

UNITED STATES POSTAL AGENCIES IN THE FAR EAST 1867 - 1899

This exhibit is designed to show postmarks of the American postal agencies in Japan and China from the inauguration of service in those countries in 1867 to the end of the 19th Century. Although American commercial activity in Asia increased rapidly starting around the 1850s, mail to the U.S. initially had to be sent through foreign postal services via Europe or irregularly via private sailing vessels at costs ranging from 30 to 72 cents per ounce. Thus, pressure increased from U.S. citizens and businesses for an American postal service that would be both reliable and reasonably priced. President Lincoln authorized the development of such a service in 1865. As a result, during 1867 the first of an eventual six American postal agencies in the Far East were opened in Yokohama and Shanghai. The four offices in Japan were closed in 1875, but Shanghai remained in operation until the end of 1922.



This postmark is inscribed (in slightly abbreviated form) "U.S. Postal Agency/Shanghai." It was used showing only the month and day, but no year date, from May 1871 to July 1886. Above cover was franked with a 10 cent denomination 1869 stamp to pay the then current rate from Shanghai to the United States. The San Francisco transit marking applied on June 18 (1872), five weeks later.

As suggested by the long period of active operation, mail from Shanghai is relatively easy to obtain. However, some of the postmarks shown in the exhibit were used only briefly and are definitely difficult to find. The single marking of the agency in Tientsin must be considered as extremely elusive, and one is fortunate to ever find one. The scarcity of the Japanese markings is a significant constraint to making such an exhibit, as could be inferred from the relatively short period of operation in that country. The Yokohama office was open for more than seven years and processed the most mail. Thus, examples of its marking become available on the philatelic market from time to time. Those from the other three Japanese offices are another matter entirely. Only a single example has ever been recorded of Hakodate, and covers from Nagasaki and Hiogo are seen only once every decade or so. Thus, the material shown in the exhibit has taken a long time to accumulate and likely could not be duplicated except over a similar time period.

JAPAN

The 1867 U.S.A. - Japan Postal Convention authorized the opening of U.S. Postal Agencies, which were subsequently established in four cities: Yokohama, Nagasaki, Hiogo (Kobe) and Hakodate. In that same year, the subsidized Pacific Mail Steamship Company began service to Yokohama, with letters to the U.S. costing 10 cents per half ounce. The initial Postal Agency was opened at the Consulate in Yokohama on 27 July 1867. The final office was opened at Hakodate on Hokkaido Island about 1871. All of the offices closed in 1875.

Yokohama/Japan

26 November 1868



This early single rate cover is franked with a 10 cent adhesive of 1861. It has no despatch postmark as the earliest recorded use of the Yokohama cds is July 1870 (per Riddell). However, the letter is datelined "Yokohama 26th November 1868." A magenta marking inscribed "China and Japan Steam Service" was applied, and the cover traveled on the *S. S. Great Republic* of the Pacific Mail Steamship Company. It arrived in San Francisco four weeks later on December 23 and was received by Hastings & Co. in Boston on January 7, 1869.

No 149265

THE ROYAL PHILATELIC SOCIETY
LONDON



41, Devonshire Place,
London, W1N 1PE

Meeting of 28 JUN 1989

In the OPINION of The EXPERT COMMITTEE the item
submitted as

United States: 1861-62 S.G. No. 64
10c. Yellow-Green - Thin
paper - Used on lettersheet
is genuine.

Observations

[Signature]
Chairman

... email with some trepidation.

... It doesn't fit know patterns of usage at Yokohama
... carefully at your cover, I am as positive as I can be,
... used at Yokohama and is quite similar to cancels used at
... the "tie" looks a little weird. Before writing this, I sent a scan to
... to owner or my opinion, and he emailed me back that he feels that the
... bears a New York City cancel.

... nce is a known correspondence and in fact there are several Pony Express cov...

JAPAN
Yokohama, Japan

7 September 1873
26 April 1874



Only one postmark was used at Yokohama, recorded from July 1870 to August 1874. Under the Postal Convention ratified in April 1874, the U.S. agreed to close its Postal Agencies in Japan as of January 1875. This was done, except the Agency in Yokohama was kept open until the end of 1875 because of problems with Hong Kong postal officials refusing to accept U.S. mail in the Japanese post.

