



# FORENSIC DOCUMENT EXAMINATION CERTIFICATION

AMERICAN BOARD OF FORENSIC DOCUMENT  
EXAMINERS

# ABFDE



Prior to the establishment of the American Board of Forensic Document Examiners Inc. (ABFDE), in 1977, the need to identify qualified forensic scientists capable of providing forensic document examination services, was long recognized.

# ABFDE



**Within its mandate, the Board provides a program of certification in forensic document examination with the dual purpose of serving the public interest and promoting the advancement of forensic science.**

# ABFDE



**In purpose, function, and organization, the ABFDE is analogous to the certifying boards in other scientific fields.**

**The ABFDE is recognized by, and was originally sponsored by the American Academy of Forensic Sciences.**

# ABFDE

ABFDE is a non-profit organization incorporated in the District of Columbia. The Board's sponsors are:

- *The International Association for Identification*
- *The Mid-Atlantic Association of Forensic Science*
- *American Society of Questioned Document Examiners*
- *Canadian Society of Forensic Science*
- *Southeastern Association of Forensic Document Examiners*
- *Southwestern Association of Forensic Document Examiners*



# ABFDE

**The ABFDE is the only certifying body that can claim such sponsorship and, as such, is not to be confused with any other organization having a similar sounding name.**

**The Board is composed of elected officers and directors who serve staggered terms, and a Professional Review Committee which upholds the ethical and professional rules of conduct that are set forth in the Bylaws.**



# What is Forensic Science?

- **The application of science to the law**



# What is a Forensic Document Examiner?

An expert who examines a document to render an opinion about an issue involving the document

The issue can include handwriting, signatures, alterations, obliterations, ink, authenticity, dating or printing processes





# What Lab Equipment does a Forensic Document Examiner Use?

- Various magnification devices
- Various light sources and filters
- Instrument to image impressions
- Cameras, Photoshop, scanners



# HANDWRITING

Writing can be positively identified based upon a pattern of individualized characteristics

MEASURED HEIGHT 5.4 AGE 51 COLOR White  
CASE NO. D-3705 PHOTO NO. 10969 CHARGE Checks NSF  
Bureau of Identifications and Records  
Police Department, San Diego, Calif. F. P. CLASS 9 T 13  
1 R 11

Fill in completely below this line.

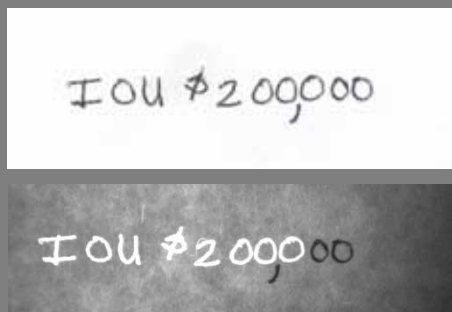
1. NAME John H. Hays  
2. STREET ADDRESS 2818 Copley ave.  
3. CITY San Diego STATE California  
4. OCCUPATION Butcher Date of BIRTH April 25, 1884 AGE 52  
5. WEIGHT 162 HEIGHT 5 Ft. 7 In. Color HAIR: Black Color EYES: Black  
6. NEAREST RELATIVE: Jessie Hays What RELATION? Wife  
7. ADDRESS NEAREST RELATIVE: 2818 Copley ave.  
8. IN CASE OF ILLNESS NOTIFY: Jessie Hays  
9. ADDRESS 2818 Copley ave.

Form 144 1M 4-33 (Over) Printed in San Diego



# DETECTION of ALTERATIONS

Examination of Inks with similar colors - Alternate Light Source Examination



Was the "IOU"  
increased?

Microscopic Ink Examination



How was the  
number altered?  
Note two different  
inks ...

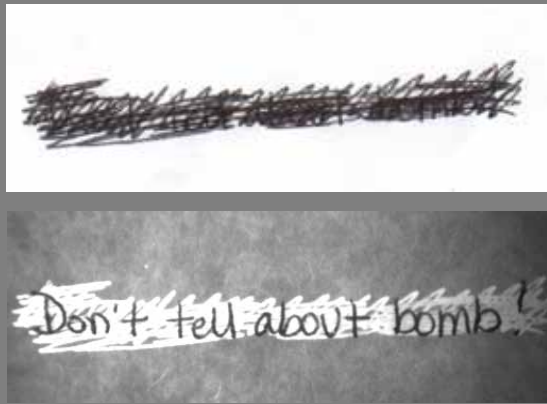
Pencil Guidelines



Was this traced?

