

Columbia, S.C., Double-Circle Postmarks

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A one-inch diameter double circle townmark was part of the Columbia, S.C., post office equipment from late 1860 through the Confederate period. It was not used very much in 1860-1861, perhaps because it frequently produced weak or unreadable mailing dates.

A modified version with strongly struck dates is found later, probably beginning in 1862. It appears that the date slugs had been enlarged and protruded slightly to make them print clearly. In doing so, the distance from the bottom of the date slugs to the bottom of the outer circle was lowered from 10½ mm. to 8½ mm. The protrusion makes the inner circle print incompletely or not at all, depending on the degree of protrusion and compressibility of the envelope. In some cases, even the postmark's COLUMBIA SC letters are incompletely printed. This "modified mark" seems to have replaced the original one from about 1862 on.

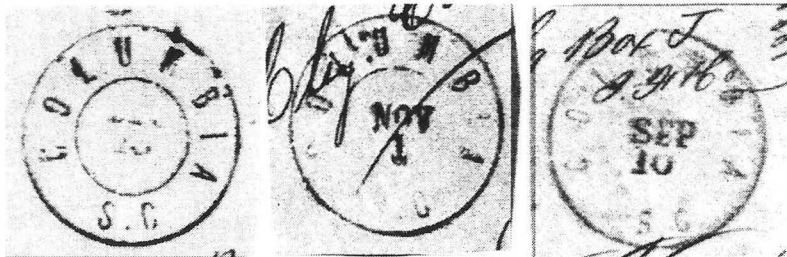
A single copy of a different version has been found. It has the characteristics of the modified marker, but with smaller letters for COLUMBIA and SC (2½ mm vs. 3 mm). It is not clear from my copy, but a period may have been added after SC. Other copies are needed to confirm this one as



truly "different." Without the corroboration of other examples, this copy may only be a vaguely struck version of the modified mark.

The table below shows the distinguishing characteristics of the three versions of this townmark. In spite of improvements that insured good dates, the double circle townmark must not have been satisfactory. It was little used, based on the small number of surviving examples.

Original Postmark	Modified Postmark	"Different Postmark"
10.5 mm, Dates High	8.5 mm, Dates Low	8.5 mm, Dates Low
Complete Inner Circle	Partial or No Inner Circle	No Inner Circle
3 mm Letters	3 mm Letters	2.5 mm Letters
No Period After S.C	No Period After S.C	Period (?) After S.C.



I would appreciate photocopies of other examples of the "different" townmark. Also, information on firmly dated examples of all types is needed for the period late 1861 to 1865 to establish periods of use.