Early Registered Meter Franked Mail and Machine Cancels
Part II A cancel from Chicago by A J Savakis, Editor

There is an intriguing note in the U.S. meter catalog, which reads, "With "REGISTERED / MAIL" at left (90123). This slogan was applied to the adhesive tape stamps only. The left portion with the slogan was meant to be stuck to the front of the cover and folded over with the postage indicia on back."[9] It was one of those notes missed until an example popped up on ebay. The cover, front and back are displayed as **Figure 14.**

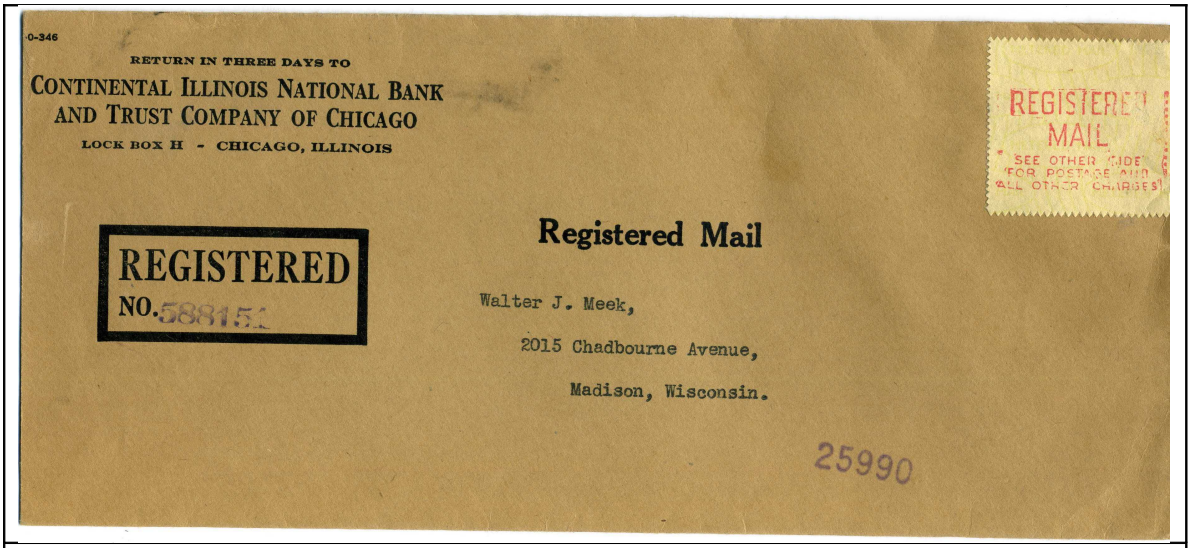


Figure 14A, above: Chicago, Illinois registered mail dated April 14, 1936. FRONT
Figure 14B, below: BACK of cover featured in **Figure 1A**.

[9] Hawkins & Stambaugh, UNITED STATES POSTAGE METER CATALOG (Second Edition privately published by the authors 1994), at page 72.

The description from the catalog very much explains the meter frank and its slogan, and how it was applied. Although both the slogan and the meter postage frank are printed on a single adhesive tape, the tape is applied by hand with the REGISTERED / MAIL slogan applied to the top right corner of the front of the envelope, and the rest of the tape folded over so that the meter stamp is at the top left corner of the back of the envelope.

If one were to take a scan of the two halves of the tape, and put them together, the tape before applied to the envelope would look like this:

