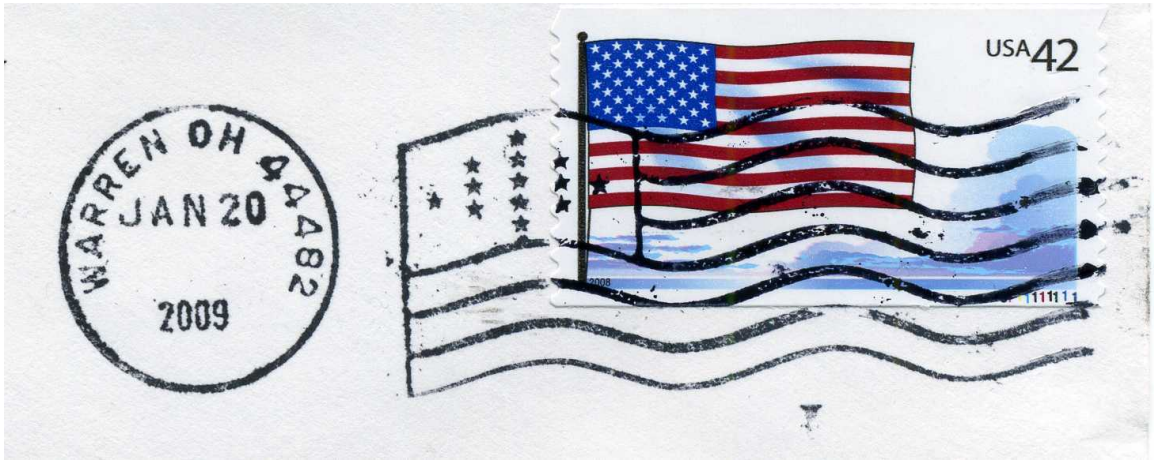
Editor's Corner



I hope you enjoy this special issue of *Machine Cancel Forum* during your visit to StampShow 2009. This is your invitation to join The Machine Cancel Society. The Society began as The Flag Cancel Society on Flag Day, June 14, 1961. The following year it released its first periodical, *Flag Cancellations*. Later, The Flag Cancel Society became a non-profit corporation in the State of Ohio. The incorporation gave it permanency, and simplified our later 1987 transformation into the present day Machine Cancel Society and its quarterly publication *Machine Cancel Forum*. Over the past 22 years, *Forum* has published just under 5,000 pages on the topic of machine cancels!

As the name suggests, *Forum* is a place for exchange of ideas and presentations of new machine cancel finds, or new members rediscovering something that has not been published for some time. Much of what is known about machine cancels is not found in any central governmental archive. Most of those records have been discarded or destroyed. The key source is the reporting by members of towns that use a certain cancel, dates of use reported, and searches though news reports and patents to match a cancel with a manufacturer.

Many cancels look the same. They are distinguished by their year of use, and from the information gleamed from available records. One of the great unknowns is the manufacturer of the Pittsburgh shield cancel of 1872, featured on the front cover of this issue. Who invented the machine that applied it? Who manufactured the machine? Pittsburgh newspaper accounts and post office records have been searched. There is no information. Even the dates of use of the shield cancel is limited to information from known and reported covers.

The Pittsburgh shield is a pricey cancel. But there is plenty of excitement in collecting uses of other machines. There is a potpourri of different cancels in this special issue: mute cancels used on metered mail, a short term bar cancel used in Xenia, and various Pennsylvania cancels featuring new towns or new dates of use. *How do you evaluate a cancel that 'might be' a machine cancel. An interesting Chicago cancel is evaluated. And yes, there are surprises.* So enjoy this special issue, and the Show.