

GUAM ISLAND MAIL 1898 - 1902

Guam is the main island in the Marianas group and was discovered by Ferdinand Magellan in the 16th Century. It remained a backwater of the ramshackle Spanish Empire 350 years later. With the outbreak of the Spanish-American War, U.S.S. *Charleston* stopped on June 21, 1898 en route to Manila and demanded surrender by the unsuspecting governor, who complied even though he was unaware that war had been declared. The island was formally ceded to the U.S. by treaty on December 10, 1898. However, the Americans did not take over administration until August 10, 1899.

A postal agent was appointed and sent to Guam with a supply of U.S. postage stamps appropriately overprinted "GUAM" in preparation for the opening of the first post office on August 15, 1899. These stamps then remained valid until supplies ran out several years later. However, unoverprinted American stamps were introduced in late 1901 (and continue in use today).

The purpose of this exhibit is to show the various postal markings that were used on Guam in the classic period of the U.S. administration when the specially overprinted stamps were in use in the possession. Although there were eleven denominations for postage plus a special delivery stamp, there was no conceivable commercial use for values above 15¢, so the higher denominations – which were issued in quantities of 3,000 and 4,000 pieces – can only be found on covers that were prepared as souvenirs of the occupation or philatelically.



During the Spanish period, stamps of the Philippines were also used in the Marianas. This cover, mailed in early August 1898 (specific date illegible) as attested by the receiving backstamp in Manila, bears the "Marianas" cds, and the stamps are cancelled with a boxed "Certif." killer as was appropriate for registered mail. It was sent to Tarlac in the Philippines (which had by then been occupied by the Americans). However, the recipient could not be found and the cover ended up in the Dead Letter Office as undeliverable. Thus, it provides a very elusive example of a forerunner of the American period on Guam.

SPANISH MARKINGS

Guam was captured in the Spanish-American War when Captain Glass of the *U.S.S. Charleston*, en route to the Philippines, stopped at the island and demanded the surrender of the garrison on June 20, 1898. This was done by the Spanish governor since he had no defense against a potential naval bombardment. Guam was then officially transferred to the United States pursuant to the Treaty of Paris on December 10, 1898. However, formal possession was not taken until Captain Leary of the *U.S.S. Yosemite* arrived with an appointment as governor on August 10, 1899.

Marianas
September 11, 1899



The postal history of Guam under U.S. administration began on August 15, 1899 when Chief Yeoman Hobby was appointed acting postmaster and began selling stamps overprinted "GUAM" that had been brought out on the *Yosemite*. Several of the old Spanish devices were used for cancelling mail, including the "Marianas" cds and the oval killer shown above. These have been recorded as being used from August 17 to December 8, 1899. The *U.S.S. Solace* was the station ship for Guam in this period, generally engaged in bringing supplies from the Philippines.

SPANISH MARKINGS

Marianas
August 17, 1899

Earliest Recorded Registered Letter



This registered cover to Germany was sent on the third day of U.S. postal service on Guam and is the earliest recorded use of three old Spanish markings – the “Marianas” cds, a boxed “CERTIF” signifying registration and the oval killer. Backstamped for transit in Manila and Hong Kong as well as on receipt in Germany.

FIRST PROVISIONAL U.S. POSTMARK

The first American-made cancellation was a two-line marking inscribed "Agana, Isle of Guam" above with the date below. It is recorded as being used from August 15, 1899 to May 22, 1900 (see LRD below).



Agana, Isle of Guam
November 17, 1899
May 22, 1900



The upper cover represents an unusual use of a GUAM overprint to a foreign destination. The letter was apparently double weight, which caused the Japanese post office to charge postage due of 25 French centimes or 5 U.S. cents. Cover to the U.S. below is properly franked for 2 cents postage and the 10 cent special delivery fee.

