

CATALOG OF THE  
20<sup>TH</sup> AND 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY  
STAMPED ENVELOPES  
AND WRAPPERS  
OF THE  
UNITED STATES

Fourth Edition  
2016



Dan Undersander, Editor

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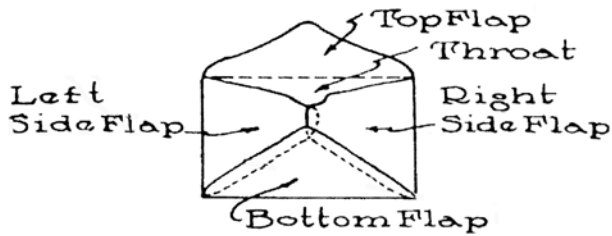
**The United Postal Stationery Society, Inc.**



# Envelope Knife Illustrations

A knife is a sharp-edged, steel form used to cut envelope blanks (like a cookie cutter). In the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century, envelope blanks were made by forcing the knife, using a hydraulic press, through a pile of up to 500 sheets of paper. The knife was then repositioned and another set of blanks cut from the same pile of sheets. This process was repeated until as many blanks as possible were cut from the sheets.

It should be apparent from the previous description that metal knives wore out and needed to be replaced. The replacement may have varied slightly in shape from the original. Therefore it is important to recognize that knives shown on the following pages are actually a family of shapes that varied slightly over time.



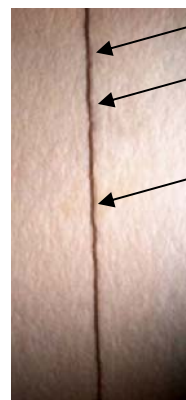
10x magnification



Envelope blanks cut with knife from sheets (above) have straight edges and gradual curves, while rotary cut envelopes have rougher edges with nicks (below).



10x magnification

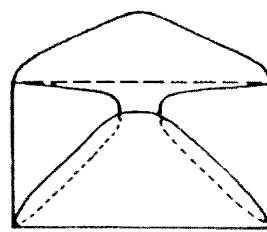


Arrows point to nicks from rotary knife.

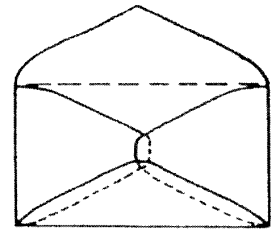
Beginning about 1912 some envelopes were made from a roll of paper fed into the press with envelopes printed and then cut in one process. These early rotary cut envelopes can usually be identified by less sharp edges.

In philately we refer to 'knife' as the shape of envelope cut by a particular metal knife.

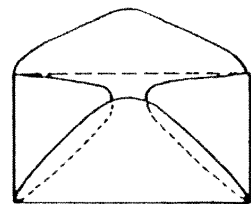
Diagrams below give terms and conventions for portraying envelope characteristics. Sizes and knives not shown on following pages were used only on 19<sup>th</sup> century envelopes.



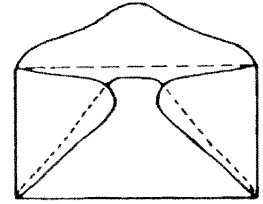
High Back



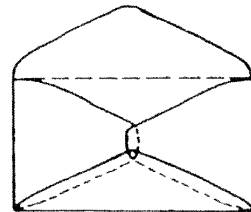
Low Back



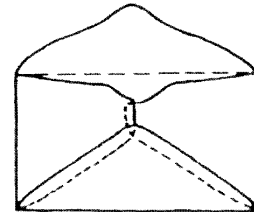
Bottom over Side (B/S)



Side over Bottom (S/B)



Right flap over Left (R/L)



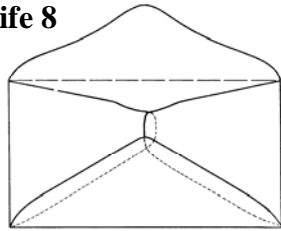
Left flap over Right (L/R)

A knife number may be followed by a letter indicating a subtype. The terms used in this catalog are:

- o - Open ended envelope
- u - Without gum on top flap
- w - Window envelope (with number if more than one type)
- x - Extra quality paper

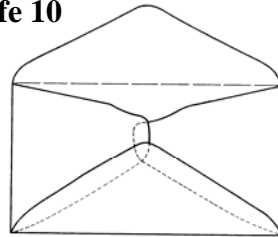
**Size 3 - 73/77 x 134**

**Knife 8**



Plimpton-Morgan Knife, right side flap over left, 73 x 134 mm.