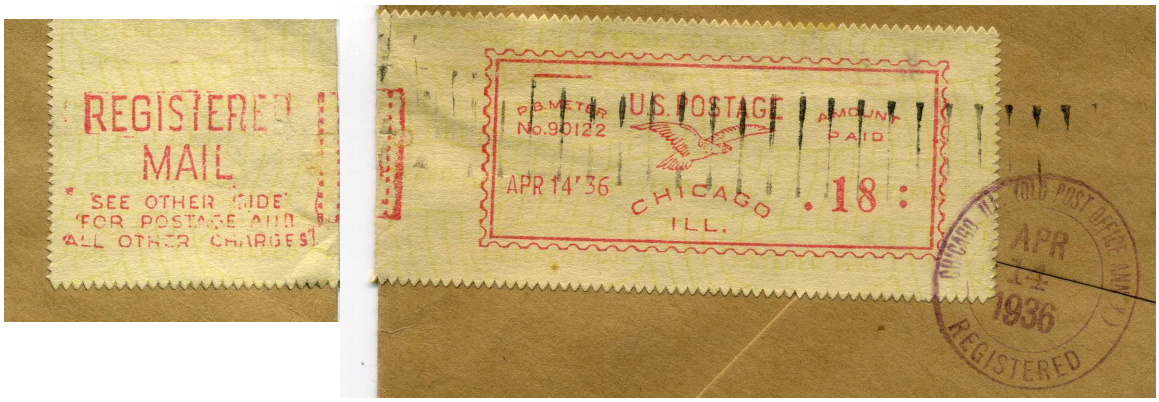


Figure 15, above: Graphically cropped, the single meter tape which is wrapped onto both sides of a single envelope are placed side-by-side to recreate how the tape would have appeared before being applied to the envelope.

It is interesting that this meter frank has BOTH a date and the city-state information. This 'flying eagle' meter must have been intended for uses other than registered mail. If this meter machine were being used for regular mail, then the city-state would have to be engraved in the indicia, and the date also be available for printing. So this meter machine that produced the frank in **Figure 15** from the very beginning was leased for different duty than the townless meters in **Figures 3 and 4** that appeared in Part I of this article.

The meter cover was dutifully handstamped on the back, and then some items that I had not noticed when I bid on ebay.

1. The meter machine in **Figure 15** is meter #90122. The catalog lists only meter #90123 as using this slogan. But this was a mistake on my part in reading the catalog. The next listing[10] states that additional meters used this slogan, but instead of an omni-denominational potential of printing rates from 0 00 to 99 99, the meter like the one in

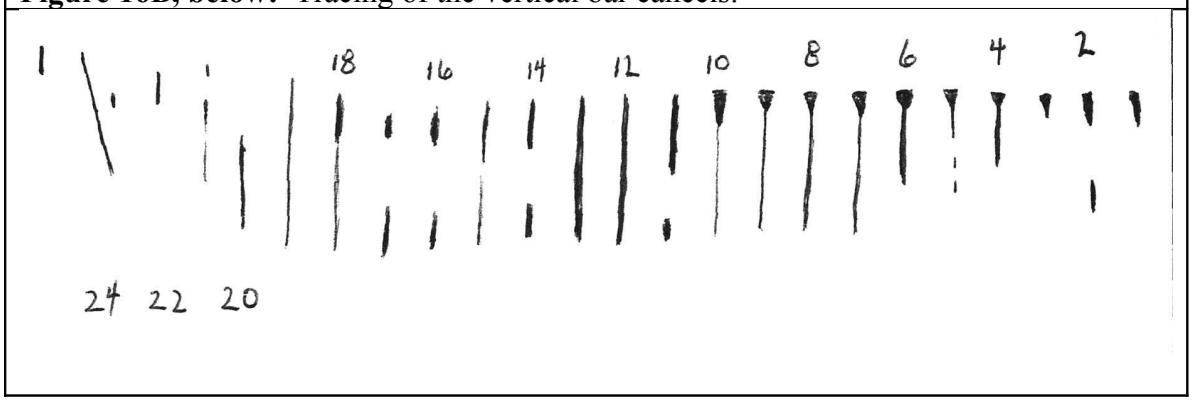
[10] Hawkins & Stambaugh, UNITED STATES POSTAGE METER CATALOG (Second Edition privately published by the authors 1994), at page 73.

