

The Fresno and San Francisco

Bicycle Mail of 1894

The Fresno and San Francisco Bicycle Mail was both a legitimate local service to transport the mail during the Pullman strike, which caused a postal failure, in addition to being a philatelic adventure.

The Pullman strike started May 11, 1894 and spread to the American Railway Union which declared a boycott of all Pullman cars on June 26. The strike was violent and interrupted much railroad activity, especially the mail West of Chicago. The strike ended July 15, 1894, train service was quickly restored.

Bicycles were all the rage at the time, Arthur Banta the initiator of the Bicycle Mail owned the Victor Cyclery store in Fresno and was active with the American Wheelman Co. in San Francisco. He set up a mail service between Fresno and San Francisco consisting of 8 bicycle relays to convey the mail over 210 miles. The service ran from July 7 through July 16. Banta was not a stamp collector but quickly became aware that there was considerable interest in the stamps and covers for the collector market.

Soon after the Bicycle Mail ceased to operate detailed articles appeared in W. Sellschopp & Co. journal *Filatellic Facts and Fallacies*, mostly in H.B. Phillips column, Department of Western Franks, in addition to advertisements offering the Bicycle stamps and covers. Major articles appeared by Chas. E. Jenney in *The Weekly Philatelic Era* and others in *The American Journal of Philately* and *The Weekly Philatelic Era*.

All the published articles are similar in facts but unfortunately they all have the same lapses of information. Banta kept a log of the carried covers which existed in the 1930's; the family would not permit it to be copied and the present location is not known. At this time a complete listing of the actual runs are not possible, the contemporary references are incomplete and there are not enough surviving covers that were actually carried over the route to fill in the missing information.

From the basic facts the story becomes quite complex, a real mail service and also a philatelic adventure. Stamps and covers were created for the philatelic market and much fraud and deceit between Banta and Eugene Donze, the engraver of the die. Donze retained ownership of the die as Banta would not pay the originally requested \$5.00 for it but preferred to buy the printed stamps. Donze made and defaced a fake die so Banta would believe the original could not be used to produce more stamps. The deception was quickly discovered and Donze defaced the real die. Donze apparently printed stamps, envelopes and made used covers that Banta was not aware of. The Donze family was always most cooperative in supplying information but the Banta family was not.

Arrangement of Exhibit

- The initial story and stamp outline
- Stamps used, Die 1 and Die 1-R
- Used covers, carried and not carried, and cancelled after the post ended
- The mystery Die-2
- The authentic defaced die, Die 1-R-D
- The fake die made by Donze, Die 3
- Philatelic sales
- The End, a bit of Nostalgia, 1934 re-run and Wells Fargo

My thanks goes to the late Lowell B. Cooper for his study of the Bicycle Mail during the 1930's – 1970's. This information is recorded in his 1982 book: *The Fresno and San Francisco Bicycle Mail of 1894*.

Fresno and San Francisco Bicycle Route

General Scheme

The 210 mile run was broken into 8 bicycle relays.

Relay 1:

B. J. Treat of Fresno.

Fresno to 20 Mile House on the White's Bridge road, 20 miles.

Relay 2:

H. S. Gangbin of Sanger. 20 Mile House to Firebaugh, 20 miles.

Relay 3:

R. O. Puryear of Fresno. Firebaugh to Los Banos, 35 miles.

Relay 4:

Arthur W. Drummond of Los Banos. Los Banos to foot of mountain 6 miles beyond St. Louis Ranch, 20 miles.

Relay 5:

W. B. Atwater of Fresno. Foot of mountain over the summit at Pacheco Pass to Bells Station, 15 miles.

Relay 6:

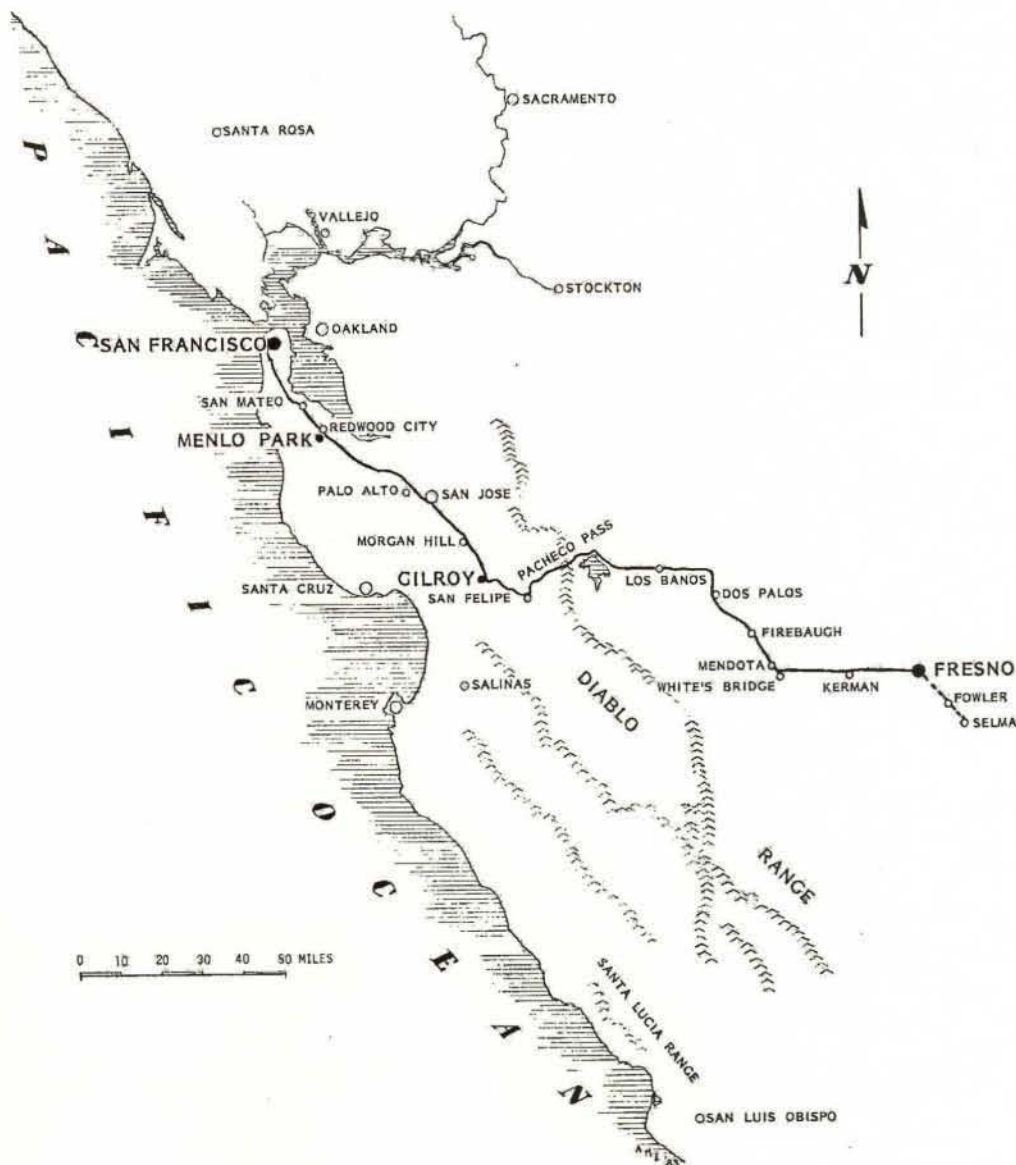
Joseph M. Smith of Selma. Bells Station to Madrone, 32 miles.

Relay 7:

George Calquhoun of Fresno. Madrone to Menlo Park through San Jose, 38 miles.

Relay 8:

C. S. Shaffer of Fresno. Menlo Park to San Francisco, 30 miles, then returning immediately to Menlo Park for a total distance of 60 miles

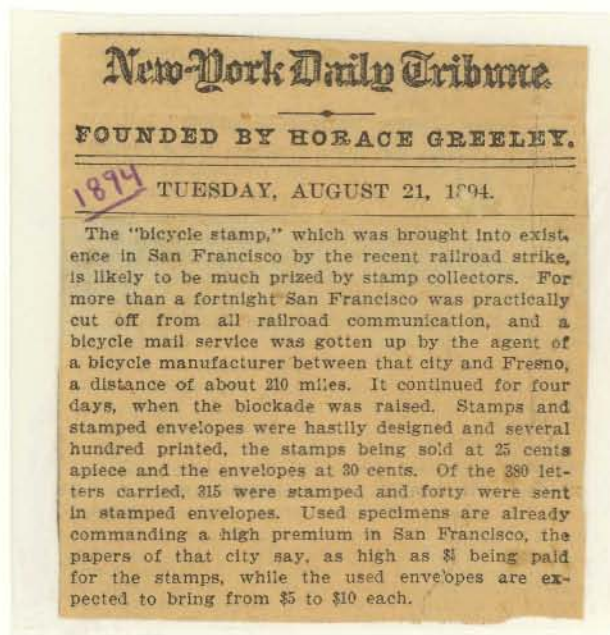


It was anticipated that the 210 mile run could be completed in 18 hours each way.

Each rider, except for San Francisco, was intended to remain at his post until receiving mail from the opposite direction. At the time the 18 hour schedule was considered too optimistic by the public. Based on the known covers that traveled the route it was most optimistic.

Pictures of the Time

Circa 1894



August 21, 1894 report in *New-York Daily Tribune*
Fresno and San Francisco Bicycle Post

*380 letters were carried; 315 were stamped,
40 in stamped envelopes, the numbers do not add up !*



© San Jose Historical Museum

Left to Right,
Arthur C. Banta, proprietor of the post
S.J. Jon Schmidt
Orrin (B) J. Treat, rider on the first leg out of Fresno

— BICYCLE —
MESSAGE ROUTE
To San Francisco.