SECOND PROVISIONAL U.S. POSTMARK

In 1900, the second American-made cancellation was introduced. It was a two-line marking inscribed "Agana Isle/of Guam" in all capital letters and a separate datestamp was applied nearby. It is recorded as being used from June 14 (shown here on both covers) to October 14, 1900.

In total, eleven different denominations of U.S. First Bureau stamps were overprinted "GUAM" and placed on sale on August 15, 1899. The commercial use of this issue was largely confined to the 1, 2 and 5¢ denominations which paid the postcard, domestic letter and international letter rates. Use of denominations above 10¢ is rarely seen. Such items are usually overfranked and prepared as souvenirs or philatelically. Printings ranged from 105,000 of the 2¢ to just 3,000 of the \$1 black stamp. The special stamps were replaced by unoverprinted U.S. postage on March 30, 1901 but remained valid for postage.



Agana Isle/of Guam
June 14, 1900



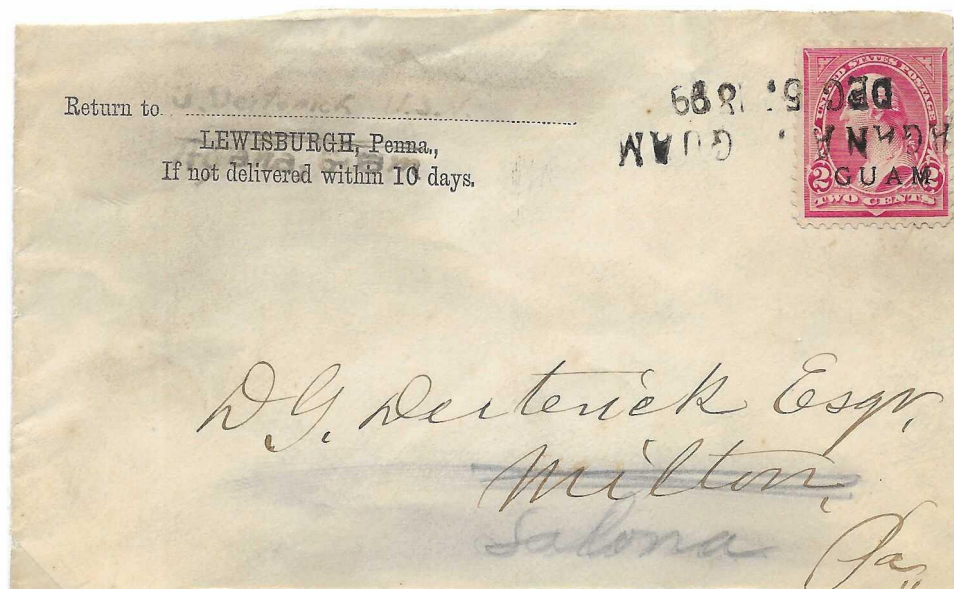
Upper cover is a double-weight registered letter requiring 12 cents postage (4¢ for the letter plus 8¢ registry fee) paid with the unusual use of the 4 and 8 cent denominations of overprinted stamps. Below is an overfranked registered letter bearing a 50¢ stamp (just 4,000 issued) sent to Captain von Francois, a well-known philatelist in Baden-Baden.

OTHER PROVISIONAL POSTMARKS

Toward the end of 1899, the "Agana Isle of Guam" postmark may have been temporarily mislaid. This would account for the appearance of two unusual markings that were used briefly during December. The upper marking is listed by Murphy, who records only this single example. The example below has not been recorded.

