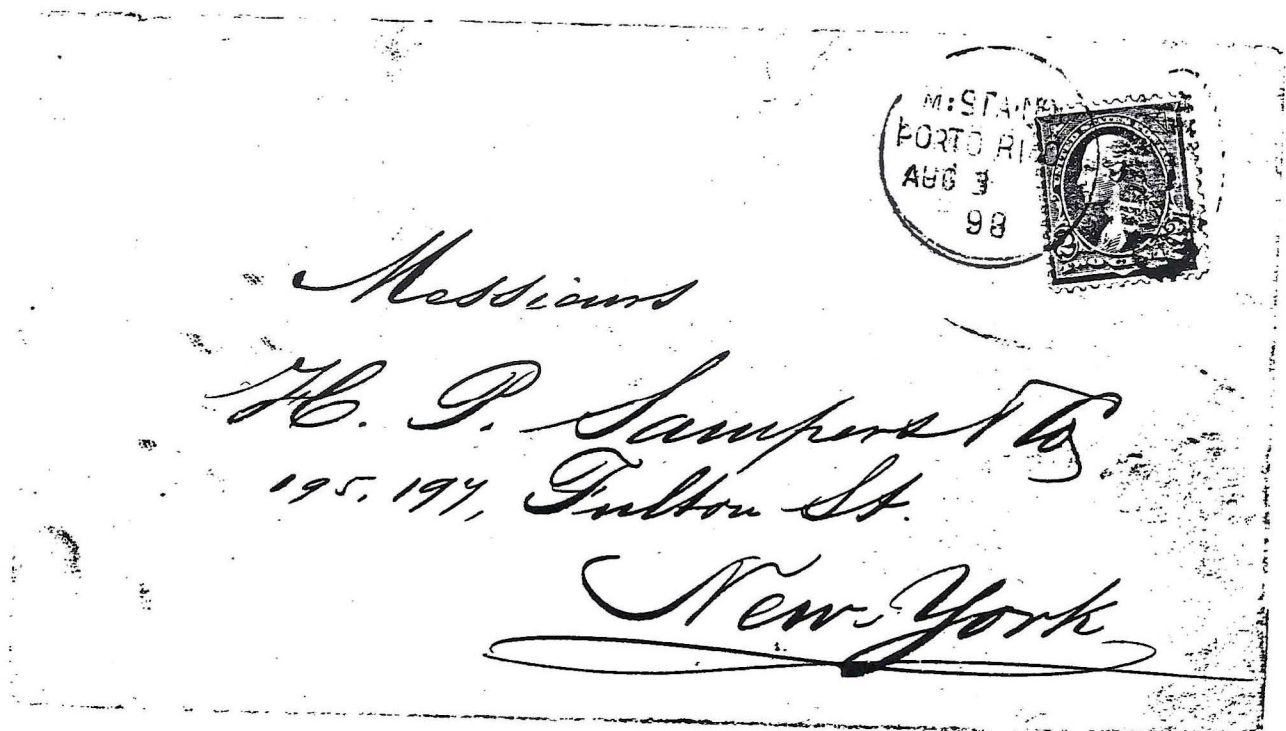


PUERTO RICO

The first American troops landed in Puerto Rico on 25 July 1898 at Guanica, a small village near Ponce -- the principal town on the south coast. Resistance by the Spanish forces was light, and Ponce was captured on the 28th. Large portions of the island were quickly overrun, and hostilities ceased upon the declaration of an armistice on 12 August.

Mil. Sta. No.1 Porto Rico
3 August 1898

Opening Day of Military Post Office



Military Station No.1 was opened in the former Spanish Custom House at Playa de Ponce on 3 August 1898. A provisional postmark, modeled on RPO devices in use in the United States at the time, was used initially. Only two examples are recorded of the first day of usage.