The undersigned begs to announce to the Public that he will establish a Messenger Route to San Francisco on Bicycles, via

WHITES BRIDGE,
PACHECO PASS,
GILROY AND
SAN JOSE.

A daily service will be established between Fresno and San Francisco, beginning Saturday Morning. ~~The rate for Letters to San Francisco and intermediate points will be 25 cents.~~ All mail matter should be addressed to street and number, and will be stamped and deposited at the post office at destination. All mail must be left at **VICTOR CYCLERY**, 1730 Tulare Street, Hughes Hotel, not later than 10 P. M., to insure delivery on the following day. The San Francisco headquarters will be Overman Wheel Co., corner Larkin and McAllister Streets; and San Jose at Merrigot & Co.'s

Call on or communicate with

ARTHUR C. BANTA,
1730 TULARE ST., FRESNO, CAL.

COMMERCIAL PRINTING CO.

Banta's initial announcement of his intention to establish a Bicycle Message Route to San Francisco

It is believed that the Fresno Post Master marked out the line
The rate for Letters to San Francisco and intermediate points will be 25 cents.

The Dies

Die 1

Original Die, error in SF spelling
Used for Stamps and Postal Stationery
Used for advertising
First Day usage July 7, 1894



Die 1-R

Major re-engraving of Die 1
SF spelling corrected, other changes
Used for Stamps and Postal Stationery,
also for corner cards
First Day usage July 7, 1894



Die 1-R-D

Defaced Die 1-R
Die shows wear from Die 1-R impressions
Used for sample stamps in 1894
Electrotype copy used for 1935 re-run



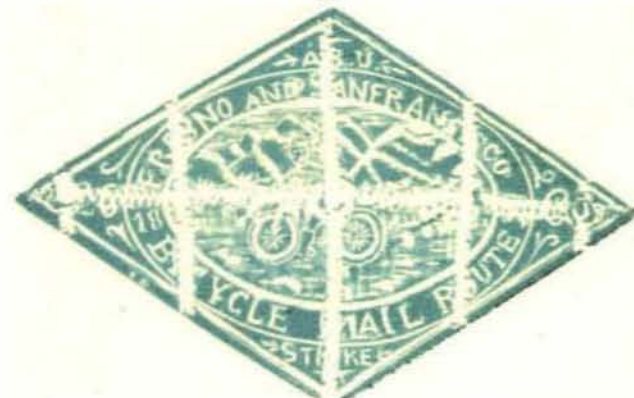
Die 2

Electrotype of Die 1-R
Original Die 1-R modified,
lines behind bicycle, etc.
Only used on Postal Stationery
Banta recorded: 10 printed
First Day usage July 12, 1894



Die 3

Donze Counterfeit Die, Defaced,
only know as defaced
Used as corner cards
on Banta's and Donze's envelopes



Die 1

Proofs

Original design



Die 1, Proof, Green on card, printed July 7th, 1894



Die 1, Essay, Brown - Violet on card, printed July 7th, 1894
The small circle in the outer line below the TR of STRIKE is not present.



Issued Stamp

The bicycle stamps shown herein together
with the proofs and color test are from
the original plates made at the time of
the A. R. U. strike by my father, Eugene Donze.

Santa Barbara, Calif.,
March 11, 1936

Eugene A. Donze
Helen G. Bowen

Eugene Donze died in August, 1931 at which time Helen G. Bowen,
a daughter received some stamps and the defaced die.
All Proofs in this exhibit were obtained from the Donze family in 1936.

The First Design



Die 1, Reconstructed Sheet

All Bicycle Mail stamps were printed as sheets of 6.

Each stamp was individually printed on the sheet, the uniform spacing erroneously suggests a plate of 6. Close examination, of a number of sheets, prove the exact alignment between the stamps varies.

The stamps were printed on pre-cut and pre-glued paper, adding to the uniformity of spacing.

Donze's diary indicates; July 7, Printed 816 stamps, gave Banta 606 and retained 210. This is the only printing from Die 1, the collector interest was not quite realized at this time.



This Banta handstamp is also known on the July 9, 1894 printing of D 1-R, it is also fully rouletted, unlike the autographed copies from the July 16, 1894 printing.

Die 1-R

Proofs

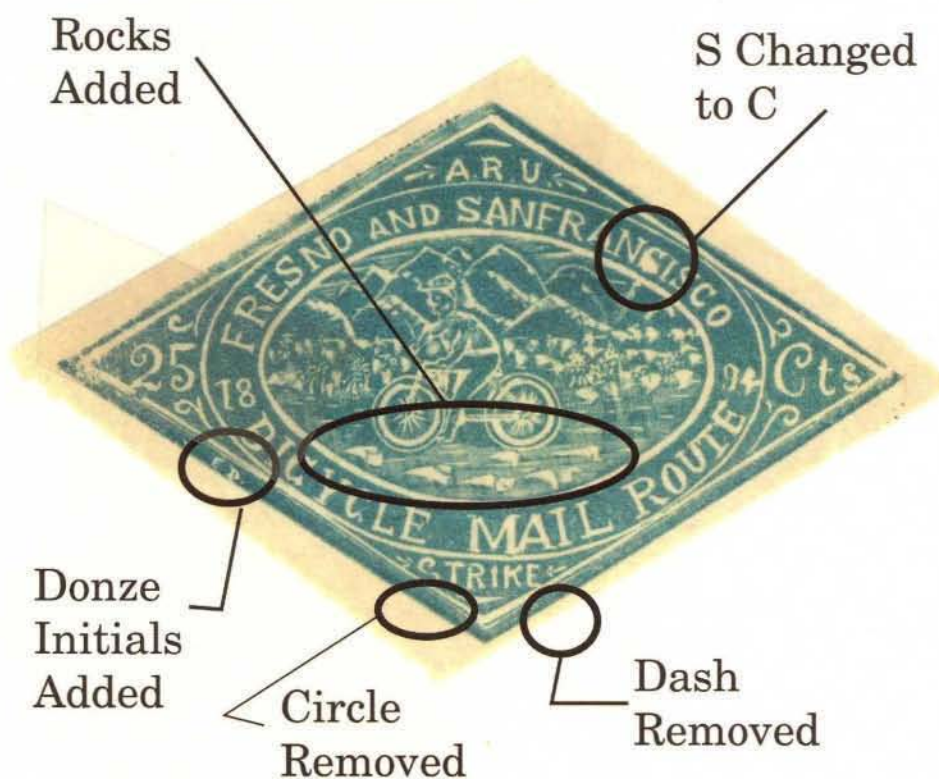
Die 1, Re-Engraved



Die 1-R-D, Proof, Black on off white paper, printed July 7th, 1894



Die 1-R-D, Issued Stamp



Changes in Die 1 to make it Die 1-R

First and Second Printings



July 9, 1894 Printing, Sheets measure 67-68 mm in height

Used on all mail carried by the Bicycle Post



July 16, 1894 Printing, Sheets measure 61.75 to 63 mm in height

Printed after the last Bicycle Post run departed for San Francisco, 2:30 PM, July 16, 1894,



Banta Handstamped Signature
July 9, 1894 Printing



Banta's Manuscript Signature
July 16, 1894 Printing
Double Impression on Position 6

Vertical Pairs of the two printings are easy to tell apart by the paper height.
Single copies can be distinguished by the smaller vertical stamp margins.



The signed July 16, 1894 printing is not rouletted vertically, evidently so the tab would not fall off.

Signatures of Arthur C. Banta owner of the Bicycle Mail and O. J. Treat, a rider on the route.

The July 16, 1894 printing was intended for the collector market thus to enhance the value,
there are a number of varieties in addition to autographs.



No Vertical Rouletteing

A contemporary account by Elzie Unthank reported that Donze and Banta agreed that a portion of this printing should not have vertical rouletteing.



No Vertical Rouletteing and Position 4 spaced away from Positions 5 - 6.



No Rouletteing, the strong offset on only one stamp suggests it was deliberately done.

The intentional varieties only exist from the Die 1-R, July 16, 1894 printing.

BEWARE OF IMITATIONS.



U. S. and Foreign Postage Stamps
Bought and Sold.

EUGENE DONZE,

Engraver

Fine Engravings on All Gold, Silver, Copper, Etc.

MONOGRAMS A SPECIALTY.

Santa Barbara Fresno, Cal., Jan. 28 1895

Mr. H. P. Atherton

RETURN IN TEN DAYS TO



EUGENE DONZE,
FRESNO, CALIFORNIA, U. S. A.

Santa Barbara

Mr. H. P. Atherton

207 Beach St

Holyoke Mass.



Santa Barbara, California, January 29, 1895

.... I engraved the die in a hurry and made a mistake in spelling San Francisco. There were more than 810 struck before we found it out. Then I re-engraved the plate and turned out about 2000. The printer in my absence struck off 500 on dark paper on this own for himself but finally made him give them up. After having used some from each of these varieties we found out that according to the Postal Law we could not carry our mail service unless we used U.S. envelopes, same as the Express Companies, so we bought about 150 of each on the white and amber envelopes. There were two sized of the env. One size being larger than by about 1/2 inch which I never noticed

Donze evidently had other spelling problems, note upper left corner of his letterhead:
Beware of Imitations

Carried on the Post
Northern Trip

Not Philatelic
Die 1

July 8th
Registry Number 42



Fresno Bicycle Mail registry number 42

Fresno to Santa Barbara by way of Menlo Park

Fresno, July 8, 1894 Bicycle backstamp
Entered the mail at Menlo Park, July 11, 1894

Manuscript notation *Via Boat to S. F.*, normal transit
San Francisco receiving backstamp, July 11, 12 - M
Santa Barbara receiving backstamp, July 14, 4 PM



The Bicycle Mail registry log was seen in the 1930's,
copies were not permitted and the present location is unknown.

