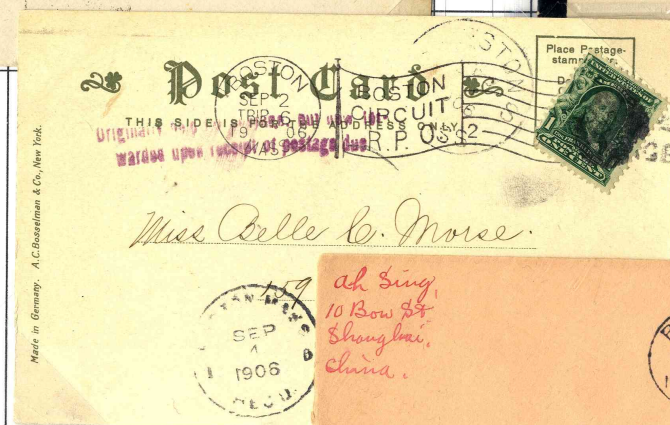
First street car machine. *In use:* October 14, 1895 to mid-September 1896



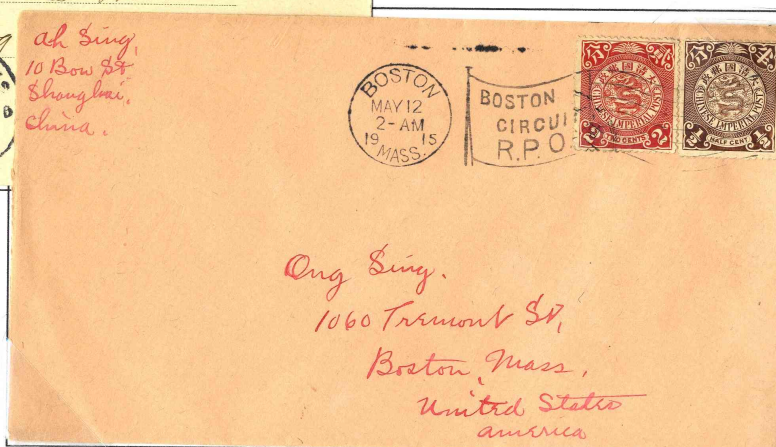
In mid-September 1896 '1' changed to a triangle. In use to the end of 1897



One of seven other Boston lines, two of which used machines. Earliest recorded date of use



Trip number replaced time for about 23 days in 1906



"Tuttle" fantasy cover, created by Boston streetcar conductor with access to post office cars or personnel. Address is that of C. W. Tuttle, but almost certainly never in mailstream or China. Boston street railway service ended June 30, 1915

SLOGAN CANCELS

The Barry Postal Supply Company of Syracuse, New York, pioneered promotional slogan cancels for the 1901 Pan-American Exposition in July 1899 and a month later for the National Export Exposition in Philadelphia. The American Postal Machines Company was only weeks behind in both cases.

