U.S. MILITARY POSTAL STATIONS IN CUBA

This is a study of the US markings and postal history generated during the Spanish-Cuban American War period and the years that followed until the independence of Cuba in 1902. The main areas covered are: a) interrupted mails to Cuba and Spain; b) soldier's mail from training camps in the US; c) mail from US military personnel during the invasion and occupation of the island; d) the markings and postal history of military postal stations; e) the provisional stamp issues of Puerto Principe on cover; f) mail from the military camps established after the closing of the military stations; g) official mail and postal documents; and h) second US military occupation of Cuba.

Most of the exhibit is devoted to the military stations that were created by order of President McKinley on May 3, 1898. All the stations were at some point transferred to civilian control but the markings from the "military" period continued to be used, often for many months or years. Some of the military station postmarks are only known after they were officially under civilian control and they are included in this exhibit. As P.M.G. Emory Smith defined it in December 30, 1898 : "The postal system of Cuba, while for convenience practically administered under the direction of the Post Office Department, is to be maintained by virtue of military authority and as part of the military government established by the US during the period of control."

A total of 39 stations were gradually created as they were needed. No items have been recorded from stations 2, 9, 14, 25, 36, and 39. Markings from stations 2, 14, 25, and 39 have been reported by Dr. Antonio Barreras, a prominent student of Cuban philately in an article published in 1902, but no examples have been seen since his original report. The population figures were obtained from the U.S. census of 1899. The post office class refers to the Spanish colonial period.

This exhibit is divided as follows:

- The Catalyst for War
- Suspended Mails
- Training Camps in the USA
- Embarkation of Troops
- Sailor's and Soldier's Mail
- Military Stations During the War
- Military Stations After the War
- Puerto Principe Provisional Stamp Issues on Cover
- U.S. Military Camps in Cuba
- Military Hospitals in Cuba
- Military Camp in USA
- Postal Department Official Mail and Documents
- Second US military occupation of Cuba

U.S. MILITARY POSTAL STATIONS IN CUBA

The Catalyst for War

Following riots and rumors of a pro-Spanish and anti-American conspiracy in the Cuban capital, the U.S.S. Maine arrived at Havana on January 25, 1898 on a "friendly visit". It was destroyed by an explosion, under unclear circumstances, on the night of February 15 with the loss of 268 American lives.

A US Naval Court of Inquiry concluded that the explosion was due to a submerged mine and prowar sentiment grew.

Captain Charles Dwight Sigsbee commanded the late battleship and wrote this note:

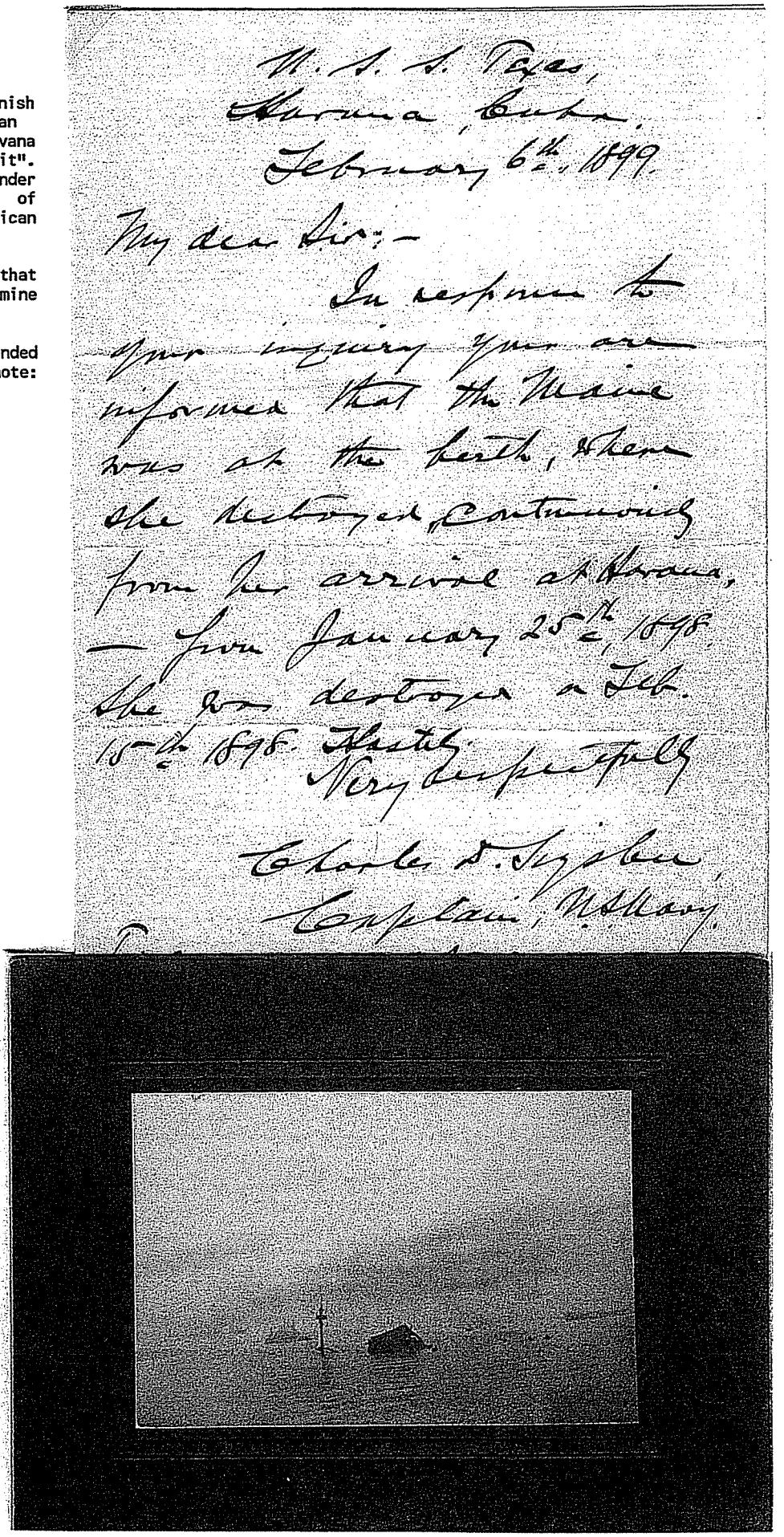
" U.S.S. Texas,
Havana, Cuba.
February 6th., 1899.

My dear Sir:-

In response to your inquiry you are informed that the Maine was at the berth, when she [was] destroyed, continuously from her arrival at Havana, - from January 25th, 1898. She was destroyed on Feb. 15th 1898. Hastily.

Very respectfully

Charles D. Sigsbee
Captain, US Navy "



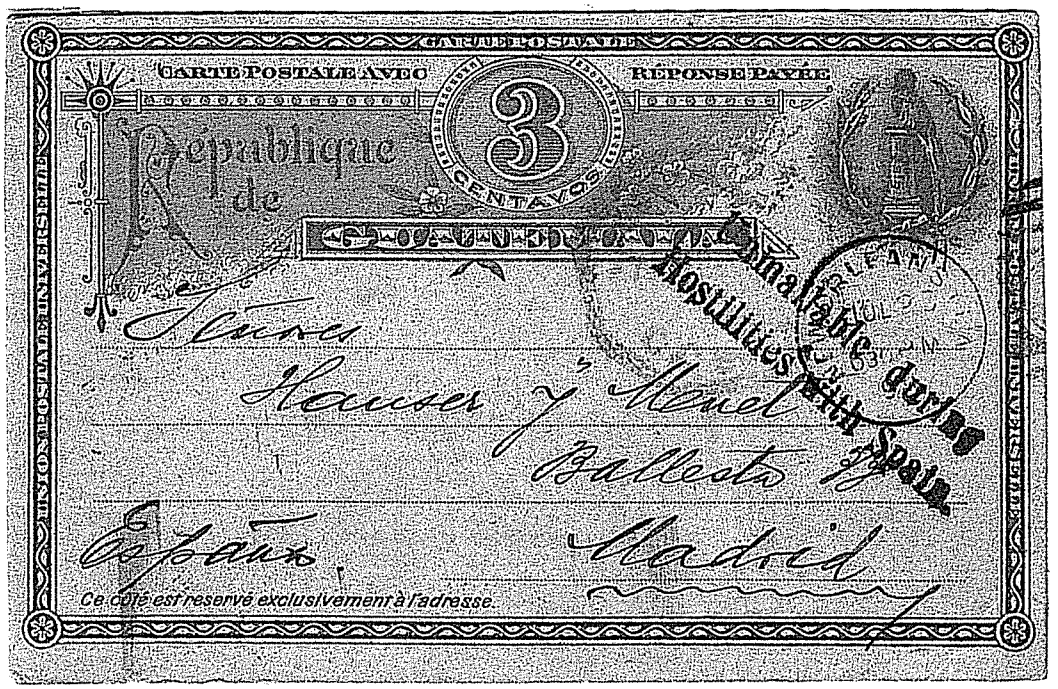
Wreck of the U.S.S. Maine.

U.S. MILITARY POSTAL STATIONS IN CUBA

Suspended Mails

Order number 161 of April 26, 1898 by Postmaster General Charles E. Smith suspended mails between the US and Spain and its Colonies. However, letters were being held since at least one week earlier.

The US naval blockade of Cuban ports started on April 22 and war was officially declared on the 25th.



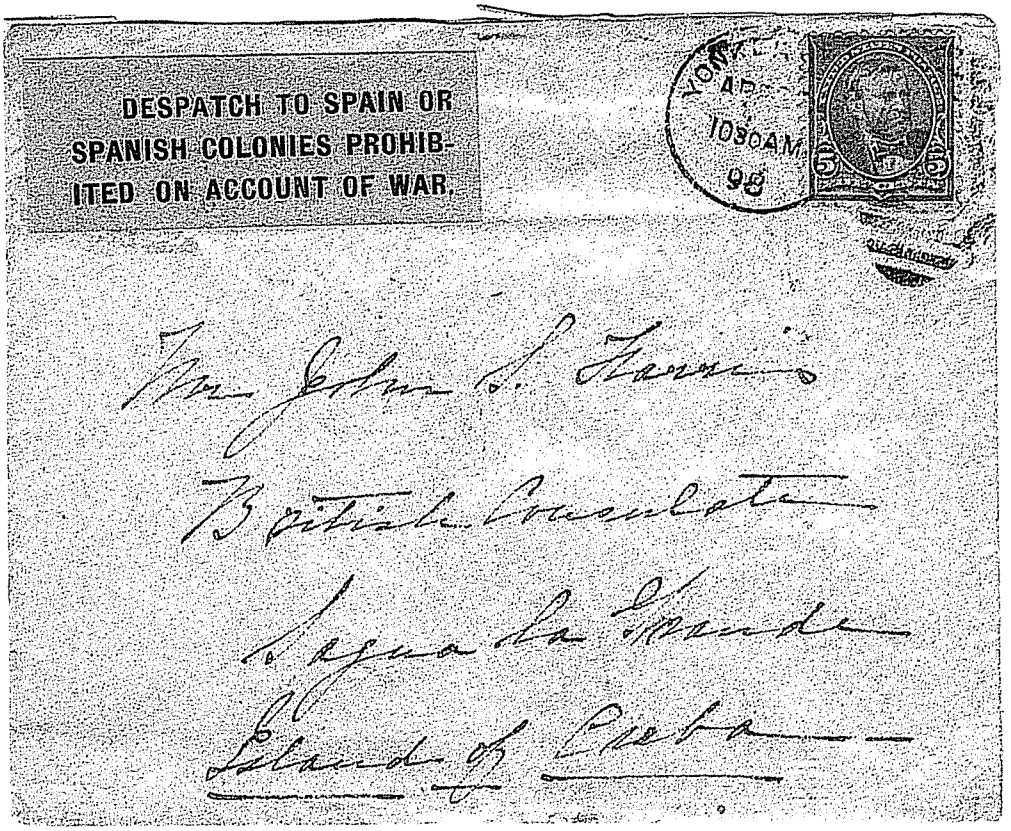
July 6, 1898. Coban, Guatemala to Madrid, Spain via New Orleans (July 23). There is one other recorded example of the marking "Unmailable during/Hostilities with Spain." from New Orleans. Most of the mails from the Caribbean, Central and South America during this period went through New Orleans.

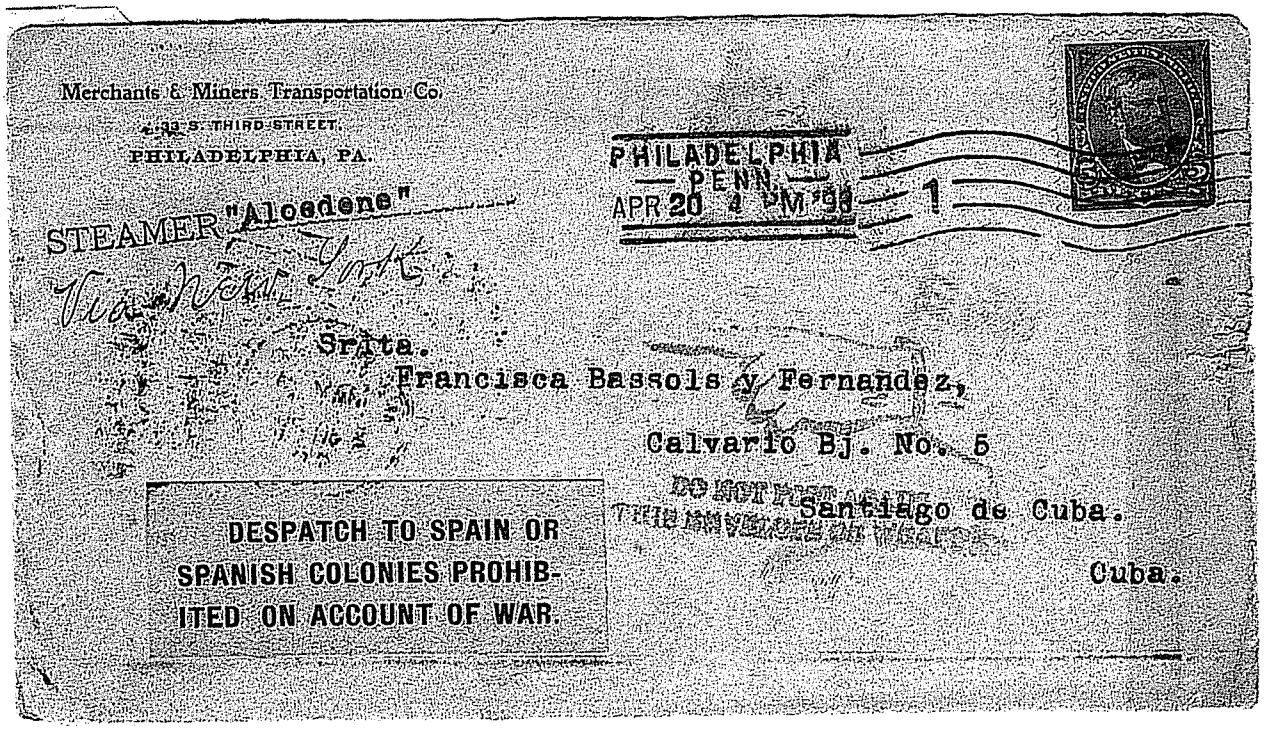
The vast majority of mail to Cuba was dispatched from New York, which was the only other US city that used distinctive handstamps or labels on interrupted mail during the war.

U.S. MILITARY POSTAL STATIONS IN CUBA

Suspended Mails

New York used two types of labels on suspended mail. The first one has the letter "D" of "DESPATCH" above the "N" of "SPANISH". Two examples of the early type of label on first class mail to Cuba are shown below. Some letters were delivered after the war while those with return address were sent back to the sender.





U.S. MILITARY POSTAL STATIONS IN CUBA

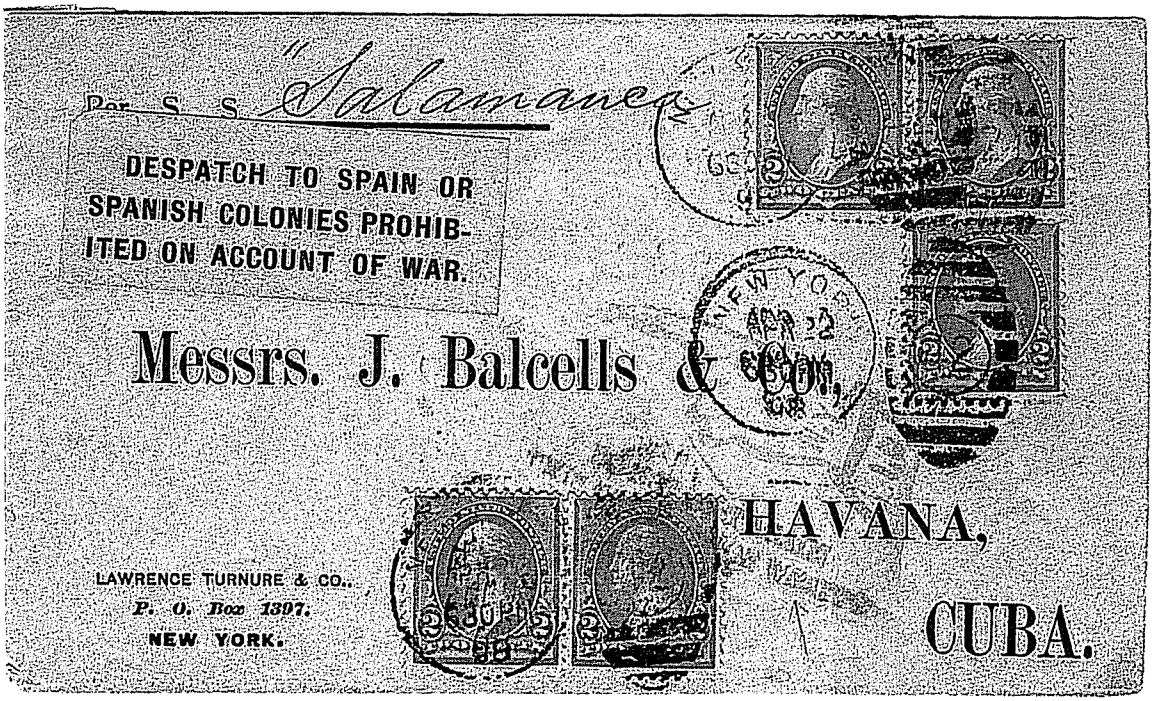
Suspended Mails

The two types of labels used at New York City. The first one on a cover held for insufficient postage. The second one, with the letter "D" of "DESPATCH" above the "A" of "SPANISH", on a first class letter that was returned to the sender.









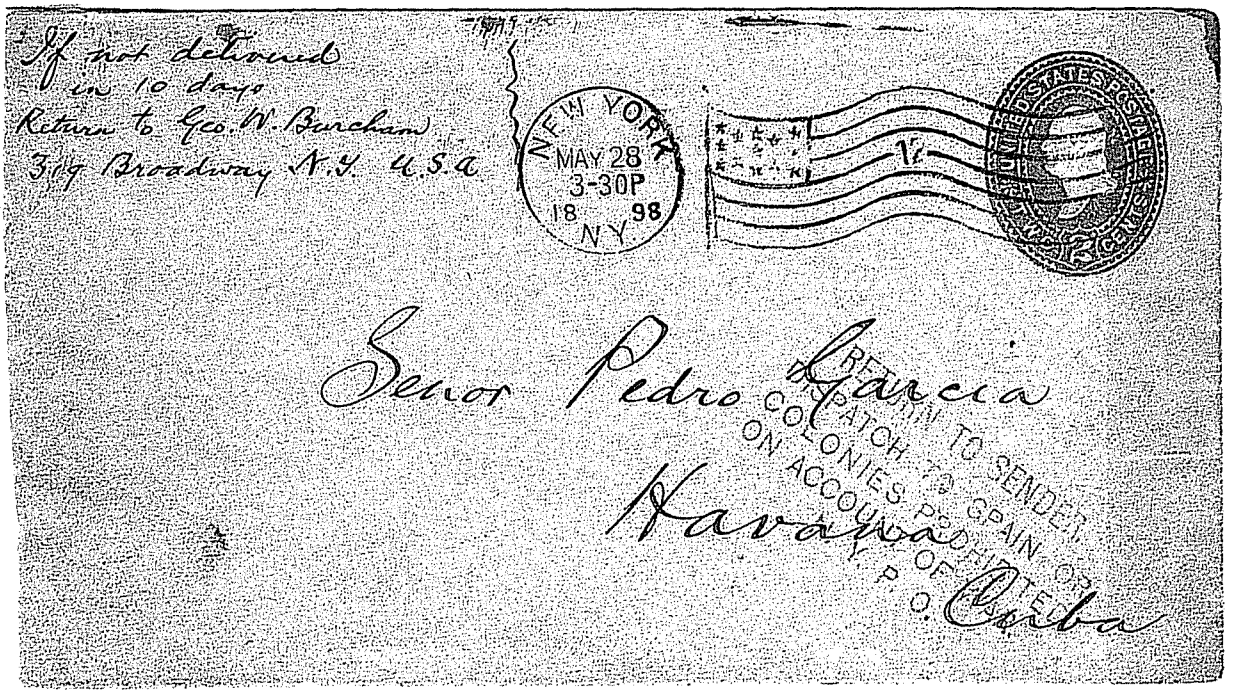
U.S. MILITARY POSTAL STATIONS IN CUBA

Suspended Mails

During May of 1898 the post office at New York City started using handstamps instead of labels.



April 16, 1898. New York to Havana. Only recorded example of the first type of handstamp dated May 6. This cover was previously held for insufficient postage.



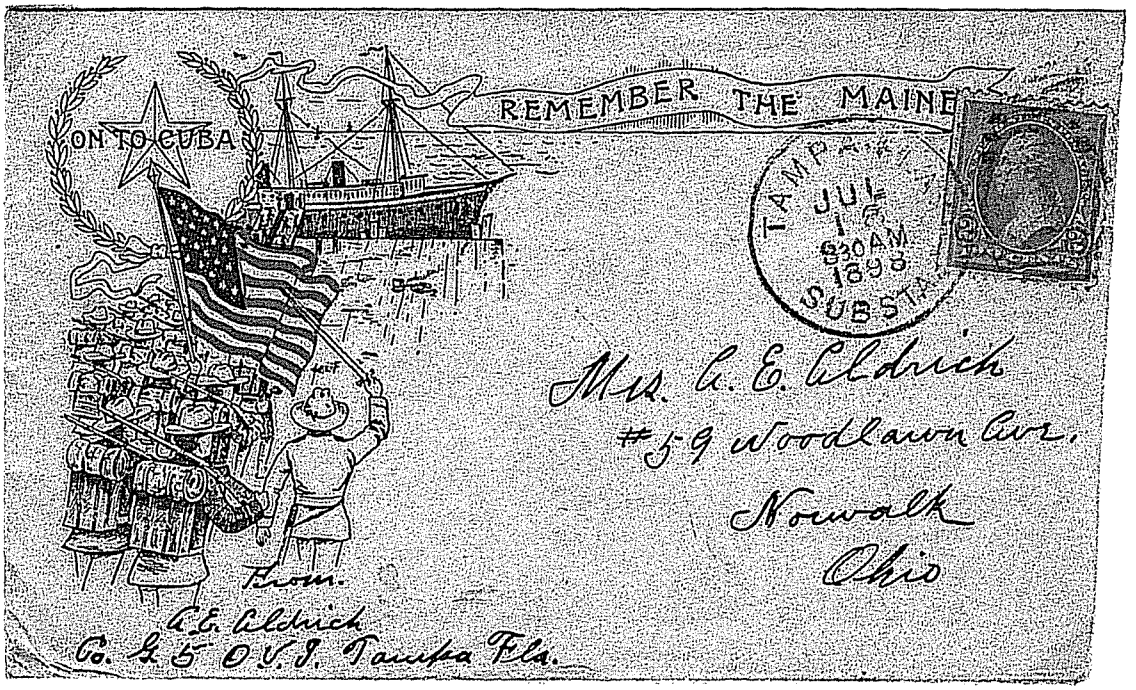
May 28, 1898. New York to Havana. Last type of handstamp used on suspended mail at New York. It incorporates the words "RETURN TO SENDER." and has no date.

U.S. MILITARY POSTAL STATIONS IN CUBA

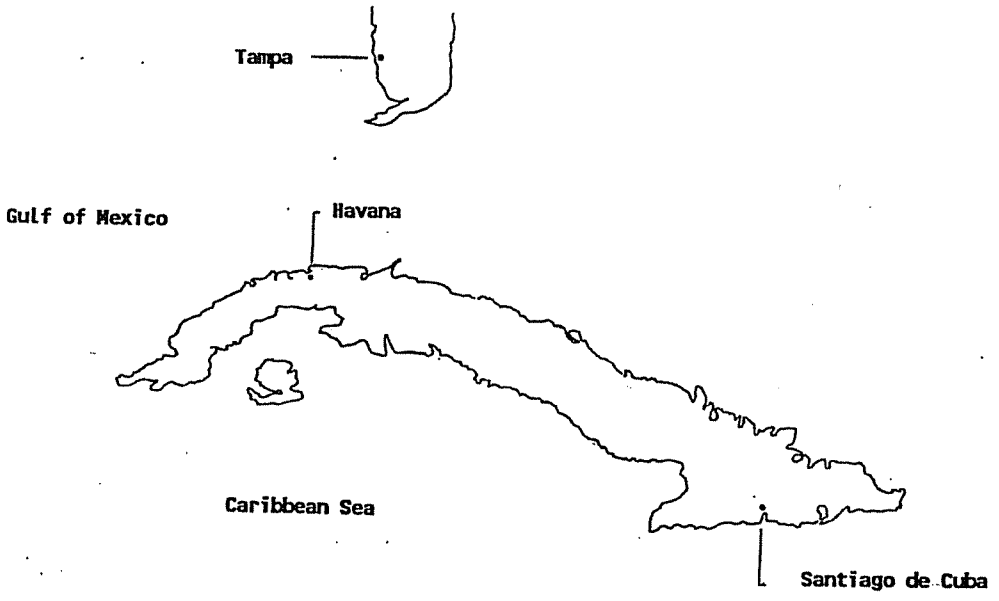
Embarkation of Troops

The US officially declared war on Spain on April 25, 1898 (but made it retroactive to the 21st). On April 22 the North Atlantic Squadron, commanded by Admiral Sampson, was assembled off Key West and steamed towards Cuba to blockade the major ports.

Tampa was the port of embarkation of US troops.



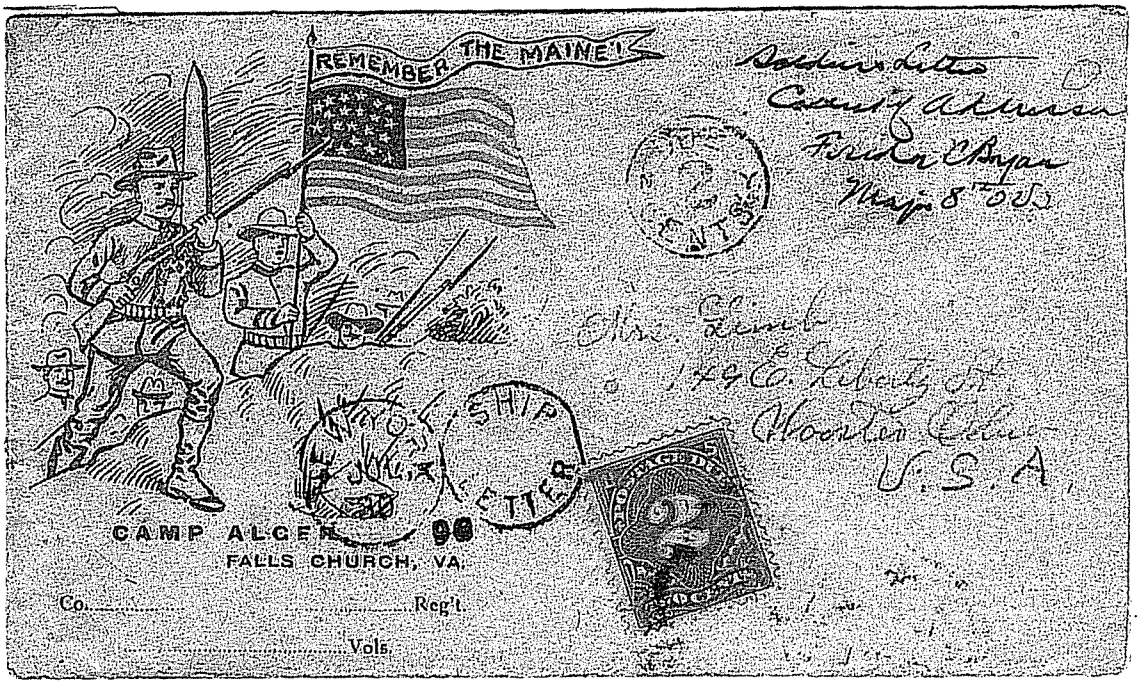
July 18, 1898. Tampa, Florida to Norwalk, OH. Soldier's patriotic cover mailed from "SUB STA. 4" (reportedly an embarkation canceller). The slogan "Remember the Maine" became the battle cry for US troops.



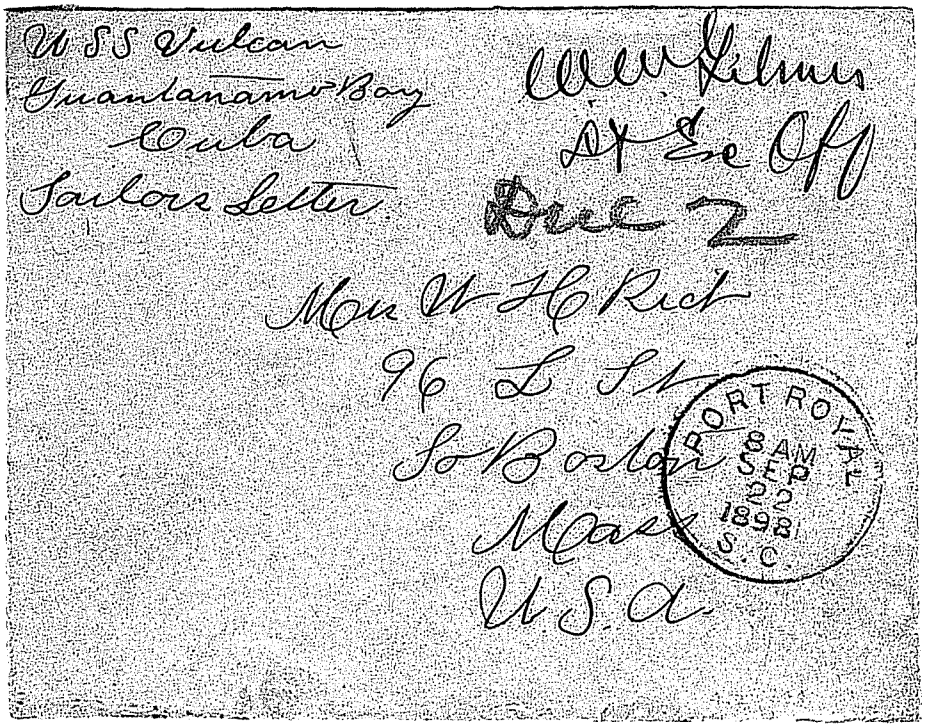
U.S. MILITARY POSTAL STATIONS IN CUBA

Early Soldier's and Sailor's Mail

Most of the mail from US military personnel during the naval blockade of the major Cuban ports and early landing in the southeastern coast was sent collect. The Act of March 3, 1879 allowed mail from active US servicemen to be paid on delivery.