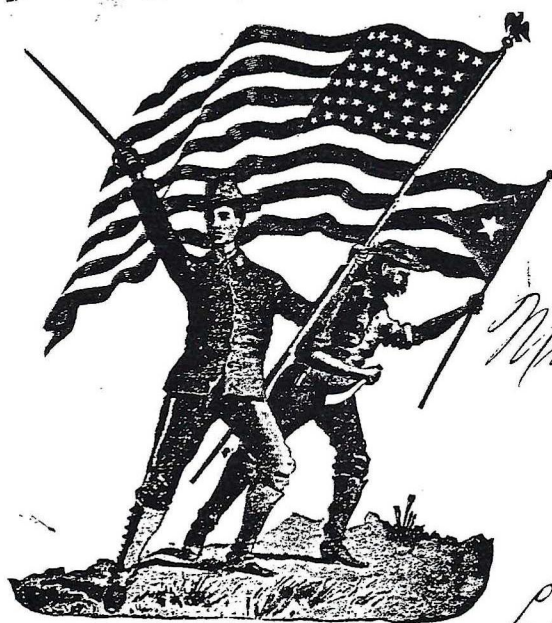
PUERTO RICO

Mil. Sta. No. 1 Porto Rico

5 August 1898

11 August 1898

Mrs James Sweet
#2 Pulaski St-
Brooklyn
New York City

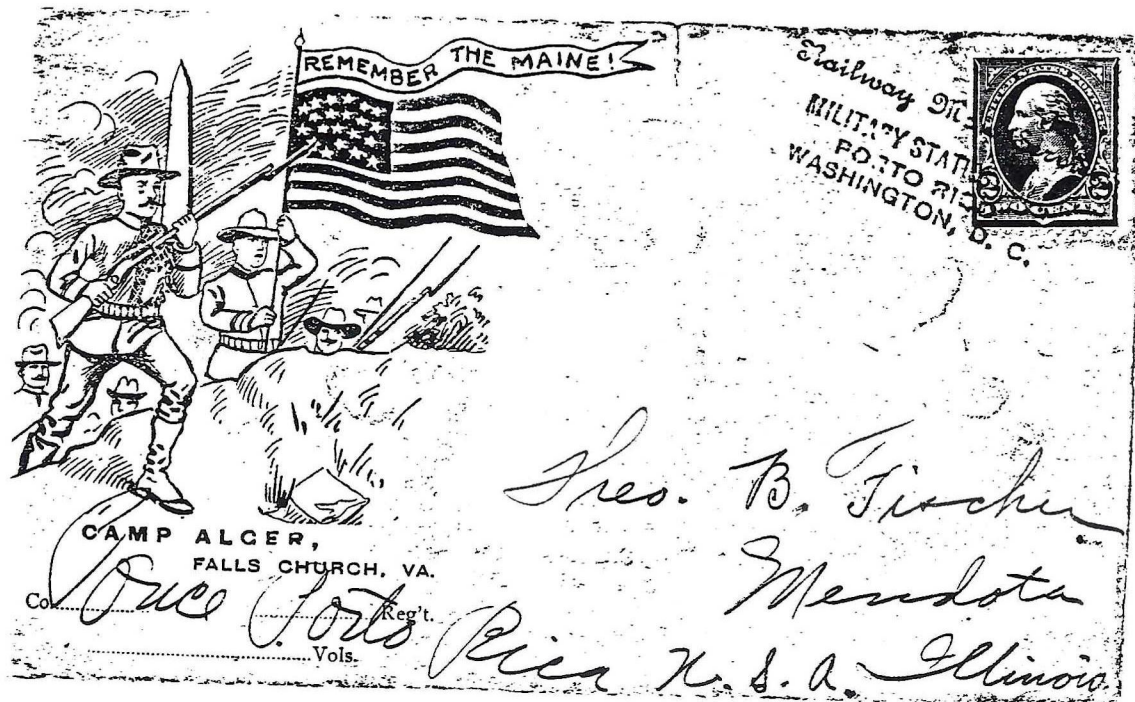


Mr. Robert Frankfield
625 Gordon St.
Allentown
Lehigh Co.
Pa.
U.S.A.

The first Military Postal Station operated at Playa de Ponce until 17 September, when it was moved from the beach area to the main post office in Ponce proper. Although the provisional RPO-type postmark was used for two weeks, its movable type format resulted in varieties in the placement of the text. Note that the lower cover shows the date in the top line of the cancel and the time added at the bottom.

PUERTO RICO

Mil. Sta. 1 Porto Rico
Railway Mail Service
August 1898



There was a short (35 kilometer) railway line from Ponce to Yauco, on which this extraordinary but previously unknown Railway Mail Service marking on cover was used. No information is available on how this marking came to be used, but it must be from very early in the occupation period based on the New York transit marking of 9 August and Mendota, Illinois receiver of 11 August.

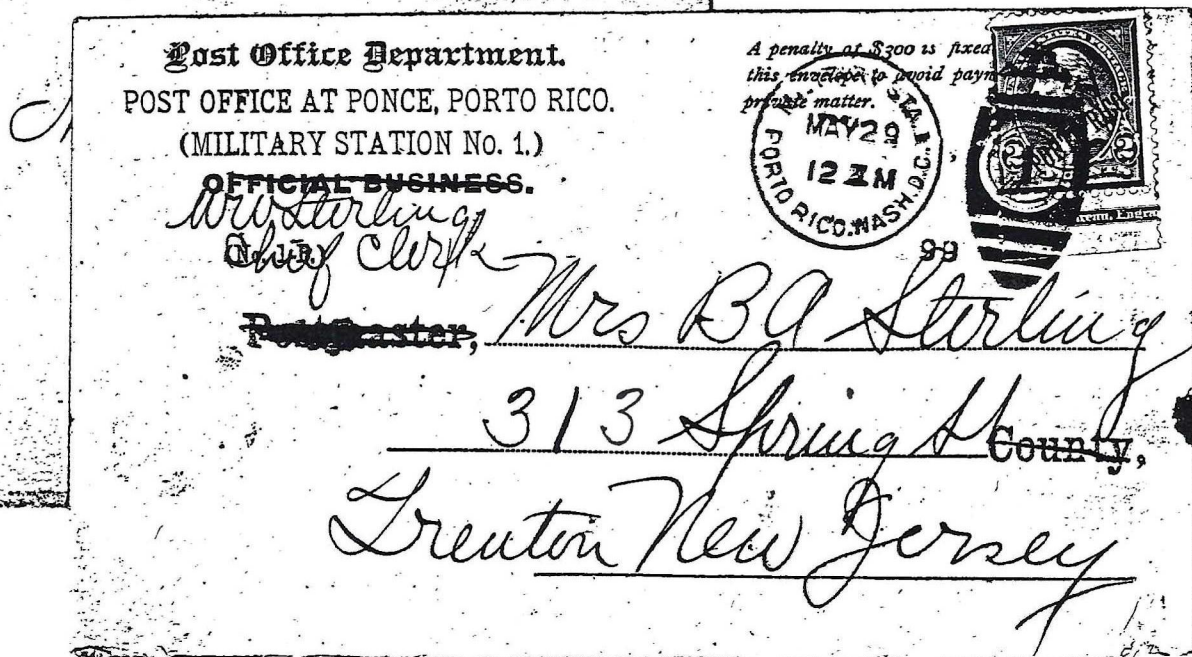
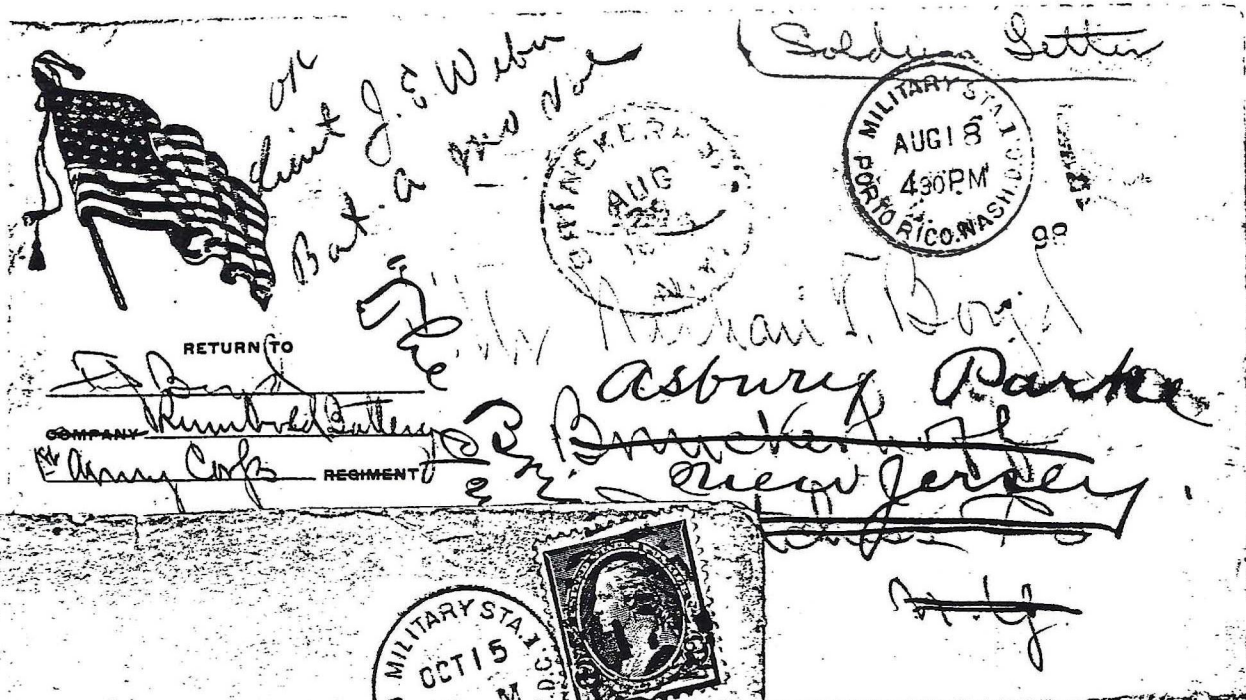
PUERTO RICO

