

## UH-OH! - MISTAKES IN U.S. AUXILIARY MARKINGS

The Auxiliary Markings Club defines the term “Auxiliary Marking” as follows:

*Postal marking applied to covers by handstamp, machine cancellation, a stick-on label, manuscript markings, or by mechanical or electronic methods such as addressograph or computer, indicating that the covers were given special attention due to some special circumstance...*

Many auxiliary markings are the result of a mistake - such as using an incorrect address. But the markings themselves are not immune to Murphy's Law. This exhibit will show the following types of mistakes found in U.S. auxiliary markings:

- Spelling or other mistakes made in the manufacture of the handstamp or other device used to apply auxiliary markings. Also missing letters which may have been caused by faulty manufacture or may have been the result of wear.
- Mistakes made by the user of the device, such as inverted elements or misspelled spray-on markings.
- Errors in grammar or logic in the text or usage of the marking.

In a few cases, either the marking or the cover is in less than ideal condition, but better copies may not exist. Except for the relatively common fully-inverted dials, the covers shown here are the *only* examples I have seen of these mistakes after looking through many thousands of covers bearing auxiliary markings. The devices with manufacturer errors were presumably used on multiple covers, and other examples may be extant. The Newton Upper Falls *UNKOWN* marking is the only one where I have seen more than one use - but no additional uses beyond the two shown. The “user errors” may have had the date or other element inserted incorrectly in order to make a single impression. At most the inverted dates were probably in use for a single day before the inverted element, even if it was the year, was repositioned.

Inverted dials in machine “Return to Sender” markings are relatively common. The cancelling die and killer are normally inverted on the machine because the mail is fed with the upper edges down (so gravity will keep the top edges of various sized mail even for cancelling). The RTS killer is inserted right-side up and the dial is un-inverted for processing mail to be returned (the mail is then fed into the machine right-side-up. The non-inverted position must appear unnatural to a worker used to the normal bottom-up position.

Most other items are not only scarce, they are rarely identified as anything unusual by dealers, so they can be found only by looking with a proofreader's eye through large numbers of covers with auxiliary markings.

No literature exists on this topic, and a census is difficult to envision. This exhibit shows one collector's finds from looking through hundreds of boxes of covers with auxiliary markings.