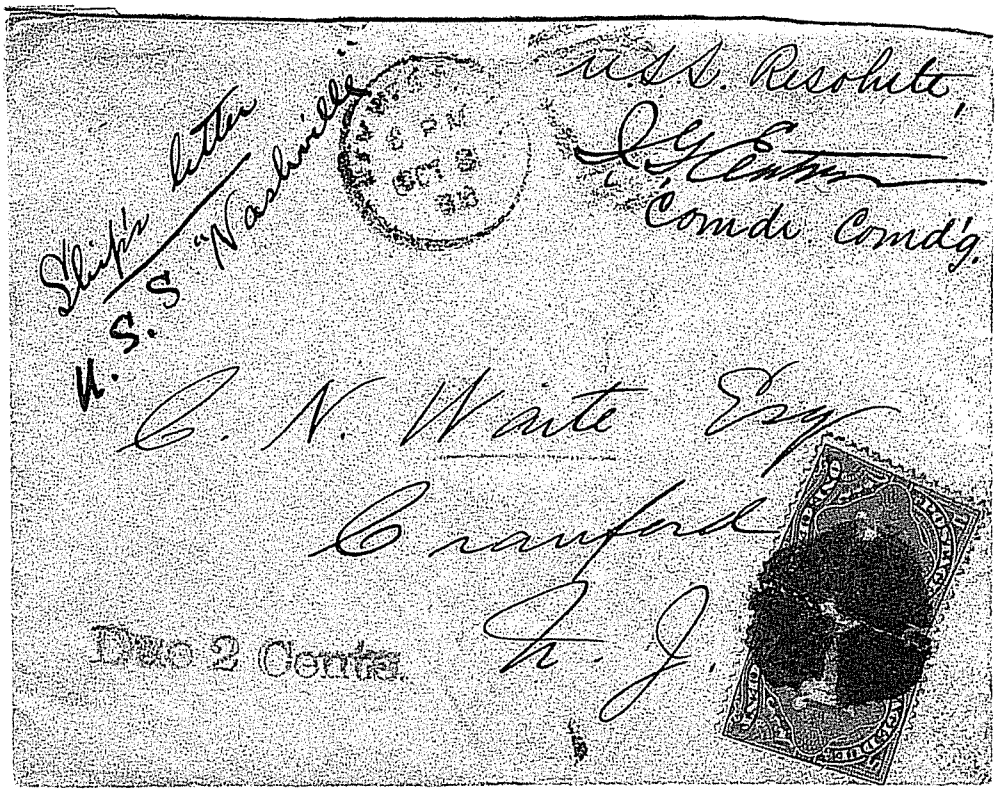
Jul. 1898. Soldier's patriotic envelope to Wooster, OH. Very early mail sent from Daiquiri or Siboney and received at New York on July 30.



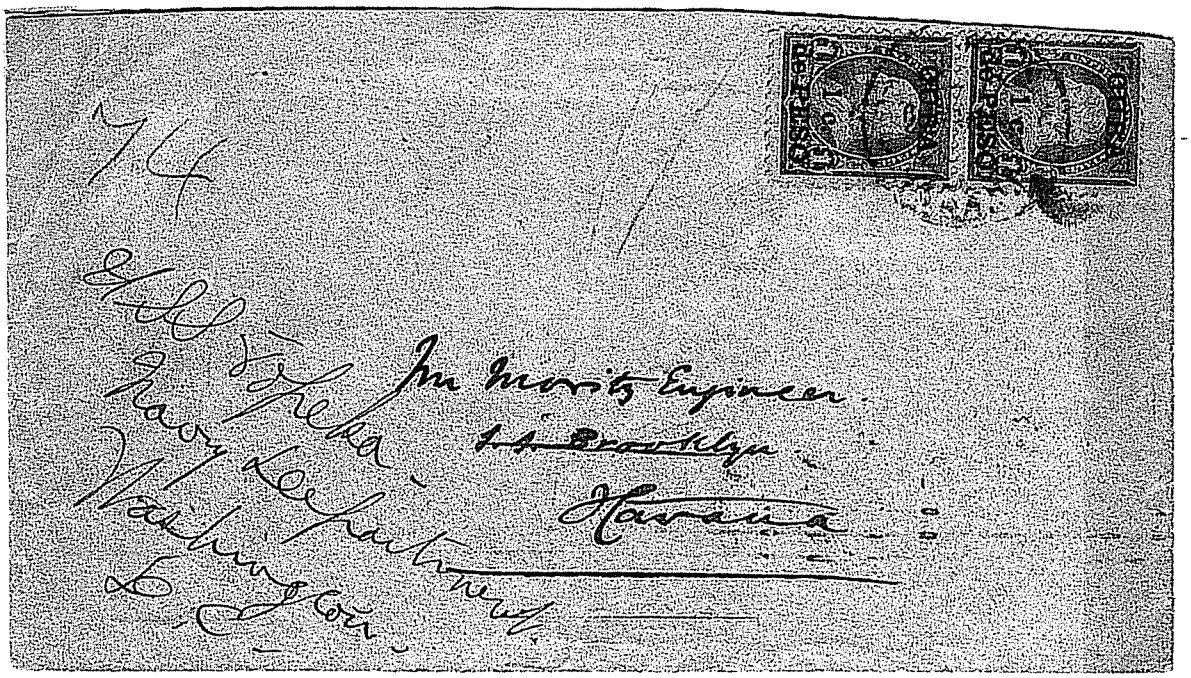
Sep. 1898. Sailor's letter to Boston from the U.S.S. Vulcan guarding Guantanamo Bay, the site of the first landing of US troops in Cuba on June 10.

U.S. MILITARY POSTAL STATIONS IN CUBA

Early Sailor's Mail



Oct. 1898. Letter from the U.S.S. Resolute to Cranford, NJ. It was probably carried on the U.S.S. Nashville into Key West.



Jan. 1899. Letter to an engineer aboard the U.S.S. Brooklyn at Havana. By the time it arrived to Cuba (Jan. 24) the addressee had been transfered to the U.S.S. Topeka at Washington, DC.

U.S. MILITARY POSTAL STATIONS IN CUBA

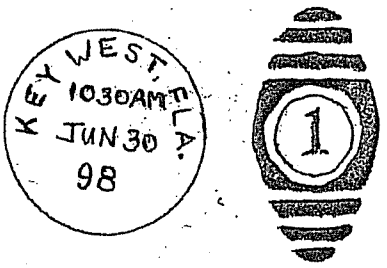
First Mail from Cuba

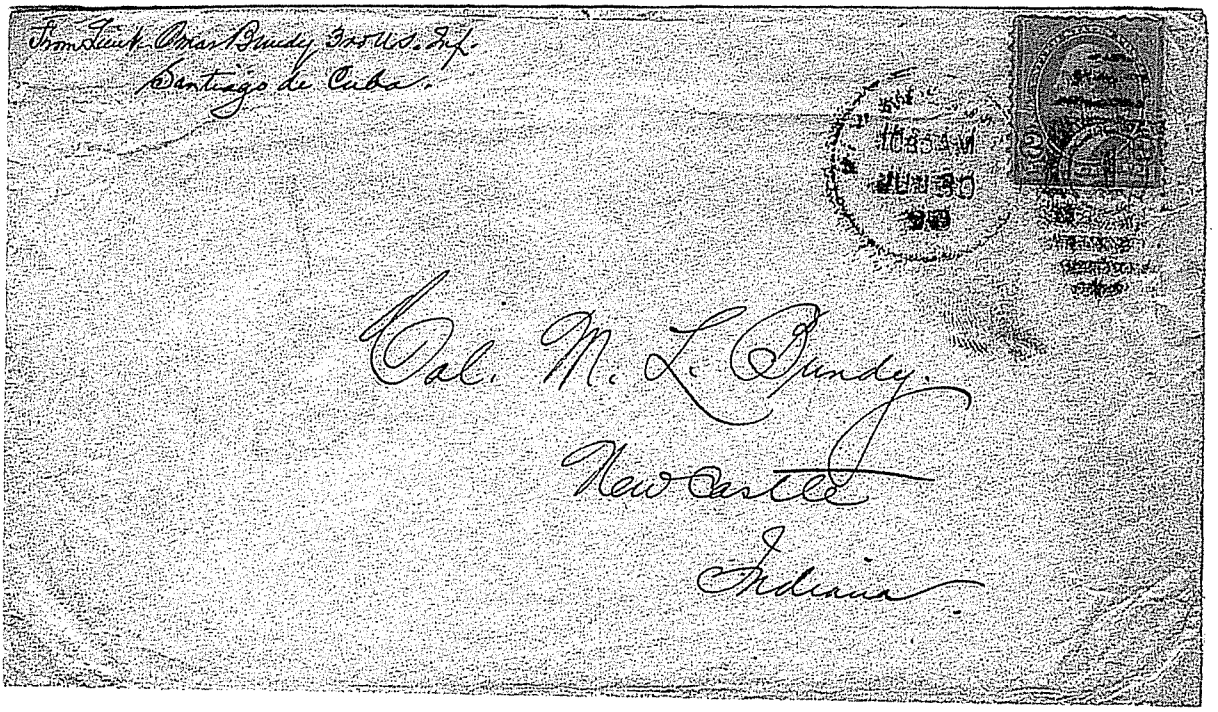
Lieutenant Omar Bundy, the sender of this letter, led one of the two initial assaults at Daiquiri on June 24 and later became a Brigadier General in the First World War. The addressee, his father, was a Colonel during the US Civil War.

This cover was sent on the first northbound mail that was dispatched on the U.S.S. Dolphin after calling at Daiquiri on June 26, 1898. It arrived at Key West on June 30.

It is possible that this letter was written and mailed before the official opening of the first military post office at Daiquiri since it bears no postal markings from the station and most soldiers had provided themselves with postage stamps before leaving Tampa, in accordance to instructions from the high command. Order number 219 of June 7, 1898 fixed domestic rates and conditions for "mail matter for or from persons connected with the US forces at and near the islands of Cuba and Puerto Rico". First class letter rate was two cents per ounce.

Civilian mails could neither be sent to nor dispatched from the island.



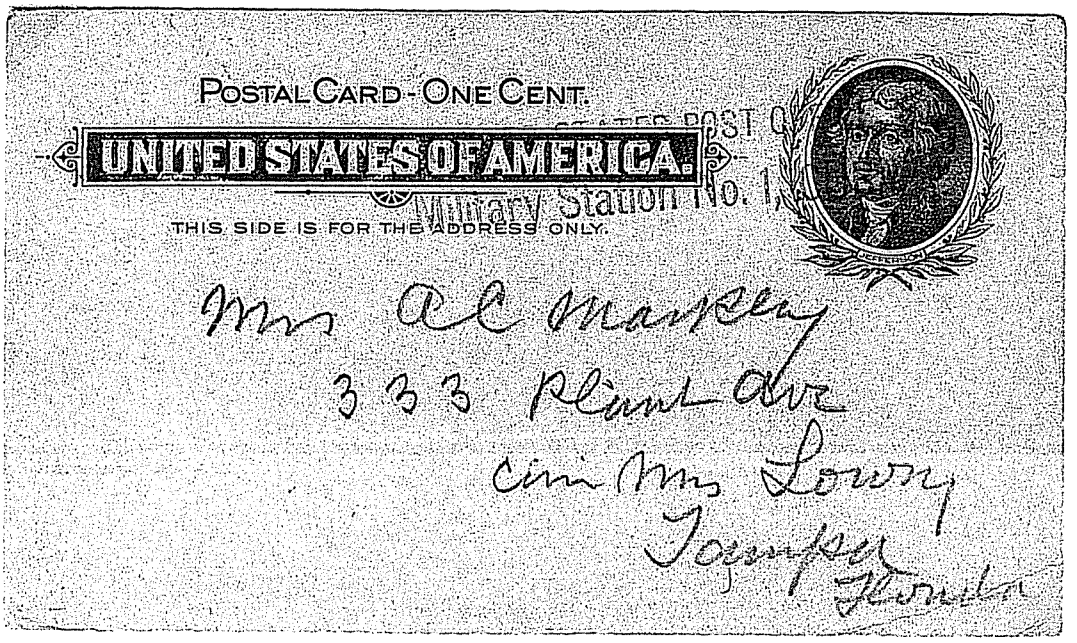


U.S. MILITARY POSTAL STATIONS IN CUBA

Station Number 1. Daiquiri

One day after the first troops landed in this town, "United States Post Office, Military Station No. 1" opened for business on June 23, 1898, although stamps were not available for sale until June 25 when the last US soldiers from the first transports went ashore.

The post office was set up in a small farmhouse and the Postmaster was Mr. Louis Kempner, from the New York Postal Service, who was also Assistant Postal Agent for Cuba.



June 27, 1898. Mailed from the field to Tampa, Florida. This is the earliest known usage of this two-line handstamp or of any other military station marking during the Spanish American War. It arrived to Tampa on June 30. Domestic postal card rate of one cent.

The contents of the postcard:

" 24 Inf 3d Brig 1st Div. 5th Corps

Near Santiago Cuba June 27/98

Dear Wife

I am well and all right - but we live like privates left (?) my valise on the ship - write to you by dim moonlight live on rations but am in fine health. dont know any thing but will write when I get an envelope

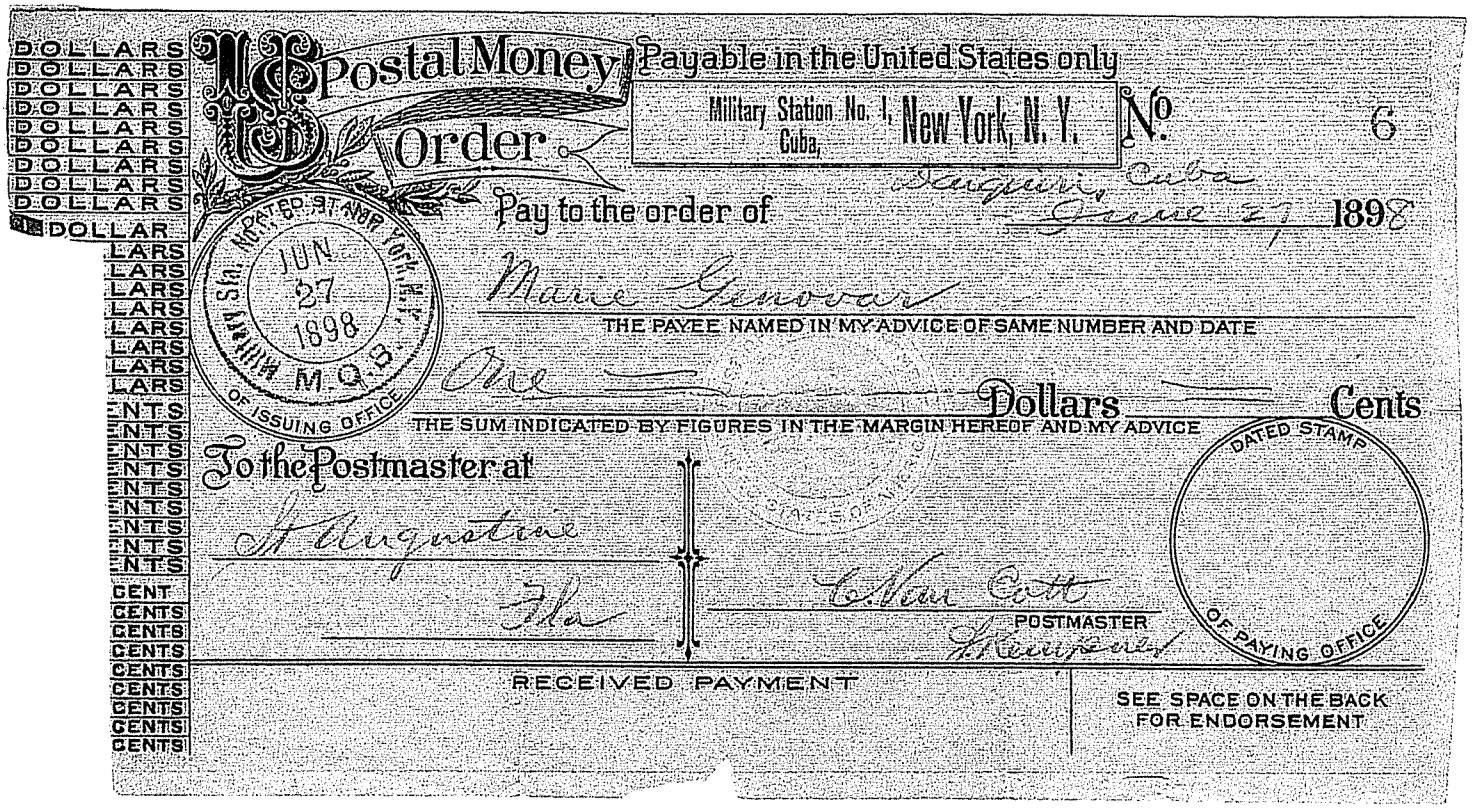
Alfred "

U.S. MILITARY POSTAL STATIONS IN CUBA

Station Number 1. Daiquiri

This town was previously known as Baiquiri and had a population of 1,380 and a fourth class post office. The first US post office operated here for 13 days until it was transfered to Siboney on July 6, 1898.

A second military postal station, Number 2, officially opened at Daiquiri on December 1, 1898 and was transfered to civilian control on February 27, 1899. No items have been recorded from Military Station No. 2, but Barreras reported a straightline receiving handstamp.



Postal Money Order issued at Daiquiri on June 27, 1898. This is the only item positively identifying military station number 1 with Daiquiri and the only recorded example of the circular "Money Order Bureau" handstamp.

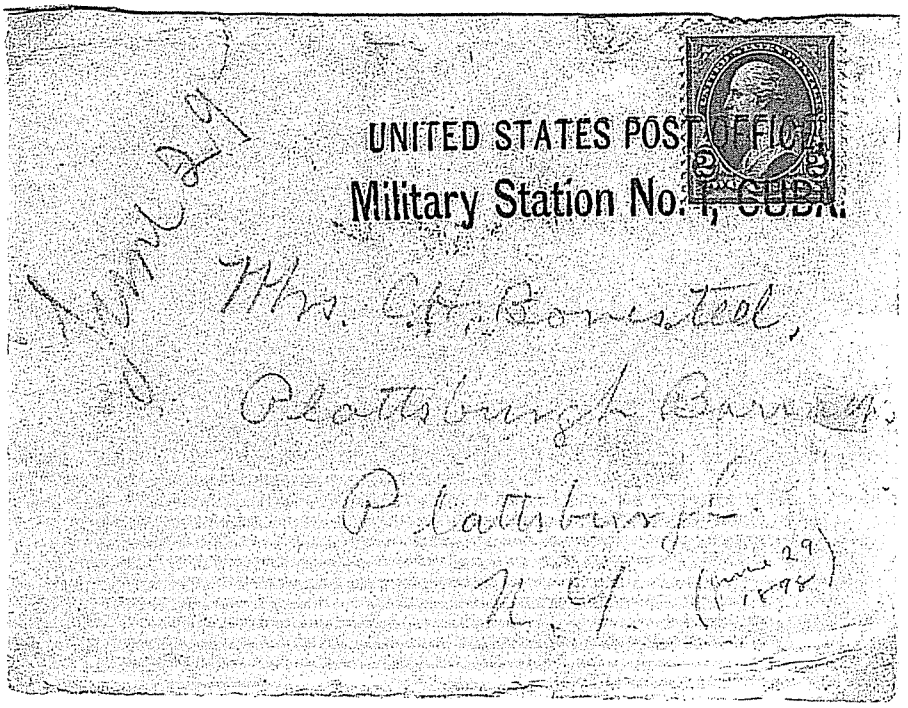
This money order was signed by Postmaster Louis Kempner, was never cashed and it is the sixth money order sold in Cuba.

Markings of the first 13 military stations generally made reference to the Post Office at New York which was in charge of administrating the entire Cuban postal system.

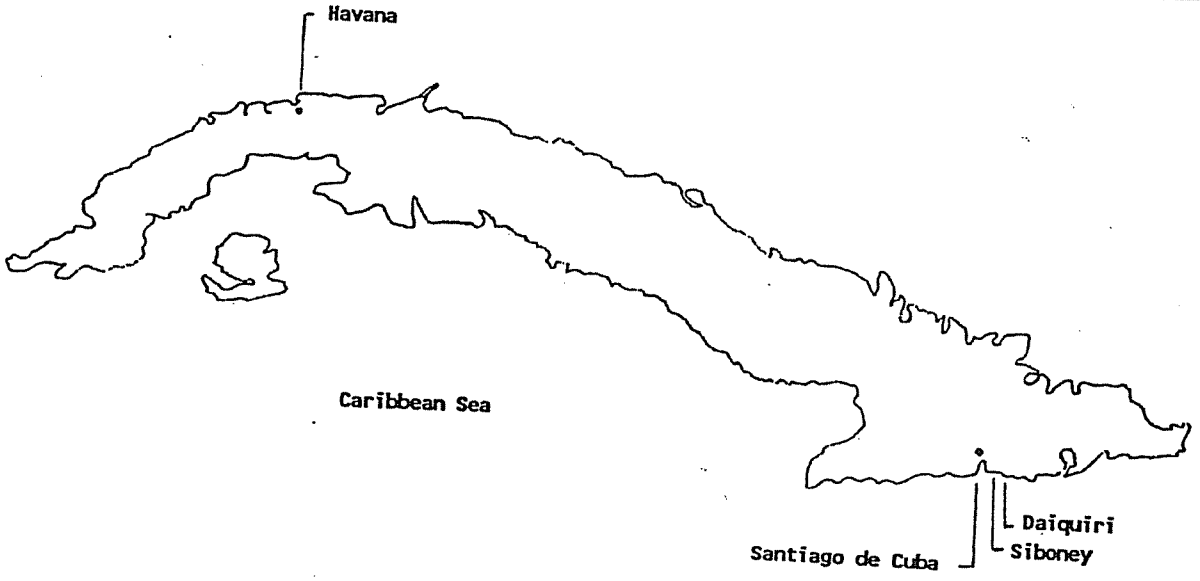
U.S. MILITARY POSTAL STATIONS IN CUBA

Station Number 1. Daiquiri

There are very few "War Covers" from Cuba during the 26 day campaign that ended with the occupation of Santiago on July 17.



June 29, 1898. Daiquiri to Plattsburg, NY. There are two other covers recorded on this early date. Prepayment of letters during the first few weeks following the landing of troops is very unusual.



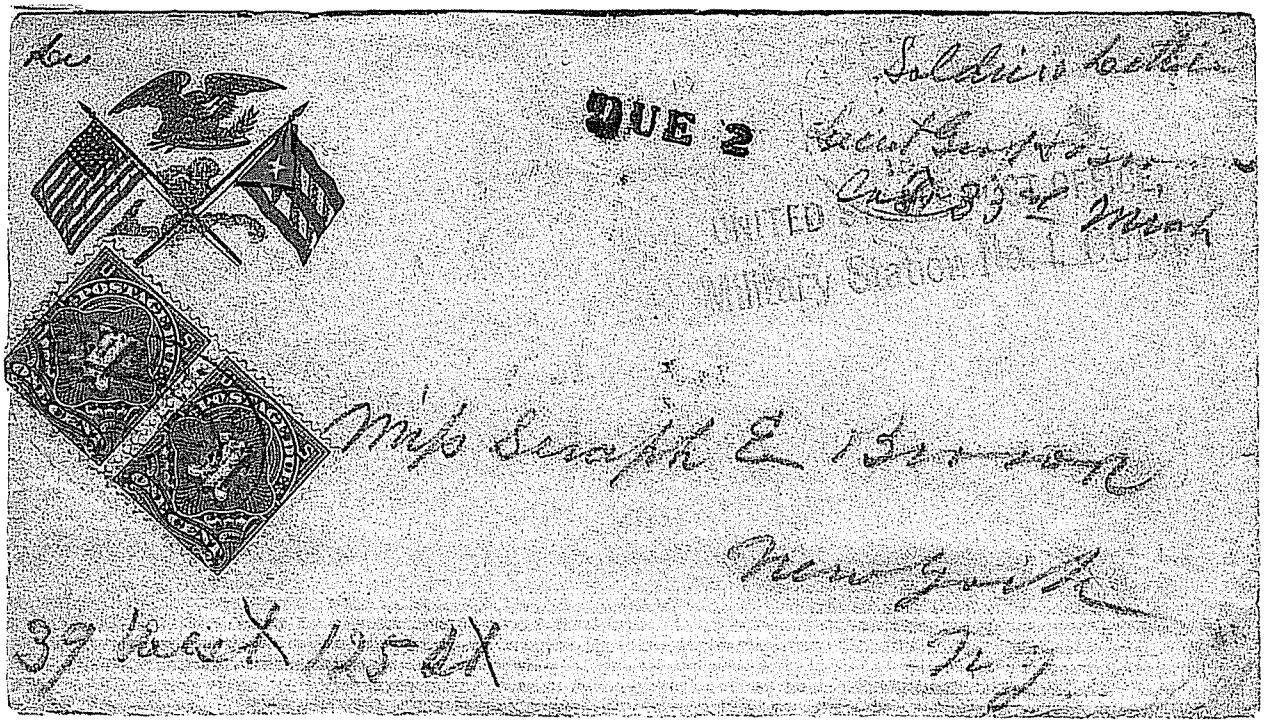
U.S. MILITARY POSTAL STATIONS IN CUBA

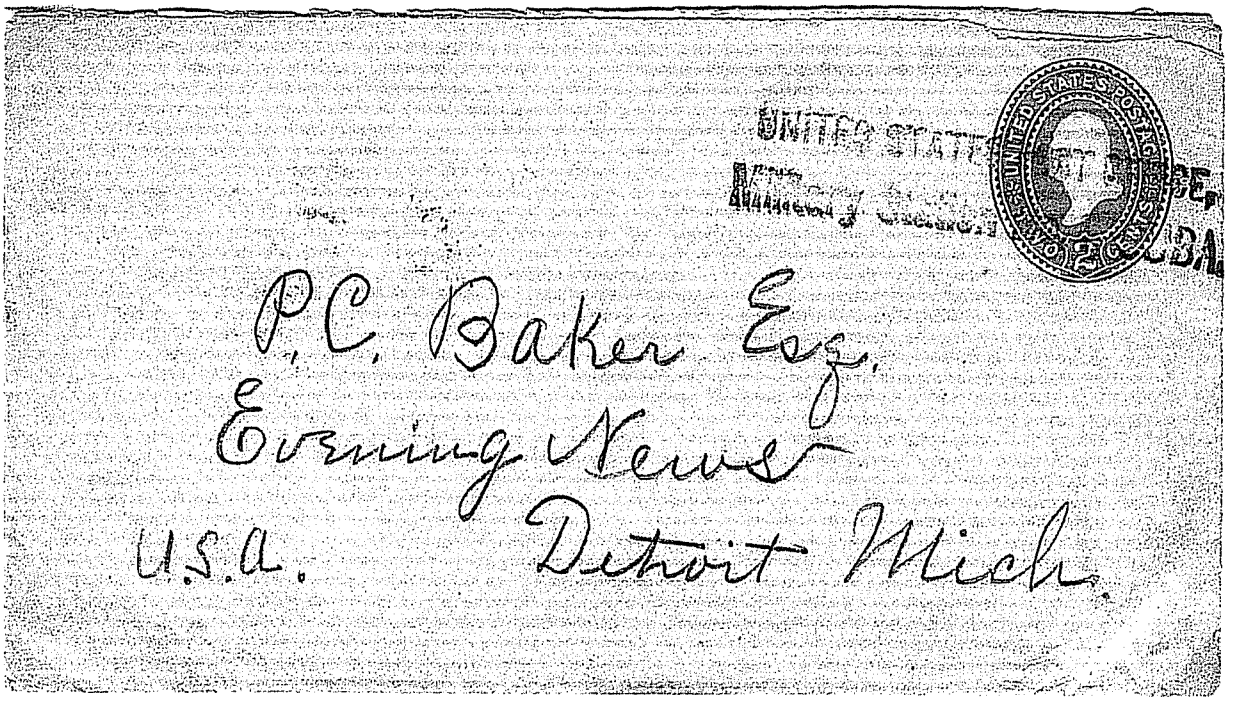
Station Number 1. Siboney

Siboney was a very small town that had no postal facilities during the Spanish administration. As the troops moved towards Santiago, the first military postal station was moved four miles west to Siboney which was closer to Cuba's second largest city. It operated from July 6 to about July 21 when it was transfered to the outskirts of Santiago.

Due to a "yellow fever" epidemic which forced the closing of this station, no mail was handled here from July 10 to July 20. During the second week of July, all the buildings in the village had to be burnt and the station moved to a near by location, probably an improvised "fever hospital".

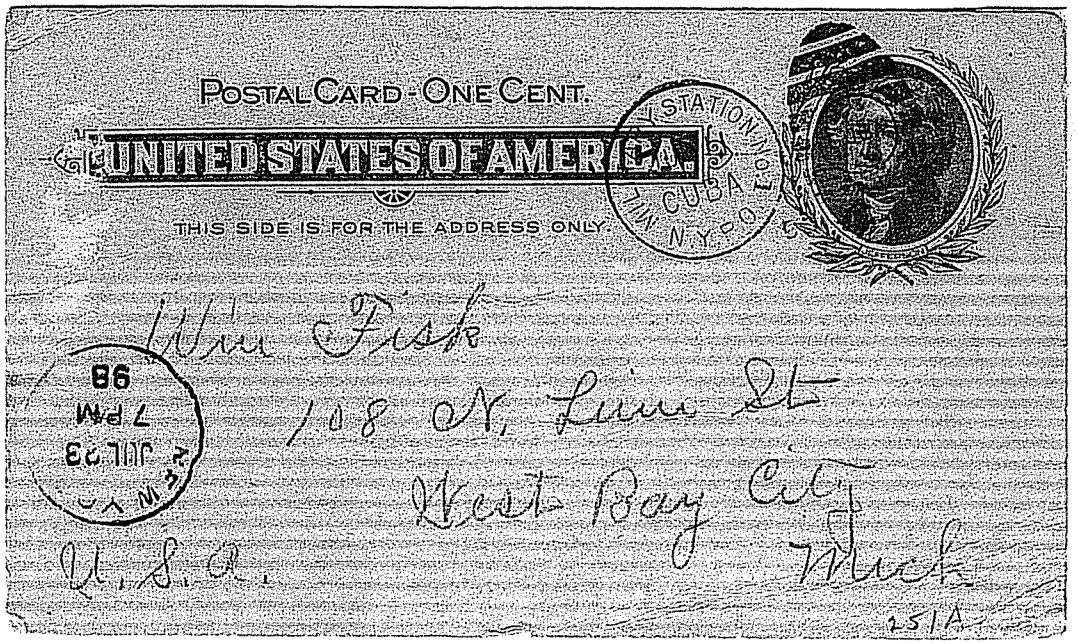
Below are two items most likely mailed at Siboney. The first one, with the purple marking, was sent unpaid to New York and was received on July 17. The second one, with the black handstamp, was prepaid to Michigan and received in transit at New York on July 23.





U.S. MILITARY POSTAL STATIONS IN CUBA

Station Number 1. Siboney



Siboney, July 10, 1898. This postcard, addressed to West Bay City, Michigan, was written on the day when mail delivery from this station was first suspended because of the fever epidemic. It was postmarked the following day, probably on the outskirts of Santiago.

