

New Information on a Mittineague "7" Killer

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Collectors are always looking to enhance their collections with new items that tell a story and add new information about the areas in which they collect. As a dealer specializing in cancellations and postal markings, I am no different. Several years ago I wrote an article for the *NEWS*¹ analyzing the fascinating numeral "7" killers of the town of Mittineague, Massachusetts. So, it was with much excitement that I discovered a number of similar, but apparently different versions of a scarce Mittineague killer while perusing a dealer's stock of 3¢ greens at a recent show (my first in over a year's hiatus due to COVID-19 restrictions!). A selection of the better strikes is illustrated in Figure 1, with some magnification. Figure 2 shows two tracings from Whitfield² relevant to this discussion.



Figure 1

The particular Mittineague killer is Whitfield 6449, a negative "7" within a 13 point starburst.³ Finding so many of these in one place (all on the soft paper ABNC issue, Scott #184) made me quickly realize that I was seeing three different versions of this cancellation. The first notable difference is the height of the numeral "7". From left to right this decreases from 14mm to 12mm. I believe that the Whitfield 6449 tracing is from the 13mm version. The "7"s of the 14mm and 13mm versions are stylistically the same (tailed crossbar), but the larger one is significantly fatter at the bottom and cuts much closer to edge of the starburst. (The large "7" may also be scarcest, since the pictured example was the only one among the several available examples in the dealer's stock.)

The 12mm "7" clearly differs from the Whitfield 6449 tracing in that its crossbar is without tails and is cut significantly deeper in the upstroke. This small "7" might also be the same as that in the 6451 tracing. Perhaps, this particular negative starburst was recut into the outlined negative 6451. If there are confirming on-cover examples of these different 6449 versions, I would love to see them and perhaps date their progression. ■

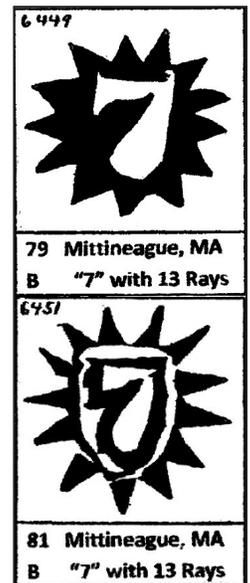


Figure 2

Endnotes:

1. Valenti, John, "Exploring the Mystery of the Mittineague 7s", U.S. Cancellation Club *NEWS*, Whole No. 272 (August 2009), pp. 100-101.
2. Whitfield, Kenneth, A., *Cancellations Found on 19th Century U.S. Stamps*, U.S. Cancellation Club, 2002, p. 217.
3. In my 2009 article, I mused that perhaps the Mittineague 7s were symbols of luck. It was later pointed out by another club member that both tracings 6449 and 6451 exhibit 13 points – a strong indication that the carver of these killers realized the import of his design to the element of luck.

Editor's Notes:

1. A little bit of digital enhancement strongly suggests the 13 points in the 14mm and 13mm killers are one in the same. One theory is that the "7" started out at 13mm and was then "supplemented" and recarved to be 14mm long and fatter in the tail. Getting a better sense of the chronological sequence is the only way to firm that theory up. The 12mm killer looks to be a totally different carving.

2. The killers out of Mittineague appear to an area that is ripe for further research. Readers are requested to send in scans of any and all Mittineague items and send them to the editor. Anyone willing to coordinate a possible study into Mittineague's cancels should also let the editor know.