

The 1912 Roller type Precancels; what's unusual about some of them

by Hans Kremer

The roller type (in the U.S. also called the Life Saver cancel) precancel is the most common type of Dutch precancels. A picture of the canceling device made it to the cover of the Dutch 2002 NVPH stamp catalog.

After a trial with the roller cancel in 1911 in 's Hertogenbosch the Dutch P.T.T. approved the cancel in Circular No. 8, dated March 7, 1912, Section 1. It states:

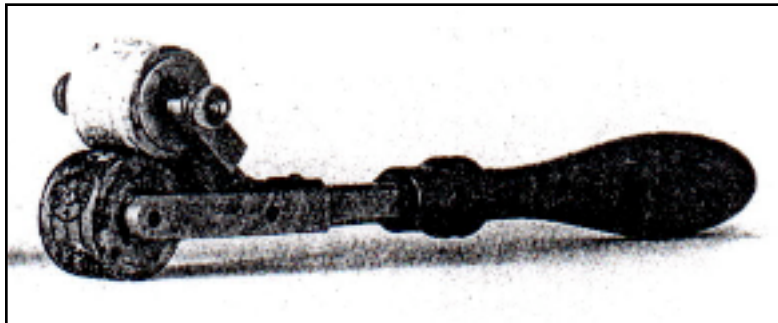
"In canceling postage stamps on wrappers which are already addressed and brought in for canceling, and for newspapers for inland delivery, the post office can, if a written request is made, use the roller cancel. The roller cancel can also be used to cancel savings stamps".

Savings stamps was a way of saving for school children. Every week they bought one postage stamp of 1 or 5 cent each, which they put on a sheet, and after a certain amount of time they would have saved a complete card. When they brought this card to the postoffice their savings account would be credited with one guilder. All the stamps on the sheet would be canceled using the roller cancel. The canceled sheet remained at the postoffice; they were ultimately destroyed. However, a few of these sheets have survived and they are now desirable collector items.

brought to the postoffice for precancelling. Once the stamps were canceled the sheets were returned to the newspapers, where the stamped and canceled address labels were separated and wrapped around the outgoing papers.

The canceler was a cylindrical device, attached to a fork at the end of a long handle. With this device the precancelling could be done quickly, quiet and easily. It has been reported that one day, 28,000 wrappers (560 sheets) were canceled within one hour.

The roller cancel had five copies of the cancel on the roll. On top of the cancel is the ink roll.



The roller type canceling device. Five copies of the cancel are on the lower roll, the inkroll is on top.



Newspaper wrapper with 'Arnhem ('17)' roller cancel

The typical precancelling procedure was as follows: Sheets of pre-stamped, pre-addressed address labels were

The actual setup of the cancellation consists of five sets of two concentric circles with three short lines between each outer circle and another set of continuous parallel lines outside of the three short lines just bypassing the circles. All lines are parallel. Between the two concentric

circles is the name of the town of issuance and a simple (variable) design. It is the variance of the designs that enables us to classify this precancel into different types. In the center is shown the year of use of the cancel (like ‘12’ for 1912). These year characters would every new year be replaced with a new character (‘13 would replace ‘12, etc.). One can see that replacing these characters (it had to be done five times for each cancel) could lead to errors.

Seven types of roller cancels are known:



- Type I a single dot
- Type II three dots
- Type III an absence of design leaving only the town name
- Type IV a curved arc
- Type V a curved arc interrupted by a dot
- Type VI a number (either 1 or 2)
- Type VII a curved arc interrupted by a number (3).

From Top to Bottom the types I through VII.

Cancel errors to look for:

Upside down year characters can be found for Alkmaar, Appingedam, Assen, Culenborg, Goes, Haarlem, Kampen, Utrecht, and Winschoten.

Combined year characters: Almelo (‘12 and ‘15 combined), Assen (‘17 and ‘18), ‘sGravenhage (‘15 and ‘18), Neuzen (‘18 and ‘19), and Wijhe (‘18 and ‘20).

Horizontal (laying down) year characters are known for Almelo, Assen, Breda, Culenborg, Dalfsen, and Kampen.

The ink used in connection with these precancels was a mandatory black, but blue (Apeldoorn, Doetinchem, Druten, Nijmegen, Sneek and Tiel) and violet (Maastricht and Neuzen) cancels can also be found.