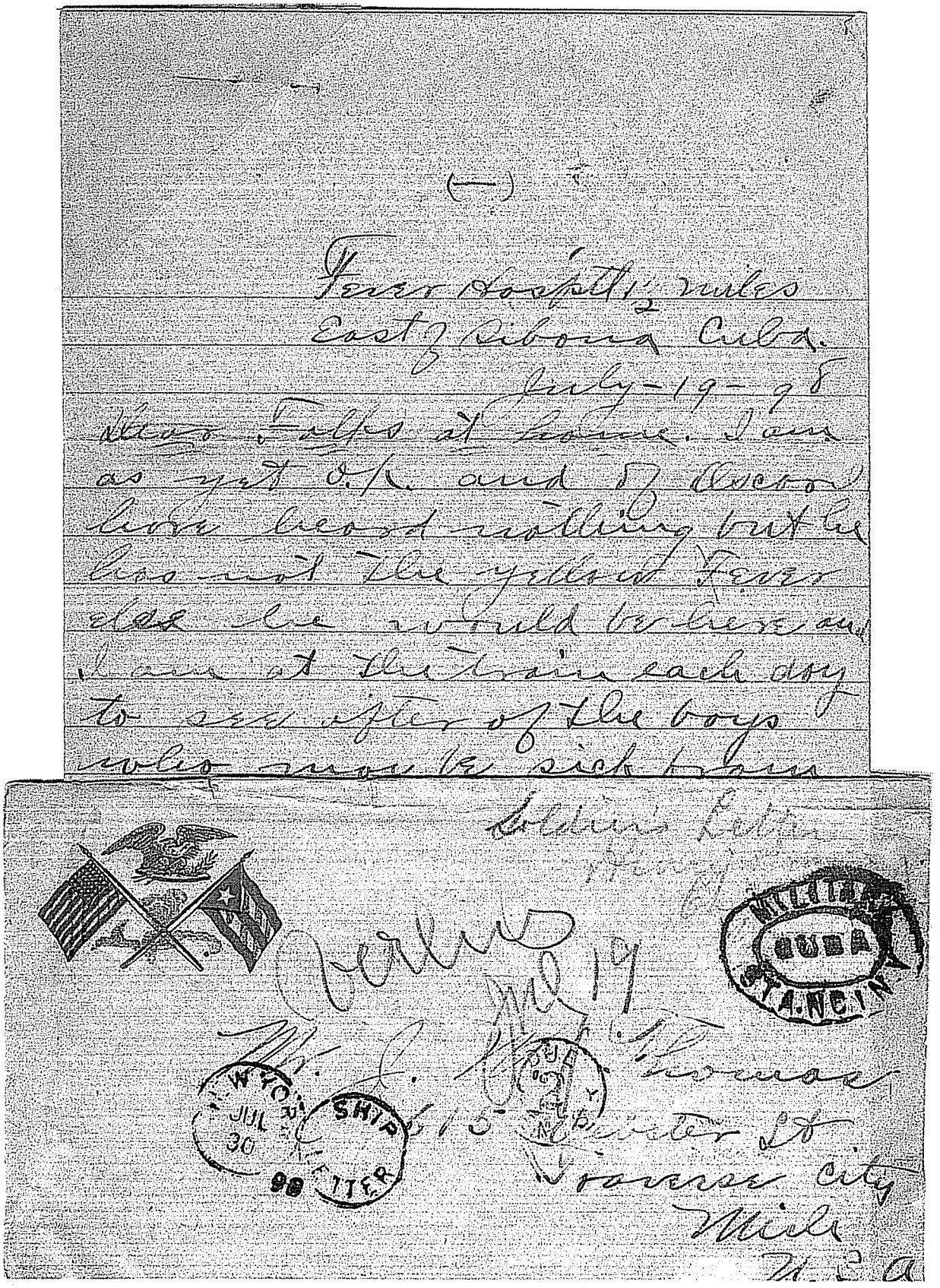
It has the earliest example of this handstamp (two other known), the first type of duplex canceler used by the US Miliatry Stations in Cuba. The New York City transit marking is dated July 23, same as the previous cover with the straightline marking from this station.

U.S. MILITARY POSTAL STATIONS IN CUBA

Station Number 1. Siboney

This is the only recorded letter mailed from Military Station No. 1 at Siboney while it operated from a "fever hospital". It was written two days before the station was transfered to the outskirts of Santiago. This is also the earliest use of the first type of crude oval canceller which was later used in Santiago de Cuba.

There were three different types of crude oval killers which were probably sent to all 39 military postal stations although they only have been recorded in less than half.



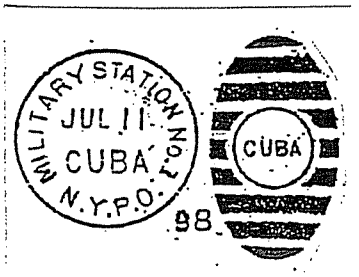
U.S. MILITARY POSTAL STATIONS IN CUBA

Station Number 1. Santiago

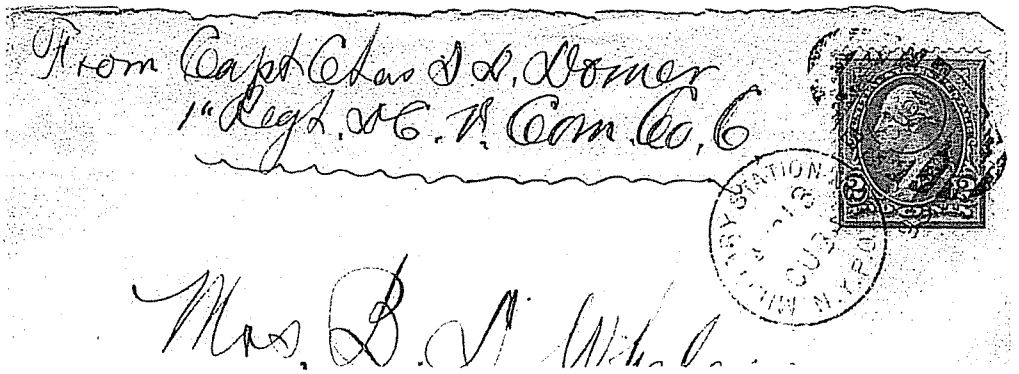
Santiago had a population of 43,090 and was "Administracion Principal" second only to Havana. The city surrendered on July 17 and was occupied a few days later. Military station No. 1 was officially moved to Santiago on July 21, although it is evident that some sort of postal facility operated here during the period in which the post office at Siboney was closed due to "yellow fever".

This Station used two types of duplex killers, two crude ovals, three registered handstamps, a receiving postmark, a postage due and three miscellaneous straightline marking in addition to the captured Spanish cancelers. This station was turned over to civilian authority on February 18, 1899.





July 11, 1898. Unpaid letter from Santiago to Brooklyn. Earliest usage of the first type of duplex ("CUBA" inside small circle) ten days before the official transfer of the Postal Station from Siboney. One other example recorded on this day. (It is also possible that this letter was mailed from Siboney although that station was officially closed from July 10 to July 20 due to a "fever" epidemic).

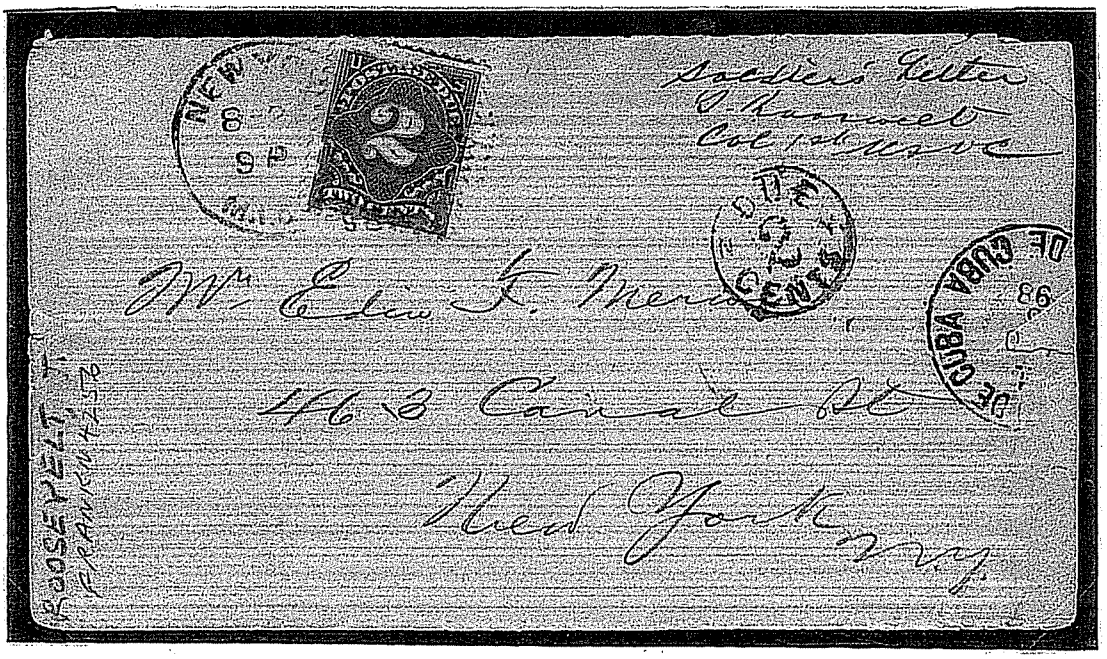


Aug. 13, 1898. Prepaid fragment from Santiago de Cuba. Latest recorded use of the first type of duplex from this city.

U.S. MILITARY POSTAL STATIONS IN CUBA

Station Number 1. Santiago.

Soldier Letter from Theodore Roosevelt who in 1901 became the 26th U.S. President.

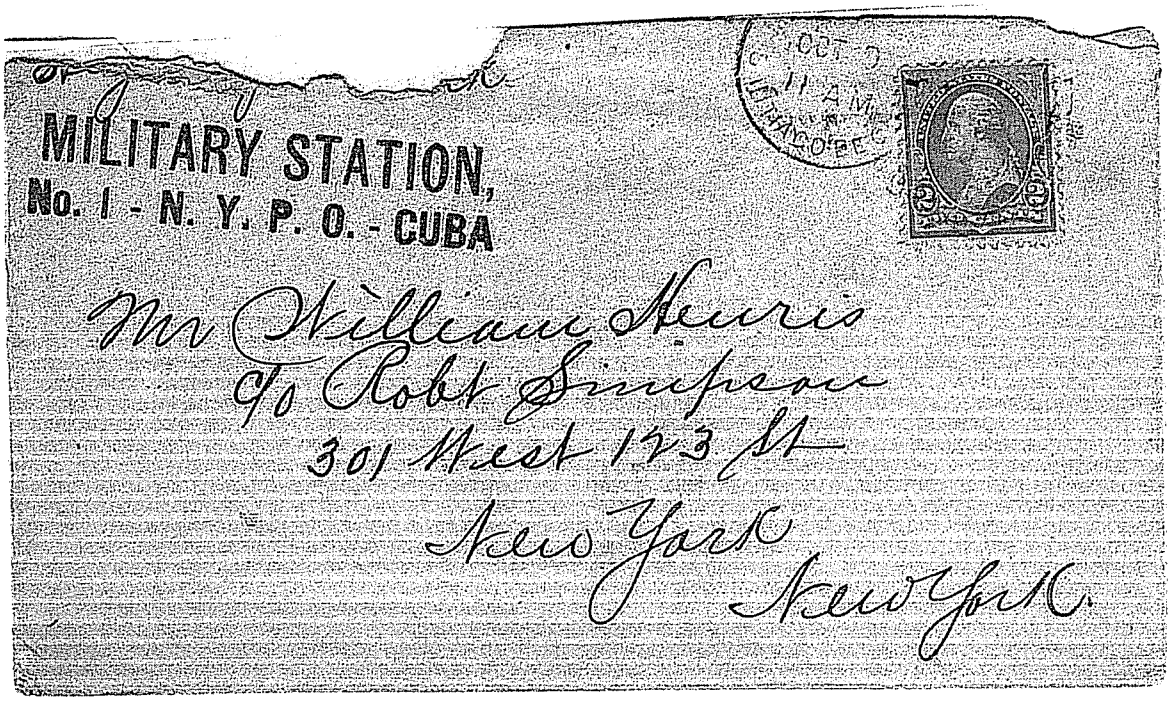


1898. Santiago de Cuba to New York City. One of the few surviving letters sent by Lieutenant Coronel Theodore Roosevelt of the First U. S. Volunteer Cavalry (Rough Riders) just five weeks after the famous battle of San Juan Hill. Two cents postage due were charged to the addressee.

U.S. MILITARY POSTAL STATIONS IN CUBA

Station Number 1. Santiago

There are only three recorded covers with miscellaneous straightline markings from Santiago.



Oct. 9, 1898. Prepaid soldier's rate from Santiago to New York City. Only reported cover with the two-line **"HILITARY STATION,/No. 1 - N.Y.P.O. - CUBA"**. The stamp is obliterated with the second type of duplex canceller.

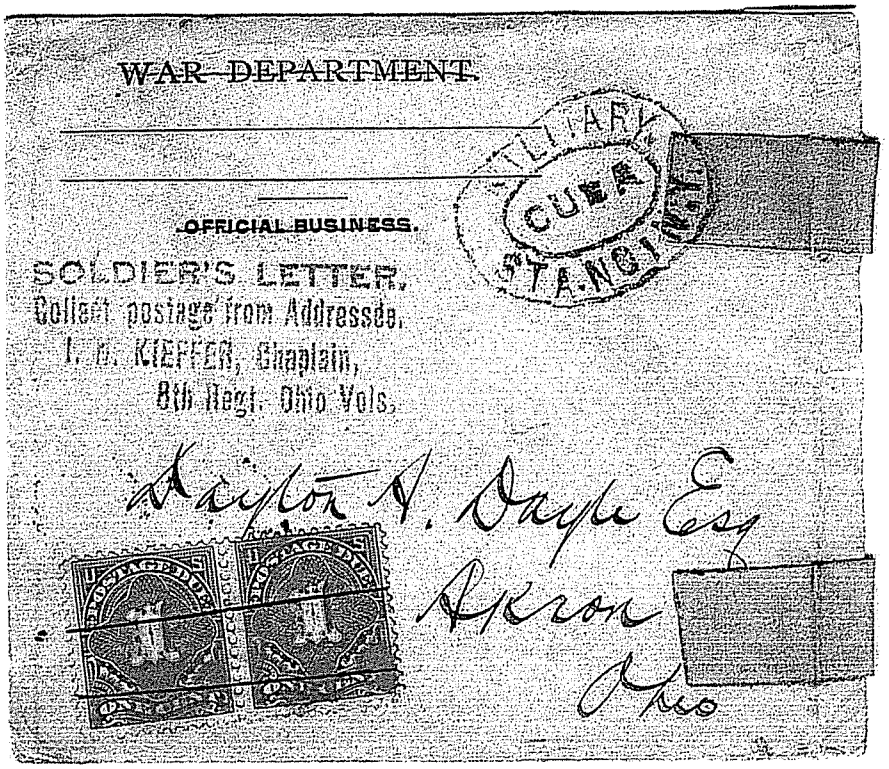


Sep. 5, 1898. Patriotic cover from New Orleans to Siboney, near Santiago de Cuba. The ten cent rate corresponds to eight cents registry fee plus two cents for letters to active US military personnel. There is one other example of the two-line **"NOT IN CUBA./Military Station No. 1, Cuba."**. This is the only reported example of the marking **"SECOND NOTICE./(Military Station No. 1, Cuba.)"**.

U.S. MILITARY POSTAL STATIONS IN CUBA

Station Number 1. Santiago

Of the three types of crude double oval cancellers, the first two were used in Santiago de Cuba. Type one, which was used also at Siboney, has the word "CUBA" in the center and "MILITARY./STA.NO 1 N.Y." between the two ovals. These handstamps were made of rubber and due to the tropical weather they often appear with gross deformities. Two examples of the first type are shown below.



Unpaid soldier's rate from Santiago to Akron, OH. It was received in Akron on July 30, making this is one of the earliest (if not the earliest) recorded covers form this station. The envelope was improvised by cutting in two an Official Business envelope from the War Department and sealing it with surgical tape. Note that the handstamp from the sender included the phrase "Collect postage from the Addressee.".



Registered letter from Santiago to New Orleans. The registry fee was 8 cents and the single letter soldier's rate was 2 cents. This is the earliest known registered cover from Cuba. The manuscript notation "# 55" may

U.S. MILITARY POSTAL STATIONS IN CUBA

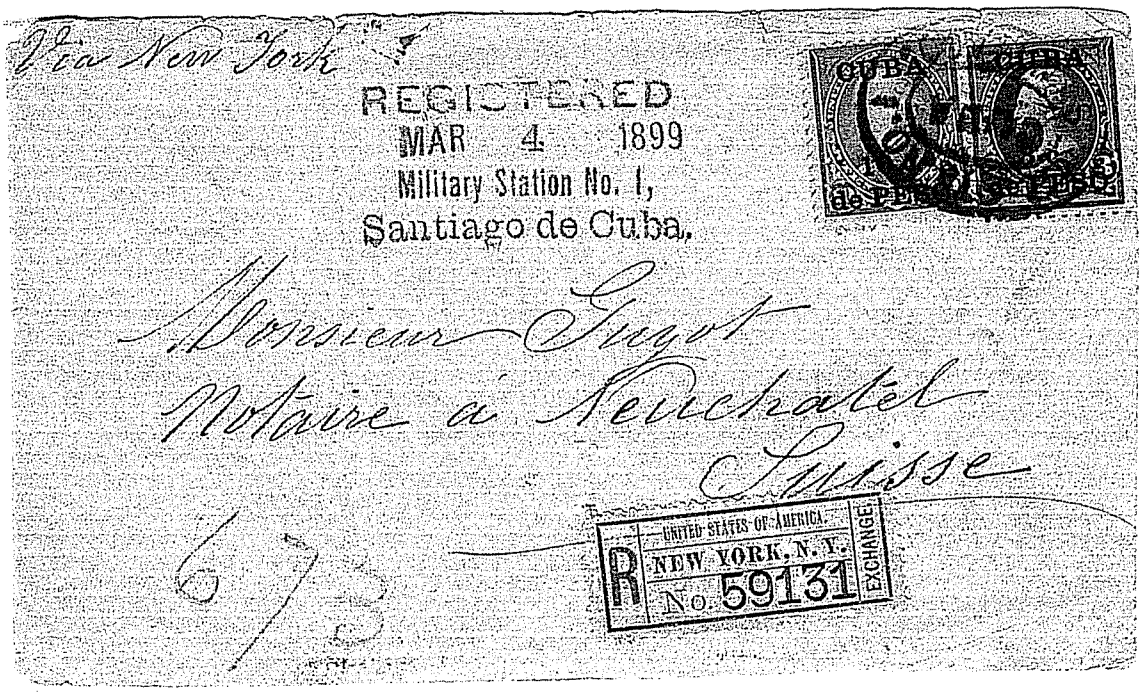
Station Number 1. Santiago

Order No. 395 of September 19, 1898 authorized Military Station No. 1 at Santiago to dispatch registered mail via New York instead of via Tampa.





Oct. 1898. Santiago de Cuba to Havana. Civilian letter rate of five cents plus eight cents registry fee. This is the first type of straightline registry marking from Santiago. The stamps are canceled with the first type of crude oval.





March 4, 1898. Santiago de Cuba to Switzerland via New York. Second type of straightline registry marking and second type of crude oval which has the word "SANTIAGO" in the bottom. Santiago was the only military station that used to different types of oval cancelers.

U.S. MILITARY POSTAL STATIONS IN CUBA

Station Number 1. Santiago

The third and last type of registry marking used in this station is only recorded after it passed under civilian control. This style of boxed registry handstamp was also used in stations 11 and 13. The civilian first class rate to Spain from Santiago de Cuba appears to have been one cent higher (six cents) than the rate to other foreign countries. The registry fee was the same (8 cents).

The first cover, a mourning envelope, is a single weight civilian letter overpaid by one cent (7+8=15). The second cover is double weight (6x6=12 + 8=20). In both cases the stamps are obliterated by the second crude oval.

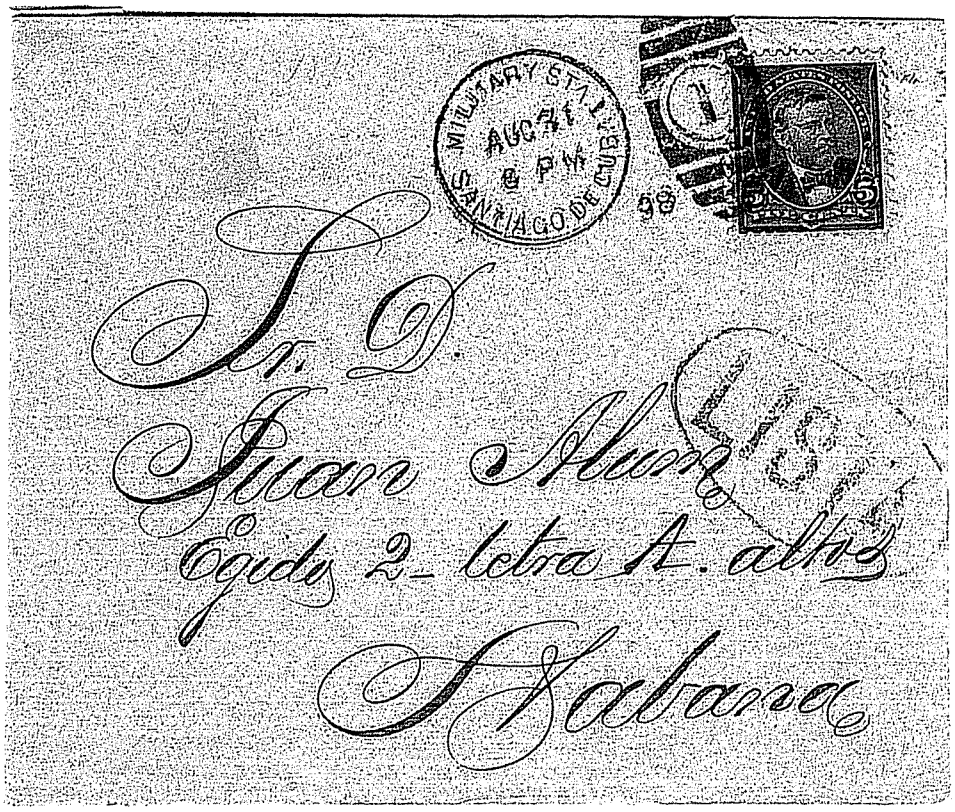




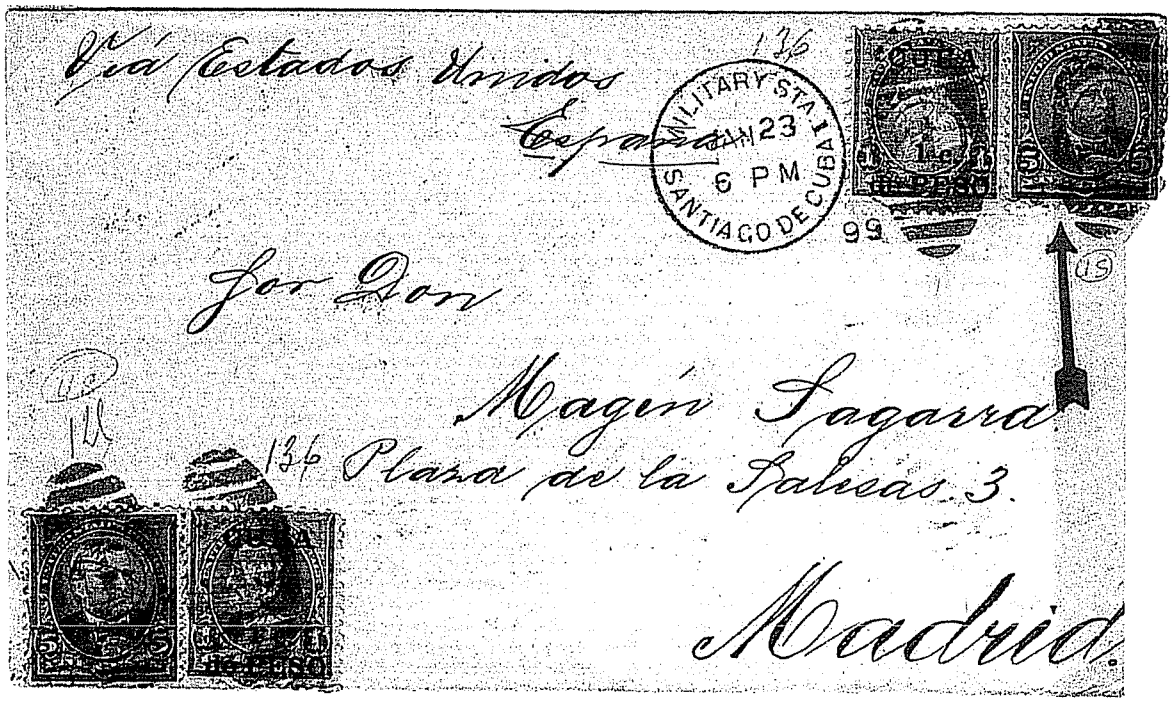
U.S. MILITARY POSTAL STATIONS IN CUBA

Station Number 1. Santiago

Civilian mail from the Province of Santiago was authorized by postal order No. 296 of July 21, 1898.



Aug. 31, 1898. Santiago to Havana. Civilian rate on domestic first class letters was 5 cent per 1/2 Oz. The oval "LISTA" was the equivalent to "ADVERTISED". Second type of duplex canceller from Santiago.



Jan. 23, 1899. Santiago to Madrid Spain via New York. Double weight letter at the old Spanish period rate of

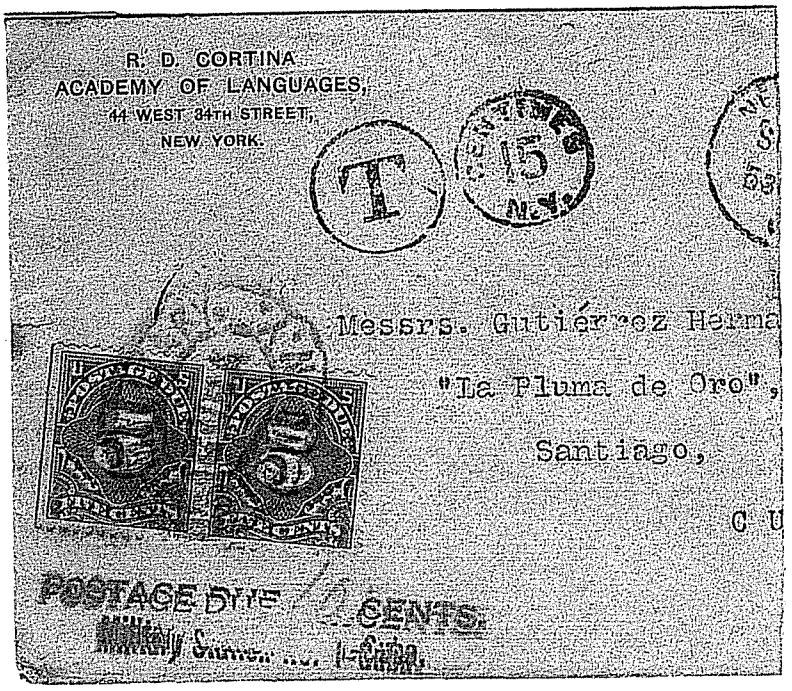
U.S. MILITARY POSTAL STATIONS IN CUBA

Station Number 1. Santiago.

The two types of straightline handstamps used at santiago to indicate postage due are shown below.

Right:

New York City to Santiago de Cuba. Part of a double weight envelope underpaid by five cents. The UPU penalty of double the deficit was assessed in Santiago, and the addressee was charged ten cents postage due. This first type of marking, used in September 1898, leaves a space where the amount to be collected was written in.



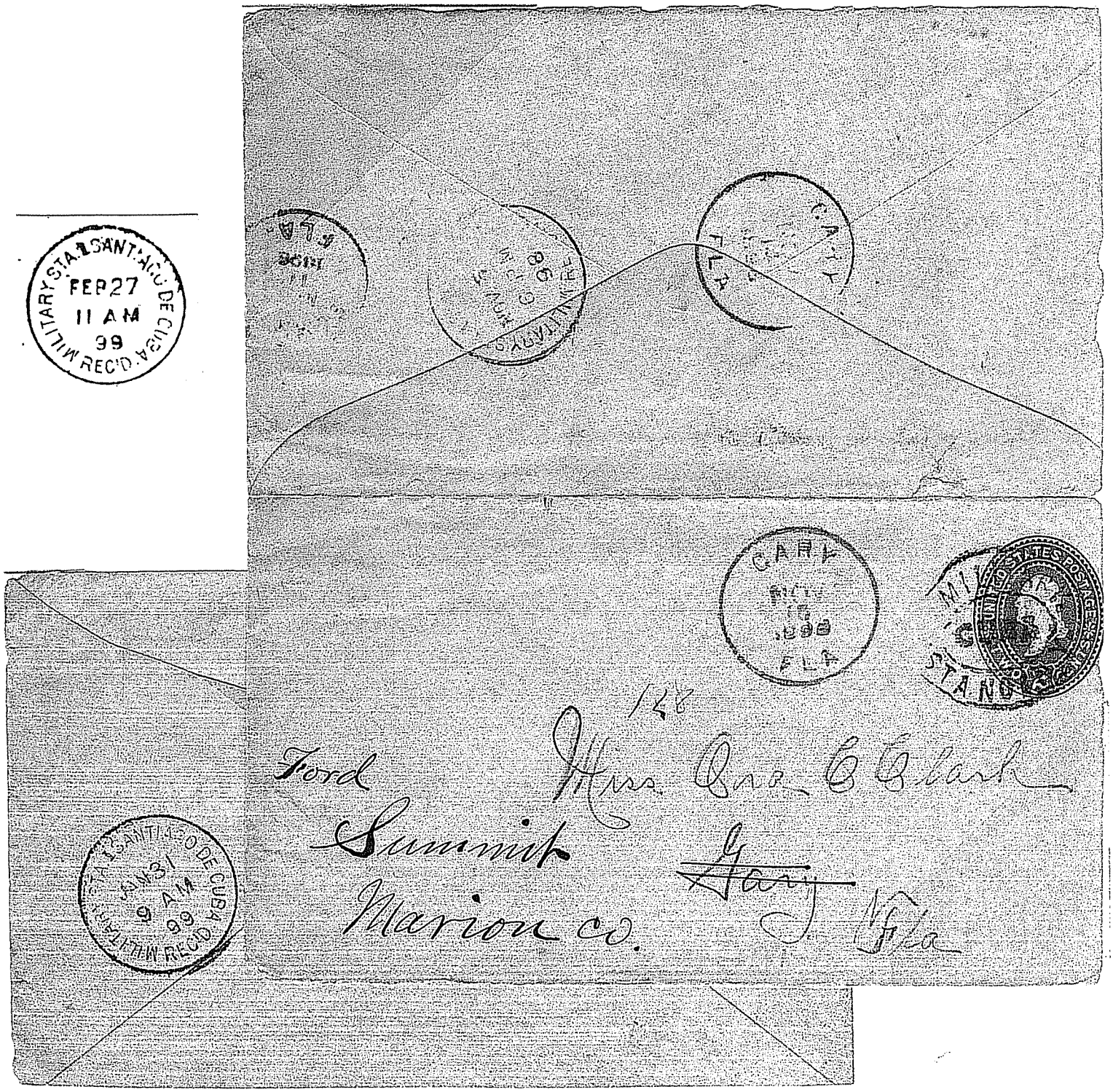
Below:

New York City to Santiago de Cuba. Double weight envelope underpaid by five cents. This second type of handstamp, used in January 1899, incorporates the rate and the location of the station.



U.S. MILITARY POSTAL STATIONS IN CUBA

Station Number 1. Santiago



TOP: Nov. 5, 1898. Santiago to Florida. US entire prepaying soldier's rate. On the back there is the earliest recorded example of the Receiving marking from this station (Nov. 5, 1898). Type one crude oval.

BOTTOM: Later example of the receiving handstamp.

