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U. S. NAVY SHIP CANCELLATIONS.

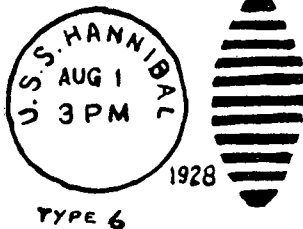
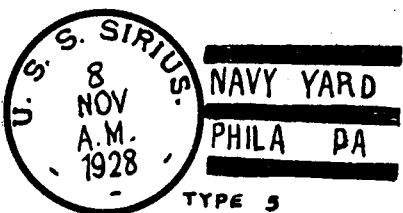
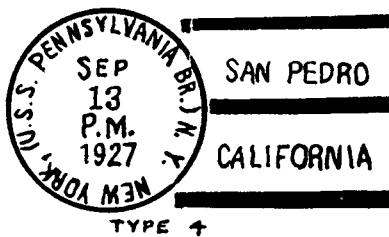
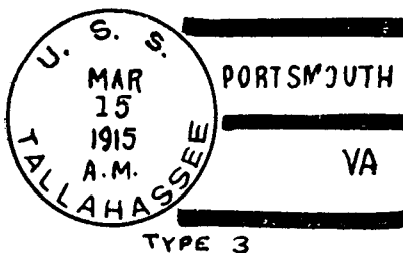
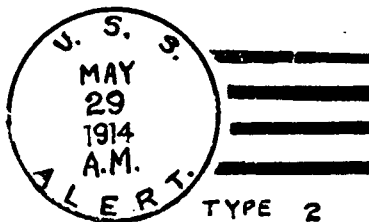
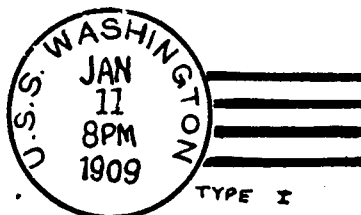
By DR. F. E. LOCY.

For the past three or four years there has been a rapidly growing interest in covers of all kinds. A share of this interest is now turning toward the collection of covers sent through the postoffices on board the ships of our Navy. This is an interesting side line to the collection of the stamps of the United States. It is on these covers that frequently we may find U. S. stamps used abroad. Cancellations which show the location of our ships in the ports of China, Cuba, Mexico, Nicaragua and Europe are quite common.

In the early days mail was sent and received through the post offices of the various seaports. When abroad, the mail was despatched either through the local U. S. Consul or the local foreign post office. In the early '40s the librarian of the U. S. Naval Lyceum in the Brooklyn Navy Yard despatched mail sent in his care to the officers of the Fleet.

By the Act of May 27, 1908 congress authorized the establishment of a postal service aboard the various ships of the Navy. Soon after Navy Mail Clerks and Assistant Navy Mail Clerks were appointed from among the enlisted men by the Secretary of the Navy. They received, as they still do today, extra compensation for this work. Vessels with a complement of over 650 men were entitled to a Navy Mail Clerk and an assistant. Vessels or flotillas having complements of 125 to 650 had one Navy Mail Clerk. In the fall of 1908 all vessels having complements of over 35 were allowed a mail clerk. During the past twenty years nearly 700 ships have had post offices aboard. The current volume of the U. S. Postal Guide, which may be found in any post office, gives the current list of ship's post offices.

The earliest type of postmark found on letters from Navy ships is similar to Type 1, shown in the illustration. The cancellation stamp was of rubber and had removable type to show the date and hour. As with all rubber stamps after long and hard usage, the outlines would often become distorted and portions broken off or worn down. A common variation from the type illustrated is with the name of the ship in letters with serifs. Types 1 ay and 9 v were also used in the early days of the Navy Postal Service.



A few years later, probably in 1911, Type 2 appeared. This and Type 1 are often found with the bars removed. Type 3 appeared about fifteen years ago and remains today the commonest type of cancellation on letter mail. The cancellation stamp Type 3 has grooves between the killer bars where rubber type may be placed to indicate the location of the ship or occasionally to express some sentiment such as "JOIN THE NAVY". Very frequently the letters between the bars are left out. This leads to distortion of the bars, and they become curved, twisted out of parallel and frequently are broken and one or more of them found missing. While the ship's name is usually found with block letters, letters with small serifs are not infrequent, occurring about one in four of this type.

Type 4 appeared a few years ago but was never put into general use. It is of course similar to Type 3 except that the name of the ship is in parentheses and is shown as branch of the post office at New York, N. Y. This cancellation stamp caused confusion in that letters were frequently addressed to the ship care of the postmaster at New York even though the ship might be in the Pacific Ocean and letters would go much more directly when sent via one of the post offices on the West Coast. On the U. S. S. Pennsylvania, which bases usually at San Pedro, California, the words "BR. NEW YORK, N. Y." and the parentheses were removed from the cancellation stamp. Type 5 is also a rubber stamp and appeared first in the fall of 1928. Recent requisitions for new stamps are being filled with this type. Type 6 is a steel hand stamp similar to those used for many years in civilian post offices ashore. There are three major variations of this canceler. It has been in use on the larger ships for the past four years. Types 7, 7t and 8 are machine cancellations and are in use only in the larger ship post offices. Type 9 or 9u is found on practically all ships and is commonly seen on all classes of mail matter. The larger offices also use Types 9v, 9w and 9x.

Occasionally while some ship has been in a foreign port a cancellation stamp has