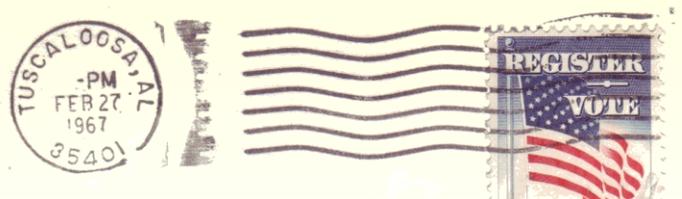
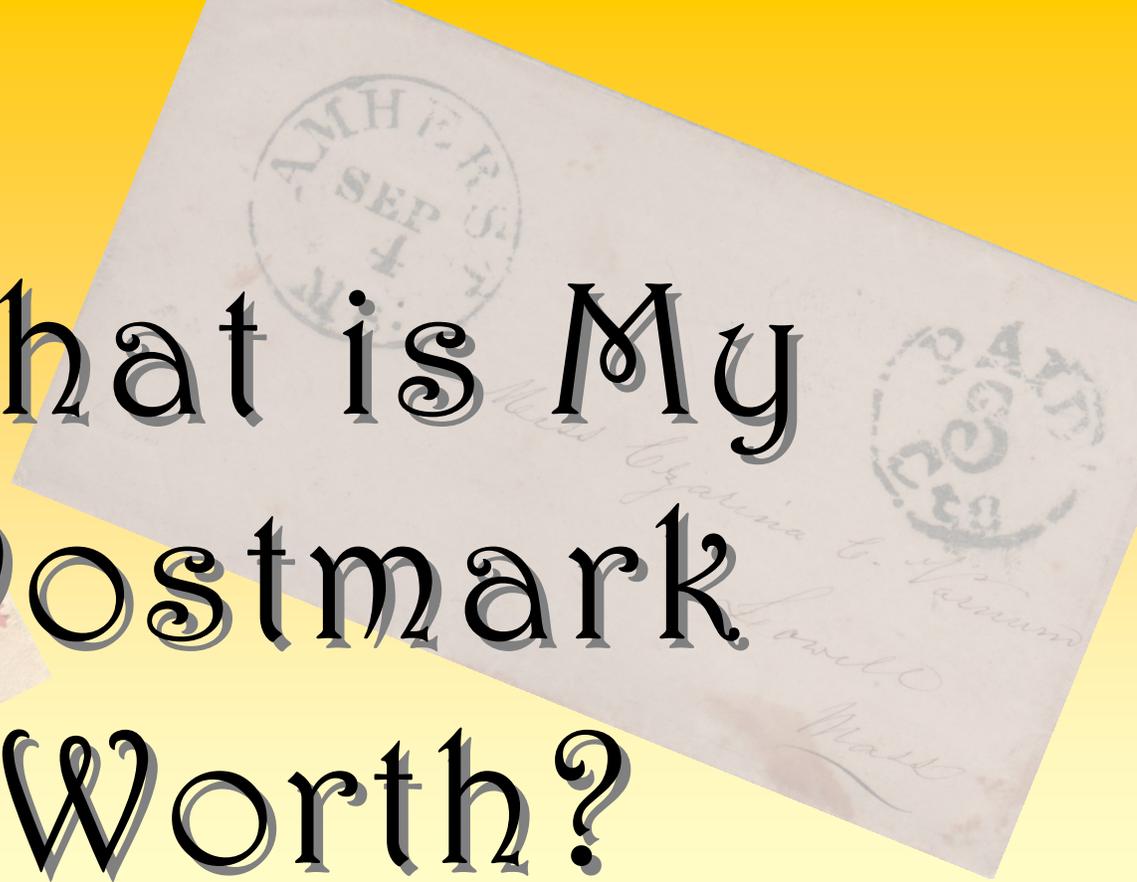