Agana, Guam
December 5, 1899

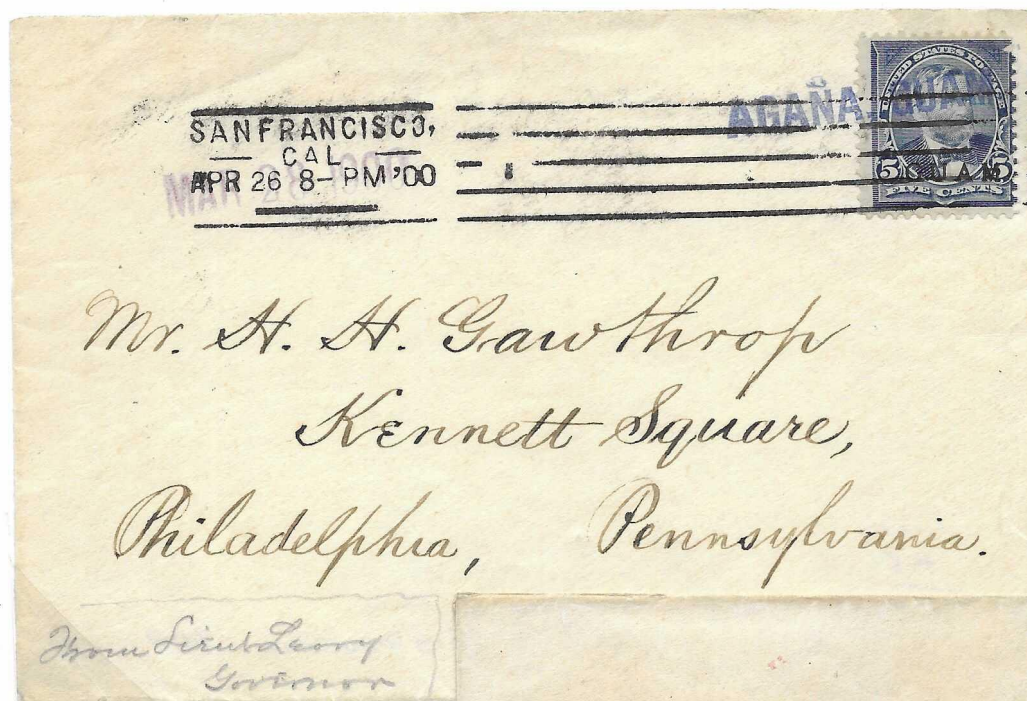
December 30, 1899



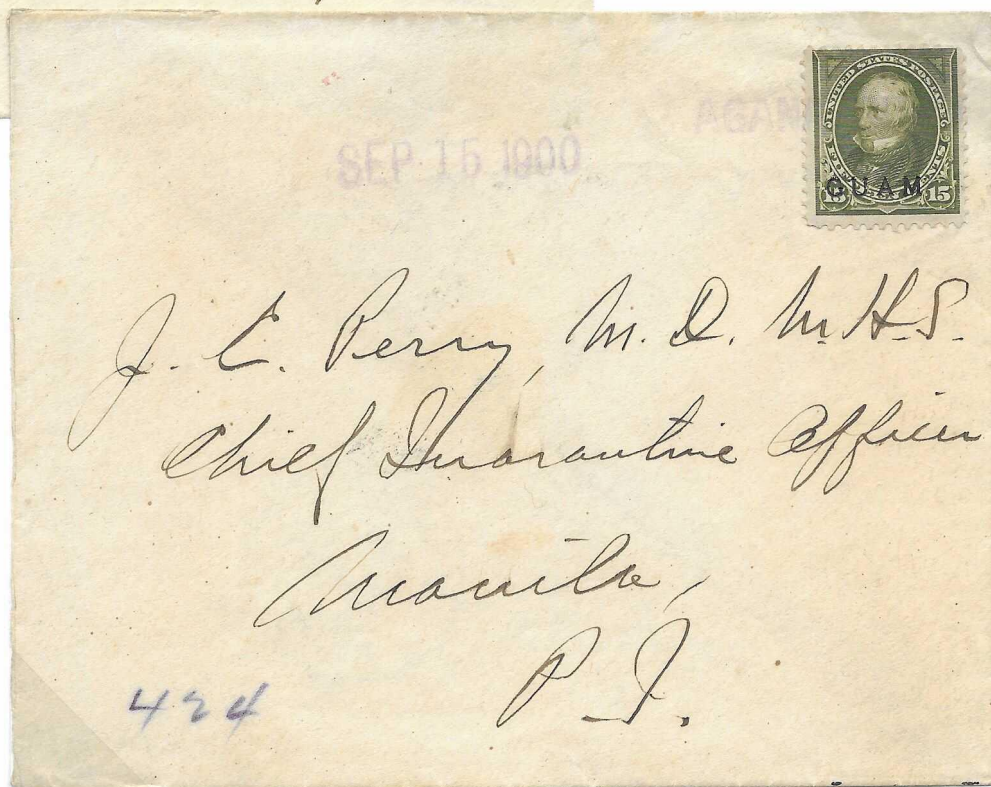
Upper cover sent by a private party from Agana to Pennsylvania. It is backstamped in transit at Manila and for receipt at Salona. Cover below represents some sort of official mail from the Government House in Agana to the National Museum in Washington. It has a transit marking of San Francisco and a Washington receiving mark.