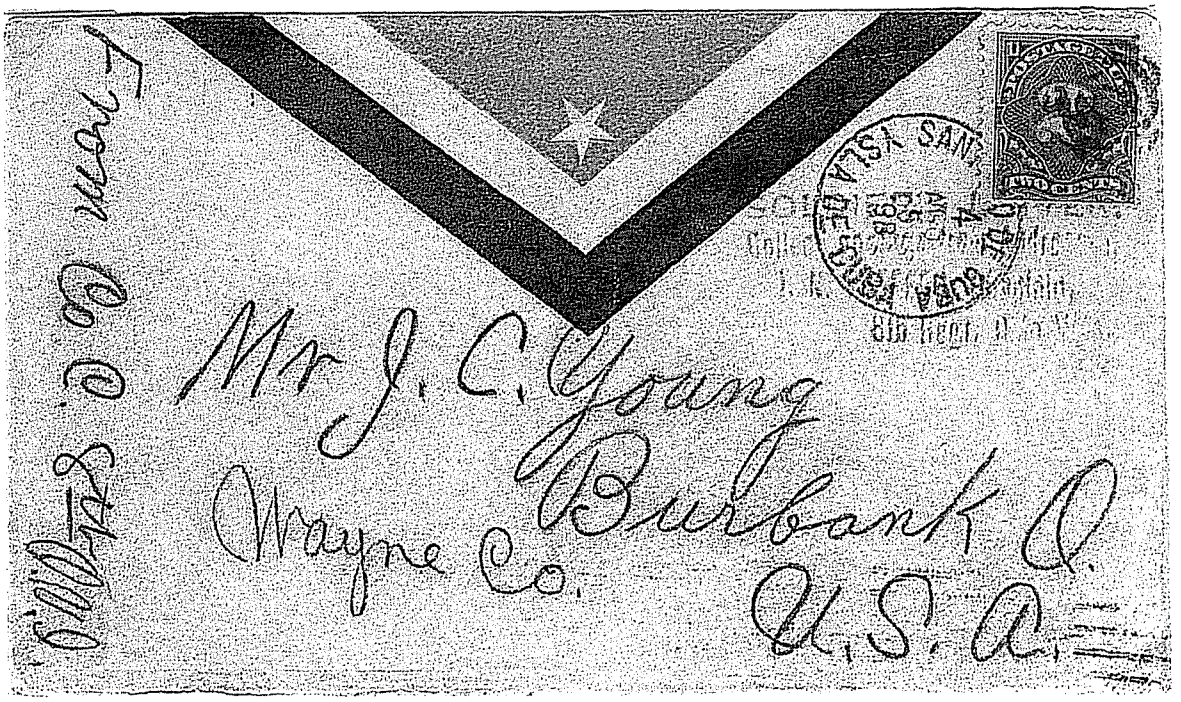
U.S. MILITARY POSTAL STATIONS IN CUBA

Station Number 1. Santiago

Captured Spanish cancellers from Santiago were used for a brief period until the new American handstamps arrived at the Military Station. A few other Stations did the same. This style of marking was first introduced by the Spanish in Cuba in 1888.



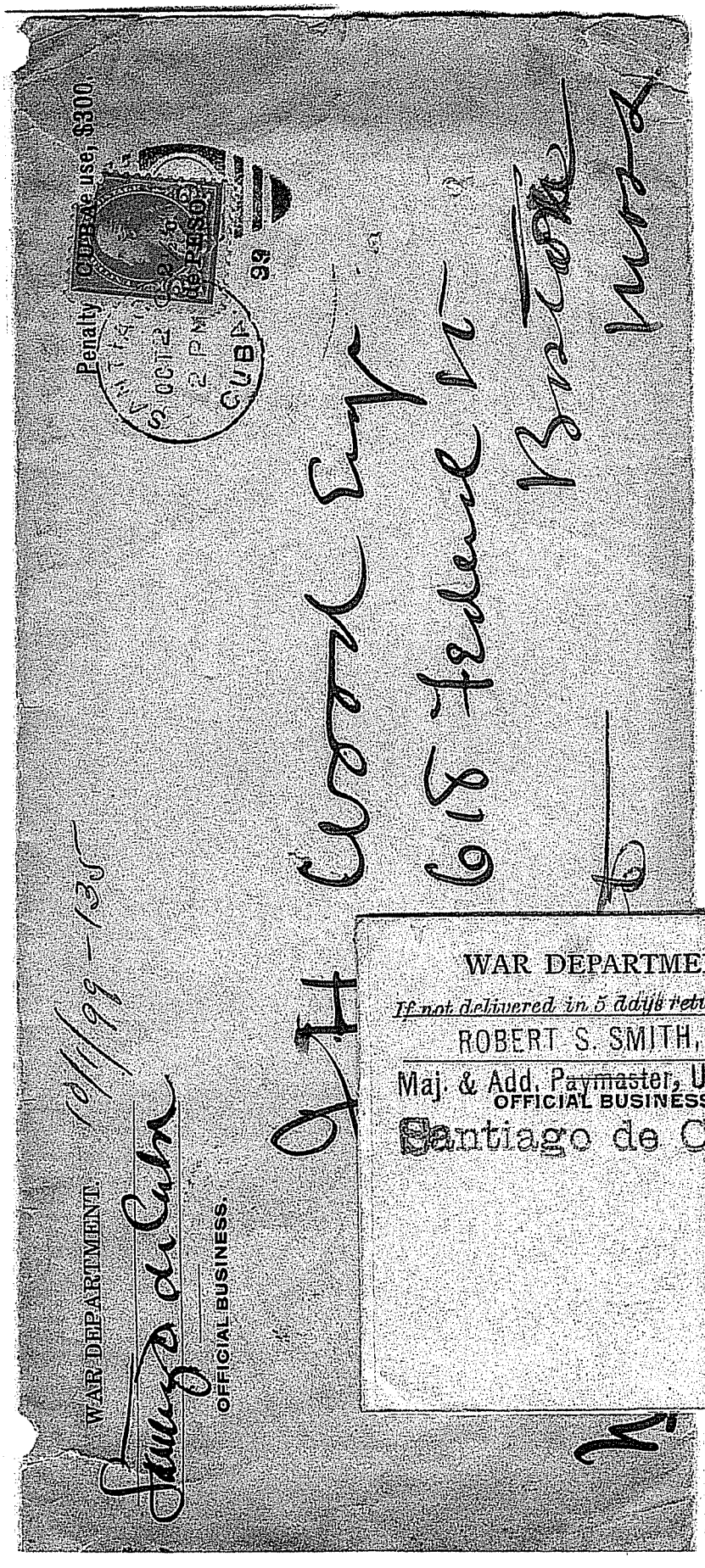
July 23, 1898. Santiago to Plattsburg, NY. Prepaid soldier's rate. This is the earliest example of the Spanish killer from Santiago on US stamps used only a few days after the surrender of the city.



Aug. 4, 1898. Unpaid patriotic cover from Santiago to Ohio. The number "4" above the month inside the canceller refers to postal station number four (Santiago). There were over three hundred post offices in Cuba by the end of Spanish domination.

U.S. MILITARY POSTAL STATIONS IN CUBA

Santiago. Official Mail Envelopes



Postal order of January 3, 1899 established that all matter entitled to be carried "free" in the US mails was also to be carried free in the Cuban mails. Below there are two official mail envelopes used after the transfer of the postal station to civilian control.

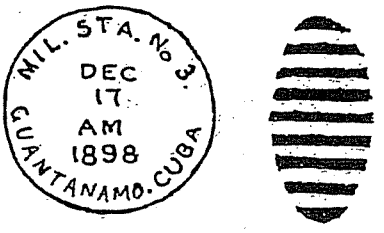
LEFT: Oct. 2, 1899. Privately used War Department envelope from Santiago to Boston.

BELOW: Dec. 30, 1899. War Department envelope from Santiago to Guantanamo.

U.S. MILITARY POSTAL STATIONS IN CUBA

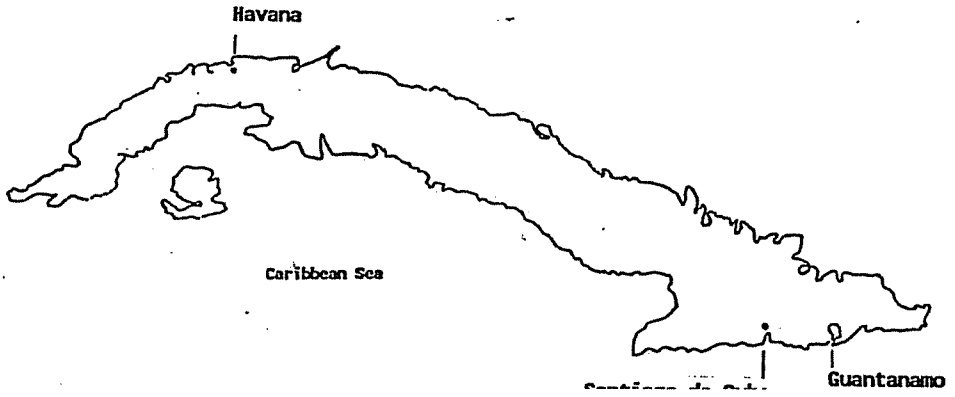
Station Number 3. Guantanamo

This city had a population of 7,137 and a first class post office. US military forces arrived on August 21, 1898 and the military post office officially opened on December 1st. On February 22, 1899 it reverted to civilian administration. There were two duplex handstamps and a crude oval canceller used in this station.





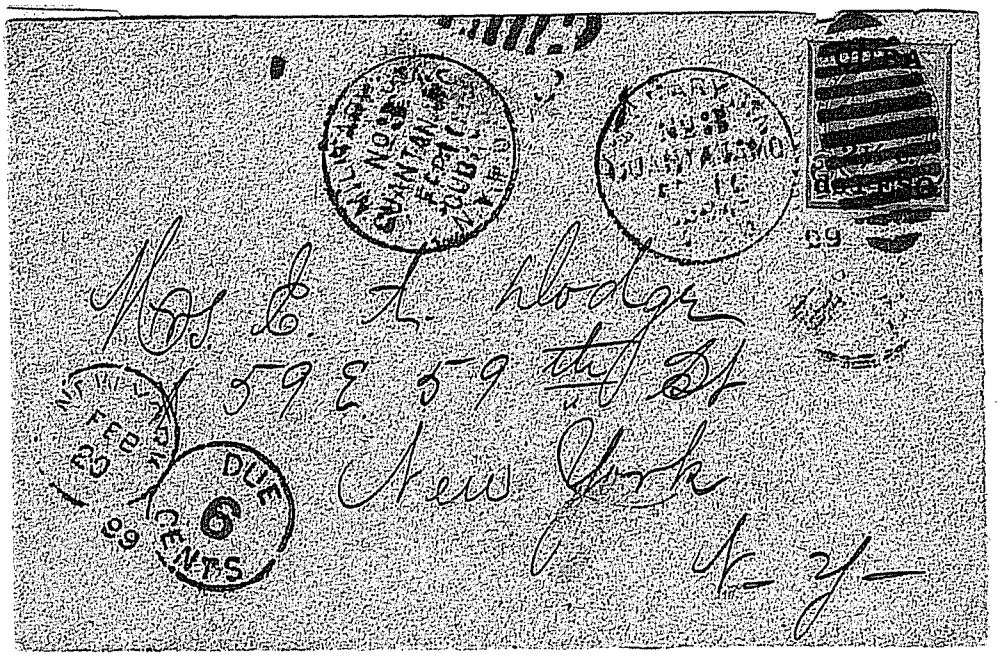
Dec. 11, 1898. Guantanamo to New York. Civilian rate of five cents per 1/2 Oz. This is the first type of duplex handstamp (large circle) used in this station which is recorded from December 8, 1898 to July 28, 1899. This style of duplex marking was also used in stations 5, 6, and 7.



U.S. MILITARY POSTAL STATIONS IN CUBA

Station Number 3. Guantanamo

This style of duplex canceller was also used in stations 5, 6, 7, 8, 10, 11, 12, and 13.



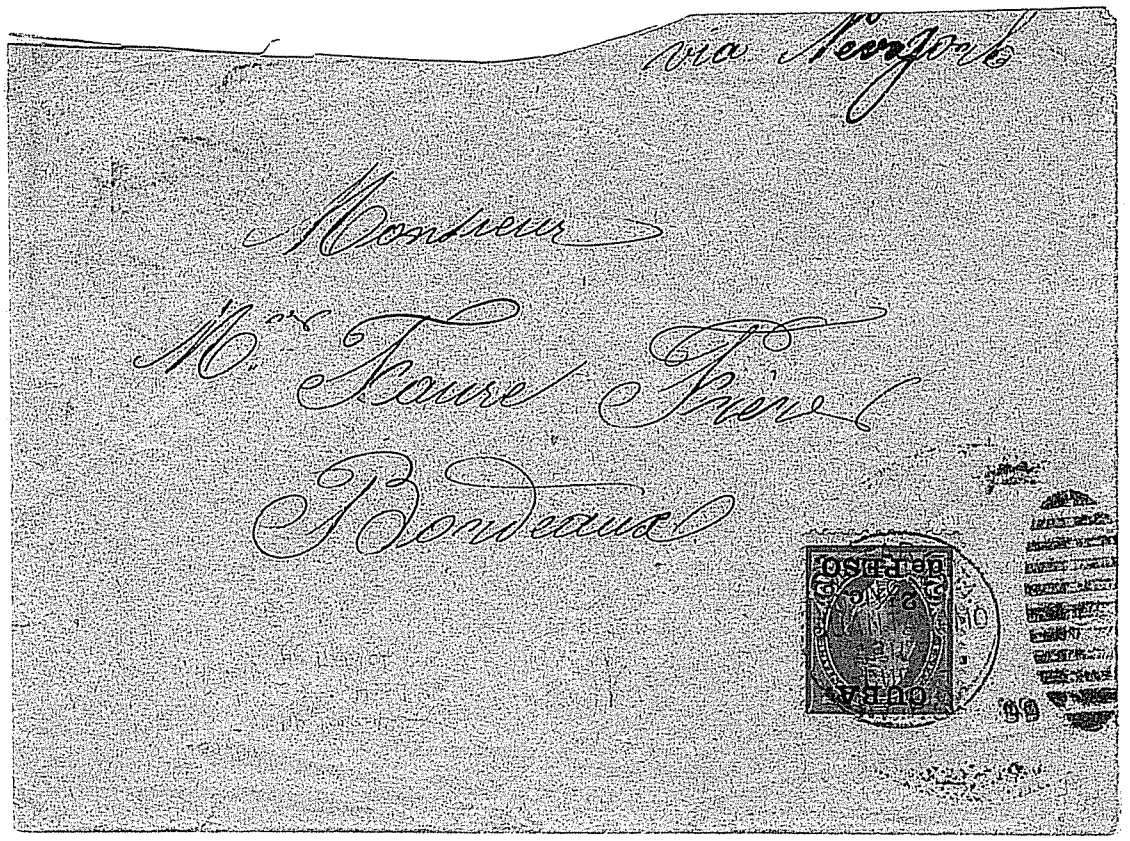
Feb. 10, 1898. Guantanamo to New York. Prepaid military personnel rate but since it was not properly endorsed, six cents postage due were charged at New York (double the three cent deficiency). This is the second type of duplex handstamp (small circle) from this city which is recorded from January 7, 1898 to June 28, 1899.



Feb. 18, 1898. Guantanamo to New York via Santiago de Cuba. Civilian rate. Probably carried on the steamer "Thomas Brooks" which made semi-weekly trips between santiago and Guantanamo.

U.S. MILITARY POSTAL STATIONS IN CUBA

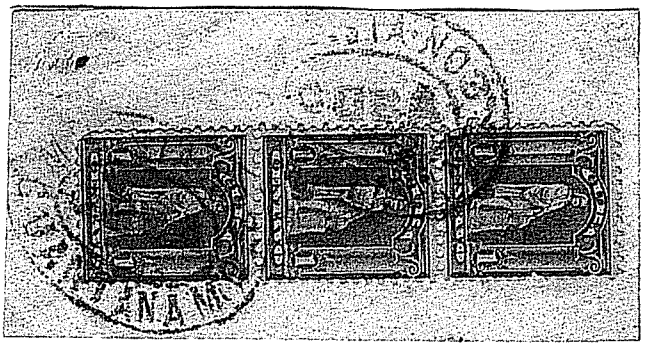
Station Number 3. Guantanamo



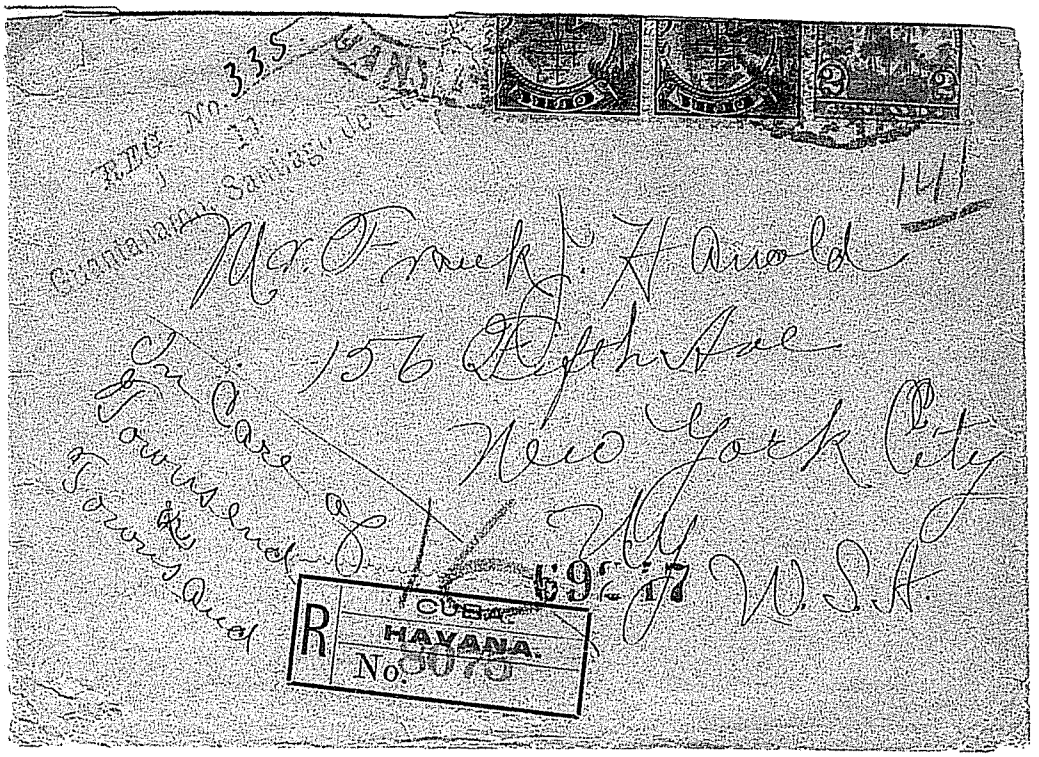
Apr. 5, 1899. Guantanamo to Bordeaux via Havana and New York. Very unusual printed matter rate to foreign countries. The stamp was obliterated by the second type of duplex canceller used after the station had officially been transferred to civilian control.

U.S. MILITARY POSTAL STATIONS IN CUBA

Station Number 3. Guantanamo







June 1900. Guantanamo to New York via Havana. Registered double weight military rate (2 cents x 2 = 4 + 8 cents registry fee = 12 cents). The letter is properly endorsed by a soldier on the reverse.

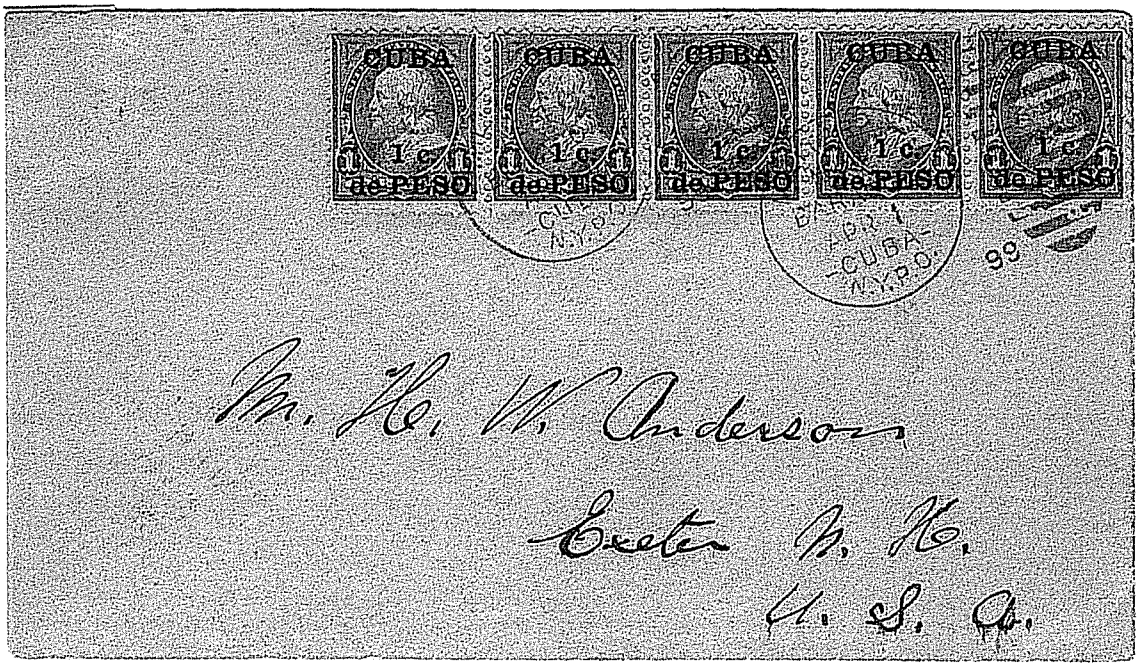
These are the only two reported usages of the crude oval handstamp which evidently was used very late since the definitive stamp issues for Cuba were only available after September 1, 1899.

U.S. MILITARY POSTAL STATIONS IN CUBA

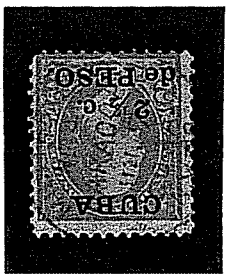
Station Number 4. Baracoa

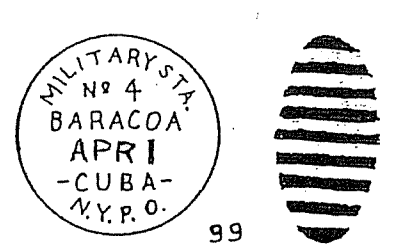
This town had a second class post office and a population of 4,937. US troops first landed on September 5, 1898. The military postal station opened on October 28, 1898 and passed to civilian control on February 27, 1899.

Two duplex cancellers, a receiving handstamp, and a straightline marking were used in this station. There are about half a dozen covers reported from Baracoa. The earliest is dated on December 21, 1898 and the latest on July 7, 1899.



April 1, 1899. Baracoa to Exeter, New Hampshire. Civilian rate of five cents per 1/2 Oz. Second type of duplex canceller (small circle) from this town.

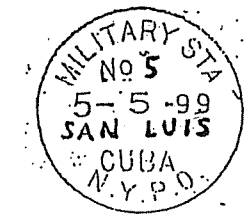


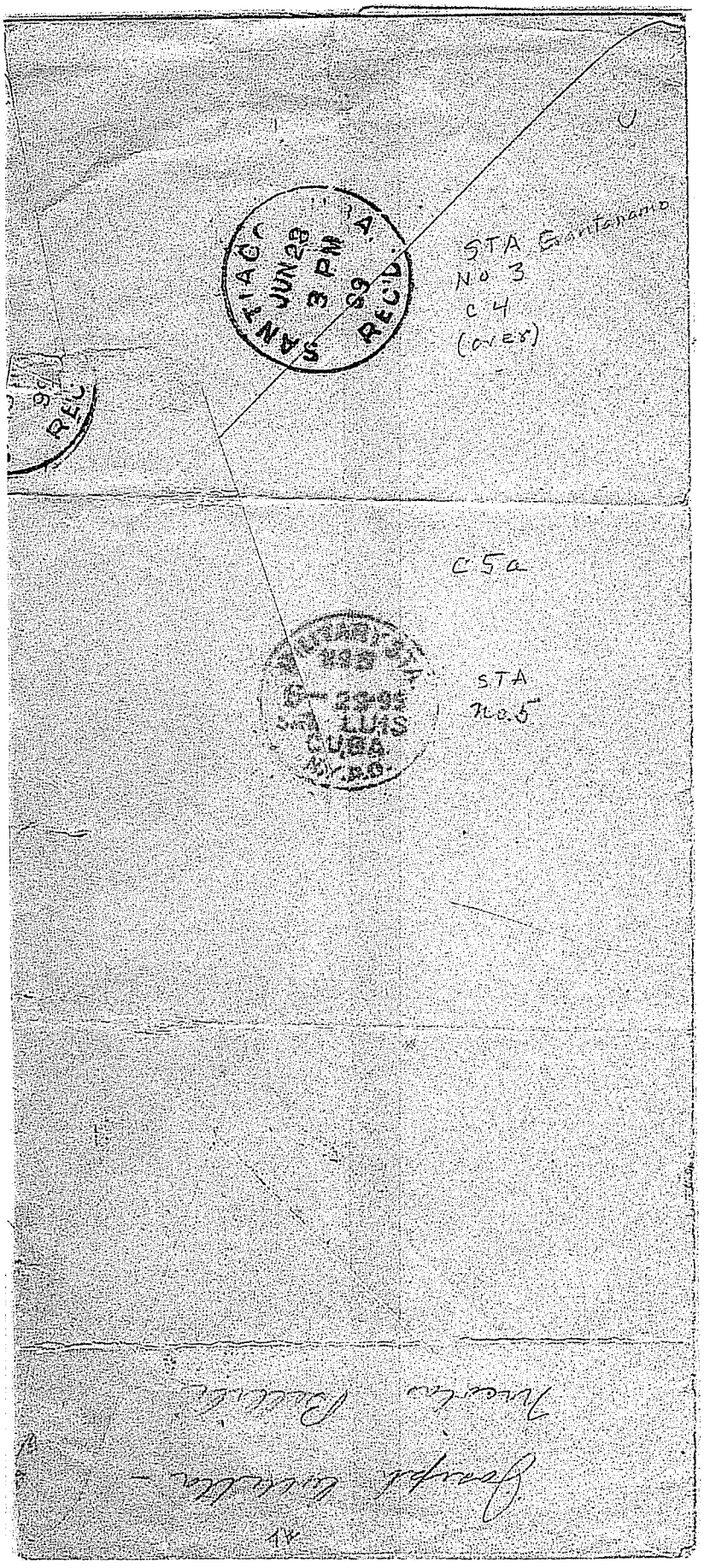


Latest recorded usage.

U.S. MILITARY POSTAL STATIONS IN CUBA

Station Number 5. San Luis

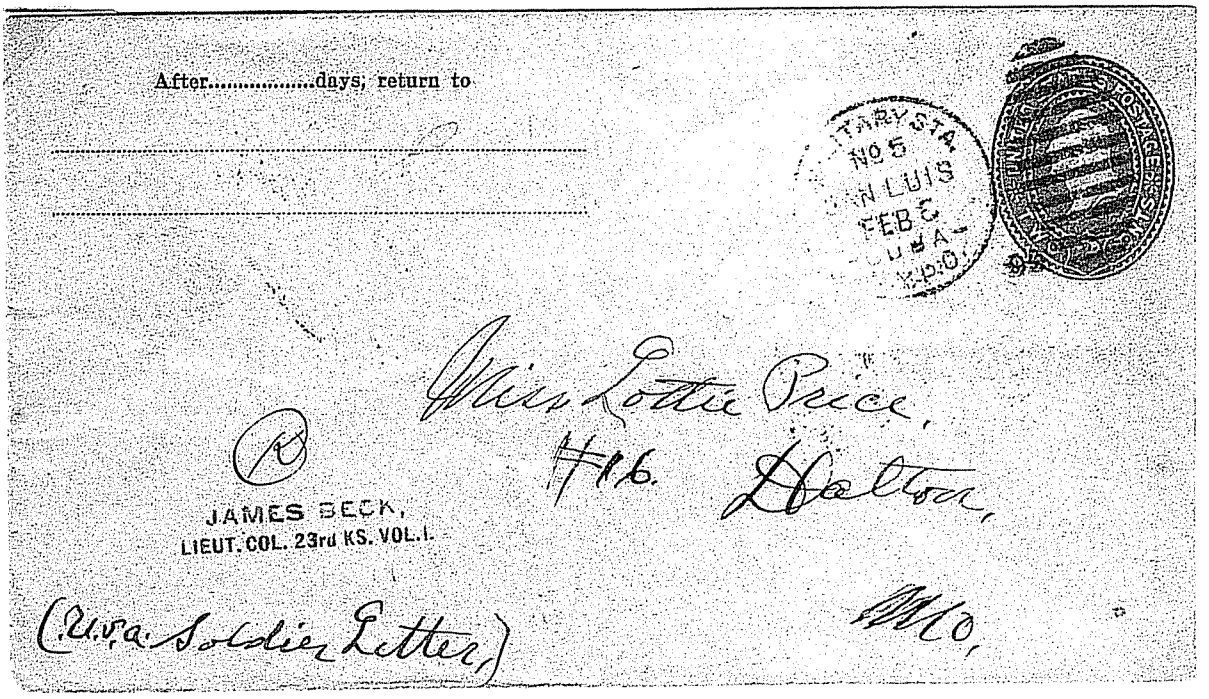




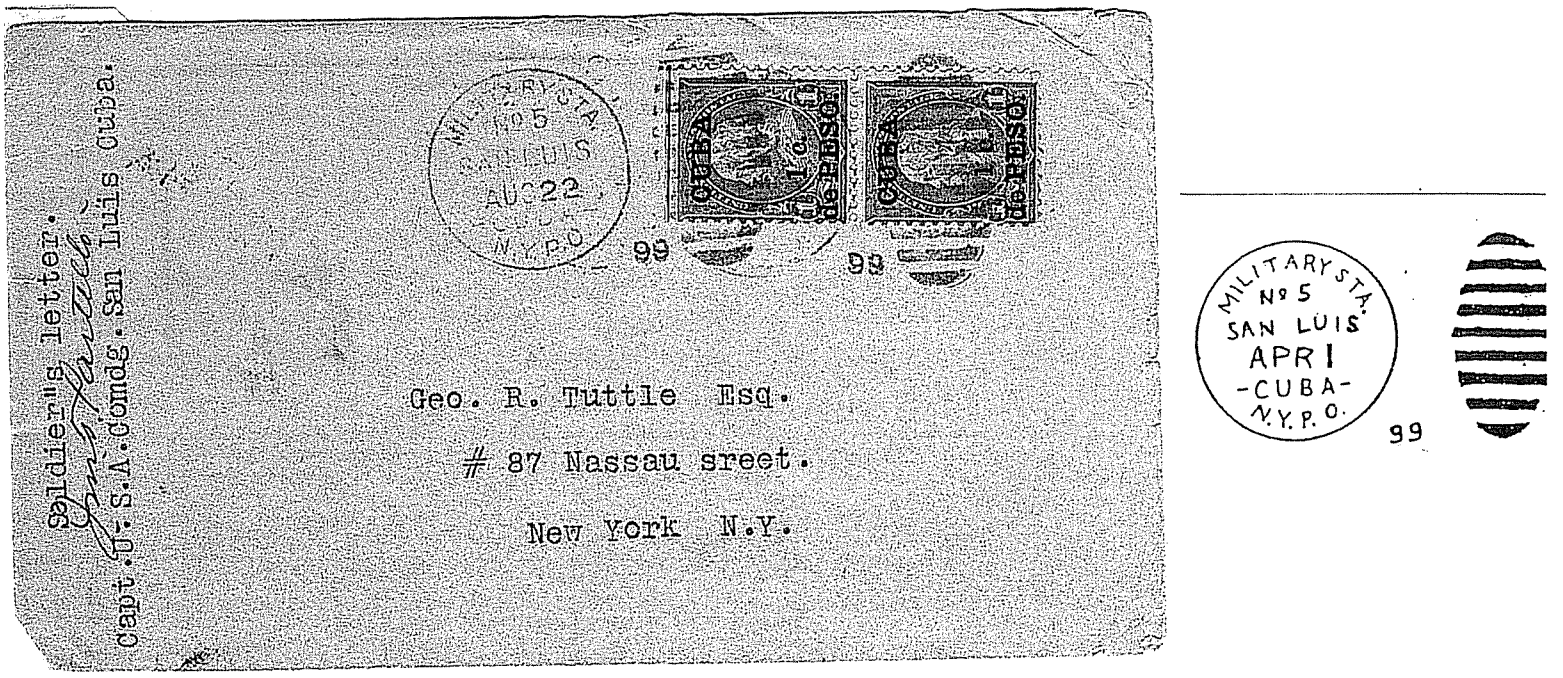
June 29, 1899. War Department official envelope from Guantanamo to San Luis. This is the only recorded example of the receiving marking. This style of handstamp was also used in stations 6, 8, 11, and 13; generally as a receiving marking.