# What is My Postmark Worth?



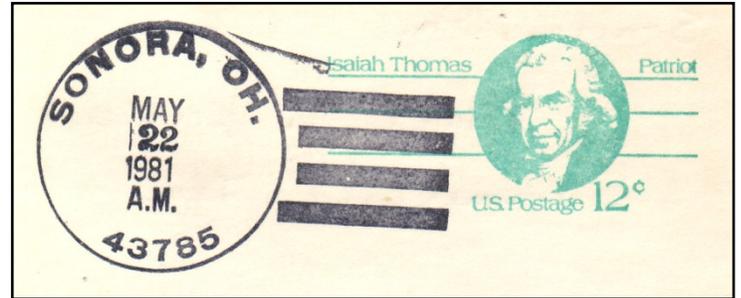
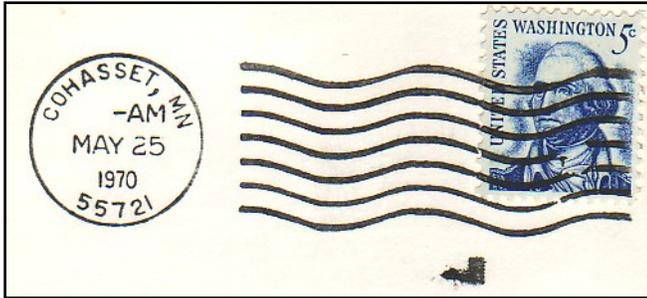
By Bill German, Editor PMCC Bulletin

# What is My Postmark Worth?



We at Post Mark Collector Club often get asked about the value of postmarks. Like any collectible, without seeing the actual postmarks it is impossible to tell value.

To give you a rough idea what you may have, below are a few examples with approximate values found at a stamp show or auction. If the postmarks are on full envelopes or post cards they are called covers. That is what collectors and dealers refer to them as. If the postmark is cut from the cover, it will be worth far less and maybe nothing. Some of the images below are cropped, but may actually be on full cover. Please keep that in mind.



A common machine postmark or hand cancel (cancel is another term for postmark) from the ZIP Code era since the 1960s may be worth pennies to a dollar or two. If the post office that the cancel is from is now closed, the postmark would be worth more.



A postmark from before ZIP Code usage, which began in 1963, may sell for a few dollars, again more if the post office is now closed.

*Terms postmark and cancel are often interchanged, but they are different parts of the same thing. The postmark tells when and where mailed. In the target cancel example below, so named because it looks like a target, the postmark is with the information, in this case Kidders, NY on Aug 8, 1904. The cancel portion, also called the killer, is the target. It cancels, or kills, the stamp for reuse.*

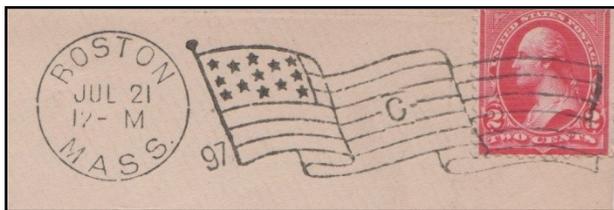
Above: Four Bar hand cancel  
Right: Duplex hand cancel



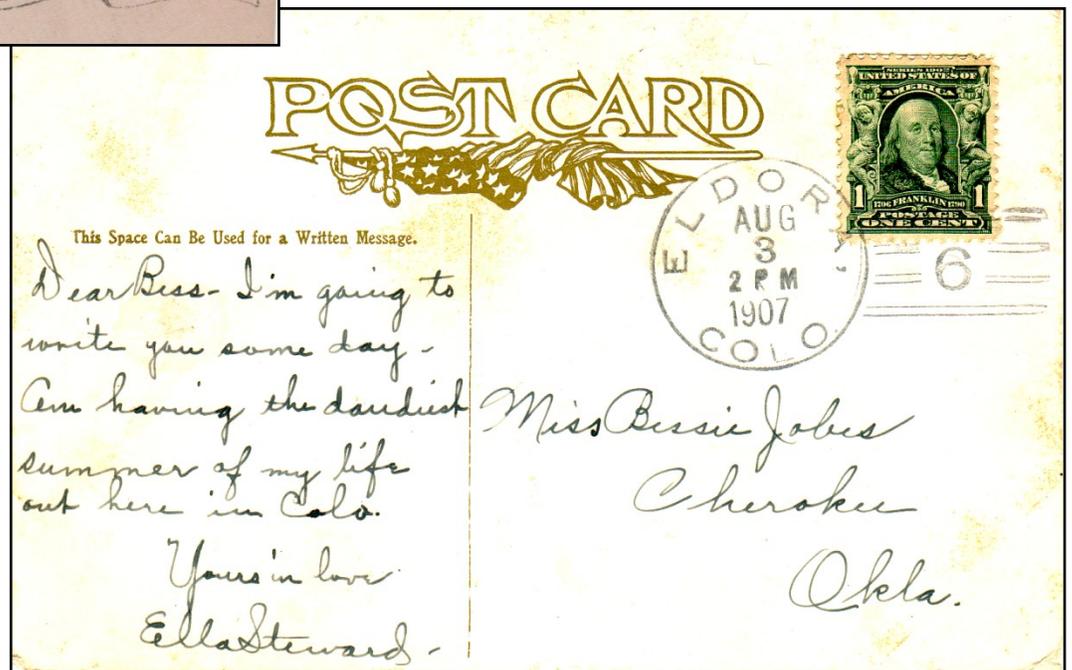
RFD in the lower left corner stands for Rural Free Delivery. Before 1896, rural residents had no delivery