Mil. Sta. 1 Porto Rico

18 August 1898

15 October 1898

29 May 1899

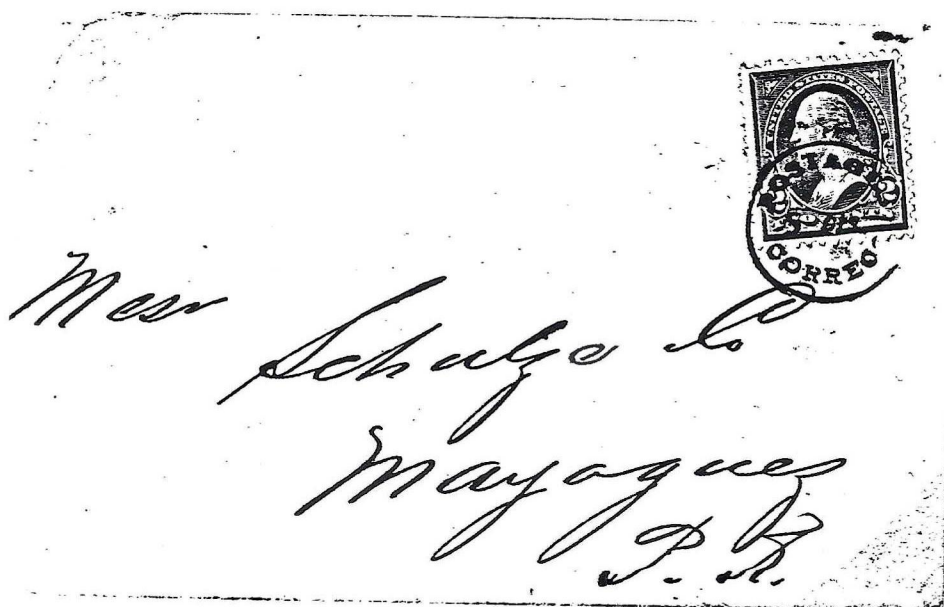


The provisional postmark was replaced in mid-August by a steel duplex, which continued in use until well into 1899. Above examples show a soldier's letter with early use of this device, an unusual variety with "17" in the killer, and a late example used on an official Post Office Department envelope. This marking clearly indicates the fact that the Puerto Rican military stations were treated as branches of Washington, D.C.

PUERTO RICO

Ponce
September 1898

Provisional Municipal Postmark



As the American forces advanced into the interior of Puerto Rico, the Spanish soldiers retreated toward San Juan, often accompanied by civilians and civil servants, thus causing a disruption in postal service. For example, although the military station at Playa de Ponce opened on 3 August 1898, there was no office in Ponce proper until 17 September. In this interim period, the mayor authorized creation of a temporary "municipal" postal service, which used a provisional circular rubber handstamp to indicate that postage had been paid.