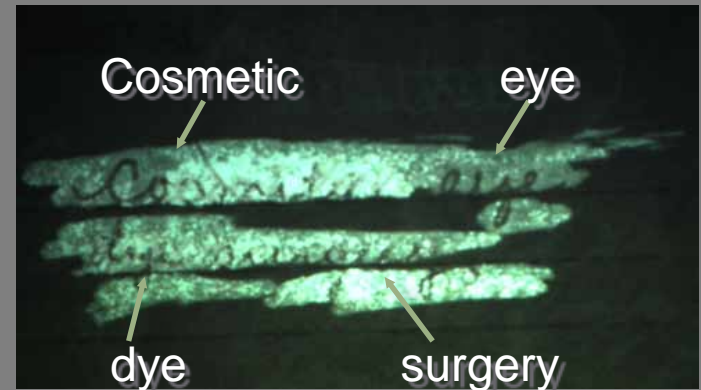


# RECOVERY of OBLITERATED TEXT



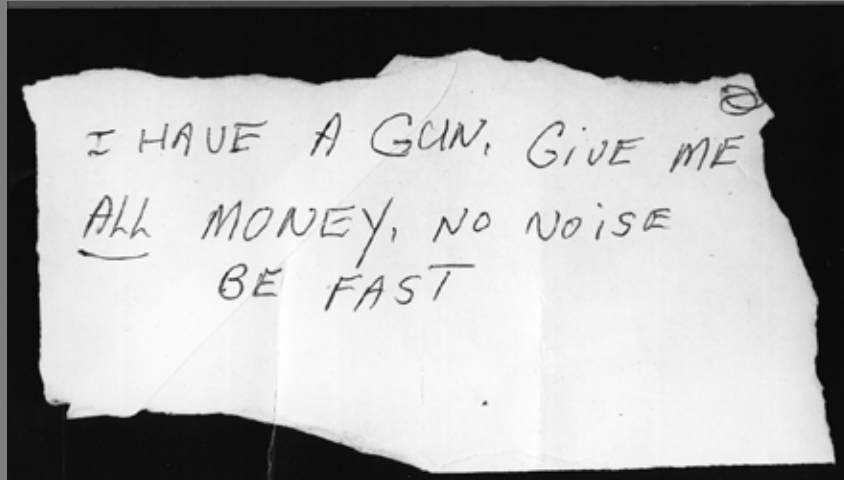
**What is under the obliteration?**

**Recovering Data  
Arabian Horse - Veterinary  
Malpractice**



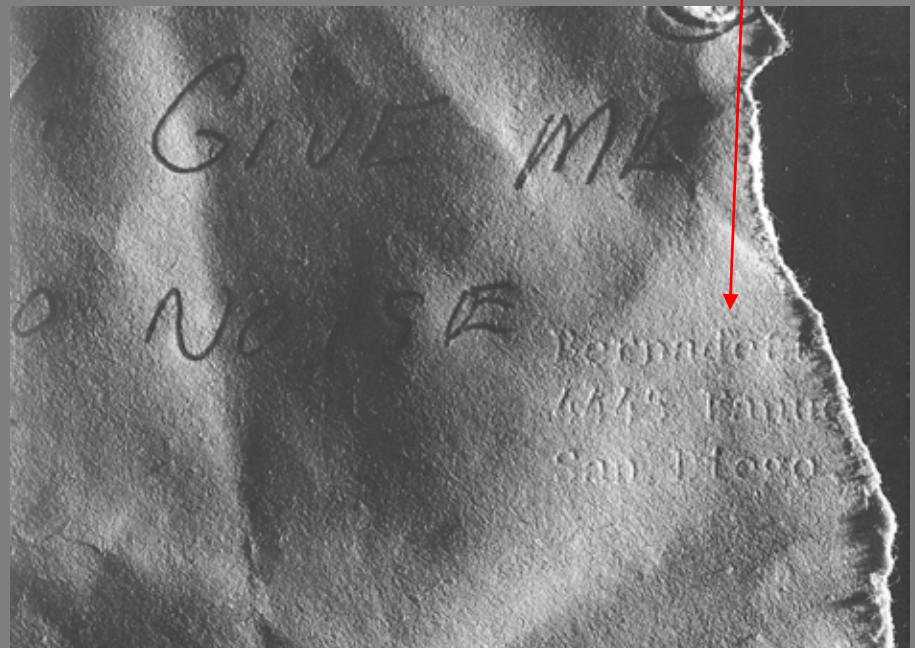


# ROBBERY DEMAND NOTE

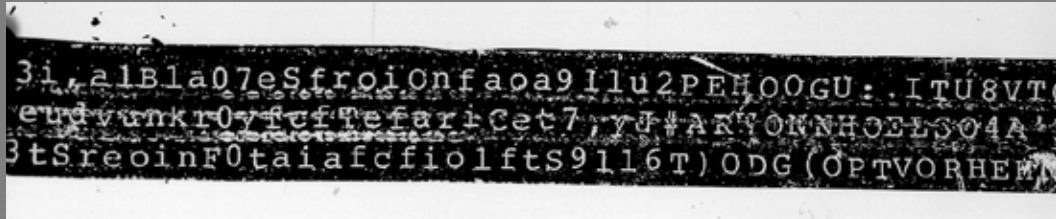


Handwriting Examinations  
of course but .....

oblique lighting of the “Demand  
Note” provides another clue



