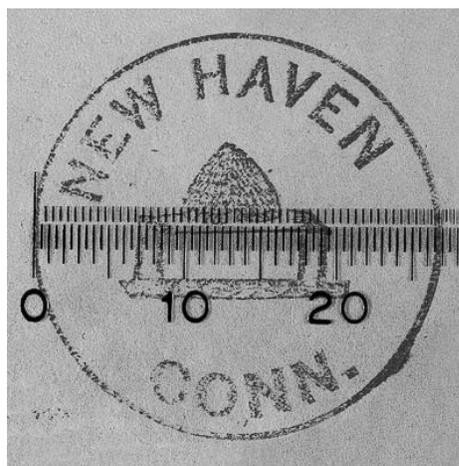


# *The New Haven Beehive and the Passion of Arthur Warmlesley*

Bernard Biales

In his column for July 11, 1936, Harry Konwiser presented information about covers with Beehive markings of New Haven. A later column dated two of these to 1838 and 1839. This marking became the subject of extended speculation and controversy. It sometimes sold, or almost sold, for fabulous prices. Its status has been resolved only in recent years and has led to a deeper understanding of early charity covers and their use, in some cases, of post office markings.

The initial find consisted of three or possibly four covers found in a correspondence purchased from Chester E.H. Whitlock, who kept a bookstore, by the Collector's Shop in New Haven about 1934. These covers were addressed to Mr. Day / New Haven, Conn. or New Haven. Each has a reddish 26mm circle at the upper left with sans serif peripheral NEW HAVEN / CONN. around the image of a beehive on its stand. Each is rated 12½¢. The contents are quite peculiar.



*Detail of the Beehive strike on the 1994 University of North Carolina discovery. (W.J. Duffney Photos)*

The known covers are: (1) the Knapp cover, (2) the Dunsmoor cover (sometimes erroneously attributed to Knapp based on a probable misreading of philatelic docketing now missing), and (3) the Eaton cover with a heavily reinforced marking. Connecticut Judge J. Richard Fay passionately defended the Dunsmoor cover in discussions with his friend and fellow philatelist Arthur Warmlesley, who was a great doubter of the Beehive. After Fay's death, the cover was sold to Henry Houser at \$5,250, but he returned when it received a less than positive Philatelic Foundation certificate. The lawyer for the Fay estate sold it to Warmlesley for a rumored \$100 in spite of Lou Robbins's opinion that it was worth \$3,000.

Mr. Warmlesley remained faithful to the notion that the cover was not good. He wrote a booklet about the time of the Fay sale *The Search For The Truth About The New Haven Beehive* and several later articles, which have been helpful for this study — in which his negative viewpoint was revealed. Physical testing gave a neutral result that Warmlesley interpreted as showing that the cover was faked. Later, when the APS got some fancy equipment, he sent it to them in the



Sir

I am commissioned by Miss F.A.C., of this city to inquire into the reason of your distance to her, after what occurred last fall. Have you forgotten your passionate \_\_\_\_\_? Do you not consider yourself bound both morally and honorably to fulfill your engagement with her?

Are you aware that your course has a direct tendency to break her heart. She loves you dearly? Has she given you any cause to neglect her? I feel it to be my duty, being her relative, to demand your intentions. I am very Respectfully,  
Geo. A. Drake

64 ☒ **New Haven Conn.**, The Famous **Bee Hive** Cancel in Red on 1838 Folded Letter, ms. "12½" rate, VF, The Rarest of All Conn. Stampless Cover Markings. (This Cover along with Four Others were discovered by Harry Keffer & Carol Means, This One Being the Finest Strike), ex-Knapp, Dunsmoor, Mayer .....  
.....(Photo) **E.XVI**

*The Dunsmoor Beehive cover (top; Ex-Mayer/Dunsmoor/Knapp/Judge Fay/Warmsley), text of unusual contents (middle), and description (bottom) from the R.A. Siegel Sale #622, September 14-16, 1983.*

hopes of getting an ink comparison done between the Beehive and a postally used New Haven stampless cover. They came back with 'certs' and a bill, which Warmlesley declined since he actually had not submitted them for certification. The APS cert stated that the Beehive was a 'non-postal marking'.