Above examples sent from Yokohama in 1873 and 1874, respectively, to domestic and international addresses. The latter is backstamped for receipt at Genoa on 10 June 1874.

JAPAN
Nagasaki, Japan

6 February 1873



The second Postal Agency to open in Japan was at the Consulate in Nagasaki on the island of Kyushu in August or September 1867. Prior to the arrival of the normal datestamp in 1872, stamps on letters were cancelled with a large "N," but only one such cover has been recorded (Spaulding). Even after the cds was placed in use, only a few examples have been recorded -- used in 1873 and 1874.

This example of the Nagasaki marking was used in 1873 on a letter to Yokohama. This is an extraordinary use with postage charged between U.S. postal agencies at the 3 cent domestic rate.

JAPAN
Hiogo, Japan

16 April 1873



The third Postal Agency to open in Japan was at the Consulate in Hiogo (now part of Kobe) on the island of Honshu in March or April 1868. Prior to the introduction of a postmark with the town name, stamps on letters were cancelled with a large "H." Only a few such covers have been recorded.

This example of the first Hiogo marking originated in 1873 per the enclosed letter. Addressed to Boston, it was franked at the normal 10 cent rate. The cover traveled on the *S.S. Japan* for 21 days from Yokohama, arriving in San Francisco on 14 May.

JAPAN
Hiogo, Japan/PAID

1 June 1874



Hiogo never used the conventional cds that was sent to the other Agencies, but did cancel mail with locally-made postmarks carved from wood. The first was inscribed "Hiogo, Japan" around the dial and "PAID" in the center. Only two covers with this marking have been recorded -- the other being sent to Philadelphia in July 1874. This office was closed at the end of 1874.

Above example of the Hiogo Paid cancel used on cover to France. Transit markings of San Francisco (28 June), New York (8 July), "Angl. Amb. Calais" and "Paris a Clermont" (both 20 July). Receiving backstamp of St. Etienne dated 21 July. Diamond-shaped British accountancy marking "G.B./3F60c" and manuscript "15" decimes charge applied on arrival in France indicate that the letter was treated as unpaid in spite of the "PAID" Hiogo marking.

JAPAN
Hiogo, Japan
Hiogo/Japan



Two additional locally-made postmarks carved from wood have been recorded from Hiogo. The first is believed to be the same device as the "Hiogo, Japan/PAID" cancel but with the "PAID" excised so that it could be used on franked mail. Only one cover is recorded with this marking, sent to Providence in August 1874.

A second circular cancel is also known. It is much smaller in diameter, with double rings, and has "Hiogo/Japan" set upright at top and bottom instead of reading around the dial. A handful of covers have been recorded with this marking, and there are other examples on loose stamps, shown above on adhesives from the 1869 series. All of these are, of course, undated.



The Philatelic Foundation

No. 532955
01/12/2016

341 West 38th Street • 5th Floor
New York, NY 10018

EXPERT COMMITTEE

We have examined the enclosed item, of which a photograph is attached, and *described by the applicant* as follows:

Country: UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Cat. No.	Issue	Denom.	Color
114	1869	3¢	ultramarine

Scott's unless otherwise specified.

USED, HORIZONTAL STRIP OF THREE TIED ON SMALL PIECE BY "HIOGO, JAPAN" DOUBLE CIRCLE CANCELS.

AND WE ARE OF THE OPINION THAT:

IT IS GENUINELY USED ON PIECE, THE STAMPS WITH SPLIT GRILLS. *****



532955

F 266879

For The Expert Committee
Chairman

Photocopies of this Certificate are not valid.

THE PHILATELIC FOUNDATION

No. 0185038
1/21/89

270 MADISON AVENUE
NEW YORK, N.Y. 10016

EXPERT COMMITTEE

We have examined the enclosed item submitted by the applicant described as follows:

Country: UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Cat. No.	Issue	Denom.	Color
113	1869	2¢	brown

Scott's unless otherwise specified.

USED WITH HIOGO, JAPAN CANCELLATION.