The stamp most often used for precancelling purposes was the 1/2 cent value of the 1899-1913 Numeral Issue. Newspapers (weighing less than 55 grams) could be mailed for 1/2 cent.

The 1 cent values are very scarce for some of the towns and are not plentiful in any case. The real scarce varieties are the higher values of this issue and those of the 1899-1923 Wilhelmina Issue.

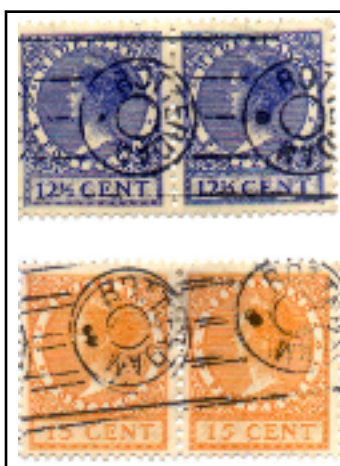
There are many cases when these precancels (used 1912-1923) are found on stamps after the roller precancel usage had expired. These are to be considered as post-canceled items and were mostly used on parcel post receipts.

Unusual cancels

Some of the more unusual cancels are: AMSTERDAM, ROTTERDAM, ARNHEM 3, ‘sGRAVENHAGE WO, ‘sGRAVENHAGE Rps, AMSTERDAM-ZUID, TERNEUZEN., UTRECHT and ZALTBOMMEL

In 1926 the Amsterdam CS (Central Station) postoffice started using the AMSTERDAM roller cancel to cancel parcel post receipts (labels).

The Rotterdam post office followed suit and started using the ROTTERDAM roller cancel for the same purpose. The ROTTERDAM cancel, (issued in 1912) was originally issued by the PTT to be used on spaarbank zegels (savings stamps). It also was in the hands of the Nieuwe Rotterdamse Courant for a long period of time. This explains why you don't see any ROTTERDAM cancellations on the 'printed matter stamps'.



Two sets of 'Veth' stamps, both canceled with the 'Rotterdam' roller cancel

Since the use on the parcelpost receipts occurred from 1926 onwards the stamps these cancels can be found on are not the numeral series of 1899, but most often the Veth type stamps, first issued in 1924. Since packages could be quite heavy these Amsterdam and Rotterdam roller cancels are often found on the higher denomination stamps.

In 1929 there was a bit of an uproar about the ROTTERDAM roller cancel. This cancel was in the hands of a private collector for a while and he produced some stamps with this cancel on it. These must be considered to be 'maakwerk' (canceled to order cancels).

Another story is the “ARNHEM 3” roller cancel. This cancel (which by the way is the only Type VII roller cancel) is known only with '19 in it. Interesting enough, the cancelbook at the Museum for Communication in the Hague shows the cancel as ARNHEM 3 / '17 (not '19, or '15 as is shown on the actual cancel). The cancel was sent to Arnhem on December 10, 1917, and used at the Arnhem (Railway) Station.



Arnhem 3 ('19) cancel on NVPH # 341

Since there is also an “ARNHEM” cancel the obvious question would be: Was there also an “ARNHEM 2” cancel? The cancel books kept by the PTT for the various postoffices do not show an “ARNHEM 2”, but there were two “ARNHEM” roller cancels issued (both on February 27, 1912), and that could explain that the next one would be “ARNHEM 3”, and not “ARNHEM 2”.

Although this sounds reasonable we have to realize that there were also two GRONINGEN cancels (issued September 3, 1912). When two additional roller cancels were sent to Groningen on September 25, 1919 they were labeled as GRONINGEN 1, and GRONINGEN 2, and not GRONINGEN 3, and GRONINGEN 4.

The ARNHEM 3 cancel was kept at the Arnhem railway station's postoffice, where it led a quiet life until somebody found it again, and 'reactivated' it. It should be noted that the ARNHEM 3 roller cancel is listed under “Expeditiebureel Arnhem Station” in the PTT cancelbooks, now kept at the Museum of Communication in The Hague.

Mr. Bonefaas in his collection of ARNHEM 3 on single stamps and covers, comes to the following conclusions:

On Scott# 55/60 very rare
 On Scott# 61/82 rare; mostly on strips and blocks.
 1924-1945: used occasionally.

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1946-1948: used regularly on large envelopes and packages

Not known after 1948.



