

19th Century Town-Named Hand Carved Killers: a Follow-up

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In the USCC NEWS of May 2019, I wrote an article entitled “19th Century Town-Named Hand Carved Killers.” In that article I identified two killers, both from the 1870-80s Banknote period, where the town name appears as part of the killer separate from the town postmark. Further review of items that I have handled as a dealer revealed additional town-named killers, not previously identified in major references.

Lodi is in Seneca County, upstate New York in the Finger Lakes area and its post office has been around since 1829. Figure 1 shows a UX5 postal card postmarked in Lodi on August 25, (1877), when the town population was then around 1,900. The killer – not duplexed to the postmark – at first appears to be a large circle containing a possible geometric or letter combination. Figure 2 shows a close up of the cancellation impression with digital enhancement. I believe that close examination reveals that this killer spells out the LODI town name. Because smudging to the left center of the killer makes definitive reading difficult, I propose two possible ways that the four letters array to spell out the word LODI in capital letters:

- 1). A block “L” at left, a block “I” in the middle, a block “D” to the right (using the letter I as its spine), and the large circle representing the letter “O”.
- 2). A block “L” at left, a block “I” in the middle, a lower case “d” between the “L” and “I” that uses the letter “I” as its spine, and the letter “O” to the right of the letter “I”.

Regardless of the actual representation of the four letters, I believe that all can agree that the carver of this unusual killer intended to stylishly write out the Lodi town name in full.



Figure 2

Figure 1

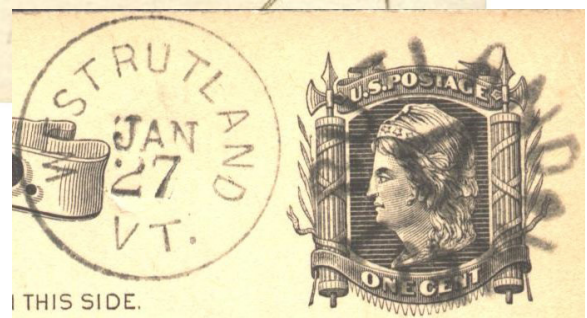


Figure 3

A second new example comes from the west central Vermont post office in West Rutland, which has been operating since 1826. Figure 3 shows the detail of a duplexed strike on a UX7 postal card postmarked January 27, (1882). The killer reads “WEST RUTLAND ♦” in a circular layout surrounding a central hollow triangle.

Subsequent to the publication of my original article, it occurred to me that it did not address town-named killers that appear on registered mail from the late 19th century. Such mail will typically have a postmark entirely separate from the killer and in a style that may be unrelated to the stamp killer. Figures 4 and 5 show two examples that I have located. Bound for Philadelphia, the first example is from Denver, Colorado in 1886, cancelled with a simple unserifed font in black. The second example, dated December 1, 1897 hails from Woodland, California, the seat of Yolo County and situated 15 miles northwest of Sacramento.



Figure 4



Figure 5

The author – contact information is on the masthead – would be most interested hearing from readers who can identify additional examples. ■