



# The United States SPECIALIST

*for the Collector of Postage & Revenue Stamp Issues of the United States*

WHOLE NUMBER 1130



## 1938 Bi-Color Airmail Stamp: FDR, Farley and National Air Mail Week, Part II

— plus —



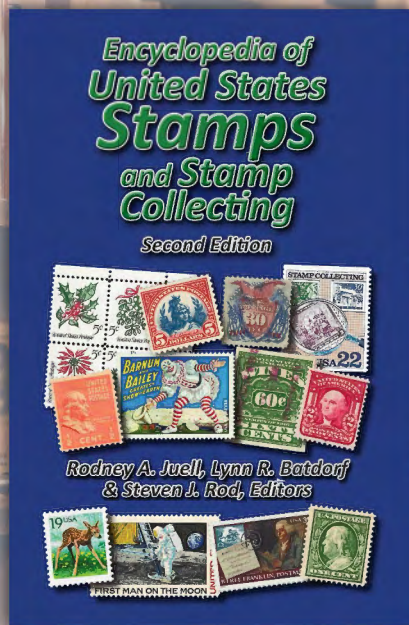
## Plate Varieties on the Poland Overrun Countries Stamp

— and —

Rutland Railroad "Emergency" Handstamp,  
New Retouched on Cheek Variety on Scott 528B, & more



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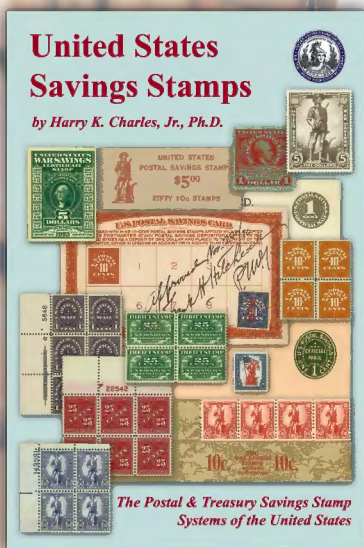
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# The United States SPECIALIST

*the journal of the United States Stamp Society*

VOLUME 95, NUMBER 4

APRIL 2024

WHOLE NUMBER 1130

An association of collectors to promote the study of all postage and revenue stamps and stamped paper of the United States and US-administered areas produced by the Bureau of Engraving and Printing and other contract printers.

American Philatelic Society Affiliate No. 150

## Prologue

### 147 Society News

### 151 Letters to the Editor

### 168 Vintage Photo of the Month

*by Rodney A. Juell*



## Epilogue

### 189 Plate Number Report

*by Kim D. Johnson*

### 191 Executive Secretary's Report

*by Robert Rufe*

### 192 Classified Advertising

### 192 Index of Advertisers

## Features



### 153 Plate Varieties on the Poland Overrun Countries Stamp

*by Keith Lichtman*

### 158 Rutland Railroad "Emergency" Handstamp

*by Roger S. Brody*

### 160 A New Type of the Retouched on Cheek Variety on Scott 528B

*by Andrew S. Kelley*



### 170 1938 Bi-Color Airmail Stamp: FDR, Farley and National Air Mail Week, Part II

*by Paul M. Holland*

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## Andrew S. Kelley Assumes Editorship of *The United States Specialist*

I am pleased to announce that Andrew Kelley has taken on the role of Editor of our monthly journal, replacing Martin Kent Miller, who has served in that position since 2019. Martin decided to step down due to increased workloads related to other philatelic organizations. I want to thank Martin for his years of service and wish him well in the future.

Andrew's philatelic journey began in fourth grade with a beginner stamp album from his school's book club. After attending the APS summer seminar several times—Wayne Youngblood and George Brett taught his first class—he assembled a successful national and international youth exhibit. Following a break for Harvard Law School, family, and early career, Andrew returned to the hobby roughly eight years ago. Since then, he has written extensively about the US Washington-Franklin Heads and related postal history, earning the United States Stamp Society's 2023 Hopkinson Literature Award for one of his articles. He is the editor of *Auxiliary Markings*, the journal of the Auxiliary Markings Club. Andrew also co-chairs the USSS' Washington-Franklin committee and serves on the APS expert committee. His exhibit of the Offset Lithographed Washington-Franklin Heads won the 2023 George Brett Cup and other awards, including two Grand Awards, and has been recognized several times for excellence in exhibit text.