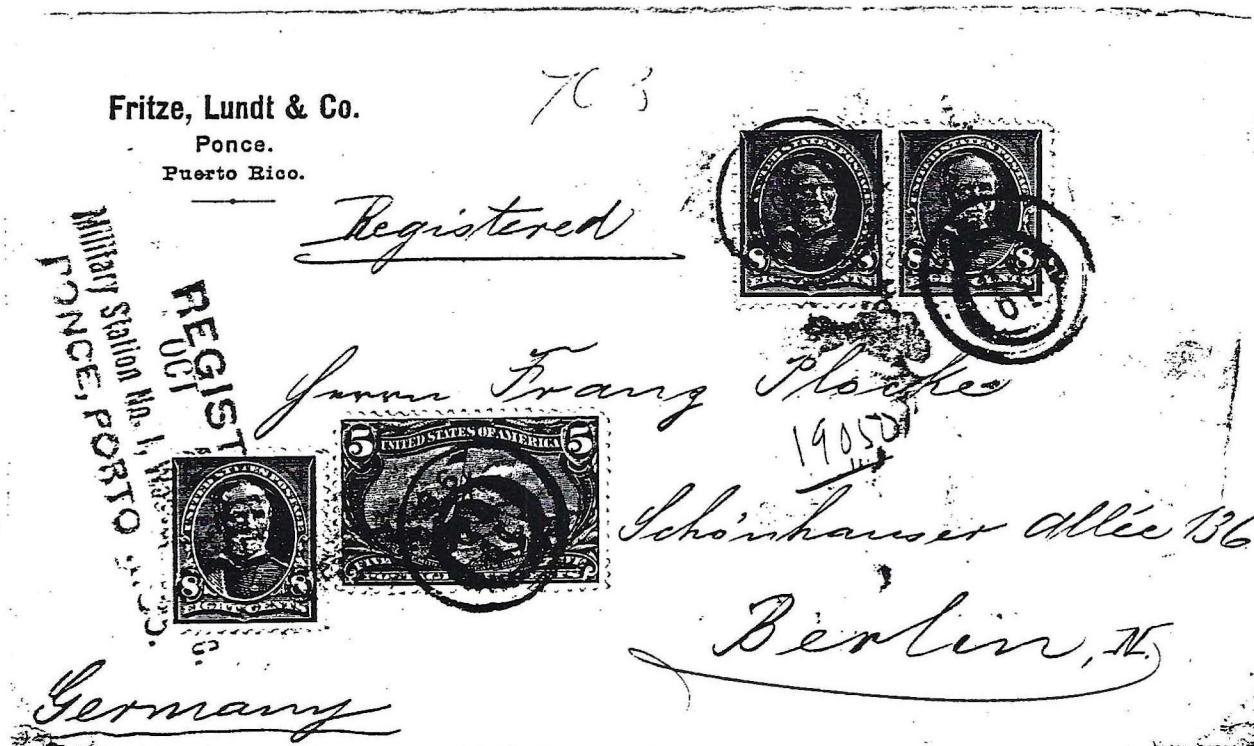
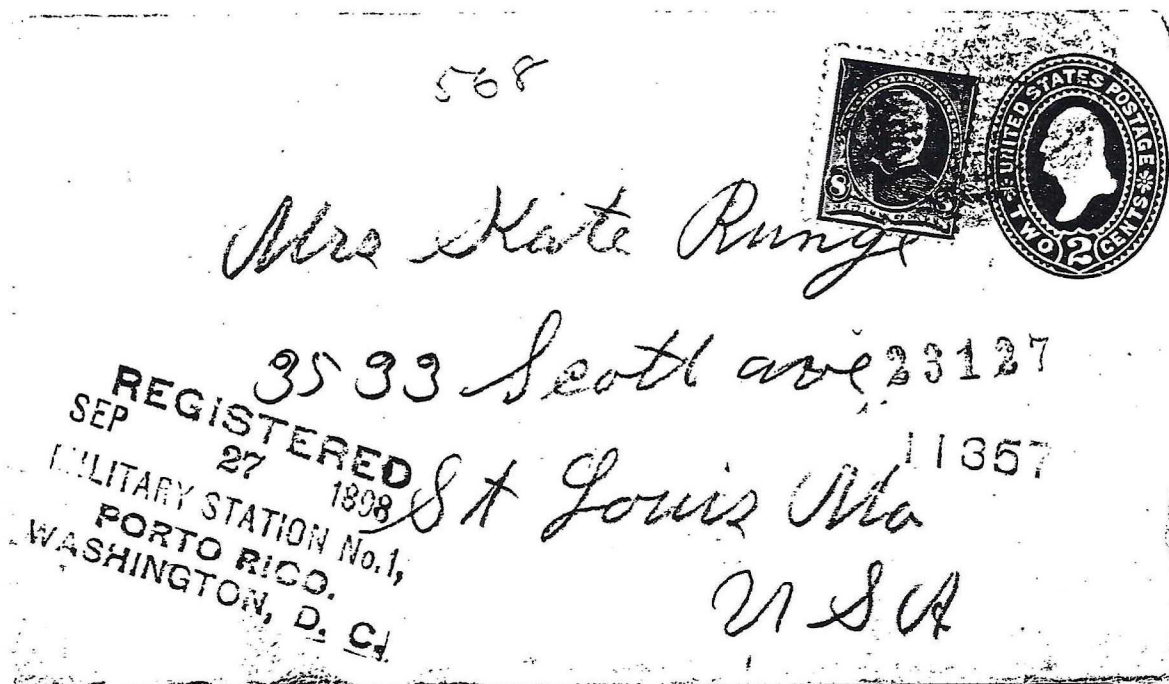
In the primary source literature, Hill states that on letters forwarded through the military postal system after having travelled over the municipal routes, the Ponce handstamp was struck over the U.S. stamp to indicate that the municipal postal fee had been paid in cash.