Carried on the Post
Northern Trip

Not Philatelic
Die 1-R

July 10th
Registry Number 88



Fresno, Bicycle Mail registry number 88

Fresno to San Francisco

Fresno, July 10, 1894 Bicycle backstamp only
Lack of a Fresno CDS is unusual

Entered the mail at San Francisco. machine cancellation, July 12, 10:30 AM

San Francisco Station J. receiving backstamp, July 12, 1 PM



back image, reduced

Carried on the Post
Northern Trip

Not Philatelic
Die 1-R

July 12th
Registry Number 143



Fresno, Bicycle Mail registry number 143

Fresno to Santa Barbara by way of Gilroy

Fresno, July 12, 1894 Bicycle backstamp

Entered the mail at Gilroy, July 14

the Railroad was open north of Gilroy on that date

San Francisco receiving backstamp, July 14, 2 PM





To Arthur C. Banta

July 13, 1894, Overman Wheel Co., San Francisco, red RECEIVED handstamp

July 17, 12:30 PM, Fresno CDS,

No Bicycle Handstamp on Back

We know of no Philatelic Bicycle Mail covers traveling from San Francisco to Fresno.

Some covers originating in San Francisco with evident philatelic association
but appear to be legitimate correspondence.

Sellschopp, etc. corresponded with both Banta and Donze
on the marketing of stamps and covers,
the Bicycle Mail was the only means of correspondence.

Donze diary for July 16th indicated he received by Bicycle Route
two letters from Sellschopp and one from Ed West.



RECEIVED

JUL 12 1894

To E.G. Donze

July 12, 1894, Overman Wheel Co., San Francisco, red RECEIVED handstamp

July 16, 1894, Fresno CDS and also July 16 Bicycle Handstamp on Back
The faint pencil notation, 76 in the Bicycle Handstamp may or may not relate to the Post



Despite the similarity of the covers with the red RECEIVED handstamp, and the fact that one is addressed to Donze and another to Banta they were definitely carried over the route.



July 13, 1894, Overman Wheel Co., San Francisco, red RECEIVED handstamp
The above day date is unclear but it appears to be more a 13 than a 12.

July 16, 1894 Fresno cancellation and also there receiving backstamp



The Fresno receiving backstamp is unusual in that the cover did come from a normal mail route and is the only Bicycle Mail cover having one.

The handstamp 444 on the back may or may not relate to the Bicycle Post.

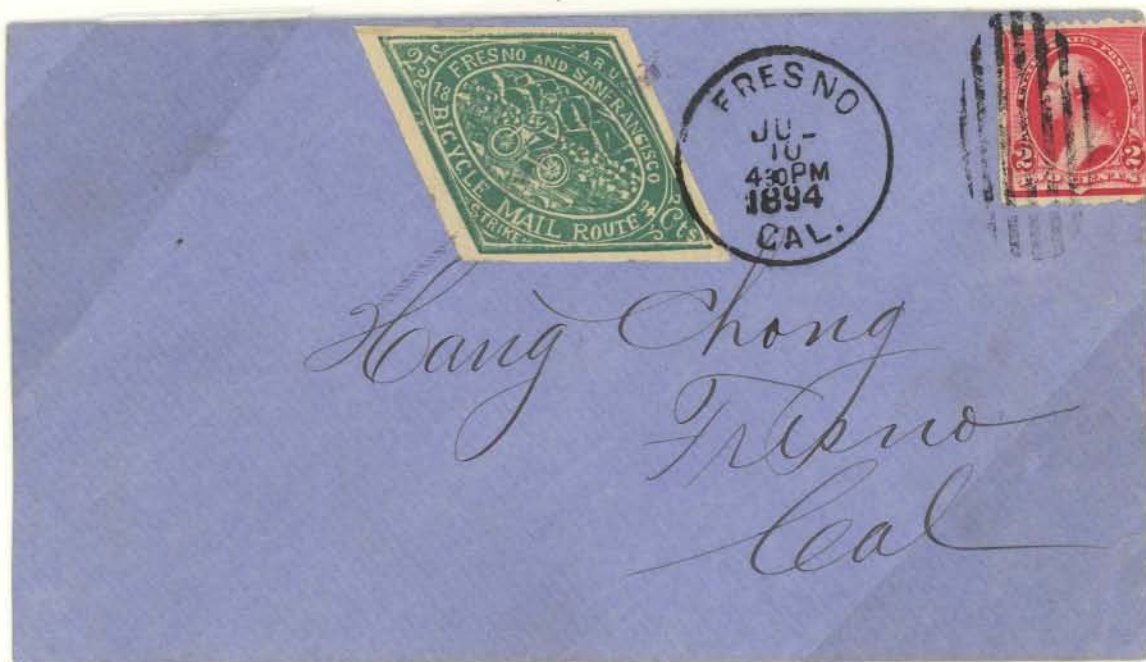
Not Carried on the Post
Fresno to Fresno

Philatelic
Die 1-R
Afternoon Post

Dated July 10th



July 10, 4:30 PM, Fresno CDS, July 10, Bicycle Backstamp



July 10, 4:30 PM, Fresno CDS, July 10, Bicycle Backstamp

All authentic and while the service was operating but not carried on over the Bicycle Route.

Not Carried on the Post
Fresno to Fresno

Dated July 12th

Philatelic
Die 1-R
Afternoon Post
First Day Use



July 12, 4:30 PM, Fresno CDS, July 11, Bicycle Backstamp

This cover is identical in both dates to the only known used D-2 cover, however it also has the Overman Wheel Co. handstamp.



Donze's diary reads for July 11, 1894:

Up at 7:10, warm TH 98 at noon 102. Got bal. of stamps & bought 100 envelopes and stamped them

All authentic and while the service was operating but not carried on over the Bicycle Route.

Not Carried on the Post
Fresno to Fresno

Philatelic
Die 1-R
Afternoon Post

Dated July 15th



July 15, 4:30 PM, Fresno CDS, July 15, Bicycle Backstamp

The US 2¢ adhesive stamp is not tied to the envelope.
The cancellation appears to be Fresno and reads July, the envelope ageing agrees with the stamp.



All authentic and while the service was operating but not carried over the Bicycle Route.

The US 2¢ stamp on this cover is questionable as to have originated on this cover !

Not Carried on the Post
Fresno to Fresno

Philatelic
Die 1-R
Evening Post

Dated July 12th



July 12, 8:30 PM, Fresno CDS, July 12, Bicycle Backstamp



July 12, 8:30 PM, Fresno CDS, July 12, Bicycle Backstamp

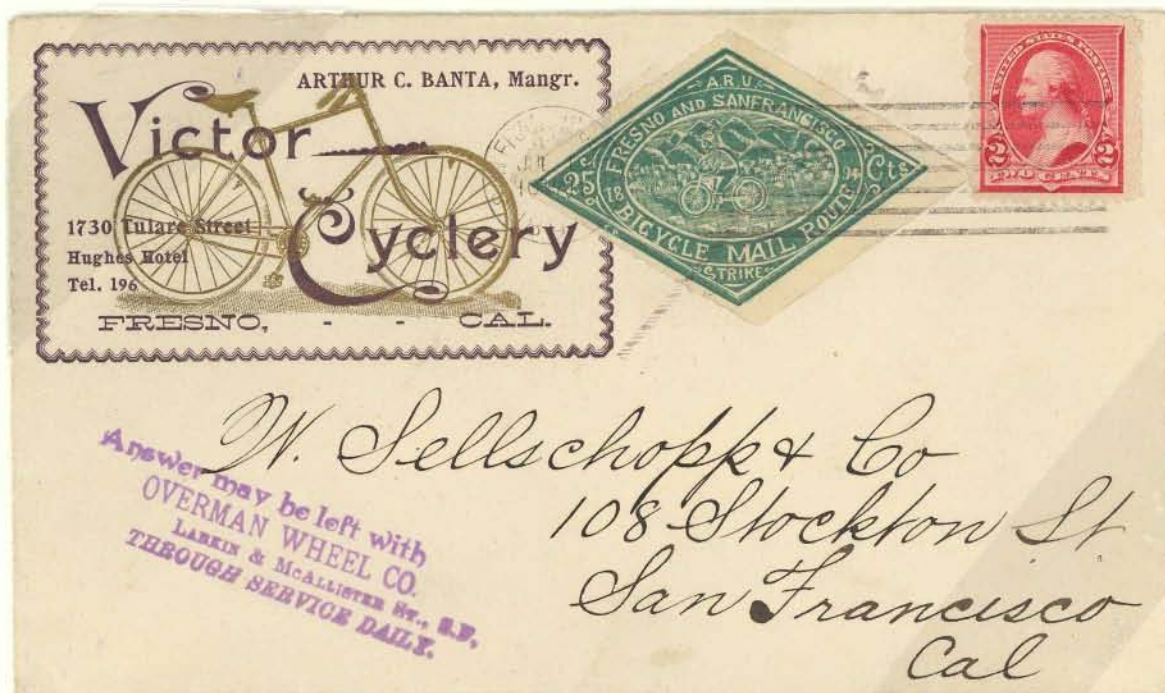
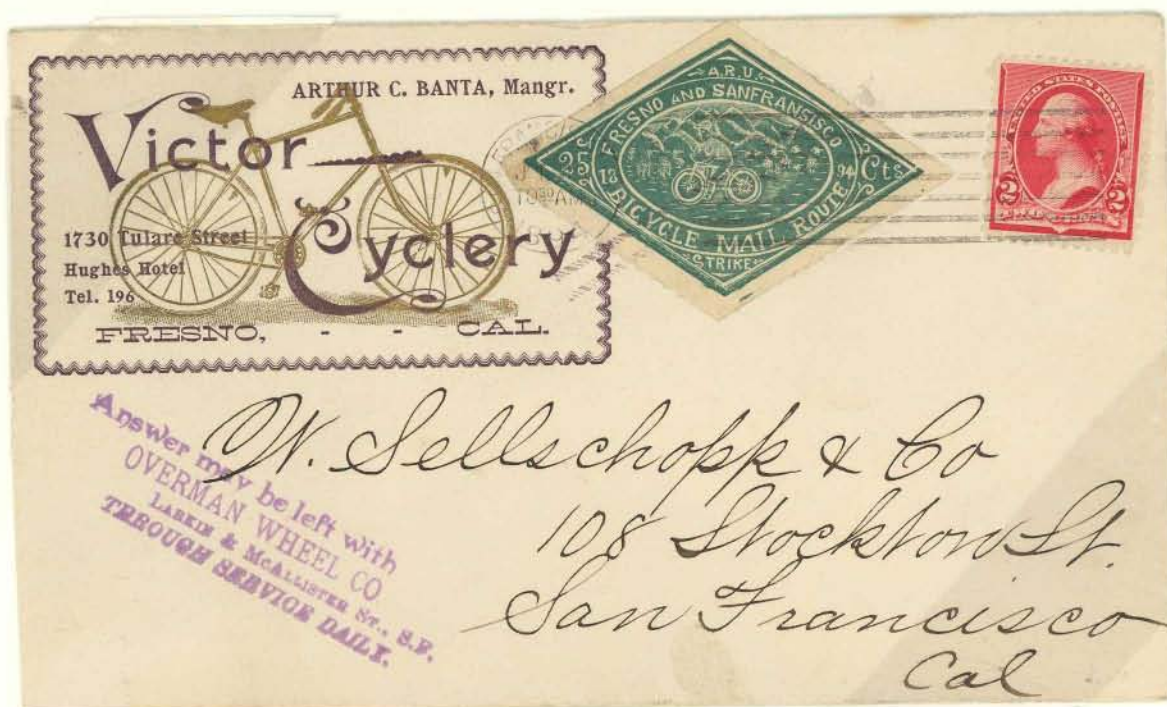
All authentic and while the service was operating but not carried on over the Bicycle Route

