

## Chapter 4

### The First Bureau Series

The regular issue of 1894, the first issue printed by the BEP, has been a favorite among many collectors. There were 1090 plates sent to press and copies are known on all of these plates. This is the only regular issue for which this is true. There may be one complete plate number collection of this issue and, if so, this is a remarkable feat. It is well known that the \$5 Marshall plate 288 is unique. All of the 2c Washington booklet plates are very rare as are some of the late 1c Franklin plates. But this series was heavily collected and many of the plate numbers are readily available and it is possible to obtain a high degree of completion. A determined collector could locate 1000 of these plates and then the real fun would begin. To add variety, many of these plates have multiple varieties such as color changes, overprints, and some appear on both unwatermarked and watermarked paper.

The 1c Franklin stamp has 349 plates available to collect. I have found the plate numbers of this stamp to be much more difficult to locate than the 2c Washington which had 200 more plates. The rate of acquisition slows down very fast after about 300 plate numbers. The blue Franklin is available on unwatermarked and watermarked paper and none of these plates are scarce. The situation changes in 1898 when the color was changed to green. All of the green Franklins are on watermarked paper. Some of these plates are overprinted with "I.R." and "i.r." for revenue use. Many plates were overprinted for use in Cuba, Puerto Rico, Guam, and the Philippines. The Puerto Rico stamps are overprinted with PORTO RICO or PUERTO RICO. Strips or singles of these plates add a lot of interest to a collection.

560 plates were used to print the 2c Washington. This stamp is available in four design types and 4 plate imprint types. Plate 170 is of particular interest since the left three vertical rows of stamps are the type II triangle design and all other positions from this plate are the type III triangle design. This plate is not scarce so it is easy to get copies of each type. Plate number 89 has a reputation of being the toughest number but it had 6 reports in the plate number survey and there are a few 2c plates with only 2 and 3 reports. The collector's percentage of completion should be much higher than the 1c Franklin and 90% is not an unreasonable goal. Many of the 1c Franklin types of overprints appear also on the 2c Washington. The Cuba overprint appears with a 2c and a 2 1/2c denomination. Plates 556, 758-765 have the distinction of each having 5 different overprints. It would be a real challenge to have even one of these plates with all 5 overprints. Plate 556 also exists with the "I.R." overprint inverted.

The first stamp booklet was issued in 1900 and the subject was the 2c Washington stamp. 20 plates were used to print these booklets. Perhaps collectors did not realize that booklet plate numbers were available because these plate numbers are rare. A collector who possesses even one of these plates should have a real sense of accomplishment. The plate number survey reported only 44 copies of all 20 plates.

These plates seldom appear at auction and I would guess that the total 2c Washington booklet plate number population to be less than 100. The first set of the booklet plates exist with the "Specimen" overprint and plate number copies are easier to find with this overprint than without the overprint.

Sixteen plates were used to print the 3c Jackson stamp. The last four are scarcer than the rest but this issue can be completed without too much difficulty. Overprints exist for Cuba, Guam, and the Philippines.

The 4c Lincoln stamp printing required 36 plates. The last six plates are the toughest but a determined collector can complete this stamp. Guam and Philippines overprints exist.

Fifty-six plates printed the 5c Grant stamp. There are a few scarce numbers and completion is not easy. Change in the color from brown to blue adds interest since 4 plates are available with both colors. Some of the plates were overprinted for use in Cuba, Guam, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines.

The 6c Garfield stamp has eleven plates and all are relatively easy. Plates exist with the Guam and Philippines overprint.

Eleven plates were also used to print the 8c Sherman and the last four are a bit more difficult than the others. Guam, Philippines, and Puerto Rico overprints exist.

The 10c Webster stamp is a real challenge. 24 plates were used to print the two types. Plates 1336-9 are scarce but in my experience plates 932-935 are much tougher. Plate 932 has both type I and II stamps on the plate. All plates after 932 printed type II stamps. Cuba, Guam, Philippines, and Puerto Rico overprints exist. Plates 302, 303, 305, 306 not only exist in both green and brown colors, but each brown is also overprinted for use in Cuba, Philippines, and Puerto Rico.

The 15c Clay stamp required only 2 plates and both are not hard to find. Plate 264 exists with both blue and green colors and with the Guam and Philippines overprints.

One plate printed the 50c Jefferson stamp. This plate exists both unwatermarked and watermarked on the US stamp and the Philippines overprint. The watermarked stamp was also overprinted for use in Guam.

Plate number 76 printed the \$1 Perry stamp. The left 15 rows of stamps on this plate are type I and the right 5 rows are type II. There are eight possible varieties that can be collected on this plate. Both design types exist on unwatermarked and watermarked paper, and both types on watermarked paper are overprinted for use in Guam and the Philippines.

One plate was used to print the \$2 Madison stamp. The price of the stamp is one obstacle to owning this plate and copies are not often seen. It exists on both unwatermarked and watermarked paper and the watermarked variety exists with the Philippines overprint.

Two plates exist on the \$5 Marshall stamp. Plate 288 is overprinted PHILIPPINES and is unique. A special printing was made for the 1904 St. Louis Fair after the plate was canceled! Plate 85 exists on both the unwatermarked and the watermarked paper varieties and the watermarked variety was overprinted for use in the Philippines. The plate number survey indicated 11 collectors owning this plate compared with only 5 for the \$2 Madison. Apparently if you have the money, the plate number can be yours.

The incredible variety of the first Bureau series adds to the appeal of this issue for many collectors. A high degree of completion is possible for plate number collectors and I would encourage anyone who loves plate numbers to take a look. You will probably get hooked!

Chapter 4-1stBureau

		1st Bureau Series Totals						
Series	Subject	Plate Type	Assigned	To Press	Available	Unreported	I Have	
	(totals)		1126	1090	1090	0		
1894	1c Franklin	400F	355	349	349	0		
1894	2c Washington book	180F	12	12	12	0		
1894	2c Washington book	360F	12	8	8	0		
1894	2c Washington Type I	400F	41	39	39	0		
1894	2c Washington Type II	400F	5	5	5	0		
1894	2c Washington Type II, III	400F	1	1	1	0		
1894	2c Washington Type III	400F	210	206	206	0		
1894	2c Washington Type IV	400F	313	309	309	0		
1894	3c Jackson	200F	12	12	12	0		
1894	3c Jackson	400F	4	4	4	0		
1894	4c Lincoln	200F	32	32	32	0		
1894	4c Lincoln	400F	4	4	4	0		
1894	5c Grant	200F	60	52	52	0		
1894	5c Grant	400F	4	4	4	0		
1894	6c Garfield	200F	15	11	11	0		
1894	8c Sherman	200F	11	11	11	0		
1894	10c Webster Type I	400F	13	12	12	0		
1894	10c Webster Type I, II	400F	1	1	1	0		
1894	10c Webster Type II	400F	7	7	7	0		
1894	10c Webster Type II	200F	4	4	4	0		
1894	15c Clay	200F	2	2	2	0		
1894	50c Jefferson	200F	2	1	1	0		
1894	\$1 Perry	200F	2	1	1	0		
1894	\$2 Madison	200F	2	1	1	0		
1894	\$5 Marshall	200F	2	2	2	0		