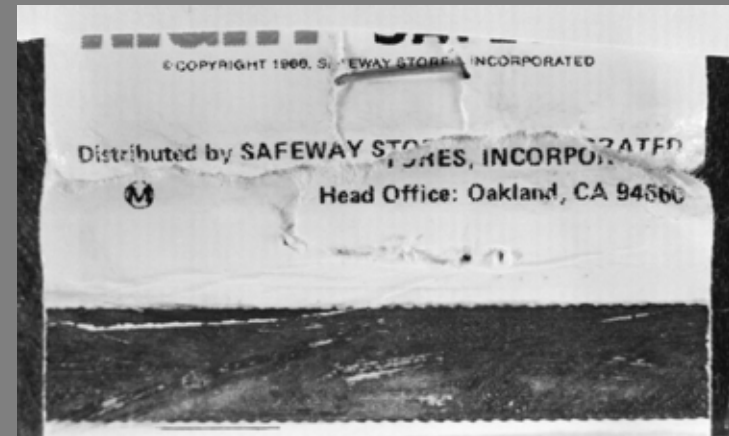
# RECOVERING DATA from CARBON TYPEWRITER RIBBON



31, a1B1a07eSfroiOnfaoa91lu2PEH00GU: .ITU8VT  
eudvankr07fcfTefar+Cet7,yU+ARVONNH0ELS04A  
3tSreoinF0taiafcfiolfts9116T)ODG (OPTVORHEFN

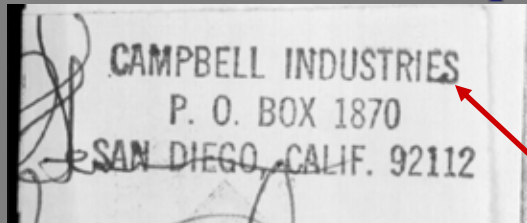
“Have 48 hours to live. TOPHUONG (NO GOOD WHORE) APT#26 July 11,  
1979 State of California Office of Traffic Safety 7000 Franklin Boulevard,  
Suite3”

