

## Chapter 58

### The Flag Definitives

US stamp collectors flocked to the post offices in 1957 to buy the new 4c flag stamp. This stamp was the initial offering from the new Giori press which was capable of printing up to three colors from a single plate. This attractive stamp was very popular and was followed by a 49 star flag stamp in 1959 and a 50 star flag stamp in 1960. The rate increase to 5c in 1963 prompted the issuance of a 5c definitive flag stamp which began an unbroken string of flag definitive stamps which persists to this day. With one exception, the 15c flag stamp of the Americana series, none of the flag stamps is attached to a definitive series, thus they make a logical category of stamps. The last flag stamp issued within the confines of the BEP's postage stamp plate number series is the 22c flag stamp of 1985. All flag stamps starting with the 18c flag stamp of 1981 were printed from plates using the new plate numbering system. Our old friend, the nine color Huck press, figures prominently in the Flag series and is the principal reason for plate number difficulties in this series.

The 5c flag stamp of 1963 was issued at the time of the rate change. This stamp was printed on the Giori press with 37 plates being used during this stamp's five year life. Typically of the Giori press, some of the plates were able to produce well over 100,000 impressions but there are also many plates that for some reason printed considerably fewer impressions. Some of these 37 plates did have short press runs and are a bit on the scarce side, but this should be no real problem to the plate number collector since matched set collectors of that time saved thousands of these plates.

The postage rates again increased, this time to 6c in 1968, and this prompted the issuance of a 6c flag stamp. Once again, the Giori press was put to work and this time 118 plates were used in a three year period. There were quite a few short run plates, but the matched set collectors were still very active which makes the job of locating these 118 plates much easier today. The 9 color Huck press took over production of the 6c flag stamp in August, 1970. There was such an abundant stock of the Giori variety in the post offices that many areas did not have the Huck variety until the issue was almost obsolete. The Huck printed stamps reached the Dallas area only shortly before the rate was changed to 8c. 135 plates were used to print the 6c flag (Huck variety) and there are some scarce to rare plates in this group. Plate 32169 was supposedly sent to press but has never been reported. Plate 32175 is rare with only a few copies known. This variety was not saved by many matched set collectors and accumulating these plates today is not an easy task. The Huck press also printed the 6c flag in coil form and the plate numbers were entered so far from the design that none of the plate numbers are found in normal production. But 25 of the 467 coil plates were found due to a severe miscut and all of these numbers can be considered very rare.

The 8c flag stamp of 1971 was printed in sheet and coil form exclusively by the 9 color Huck press. 166 plates reportedly went to press during the three year life of this

stamp but no copies have been found on 22 of these plates. Perhaps these plates went to press during one of the last 8c flag press runs and few, if any, were sold due to the rate change to 10c in 1974. There are some scarce to rare plates in the 144 reported plate numbers. There were 292 8c flag coil plates to press with only 12 being found and these are real rarities. Some of the found coil plates are on imperf strips or sheets which are considered printers waste. By this time there seemed to be few collectors trying to find the plate numbers from this press and this contributes to the difficulties of today's collector in trying to find a large percentage of these plates.

The 10c Crossed Flags sheet and coil stamps of 1974 required the use of two of the three printing units of the 9 color Huck press. Collectors had a chance to chase plate number combinations from this press for the first time since the 1969 Christmas stamp but now there were few collectors seriously trying to locate all of the plate numbers. The interest that had surrounded the 1968 and 1969 Christmas stamps and the 6c Flag stamp had dissipated as most collectors despaired of ever being able to complete the plate numbers from any issue from this press. This is a shame because the 10c Crossed Flags stamp is the most fascinating of any of the flag issues from the plate number standpoint. A study of plate strips of this stamp, in order to establish plate number sequences of press runs similar to the studies done on the 1968 and 1969 Christmas stamps, would be a fascinating project for an ambitious plate number collector who would be able to obtain large quantities of these strips. There may still be a few large holdings of these strips. Hundreds of these strips passed through my hands but I unfortunately did not take the time to record the plate number sequences. I would do it differently if I had access to a time machine! In addition to saving copies of all the plate numbers I could find, I decided to build a side collection of combination plate number pairs, and I have well over 1000 different pairs with no end in sight, but it has been some time since I have added any new items to this collection. This stamp was also printed with the red printing shifted two stamps to the right so that the red plate number now precedes the blue plate number. This alternate printing occurred late in the life of the stamp and is comparatively scarce. 95 blue plates went to press and some are scarce to rare. The red plates are much more difficult with 197 to press, 12 unreported, and many scarce to rare plates. 336 coil plates went to press and 54 were found, perhaps all from the same roll. These plate numbers are rare.