Figure 15 could frank ALL values from 0 00: to 9 99½. Note that the ":" symbol is a character than can be replaced by a half-cent symbol if required for a rate. If you go back to **Figures 3 and 4**, note there are no colons in the figures of value. Those machines in **Figures 3 and 4** could not print fractional rates. They were intended for registered mail, and could insure the contents using their omni-denominational capacity.

If there was any question that meter #90122 was intended for multiple jobs, the fact that it could print a rate with a fractional cent would settle that issue.

2. There are a series of vertical bars, much like Doremus or Barr-Fyke cancellation bars, that cancel the meter frank. To emphasize them, I have taken a scan of the meter with the black cancellation, and removed some of the color.

Figure 16A, above: Background color has been removed from the scan in Figure 15. Note how not only the cancellation is easier to see, but the watermark of the postage meter paper now stands out.
Figure 16B, below: Tracing of the vertical bar cancels.



Both the Doremus and Barr-Fyke cancels ceased being used about 15 and 40 years earlier, and the chances of an old machine or its cancellation hub being converted to a rocker-style hand cancel is pretty remote. Still an analysis as to why it cannot be is needed.

In making the tracing in **Figure 16 B**, I also numbered them from the right, the end that I think the cancellation was first applied. From the right and to the left, I numbered them with even numbers. *Note how the cancel suddenly turns upward at the far left.*

I can submit the following observations:

1. The bars are too short to be from a Barr-Fyke die, as the full length bars measure 12-14 mm tall compared with 20 mm or more for the Barr-Fyke.
2. Doremus vertical bar cancels have 15 mm tall bars, and the cancellation on our meter stamp could be possibly a worn example. Still, the Doremus vertical dies numbered from 16-19 in number. This example clearly has over 20 before it goes upwards and off the envelope to the far left.
3. Machine cancel devices apply their marking to the top right corner if the use is for cancelling stamps. If the die is engraved upside down (like for a RETURN TO SENDER cancel), the lower left corner of an envelope can be cancelled and the cancel will read up with relation to the envelope. Otherwise, the cancel will be upside down. There are other examples of machine cancels being applied toward the middle of an envelope, and different mechanical arrangements are used. Also, these are the continuous cancelling hubs and cancellations, shown in Part I of this article. But there is no arrangement for cancelling in the upper left corner of an envelope horizontal to the long end of the mail piece. If one tries to cancel the upper left corner by feeding the corner to be cancelled first, the only way to get it into the machine is to turn the envelope on its short side and feed it in down. But the cancellation will be perpendicular to the top . . . .like the sample shown in **Figure 13** from Part I.

The only thing left would be a roller (one that rolls like a wheel) or a mechanical handstamp (one that goes up and down like a piston).

In going back to **Figure 16 B**, one can observe the series of bars swerving upward at around bar 20 or 21. So a mechanical stamper is out. It must be a roller.

Indeed, when I started this exercise, there was a similar roller cancel featured in Leonard Piszkiewicz's book, CHICAGO POSTAL MARKINGS AND POSTAL HISTORY. His roller Type RL-21 pictured on page 79 is it, with just a little thicker bars. **See Figure 17**.

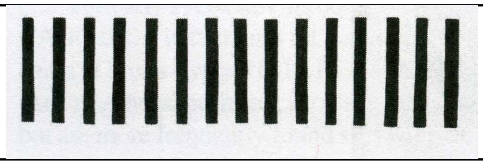


Figure 17 above: Identified as a roller, Leonard Piszkiewicz labels this as Type RL-21 for Chicago in his book on Chicago markings and postal history.

So why does the marking in **Figure 16** look so much different than the marking in **Figure 17**? As summarized by Leonard in an email, 'Wear.' As further proof that they are the same, he points out that his Type RL-21 was used at the Old P.O. Annex, just like the round handcancel says in **Figure 16**!

Figure 18, above: Courtesy of Leonard Piszkiewicz, 1929 and 1932 examples of Chicago Type RL-21 roller cancel used on registered mail.