## FRACTURE EDGE MATCH

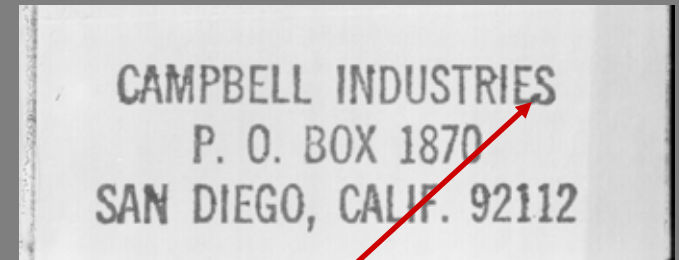


# STAMP IMPRESSIONS

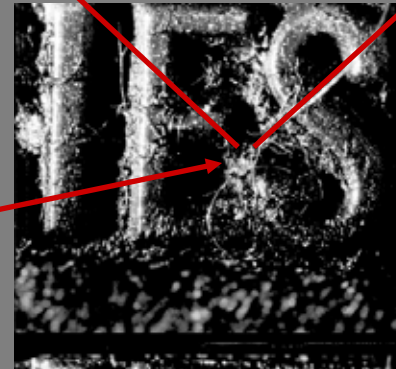
Questioned Stamp



Known Stamp



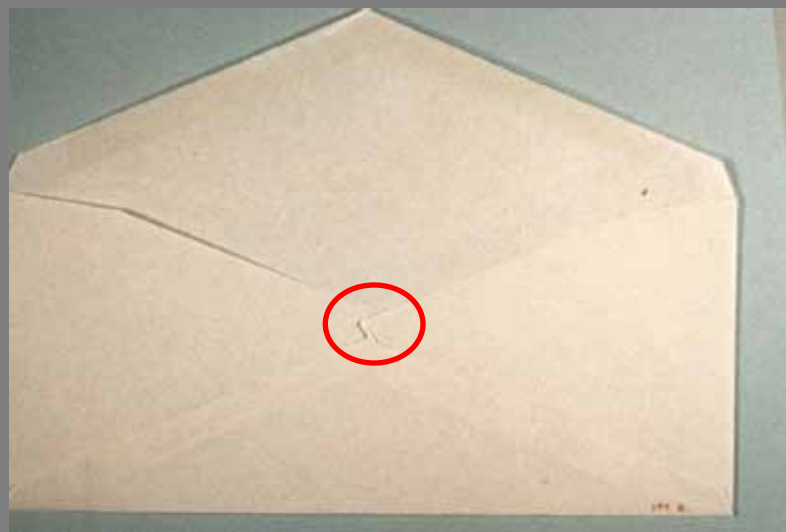
Actual  
Rubber  
Stamp



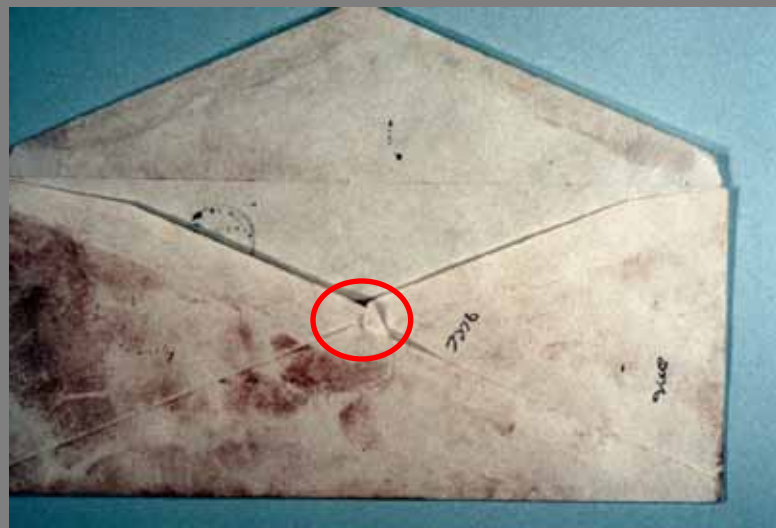
# ENVELOPE DEFECT EXAMS



Envelope Defect on Questioned Envelope Matched to Defect present in Box of Envelopes Seized from Murder Suspect's Desk