U.S. MILITARY POSTAL STATIONS IN CUBA

Station Number 5. San Luis



Feb. 8, 1899. San Luis to Dalton, MO. Soldier's rate. This is the second type of duplex canceler (small circle) used in this town.

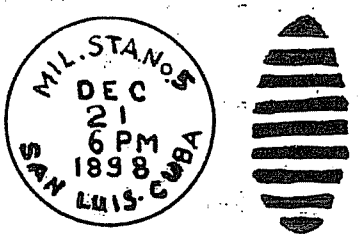


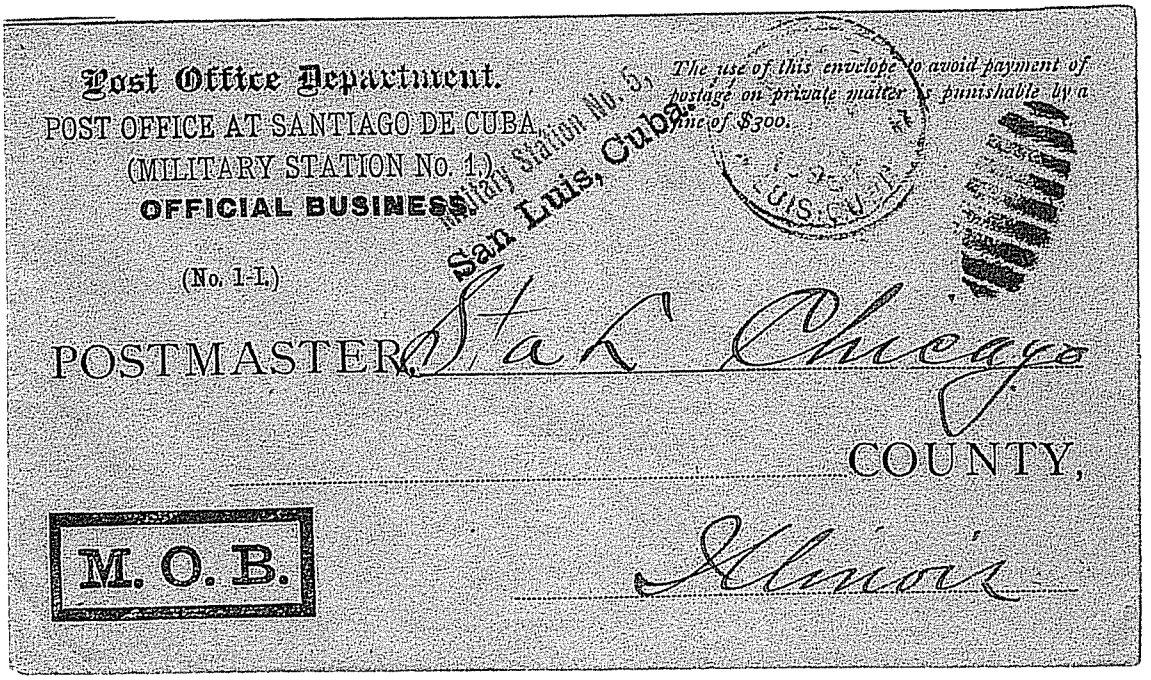
Aug. 22, 1899. San Luis to New York. Prepaid soldier's rate of 2 cents per ounce.

U.S. MILITARY POSTAL STATIONS IN CUBA

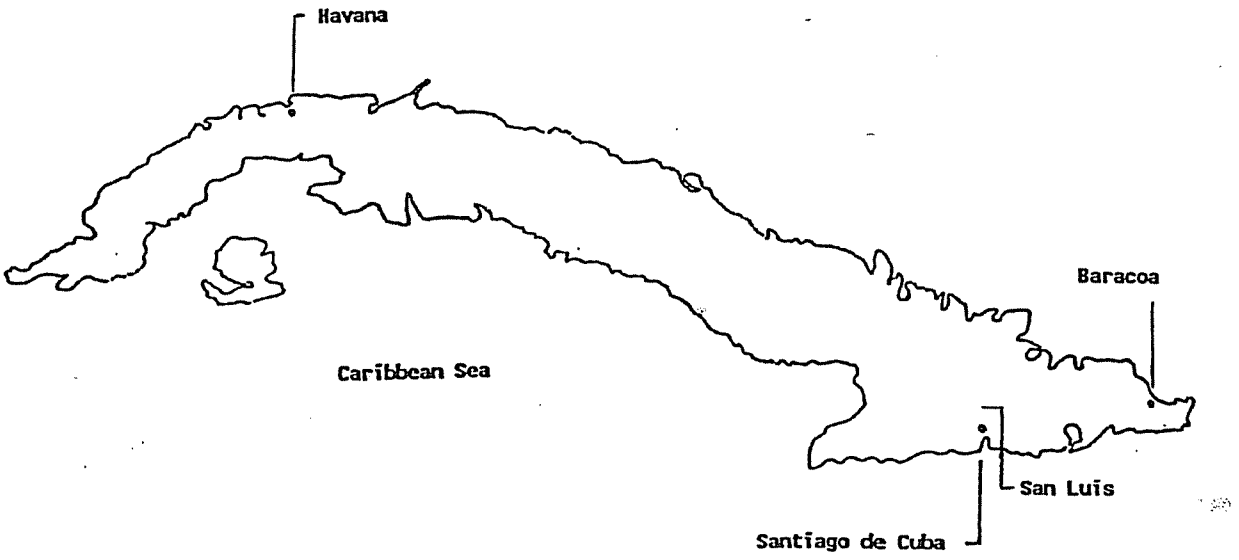
Station Number 5. San Luis

This town had a population of 5,059 and a fourth class post office. US troops arrived on August 16, 1898. The military postal station officially opened on December 1, 1898 and was transferred to civilian authorities on February 24, 1899. Two duplex cancelers, a receiving handstamp, and a straightline marking were used in this station. There are less than ten covers reported from San Luis.



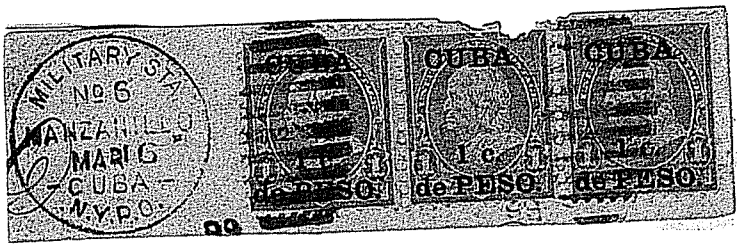


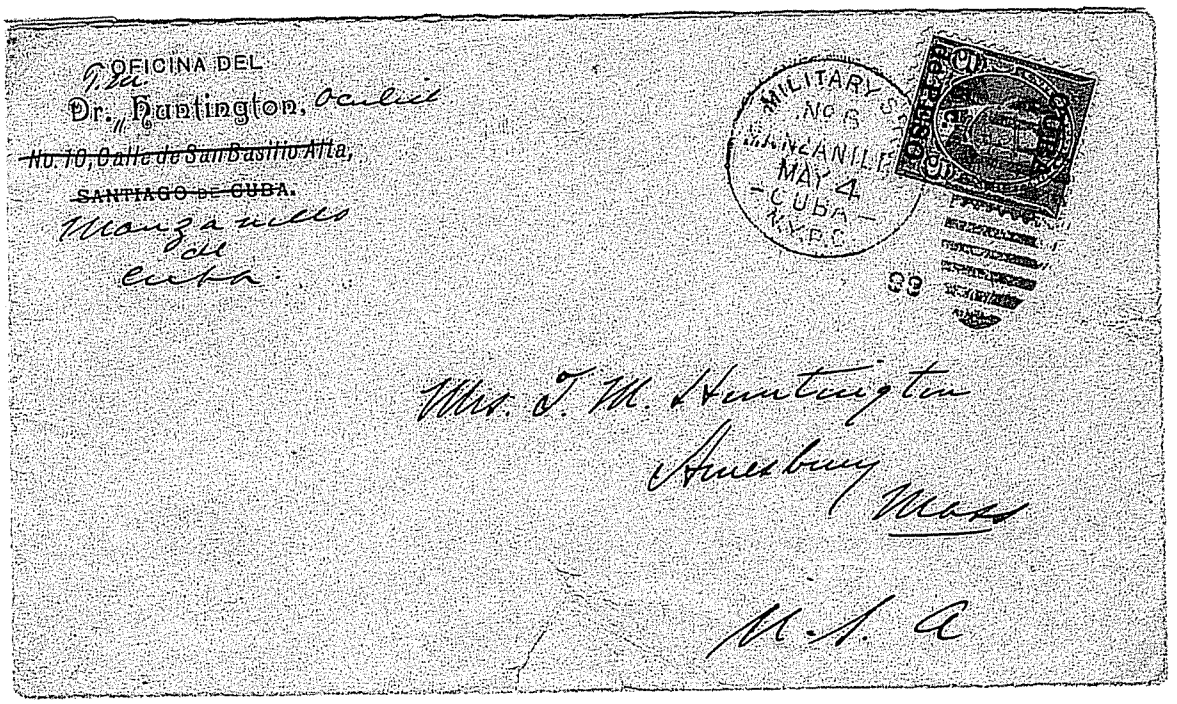
Dec. 1898. Post office department official money order business envelope from San Luis to Chicago. These are the only known examples of the first type of duplex canceler (large circle) and purple straightline marking from this town. This is also the earliest cover from this station.



U.S. MILITARY POSTAL STATIONS IN CUBA

Station Number 6. Manzanillo





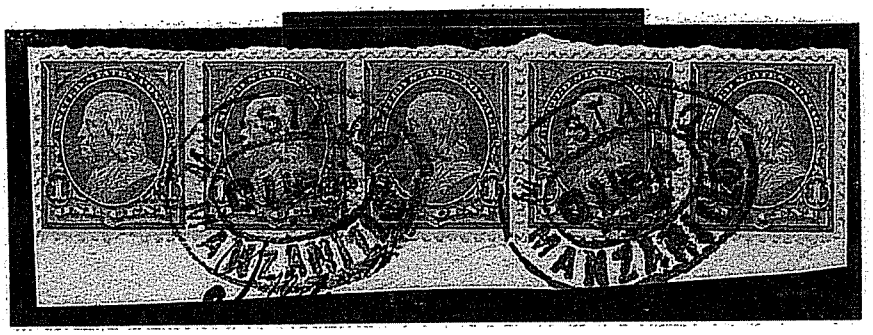
May 4, 1899. Manzanillo to Amesbery, MA. Single weight civilian rate. This is the second type of duplex canceler used in this station.

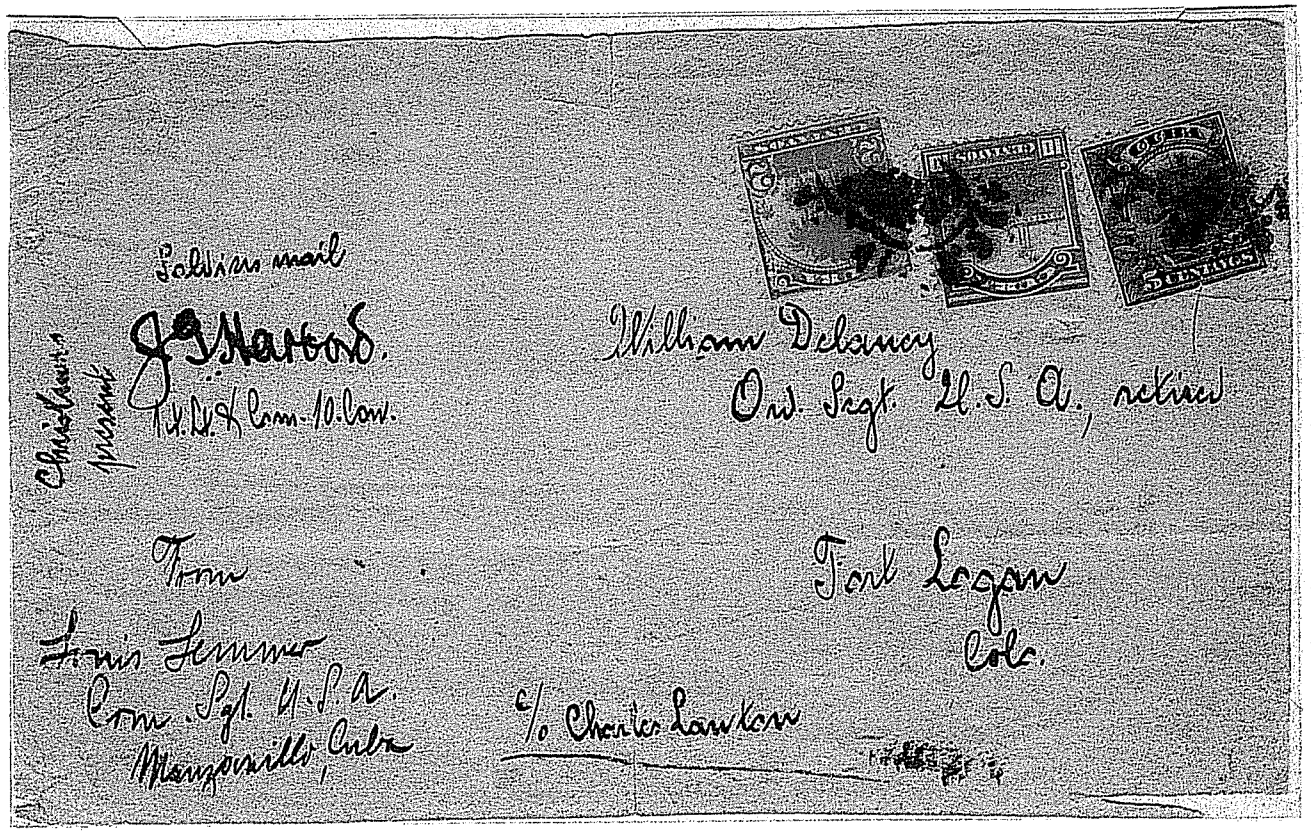
U.S. MILITARY POSTAL STATIONS IN CUBA

Station Number 6. Manzanillo









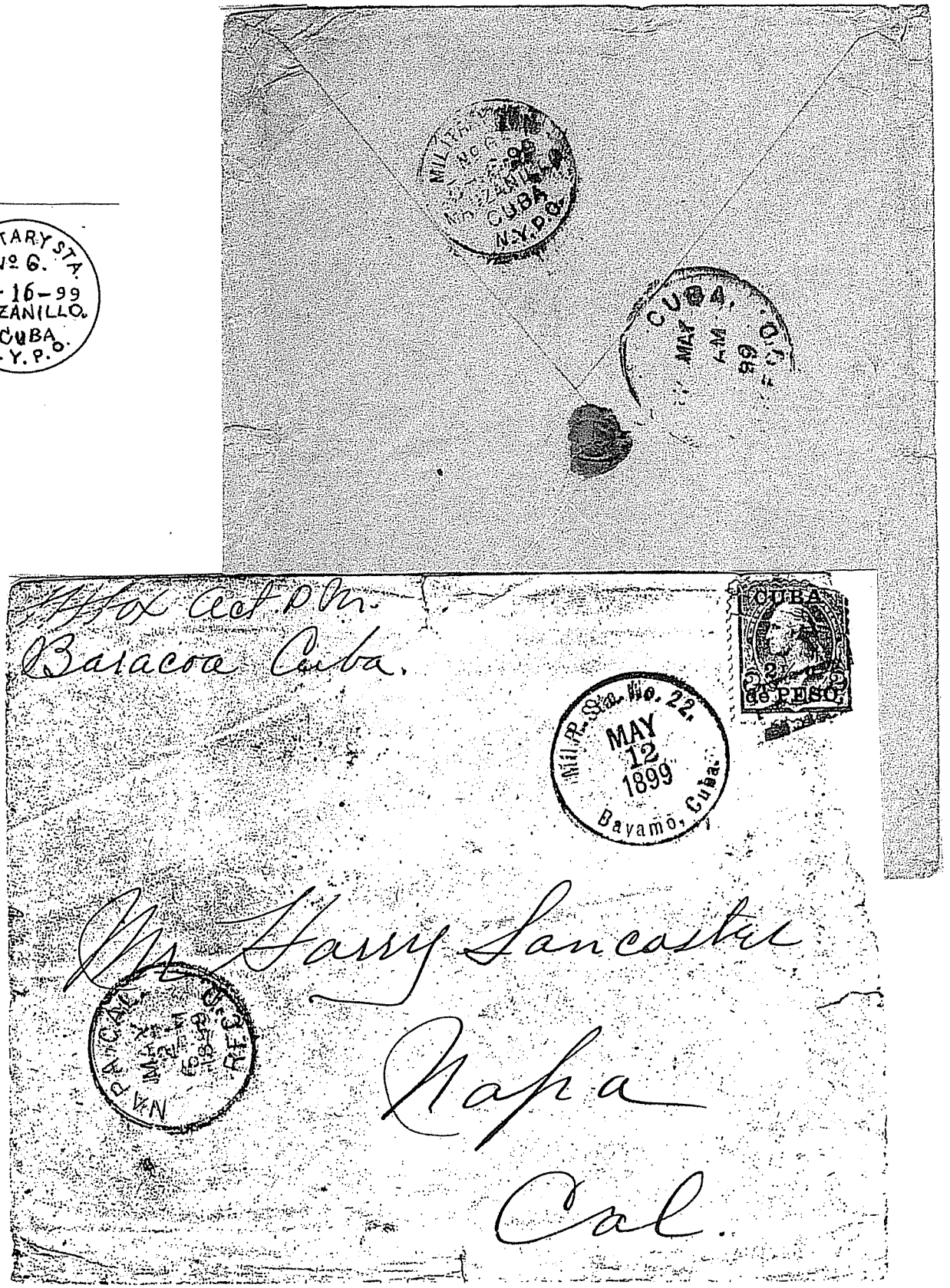
Manzanillo to Fort Logan, Colorado. Large fragment of a package with manuscript `Christmas present'. There are very few surviving examples of parcel of parcel post from this period. Prepaid soldier's fourth class rate of one cent per ounce (17 cents). Four examples of the crude oval have been reported from Manzanillo, three of them on loose stamps or small fragments.

U.S. MILITARY POSTAL STATIONS IN CUBA

Station Number 6. Manzanillo

May 12, 1899. Baracoa to Napa, California posted at Bayamo (Military Postal Station No. 22). The only recorded copy of the Manzanillo receiving handstamp that was applied to this cover in transit. Private correspondence of the acting American Postmaster at Baracoa (Military Postal Station No. 4).

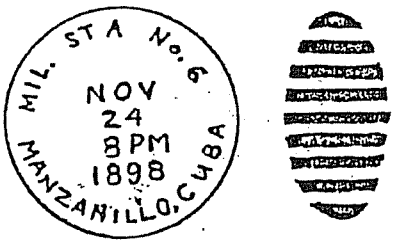


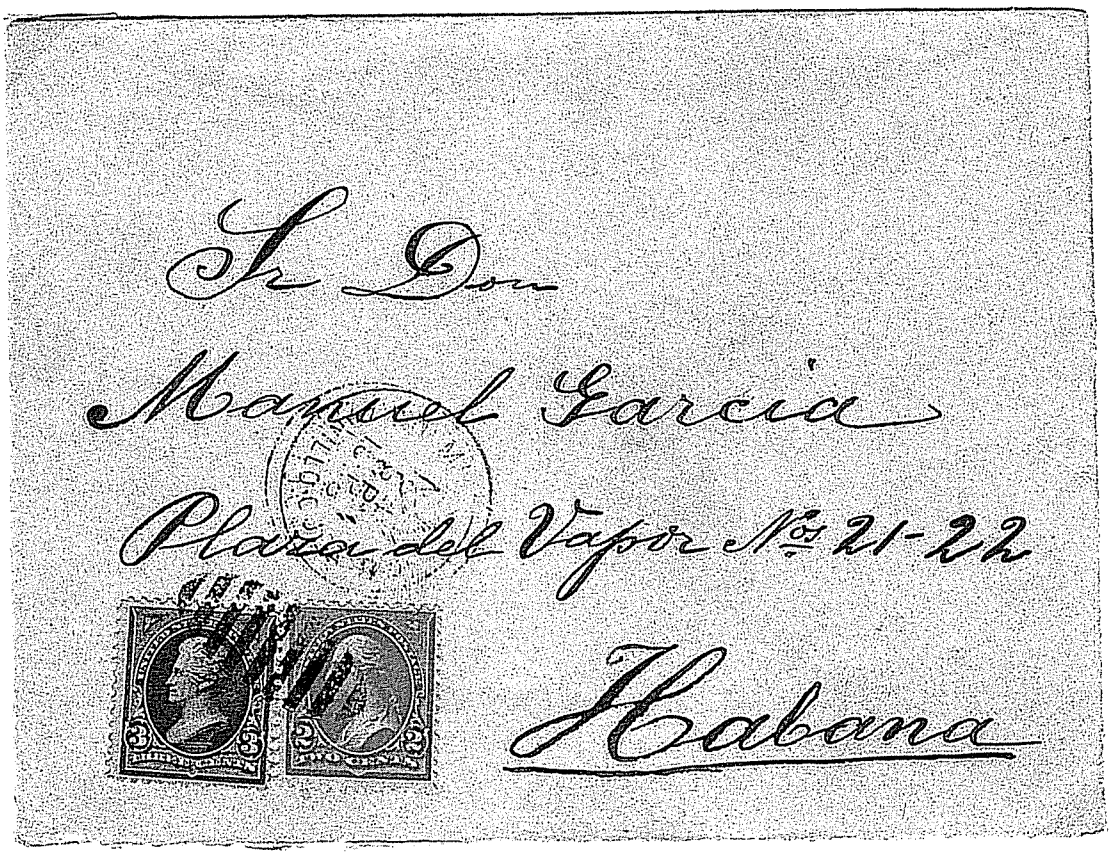


U.S. MILITARY POSTAL STATIONS IN CUBA

Station Number 6. Manzanillo

This important southern coastal city had a population of 14,464 and a second class post office. US troops landed here on October 3, 1898. The military post office officially opened on December 1, 1898 and was handed over to civilian control on February 19, 1899. There were two types of duplex cancelers, an auxiliary straightline marking, a receiving, and a crude oval handstamp used at this station.





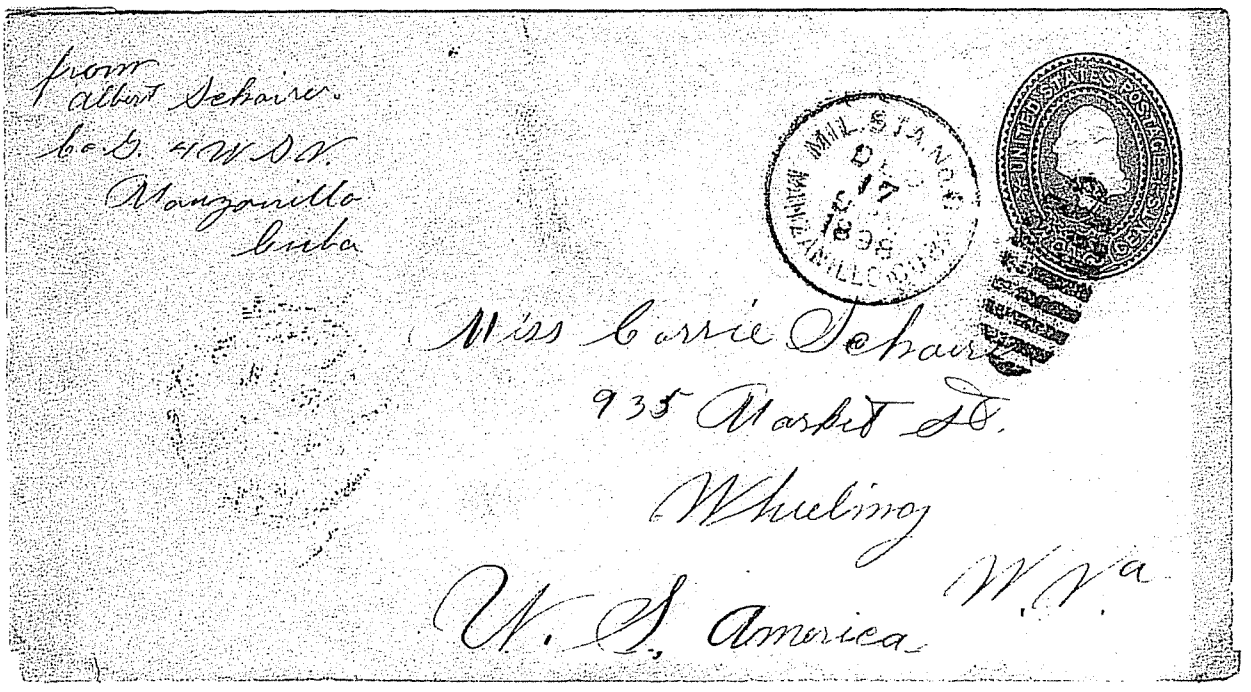
Nov. 24, 1898. Manzanillo to Havana. First class civilian domestic rate of five cents per 1/2 Oz. Post office order 296 of July 21, 1898 authorized civilian use of military postal service at higher rates. This is the earliest cover from this station mailed before the official opening date. It arrived at Havana on Nov. 28.

U.S. MILITARY POSTAL STATIONS IN CUBA

Station Number 6. Manzanillo



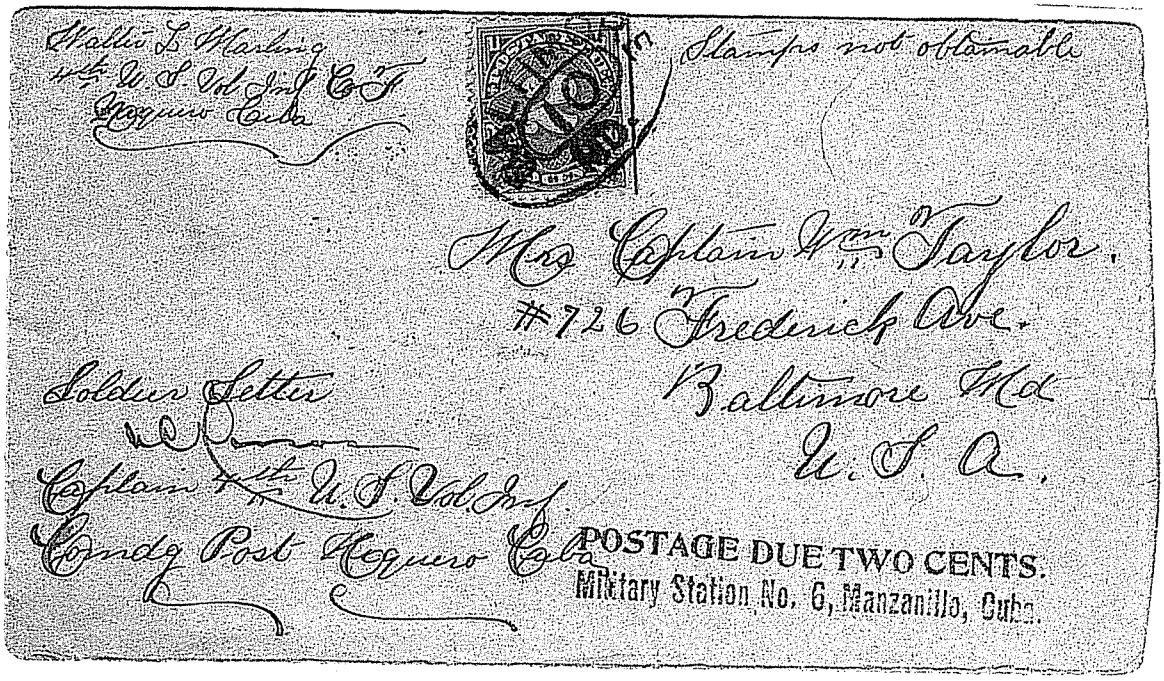
Dec. 15, 1898. Manzanillo to New York. Civilian rate. First type of duplex canceler from this town last recorded on December 22, 1898.



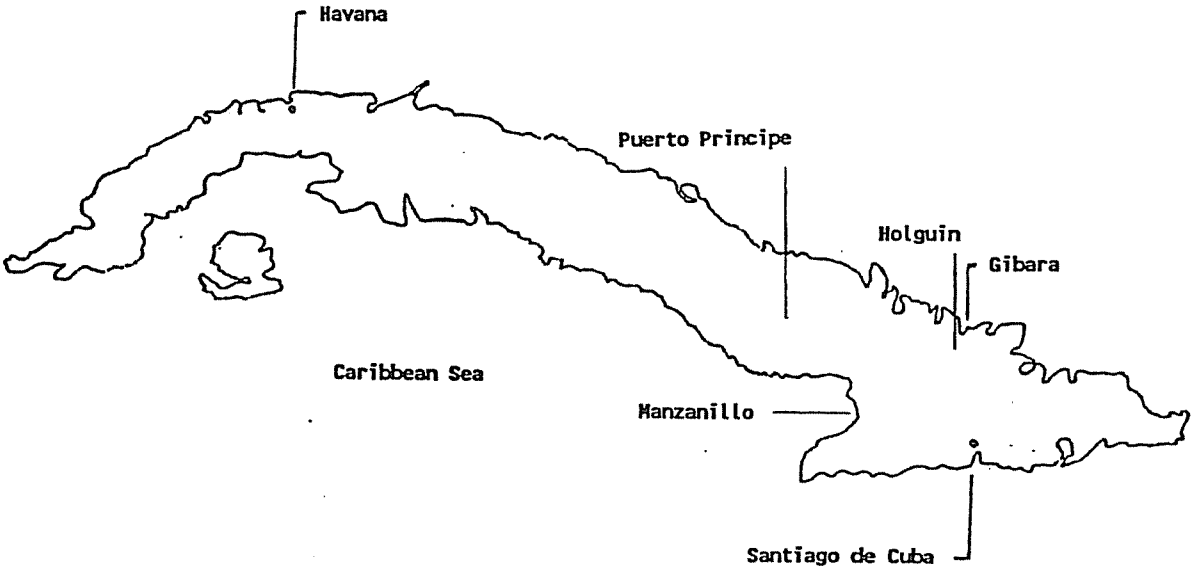
Dec. 17, 1898. Manzanillo to Wheeling, West Virginia. Prepaid soldier's rate.