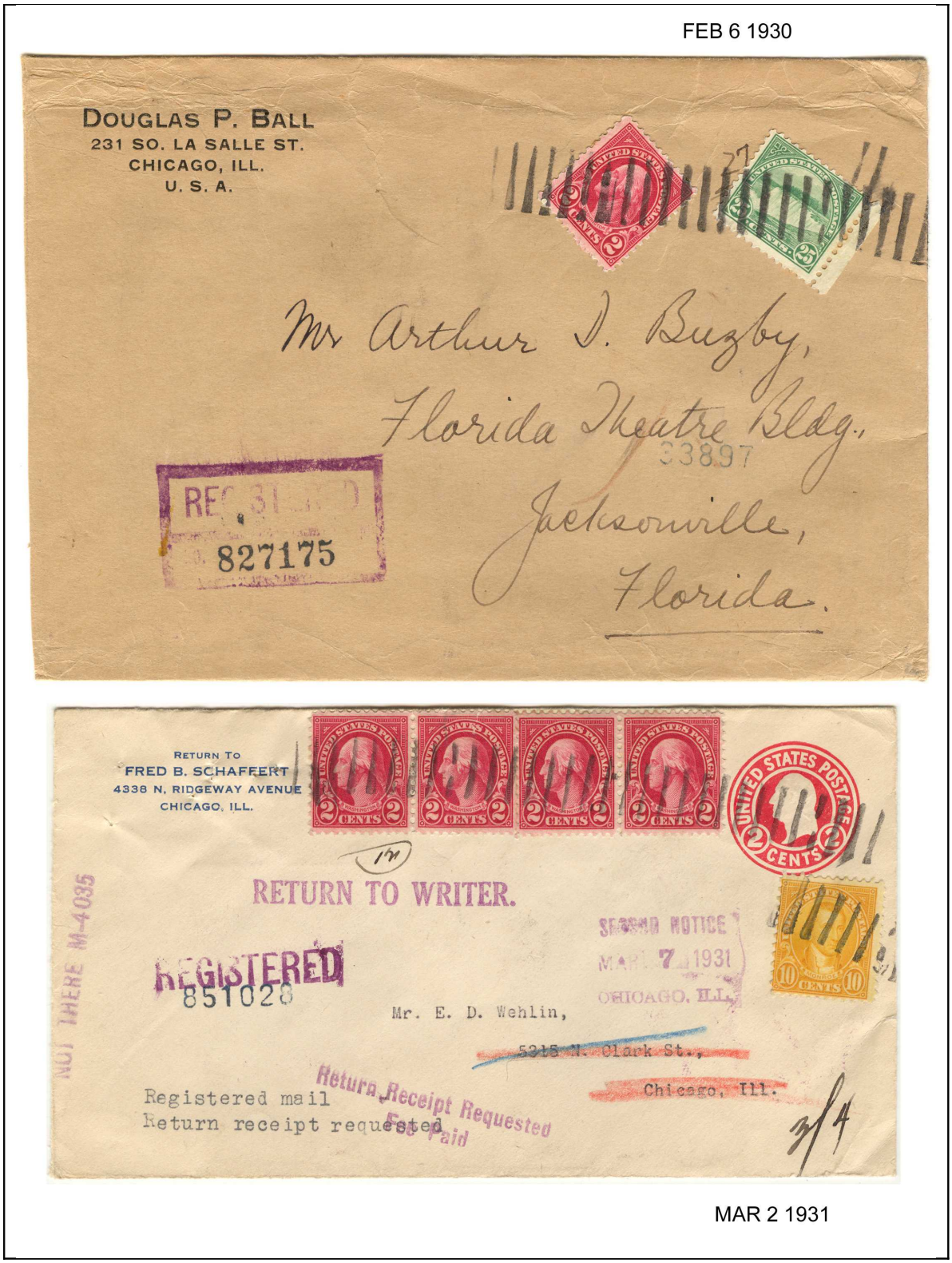


Figure 19, above: Courtesy of Leonard Piszkiewicz, 1930 and 1931 examples of Chicago Type RL-21 roller cancel used on registered mail.