Outside of philately, Andrew is a business litigation attorney. Throughout his career, his practice has focused on editing other lawyers' work to ensure that it is clear, concise, and persuasive. Andrew is also a semi-professional outdoor photographer. He has taught many classes about preparing images for publication using Adobe Photoshop and other tools. He lives in Denver, Colorado, with his wife and children.

Andrew's contact information can be found on the masthead page of *The Specialist*. Please submit your articles to him as well as any forms for the two free ad inserts each member is entitled to each year.



Andrew S. Kelley

—Nick Lombardi, President



# **I WANT YOUR MANUSCRIPT**

## **FOR THE US SPECIALIST**



## **SUBMISSIONS NEEDED FOR THE UNITED STATES SPECIALIST**

The *United States Specialist* depends on member-submitted content to present high-quality and diverse philatelic articles each month. At present, we have a severe shortage of material awaiting publication.

As the new editor, I am appealing to you to submit story ideas, working manuscripts and, especially, completed articles to be considered for publication. The goal is to maintain a balance between longer, multiple-part articles and short vignettes—both of which need compelling narrative and a strong philatelic thread centered around US material.

I am grateful for the great articles that have been submitted and the work that many of you are continuing. If you have contributed materials, thank you! If you have submitted material to the previous editor or to me, but have not heard back, please email again. If you haven't submitted anything for review, please consider preparing a manuscript soon. Do not be intimidated by the process; I am happy to help polish a manuscript or perfect illustrations. The success of the journal depends on your contributions.

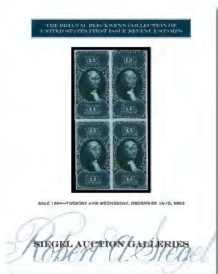
### **Considerations**

When preparing materials for print, please follow the guidelines in the January 2024 *Specialist*, p. 28–31. (I am happy to send a copy on request.) The most important guidelines are to submit files with minimal formatting and to ensure that illustrations have sufficient resolution for print (ideally at least 300 pixels per inch).

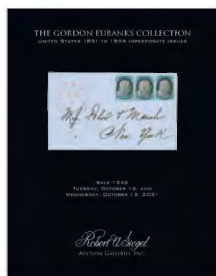
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—Andrew S. Kelley, Editor

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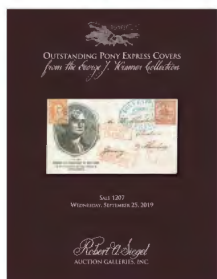
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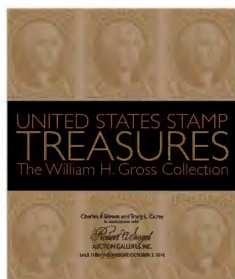
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### Letters to the Editor

## Regarding Newly-Documented CIA Inverts.

I was recently re-reading some old *Specialist* issues when I came across a short article by Nick Lombardi regarding a deceased collector who had discovered an unreported philatelic item but, for unknown reasons, never reported it to the philatelic community. Nick goes on to say how our hobby "...thrives on shared knowledge" and reiterated the words of New York City's post-9/11 advertising campaign: "If you see something, say something."

This article reminded me of last year's announcement in *Linn's* by Wayne Youngblood regarding the "recent" discovery of additional CIA Inverts (Scott 1610c) almost 35 years after the original find. Apparently, during that time-period, the additional inverts were known to several prominent dealers but not the collecting public. The only reason I can attribute to this clandestine action is the ability for those involved dealers to sell non-position copies of the additional stamps without the decrease in the price that would have been



1979 \$1 Rush Lamp and Candle Holder with engraved brown inverted, the CIA Invert, Scott 1610c (courtesy Siegel Auction Galleries).

the result of another 100 errors entering the market. So much for "shared knowledge."

To Lombardi's final line of his article, I would make the following change: "If you see something, say something, unless you can profit from it."

**Gene Pica**

USSS 13757

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Overrun Countries

## Plate Varieties on the Poland Overrun Countries Stamp

by Keith Lichtman

USSS # 14279 | ✉stampmankeith@gmail.com



The Poland stamp, the first stamp in the Overrun Countries series, was produced by the American Bank Note Company. Its first day of issue was June 22, 1943. 19,999,646 stamps were produced in sheets of 200, four panes of 50 per sheet. The frame of the stamp is engraved. The flag and country name were printed by offset lithography.

In 1945 Sol Glass wrote in *The Stamp Specialist* about plate varieties found on these panes. These varieties are constant varieties, meaning that they appear in the same position in the pane through one or multiple printings. Such varieties were made by damage, alteration, or repair of the plate.