Carried on the Post
Northern Trip

Philatelic

The Last Day of the run
Fresno, July 17th

Adhesive Stamps
Die 1 & 1-R



Fresno July 17 Bicycle Backstamps with San Francisco July 19, 1894, 10:30 AM mailing

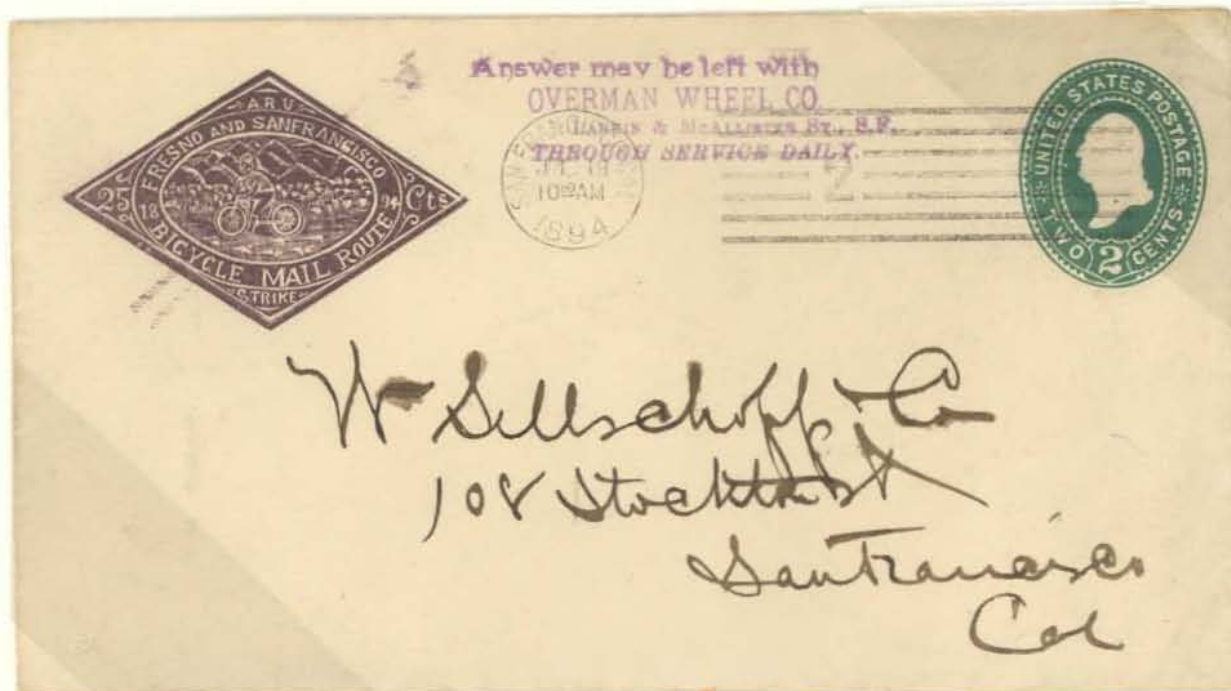
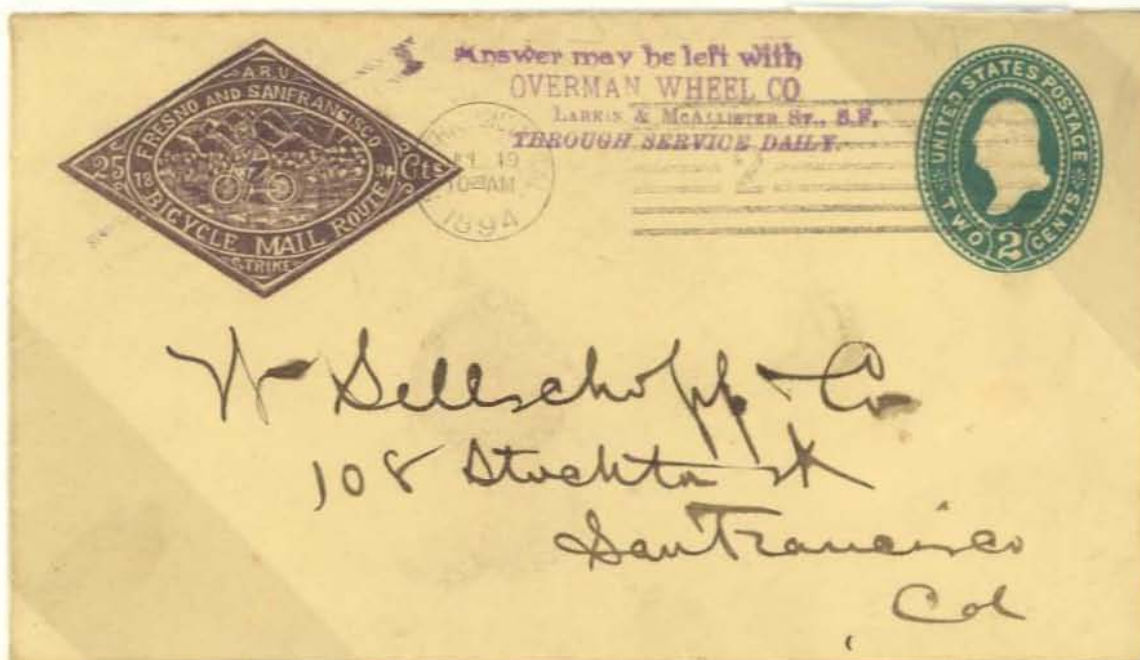
All to W. Sellschopp a major stamp dealer

Carried on the Post
Northern Trip

Philatelic

The Last Day of the run
Fresno, July 17th

Postal Stationery
Die 1 & 1-R



Fresno July 17 Bicycle Backstamps with San Francisco July 19, 1894, 10:30 AM mailing

Plimpton envelopes, size 4½ amber and Size 5 white

All to W. Sellschopp a major stamp dealer

After the Last Day of the run
Fresno to Fresno

Philatelic
Postal Stationery
Die 1-R



Fresno July, 18, 1894 with July 18, 1894 Bicycle Mail backstamp
To Arthur C. Banta



Fresno July 20, 1894 with no Bicycle Mail backstamp

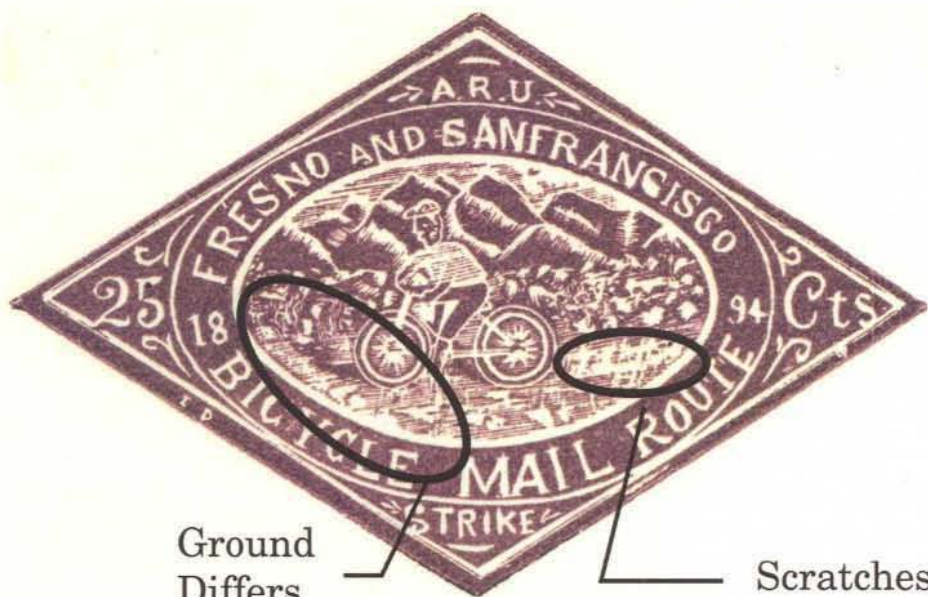
All imprints and markings are authentic but they were not carried by the Bicycle Mail
To Henry Hart but addressed to the Hughes Hotel, Banta's address

