

Doane Town Cancells

By Patrick Crosby

How would you like to be so involved with a segment of stamp collecting that your name is attached to the field for generations to come? That is the legacy of Edith R. Doane who started collecting certain styles of handstamp cancelations in the 1950's.

Doane cancelations (or simply Doanes, like "bones") are impressions from rubber handstamps with three distinct styles - types 1, 2, and 3 - chronologically distributed by the United States Post Office Department (P.O.D.). They were meant for use in smaller, fourth-class post offices throughout the country and U.S. possessions. Spot a Doanes and it may be from a discontinued post office (DPO). Some larger towns also received this canceler when the postmaster requested one.

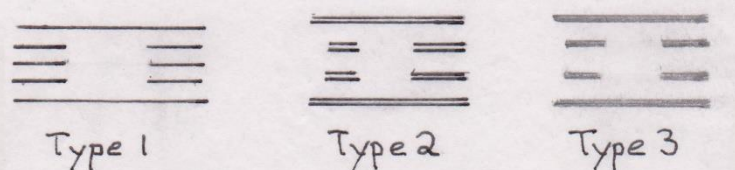
In a search for better hand marking devices for Rural Free Delivery (R.F.D.) mail carriers the first R.F.D. rubber handstamps were issued at the end of 1899. After three years they proved to be satisfactory, and with a switch from straight-line town and date information to a circle date stamp (cda) the first Doanes were issued in 1903. Examples greatly diminish after 1912, but have been seen into the 1950's.

Both the R.F.D. and all Doanes cancels included a number in the killer bars, but they had different purposes. The R.F.D. numbers indicate the carrier's route number. The Doanes numbers usually refer to the size of the post office relating to its postmaster's compensation for the previous fiscal year. If a postmaster had made less than \$100 then a "1" was used. If he had made between \$400 and \$500 then a "5" was used. Although numbers through "10" are typical, higher numbers exist. For example, for almost four years Sparks, NV, used a "15".

However, note that Doanes with "1" were also distributed to new post offices which had no previous postmaster compensation records. The cancelers typically lasted one to ten years depending on use and abuse. Doane numbers were used by the P.O.D. to determine the durability of the devices - a canceler with a "2" should last longer than a "7".

Doanes cancels were not only used as origin post office cancels, but often as receiving, forwarding, and redirecting cancels.

DOANE HANDSTAMPS	# Bars	Doane #	Dial Diameter	Dates Issued by P.O.D.	Est. Number Issued to P.O.'s	Approx. Number of Known P.O.'s
Type 1	5 thin	yes	27-29mm	1st half 1903 to	1,600	1,200
Type 2	4 pairs	yes	28-30mm	9/29/1903 to 6/30/1905	17,500	8,300
Type 3	4 fat	yes	31-32mm	7/1/1905 to fall, 1906	12,000	5,300



The three types of Doanes cancels are readily distinguishable as shown in the illustrations and described in the chart above. The quantities of Doanes distributed is staggering and there are many new towns waiting to be found.

The Doane handstamps proved to be a success. The numbers were no longer needed in the killers and about September 1906 the P.O.D. began distributing a four-bars canceler without numbers that were (sometimes confusingly) similar to a type 3 Doane. With little change, these are still issued today.



R.F.D. handstamp from Pulaski, NY rural route "1", is a basis for the type 1 Doane from Foley, MO "3". With a different background and stamp, the Calcium, PA (1885-1944) type 1 Doane shows well.

In 1903 the private postcard (ppc) craze was just beginning in the U.S. and many Doanes are to be found on ppc's. Unfortunately, reading the cancel on ppc's can be a challenge, especially with the often-seen dark green 1¢ Franklin postage stamp (Sc. 300) making the Doane number sometimes unreadable. Yes, clear complete cancels are not the norm. As far as government issued postal cards, Doanes examples are mostly found on the 1¢, side-facing McKinley card (Sc. UX18, UPSS S22) of 1902, and also the McKinley cards of 1907 and 1908.



Type 2: The Gilbert, PA (1868-date) cancel is a near perfect strike for a postcard. The "2" indicates a small post office, and the community of about 450 people today remains small. The Meyers, CA "1" post office (in the South Lake Tahoe area) is in operation today, and the card is part of my El Dorado Co., CA, collection.



Type 3: Prospectville, PA, "2" is a DPO (1854-1967) and its Doane was used for almost six years. Slatington, CA, also in El Dorado Co., used a type 2 Doane with "2" until 1908 when a type 3 Doane with "3" was added and used until the end of 1909. The post office closed in 1920.



Dials can change size and shape if left too close to a heat source as seen on the Westcreek, NJ "4" type 2 Doane. As seen, type 2's narrow pairs can fill in. Unsure of the Doane #? Reference www.doane.com. The Chester, NH cancel sandwiches this article with an R.F.D. four-bars cancel.

With over 31,000 Doanes town possibilities, someone had to start somewhere. Way to go, Edith.

References:

- Richard W. Helbock, Postmarks on Postcards Revised Second Edition (Tarpon Springs, FL: Marrakech Express, 2002) [Although it says Postcards, this is an excellent introduction to and reference for collecting postal history on any type of cover. Available on Kindle at Amazon.com].
- Gary Anderson, Doane Cancels (www.doanecancels.com). The website lists Doanes by states, each town's know usage dates, and with each state having an individual to contact with new information – and it's free!
- Richard W. Helbock, United States Post Offices Vol. IV – The Northeast (Scappoose, OR, La Posta Publications, 2001).

Patrick Crosby is a member of the Nevada Stamp Study Society and collects U.S. postal stationery, stamps, and postcards with an emphasis on postal history.