Collectors discovered additional varieties after the publication of Glass' article; these were reported in the *Encyclopedia of Plate Varieties on U.S. Bureau-Printed Postage Stamps* by Loran C. French.

In my research, I have discovered some additional varieties that were not previously reported, as well as some errors in the prior literature. This article reports on these discoveries.

In the following table, UL refers to upper left pane, UR refers to upper right pane, LL is lower left pane, and LR is lower right pane. The number next to the pane designation refers to the position of a stamp on the plate.



**UL2**—red spot inside the flag pole, 0.5 mm from the upper right corner of the red field.



**UL10**—a 0.1 mm line protruding from the right side of the red field, 1.5 mm from the bottom tip of the flag.



**UL16**—red spur at the bottom of the flag, 4.5 mm from the bottom right corner of the red field.



**UL26 & LR26**—upper right corner of the flag outline is broken. The gap is about 0.5 mm wide. Be aware there are many stamps that have a gap in this general area but they are usually located more on the right side of the outline and only gap .025 mm or smaller.



**UL41**—two red dots between the flag and the pole. The dot touching the left side of the pole is 2 mm from the upper left corner of the red field. The dot not touching the pole is 0.75 mm from the upper left corner of the red field.



**UL48 & LL48**—red dot over the “A” in Poland, 0.5 mm from the top of the ‘A’.



**UR4**—red dot 3 mm from the bottom of the flag pole and 0.75 mm from the left side of the pole.



**UR18**—red spur on the bottom left side of the red field, 2 mm from the bottom hoist.



**UR25**—red spot in the white field, 1 mm above the red field and 1.8 mm from the right-side outline. This variety listed in Sol Glass's article but not in the *Encyclopedia*. I have confirmed Sol Glass's identification.



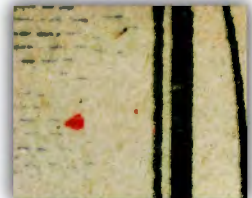
**LL3**—red spot between flag and pole, 1.5 mm from bottom hoist.



**LL7**—"D" in Poland looks like an "O." The left out-side of the "O" is missing that small straight line. This stamp can be difficult to identify.



**LL14**—red spot 1.25 mm from the left side of pole and 2.75 mm from the top of the pole.



**LL16**—red spot in lower left corner of the white field.



**LL18**—red spot 0.8 mm from the left side of the pole and 3.25 mm from top of pole.



**LL44**—black spot below right corner of the red field. Bottom of the round corner of the flag lines up with the top of the black spot.



**LR30**—red spot between the “N” and “D” of Poland. I have listed this stamp as being from lower right panes. I have not examined enough of these panes to say positively that they are lower right. I have examined enough single stamps to conclude they are plate varieties



Lastly, both Sol Glass and the *Encyclopedia* list LL40 as “white spot in red field.” I have not found any panes with a white spot in that position.

I have not examined the shading in the flag for plate varieties. Such varieties exist and I hope to research them at a later time.

## References

1. Glass, Sol. “The Overrun Nations Series.” In *The Stamp Specialist Coral Book*, 3–48. New York, N.Y.: H.L. Lindquist, 1945.
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3. French, Loran C. *Encyclopedia of Plate Varieties on U.S. Bureau-Printed Postage Stamps*. Whittier, CA: Bureau Issues Association, Inc., 1979.

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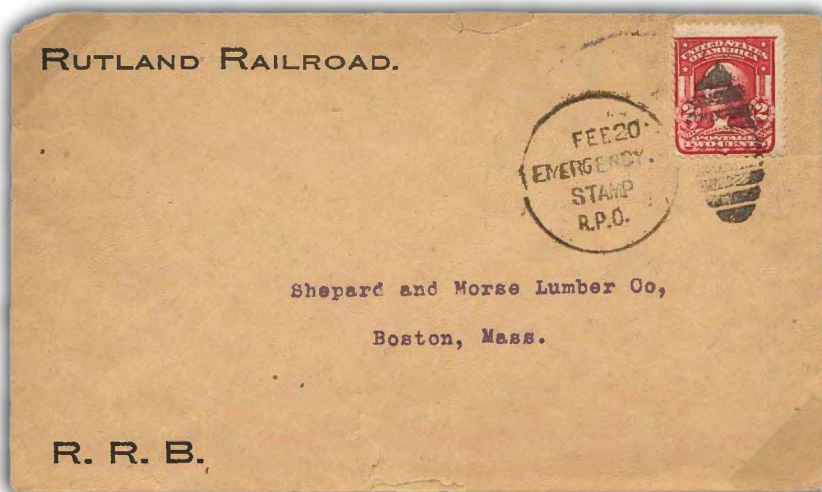
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## Rutland Railroad “Emergency” Handstamp

by Roger S. Brody

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What was the emergency in the unusual “Emergency” handstamp used in February 1904 on the Rutland Railroad envelope that caught my eye in an early 1990 auction. Was it a fire, a washed-out bridge, or perhaps a train wreck?