PUERTO RICO

Mil. Sta. No.1 Porto Rico

27 September 1898

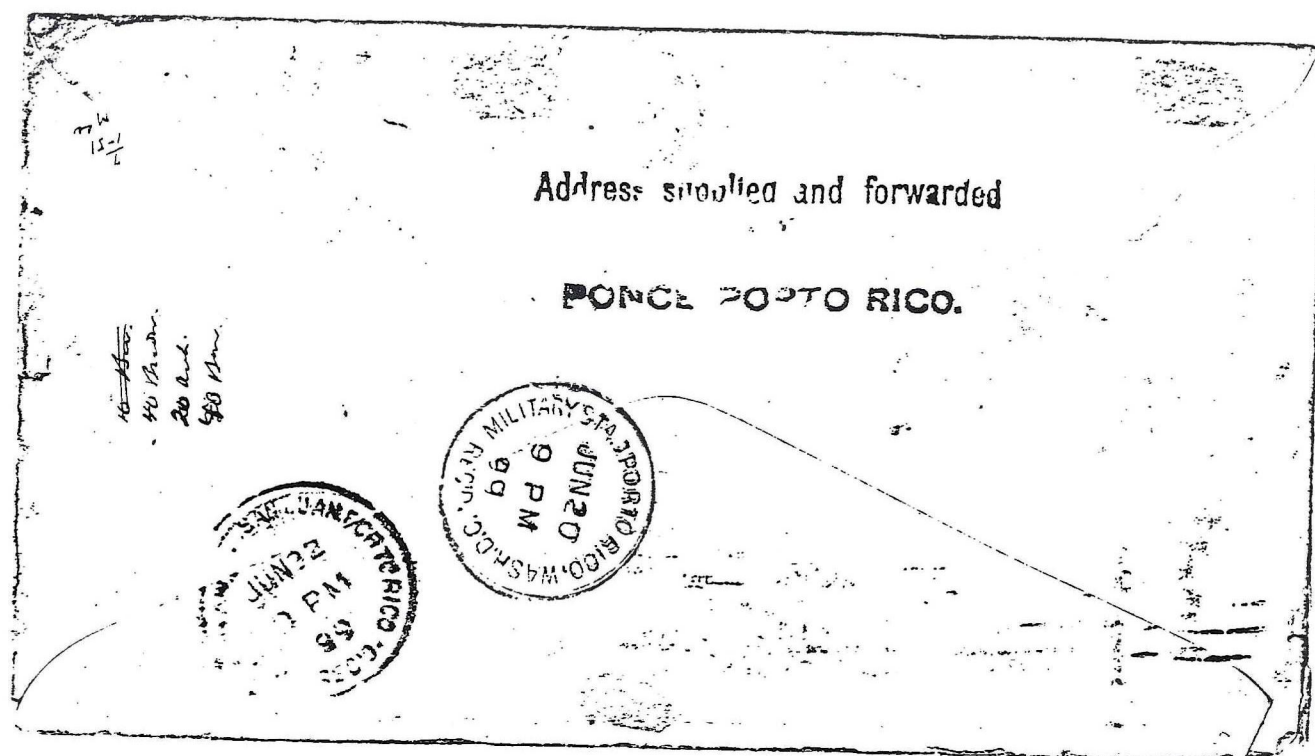
29 October 1898



Two types of Registration markings are known from Military Station No.1 at Ponce. The first was a 5-line device without indication of the town of origin. A later version had 4 lines that included "Ponce" in the text.

PUERTO RICO

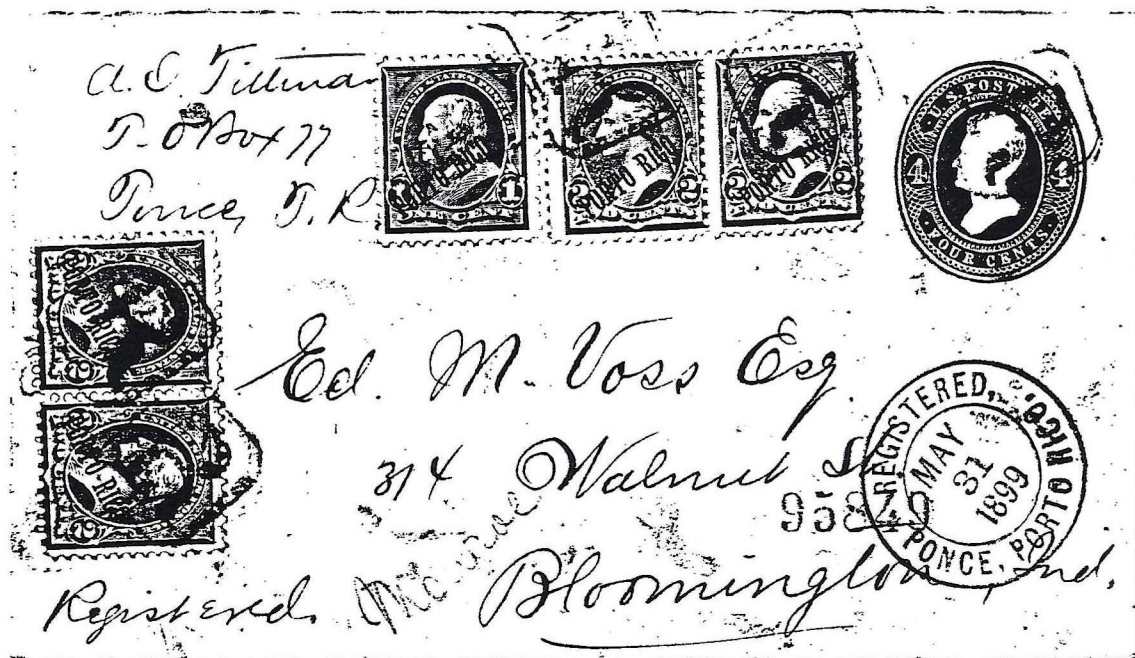
Mil. Sta. No.1 Ponce
January 1899
20 June 1899



Examples of auxiliary markings used at Military Station No.1 are unusual. Further, incoming mail is considerably scarcer than outbound. Thus, "Rec'd." markings are much less common than the normal cancels for the corresponding stations.

