

STAR CANCELS OF DELAWARE COUNTY, NEW YORK

1 Synopsis 1

Star cancels were very popular throughout the United States in the late Nineteenth Century, and even small post offices often went along with the fashion. Rural Delaware County, New York, was rich in small post offices, and quite a few of them used star cancels of one sort or another, especially in the period between the late 1870's and the early 1890's. Many were hand-carved, some more skillfully than others. Unfortunately not many of the covers bearing these cancels were saved. In cases where the condition of the cover shown is less than desirable, it is often the case that what is shown is the *only* example this exhibitor has seen in almost two decades of vigorously searching out such items.

Surprisingly, although star cancels are fairly common, literature on star cancels is scant. The most relevant printed source is David H. Proulx's *Star Cancels of New York State* [Albany, NY] : Empire State Postal History Society, 1987 xii, 23 p. Although helpful, this publication is far from complete and has some inaccurate information. Star cancels from Downsville, Cannonsville, Halcottsville, North Kortright, North Harpersfield, and several other offices shown here are not reported in Proulx, nor are relatively common varieties such as the Type 1 from Andes in dark blue.

Circled stars with the points of the stars not touching the circle (Proulx's Type 53) from Stamford, Bovina Center, and Union Grove are reported as the more common Type 2 with the points touching the circle.

North Franklin is listed in Proulx with a totally different 1916 star than the 1916 star from that small town shown in this exhibit. Since 1916 is extremely late for any kind of star cancel (it is the latest year listed in Proulx for anywhere in New York State), it seems unlikely that tiny North Franklin used two different types that year -- possible, but not probable.

A few towns or types listed by Proulx are not shown; these cancels may exist, but if so they are very elusive.

Some people have questioned whether the crude hand-carved four-pointed stars are really stars. It is my opinion that they are -- the ends taper to distinct points, and the four-pointed or Nativity Star is a well-recognized shape in fancy cancels. See a recent addition to the star-cancel literature: "Seeing Stars," by Wayne Youngblood in the July 2010 *American Philatelist*, pp 628-633.

Population figures, shown as an indicator of scarcity, are mostly from 1890, but 1860 information was used in two cases when the cancel was from that period.