To learn more about the handstamp I contacted Ruth Henson, editor of *The Vermont Philatelist*. She kindly pointed the way, and the cast of characters and amount of information blossomed.

The primary transporter of the mails at the turn of the twentieth century was the Railway Mail Service. Regulations for the thousands of RMS employees were established to insure the efficient movement of the mail. The rules covered everything from guarding the mail and trip reports to postmarking to identify when and who handled mail matter as it moved from one point to another across the country. Accountability was the watchword of the RMS.

### Emergency Postmarkers

The Division Superintendent of the Railway Mail Service issued the Emergency markers for use when a clerk lost his postmarker or was unable to perform his duties. The term “emergency” is more generic when used for this particular purpose, as it only

means that a postmarker was not otherwise available for that particular route when needed by the person acting as the Clerk-in-Charge on that RPO, according to Frank Scheer of the Railway Mail Service Library.

In the absence of a postmarking handstamp that shows the route, spare “emergency” postmarkers were kept in the Chief Clerk’s office. Since they were accountable property, they would be issued to the Clerk-in-Charge when needed, then returned when

an appropriate postmarking handstamp became available, usually through procurement of a new device. Reports and postmarked mail matter could be traced by seeing to whom an emergency handstamp was issued on that date, as each handstamp was distinctive. When the emergency postmarker could not be delivered, clerks would use anything they could find, such as a different route marker or an obsolete marker. Unfortunately, records of the use of “emergency” markers do not exist today.

Lyle K. Rice, of Rutland Vermont, RMS retired, was assigned to the Rutland, Vermont, Terminal with Transfer Clerk duties starting June 1, 1934. He believes that this particular “emergency” handstamp might have been used by a Substitute Clerk who lacked a device. The regular Clerks on regular runs always made up a Letter Pouch for the Clerk or Clerks due to take the assignment next. If a Substitute was assigned in place of a regular Clerk, it was the duty of the regular Clerk to make sure the Substitute had the postmarking device and, sometimes, even the revolver in case the Substitute was never assigned such an object. Chief Clerks probably had one or more of the emergency devices at their office, but more likely, a Transfer Office was the supplier for Rutland’s emergency use.

The circular date portion of the illustrated “emergency” duplex postmarker on the Rutland Railroad cover measures 29.5mm in diameter. The killer portion is a 9 bar oval, 29mm high. Fred D. MacDonald, editor of the Mobile Post Office Society’s *United States RPO Catalog* believes that only the First Division of the RMS used this type of marker as none have been reported for the other Divisions. The mark, (see tracing above) in black ink, is dated February 20, 1904. The *RPO Catalog* lists this type of marker as type #49-F-3, which was previously only known to be used in 1903.



### Rail Road Business

Frank Scheer identifies the “R.R.B.” initials in the lower left corner of the cover as “Rail Road Business.” “R.R.B.” was a franking required for mail, internal to a railroad, permitted by federal law to pass through the RMS without postage. Frank says “R.R.B.” was a practice widely used for railroad company mail matter and could also frank mail from one railroad to another. The author was, however, unable to cite such a provision in the *Postal Laws and Regulations* of the time. This particular Rutland Railroad envelope was used by a railroad employee for communication to a non-railroad office (possibly a shipping client) in Boston, thus requiring the two-cent first class postage rate.

The exact reason for the use of the “Emergency” postmarker on the Rutland Railroad cover is lost to the past. Lyle Rice muses the lack of the regular postmarking device could occur under several conditions, not the least of which was the possibility that a mail car burned in transit. [*This article originally appeared in the Vermont Philatelist -Ed*]





*From the Washington-Franklin Head Committee*

## A New Type of the Retouched on Cheek Variety on Scott 528B

by **Andrew S. Kelley**

USSF # 16734 | ✉ [stamps@andrewkelley.net](mailto:stamps@andrewkelley.net)