Die 2

Special Envelope Die



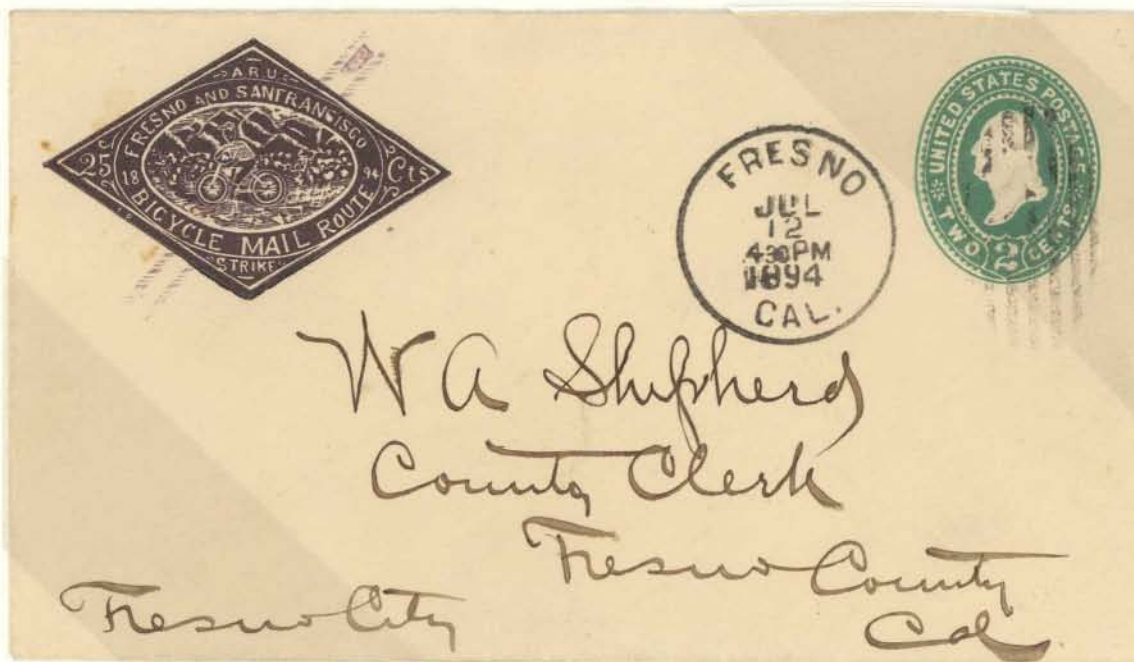
Unused, Die 2 with Die 1 adhesive and Bicycle Backstamp but no date



Die 2 is an electrotpe made from Die 1-R

Only 10 envelopes and no stamps are reported by Banta to have been printed with Die 2.

We can only guess why Die 2 was made; perhaps as a spare, perhaps considered defective!



Fresno July 12, 4:30 PM CDS, With Bicycle Backstamp July 11, 1894

Fresno to Fresno, the Post Office would deliver to the County Clerk as addressed.



**Authentic in all respects, used while the Bicycle Mail route was in operation,
but only carried from Banta's office to the Post Office,
and not carried over the Bicycle Mail route.**

Die 1-R-D

Proofs

Die 1-R, Defaced



Die 1-R-D, Proof, Green on White Card, Sept. 1894



Die 1-R-D, Trial Color Proof, Black on Thin White Buff Paper, Sept. 1894



Die 1-R-D, Stamp, Sept. 1894



Die 1-R-D, Proof, Black on White Card, Feb. 1963

FRESNO, CAL., August 23d, 1894.

We, the undersigned, hereby certify that we have witnessed the defacement, by Eugene Donze, of what, after careful examination, we believe to be the original Die or Plate from which the San Francisco and Fresno Bicycle Stamps were printed.

Subscribed and sworn to before me, G. C. GRIMES, a Notary Public in and for the County of Fresno, State of California, this 23d day of August, 1894.

EUGENE DONZE, Engraver,
ARTHUR C. BANTA,
C. E. JENNEY.

STATE OF CALIFORNIA, }
COUNTY OF FRESNO. } SS.

On this 23d day of August, in the year of our Lord, one thousand eight hundred and ninety-four, before me, G. C. GRIMES, a Notary Public in and for said County and State, residing therein duly commissioned and sworn, personally appeared EUGENE DONZE, ARTHUR C. BANTA and C. E. JENNEY, known to me to be the persons described in, whose names are subscribed to, and who executed the within instrument, and acknowledged to me that they executed the same.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and affixed my official seal the day and year in this certificate first above written.

[SEAL] G. C. GRIMES,
Notary Public in and for the County of Fresno,
State of California.

FRESNO, CAL., August 23d, 1894.

I, EUGENE DONZE, hereby certify that the original Die or Plate, from which the Fresno and San Francisco Bicycle Mail Route Stamps and Franks were printed, has been continually in my possession since the said Mail Service was discontinued, and that there has been no stamps or impressions made from said Die or Plate since the said Mail Service was discontinued.

Subscribed and sworn to before me, G. C. GRIMES, a Notary Public in and for the County of Fresno, State of California.

EUGENE DONZE, Engraver.

STATE OF CALIFORNIA, }
COUNTY OF FRESNO. } SS.

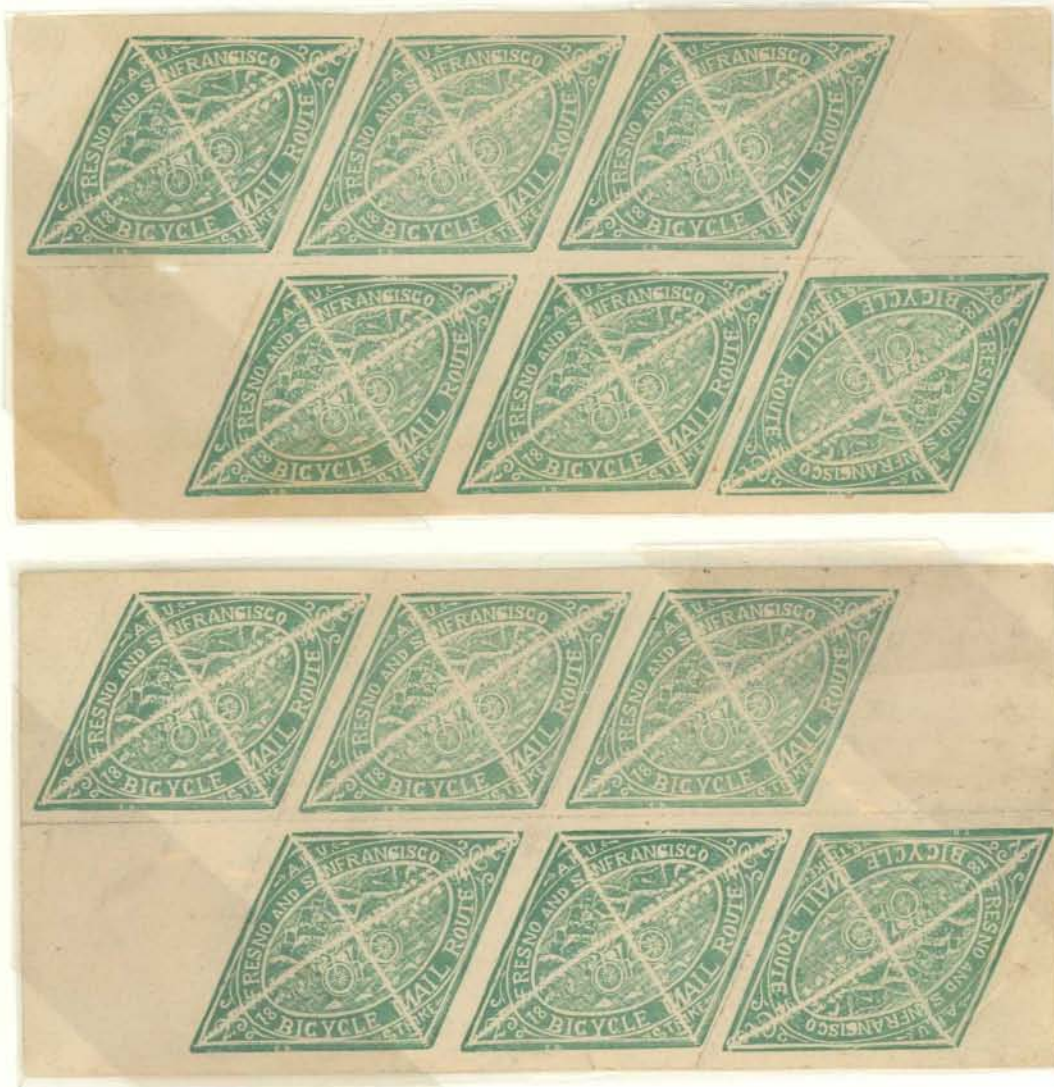
On this 23d day of August, in the year of our Lord, one thousand eight hundred and ninety-four, before me, G. C. GRIMES, a Notary Public in and for said County and State, residing therein duly commissioned and sworn, personally appeared EUGENE DONZE, known to me to be the person described in, whose name is subscribed to, and who executed the within instrument, and acknowledged to me that he executed the same.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and affixed my official seal the day and year in this certificate first above written.