OF WHICH A PHOTOGRAPH IS ATTACHED AND ARE OF THE OPINION THAT:

IT IS GENUINE WITH SLIGHT CREASES *****



[Signature]

For The Expert Committee
VICE Chairman

33597



The Philatelic Foundation

501 Fifth Avenue • Suite 1901
New York, NY 10017

EXPERT COMMITTEE

No. 0384287
5/29/02

We have examined the enclosed item, of which a photograph is attached, and *described by the applicant* as follows:

Country: UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Cat. No. 100 Issue 1867 Denom. 30¢ Color orange

Scott's unless otherwise specified.

USED
HIOGO JAPAN CANCEL.

AND WE ARE OF THE OPINION THAT:

IT IS GENUINE WITH A SMALL CORNER CREASE AT TOP
RIGHT AND A TINY TEAR * * * * *



Members of ISJP Expertizing Service have examined the item submitted and it is their opinion that it is

*genuine in all respects with above
circle HIOGO Japan letter cancel.*

Date 4/20/02

(ISJP Authorized Signature)

LOT Crane
For The Expert Committee
Chairman

Photocopies of this Certificate are not valid.

Submitted by ALAN COHEN

086526

CHINA

The initial U.S. Postal Agency in China was opened on 3 August 1867 at the General Consulate in Shanghai. Postal charges for mail sent from China to the United States were at international rates until 1 June 1903, when they were reduced to the comparable domestic rates.

P.O.D. U.S. Con. Genl./Shanghai

24 February



The first postmark was inscribed (in abbreviated form) "Post Office Department United States Consulate General/Shanghai." The period of recorded use of this device was 20 March 1868 to 24 October 1871. This cover paid the then current 10 cent international rate to travel from Shanghai via Costa Rica to New York. It is docketed as received on 22 April after 57 days in transit.

CHINA
U.S. Postal Ag'cy/Shanghai

14 May 1875
14 June 1876

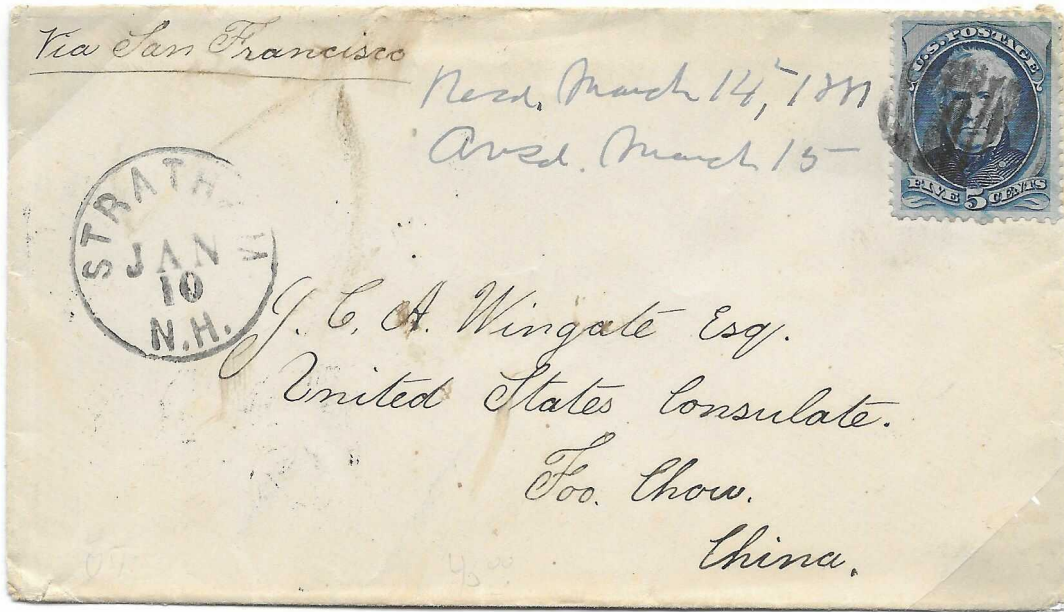


The consulate postmark was replaced with one more properly inscribed "United States Postal Agency/Shanghai," which also contained the date in two lines without indicating the year. Its earliest recorded use is 12 May 1871, and the latest is in July 1886. The upper example is a double-weight cover at twice the old 10 cent rate from Shanghai to Virginia. Note San Francisco "Paid All" mark.

