

Chapter 8

The Second Bureau Series

The second Bureau series. The regular issue of 1902. These names send chills down the spine of the prospective plate number collector who even remotely thinks of attempting to collect these plate numbers. Many have heard tales about how tough these plates are and they may think it would be futile to try. But are these fears really warranted? I have read accounts in the BIA's SPECIALIST journal about how tough these early plate numbers are and, as a young plate number collector, I was not inclined to take up the challenge. But after a few years of experience, I could read the same words and I could see how some collectors would take up the challenge and be very successful. As in many areas of life, some collectors prefer things to be easy. We all know many collectors who are perfectly content with just picking up the latest stamps at the post office and never going beyond that. But there are other collectors who believe firmly in the pursuit of excellence, who welcome the opportunity to test themselves and to see just what they can accomplish.

Let's be very clear. The second Bureau series is the most difficult regular issue for the plate number collector. But collectors of today owe a debt of gratitude to the collectors of the first decade of the 20th century who did manage to find over 98% of all the second Bureau plates that were used. The really determined collector can make a presentable showing of these plate numbers. There were 3081 plates sent to press, three times the number of the first Bureau series. And the series was current only 6 years compared to 8 years for the first Bureau series. In my opinion, even a 20% showing (600 numbers) is a very significant accumulation of this issue.

As with most regular issues, the plates that print the higher values are few in number and are easier to find although the stamps are more expensive. The \$2 and \$5 reissue plates are easy to locate but the plates that print the original perf 12 stamps are rare and expensive. Some of the higher value plates are very tough such as the last four plates of the 6c Garfield. The 5c Lincoln and the 3c Jackson stamps have some difficult numbers.

823 plates went to press to print the 1c Franklin. Outside of the booklet plates, the 1c Franklin is the most difficult stamp of the series. Many of the plates are scarce to rare and no dealer seems to have any significant holdings of these plates. A few of the 1c Franklin plates were overprinted for use in the Philippines and the Canal Zone and copies of these items are scarce and desirable. At least 38 plates exist in imperforate condition. The 1c Franklin booklets are extremely rare, with 4 of the 20 plates sent to press still unreported.

The 1902 2c Washington with flags stamp was printed from only 145 plates but completion is extremely difficult. Some of these plates are known overprinted for use

in the Canal Zone. The booklet version of this stamps was produced from 20 plates and all of these can be considered rare.

A whopping 1450 plates were used to print the 2c Washington shield die I stamp and another 225 plates to print the die II stamp. The 2c stamp has some plates overprinted for use in the Canal Zone and the Philippines. There are 37 die I and 6 die II plates known to exist in imperforate condition. I have found these 2c plates easier to find than the 1c on a percentage of completion basis, but it is really difficult to find any source of supply of these plates. The 2c die I booklet was printed from 252 plates with 38 unreported, the die II booklet had 20 plates and all are reported. The booklet plates keep many collectors from reaching a high degree of completion in the 2nd Bureau series.

I would like to encourage any collector to attempt this issue. Although unpopular at the time, today many collectors regard the second Bureau series as the most beautiful regular issue produced by the BEP. The challenges are second to none, but there will be little competition from other collectors. And the feeling of accomplishment will grow as your completion percentage grows. Plate collecting is all about having fun, and the second Bureau series (the Mount Everest of plate number collecting) offers the collector fun, and much more.

We next return to the beginnings of the new third Bureau series with the examination of the 5000 series of plates and we will see if the resurgence in plate number collecting is for real.

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		2nd Bureau Series Totals						
Series	Subject	Plate Type	Assigned	To Press	Available	Unreported	I Have	
	(totals)		3148	3081	3081	42		
1902	1c Franklin	400F	831	823	823	0		
1902	1c Franklin book	180F	28	20	20	4		
1902	2c Washington	400F	146	145	145	0		
1902	2c Washington book	180F	24	20	20	0		
1903	2c Washington Die I	400F	1463	1450	1450	0		
1903	2c Washington Die I book	180F	252	252	252	38		
1903	2c Washington Die II	400F	243	225	225	0		
1903	2c Washington Die II book	180F	28	20	20	0		
1902	3c Jackson	400F	16	16	16	0		
1902	4c Grant	400F	26	24	24	0		
1903	5c Lincoln	400F	35	34	34	0		
1903	6c Garfield	400F	8	8	8	0		
1903	8c M. Washington	400F	16	12	12	0		
1902	10c Webster	400F	12	12	12	0		
1902	13c Harrison	400F	8	8	8	0		
1902	15c Clay	200F	2	2	2	0		
1902	15c Clay	400F	4	4	4	0		
1902	50c Jefferson	200F	1	1	1	0		
1902	\$1 Farragut	200F	1	1	1	0		
1902	\$2 Madison	200F	2	2	2	0		
1902	\$5 Marshall	200F	2	2	2	0		