I have been unable to confirm the existence of a fourth Day correspondence cover, which was purportedly sold to Robert Chambers. Tom Greene tells me Chambers died in 1946 and there is no Beehive in the Rhode Island Historical Society where some Chambers material ended up. There was also no Beehive in the Samuel C. Paige sale of Chamber's material. Around 1945, Harry Keffer obtained a further cover. This one is address to a Mr. Tiffany, dated June 25, 1838, and proposes a duel. It first went to Dr. Glenn Jackson. It is also worth mentioning that there is an aberrant cover, which has been condemned. It is attributed to John Fox.



*The Tiffany Beehive cover discovered in 1945 challenging the recipient to a duel, dramatic text below. (www.philamercury.com)*

New York City June 25.

Dear Sir,

I feel myself greatly insulted in the article written or prompted by you for the last number of the "Herald." What! you say, what article? You know sir, as well as I can inform you — ask your own conscience and if you are indeed as guilty as I think you are I will answer in thunder tones.

Sir, all I have to ask, or rather demand, for I do not beg, all I have to demand is that you will either retract what you said and in that way make the article honorable or that you will meet me as a Gentleman with your second and we will settle the whole affair — place of meeting Hoboken — opposite the ferry — time 7 o'clock P.M. Saturday.

I am your very humble and most obedient  
Equal

John W. Williams

N.B. Bid your friends farewell and take the New Haven steamer on Friday — I am anxious to see — how greatly I can shoot you — as above.

J.W.W.



The University of North Carolina new find Beehive cover discovered in 1994.  
 (R.A. Siegel Sale 764, Lot 1094, realized \$2,100, Dec. 13, 1994; S. Rumsey Sale 39, Lot 14, Dec. 6, 2010, realized \$500)



UNC find strike detail.



The bogus Beehive cover attributed to forger John Fox. (Philatelic Foundation Cert # 198669)

My own totally unwilling involvement came in 1994. I had received the 1983 Fay sale catalog, in which the Beehive cover is prominently featured and had taken only passing notice. In 1994 I was visiting Calvet Hahn shortly after Siegel's had announce the discovery of new Beehive cover. It was suggested that its long residence in a archive (at the University of North Carolina) made it unlikely that it was less than genuine.

Mr. Hahn was very interested and gave me an extensive introduction to the Beehive story. At the time of the 1975 sale of the damaged Beehive he had been involved in a Beehive group with David Jarrett, Lea Leonard and others. (He had also corresponded with Warmlesley at the time.) He indicated a main lead was the New Haven bank, which used a beehive as a symbol. I think he was hoping I would look in to the matter — a hint to which I was completely refractory. He pointed to the nonsensical letters and the inappropriate rates. He thought there was some similarity to some Hudson River manuscript markings.

Overall, I had the impression he was dubious about the authenticity of the markings, but nudged a bit in the positive direction by the new find. In the actual auction description, which soon appeared, David Petrocelli suggested that the Beehive letters might be schoolwork, much in the manner of the well-known business school covers of the late eighteenth century. Calvet and I had a brief conversation in which we agreed that this was a useful notion.

Fate stepped in. Shortly thereafter, I was at a Kukstis sale and noted a cover with the well-known New Haven SHIP pictorial marking of 1816-57, but showing a 12½¢ rate, which wasn't a ship rate. A ship cover going into New Haven would be rated 6¢. On examining the cover I had a rare moment of philatelic epiphany (keep in mind, epiphanies can be wrong). The contents were zany — reminiscent of the Beehives. The docketing included the revelatory phrase *Burying Ground Fair*. Now I had to grapple with the Beehive.



*An example of the New Haven SHIP pictorial handstamp.*

My initial research included reading Warmlesley's little book. Of interest was the addressee Horace Day, presumably the same Mr. Day who received at least three Beehive covers. But now I had a first name. Also, the date of June 1840 lay on a line with the June date of 1838 and, perhaps 1839 of the Beehive covers. My thought, eventually proved wrong, was that in its third year the burying ground fair switched to a borrowed post office marking — or the covers were locally handled by the Post Office but charged a special charity rate premium (also wrong).

Another erroneous theory was based on a brief study of the history of fairs, which go back to Roman times. In medieval times these economically important gatherings were often held at cemeteries as this inhibited outbreaks of violence. (Supposedly fairs became important in America after 1800, but Franklin's almanacs mention many fairs.)

Turning to the New Haven directories, which apparently began in 1840, I found Horace Day, a Reverend at College along with Gad Day, a joiner. At this point I suspected that he was a young man, possibly a teacher. The name Laura Hinds, of the North Carolina correspondence, didn't show up there or in the Census, raising the possibility she was student.

