



**EMPIRE STATE  
POSTAL HISTORY  
SOCIETY**

**APS UNIT 28**

Meets twice annually

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## SEEING STARS

By David E. Williams

While many collectors of New York State postal history collect specific towns or counties, there are those that like to collect specific types of cancels on cover. These may include stampless markings, Doane cancels, flag cancels, or fancy cancels. One type of fancy cancel to be examined here is the star cancel.

One type is probably a misnomer, since to date there have been more than 80 design types of star cancels reported from New York State. They range from the simple five-pointed solid star to very ornate, intricate designs. Many were handmade and can be fairly crude looking. They are found mostly from the mid 1860s to the beginning of the twentieth century, although they are known both before and after these dates. They also exist in combination with both county and postmaster cancels. They are found in a wide range of colors and shades.

The bible for star cancel collectors is *Star Cancels of New York State* edited by Dave Proulx and published in 1987 by the Empire State Postal History Society. Proulx listed 70 star types and more than 600 New York post offices that used star cancels. When one takes into consideration different combinations of post office, star type, color, and year of use, more than 900 collectible varieties were listed.

Since its publication nearly 25 years ago, another 500 plus new records of star cancels from New York State have been reported and documented.

These consist of many previously unreported post offices, an additional dozen new star types, as well as newly reported combinations of post office, star type, color, and year of use. New finds are made quite often. The existence of the Internet and eBay, with its wide diversity of postal history material, makes new discoveries much easier than ever to find. It is an interesting facet of postal history for the collector looking for something different in which to specialize. ■