THIRD PROVISIONAL U.S. POSTMARK

In early 1900, yet another provisional marking came into use. This time, it was a single-line marking inscribed "Agana, Guam." A separate datestamp was applied nearby. It is recorded as being used from February 7, 1900 to July 13, 1901.



Agana, Guam
March 28, 1900
September 15, 1900



Examples of covers with the third and most commonly seen provisional postmark. Upper example has manuscript note indicating that it was sent by Governor Leary but this is not confirmable. Lower cover is franked with a 15¢ overprint (5,000 issued), which would pay postage for a triple-weight letter, and was sent to the Chief Quarantine Officer in Manila.

THIRD PROVISIONAL U.S. POSTMARK

Agana, Guam
August 23, 1900
January 23, 1901

Special Service Usage



Covers sent by registered mail and special delivery. Note circular marking inscribed "Agana/ Guam" which was used to denote registered letters at this time. This marking is recorded as used from August 1900 to January 1902. Lower cover franked with a copy of the U.S. 10¢ special delivery stamp overprinted "GUAM" of which 5,000 copies were issued. It is very seldom found on covers that were actually sent by special delivery.

THIRD PROVISIONAL U.S. POSTMARK
Used as Transit Marking

Agana, Guam
July 5, 1901



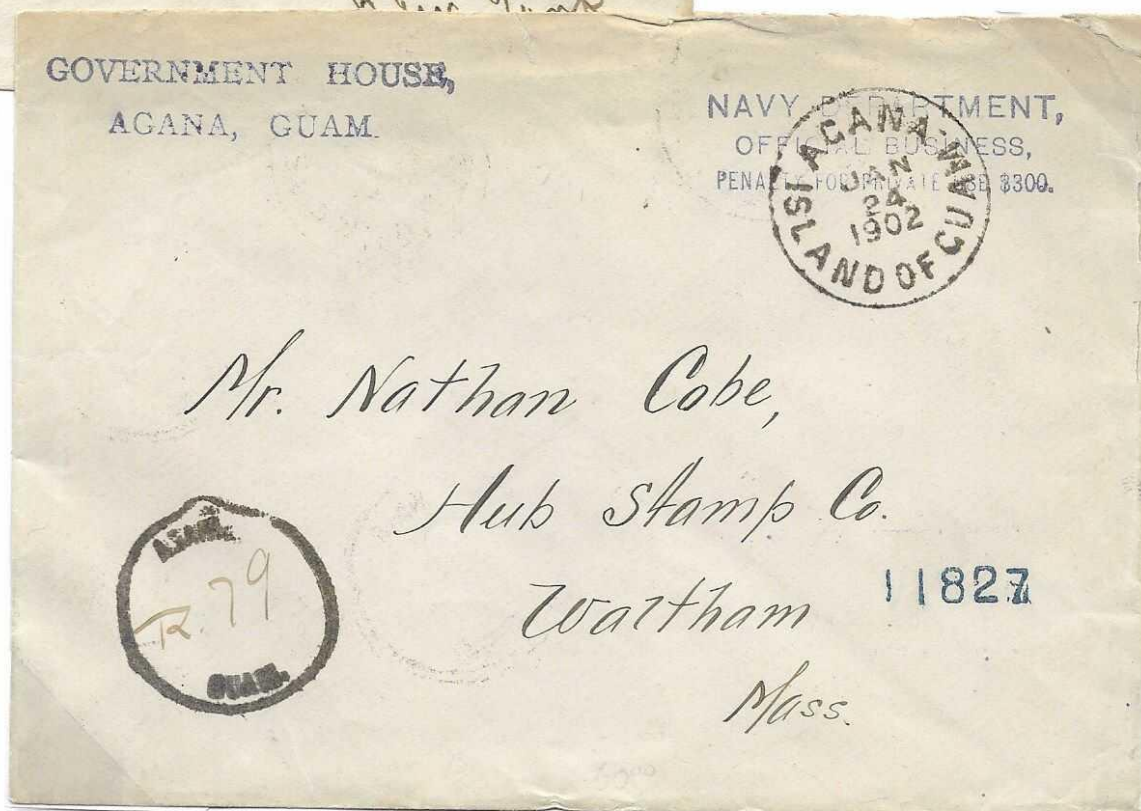
The above example shows the third provisional cancel used as a transit mark on a cover sent from Saipan in the German Marianas to the home country. Only two days en route from Saipan to Guam, it then went via Manila (transit mark of August 18) and obtained a receiving mark at Alzey on September 27. This is one of only two such transit usages of this Guam marking known to exhibitor.