The New Haven newspapers are rare — the ones at the Boston Public Library didn't help much. I turned to the Antiquarian Society in Worcester, started by the revolutionary Postmaster Isaiah Thomas. They have the Herald for June 1839. These very friendly folk presented me with a huge volume of original papers for examination. As I worked my way through June I noted an agricultural society meeting announcement, but this went nowhere. Then there was mention of the upcoming Ladies Fair. The editor was promoting this charitable function with repeated mentions. It was a fund-raiser for the new site for the Orphan's Asylum. Then on June 27, 1839:

We would observe however that the Ladies have accomplished more than all their Lords have done in the mail line. They have got up an effectual opposition to the “old Bolivar” and established an independent post office. Our old Postmaster may say ‘And Othello’s occupation is gone.’ And Amos Kendall is under embargo for three days at least. The liberality of the post-mistresses too is shown in that there is no prying or peeking unlawfully into the written contents — only the regular postage is demanded and good current bond bills are received. No Specie Circular this year — NB

What an exciting discovery. And indeed, the mystery of the Beehive was essentially solved. But to find papers for 1838 and 1840 I was going to have to go to Connecticut. In the mean time I tried to learn about the orphan asylum. But most orphanages have mostly been closed due to the modern trend to foster care. Yale did help with a snippet on Rev. Day. He came from Pittsfield (home of a famous early fair) and received a BA in 1836 and a Doctorate of Divinity in 1840. He died in 1902. This leaves a gap of three decades between his death and the purchase of his correspondence by the Collector’s Shop. One of the many ironies of the search for the secret of the Beehive is that the very suggestive Burying Ground cover was likely with that correspondence in the 1930s. The connection appears not to have been made.

As time passed, I needed to arouse myself from self-satisfied sloth and decided to offer a cryptically titled talk to the Connecticut Postal History Society to unveil the secret of the Beehive. In preparation, I made a trip to New Haven where the historical society provided access to the papers for the missing period for a nominal payment. The 1838 papers confirmed the orphans fair for that year and the public library filled in background on the orphanage. The 1840 papers showed that I had been wrong all along. A Ladies Fair was indeed held in June of 1840, but it was not related to the orphanage or the fact that medieval fair locations were on burying grounds. Rather, it was a fundraiser to fix up the cemetery.

When viewed in the light of new information, we have a good idea of what both groups of fair letters were about. They were made up, probably by students, and sold at the fair. Day’s docketing is later than the date of the letters in two cases, suggesting that they may have been made up in advance. The humorous and fantastic themes were invented for the fun of the fair.

Warmlesley said that Fay was obsessed with the Beehive and admitted he was also — on the opposite of the fence. There are many ironies to his obsession. One was his cryptic comment that the secret of the Beehive was to be found six feet under. It turned out a burying ground cover was the key to the secret. He searched the Herald for explanation of strange content, and missed the answer that was there. He collected Sanitary Fair covers, the offspring of the earlier charity fair covers such as the Beehive covers.

Arthur Warmlesley never tried to cash in on the cover that he was convinced was bad. After his death it sold for nearly ten times his cost. I became the owner but would rather he have lived to hear my talk, which was given shortly after his death. Misdirected as his work was, it helped in being an available source of information.

Of course, I am engaging in a bit of Monday morning quarterbacking, so will add an irony of my own. The ship marking does coexist with the 12½¢ rate on steamboat covers, though from an earlier period.

The understanding of the Beehive leads to a broader understanding of some early charity covers. Among these is the one with the New Haven SHIP and the normal town mark — there is no year and the associated fair is as yet unidentified. Another New Haven fair type cover shows a 25¢ rate. There exists a fair cover from Foxborough, Massachusetts that shows postal markings. Some Civil war sanitary fair covers show borrowed postal or possible postal markings. Other fair covers include the unique Chelsea Fair, Orphan Fair and Presbyterian Fair covers. A recently discovered Massachusetts town oval has an absurd genealogical letter relating two families through a cat entering a door in the 1600s. It may represent a fair or a school type pseudo-postmark — the two categories can overlap.

*This article appeared first as a hand out from a talk given to the New York Chapter of the Classics Society, after its initial presentation at the Connecticut Postal History Society. The author would like to express his gratitude for input from the late Mr. Calvet Hahn, and to Mr. William Duffney for some felicitous edits.*