**Figure 1.** Previously documented “light” retouch (photographic crop from Figure 6).

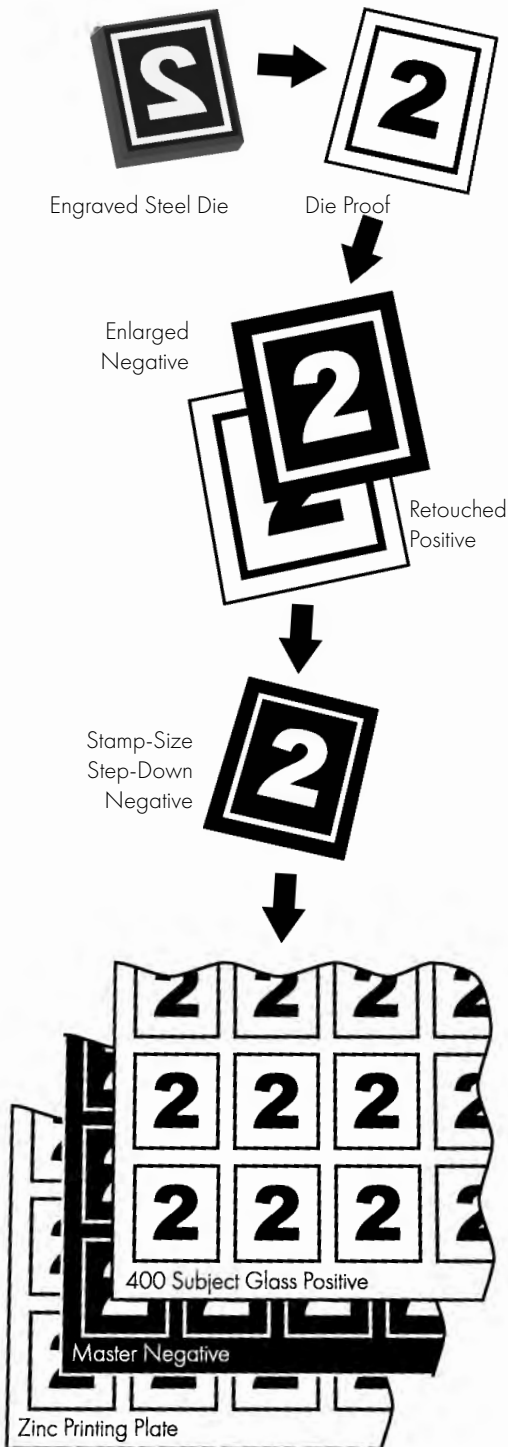


**Figure 2.** Newly-discovered “heavy” retouch.

The retouched on cheek variety—found on Scott 528B—is the most spectacular “plate” variety on the Washington-Franklin Heads printed by offset lithography.<sup>1</sup> See Figure 1. Philatelists have been writing about this variety for nearly a century, so it was surprising to discover an unreported second type of this retouch, which appears to be a heavier version of the first. See Figure 2. This article reports on the new variety and analyzes its origin.

### Background

Offset platemaking was a complex, multi-step, largely photographic process. See Figure 3.<sup>2</sup> The many steps and fragile materials generated many varieties. Foreign matter on the photographic materials and damage to and imperfections in those materials created “plate” flaws. For example, a scratch on a negative would create a line of color. In other cases, a bit of paper stuck to the master negative generated a blank spot on the finished stamps. Consider plate 11950: this oversize plate (1600 subjects) was made by exposing an ordinary-size 400-subject negative four times. Some positions have a white blotch caused by a piece of foreign matter adhering to the negative. Remarkably,



### The Offset Platemaking Process

1. Traditional die proof pulled from engraved die.
2. Enlarged negative made by photographing die proof and positive made from negative. Lines retouched and strengthened on positive to adapt design to lithography.
3. Stamp-sized "step-down" negative made from retouched positive.
4. Glass positive created by using the step-down negative in a step-and-repeat photo composing machine to expose 400 subjects on glass plate, one at a time.
5. Celluloid master negative made from glass positive.
6. Zinc printing plates made from master negative by contact photographic printing. Single master negative used to create many plates.

