



EMPIRE STATE
POSTAL HISTORY
SOCIETY

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THE 4-BAR HANDCANCEL CHALLENGE

By Glenn A. Estus

I shake my head from time to time when I read articles in postal history journals or visit online bulletin boards where writers apologize for intruding with questions or comments that pertain to twentieth century postal history as if anything after 1900 is not worth philatelic study or discussion.

But, there is much interesting material in post-1900 postal history also. One area that I have become interested in is Type E 4-bar handcancels issued in the summer of 1930 and part of 1931. In *A Catalog of Non-standard US Postmarks, 1900-1971*, Randy Stehle and Doug Deroest, write: "In August or September 1930, the P.O.D. (Post Office Department) introduced a drastically new design in 4-bar handstamp postmarks.(T)hese new devices — termed ... type E (and also known as Depression-era 4-bars) — are readily identifiable..."

Besides having small circle diameters and shorter and thick killer bars, as well as squared off ends on the killers bars, the handstamps have the town and state names in a full arc across the inside top of the dial. There is no wording at the bottom of the dial. This was the first time that the town and state names were issued in this format. This makes identifying these cancels extremely easy. However, since the cancels were used at post offices which had the least business, they can be extremely challenging to find. To me this challenge is a major part of my collecting enjoyment.

Furthermore, this type of handstamp was issued by the Post Office Department for about nine months and was replaced by a new type of handstamp in June 1931.

Even though they were sent to post offices for about only nine months, I have seen the Depression Era 4-bars used as late as 1950 (Triangle, Broome County) and as early as Coreys (Franklin County) from August 1931. Obviously, since August 1931 is a full year after they were first issued, there are earlier dates for New York Post offices just waiting for me to add to my collection. Perhaps you have an earlier date or a later date in your collection. ■

