

# The SHIFT HUNTERS

AN ORGANIZATION OF STUDENTS OF PLATE RESEARCH PROBLEMS—  
Acting as the PLATE VARIETIES COMMITTEE of the BUREAU ISSUES ASSOCIATION



Subscriptions to Shift Hunter Letters \$2 per year, starting with January

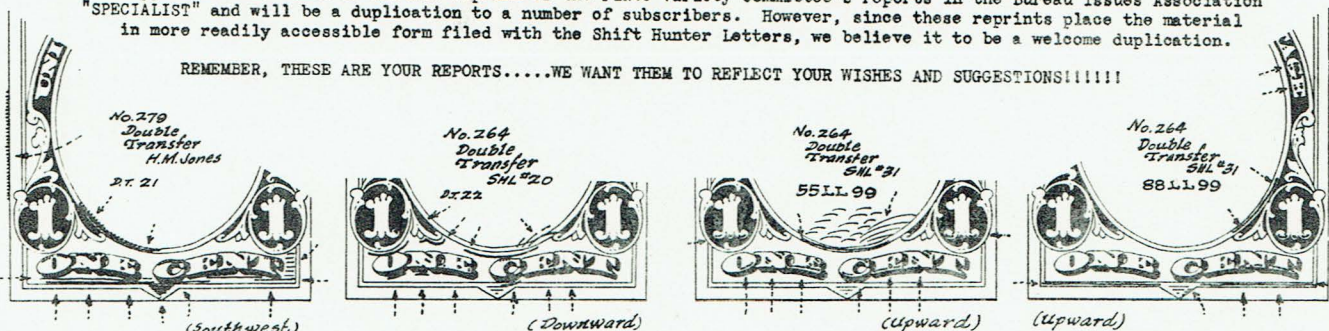


In SHL #69 we illustrated 13 plate varieties in the 1894-98 (consisting of 1 Crack and 12 Double Transfers) and asked that any further varieties be reported at once. The response was prompt, and the number of new varieties was sufficient to complete another report. Since these two Shift Hunter Letters #69 and #70 represent the complete data to date, the varieties previously reported in SHL #20 and SHL #31 are included.

Dr. Fritschel suggests that as a matter of reference an arbitrary number be assigned to each variety for which position data are unknown, and this report is being made accordingly. Please take your copy of SHL #69 and mark the first variety illustrated "C-1" and then number each of the Double Transfers consecutively from "DT-1" to "DT-12". These numbers may be used for all future reference until replaced with plate and position data.

The supplement this month is another reprint of the Plate Variety Committee's reports in the Bureau Issues Association "SPECIALIST" and will be a duplication to a number of subscribers. However, since these reprints place the material in more readily accessible form filed with the Shift Hunter Letters, we believe it to be a welcome duplication.

REMEMBER, THESE ARE YOUR REPORTS....WE WANT THEM TO REFLECT YOUR WISHES AND SUGGESTIONS!!!!!!



As Confucius said nearly 2500 years ago: "One picture is worth ten thousand words!" Use MATS for mounting and illustrating plate varieties. Prices from \$1.25 to \$1.75 per 100 postpaid—less than 2¢ each!

## Committee On Plate Varieties

L. M. RYER, Chairman  
1932 Calhoun St., Seattle, Wash.

Reports from the front are pouring in with ever increasing frequency, due largely to the addition of new non-B.I.A. members of this committee to the group of Shift Hunters. Altho we get "swamped" with correspondence from time to time, we never get too many varieties, so **SEND IN YOUR DISCOVERIES!** We want to make our plate variety records (yours and the B. I. A. records) preeminent in the field, but it will take the cooperation of all of you to do it. There are hundreds of varieties which have been reported elsewhere by our members but which we have never seen, and we want a record of them all in our illustration file. **LOOSEN UP, WILL YOU?**

\* \* \* \* \*

### 1c 1894, No. 246.

Two new varieties are reported by J. A. Ross, both being major double transfers. The first is a northeast displacement showing below the medallion, in both numerals, in all letters of ONE CENT and above the bottom frame shading. The second is similar and in a northwest direction, showing the AGE of POSTAGE, on the face and shoulder of the portrait, in the oval below and at right of medallion in both numerals, in all letters of ONE CENT, in the shading lines at right of T of CENT and at the right side of the "V" in the bottom frame.