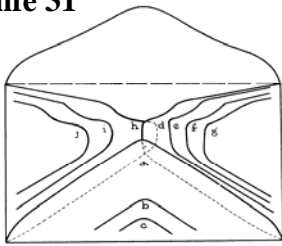
**Knife 10**



Mercantile Knife, left side flap over right, 77 x 134 mm.

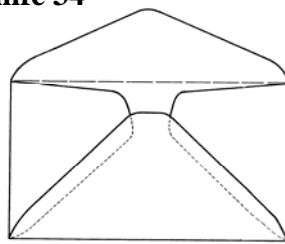
**Size 7 - 82/83 x 139**

**Knife 31**



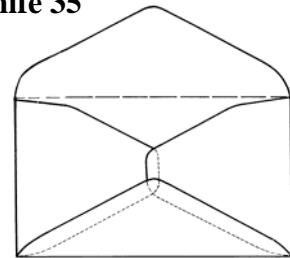
Plimpton-Morgan Knife, tongue-shaped top flap, side shapes vary.

**Knife 34**



Plimpton-Morgan Knife, high back knife, first time sides don't meet.

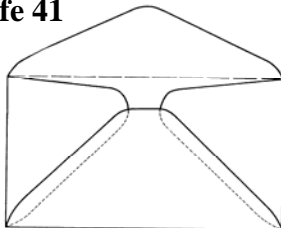
**Knife 35**



Mercantile Knife, side ends nearly straight, made to match the shape used on web printing machines.

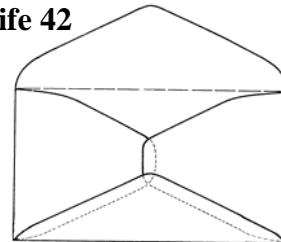
**Size 8 - 85 x 149 mm**

**Knife 41**



Plimpton-Morgan Knife, high back knife.

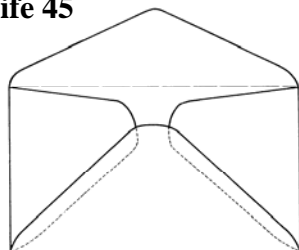
**Knife 42**



Mercantile Knife, made to match the low back shape required for web printing.

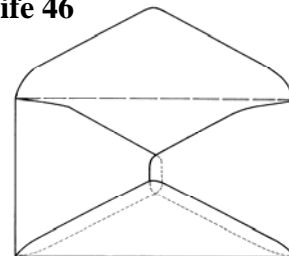
**Size 9 - 92 x 149 mm**

**Knife 45**



Plimpton-Morgan Knife, high back knife.

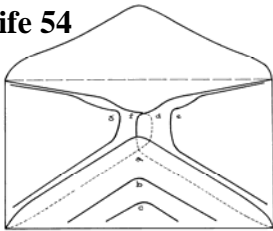
**Knife 46**



Mercantile Knife, made to match the low back shape required for web printing.

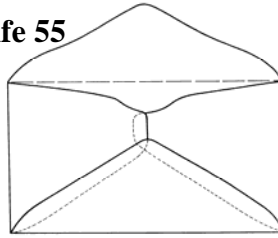
**Size 10 - 89 x 160 mm**

**Knife 54**



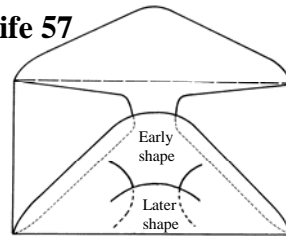
Plimpton-Morgan Knife, moderately deep throat, side flaps with shoulder ¼ distance from end, right side flap over left.

**Knife 55**



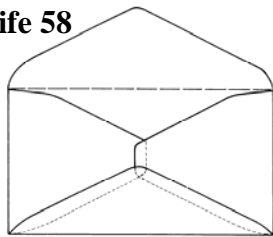
Purcell Knife, similar to knife 54 but left side flap over right.

**Knife 57**



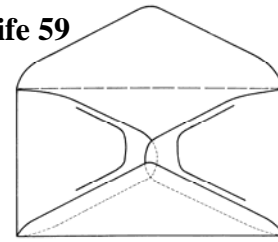
Mercantile Knife, high back knife.