FIRST STEEL POSTMARK

Postal activity on Guam was under the jurisdiction of the Navy Department until March 29, 1901 when it was transferred to the Post Office Department. At that time, a new steel circular datestamp was introduced with the inscription "Agana/Island of Guam." This marking is recorded as being used from April 1901 and November 30, 1904.



Agana/Island of Guam
November 30, 1901
January 24, 1902



Examples of this marking shown on cover franked with a commemorative stamp (not stocked in Guam P.O. so carried or sent there), and an official registered cover of the Navy Department.

**FIRST STEEL U.S. POSTMARK
UNOVERPRINTED STAMP**

On March 29, 1901, the responsibility for postal operations on Guam was transferred from the Navy Department to the Post Office Department. At that time, a postal agent was appointed and the sale of unoverprinted U.S. stamps commenced, although the overprinted ones remained valid for postage until supplies were exhausted. A new metal cancel was introduced at that time and remained in use until late 1904.

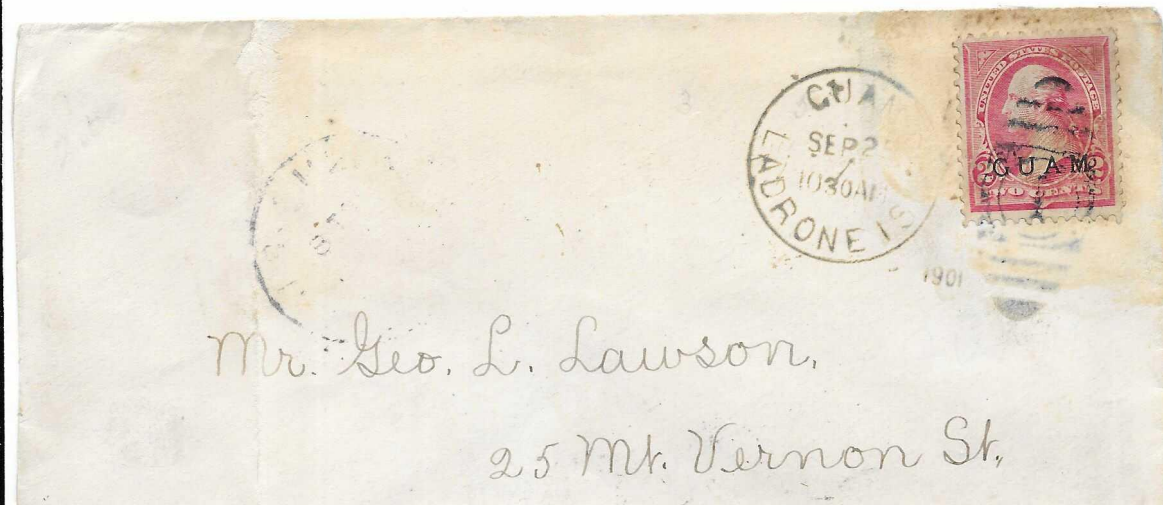
Agana/Island of Guam
March 19, 1902



This cover was franked with an unoverprinted 5¢ U.S. stamp to pay the UPU rate on this letter to France after the takeover of postal activity by the USPOD. Transit markings on reverse from Manila and Paris.

STEEL DUPLEX U.S. POSTMARK

A steel duplex cancel with the year date between the cds and killer was provided at about the same time. However, its usage was limited because of objections by local people to the use of "Ladrone," which means "thieves" in Spanish. (This name reportedly was originally applied to the Marianas by Magellan, who had a problem with the disappearance of supplies during his visit.) Its usage is recorded from August 19, 1901 to early 1903.



Guam/Ladrone Isl's.
September 21, 1901
October 31, 1901



Upper cover shows use of a 2¢ overprint on a letter to Massachusetts. Lower example is considerably overfranked but shows use of both of the highest values. It was sent to a government official on nearby Saipan in the German Marianas. Clearly a souvenir or philatelic franking but a highly desirable piece.

REGISTRY RETURN RECEIPTS

Agana Isle/of Guam