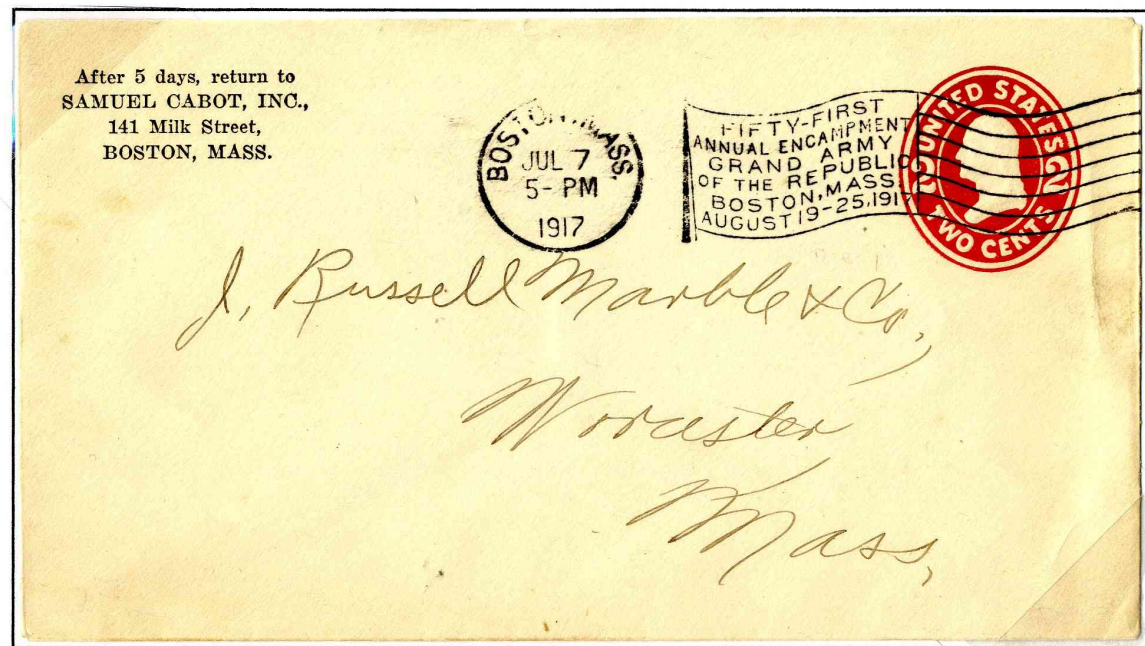


First American slogan used only for receiving. *In use:* September 1 to December 9, 1899

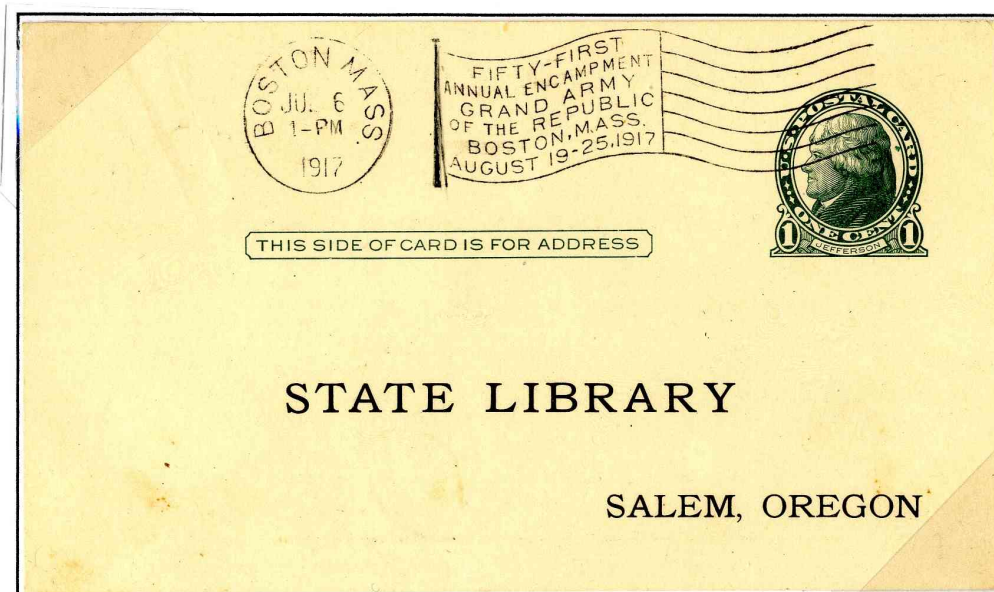


Philadelphia National Export Exposition: American slogans for 12 main office machines and 15 stations

The first Boston slogans promoted an annual encampment of the Grand Army of the Republic. Dies were installed on two of the nine remaining American machines in July 1917 and removed several days before the encampment. Why the slogans were pulled before the event is unclear, although official records show that the event adjourned on August 23rd and not the 25th.



First die, **earliest documented date of use**. *In use:* July 7 to August 13, 1917



Second die, **earliest documented date of use**. *In use:* July 6 to August 15, 1917

War efforts occupied the remaining American machines in Boston from October 1917 to May 1918. Dies for the 2nd Liberty Loan were mortised for an easy later change to the 3rd Liberty Loan.



2nd Liberty Loan die "9". Discovered 1990 proving 2nd Liberty Loan dies with Type B dials were mortised. **Three copies recorded** from October 2 to 10, 1917



3rd Liberty Loan die "9". Only Type B dial machine then in service. *In use:* April 22 to May 2, 1918