\* \* \* \* \*

### 1c 1898-99, No. 279.

A major double transfer with a southeast displacement is submitted by Murray G. Henry, and shows at right of right frame, in and around the upper label, in forehead and nose of the portrait, below the medallion, in both numerals, in ONE CE of the bottom label and below the bottom frame.

Another from the same source shows a downward displacement in UNITE of the top label, below medallion, in ONE CE of bottom label, and slightly in both numerals and below the bottom frame. This copy is from the relief which broke down in both triangles, showing two breaks at left and one small break at right.

Still another shows a southwest displacement inside right frame, in top label, outside right frame, in bottom label, and below bottom frame.

A fourth shows an upward displacement above top frame, in N and E of UNITED, in and above STATES.

\* \* \* \* \*

### 2c 1898-99, No. 279-b.

From Kenneth D. Niven comes a nice double transfer of eastward displacement showing the upper left corner, inside left triangle, in UNITED STATES POSTAGE\*, in forehead of portrait, at right of left foliate ornament, in both numerals of value, inside lower left corner, in TWO \*\*NT\* and at left side of the "V" in the bottom frame.

\* \* \* \* \*

### 4c 1898-99, No. 280.

Everett H. Townsend sends a new double transfer in this stamp showing a downward displacement in upper corners and below lower corners, in IT of UNITED, below ST of STATES, in E of POSTAGE, below the medallion and in FOU\* \*\*TS.

\* \* \* \* \*

### 10c 1898-99, No. 282c.

Double transfer downward showing in oval at left of UNITED, below ES of STATES and below bottom frame. From E. H. Townsend.

\* \* \* \* \*

### 1c Pan American, No. 294.

Another steal on friend Halsey to match the previous report of the 2c vignette shift. Al Ross sends a copy showing all lines at the prow of the ship shifted (doubled) to the left.

\* \* \* \* \*

### 4c, 5c, 6c and 8c 1902.

Similar shifts on these four values are submitted by Albert Ondik, and all show the characteristic downward doubling of bottom details and/or frame line.

A second shift on the 8c is sent by Everett H. Townsend.

We believe the 4c and 6c items to be new, and again prove the shift hunter slogan: "Wherever there is a stamp, there is a possible plate variety".

\* \* \* \* \*

### 15c 1902, No. 309.

A fine double transfer showing a southwest displacement in the lines of shading in the arch above the upper label, in ST\*TE\*, outside left frame details, in P of POSTAGE, in FTE of FIFTEEN and below the bottom frame line, found by E. H. Townsend.

\* \* \* \* \*

### 1c 1917 Booklet, No. 498b.

Dr. G. C. Fritschel sends a fine double transfer in the third stamp of a booklet pane showing a southwest displacement in U. S. P\*S\*\*\*E, below the medallion, in 1 CENT 1, at left of left frame and below bottom frame.

### 8c 1922, No. 560.

A new variety submitted by E. H. Townsend shows an extra line above the top frame line, being slightly twisted in relation to the normal design. May be remnants of a D.T., or an accident.

\* \* \* \* \*

### \$1 - 1922, No. 571.

C. L. Palmer finds varieties in the upper pane of plate 18682 as follows:

4 U: D.T. at right, in AG of POSTAGE and inside right frame.

5 U: D.T. to northeast, above and below top frame and at left of left frame, combined with Reverse Shift where left details are shifted to left and right details shifted to right.

15 U: D.T. to northwest showing above top frame, at left of left frame, and at upper left of circle around left numeral.

35 U: D.T. to eastward, showing in right triangle and outside right frame; combined with shift to left.

Another variety, not as yet located, shows a westward D.T. in ED of UNITED and PO of POSTAGE, outside left frame, and at upper left of circle around right numeral.

\* \* \* \* \*

### 2c Postage Due, No. 2246.

W. W. Hopkinson finds a double transfer of southwest displacement showing to left of left frame, below bottom frame, in P.O.G. of POSTAGE and T of TWO, with other indications in various parts of the design.

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The Shift Hunters need your cooperation. If you are not a subscriber to the *Shift Hunter Letters*, send your two bucks at once and help us to get many of the new mats, etc., so urgently needed to properly maintain YOUR official plate variety record!