**Collected Known**



**Questioned**



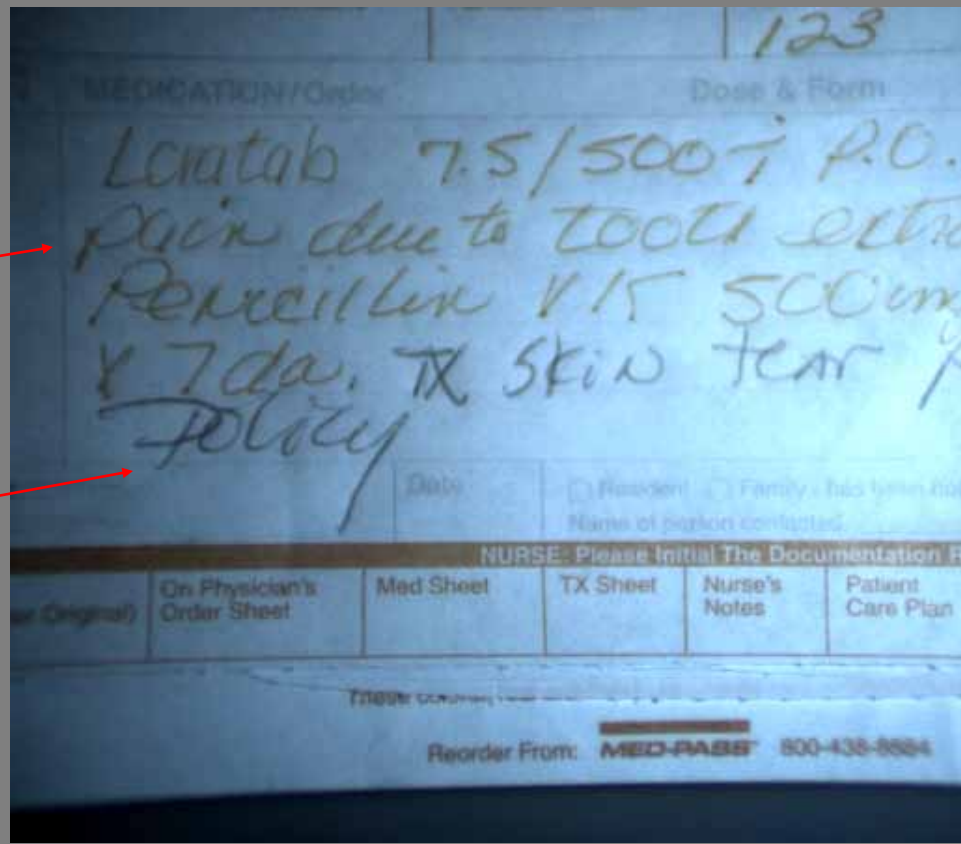


# DATING ENTRIES

## SELF-SERVING ENTRY ADDED LATER?

Original Doctor's Order

Added Later



# TYPOGRAPHIC CASES

Printers provide physical evidence in cases involving counterfeit, composite, or altered documents.



Office machine – toner process



Office machine - inkjet process

- Digital copies of genuine signatures can be easily transposed onto documents without the knowledge or consent of “signer”
- Desktop publishing gives average computer users ability to create convincing fraudulent documents
- Modern printers give forgers the ability to produce high-quality fraudulent documents



# CONSISTANCY: EXAMINERS AND EXAMINATIONS



**American Society for  
Testing and Materials**



**American Board of Forensic  
Document Examiners**

- The American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM) was chosen for final construction, review and publishing all training guidelines and examination guidelines. All guidelines are available to FDEs , nationally and internationally
- Certification examines knowledge & proficiency of an examiner
- It also requires recertification every five years after certification is acquired

# ABFDE Outline of Certification

To apply for certification, proof must be shown for all of the following:

- | **Baccalaureate degree**
- | **A full-time training period of at least two+ years (or equivalent) in a forensic laboratory recognized by the Board**
- | **Applicants need to supply reference names and addresses of three qualified Forensic Document Examiners who can attest to the applicants' qualifications for certification**
- | **At the time of application for certification, applicants must be engaged in the full-time practice of forensic document examination (Exceptions to this rule are also evaluated on an individual basis)**



# ABFDE Outline of Certification

After meeting all requirements, applicants must complete and successfully pass each step outlined below before advancing to the next step:

- | Complete a comprehensive written examination
- | Complete five practical examinations based on a wide range of problems frequently encountered in document examination
- | Complete oral examinations based on a wide range of problems frequently encountered in document examination

Eligible applicants are required to undergo these examinations within two+ years of having their applications approved. Any applicant who fails to pass any step of the examinations may apply for retesting



# Diplomate Status

Any individual who holds a valid Certificate of Qualification issued by the Board may use the designation “Diplomate of the American Board of Forensic Document Examiners”

Certificates of Qualification remain the property of the Board and are not transferable to any other person(s). Any individual who has been certified is entitled to the continued possession of the Certificate, unless and until the Board considers it necessary to revoke it

There is only one category of certification - Diplomate. There are no "retired" Diplomates or "emeritus" Diplomates. Either an examiner is currently certified by the ABFDE or they are not



# Recertification of Diplomates

Certificates of Qualification in Forensic Document Examination are valid for five years, and can be renewed in accordance with the following standards:

- | Applicants must be actively involved in case examination and other facets of questioned document examination
- | Applicants must earn 40 continuing education credits during the five-year renewal period following certification. Credits are awarded for a variety of related activities, such as attendance and participation at ABFDE recognized forensic meeting and programs, and publication of articles in journals recognized by the Board
- | Technical Research and presentations





# Recommendations listed in the NAS Report supports Certification

On February 18, 2009, the National Academy of Sciences (NAS) issued a report, we are all very familiar with, identifying various needs of the forensic science community:

“A recommendation of particular interest ... is that of mandatory accreditation of forensic entities and certification of forensic service providers. That includes identification units, fingerprint units, and crime scene units”

Accreditation of the unit/organization and the certification of practitioners cost precious dollars. The current federal legislation being proposed in response to the NAS Committee Report provides funding for these activities.





# SERVING THE PUBLIC

These recommendations are sound. The need for proficiency and consistency within forensic examinations and reports respectively, is critical.

The accreditation and certification process serves the dual purpose of serving the public interest and promoting the advancement of forensic science.



# Thank You



American Board of Forensic Document Examiners