[SEAL] G. C. GRIMES,
Notary Public in and for the County of Fresno,
State of California.

Declaration of Die 1-R being defaced, August 23, 1894
Reverse has Banta's handstamps and a manuscript notation Sep./12/94 Cost 75¢

Donze's advertisement in the November, 1894 issue of *Filatellic Facts and Fallacies* offered a copy of this declaration and a copy of the defaced stamp for 7¢.



All sheets from the defaced die, Die 1-R-D,
were printed in a staggered 3 x 2 block.

The lower right stamp in each block is tete-beche,
positions 5 - 6.

Essays from the 1935 Copy of Die 1-R-D

The word MAIL is not blocked out as with the stamp used for the Re-Enactment



White spot under MAIL is a constant variety



White spot is fixed before stamps are printed

Die 3

Destruction of the Fake Die



Die 3, Trial Color Die Proof, in Black on Thin Light Buff Paper



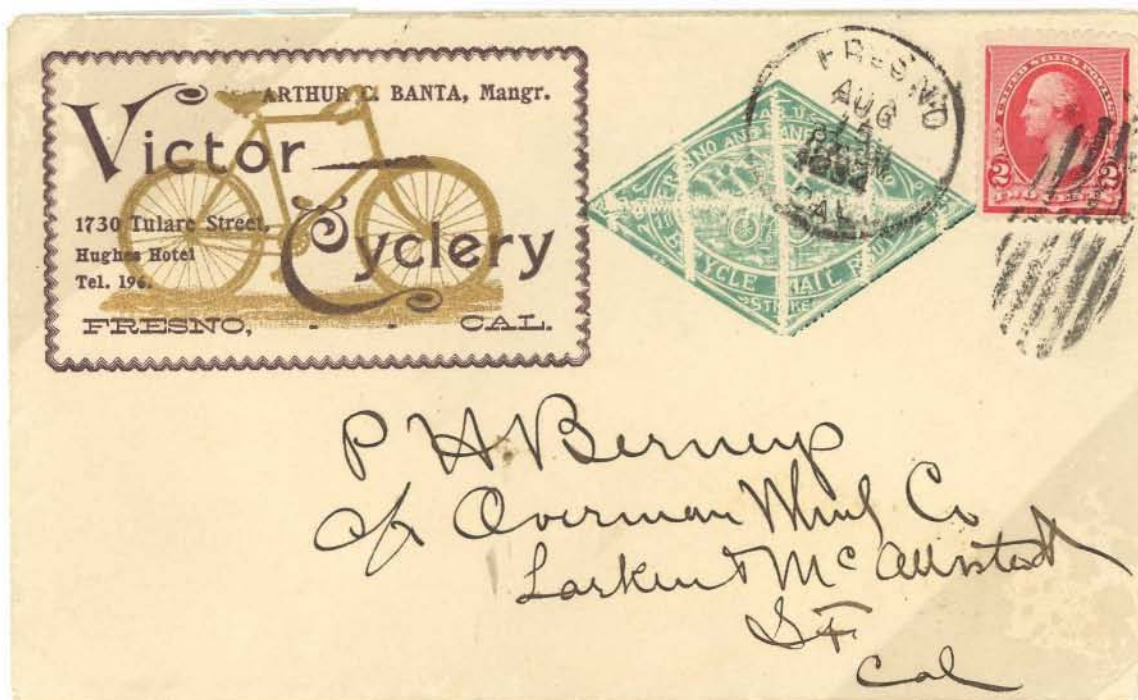
Die 3, Card impression in Green intended to prove that the Die was Defaced

This fake die resembles Die 1-R, but in detail there are many differences.
It is only known as this Trial Proof, the Destruction Card and as corner cards.

In early August, 1894 while the Bicycle Mail Route was in operation Eugene Donze, the engraver, prepared a new die resembling the original re-cut one, Die 1-R. He then defaced it as proof of destruction of the original to increase the collector value for the stamps and envelopes. Much philatelic interest immediately evolved and Donze foresaw a good philatelic market would evolve.



Die 3, Eugene Donze, used August 13, 1894
Unsealed envelope mailed at the 1¢ printed matter rate.

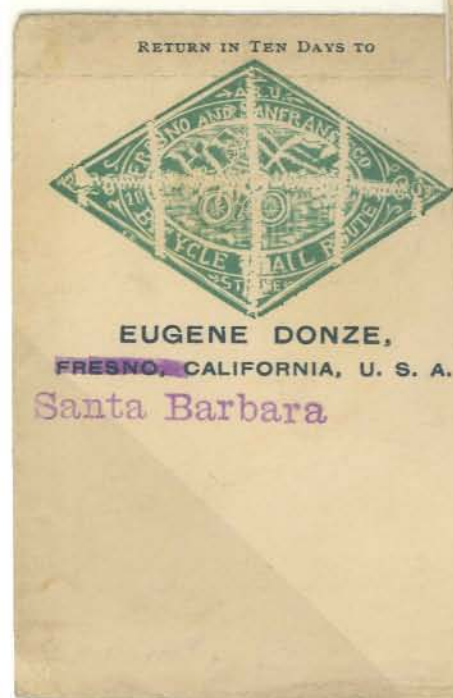


Die 3, Arthur C. Banta used August 15, 1894

The affidavit on the destruction of the authentic die is dated August 23, 1894

Donze prepared Corners cards with his Fake Defaced Die, Die 3. Believing they were proper, Banta started to use them and sent a print to Mr. H.B. Phillips and W. Sellschopp who immediately declared that it was a fake. Banta proceeded to make sure the authentic die, Die 1-R, was defaced.

It appears that Banta immediately stopped using these envelopes but Donze continued to use them.



Fresno Sept 8th, Oct 1st, 1894, and an unused example

Donze continued to use Die 3 as corner cards even after he moved from Fresno to Santa Barbara.



Fresno, October 19, 1894

Fresno Bicycle Mail Backstamp used as a corner card.
The Overman Wheel Co. handstamp used on the back.



Unused remainder, D 1-R on a 2¢ Plimpton with Overman Wheel Co. handstamp on front side.

VICTOR PNEUMATIC
WHEELS TO RENT.
NEW AND SECOND-
HAND WHEELS SOLD
ON INSTALLMENT PLAN.
RIDING TAUGHT.
DIFFICULT REPAIRING
SOLICITED



SPORTING GOODS
BICYCLE SUITS AND
CYCLING SUNDRIES
ALWAYS IN STOCK.
HEADQUARTERS FOR
ALL THE LATEST
CYCLING NOVELTIES.
ETC., ETC., ETC.

ARTHUR C. BANTA, MANGR.

FRESNO, CAL.,

JUL 28 1894

DEAR SIR:

Enclosed please find one of the original Stamps issued for use on the Fresno and San Francisco Bicycle Mail Route during the A. R. U. Strike. Kindly accept same with compliments.

Very respectfully yours,

Arthur C. Banta



A Unique Stamp.

Collectors of stamps have now an opportunity to add a valuable specimen to their collection. The stamp, which will be a memento of the present railroad difficulties, is one issued by Arthur Banta, and used on his mail route to San Francisco. The stamps are green and diamond-shaped. On them are the words "Fresno and San Francisco Bicycle Mail Route. 25 cts. A. R. U. Strike, 1894." In appearance, except as to shape, they resemble a government stamp. The engraving, which is excellent, was done by E. Donze of this city.—*Expositor*, July 12.

A New Stamp.

The bicycle messenger route established between Fresno and San Francisco has brought into existence a new postage stamp, which in time will be looked upon as a curiosity and also a souvenir of the present railway troubles. The stamps were issued by A. C. Banta,

and every letter going over the route bears one of them. Two styles of stamps were issued. The adhesive is green in color, while the envelope stamp is a red brown. In an inner oval are the words "Fresno and San Francisco Bicycle Mail Route, 1894, A. R. U. Strike, 25 cts." In the center of the oval is a messenger mounted on a bicycle with the foothills looming up in the background and sagebrush in the foreground.—*Republican*, July 13.

MAIL BY BICYCLE.

A Messenger Service Between Fresno and San Francisco.

A feature of the interruption of railroad operations was the utilization of the bicycle for business purposes.

Every one knows how it carried copies of the EXAMINER to neighboring towns with greater speed than the best teams, but all do not know that a bicycle message route was established from Fresno to San

Francisco. The service was daily for mail matter, and the intermediate points covered were White's Bridge, Pacheco Pass, Gilroy and San Jose. Envelopes were sold for 25 cents, reading: "Fresno and San Francisco Bicycle Mail Route." Above the legend were the letters "A. R. U.," and below the word "Strike," while in the center was a representation of a speedy bicyclist on his wheel, and on the two sides, "25 cents." Mail matter was deposited at the Victor Cyclery in Fresno and at the Overman Wheel Company's office in this city, and when the town to which it was addressed was reached it was deposited in the local postoffice and at once delivered. There were letters carried between these two points on bicycles, with no Pullman car attached.—*S. F. Examiner*.

This was the only regular service for mail between Fresno and San Francisco from July 6 to July 14. The distance, 210 miles, was divided into 6 relays, and the schedule time was 18 hours.

VICTOR PNEUMATIC
WHEELS TO RENT.
NEW AND SECOND-
HAND WHEELS SOLD
ON INSTALLMENT PLAN.
RIDING TAUGHT.
DIFFICULT REPAIRING
SOLICITED



SPORTING GOODS
BICYCLE SUITS AND
CYCLING SUNDRIES
ALWAYS IN STOCK.
HEADQUARTERS FOR
ALL THE LATEST
CYCLING NOVELTIES.
ETC., ETC., ETC.

