COURTESY VISITS TO THE BRITISH WEST INDIES (BWI) BY US NAVY SHIPS
By Dr David Watson (29 Dec 2017)

Visits by US navy ships to BWI were recorded on covers, together with the ports where the ship berthed. Sometimes these were shakedown voyages, to get the ships & crew in full working order ready for service. But some covers were cancelled when the ship was well past this stage.

The cancels were provided by private contractors as kits with rubber letters to fit in slots in the cancel to indicate ship and place. Eleven different types of cancel have been classified by Locy (1). Cancels for US ships visiting BWI in the 1930's appear to be mainly Locy type 3 with the occasional type 5.

Cancels for BWI port/vessel combinations have been listed, in the Naval Cover Museum (2), by the Universal Ship Cancellation Society (3) & more extensively for Jamaica (4), as follows:

- Basseterre/St. Kitts by USS Florida in 1922 & USS Honolulu in 1939.
- Belize City/British. Honduras: USS Trenton in 1935.
- Bridgetown/Barbados: USS Mahan 1936 & Tuscaloosa 1934.
- Castle Island/Bahamas: USS Texas in 1937.
- Castries/St. Lucia: USS Warrington in 1938.
- Georgetown/British Guiana (Guyana): USS Cuttlefish in 1934.
- Georgetown/Grand Cayman: USS Hannibal in 1914.
- Kingston/Jamaica: USS Arctic, 1927; Camden, 1927; Mercy 1927; Cuttlefish, 1934; Wright, 1935; Shark, 1936; Craven 1937; Decator, 1937; Omaha, 1937; Tucker, 1937; Fanning 1938; Seal, 1938; Philadelphia, 1938,9; Balch, 1939; Medusa, 1939; Chandler, 1939 & St Louis, 1939.
- Port of Spain/Trinidad: USS Hannibal in 1931 & 8).
- St. George's/Grenada: USS Colorado 1924 & USS Trenton 1930.
- St. John's/Antigua: USS Barracuda in 1936.

For Barbados the following can be added from this collection: USS Trenton 1935; USS Claxton 1935;, USS Barracuda 1935; USS Lamson 1937; USS Decatur 1938; & USS Davis 1939. The cancels are of at least three types: HELLO/BARBADOS, BRIDGETOWN/BARBADOS & BARBADOS/[BWI?].

It is likely that there are other ship/cancel combinations for US warships visiting the BWI. Indeed about 80% of such combinations in my collection for US navy mail from the Panama Canal Zone were previously unrecorded.

References

1. www.uscs.org/cover-collecting/what-is-a-postmark/locy-system/

2. www.navalcovermuseum.org.

3.www.uscs.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/04/DS12_Foreign-and-Domestic-Port-Locations.pdf

4. Sutcliffe D. (2003) Encyclopaedia of Jamaican Philately, Military, Censorship & Patriotic Mails. Sutcliffe D. & Jarvis S. [Eds.], volume 9, chapter 8, section XII, publ. BWISC.
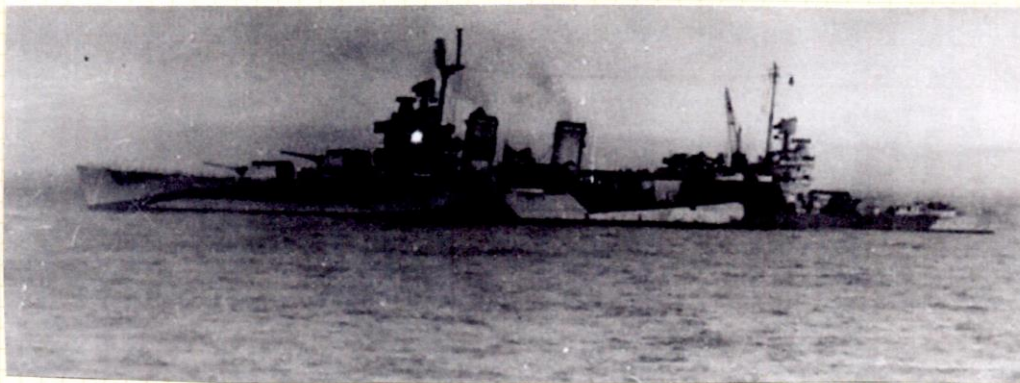
Locy type 3 cancel: 3 bar killer & ship's name at bottom of cds.

Ex collection of Mary Kerr (1936 - 2011) of Barbados.

1934 *'HELLO/BARBADOS'* cancel from USS *Tuscaloosa* (CA-37), a New Orleans class heavy cruiser. Commissioned in 1934, she spent most of her career in the Atlantic and Caribbean.

This *Tuscaloosa* cancel is recorded
by the Universal Ship Cancellation Society (USCS).

It is also recorded in the Naval Cover Museum.

Locy type 5 cancel: 3 bar killer & ship's name at top of cds.

1935 *'BRIDGETOWN/BARBADOS' cancel from USS* Trenton, *an Omaha-class light cruiser, laid down in 1920 and launched in April 1923. In 1934-5 she cruised with the Special Service Squadron, visiting ports in the Caribbean, Central America, and South America as the squadron conducted a good-will cruise to Latin America.*

Ex collection of Mary Kerr (1936 - 2011) of Barbados.

This cancel/ship combination is not recorded by the USCS.
*[@ http://www.uscs.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/04/
DS12_Foreign-and-Domestic-Port-Locations.PDF]*
Nor is it recorded in the Naval Cover Museum.