On 1 July 1875, the postal rate for one-half ounce letters from the U.S. Postal Agency in China to the home country was reduced to 5 cents, in accordance with the U.P.U. requirement. A new stamp depicting President Zachary Taylor was issued in June of that year to pay this international rate. The lower example is a single-weight cover at the new 5 cent rate from Shanghai to Massachusetts.

CHINA
U.S. Consulate General/Shanghai, China

2 March 1882



Although a postal marking was obviously available at the time, the cds of the U.S. Consulate in Shanghai was used on occasion as a receiving or transit mark on incoming mail. The two covers above from the same correspondence were sent from New Hampshire to the U.S. Consul in Foochow via Boston, San Francisco and Shanghai. Note backstamp showing the large purple handstamp of the Consulate. With no receiving mark, it was likely forwarded to Foochow in the diplomatic pouch. Manuscript indication on the front that the letter was received on 14 March 1882.

CHINA
U.S. Postal Agency/Shanghai

13 December 1889



In 1886, an entirely new type of postmark was introduced. It was a double oval inscribed "U.S. Postal Agency/Shanghai." The year was disclosed in the date for the first time. Normally the postage was cancelled with a pen or cork obliteration, with the oval marking placed nearby. The earliest recorded use is 10 August 1886 and the latest in November 1890.

This example of the oval marking was used in 1889 on a single-weight cover to Vermont. backstamped for transit in San Francisco on 9 January 1890 and for receipt in Rutland on 15 January.

CHINA
U.S. Postal Agency/Shanghai

31 October 1890
9 November 1891

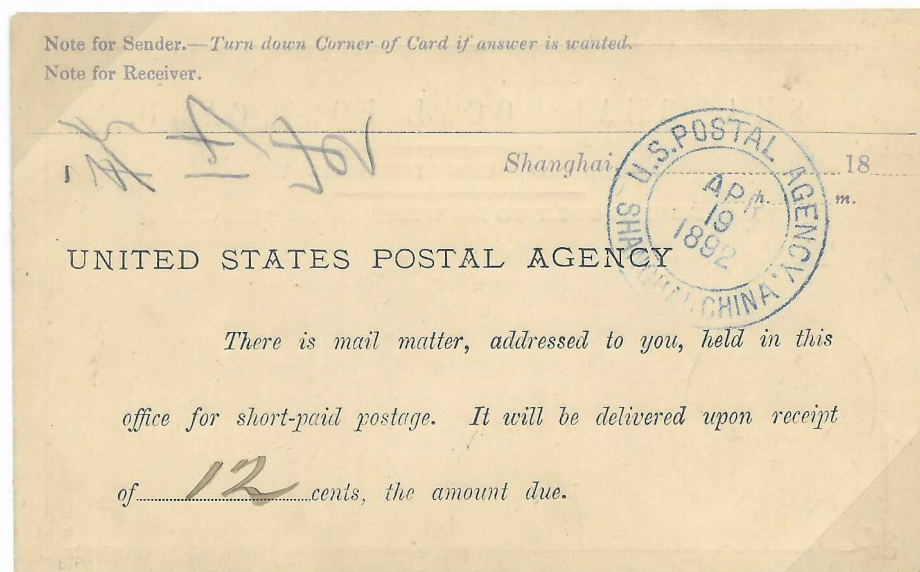
A second variety of the oval postmark had a period after "Agency" and the outer part of the oval was a double line. The earliest recorded use of this type is 31 October 1890 (below) and the latest is June 1892.

Examples shown are on the front of a registered packet sent to Toledo and as a backstamp on an incoming letter from Boston.