ARTHUR C. BANTA, MANGR.

FRESNO, CAL., AUG 8 1894

Price list

Bicycle Mail Route Stamp Adhesives

2 varieties light cream gummed paper 1 for 25¢
5 for 1.25 10 for 1.75 25 for 3.75

Banked Envelopes, either white or buff 1 for 30¢
5 for 1.25 10 for 2.25 25 for 5.00

Send all letters of inquiry to the
undersigned

Arthur C. Banta
1730 Tulare St. Fresno

A Unique Stamp.

Collectors of stamps have now an opportunity to add a valuable specimen to their collection. The stamp, which will be a memento of the present railroad difficulties, is one issued by Arthur Banta, and used on his mail route to San Francisco. The stamps are green and diamond-shaped. On them are the words "Fresno and San Francisco Bicycle Mail Route. 25 cts. A. R. U. Strike, 1894." In appearance, except as to shape, they resemble a government stamp. The engraving, which is excellent, was done by E. Donze of this city.—*Expositor*, July 12.

A New Stamp.

The bicycle messenger route established between Fresno and San Francisco has brought into existence a new postage stamp, which in time will be looked upon as a curiosity and also a souvenir of the present railway troubles. The stamps were issued by A. C. Banta,

and every letter going over the route bears one of them. Two styles of stamps were issued. The adhesive is green in color, while the envelope stamp is a red brown. In an inner oval are the words "Fresno and San Francisco Bicycle Mail Route, 1894, A. R. U. Strike, 25 cts." In the center of the oval is a messenger mounted on a bicycle with the foothills looming up in the background and sagebrush in the foreground.—*Republican*, July 13.

MAIL BY BICYCLE.

A Messenger Service Between Fresno and San Francisco.

A feature of the interruption of railroad operations was the utilization of the bicycle for business purposes.

Every one knows how it carried copies of the EXAMINER to neighboring towns with greater speed than the best teams, but all do not know that a bicycle message route was established from Fresno to San

Francisco. The service was daily for mail matter, and the intermediate points covered were White's Bridge, Pacheco Pass, Gilroy and San Jose. Envelopes were sold for 25 cents, reading: "Fresno and San Francisco Bicycle Mail Route." Above the legend were the letters "A. R. U.," and below the word "Strike," while in the center was a representation of a speedy bicyclist on his wheel, and on the two sides, "25 cents." Mail matter was deposited at the Victor Cyclery in Fresno and at the Overman Wheel Company's office in this city, and when the town to which it was addressed was reached it was deposited in the local postoffice and at once delivered. There were letters carried between these two points on bicycles, with no Pullman car attached.—*S. F. Examiner*.

This was the only regular service for mail between Fresno and San Francisco from July 6 to July 14. The distance, 210 miles, was divided into 6 relays, and the schedule time was 18 hours.

Remainders

Unused
Envelopes
D 1



Answer may be left with
OVERMAN WHEEL CO.
LARKIN & McALLISTER ST., S.F.
THROUGH SERVICE DAILY.



Answer may be left with
OVERMAN WHEEL CO.
LARKIN & McALLISTER ST., S.F.
THROUGH SERVICE DAILY.



Answer may be left with
OVERMAN WHEEL CO.
LARKIN & McALLISTER ST., S.F.
THROUGH SERVICE DAILY.



All have the Bicycle Mail backstamp, not dated, and the Overman Wheel Co. return handstamp.



Plimpton 2¢, 1890 series

Size 5, 89 x 160 mm, amber, unused, not known used

Size 5, 89 x 160 mm, white, known used and unused

Size 4½, 85 x 149 mm, white, unused, not known used

Size 4½, 85 x 149 mm, amber, known used and unused

With ageing amber and white can be difficult to distinguish.

Unused Postal Stationery envelopes may have the Bicycle & Overland Wheeler handstamp, most do not.

Pictures of the Time
Circa 1909



San Jose, Cal. November 20, 1909

The first Indian Motorcycle was sold to the public in 1902

The V Twin motor shown on this cover and photograph was first sold in 1906



© San Jose Historical Museum

After his philatelic adventure in 1894 Arthur C. Banta continued his Bicycle and Motorcycle business and ultimately moved to San Jose, California

Bicycle Nostalgia

Four Wheel Velocipede

The Safe Device

New York, March 6, 1868

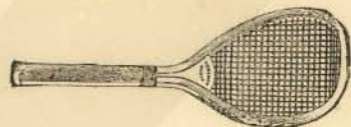


Clipping from an American Newspaper, 1874

The "Bone Crusher", High Front Wheel and Small Rear Wheel

Bicycle Nostalgia

All Claims for Damages and Deficiencies must be made within Five days after receipt of Goods.



Terms,
Payable in

New York, Jan. 3^d 1882

J. F. Seal,
Orrville, Ohio.

E. I. HORSMAN,
Importer of
TOYS & FANCY GOODS,
MANUFACTURER OF
Lawn Tennis, Archery, Croquet, &c.
Publisher of
PHOTOGRAPHS & STEREOSCOPIC VIEWS,
80 & 82 William Street,
NEW YORK.



The Horsman
Rubber Tire Bicycle.
32, 36 & 42 inch.



AN,
DS,
net, &c.
St., N. Y.
ls, R. I.

Mr. J. F. Seal
Orrville
Ohio

The "Bone Crusher", New York January 3, 1882

After 10 days, return to
THE POPE MFG. CO.,
87 Summer St., Boston, Mass.

597 Washington Street.



H. A. Keller Esq.
S. May

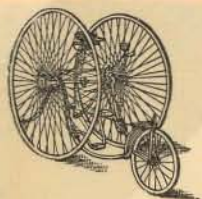
The "Bone Crusher" Boston, Mas., September 11, 1881

The Pope Manufacturing Co. was founded in 1878 at 87 Summer St, Boston
and in 1881 moved to 597 Washington Street

Bicycle Nostalgia

Three Wheel Tricycle Large Side Wheels

Cleveland, Ohio
April 23, 1887



DAVIS, HUNT & CO.,
HARDWARE,
AGRICULTURAL IMPLEMENTS,
House Furnishing Goods & Children's Carriages,
147 ONTARIO STREET,
CLEVELAND, OHIO.



*Mr. J. F. Leas
Cleveland*



Cleveland Oct 13 1887
Mr. J. F. Leas
Orville

Bought of **DAVIS, HUNT & CO.**

—DEALERS IN—

Hardware, Agricultural Implements, House Furnishing Goods,
CHILDREN'S CARRIAGES, BICYCLES AND TRICYCLES.

No. 147 ONTARIO STREET.

Cleveland, Ohio, Oct 13, 1887

1886 Coventry Rotary Quadracycle for two

Two large side wheels, smaller front and back wheels and a Rudgs Humber Tandem.

GEO. S. ATWATER & CO.,
BICYCLES AND TRICYCLES,
1230 PENNA. AVENUE,
WASHINGTON, D. C.



*Starley Co.
Massillon
Ohio*

Washington, D.C., Sept 12, 1889

A steerable front wheel that had significant caster, equally sized wheels,
and a rear wheel chain drive. Invented in 1885 by John Kermp Starley.

Perhaps as early as 1930, based on a letter from the Donze family, but definitely in 1934 Arthur C. Banta started to visualize and plan a re-run of his 1894 mail service

January 11, 1935 Banta was given a complimentary certificate authorizing the amateur relays by the California Bicycle Promotion Associate.

February 1st, 1935 the Second Assistant Postmaster General sent Banta a letter authorizing him to use his own design but providing the full postage was paid and his design did not indicate the U.S. Mail. On arrival at the termination of each route the letters were to be deposited in the post office for cancellation of the postage stamps and entering the US Mail.

Banta had evidently already printed his stamps from the original die thus another operation was required to obliterate the word MAIL, this was done by overprinting, a second press printing.

Riders were recruited for the race

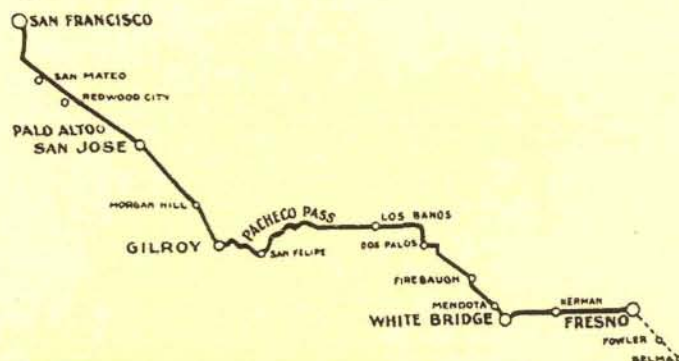
Covers were advertised and sold at 30¢ each, 60¢ for both directions

May 1st, 1935 the run was on; covers were cancelled at the Post Offices at each end; Fresno at 6pm and San Francisco at 9 pm on that day.

1894 - 1935 CALIFORNIA BICYCLE PROMOTION ASSOCIATION Entry Blank FRESNO - SAN FRANCISCO BICYCLE RELAY RACE

Promoted by
Arthur C. Banta, 1735 Kirkham Street, San Francisco

To be held Wednesday, May 1, 1935, over the course of the original Fresno-San Francisco Bicycle Mail Route during the strike of the American Railway Union against the Pullman Car Company, July, 1894. The race to start from San Francisco and Fresno simultaneously at 8 a. m. The route will be via San Jose, Gilroy, Pacheco Pass, Firebaugh and Whites Bridge; eight relays.