**Knife 58**



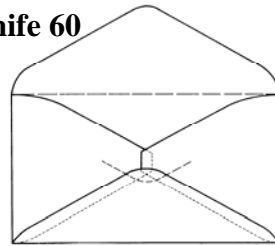
Mercantile Knife, made with Kenny rotary machines, side flaps with square ends (20 mm), rough edges usual.

**Knife 59**



Mercantile Knife, side ends nearly straight, made to match the shape used on web printing machines.

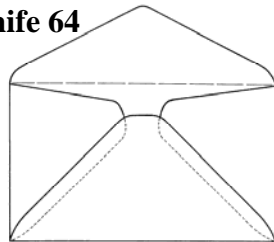
**Knife 60**



Middle West Envelope Co Knife, made with Smithe rotary machine, side flaps with square ends (15 mm), rough edges usual.

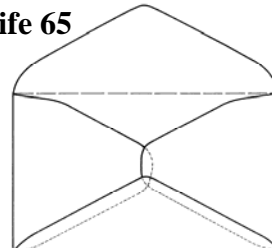
**Size 11 - 95 x 160 mm**

**Knife 64**



Plimpton-Morgan Knife, high back knife.

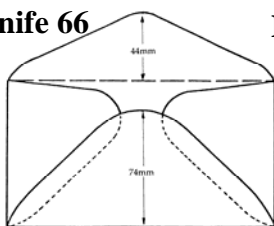
**Knife 65**



Mercantile Knife, made to match the low back shape required for web printing.

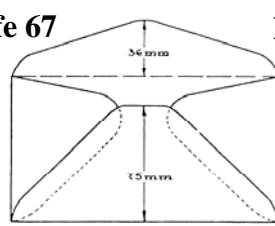
**Size 12 - 92 x 165 mm**

**Knife 66**



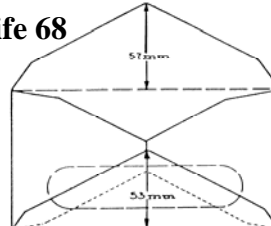
International Env. Co Knife, high back knife, rounded top of bottom flap, top flap 45 mm.

**Knife 67**



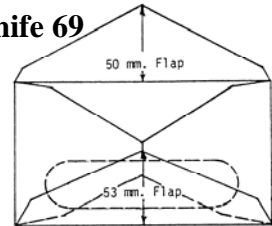
International Env. Co Knife, high back knife, flattened top of bottom flap, top flap 36/37 mm.

**Knife 68**



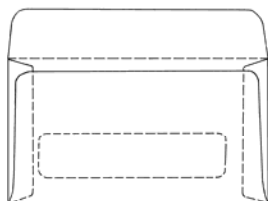
International Env. Co Knife, pointed and angular sides and bottom, top flap 57 mm.

**Knife 69**



International Env. Co Knife, pointed and angular sides and bottom, top flap 50 mm.

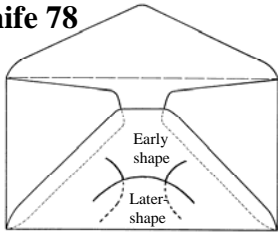
**Knife 70**



National Envelope Company Knife, wide back and narrow side flaps, 93 x 166 mm.

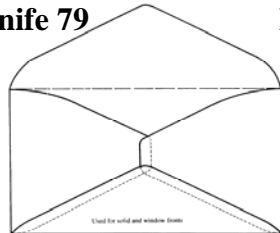
**Size 13 - 95 x 171 mm**

**Knife 78**



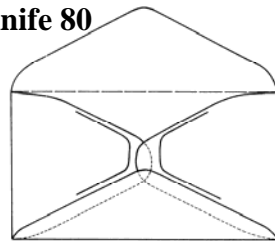
Plimpton-Morgan Knife, also used by International Envelope Co for window fronts from 1949 to 1965.

**Knife 79**



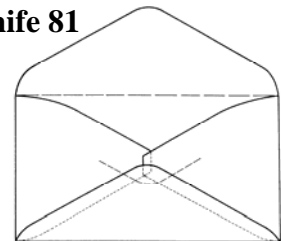
Mercantile Knife, side flaps with square side flap ends (20 mm); rough edges; made with Kenny rotary machine.

**Knife 80**



Mercantile Knife, made to match shape used on the Kenny rotary machines. Used for solid fronts, 1915-29; window fronts 1915-1949.

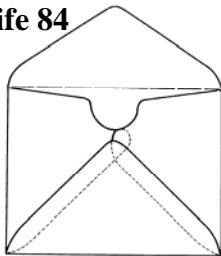
**Knife 81**



Middle West Envelope Co. Knife, side flaps with square side flap ends (15 mm), rough edges; made with Smithe rotary machine.