PUERTO RICO

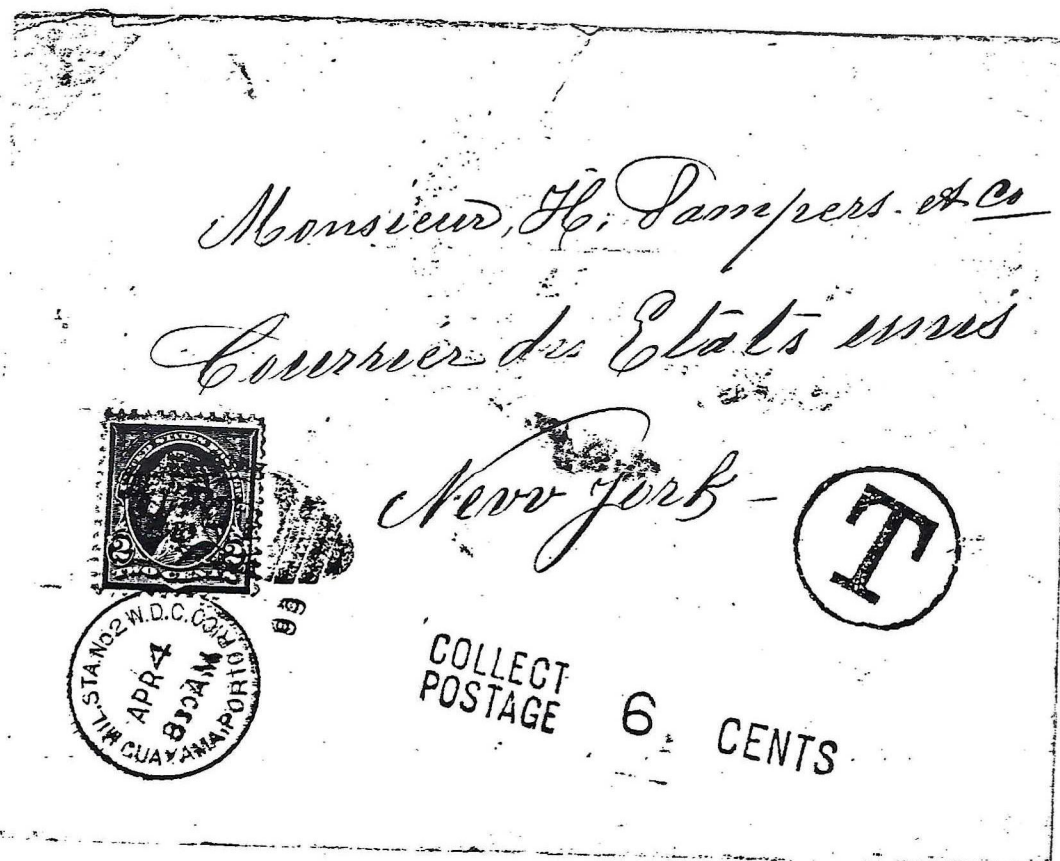
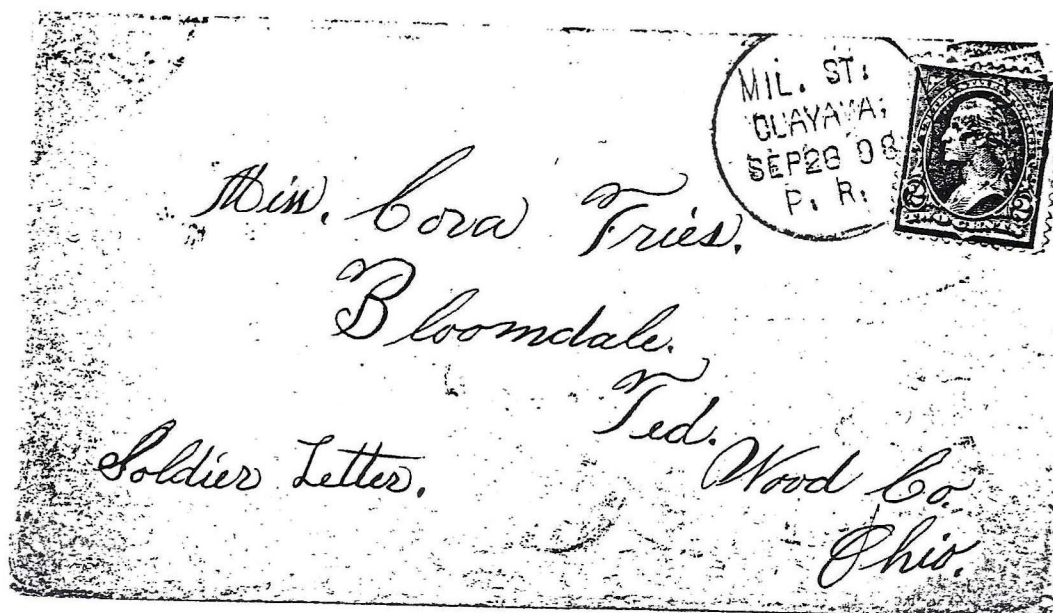
Ponce
31 May 1899
19 August 1899



Standard double ring Registration marking was introduced at Ponce in 1899. Note use of "R" and smudge killers to cancel the postage. Use of 4 cent imprinted envelope in this period is unusual. Top cover is correctly paid at 5 cent international rate (civilians could use military post offices, but had to pay U.P.U. rates on mail to the U.S.) plus 8 cents for registration. Bottom cover with 23 cents postage is most likely overfranked philatelically.

PUERTO RICO

Mil. Sta. No.2 Guayama
26 September 1898
4 April 1899



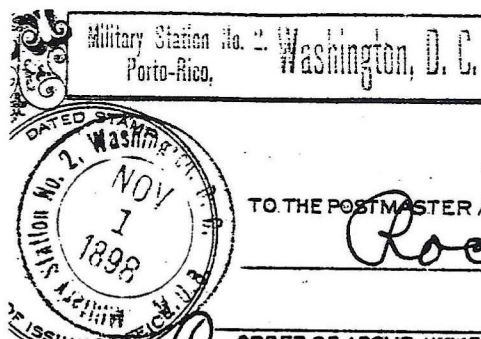
Military Station No.2 was established at Guayama on 23 August 1898. Initially, a provisional postmark was used, but this was subsequently replaced by a steel duplex device. The "T" marking is a postage due indicator left by the Spaniards; in this case postage due was assessed (at double deficiency) as the sender was a civilian, hence not entitled to send letters to the U.S. at the domestic rate.

PUERTO RICO

Mil. Sta. No.2 Guayama

1 November 1898

5 November 1898



Additional markings from Military Station No. 2 included Money Order Business and Registration. These are also unusual, with the former being the only example recorded.

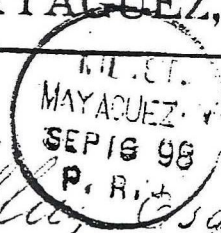
PUERTO RICO

Mil. Sta. No.3 Mayaguez
16 September 1898
18 February 1899

SABATER & C^o - MAYAGÜEZ, P.-R.