U.S. MILITARY POSTAL STATIONS IN CUBA

Station Number 6. Manzanillo



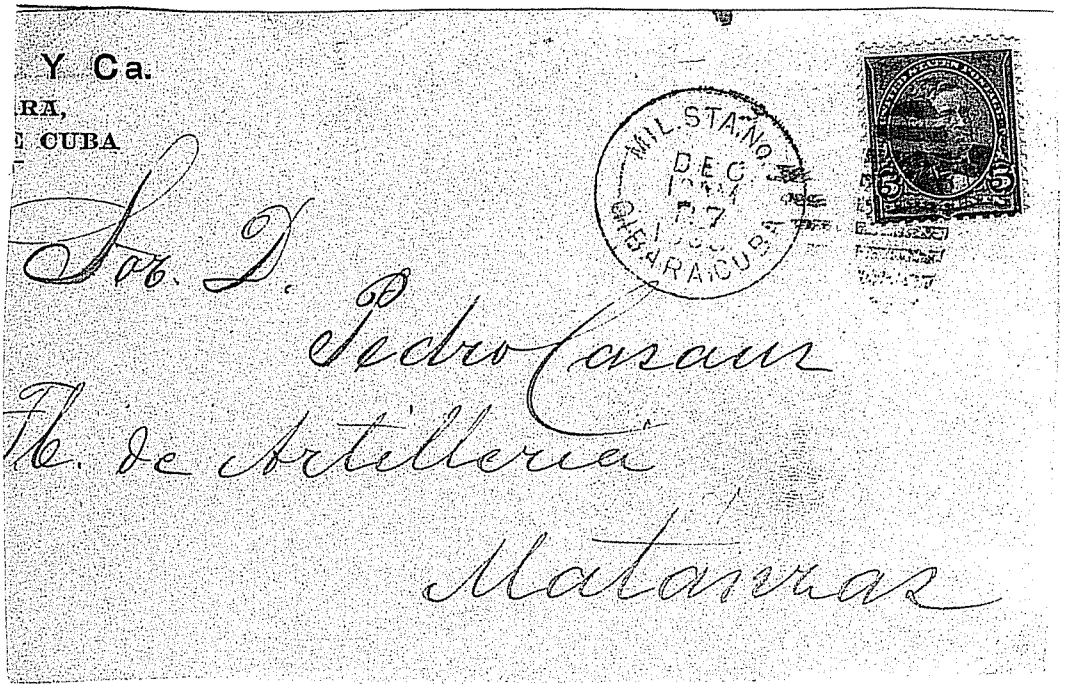
March 1899. Niquero to Baltimore via Manzanillo. Niquero was a small village that had no postal facilities and its only means of communication was a small road to Manzanillo. Unpaid soldier's rate. The postal act of March 3, 1879 specified that servicemen on duty could mail letters unpaid to be paid upon delivery at no extra charge. This is the only recorded example of this auxiliary straightline marking from Manzanillo.



U.S. MILITARY POSTAL STATIONS IN CUBA

Station Number 7. Gibara

This important town on the north coast had a population of 6,841 and a second class post office. The military post office opened on December 1, 1898 and passed to civilian control on February 28, 1899. Two types of duplex cancelers were used in this station and there are only five full covers recorded.



Dec. 27, 1898. Gibara to Matanzas. Domestic civilian rate of five cents per 1/2 oz. This is the only reported example of the first type of duplex canceler (large circle) and the earliest cover from this station.

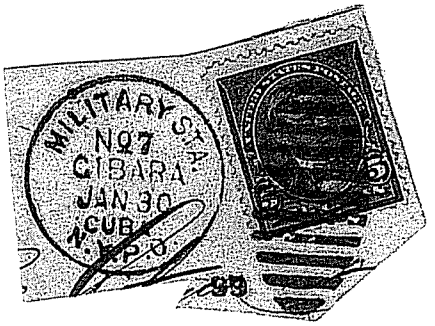


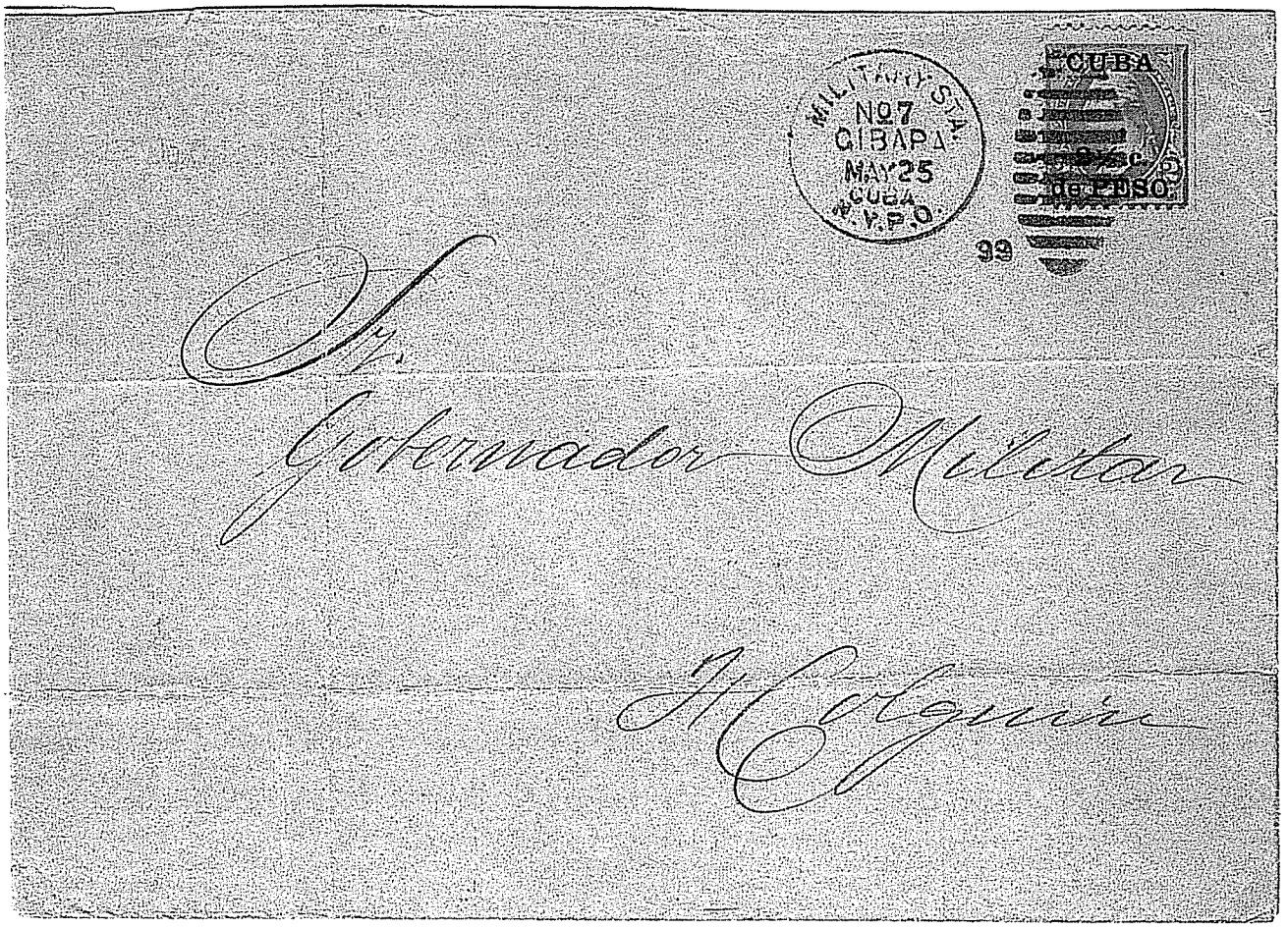
July 10, 1899. Gibara to New York. Civilian rate. First type of duplex canceler but with the words "MIL. STA. No. 7" deleted. Used when the station was under civilian administration.

U.S. MILITARY POSTAL STATIONS IN CUBA

Station Number 7. Gibara





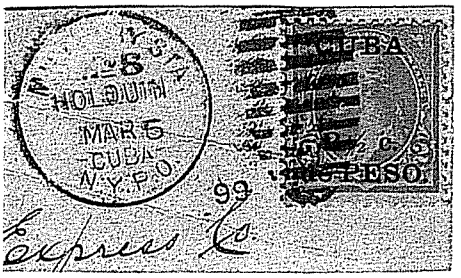


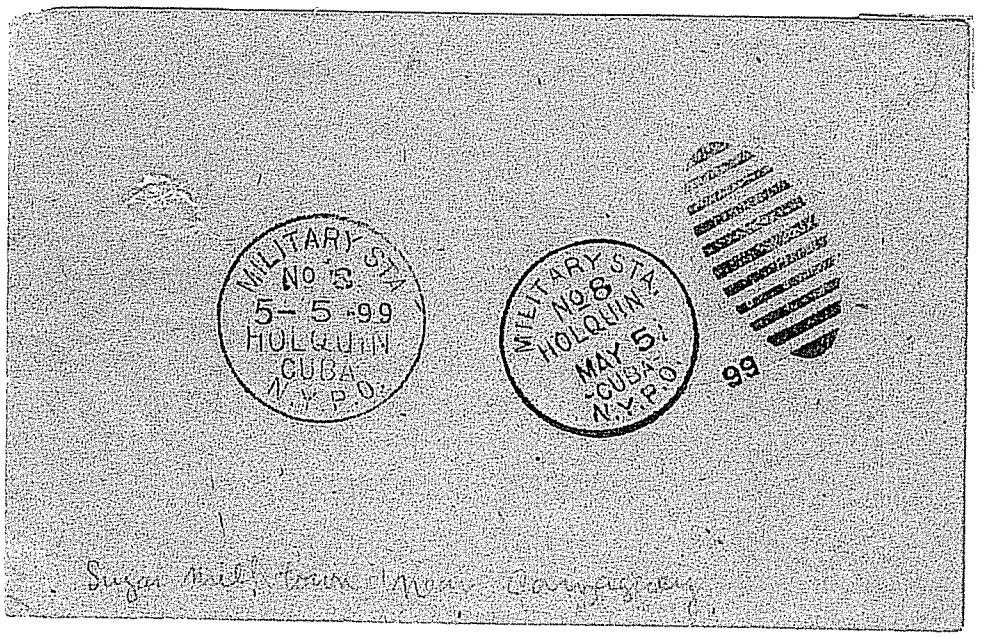
May 25, 1899. Letter from the mayor of Gibara to the military governor of Holguin. Second type of duplex canceler (small circle) from this station. On the reverse there is the only postaly used example of the receiving handstamp from Holguin. This is an example of the old Spanish colonial rate of 2 cents for letters within the same province.

U.S. MILITARY POSTAL STATIONS IN CUBA

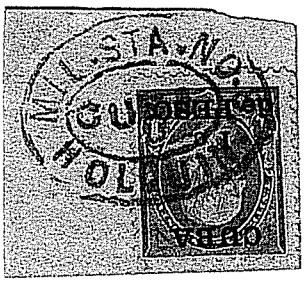
Station Number 8. Holguin

This town had a second class colonial post office and a population of 6,045. The military station officially opened on December 1, 1898 and was transferred to civilian control on February 28, 1899. A duplex canceler, a receiving marking, and an oval handstamp were used at this station. All of these markings have the town's name misspelled **"HOLQUIN"**. There are very few covers recorded and the earliest is dated February 10, 1899.





This fragment probably comes from a post office impression book and shows the receiving and duplex markings.

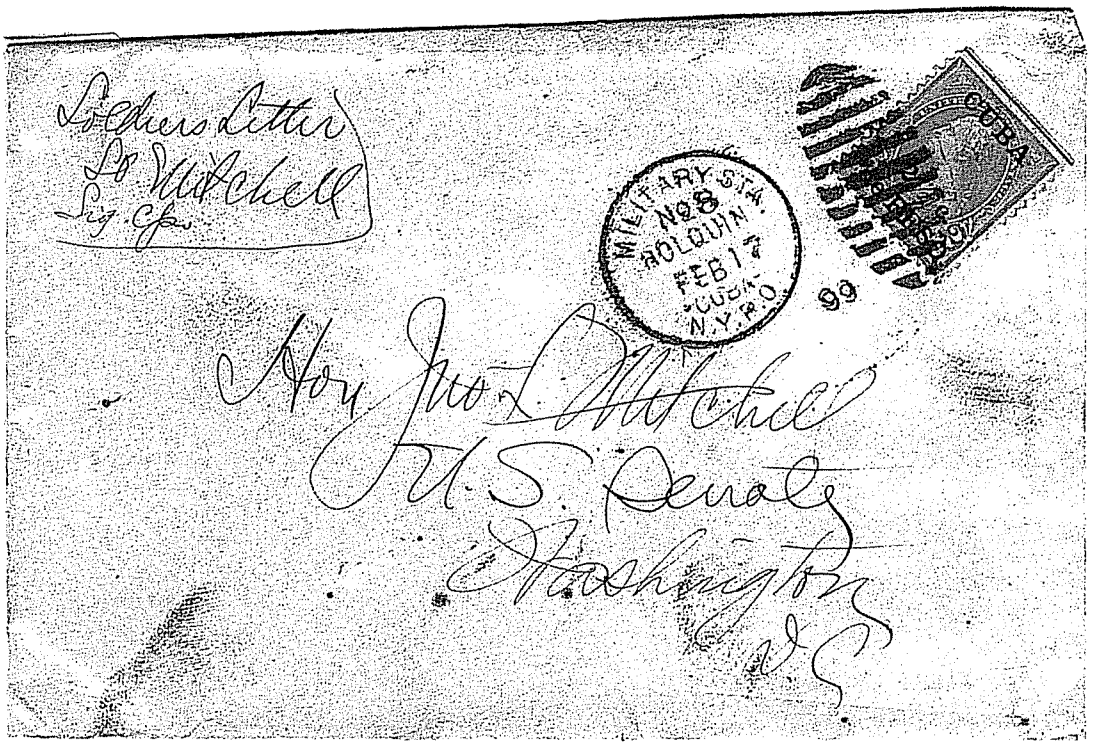




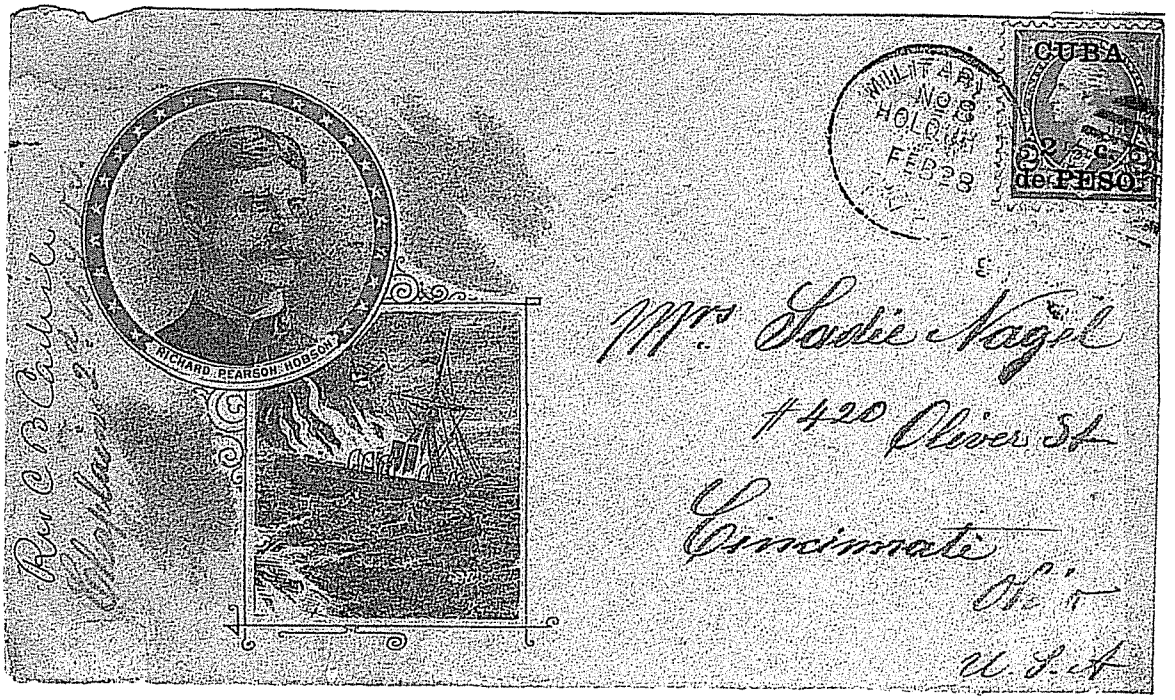
The only reported example of the crude oval marking from this station.

U.S. MILITARY POSTAL STATIONS IN CUBA

Station Number 8. Holguin



Feb. 17, 1899. Soldier's letter from Holguin to Washington DC. This is the only type of duplex canceler (small circle) recorded from this town.



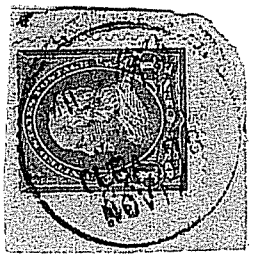
Feb. 28, 1899. Soldier's patriotic envelope from Holguin to Cincinnati. Patriotic covers from Cuba are very scarce. All of the patriotic covers with this design (Richard Pearson Hobson) seem to have been posted at Holguin.

U.S. MILITARY POSTAL STATIONS IN CUBA

Station Number 10. Havana

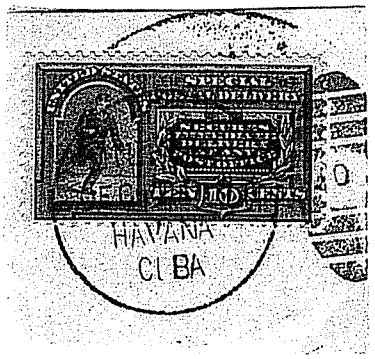
The capital city had a population of 235,981 and the largest postal facility in the island. It was under naval blockade at the suspension of hostilities on July 17. An army survey group sailed from Savannah on November 13 to make preparations for the military occupation. The first major forces arrived on November 26 and the city was formally surrendered on January 1, 1899. The military station officially opened on December 12, 1898 and was transferred to civilian control on February 17, 1899.

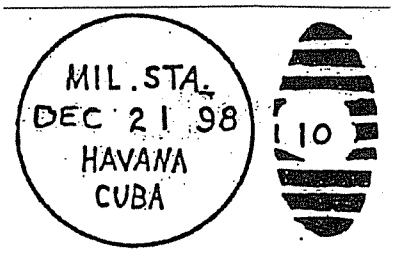
The first type of marking used in this station was a duplex canceler with movable characters. This style of marking was first used at many army camps in the US and by several military stations in Puerto Rico but apparently Havana was the only Cuban city that had it. It was in use until the end of January.



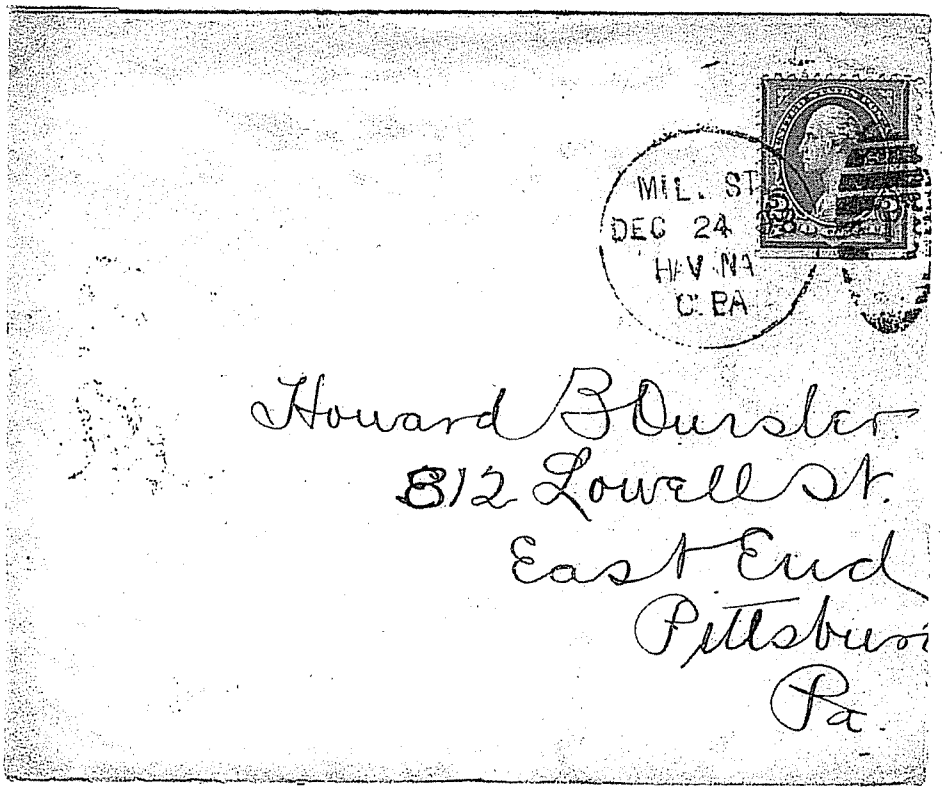


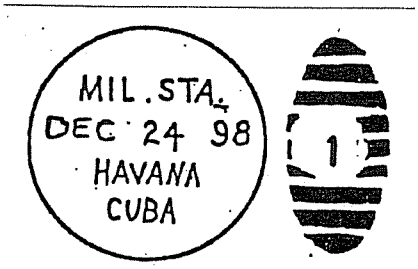
Earliest type of cancellation used at this station and only known example of this variant (date on bottom). Most likely brought by the early survey group and used before the station had officially opened.





Numeral "10" in grid. Used from December 21, 1898 to January 26, 1899.



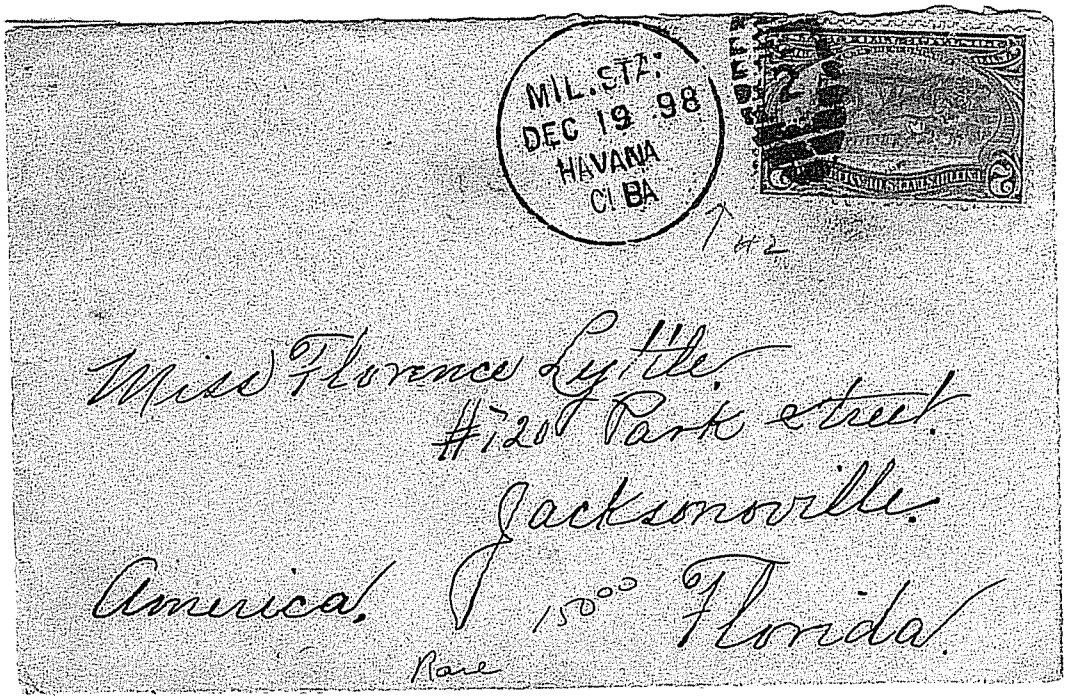


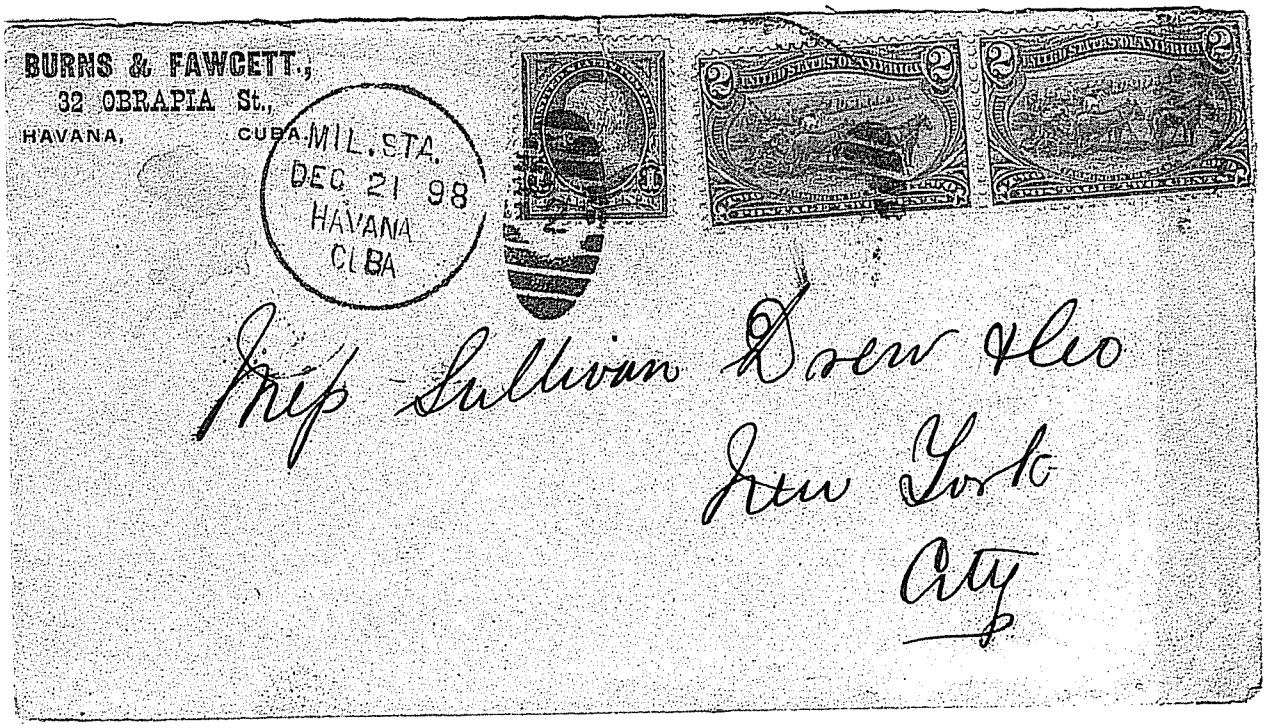
U.S. MILITARY POSTAL STATIONS IN CUBA

Station Number 10. Havana

Another type of duplex canceler with movable letters had the numeral "2" in the grid. It is only recorded from December 19 to December 24, 1898.

Below there are two examples of this marking on soldier's and civilian letters to the US.



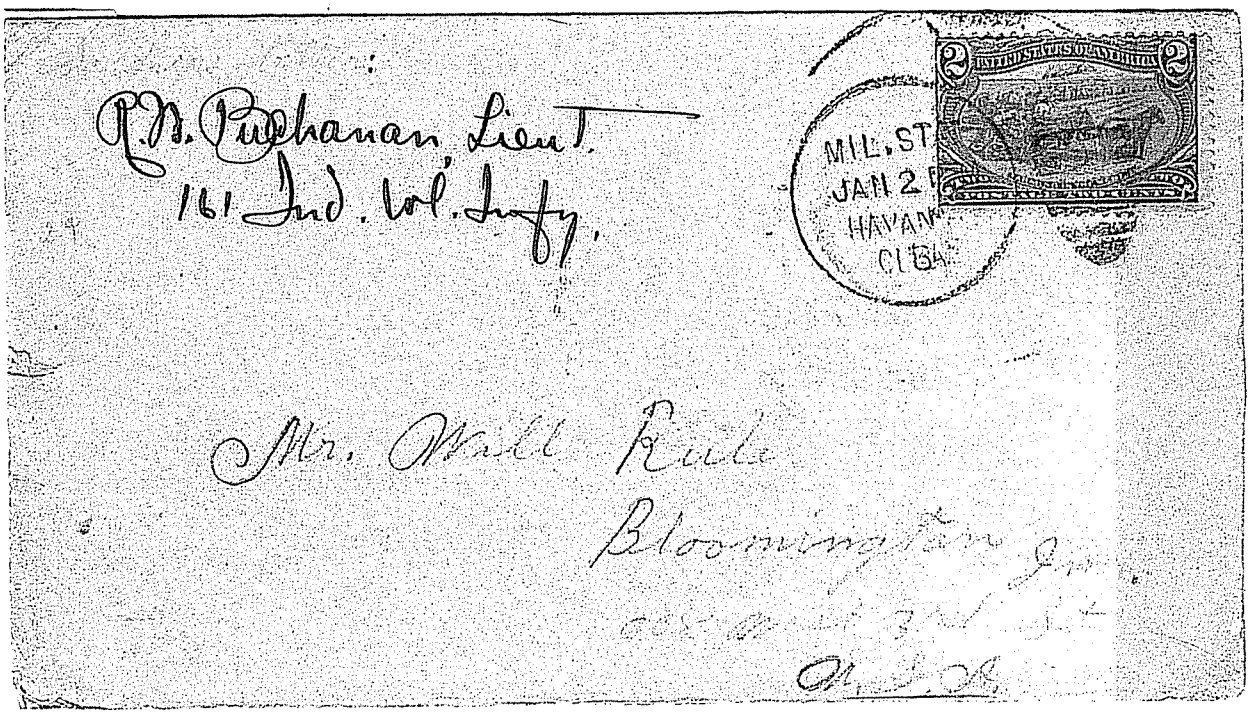


U.S. MILITARY POSTAL STATIONS IN CUBA

Station Number 10. Havana

Below there are two variants of the first duplex canceler from this station. The first one, with the numeral "1" in the grid, has only the month and day on the second line (no year). The second cover, with the numeral "10" in the grid, has "PM" instead of the year.

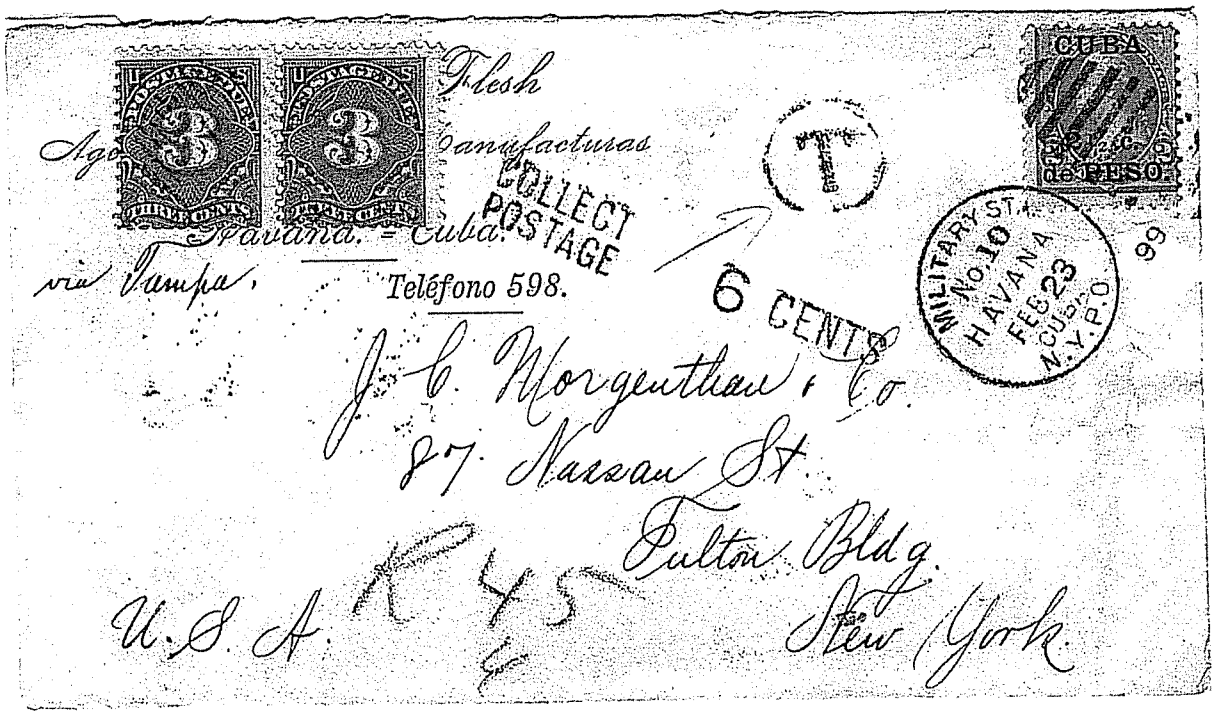




U.S. MILITARY POSTAL STATIONS IN CUBA

Station Number 10. Havana

In February of 1899, the post office at Havana started using two new duplex cancelers, one with horizontal and one with vertical lines in the grid. They were used until mid 1899. Below there are two examples of the killer with horizontal bars on civilian mail to the US. The first letter was underpaid by three cents and was therefore charged double the deficit upon arrival to New York.