## Die Flaws On Bureau Issues

CHARLES L. PALMER, B.I.A. No. 468

A contribution of the Plate Varieties  
Committee

One variation of a study of plate varieties in Bureau Issues that seem to merit attention is the possibility of errors in the engraving of the master die for each of the denominations and issues emitted by the Bureau of Printing and Engraving. Such a study does not seem to have been made, perhaps because of the difficulty of locating and defining such errors when each master die is so carefully scrutinized and inspected in the Bureau before its use.

Yet I have become convinced, after close study, that such flaws do exist, at least on the early Bureau Issues, and these notes are to outline and explain my conclusions. They are in no way to be considered as final, but merely to open a new field of thought and research in the study of Bureau Issue plate varieties.

The engraving of the master die by one or by a group of engravers, is naturally the first step in the manufacture of stamps after designs have been approved and production ordered. From the master die the transfer roll is made, and the transfer roll, in turn, is used to "roll in" the various positions on the plate.

It naturally follows, therefore, that any error in the master die must be duplicated in the reverse on the transfer roll and again duplicated in obverse in every stamp in every position on every plate for which that die and transfer roll are used. In this respect, the die flaws will vary from true plate varieties. In the engraving of the master die, every effort is made by the Bureau to produce a die that is perfect in every detail, but, where a master die is imperfect, that imperfection becomes normal for that denomination and that issue, continuing so long as the master die is in use. Under such conditions, a stamp absolutely perfect in detail would be an abnormality and could and would truly be classed as a plate variety.

There are four theoretically possible ways in which a flaw could occur in a master die, viz:

DF1 - Lines or dots placed on the face of the master die to guide the engraver in his work, and not later removed.

DF2 - Lines or dots caused by the slipping of the engraving tools in the hands of the engraver while the work was under way.

DF3 - Failure of the engraver to complete a line essential to the design.

DF4 - Accidental damage to the master die between the time of engraving and the time it is casehardened.

I have found, I believe, evidence that the first two types of die flaws do exist. No evidence of the last two types has been found as yet, but this need not be taken as proof they cannot be found.

Naturally, the most fertile field for a study of such conditions is in the first emissions of the Bureau of Engraving and Printing. In those issues, if nowhere else among the Bureau Issues, such imperfections could be found. It is, a splendid commentary on the work of the Bureau of Engraving and Printing that, with all the stamps issued, there are so few flaws known on the master dies.

In fact, study really indicates that the

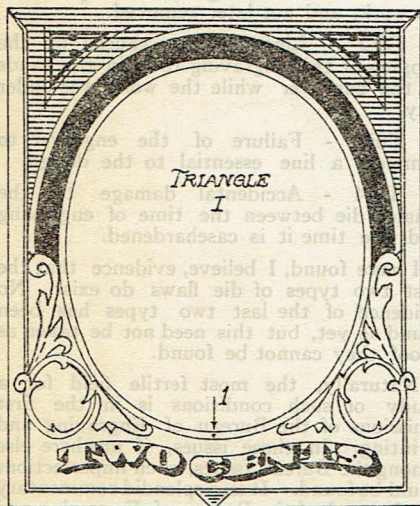
two known die flaws which probably can be accepted as actually being flaws, are not attributable to the work of the Bureau at all, but rather to engravers of the American Bank Note Company, which had the contract for the manufacture of postage stamps just prior to the inauguration of the Bureau. Comparison of the A. B. N. Co. issue, without triangles, and the first Bureau issue leads to the undeniable conclusion that the first Bureau issue plates were laid down from the master dies prepared by the Bank Note Company, after the triangles had been added. This, Lee Ryer informs me, is generally conceded.

Since the two die flaws to which I refer occur on both the Bank Note and the first Bureau issue, it will be necessary to study corresponding denominations of both issues, classifying the two flaws under the plan outlined above.

Under Die Flaw Type 1, to which I shall refer as DF1 for brevity, I would place the Two Cents denomination of the 1890 issue, the last Bank Note issue, Scott's Nos. 219d and 220 and the same denomination of the 1894-1895 issue, the first Bureau issue, Scott's Nos. 248-249-250 and 265, all Triangle 1. For the last, the master die of the former was evidently reworked by the addition of the triangles in the upper corners and by the strengthening of the horizontal lines in the lower background. On both these issues, in this denomination DF1 is to be found. These imperfections are not to be found on the stamps of Triangle II and Triangle III of the first Bureau issue. They consist of a small dot of color directly below the portrait in the center of the bottom of the white oval surrounding the vignette, and a similar dot in the center of the "S" of the word "CENTS".