Doremus Machine cancel



Flag cancel from the American Machine Company



Doane postmark

A postmark from a bygone era like machine postmarks from manufacturers no longer in existence to hand cancels from devices not used any longer will likely fetch anywhere from a few dollars to \$20, but can go much higher.

Postmark quality is determined on a rating system by most dealers. Although they vary from dealer to dealer and rating a postmark's and its cover's quality is objective, the approximate determination is as follows:

**Very Fine** – Overall appearance of cover perfect shape. Bold Strike, lettering perfectly struck. Rare before 1930.

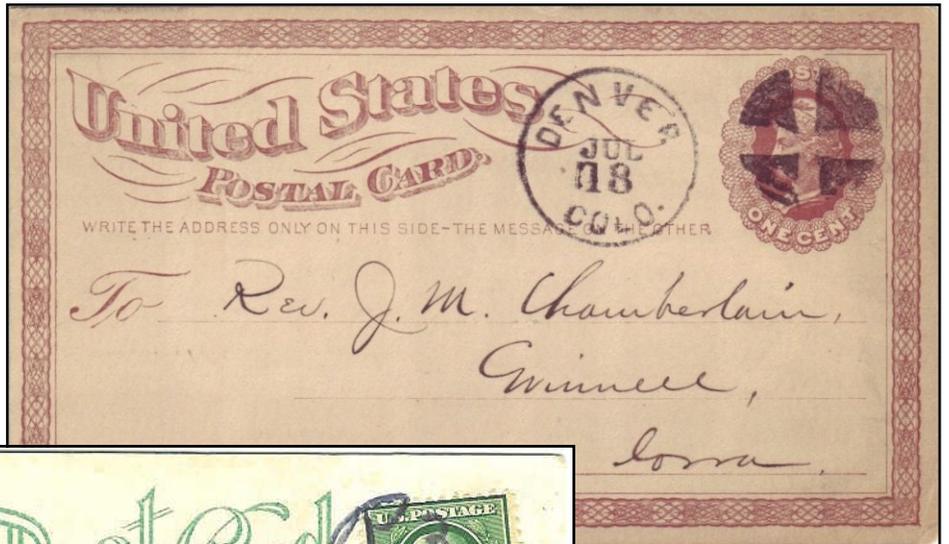
**Fine** – Cover in great shape, lettering very well struck, considerably better than average.

**Very Good** – Cover and postmark has shortcomings, but should be acceptable to most collectors, one or two letters may be light.

**Good** – Often really isn't that good. Cover with folds or tears. Missing letters in postmark strike, but name is identifiable.