F. Bonilla, Esq.
N^o 24 State St.
Room 321.

New York



Post Office Department.

POST OFFICE AT MAYAGUEZ, PORTO RICO.

(MILITARY STATION No. 3.)

OFFICIAL BUSINESS.

(No. 1-L)

A penalty of \$300 is fixed by law for
this envelope to avoid payment of postage on
private matter.



POSTMASTER, *Stapleton*

Staten Island ~~COUNTY~~

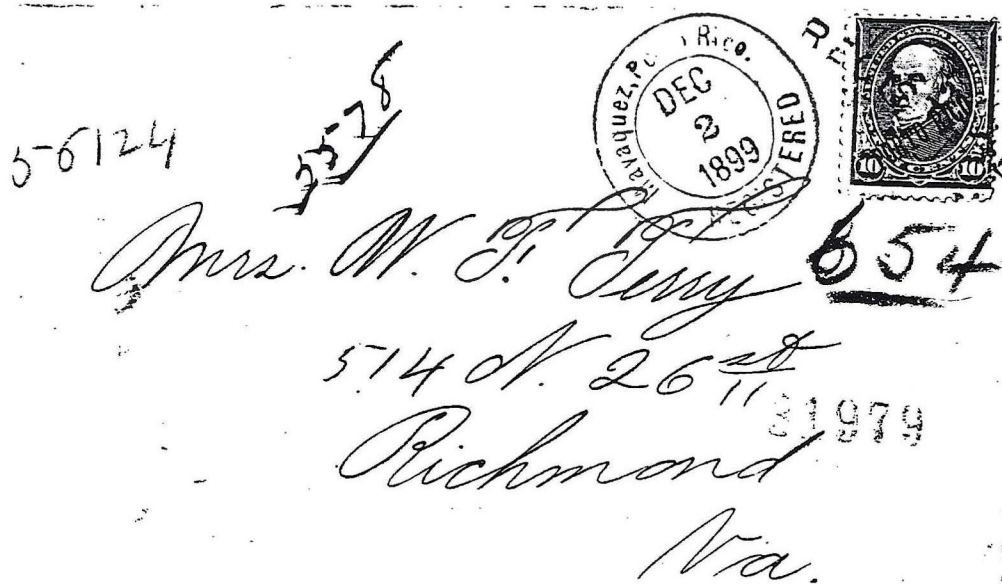


New York

Military Station No.3 was established at Mayaguez on 23 August 1898. A provisional postmark was used initially, but was subsequently replaced by the normal steel duplex device.

PUERTO RICO

Mayaguez
2 December 1899



A third type of double ring registration marking was provided in Mayaguez. Unlike those used in Ponce and San Juan, it showed the location in both upper and lower case letters. In this instance, the postage was cancelled with an unusual single line "Registered" marking. Backstamped "San Juan, Porto Rico/Received" on 4 December en route to Virginia.

PUERTO RICO

Mil. Sta. No.4 San Juan
19 October 1898
10 January 1900

FIDEL GUILLERMET

FARMACÉUTICO Y DROGUISTA

PLAZA DE ALFONSO XI

Apartado N° 43

PUERTO-RICO

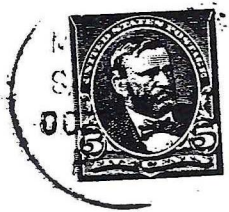


Directa.
Via HABANA

E. U. de A.

Srs LANMAN & KEMP.

P. O. Box 3784



NEW-YORK

DEPARTMENT OF POSTS OF PORTO RICO:

P. O. SAN JUAN, PORTO RICO.

OFFICIAL BUSINESS.

(No. 1-L)

A penalty of \$300 is fixed by law for using this envelope to avoid payment of postage on private matter.



POSTMASTER, *Shapleton*

COUNTY,

M. O. B.

N.Y.

Military Station No.4 was established at San Juan, Puerto Rico's capital, on 23 August 1898. As was the case for the other early offices, a provisional postmark was used initially and subsequently replaced by the normal steel duplex device.