At first I regarded these dots as position dots, but single stamps, used and unused, pairs, blocks of four and strips all showed these two dots recurring in the same positions on every stamp of the last Bank Note issue and on Triangle I, alone, of the first Bureau issue. On some copies, particularly used copies, the dots are so faint as to be almost imperceptible, possibly because of excessive washing, but in every instance traces of the dots remains.

## DIE FLAW TWO CENTS 1894-1895



DF1

#1 Dot of color in white oval at center of bottom.

#2 Dot of color in center of "S" of "CENTS".

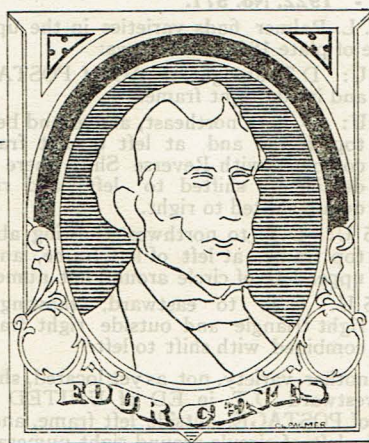
After some considerable study, in the course of which I prepared illustrations of the location of the two dots, I ascertained that the first dot mentioned, that below the vignette, marks the intersection of the center line of the white oval with the vertical line bisecting the stamp, and that the second marks the intersection of the center line of the lettering with a vertical line which is tangent to the side of the oval of the vignette. These dots then, it seemed, could only have been placed there by the engraver in laying out his work prior to engraving the master die. These dots were not subsequently removed, either through oversight or by design, until, as was obviously done later, new master dies were made from which the relief rolls for the Triangle II and the Triangle III designs were made. Lee Ryer suggests, and the suggestion is well founded, that the dies for the Triangle II and Triangle III designs were made from a relief of the Triangle I design revamped on the relief and otherwise reworked.

Under the second classification, DF2, wherein the flaw is caused by the slipping of the engraving tool in the hands of the engraver, I would place the 1890 issue 4 Cent denomination, No. 222, and the same denomination of the 1894-1895 and 1898 Bureau issues, Nos. 254-269 and 280.

Every copy of this stamp shows a heavy vertical dash in the vertical stroke of the "E" of "CENTS", a mark that is logically attributable to an engraving error. It would appear that the definitive line of the "E" had been started by the engraver too far to the left and then corrected by cutting the line in its proper place immediately to the right. This mark has been noted before by others, and submitted as evidence of a Double Transfer, but I am offering my explanation of it.

In addition there is another flaw on this denomination, showing on all the copies of the 4 Cents of the 1890 issue inspected and

## DIE FLAW FOUR CENTS 1894-1898



DF2

#1 23rd horizontal line extends into white oval at left of vignette.

#2 Heavy vertical dash in the vertical stroke of "E" of "CENTS".

on some of the copies of the same denomination from the Bureau printings, indicating, as in the case of the Two Cents of the same issue, that new dies were made from reworked reliefs of the A.B.N. Company's dies. This flaw is an extension of the twenty-third horizontal line of the background of the vignette into the white oval at the left, at about the point where the "I" and "T" of "UNITED" join. It was apparently caused

by the slipping of the tool in the hands of the engraver.

The progressive history to be deduced from this evidence indicates that the original Bank Note master die contained these two flaws; that when the master dies were first taken over and reworked by the Bureau of Engraving and Printing, these flaws were not discovered, at least in time for correction, and that subsequently the extended line was discovered and corrected when a relief was made for laying down a new master die for the denomination from which subsequent plates were made. However, since the flaw in the oval is found all the way through the series, it is also apparent that the first plate made from the Bank Note die by the Bureau was also used for the printing of the 1898 issue.

As has previously been said, I have no evidence that the other two types of theoretically possible flaws in master dies have occurred, but I do believe that such evidence can and will be found.

The purpose of offering this study is to add to the general knowledge of plate, relief and die varieties and to aid in the classification of those varieties, thereby differentiating die flaws from true plate varieties.