

# **Nature of the Information Made Available By the Post Office Department and The U. S. Postal Service**

## **Concerning “Authorized”, “Ordered”, and “Furnished”: What these terms might really mean for the devices produced**

Beginning with information compiled by Rolston Lyon from Post Office Department files in the 1940s, information has been made available about precancel using towns and devices furnished to them. As more research is done concerning what device should be associated with a particular date; there has been greater attention given to the dates and how they really link to the cataloged precancel styles. For instance, a town authorized in the last days of a particular fiscal year may actually have received a device produced in the next fiscal year, by a different contractor than the one holding the contract in the prior fiscal year. A way to deal with this appears at the end of this paper.

Early in the period that the Post Office Department began making monthly lists available, and based largely on the information Lyon had previously obtained, the PSS published as a supplement to the 1944-45 yearbook a list of offices authorized to sell precanceled postage. The introduction noted that it did not include offices that had ceased to use precancels. It also noted that war conditions had interfered with the original intention of a more complete presentation - presumably what later became the early versions of the Lyon list.

Back to the monthly lists. As an aid to understanding these records, the following is a compilation of what the lists of towns were called. Recognizing that it is not possible to determine what was intended by headings on various lists provided by the Post Office Department, the Postal Service and its contractors, the information is presented below with some observations (or speculation) as to its use or limitations.

### **August 1940 through May 1953**

“New Post Offices authorized to sell precanceled stamps during the month of ...”

- May not mean that the device was ordered or shipped during the specified month, and likely does not
- Implies that the only newly authorized offices are included. This could account for a large number of no date NHEs and electros (This is supported by at least one instance of Lyon annotating on the list that the town was previously authorized, and striking it out on the list - and not reporting it in the Forum. However, such towns **were** included in the 1971 Lyon list.) Speculating, based on the few instances where there was a “previous” annotation, the POD probably did intend to list only new towns - and generally did so. This would certainly be borne out by the many no date devices in this period of NHEs.

### **June and July 1953**

“Handstamps for precanceling postage stamps were ordered for the following post offices, at which precanceled stamps are being used for the first time”

- The change in wording implies that the devices were ordered during the month, but not necessarily shipped that month (only an issue when contractors change)
- The same issue regarding new as discussed above relates also to this period

### **August 1953**

“Handstamps for use in precanceling postage stamps were ordered for the following post offices during the month of August”

- “ordered”, not necessarily shipped (only an issue when contractors change)
- Neither “new” or “first time” are used, but most significantly, this note appears on the list, “Because the procedure for issuing permits to use precanceled stamps has been changed locally, this list will not longer be furnished.”
- This was the point in time at which precancel permit approval was decentralized from Washington to individual postmasters.

### **September 1953**

Apparently there was a change of heart, because we have a list headed:

“During the month of October handstamps for use in precanceling postage stamps were ordered for the following post offices.”

- Seems to imply all devices ordered, not just new offices
- Ordered, not necessarily shipped in October

However, checking the Forum confirms that Lyon still left out previously “authorized towns (although, as noted before, they do appear in the 1971 Lyon list)

### **November 1953**

“Post Offices furnished hand precanceling equipment during November 1953”

- Note change to “furnished”; most likely still means “ordered”
- Lyon again struck our previously authorized and did not report in Forum (same treatment of December list, and I stopped checking each month - primarily because he did include all of the towns in the 1971 list.)

### **December 1953 through May 1958**

“List of Post Offices furnished hand precanceling stamps during month of December 1953”  
Subsequent months have slight variations in wording - adding “with”, or leaving out “List of”,  
Substituting “equipment” for “hand precanceling stamps” - but the intent is the same

### **June 1958 through May 1959**

“Orders placed for rubber stamps”

- Beginning of the vinyls
- Baumgarten held the contract for this period, and there were apparently no June 1959 orders, pending a change in contractors

### **July 1959 through June 1975**

“Hand precanceling stamps (Item No. 762) furnished to post offices during ...”

- Note about Electroplates: February 1962 is the first time electroplates were observed on the monthly lists. The presence of so many no date electroplates would be because they were not reported along with hand devices.

### **July 1975 through March 1992**

The format changed again. Typically there was a cover sheet that said something like “attached

are precancel reports for the month of . . .”. What was attached was lists of devices ordered, generally by order number and date (looks like weekly) from each of the two postal supply centers that operated at that time. This continued through consolidation of the supply operation to one center, and subsequent movement of the contracting from Washington to other locations

#### **April 1992 through March 1997**

“Information on 762s ordered during .....

- This format continued through the duration of the period Lloyd Manufacturing held the contract.

#### **April 1997 through July 1998**

Effective April 1, 1997, the Baumgarten Company of Washington became the contractor. Through a series of circumstances too long to go into here, no lists were received for a 16-month period.

#### **August 1998 through present August 2007**

“Information on 762’s ordered”

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#### **Conclusions**

- 1) The early lists, through at least July 1953, appear to be of newly authorized offices. Accordingly, additional devices furnished to previously authorized offices would not be included. This would account for many “no date” devices, especially narrow hand electros.
- 2) It appears that aside from data obtained by Lyon from department records (which did include electroplates), the electroplates were not covered by the monthly lists until February 1962. This would account for the many “no date” electroplates in later styles.
- 3) The same as said for electroplates applies to envelope-using towns without exception after the initial Lyon data-gathering -- no data was made available after the early 1940s.