- FIRST RELAY**
FRESNO COURT HOUSE—To 2 miles west of Jamez (25 miles).
- SECOND RELAY**
To 8 miles northwest of Firebaugh (25 miles).
- THIRD RELAY**
To Los Banos (24 miles).
- FOURTH RELAY**
To 22½ miles west of Los Banos (22½ miles).
- FIFTH RELAY**
To Gilroy (22½ miles).
- SIXTH RELAY**
To San Jose (29 miles).
- SEVENTH RELAY**
To Redwood City (23 miles).
- EIGHTH RELAY**
To SAN FRANCISCO CITY HALL (29 miles).
(From San Francisco, read up.)

The competition open to riders who are registered with the California Bicycle Promotion Association, and unattached.

**ENTRIES CLOSE APRIL 15, 1935
WITH HARRY SPENCE, SECRETARY C. B. P. A.
2027 LINCOLN WAY, SAN FRANCISCO, CALIF.**

Please enter me in the Fresno-San Francisco Bicycle Relay Race.

I will ride in the team from _____ Club

I prefer to ride in relay No. _____ From _____

In consideration of your accepting this entry, I hereby, for myself, my heirs, executors, administrators and assigns, waive and release all rights and claims for damages that I may have against Arthur C. Banta and the California Bicycle Promotion Association for any and all injuries suffered by me in the above mentioned Fresno-San Francisco Bicycle Relay Race, or that may arise from my entry in any relay thereof.

Signature _____

Address _____
Street and number _____ City _____

Club _____ Registration No. _____ Unattached _____

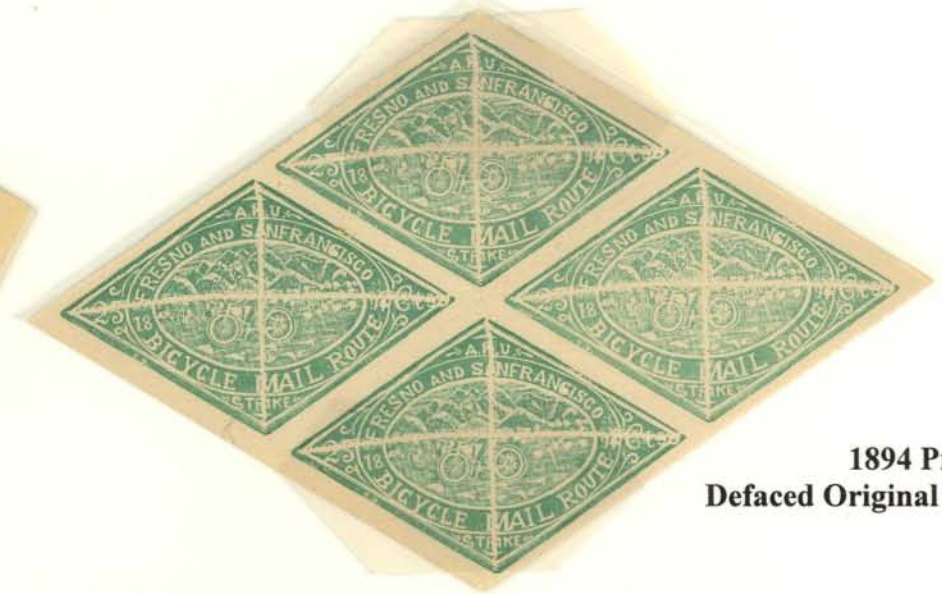
The 1935 Re-Run

Background

In 1934 Arthur C. Banta arranged a re-run of the 1894 Bicycle Mail for May 1st, 1935, in the manner of the original and offered covers in both directions at 30¢ each, 60¢ for a pair. The Post Office Department required the work MAIL to be deleted from the stamp and the word was blanked out before the run but after the stamps were printed. Banta may not have offered the unused 1934 stamps as today they are not common. Banta borrowed the original defaced die from the Helen G. Bowyer daughter of Eugene Donze to make reprints for the race and subsequently returned a die, it may or may not have been a reproduction die !



1935 Re-Print



1894 Print
Defaced Original Die

The 1934 reprints are not as clear as the 1894 printing, it has been thought that Banta reproduced the original die and the poor printing is attributed, it now appears this may not be the case.

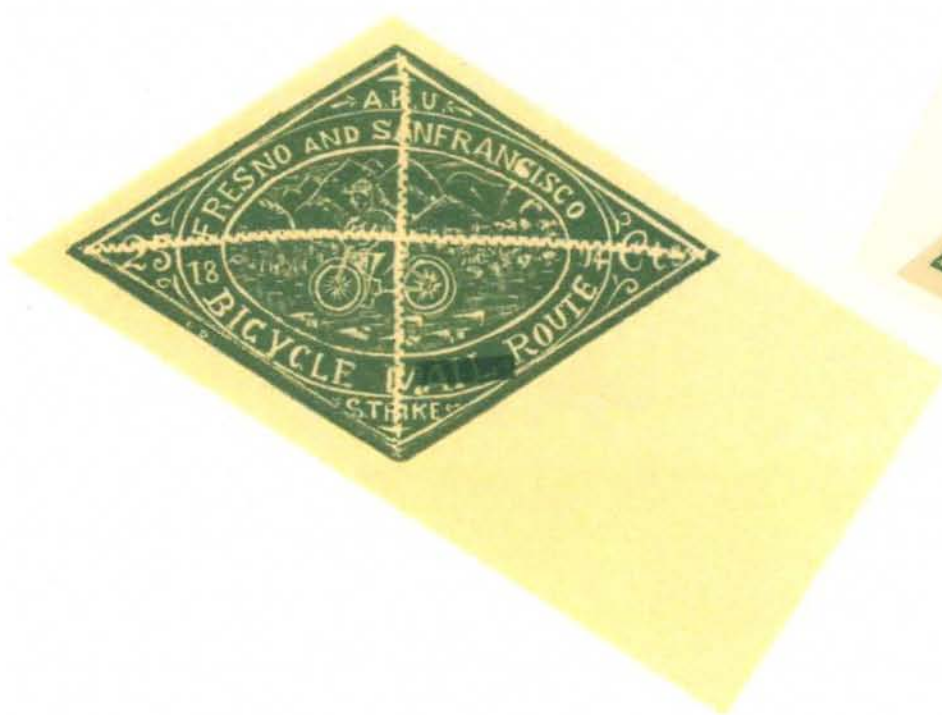


For July 13th, 1944 Banta prepared a Golden Jubilee (1894 – 1944) cachet for his 1894 Bicycle Run but also as his Diamond Jubilee (1869 – 1944), using an image of the Authentic Defaced Bicycle Stamp. This image is as sharp as the 1894 prints thus the poor image on the 1934 re-run stamps is possibly from the quality of the printing and not necessarily because of a reproduced die !



Image Enlarged

From the Original Defaced Die but without the word Mail obscured



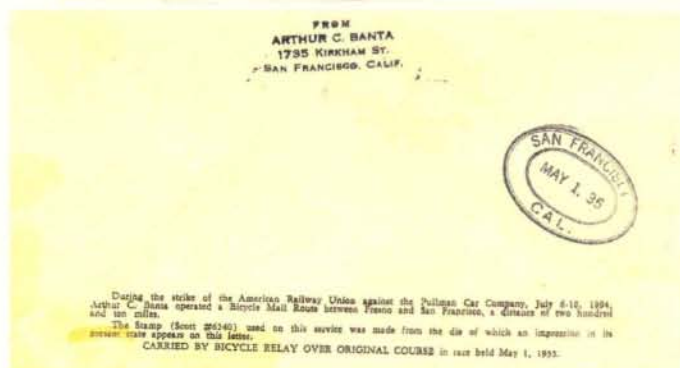
Enlarged Image

The word MAIL is obscured by postal requirements.

Printed from the Original 1894 Die but with the word Mail obscured.

The diagonal orientations suggests that it was printed in sheets of 6 per the original 1894 die, but on the 1934 printing no multiples are known to the author.

The marking obscuring the word MAIL is evidently press printed, on all examples known to the author the position is similar but not exactly the same.



Images of cover Backs

Fresno to San Francisco Run

Covers: Fresno May 1st Bicycle cancel on Bicycle stamp in red, mailed on arrival in San Francisco 9 pm, back handstamp May 1st Bicycle is in black

San Francisco to Fresno Run

Covers: San Francisco May 1st Bicycle cancel on Bicycle stamp in black, mailed on arrival in Fresno 6 pm, back handstamp May 1st Bicycle is in red

The Arthur C. Banta signature on all covers are individual signed and not printed.



Addressed to Arthur C. Banta,
1735 Kirkham St, San Francisco, California

The front markings and others in all respects are normal except,
the back receiving mark, May 1, 35 as to Fresno or San Francisco are not present.

The Arthur C. Banta signature on all covers are individual signed and not printed.

The End

For Now !

Arthur C. Banta's Bicycle Mail service was not unique to the American Railroad Union, ie. the Pullman, strike. Wells, Fargo & Co. operated the steamers between San Diego and San Francisco during the strike period, when mail service was suspended their express became a popular alternative.



A Provisional Wells, Fargo Frank used during the ARU strike

Los Angeles, Cal., Wells, Fargo & Co's Ex. S.A. Butler, agent, Octagon in Purple
Date blanked out.

"FRANK" handstamp in place of normal W.F. printed one, in Purple

Los Angeles, Cal. Wells Fargo and Co's Ex., July 7, 1894, CDS in Purple

San Francisco, Wells Fargo and Co's, July 11 9 am, Oval in Red

A Cover Attached to a Package thus no address.

July 3rd Mark Thompson, Acting Agent, Santa Barbara informed W.F. of purchasing
U.S. stamped envelopes, hand stamping and selling them at the regular W.F. price.

**Much is still to be learned on the Bicycle Post and Wells Fargo mail
service during the mail suspension.**