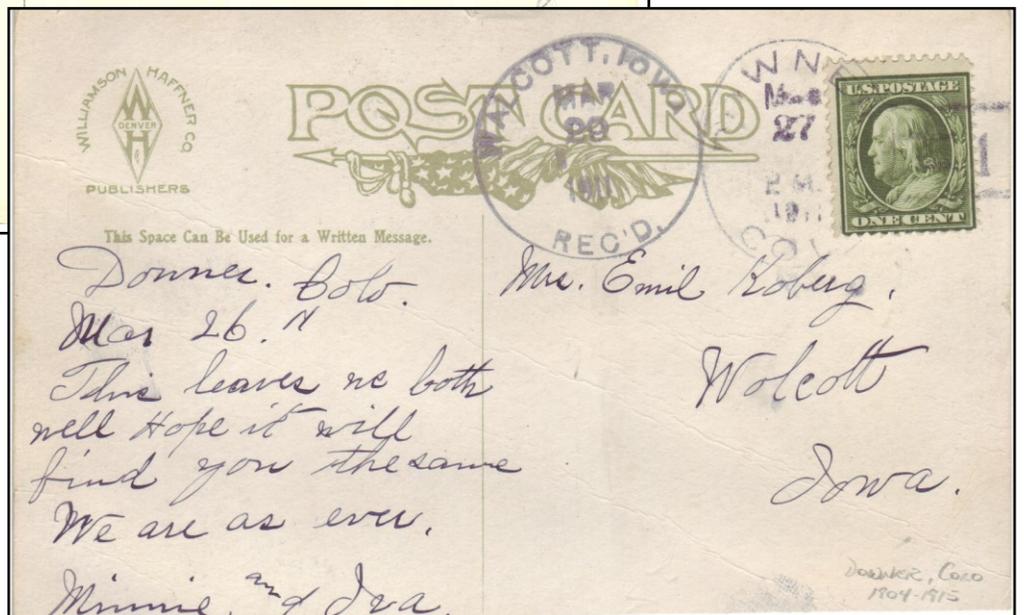
*This fine Denver fancy cancel was \$45.*

A fancy cancel (a fancy design used to cancel the stamp, almost exclusively from the 19<sup>th</sup> century) or a manuscript (handwritten post office of mailing information, again almost always 19<sup>th</sup> century) could sell for around ten dollars to hundreds of dollars for rare ones.



Nineteenth century covers will often fetch around \$10 to \$20 and up.

A postmark from a post office, i.e. town, that lasted only for a few years (like a mining camp) typically is worth much more. Here, Downer, CO was open from 1904 to 1915 and was priced at \$30. What rating would you give it?



T. B. HULL & CO.  
 COMMISSION MERCHANTS,  
 REFERENCE:  
 National Exchange Bank.

5 Pm

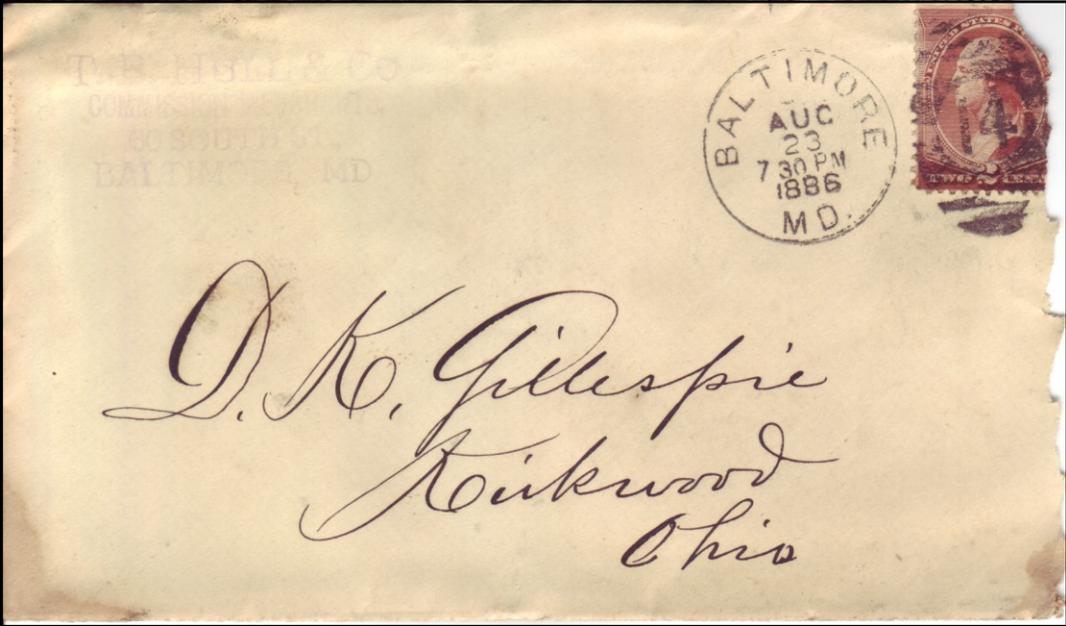
No. 60 SOUTH STREET.

BALTIMORE, 8 Mo. 23 1886

*D. K. Gillespie*  
*Edg.*

Other factors include historical value or if there is a letter enclosed adding value.