**Size 14 - 90 x 117 mm**

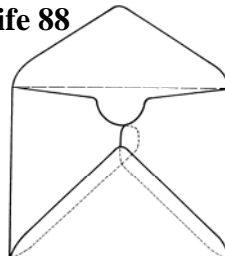
**Knife 84**



Plimpton & Morgan Knife, small baronial size.

**Size 16 - 108 x 132 mm**

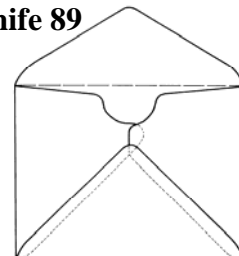
**Knife 88**



Plimpton & Morgan Knife, baronial size.

**Size 17 - 108 x 140 mm**

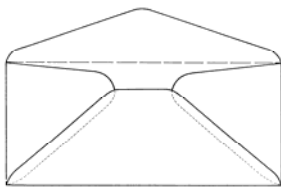
**Knife 89**



Mercantile Knife, baronial size.

**Size 19 - 98 x 190 mm**

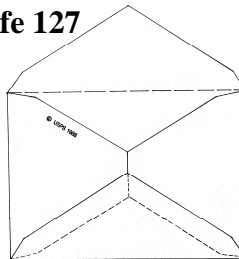
**Knife 91**



International Envelope Co Knife, new size 1931, withdrawn 1936.

**Size 19A - 127 x 190 mm**

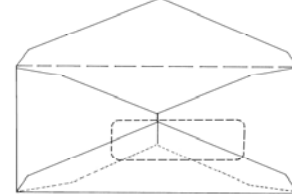
**Knife 127**



1988 Christmas issue only. (UPSS # 3728)

**Size 19B - 91 x 201 mm**

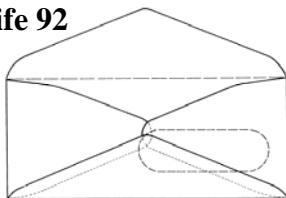
**Knife 126**



Official mail window envelope for Savings Bonds.

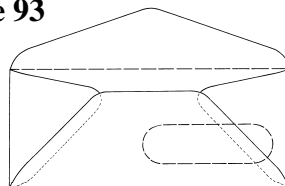
**Size 20 - 92 x 219 mm**

**Knife 92**



Middle West Envelope Co. Knife, very deep throat, low back envelope.

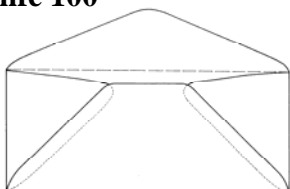
**Knife 93**



International Envelope Co. Knife, high back envelope.

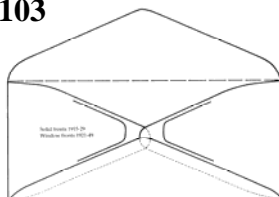
**Size 21 - 98 x 225 mm**

**Knife 100**



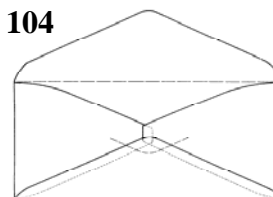
Plimpton Knife & U.S. Envelope Co Knife, used for window fronts after 1949, high back.

**Knife 103**



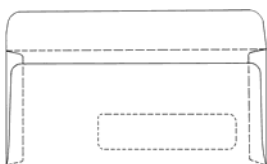
Middle West Envelope Co. Knife, intended to duplicate shape of Smithe rotary machine.

**Knife 104**



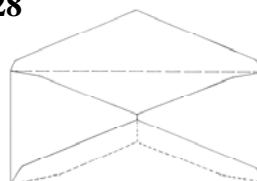
Middle West Envelope Co Knife, rough edges, made with Smithe rotary machine.

**Knife 104A**



National Envelope Company Knife, wide back and narrow side flaps, 98 x 225mm.

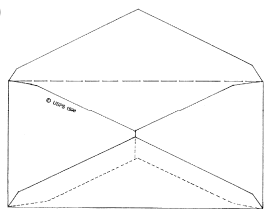
**Knife 128**



U.S. Envelope Company Knife, sharp corners on and bottom top flaps, 98 x 226 mm.