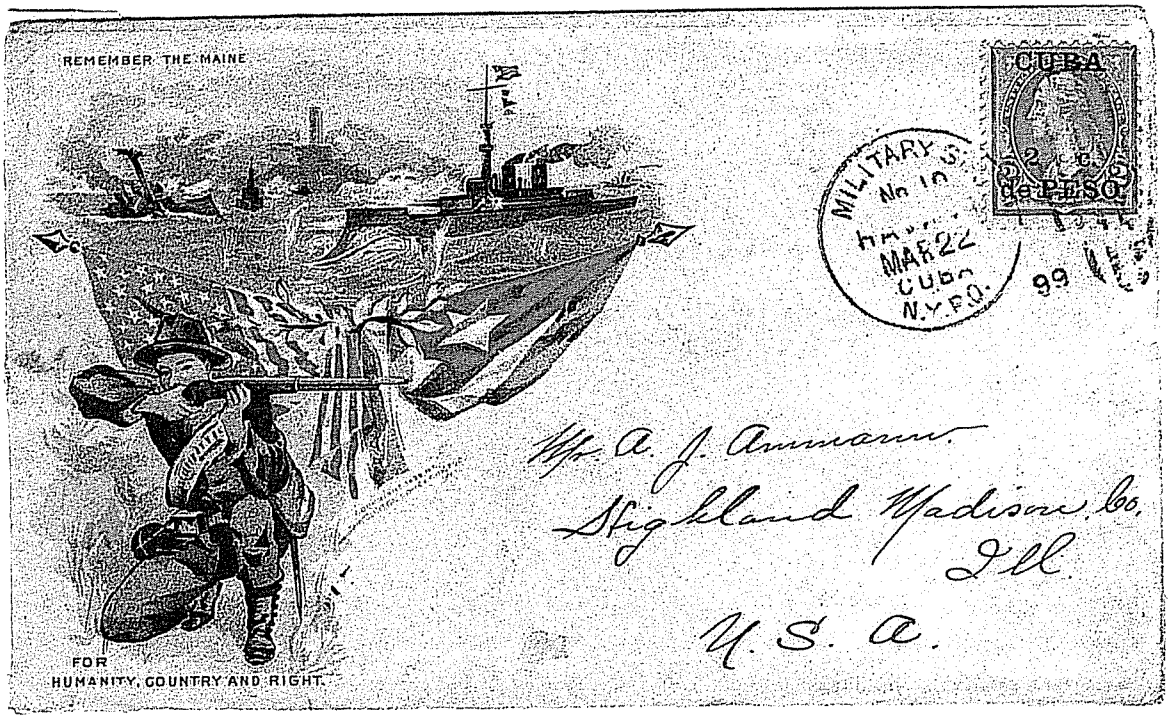


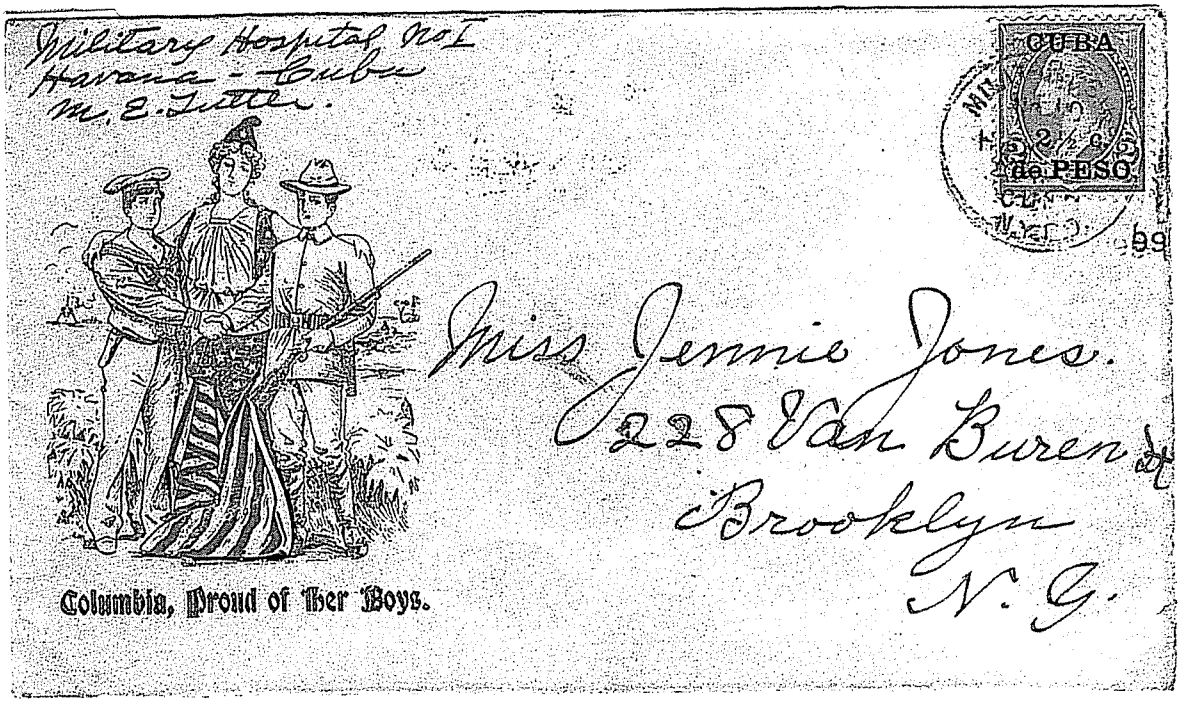


U.S. MILITARY POSTAL STATIONS IN CUBA

Station Number 10. Havana

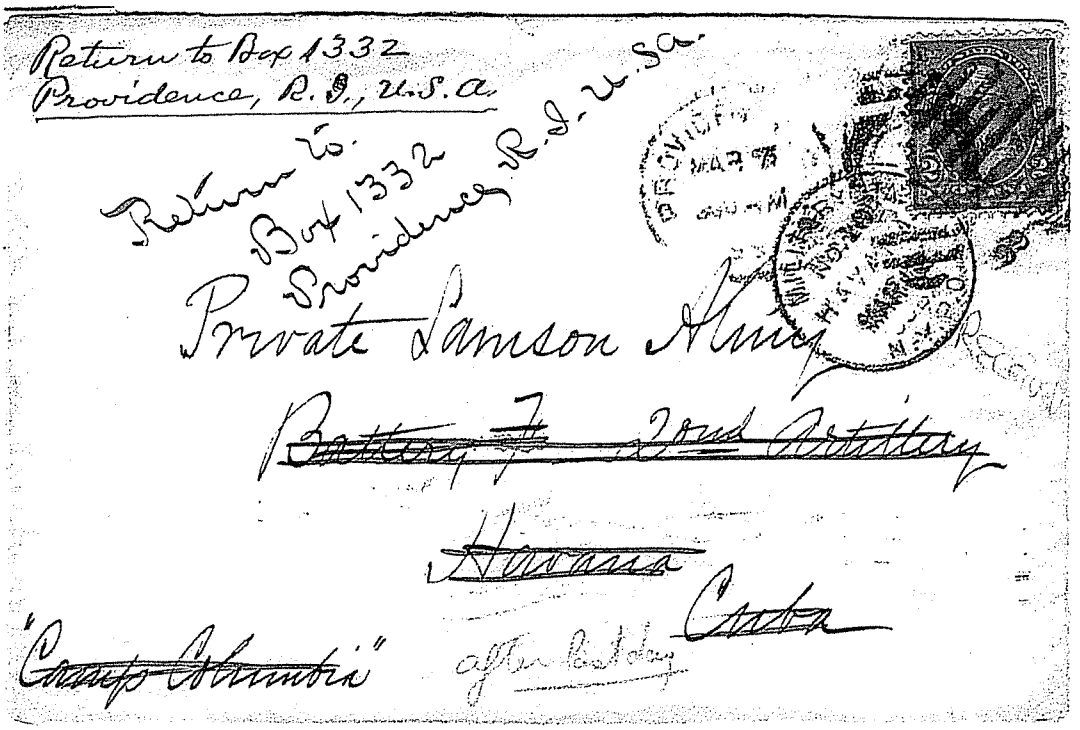
Havana had by far the largest concentration of US soldiers and the busiest military postal station in Cuba. Below there are two examples of the duplex killer with vertical bars on soldier's mail to the US. The second cover was sent from the rare Military Hospital No. I. Patriotic covers from Cuba are very unusual.





U.S. MILITARY POSTAL STATIONS IN CUBA

Station Number 10. Havana



Mar. 1899. Providence to Havana. First class letter rate to military personnel. The addressee was not in Cuba and the duplex canceler was used as a receiving (or transit) marking.

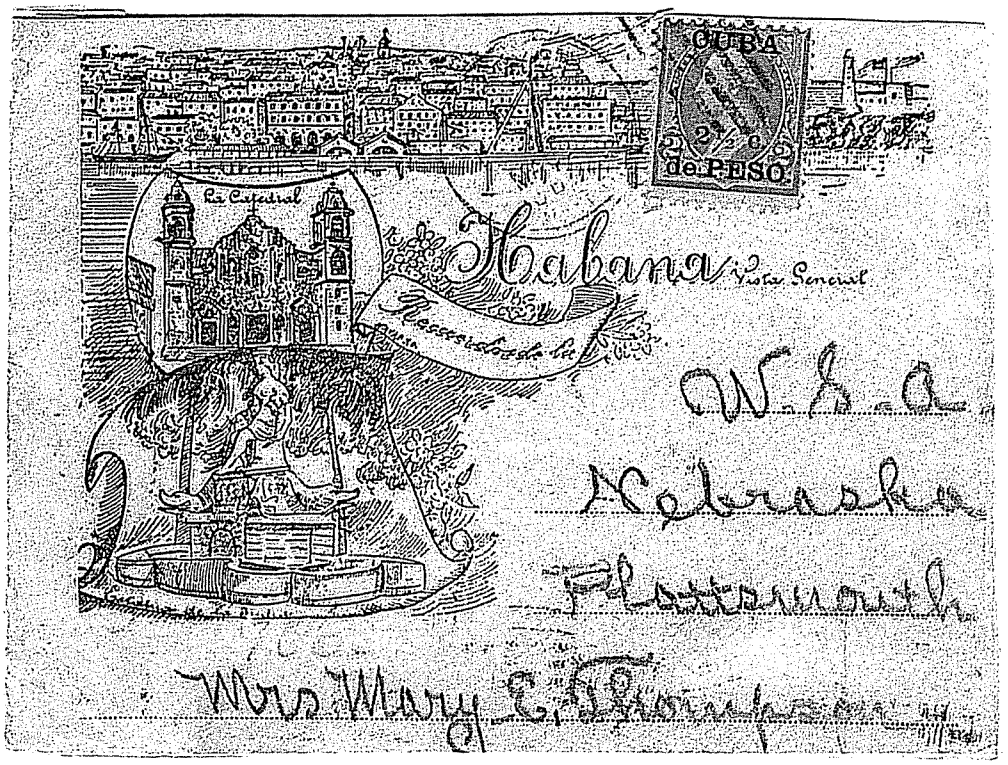


Mar. 13, 1899. Soldier's patriotic cover from Havana to Brooklyn. It originated from the US Army Hospital ship, Bay State.

U.S. MILITARY POSTAL STATIONS IN CUBA

Station Number 10. Havana

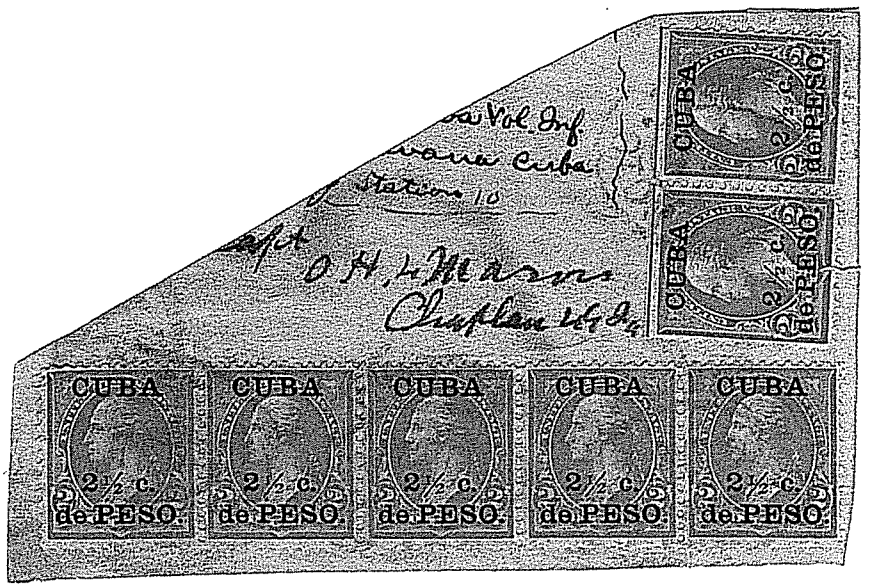
Souvenir envelope and captured Spanish patriotic cover on soldier's letters to the US. Both designs were mostly used by Spanish troops who enjoyed postal franchise and therefore did not leave a space in the design for stamps to be affixed.



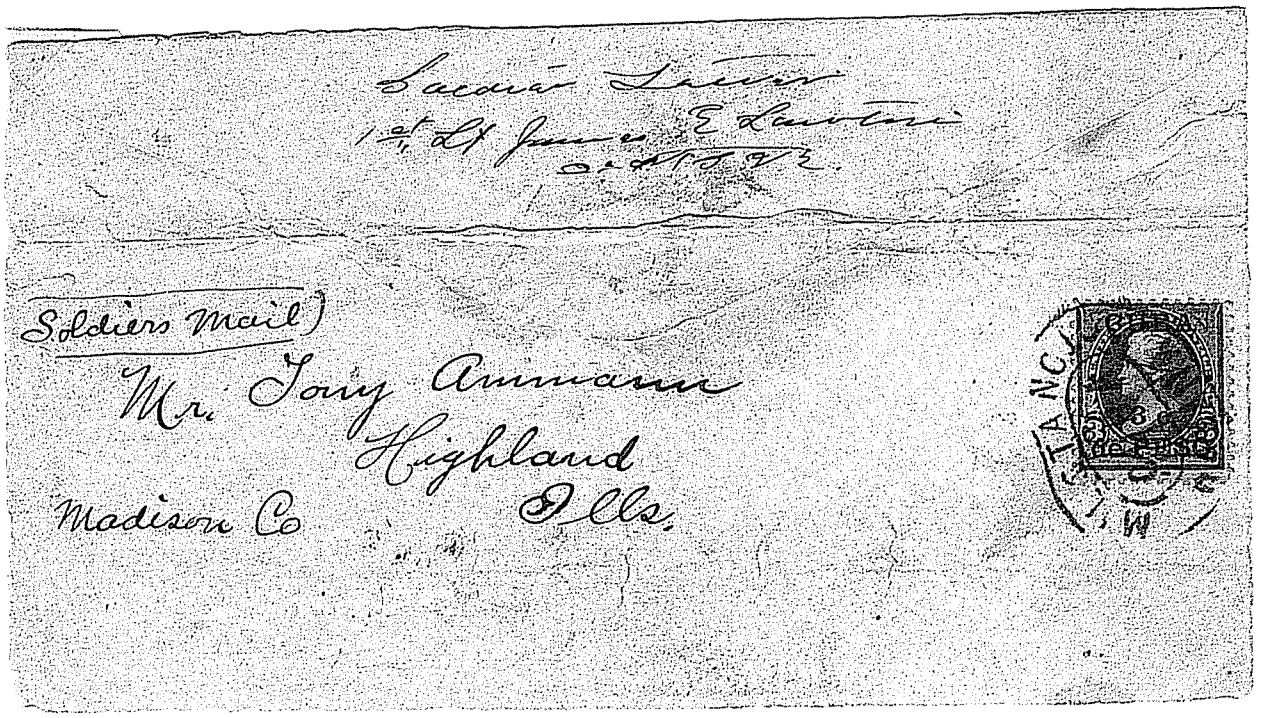


U.S. MILITARY POSTAL STATIONS IN CUBA

Station Number 10. Havana



Large fragment of a multiple weight letter from Havana. There are five recorded examples of the crude oval from Havana.

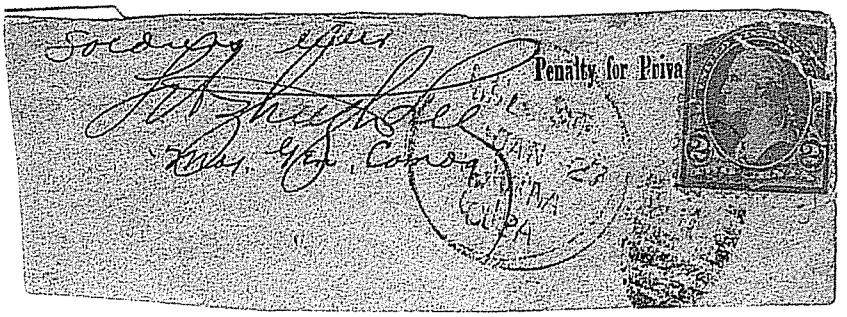


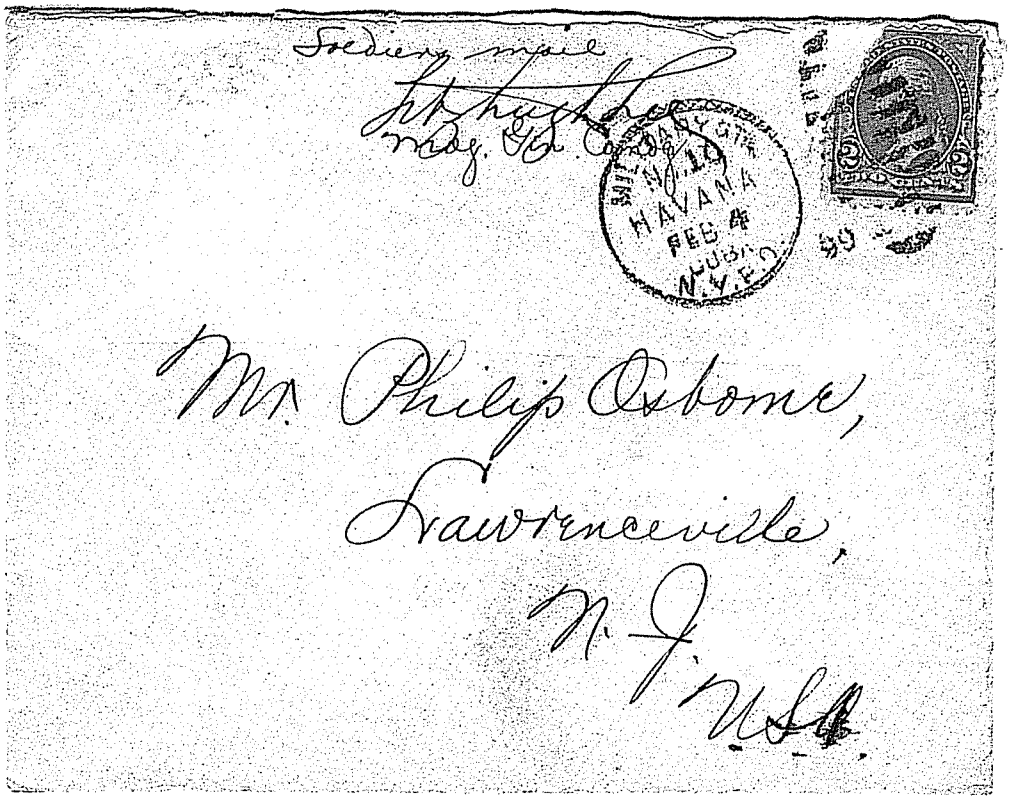
Soldier's letter from Havana to Illinois. Overpaid by one cent.

U.S. MILITARY POSTAL STATIONS IN CUBA

Station Number 10. Havana

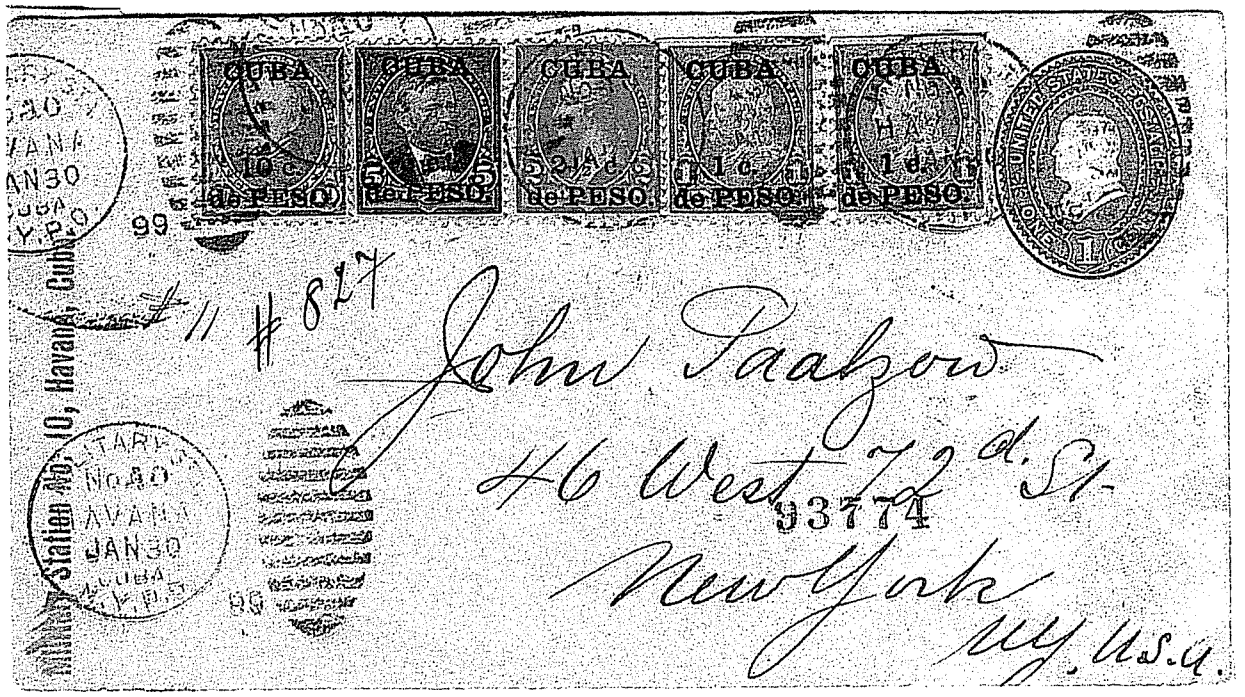
General Fitzhugh Lee was a nephew of Robert E. Lee and had been the US Consul General in Havana since 1896. It was he who requested the presence of the U.S.S. Maine at Havana, and after it was blown up and war was imminent, he resigned as Consul to join the Volunteer Army. He left Cuba on April 10, Easter Sunday, to return later as Major General of the invading forces. Below there are two items of soldier's mail duly certified by his signature.



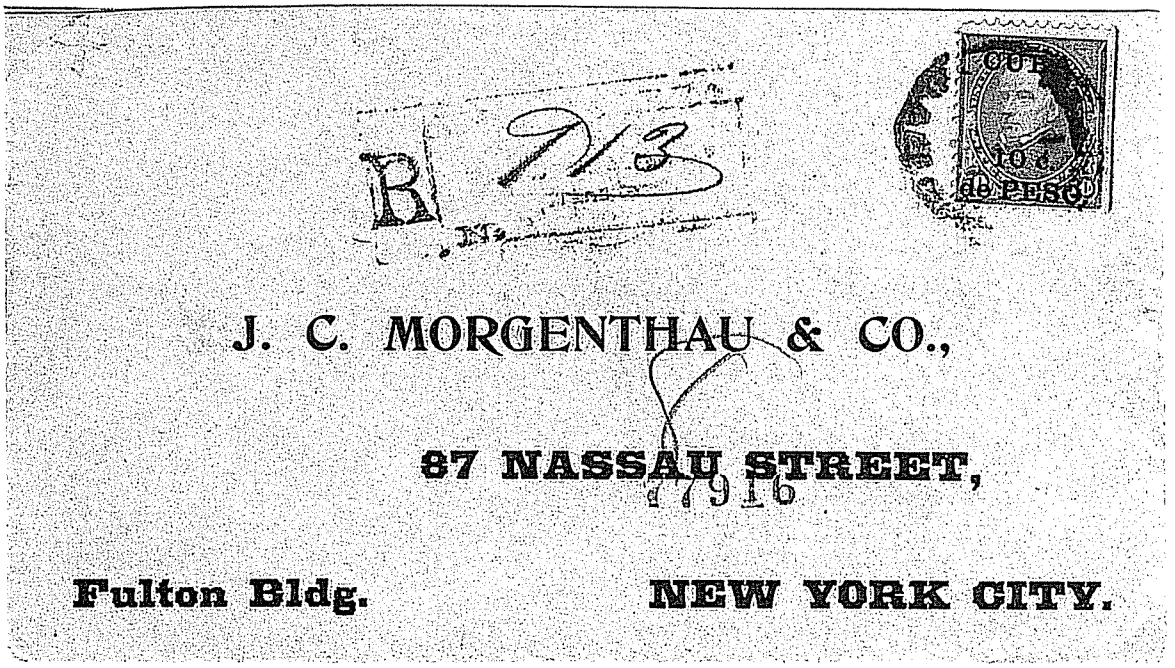


U.S. MILITARY POSTAL STATIONS IN CUBA

Station Number 10. Havana



Jan. 30, 1899. Multiple weight registered cover from Havana to New york. The only reported example of the straightline "Military Station No. 10, Havana, Cuba".

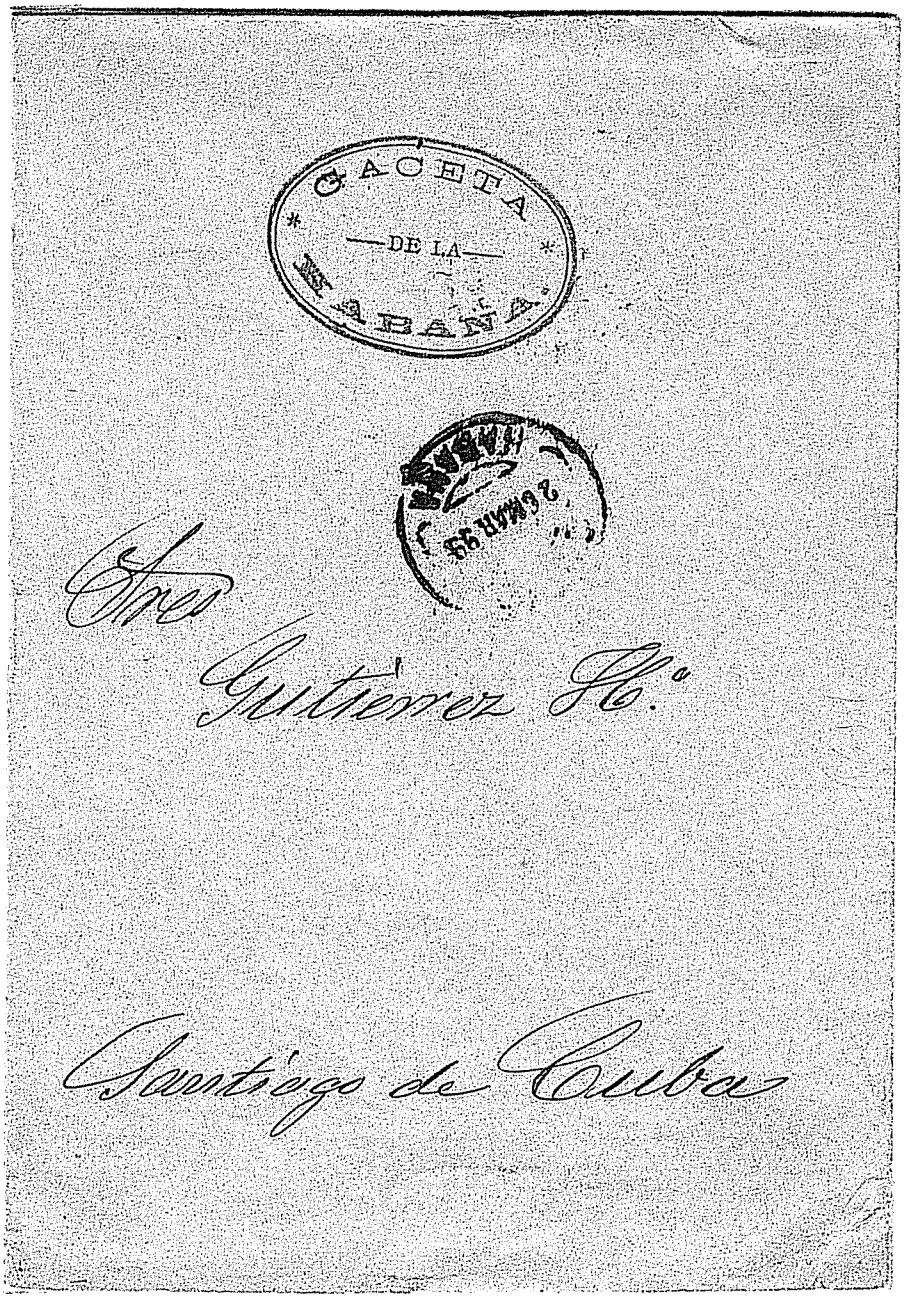


Jan. 1899. Registered cover from Havana to New York City. The worn out captured Spanish colonial canceller was rarely used on mail from this military station.