Duplex hand cancel



19<sup>th</sup> is a  
 shipment  
 full card  
 all r  
 Draft &  
 contract  
 At  
 higher  
 time t

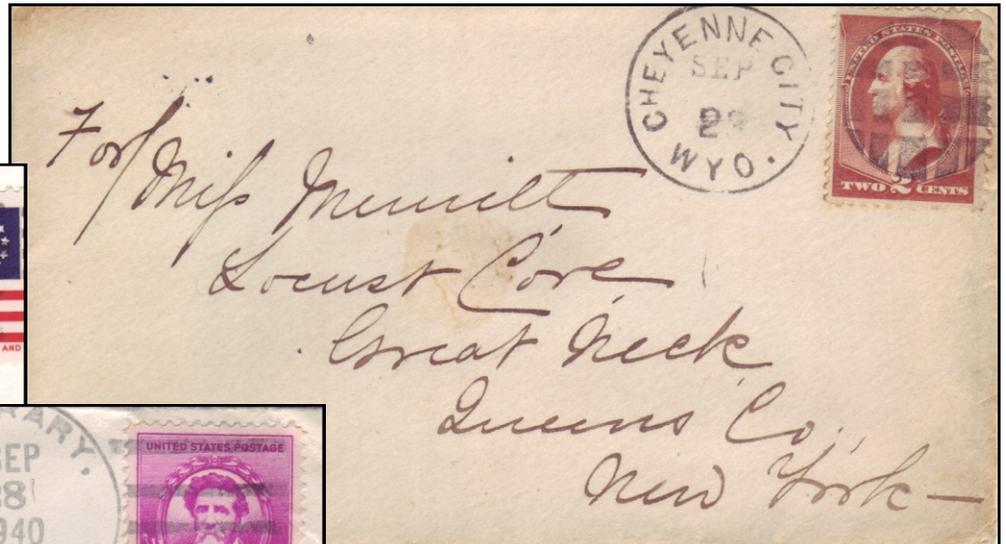
for 2 Red this morning; Have  
 no response at this writing.

It opened  
 this morning,  
 little after  
 however with  
 the war close  
 the morning came  
 very



Any cover from before the use of stamps called a Stampless Cover and could run \$20 to \$100. Stampless covers often contain a circle postmark called a circular date stamp, but could have other shapes. Many will have hand written amount of postage paid. Postage was calculated by weight and distance.

Remember, a cover or postmark deemed rare by the postal history or philatelic (stamp collecting) community would result in a larger price. Some covers could run into the thousands of dollars.



Three Wyoming postmarks with different price tags (all on full cover). Territorial Cheyenne City with fancy cancel, above, was purchased for \$35, Tipperary (operated 1916 – 1940) last day four bar with a very good postmark strike cost \$5 and relatively common Acme (1909-1980) was \$3.

The best way to tell value is to take your collection to a postal history dealer or a stamp dealer that also is familiar with postal history. Make sure they understand it is postal history: that is what the postmarks on envelopes or cards are called. If you have difficulty finding one in your area, there are some postal history dealers that do a remarkable business on the Internet. PMCC member Jim Forte at [postalhistory.com](http://postalhistory.com) is a good source. Other postal history dealers include, but not limited to, [postal-history.com](http://postal-history.com), [postalhistorystore.com](http://postalhistorystore.com) and [courtlandcovers.com](http://courtlandcovers.com). A couple of others, reached only by mail are Hedemarkin Collectibles at P.O. Box 7399, Bismarck, ND 58507 and Dr. Gary McIntyre, 904 Cheyenne Dr., Fort Collins, CO 80525. You may want to look for one in your area. Remember, any dealer will offer you less than value so he/she can make his/her money when he/she sells at approximate value. If the collection is worth a lot, the above postal history dealers will auction on consignment.

Hopefully, this has helped you with your question about value of your postmarks. Even if your postmarks are not worth much, postmark collecting is fun. Who knows, a few postmarks now could grow into many and some of those could be of great value.

Our museum is always looking for postmarks regardless of era or value. Contact the curator Bev Proulx at 7629 Homestead Dr., Baldwinsville, NY 13027-9408 or [stampdance@yahoo.com](mailto:stampdance@yahoo.com).

The recent Stromsburg, NE self-inking postmark cost 23¢ in postage to obtain the postmark, but probably would not cost that much at a dealer today. Meanwhile, even though Montrose, Colo is a fairly large town not in danger of losing its post office, this cover cost \$5 due to its date.

