

BEGINNER'S CORNER

Is it Acceptable to Cut to 2x4?

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Editor's Note: Our question this month comes from Dan Sommerfeldt, #6333. Kelvin Kindahl, #4131, and Gary Hendren, #6020, contributed to the answering of this question.

I generally try to keep a postmark in the same condition that I received it (on piece, on cover etc.) unless it is "new" (circa post-1960) and isn't a post card, a postal card, or the envelope doesn't have a cachet, advertising slogan or some other tie to the postmark. (If not *gasp* I *do* whack it to a 2x4). Will the PMCC shave my head and take away my birthday for doing this? LOL. I know the preferred method now is to collect "on cover" but the space and mounting requirements are huge. Is this an inviolate rule or is my method an acceptable practice? Postmark collectors don't seem to be as fussy as stamp collectors. I don't want to be too far off the reservation though on my collecting method. I figure a letter to Aunt Maudie from Uncle Ed or a bill from the local utility is not likely to have a future historical value.

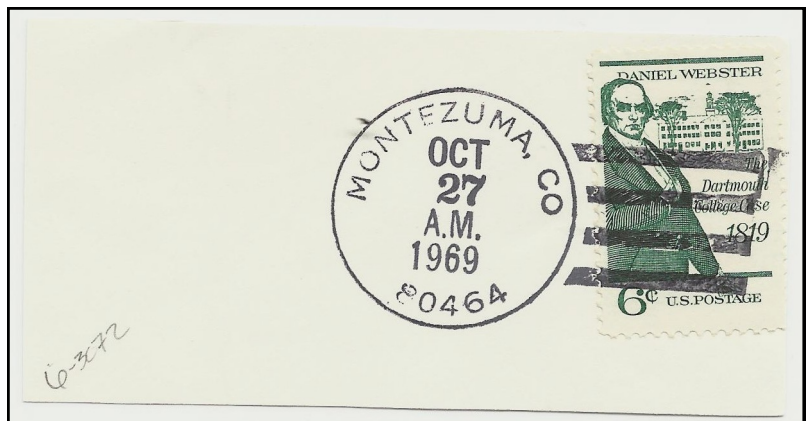
No, we won't shave your head or take away your birthday (we have enough of our own, thank you) for cutting something to 2x4. We are a tolerant group. However, leaving an envelope or card (collectively called covers) intact is the preferred method now (and a must for stringent postal historians).

History is not now, but history is *made* now for future collectors and scholars. That letter to Aunt Maudie from Uncle Ed may not seem important, but in the future it gives a glimpse of life of the common person of today. Many covers containing a letter inside (called an enclosure) are valued more than an identical cover without the enclosure.

For years, it was easy to think that anything more recent than, say, 1960, was common enough to never be valuable, and it would be fine to cut those envelopes down. However, that just isn't true. The reality is that nice post-1960, small sized, locally cancelled, postally used covers are surprisingly difficult to find. If everybody cuts them down, there won't be any full covers from this time period in the future. Either a letter from Aunt Maudie or a bill from the local utility are genuine postal usages, rather than philatelically created items, and are exactly the kind of cover collectors want.

With that said, many PMCCers collect only 2x4 or 3x5 due to space considerations or ease of use. That is one reason we accept your preferred collecting method—we understand.

Something to consider is that most postmark collectors sixty years ago or more collected 2x4 or smaller, probably for the reason of space. One way to deal with the space issue is to file covers in boxes, rather than mount them in albums. That is somewhat less bulky, and much easier to add to. Some collectors keep parallel collections of 2x4s and full covers. Plus, 2x4s and smaller cuts than 2x4 are great ways to build a collection, especially DPOs (Discontinued Post Offices), as those items can be purchased for considerably less than full cover.



Like this Montezuma, CO postmark, there are many DPOs since 1963 when the ZIP code era began. Extra white on the edges shows where it was cut to 2x4. Its discontinuation date is seen in lower left corner. The DPO Book: Discontinued and Renamed Post Offices in the ZIP Era, written by PMCC member Jay Lounsbury, #2820, is a nearly 300 page book listing all the DPOs since 1963. If a 2x4 is all you can acquire, that is OK, we accept that.

BEST
Buncombe Co.



BETA
Jackson Co.



BETHANIA
Forsyth Co.



BETHANY
Davidson Co.



A page from the extensive PMCC Willett/Thompson Collection that includes several different sizes of cut postmarks ranging from small circles around the postmark called round cuts (not very common today, but it was at one time) and square cuts (again, not common today), cut smaller than 2x4, 2x4 and those left full cover, all preferred at one time or another. Full covers, of course, are valued at more than square or round cuts. For instance, note the hand written date of the Bethany round cut at left. If left on full cover, it probably would be valued at around \$15 to \$20, but as a round cut maybe 1¢. However, if these small cut postmarks were not saved, the research value may have been lost forever.