U.S. MILITARY POSTAL STATIONS IN CUBA

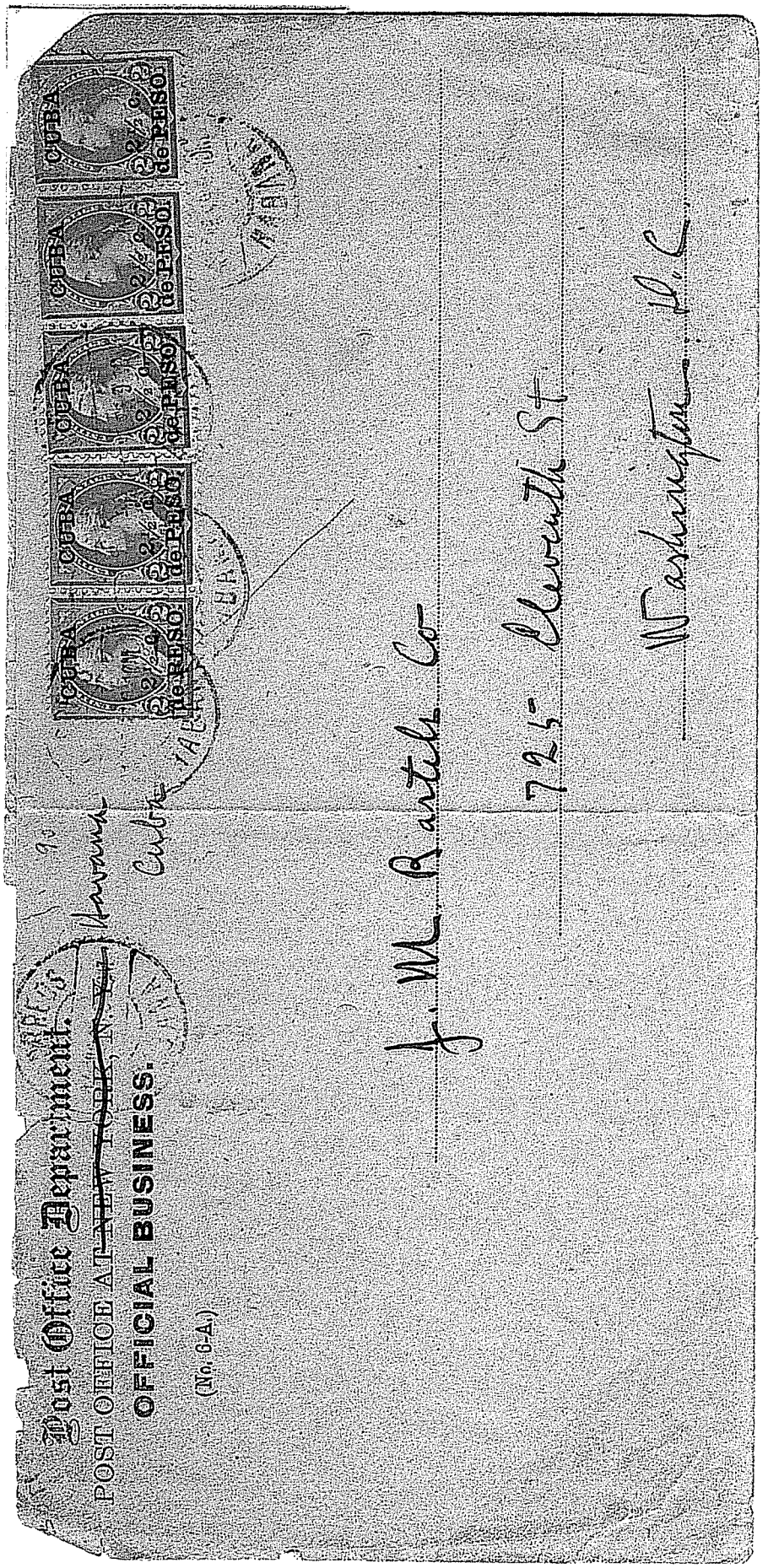
Station Number 10. Havana

The official Spanish newspaper, "Gaceta de La Habana", continued to enjoy postal franchise during the US occupation.



U.S. MILITARY POSTAL STATIONS IN CUBA

Station Number 10. Havana

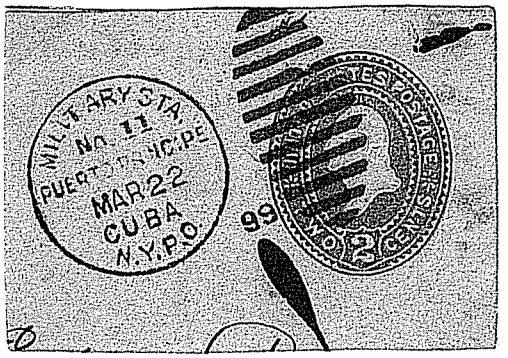


Jan. 1899. Privately used official mail envelope from Havana to Washington DC. It is a double weight civilian rate or a quintuple weight soldier's letter (less likely). The stamps are obliterated by a Spanish colonial canceling device. It is addressed to the famous stamp dealer and philatelic writer J. M. Bartels.

U.S. MILITARY POSTAL STATIONS IN CUBA

Station Number 11. Puerto Principe

A duplex killer, an oval canceller, a receiving marking, a boxed registry, and straightline and postage due handstamps were used in this station.



Only type of duplex used at this station.

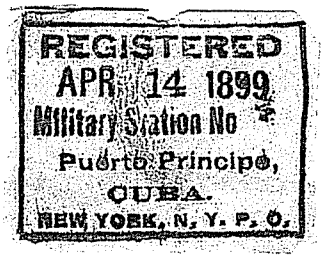


Feb. 11, 1899. Single rate civilian cover from Puerto Principe to Detroit.

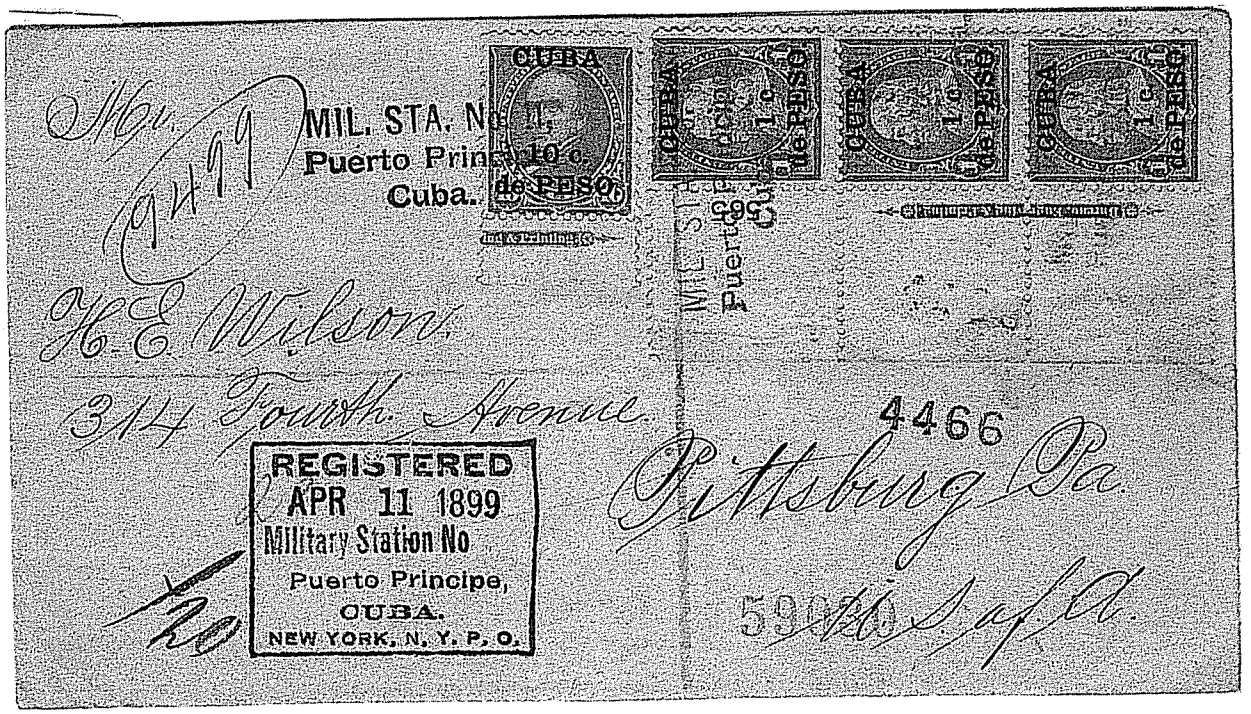
U.S. MILITARY POSTAL STATIONS IN CUBA

Station Number 11. Puerto Principe

Since the new type of handstamps on many occasions were not delivered on time, the post offices continued to use the same military station markings after they were transferred to civilian control. Some were modified to eliminate the words "Military Station".



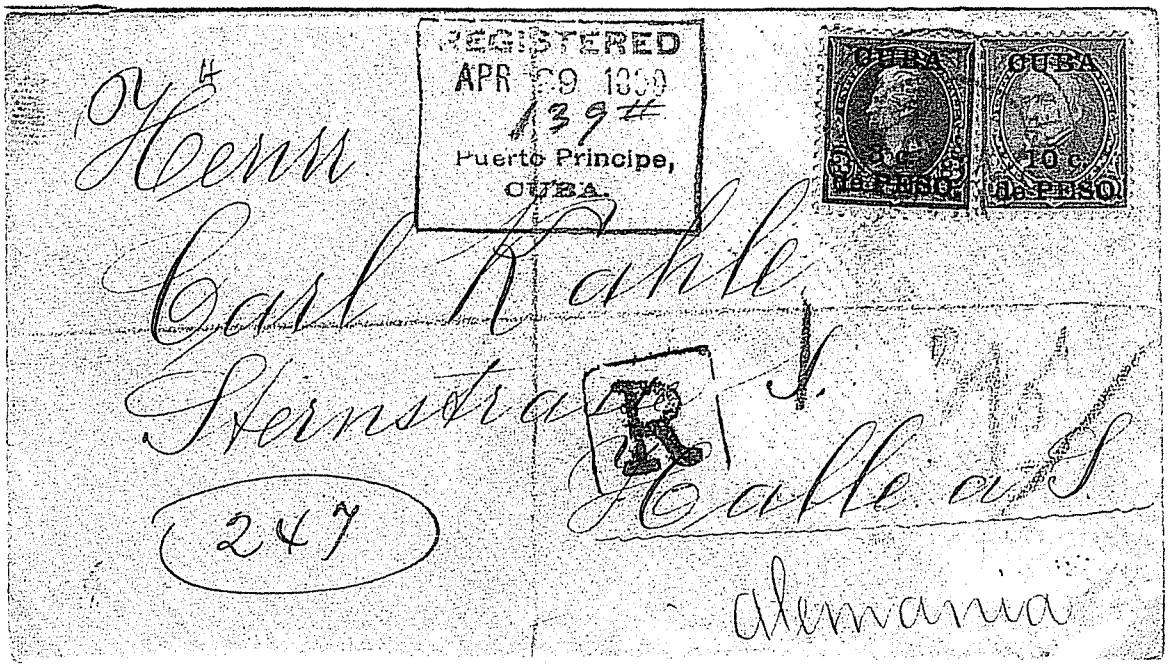
The framed registry marking with the station number deleted.



Apr. 11, 1899. Puerto Principe to Pittsburg. Probably a philatelic use on a civilian registered cover (5 cents first class + 8 cents registry fee = 13 cents). The registry marking has the number of the military station deleted. This is the only reported example of the straightline handstamp from this station.

U.S. MILITARY POSTAL STATIONS IN CUBA

Station Number 11. Puerto Principe



Apr. 29, 1899. Civilian registered cover from Puerto Principe to Germany (5 cents first class + 8 cents registry fee = 13 cents). Both the registry marking and crude oval canceler have the words "Military Station" and "No. 11" deleted.



Jul. 11, 1899. Registered civilian letter from Puerto Principe to Santiago de Cuba. Underpaid by one cent. Modified registry marking without the words "Military Station No. 11.".

U.S. MILITARY POSTAL STATIONS IN CUBA

Station Number 11. Puerto Principe

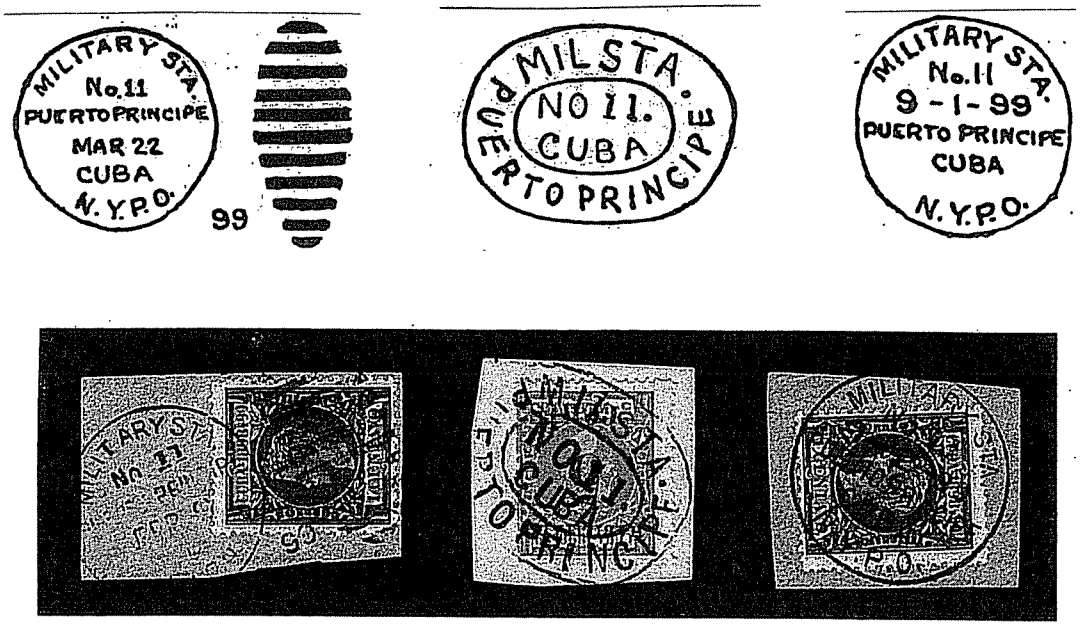
Provisional Stamp Issues

This large city, now known as Camaguey, had a "Principal" postal administration and a population of 25,102. The military station officially opened on December 12, 1898 and was transferred to civilians on March 1, 1899.

Despite banning the use of Spanish Colonial stamps in US occupied areas, they continued to be used in the Province of Puerto Principe after the arrival of American forces on November 24, 1898. Since there were no US stamps available, General R. Carpenter, the US military governor of the province ordered the purchase and overprinting of the Spanish colonial stamps. Their use was valid in the towns of Puerto Principe, Minas del Principe, Nuevitas, and Santa Cruz del Sur from December 19, 1898 until January 22, 1899 when US stamps overprinted for Cuba finally arrived. In the town of Santa Cruz, however, US stamps were not available until February 28.

The overprinting was done at night, for security reasons, on a pedal-operated flat press at the print shop of the newspaper "Las Dos Republicas". The stamps were overprinted in strips of five thus, no blocks or vertical multiples exist. The print shop only had sets of four of the same type of numerals chosen hence, a different thinner type was added to each setting of five.

There were five printings with different settings which made possible the reconstruction and identification of the distinct overprints. Between 21,400 and 28,000 stamps were surcharged. Less than 25 covers of this rare provisional issue have been recorded.



The three different Military Station cancelers used to obliterate these provisional stamps.

U.S. MILITARY POSTAL STATIONS IN CUBA

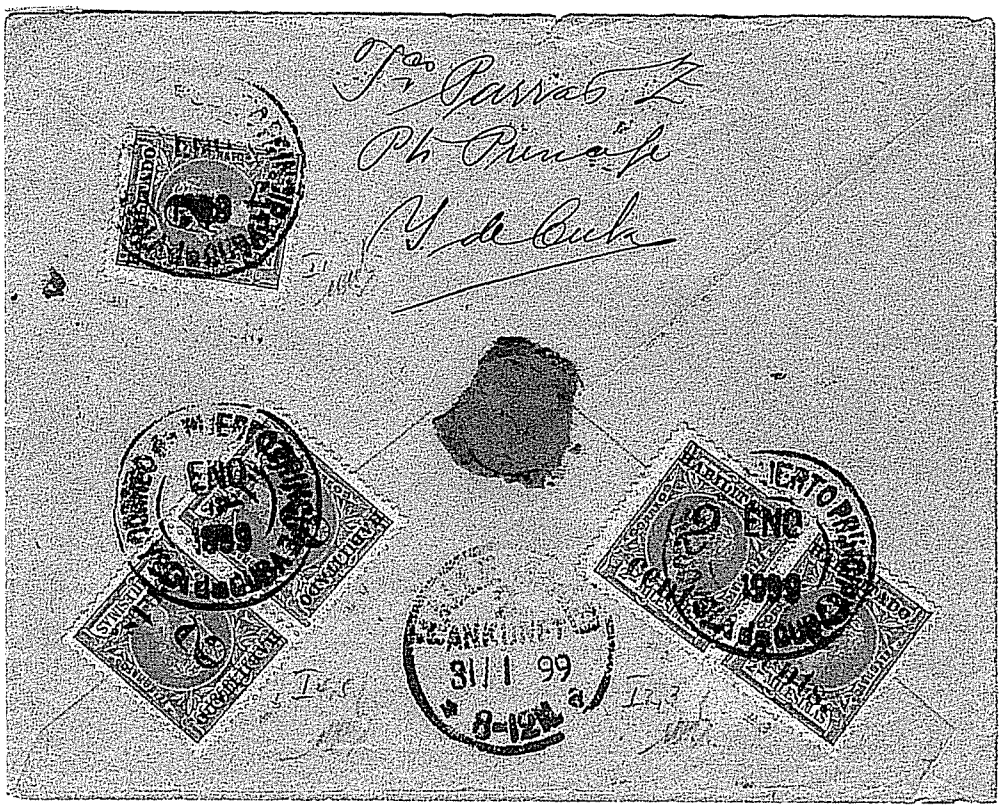
Station Number 11. Puerto Principe

Provisional Stamp Issues

First Printing. December 19, 1898.

The surcharge is 17.5 mm in height, in dull black ink on the orange brown "milesima" Spanish Cuba issue of 1898. The narrow numerals are on position two.

2 cents on 2 milesimas



Jan. 1899. Civilian registered letter from Puerto Principe to Germany. Only recorded cover of the provisional issue with a complete setting of five stamps and only recorded usage to Germany.

U.S. MILITARY POSTAL STATIONS IN CUBA

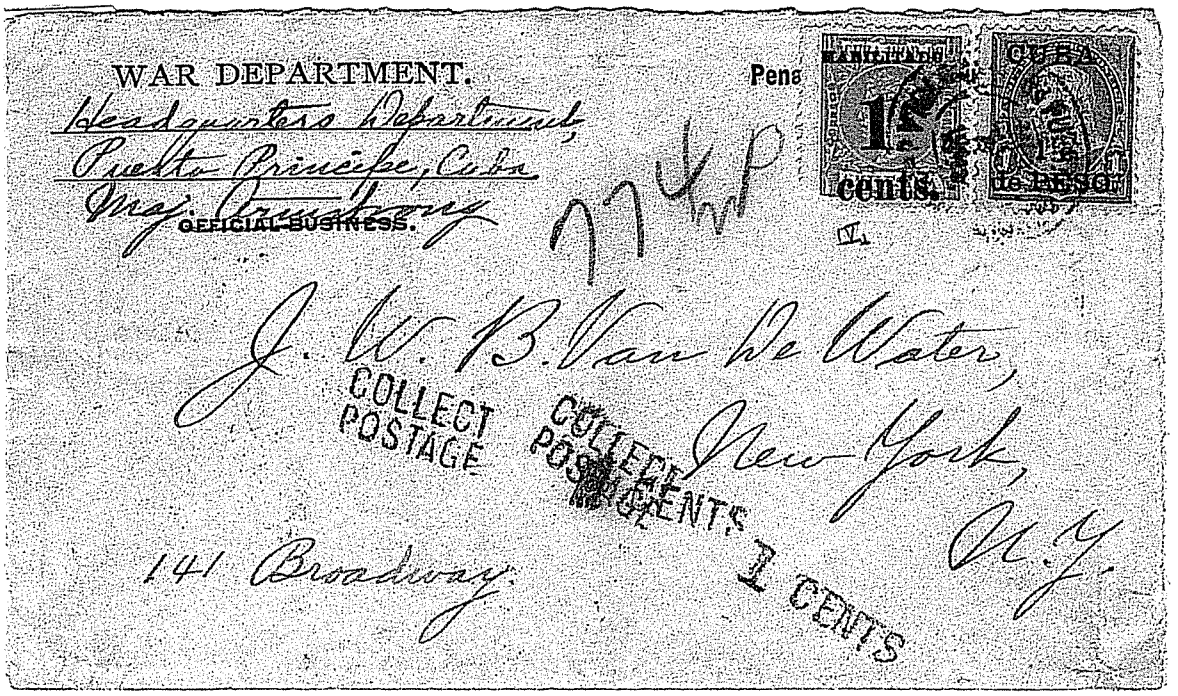
Station Number 11. Puerto Principe

Provisional Stamp Issues

Third Printing. December 24, 1898.

The surcharge is 19.5 mm in height, in bright black ink on the orange brown "milesima" Spanish Cuba issue of 1898 and the one half "milesima" newspaper stamp of 1896.

1 cents on 1 milesima



Jan. 1899. Soldier's rate from Puerto Principe to New York City. Position one used after the provisional issue was demonetized on January 23, and therefore not accepted as postage by the New York post office. The overprinted US stamp was accepted and the letter was charged only one cent postage due.

U.S. MILITARY POSTAL STATIONS IN CUBA

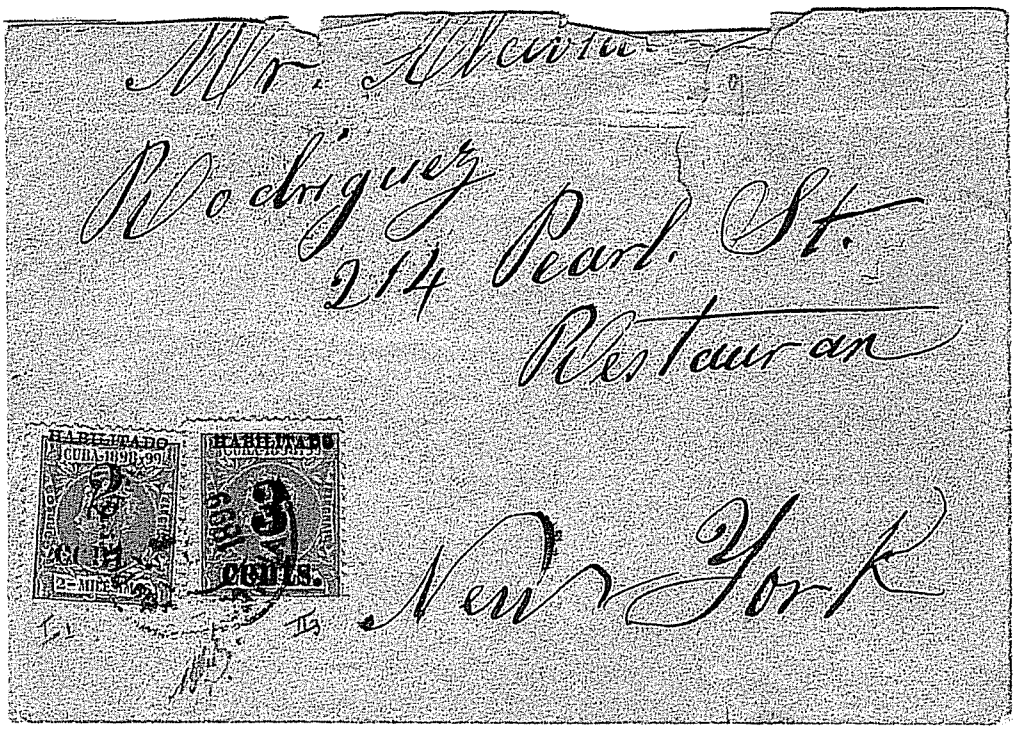
Station Number 11. Puerto Principe

Provisional Stamp Issues

Third Printing. December 24, 1898.

The surcharge is 19.5 mm in height, in bright black ink on the orange brown "milesima" Spanish Cuba issue of 1898 and the one half "milesima" newspaper stamp of 1896.

3 cents on 1 milesima



Jan. 6, 1899. Single weight civilian rate from Puerto Principe to New York City. A position three 3 cents on 1 milesima surcharge (third printing) combined with a 2 cent on 2 milesimas surcharge from the first printing.

U.S. MILITARY POSTAL STATIONS IN CUBA

Station Number 11. Puerto Principe

Provisional Stamp Issues

Fourth Printing. December 27, 1898.

The surcharge is 19.5 mm in height, in red ink on the one centavo black violet Spanish Cuba issue of 1898.

3 cents on 1 centavo



Jan. 9, 1899. Civilian single rate letter (probably overpaid by one cent) from Santa Cruz del Sur to Puerto Principe. Position five. One other recorded cover with this postmark.

U.S. MILITARY POSTAL STATIONS IN CUBA

Station Number 11. Puerto Principe

Provisional Stamp Issues

Fourth Printing. December 27, 1898.

The surcharge is 19.5 mm in height, in red ink on the one centavo black violet Spanish Cuba issue of 1898.

5 cents on 1 centavo



Feb. 1899. Third printing, 5 cents on 1 cent. Civilian registered letter from Puerto Principe to New York.

U.S. MILITARY POSTAL STATIONS IN CUBA

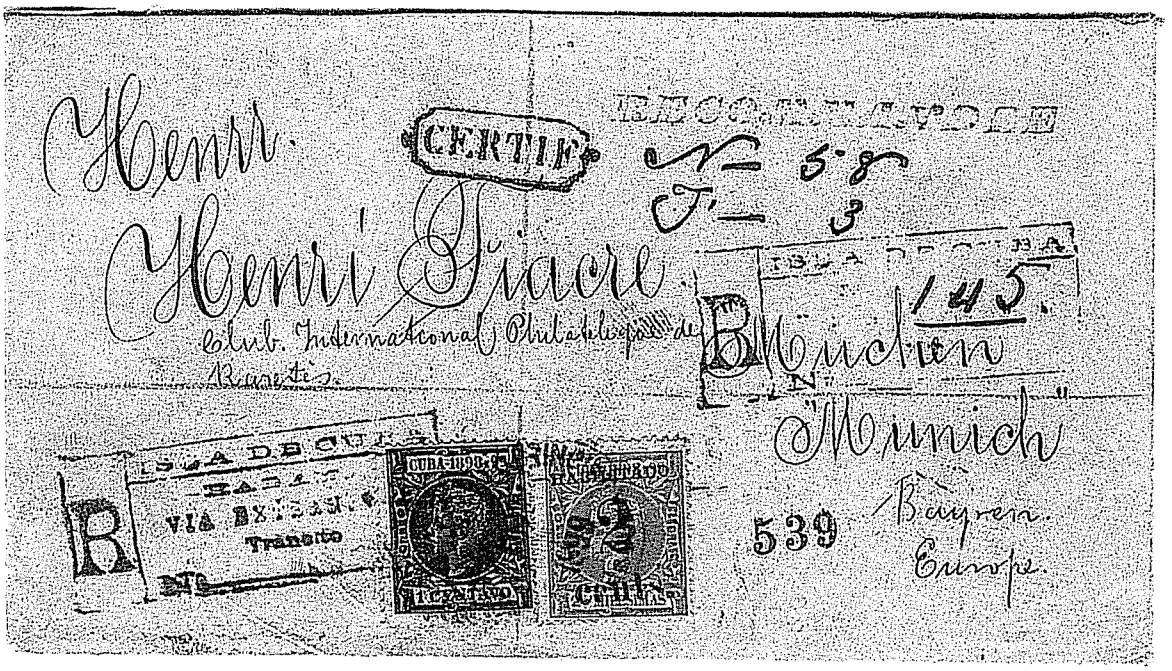
Station Number 11. Puerto Principe

Provisional Stamp Issues

Fourth Printing. December 27, 1898.

The surcharge is 19.5 mm in height, in red ink on the one centavo black violet Spanish Cuba issue of 1898.

10 cents on 1 centavo



Jan. 1899. Single weight registered letter from puerto Principe to Munich, Germany via Havana. A 10 cents on 1 centavo surcharge from the fourth printing combined with a 2 cents on 2 milesimas from the first printing. One of the two recorded covers with the ten cent stamp from the fourth printing.

U.S. MILITARY POSTAL STATIONS IN CUBA

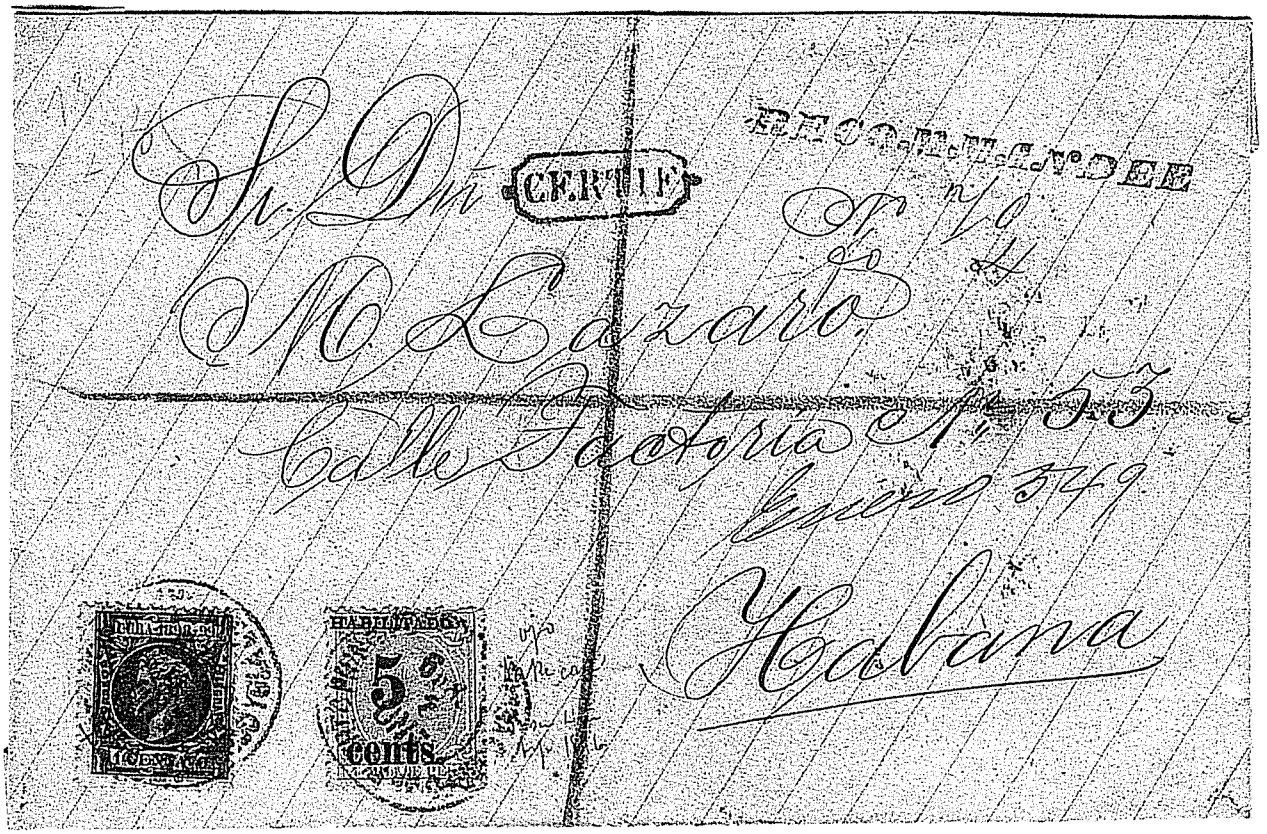
Station Number 11. Puerto Principe

Provisional Stamp Issues

Fourth Printing. December 27, 1898.

The surcharge is 19.5 mm in height, in red ink on the one centavo black violet Spanish Cuba issue of 1898.

10 cents on 1 centavo



Jan. 1899. Multiple weight registered letter from puerto Principe to Havana. A 10 cents on 1 centavo surcharge, positon two, from the fourth printing combined with a 5 cents on 4 milesimas from the fifth printing. There is one other recorded covers with the ten cent stamp from the fourth printing. Probably unique combination of printings on cover.

U.S. MILITARY POSTAL STATIONS IN CUBA

Station Number 11. Puerto Principe

Provisional Stamp Issues

Fifth Printing. January 11, 1899.

The surcharge is 19.5 mm in height, in black ink on the one half "milesima" newspaper stamp of 1896.

3 cents on 1 milesima



Jan. 1899. Civilian single letter rate from Puerto Principe to Havana. A 3 cents on 1 milesima surcharge, position two. Of the four recorded covers from the fifth printing this is the only one known with the three cent overprint.