Plate numbers were assigned to the 9 color Huck press to print 11c and 12c flag sheet and coil stamps but they were never issued since the new postage rate was set at 13c. For some reason, the PO and/or the BEP would not release information about these plates even being assigned and this lack of information was another reason some plate number collectors lost interest in consecutive plate number collecting. The 13c flag stamp in sheet and coil form was the last stamp to be printed on the 9 color Huck press. The coil version had a short run with 66 plates to press and none have been reported. The 13c flag coil was also printed from the B press which became the primary producer of the coils. The output from the B press printing cylinders is huge and only 24 were required for the 4 year run of this stamp. 298 Huck press 13c flag sheet plates went to press and a few collectors doggedly chased these numbers. Three plates are still unreported and there are a few scarce to rare plates in the remaining 295. This is a tough item to collect since collector interest in the Huck output was low. The 13c flag was reissued in 1981 on the A press with one cylinder being used. Abundant

copies were printed but few were saved and apparently many collectors were unaware of the variety and today plate blocks or strips are nice items to own. The 13c Flag over Capitol stamp was issued in booklet form with seven 13c stamps and one 9c stamp from the Americana series. These were printed on the B press and no cylinder numbers are available.

The new plate numbering system started in 1981. The 18c flag stamp appeared in three related designs in sheet, booklet, and coil format and these three stamps constitute an attractive set. The sheet stamp was printed from two cylinders and both are common. The 18c flag coil was printed from seven cylinders and included are some classic plate number coils. Coil strips with plate codes 1 and 3 are both expensive items and I remember they were on sale in Dallas but I bought only what I needed for my collection. Plate code 3 seemed to be on sale here forever. At the time of the rate change to 20c, plates 6 and 7 had not shown up, but luckily ample supplies of plate 7 were found. Plate 6 is not rare but is scarce and commands a substantial premium because there are lots of interested plate number collectors. The 18c flag booklet stamp required only one printing cylinder but this booklet is of special interest because each pane of eight stamps consisted of two 6c stamps (the design is 6c surrounded by 13 stars) and six 18c flag stamps.

The 20c flag stamp appeared in late 1981 with the same design in sheet, booklet, and coil formats. The three sheet cylinders are easy to find. The 20c flag booklet appeared in panes of ten (four cylinders used) and in panes of six (one cylinder used) and none are scarce. The 20c flag coil was printed from thirteen cylinders and plate code numbers 1, 4, and 6 are somewhat scarce and therefore expensive.

The 22c flag was issued in 1985 in all three formats and the BEP's postage stamp plate number series ended that year after only five cylinders were used for these stamps and none are scarce. The 22c booklet stamp is interesting in that the design is twice the size (horizontally) of the sheet/coil stamp and is quite attractive.

Only 1138 of the 2284 flag plates to press are available to collectors and, of these, there are at least 200 scarce to very rare plate numbers. These flag stamps are fascinating to collect in spite of the difficulties and there is a lifetime of challenge for the brave collector.

Many definitive stamps issued from 1974 through 1985 did not fit into any of the established series and I have grouped these into a 'special definitives' category which will be discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter 58-Flags

		Flag Definitives Series Totals						
Series	Subject	Plate Type	Assigned	To Press	Available Real P#	Available Code P#	Unreported	I Have
	(totals)		3323	2266	1138	36	39	
1963	5c Flag	400R	48	37	37		0	
1968	6c Flag	400R	137	118	118		0	
1968	6c Flag	80R	151	135	135		1	
1968	6c Flag Coil	72R	596	465	25		0	
1971	8c Flag	80R	231	166	166		22	
1971	8c Flag Coil	72R	368	292	12		0	
1974	10c Flags blue	80R	123	95	95		1	
1974	10c Flags red	80R	275	197	197		12	
1974	10c Flags coil blue	72R	200	145	23		0	
1974	10c Flags coil red	72R	238	191	31		0	
1975	11c Flag	80R	62	0	0			
1975	11c Flag coil	72R	68	0	0			
1975	12c Flag	80R	80	0	0			
1975	12c Flag coil	72R	80	0	0			
1975	13c Flag	80R	453	298	298		3	
1975	13c Flag	920S	6	1	1		0	
1975	13c Flag coil	72R	134	66	0			
1975	13c Flag coil	936S	30	24	0			
1980	18c Flag	920S	3	2		2	0	
1980	18c Flag coil	936S	8	7		7	0	
1980	18c/6c Flag, Stars b	832S	1	1		1	0	
1981	20c Flag	920S	5	3		3	0	
1981	20c Flag book (10)	780S	4	4		4	0	
1981	20c Flag book (6)	780S	1	1		1	0	
1981	20c Flag coil	936S	15	13		13	0	
1985	22c Flag	800S	3	2		2	0	
1985	22c Flag book	390S	1	1		1	0	
1985	22c Flag coil	936S	1	1		1	0	
1985	22c Flag coil	960S	1	1		1	0	