

## Chapter 57

### The Transportation Coils

The Transportation coil series of 1981 was part of the great revolution in the series of regular issue stamps. For the first time in US stamp history, there was a separate series of stamps for each product format with the Transportation coils and the Great Americans sheets. The Transportation coils eventually became the largest definitive set ever during its 16 year run. Some of the stamp designs were also issued with service inscribed overprints. The 17c Electric Auto stamp appeared with three different varieties of the 'PRESORTED' overprint. These stamps were all issued after the start of the new plate numbering system and the plate code number now becomes an integral part of the stamp design. Twenty-two basic designs appeared before the end of the BEP's postage stamp plate number series and these include many of the classic Transportation coil plate numbers.

Initially, collectors seemed to be at a loss on how to collect these coil plate numbers. The first stamps were printed on the Cottrell presses which required two plates on the press cylinder. Therefore, each coil roll would contain two different plate numbers which would alternate every 24 stamps. Collectors had been in the habit of saving coils in line pairs so many continued saving the new coils in this format. Collectors who had collected the partial plate numbers on the earlier coils had saved strips of five of coils printed from 170 and 384 subject plates and strips of six of coils printed from the 432 subject plates so some of these began saving strips of five. Many collectors, including me, began saving these new coils in plate number strips of three. I felt the strip of three looked much nicer than the pairs and the strip of five seemed to be longer than necessary. The strip of five collectors won the format war and the lack of a set standard in the early years contributed to the high prices for some of the early strips of five.

The Cottrell press printed 17 of the 22 designs produced before the end of the BEP's postage stamp plate number series. The 1c Omnibus and the 2c Locomotive were each printed from six plates and all are very common. Two plates printed the 3.4c School Bus coil and these plates are also available precancelled at a higher price since fewer were saved. The same is true with the precancels on the 4c Stagecoach stamp. The 4c coil was printed from six plates and plates 3-6 are known with a precancel. The 5c Motorcycle's four plates are very common but this is not true with the 5.2c Sleigh coil. The 5.2c stamp was printed from six plates. 5.2c plates 4 and 6 are known only precancelled. Plates 1, 2, 3, and 5 are known both mint and precancelled but mint copies of plates 3 and 5 are scarce and expensive. The 5.9c Bicycle stamp was printed from plates with code numbers 3-6. Plates 3-4 are known mint and precancelled and plates 5 and 6 are known only precancelled and are scarcer than plates 3-4. The 9.3c Mail Wagon was printed from seven plates. Plates 1-6 are known mint and precancelled and plate 8 is a scarce item known only precancelled. Plates 5-6 are quite scarce in mint format. The 10.9c Hansom Cab was printed from four plates with plates 1-2 known mint and precancelled and plates 3-4 known precancelled only. The 10.9c

plates 3-4 are scarce but there are rumors of large holdings of these numbers and the release of any size hoard could cause a big price drop.

The 17c Electric Auto stamp is an interesting challenge with seven plates used to print the stamp. All seven plates are known both mint and precancelled but there are three types of the precancel and not all of the precancel types are known on all seven plates. Only plates 3-4-5 each have the three types of precancel. The 18c Surrey was the first class rate stamp and 18 plates were used to print this item. None of these plates can be considered really scarce but some of the early numbers are expensive as strips of five. The 20c Fire Pumper was printed from 16 plates and was also a first class rate item. Plates 1-2 and 7-8 are the most expensive but these are not truly scarce items as anyone with enough money can easily obtain them.

The B press produced the 6c Tricycle, the 7.4c Baby Buggy, the 10.1c Oil Wagon, the 11c Railroad Caboose, and the 12.5c Pushcart coils. One printing cylinder was used for each stamp and all of the plates are common.

The Transportation coil plates assigned in the BEP's postage stamp plate number series had 111 plates to press and available. Only a few of these plates are somewhat scarce and expensive. This is the one series where one visit to a dealer could result in 100% completion. The 111 plates here are the key items to collecting the complete set of Transportation coils. These engraved stamps were the hot item in the world of plate numbers when they were current and many collectors also try to obtain the varieties such as the service inscribed overprints.

The US flag has been around as a definitive stamp since the 5c flag stamp of 1963. The plate numbers of the flag stamps are discussed in the next chapter.

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		Transportation Coils Series Totals					
Series	Subject	Plate Type	Assigned	To Press	Available	Unreported	I Have
	(totals)		155	111	111	0	
1981	1c Omnibus	432R	9	6	6	0	
1981	2c Locomotive	432R	10	6	6	0	
1981	3c Handcar	432R	6	4	4	0	
1981	3.4c Schoolbus	432R	8	2	2	0	
1981	4c Stagecoach	432R	8	6	6	0	
1981	4.9c Buckboard	432R	6	6	6	0	
1981	5c Motorcycle	432R	6	4	4	0	
1981	5.2c Sleigh	432R	8	6	6	0	
1981	5.9c Bicycle	432R	8	4	4	0	
1981	6c Tricycle	936S	1	1	1	0	
1981	7.4c Baby Buggy	936S	2	1	1	0	
1981	9.3c Mail Wagon	432R	8	7	7	0	
1981	10.1c Oil Wagon	936S	1	1	1	0	
1981	10.9c Hansom Cab	432R	4	4	4	0	
1981	11c Railroad Caboose	936S	1	1	1	0	
1981	11c Stutz Bearcat	432R	6	4	4	0	
1981	12c Stanley Steamer	432R	6	2	2	0	
1981	12.5c Pushcart	936S	1	1	1	0	
1981	14c Iceboat	432R	6	4	4	0	
1981	17c Electric Auto	432R	7	7	7	0	
1981	18c Surrey	432R	24	18	18	0	
1981	20c Fire Pumper	432R	19	16	16	0	