June 14, 1900

Agana/Island of Guam
January 8, 1902

REGISTRY RETURN RECEIPT sent Nov. 15, 1899

Reg. No. 551 from Post Office at

*Reg. Letter } Addressed to Gov. Richard Leary
Reg. Parcel } Guam

After obtaining receipt below, the Postmaster will mail this Card, without cover and without postage, to address on the other side.

RECEIVED THE ABOVE DESCRIBED REGISTERED *LETTER.
PARCEL.

(SENDER'S NAME ON OTHER SIDE.)

Sign on dotted lines to the right.

When delivery is made to other than addressee, the name of both addressee and recipient must appear.

R. P. Leary USN

*Erase letter or parcel according to which is sent.

When the registered letter or parcel accompanying this card is delivered, the Postmaster will require signature to the receipt on the other side, also on his record of registered deliveries, and mail this card without cover to address below.

A penalty of \$300 is fixed by law for using this card for other than official business.

Post Office Department.

OFFICIAL BUSINESS. POST OFFICE AT

RETURN TO: Lieut W. Mantz

Name of Sender

Street and Number, } 2 W 120 St
or Post Office Box. }

Post Office at NEW YORK,
N. Y.

Stamp here name of Post Office
and date of delivery.

AGANA ISLAND OF GUAM
JAN 8 1902

Upper example shows use of the second provisional postmark to validate a return receipt for a registered letter sent from Malden, Mass. Used on the earliest recorded date for this marking, the receipt is signed by "R. P. Leary, USN, Governor" of Guam. Below is a receipt for a registered parcel sent by Lt. Mantz in New York to a Mr. Martinez in Agana; it is postmarked with the first steel cancel used at Agana.

SAN LOUIS d'APRA FORERUNNER

The *U.S.S. Yosemite* initially anchored just off the village of Agana. However, this proved to be a poor location because the water depth drops sharply less than a half mile from the reef. Thus, the ship moved to San Luis d' Apra harbor, which offered much better typhoon protection.

San Louis d'Apra
September 1899



This cover sent by a sailor has a marking of "U.S.S. Yosemite/San Louis (sic) d'Apra, Guam." Only two examples with this erroneous spelling are recorded. Backstamped in transit in San Francisco and for receipt in Washington.