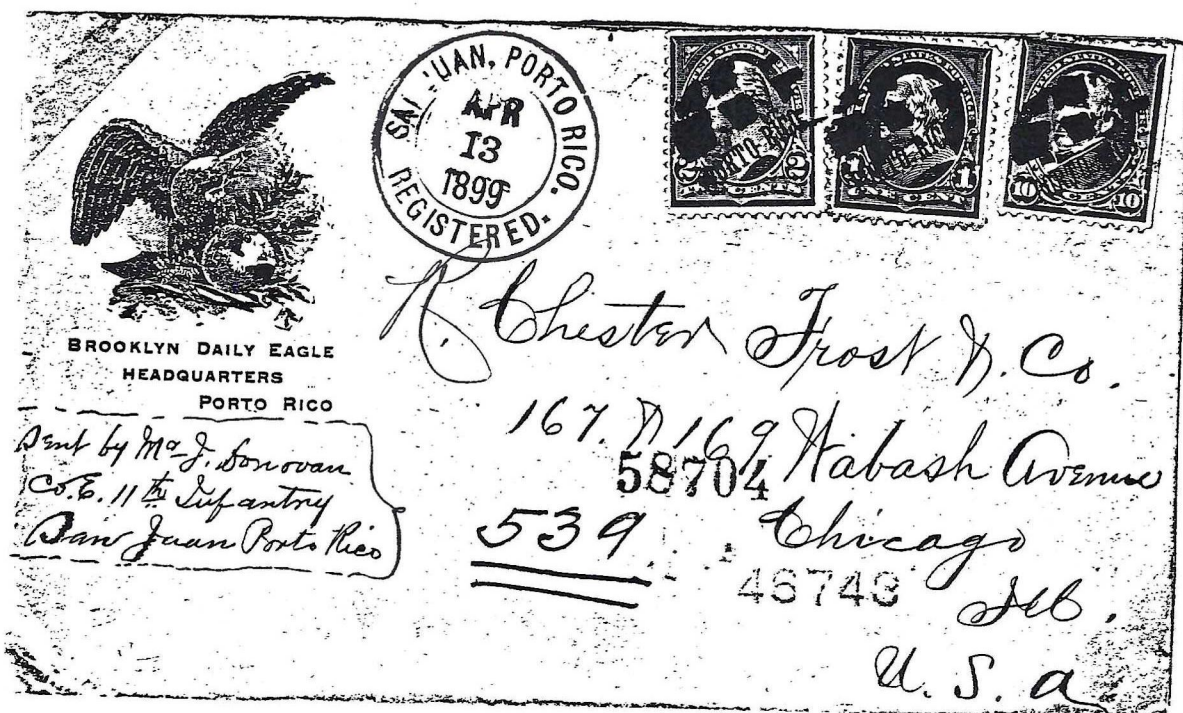
PUERTO RICO

Mil. Sta. 4 San Juan
18 February 1899
9 October 1899



Examples of auxiliary markings from Military Station No.4 are unusual. Above usages show "Address supplied and forwarded" and "Dead Letter Bureau." Lower cover also shows two receiving marks -- those of Military Sta. 4 and of the unnumbered station at Arecibo.

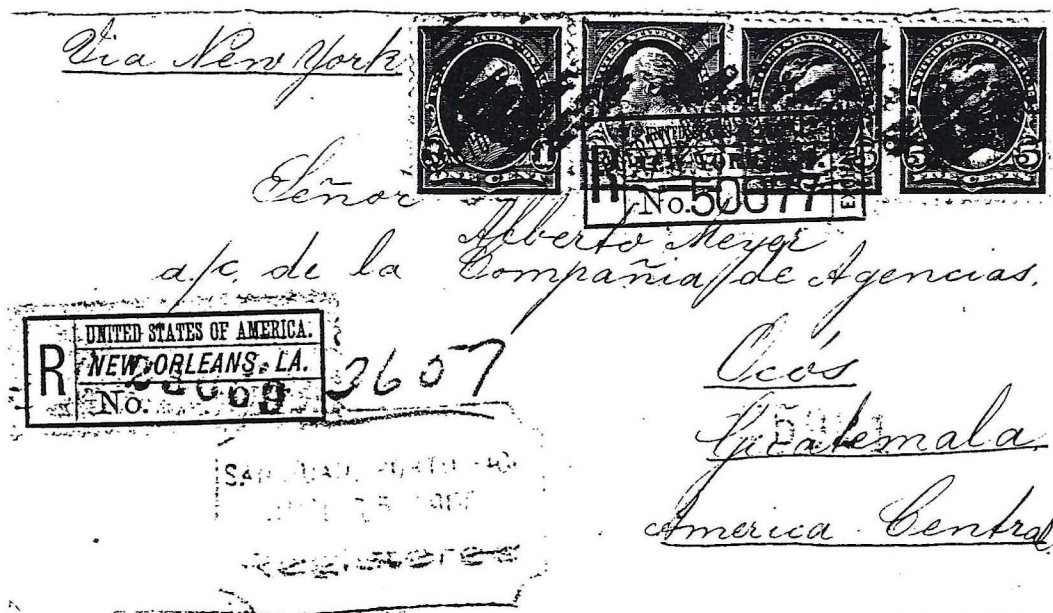
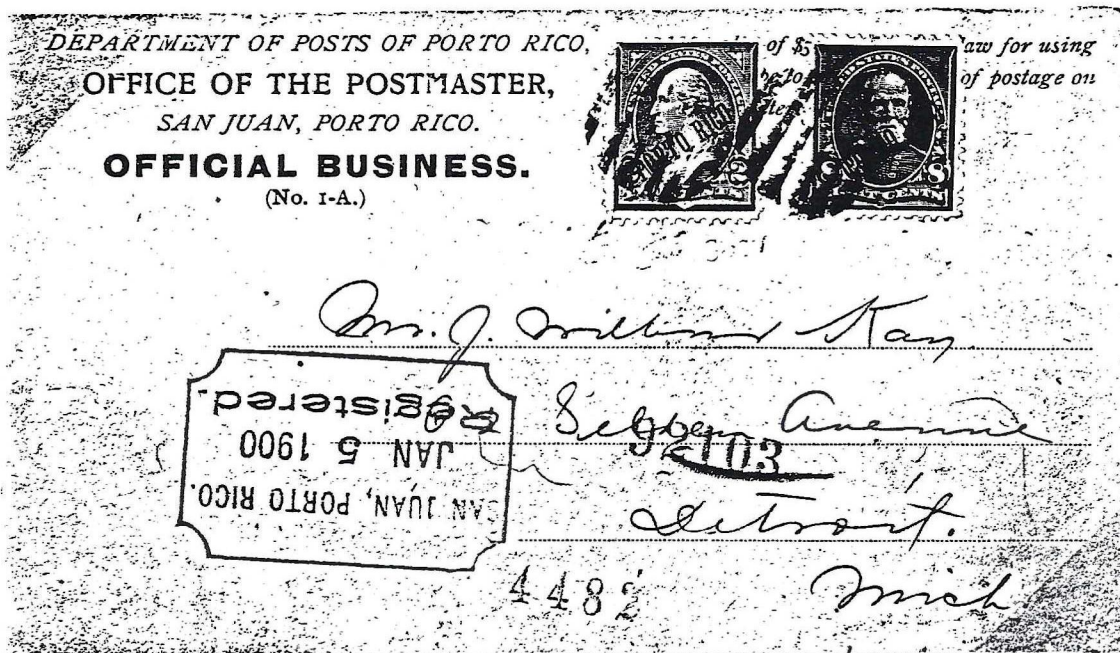
Mil. Sta. No.4 San Juan
3 January 1899
13 April 1899



Examples of Registered mail from Military Station No.4 include 4-line and double circle markings.

PUERTO RICO

San Juan
5 January 1900
15 June 1900



A special boxed registration marking (with chamfered corners) was supplied to San Juan in 1900. Lower cover transited New York, where a registration label was applied, on 22 June and New Orleans (another label affixed) on 25 June, en route to Guatemala.