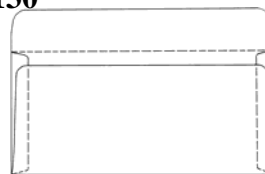
**Size 21A - 112 x 226 mm**

**Knife 129**



Passport envelope for Dept of State; very deep throat, sides angular with square ends that meet, top & bottom pointed.

**Knife 130**

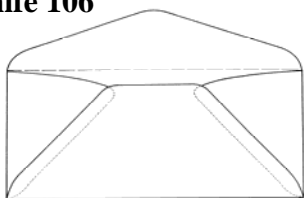


Passport self adhesive envelope for Dept of State; wide back and narrow side flaps.



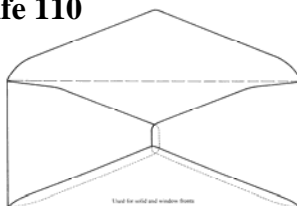
**Size 23 - 105/112 x 241 mm**

**Knife 106**



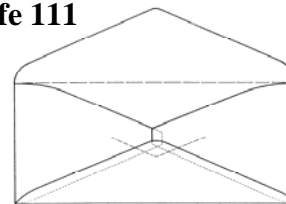
Plimpton & Morgan Knife & International Envelope Company, high back envelope, side flaps top curved with nearly circular tips (12 mm dia.), bottom flap is 95 mm tall. 105 x 241 mm.

**Knife 110**



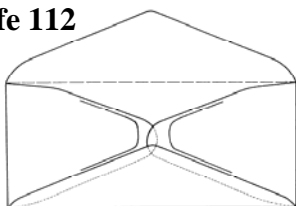
Mercantile Knife, rough edges; with square side flap ends (20 mm); made with the Kenny rotary machine. 105 x 241 mm.

**Knife 111**



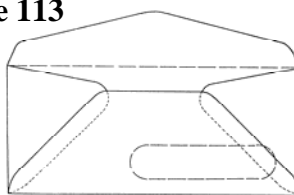
Middle West Knife, rough edges usual; with square side flap ends (15 mm); made with Smithe rotary machine. 105 x 241 mm.

**Knife 112**



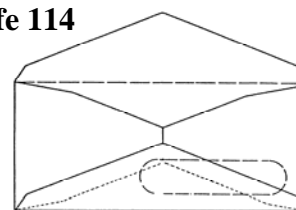
Middle West Envelope Co. Knife, intended to duplicate the shape of the Kenny rotary machine. 105 x 241 mm.

**Knife 113**



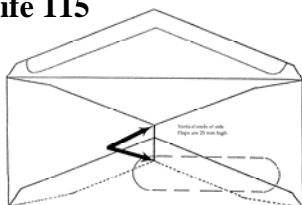
International Envelope Co. Knife, corners on top flap, high back (85 mm), compare to Knives 106 and 116, used for envelopes 3501A and 3501B only. 110 x 241 mm.

**Knife 114**



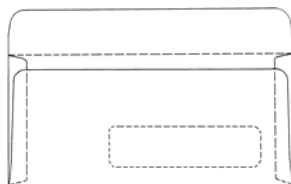
U.S. Envelope Co. Knife, side flaps with straight ends 28 to 30 mm. 110 x 241 mm.

**Knife 115**



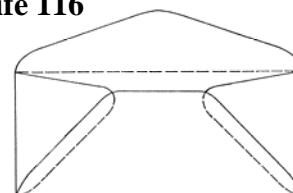
International Envelope Co. Knife, side flaps with straight ends 25 mm long. 110 x 241 mm.

**Knife 115A**



National Envelope Company Knife, wide back and narrow side flaps. 112 x 246 mm.

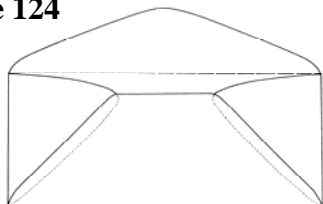
**Knife 116**



International Envelope Co. Knife, used for all size 23 envelopes from 1950 to 1964, except in 1961 when knife 113 used, side flaps slightly concave with large rounded tips (19 mm dia.), bottom flap is 88 mm tall. 105 x 241 mm.

**Size 25 - 111 x 257 mm**

**Knife 124**



Plimpton & Morgan Knife, high back.

Knives are listed by knife number. In addition to size categories, check the listed knife number below to find those knife illustrations.

<u>Knife Number</u>	<u>Knife Size</u>
126	19B
127	19A
128	21
129	21A
130	21A

# Wrapper Sizes