CHINA
U.S. Postal Agency/Shanghai, China

16 February 1892
19 April 1892

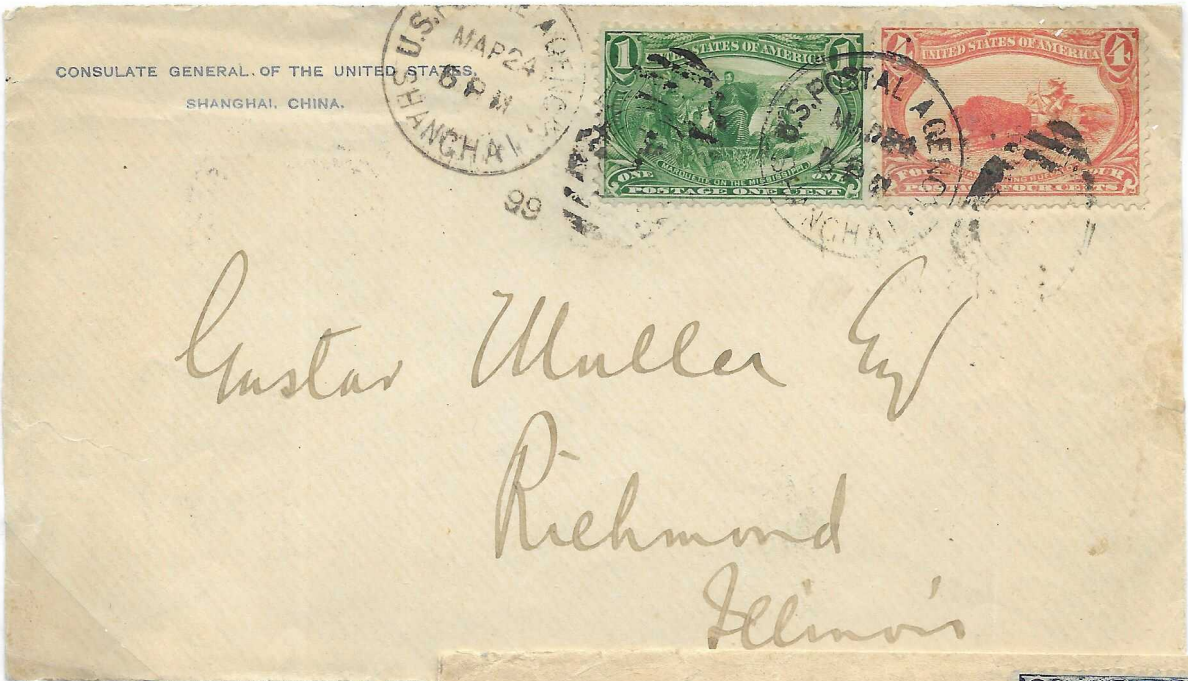


Another very elusive U.S. postal marking for China is this double-circle cds inscribed "U.S. Postal Agency/Shanghai, China." It is larger and differs in appearance from other postmarks. Only three examples recorded during its brief period of use from 16 February 1892 to 4 July 1893.

Lower example used to validate a message to a postal patron printed on a postal card sent through the Shanghai Local Post, whose marking was applied on the front and dated the following day.

CHINA
U.S. Postal Agency/Shanghai

24 March 1899
4 December 1899



The final 19th Century postal marking for China is this duplex cancel inscribed "U.S. Postal Agency/Shanghai." It was used for an extended time, being recorded between 16 February 1892 and 29 June 1902.

Examples shown are used on single and double-weight letters. The lower cover originated at Kinwha in the interior of China and has transit marks of the Chinese Post Offices in Ningpo of 20 November and Shanghai of 21 November. Note tie-print "IPO" applied to lower left corner of one stamp to discourage theft while in the Imperial Post Office system. (Why it took two weeks to get from the Chinese P.O. in Shanghai to the American agency in the same city is a mystery.)

CHINA
U.S. Postal Agency/Shanghai/China



One other marking of the Postal Agency is known from the period under review, but it is still regarded as a mystery even a century after it first appeared. This undated circular cancel has been found on U.S. stamps of the 1895, 1898 and 1902 issues. Such stamps have to be considered as cancelled par compliance as no examples are known to have been used on actual mail. In fact, the nearest thing to actual use is a pair of 1 cent stamps cancelled with this marking on a letterhead of the Postal Agency.

CHINA
U.S. Postal Agency/Tientsin

17 November 1888



By far the most elusive of the U.S. postal markings in China is the similar double-lined oval inscribed "U.S. Postal Agency/Tientsin." It was used for a brief period in the late 1880s. Only four examples have been recorded, with dates ranging from 11 December 1887 to 3 September 1889.

This example of the Tientsin marking was used in 1888 on a single-weight cover to Vermont. Transit markings of Shanghai on 30 November and San Francisco on 22 December and received in Rutland on 28 December.