Arnhem 3 ('15?) detail of cover sent 3-17-1947

‘sGRAVENHAGE WO refers to the post office in the Wouwermanstraat in The Hague, which opened in 1924. On May 15, 1941 the ‘sGRAVENHAGE WO roller cancel was sent to the Wouwermanstraat sub-postoffice. This sub-postoffice facilitated an exhibition taking place from March through September 1941 in a nearby location. Why exactly they were using a roller cancel I have not been able to find out.

‘sGRAVENHAGE Rps, also issued on May 15, 1941 was originally meant to cancel savings stamps, but also used much later to obliterate invalidated ‘Lebeau’ seagull stamps, as well as the higher values of the 1943-1944 naval heroes stamps (mostly leftovers from philatelic windows).

Naval heroes stamps canceled with the ‘sGRAVENHAGE Rps roller cancel.

AMSTERDAM ZUID was issued March 8, 1928 to cancel savings stamps, but by request it was also used to cancel stamped envelopes. These should be considered 'maakwerk' (canceled to order, or CTOs)

The TERNEUZEN roller cancel was issued to the Terneuzen postoffice on July 28, 1942. In 1942 the name of Neuzen was changed to Terneuzen.



Envelope C(anceled) T(o) O(rder) with AMSTERDAM-ZUID roller cancel



TERNEUZEN (to replace NEUZEN) roller cancel on cut-out with 1953 child welfare stamp.

UTRECHT received a second cancel on February 5, 1940, while there is a note, dated March 16, 1936 in the MofC cancel book indicating that ZALTBOMMEL still was using its roller cancel to cancel savings stamps.

List of known roller cancels (ny = no year, i.e. blank) :

| | TYPE | YEAR of CANCEL | | | | | | | | | |
|-----------------|------|----------------|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|-------|
| AALSMEER | I | ny | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | |
| AALTEN | II | ny | | 13 | | 15 | 16 | 17 | | | |
| ALKMAAR | II | ny | | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 |
| ALMELO | II | ny | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | |
| ALPHEN (Z.H.) | I | ny | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | | |
| ALPHEN A/D RIJN | I | ny | | | | | | | 18 | 19 | 20 |
| AMERSFOORT | I | ny | 12 | | 14 | 15 | 16 | | | | |
| AMSTERDAM | I | ny | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | |
| AMSTERDAM-ZUID | I | ny | | | | | | | | | |
| APELDOORN | I | ny | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 |
| APPINGEDAM | I | ny | | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | |
| ARNHEM | I | ny | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | |
| ARNHEM 3 | VII | ny | | | | | | | | 19 | |
| ASSEN | I | ny | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 21 |
| ASSEN | V | ny | | | | | | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 21 |
| BAARN | V | ny | | 13 | | | | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 |
| BERGEN OP ZOOM | I | ny | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 |
| BOXMEER | II | ny | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | |
| BREDA | II | ny | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | |
| BRIELLE | V | | | | | | | | 18 | 19 | |
| CULENBORG | I | ny | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | |
| CUYK | II | | 12 | 13 | 14 | | | | | | |
| DALFSEN | II | ny | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | |

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---------------------|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|-------|
| SITTARD | V | ny | | | | | | | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | |
| SNEEK | II | ny | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | | |
| STEENBERGEN | I | ny | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | | | | |
| TERNEUZEN | I | ny | | | | | | | | | | | |
| TIEL | V | ny | | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | | | |
| TILBURG | I | ny | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | |
| UITHUIZEN | I | ny | | 13 | 14 | | | 18 | | | | | |
| UTRECHT | I | ny | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | | | |
| UTRECHT | V | ny | | | | | | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | | |
| VENLO | II | | 13 | 14 | | 16 | | | | | | | |
| WAALWIJK | I | ny | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | |
| WAGENINGEN | I | ny | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 23 |
| WILDERVANK | I | ny | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | | | |
| WINSCHOTEN | I | ny | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | | | |
| WINTERSWIJK | I | ny | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | | |
| WOERDEN | I | ny | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | | | |
| WOLVEGA | I | ny | | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | | | | | 22 |
| WORKUM | II | ny | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | |
| WIJHE | II | ny | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | | |
| WIJK BIJ DUURSTEDEN | I | ny | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | | | |
| ZALTBOMMEL | I | ny | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | | | 23 |
| ZUNDERT | V | | | | | | | 17 | 18 | 19 | | | |
| ZUTPHEN | I | ny | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | | | |
| ZWOLLE | V | | | | | 16 | | 18 | 19 | | | | |

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