SAN LUIS d'APRA PROVISIONAL MARKING

After the Agana post office was brought on shore to Government House and the U.S.S. Yosemite moved to a safer anchorage, a new postmark was made up to be used on shipboard in the new harbor. This is normally seen as a simple straight-line postmark, but it was often used in conjunction with a "bear claw" killer. Recorded usage is from December 9, 1899 (shown below) to July 11, 1900.

San Luis d'Apra, Guam
December 9, 1899
February 10, 1900

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MAKINS & CO.

SAN FRANCISCO,

506 Market Street.

*U.S.S. Yosemite,
Lieut. John E. Brown, U.S.N.*

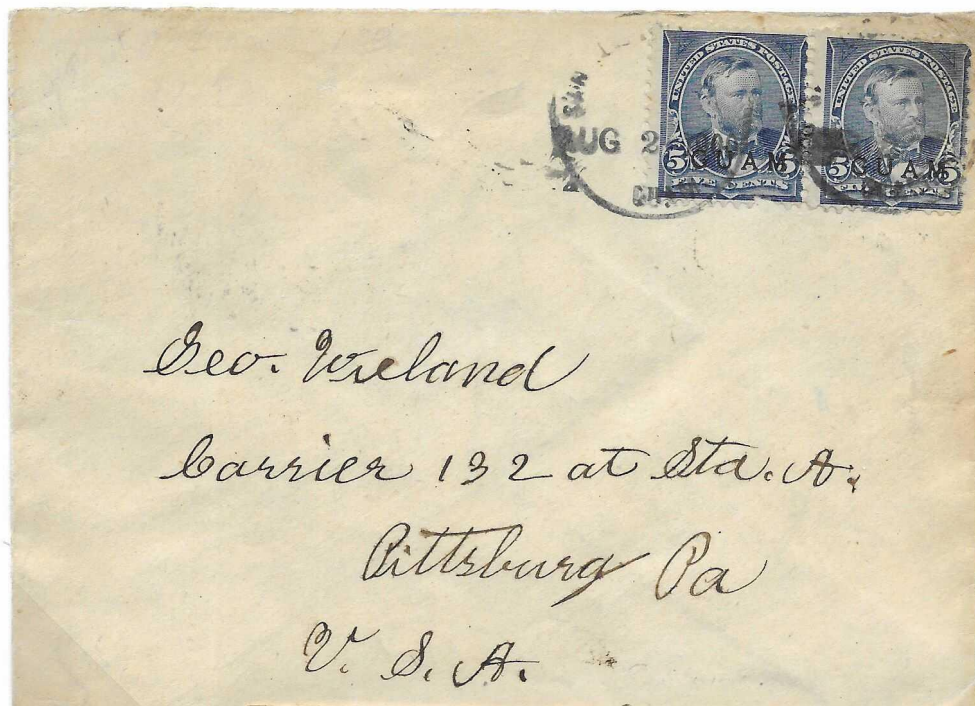
SAN LUIS D'APRA, GUAM.
FEB 10 1900
GUAM

*Mr. Elliot G. Audresen,
Hetzapfel's Compositum Co.,
Wells Building,
New York, N.Y.
U.S. of America.*

Covers showing the straight-line marking of this post office, with and without the bear claw. Appropriately backstamped in San Francisco and New York, respectively.

SAN LUIS d'APRA CIRCULAR MARKING

The provisional cancel was replaced with a circular rubber device, on which the dater was applied separately, sometime overlapping the dial of the cancel. The life of this marking was cut short by the sinking of the *Yosemite* following damage in a typhoon in November 1900. Recorded examples are known from July 15 to October 15, 1900.



San Luis d'Apra, Guam
August 2, 1900
September 25, 1900



Covers showing use of the circular datestamp of this post office. Appropriately backstamped in Pittsburgh and Newport, Kentucky, respectively.