**Figure 3. Schematic of the lithographic plate making process.**

the foreign matter moved between exposures, and so some lower left plate blocks have no flaw, some have a flaw affecting the “P” of Postage, and some have a flaw affecting the “o” as shown in Figure 4.<sup>3</sup>

Lithographic platemakers attempted to repair prominent flaws. Figure 5 shows a repair to the “P of Postage” flaw discussed above. Of these repairs, the retouched on cheek variety is the most famous. Lybarger and Johl illustrate it in their books, and it has also attracted attention from philatelic columnist George Sloane, offset specialist David Bennett, and others.<sup>4</sup>

We don’t know precisely how the Bureau made these retouches. Donald Lybarger, dean of the offset experts, claims that the retouch was made directly on the printing plate.<sup>5</sup> He is, however, vague on the details of how this was accomplished. George Sloane asserted that it was impossible to retouch offset plates directly<sup>6</sup> and that the retouched on cheek variety was made “by patching it [a flaw on the negative] over with a little opaque, directly on the film.”<sup>7</sup>

We can discount Sloane’s view: adding opaque to a negative would not fix a white spot on the stamp, it would create one: opaque areas on a negative print white. (See the white spot on Figure 4 for an example.) Moreover, flaws like the missing “P” or “o” in Postage must have been repaired on the plate, not on the negative, because the flaw was on the plate, not the negative. So, we know that the Bureau could make repairs on the plate. And the retouches in Figures 1 and 2 look like they were painted on the plate, not scratched into it. But, I am not aware of documentation about how these repairs were made.

### What We Know about the Retouched on Cheek Variety

Despite its philatelic fame, we do not know much about the retouched on cheek variety. We know that it comes from the eighth row of an upper pane, as demonstrated by the block in Figure 6.

We also know—or at least infer—that the variety was printed in a small quantity, possibly from a single plate. The variety is quite scarce: Bennett found only four examples in thirty years of searching.<sup>8</sup> Aided by modern tools like eBay, I have found more



Figure 4. Scott 528 with flaw in “o” of Postage, LR stamp caused by foreign matter on the negative.



Figure 5. Scott 528 with repaired flaw in the “P” of Postage, left stamp.



examples than that. But I would be surprised if there are more than ten in collector hands. The variety is notorious for poor centering.<sup>9</sup> The design is close to the perforations at right on all examples I have seen. The scarcity and similar copy-to-copy centering suggest that few of the retouched on cheek varieties were printed, and that (perhaps) they were all perforated close in time on the same machine.

Unfortunately, we do not know which plate(s) have the retouch.<sup>10</sup> Collectors have searched for the retouched subject or the antecedent plate flaw among the proof sheets at the Smithsonian but turned up nothing.<sup>11</sup>

From this information, specialists, including me, infer that the variety was confined to a single plate. If the damage and retouch were on a master negative or glass positive, they would likely be present on many plates, and we would expect to see many more copies in collector hands. And, of course, we would find it on proof sheets from those plates.

If the single plate theory is correct, the damage and repair must have happened after the proof sheet was printed—after the plate was mounted on the press for production.



*Figure 6. Light retouch margin block demonstrating retouch comes from an upper pane. Note large vertical scratch on subject above the retouched stamp.*

### Origin of the New Variety

In early 2020, I discovered the “heavy” version of the retouch. Prior to this discovery all the reported examples of the retouch were the “light” variety.<sup>12</sup> See Figure 7 for enlargements of the two types. I have searched unsuccessfully for additional examples

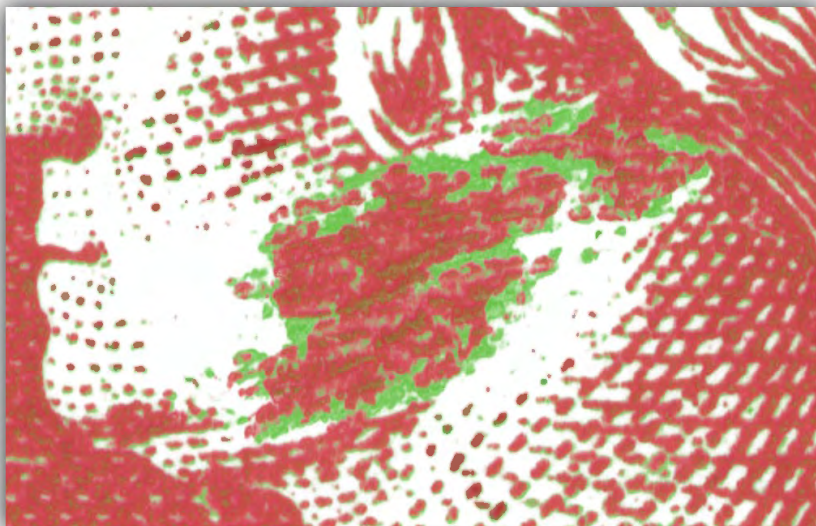


*Figure 7. Enlarged and colorized images of the retouches. “Light” retouch at left, and “heavy” retouch at right.*

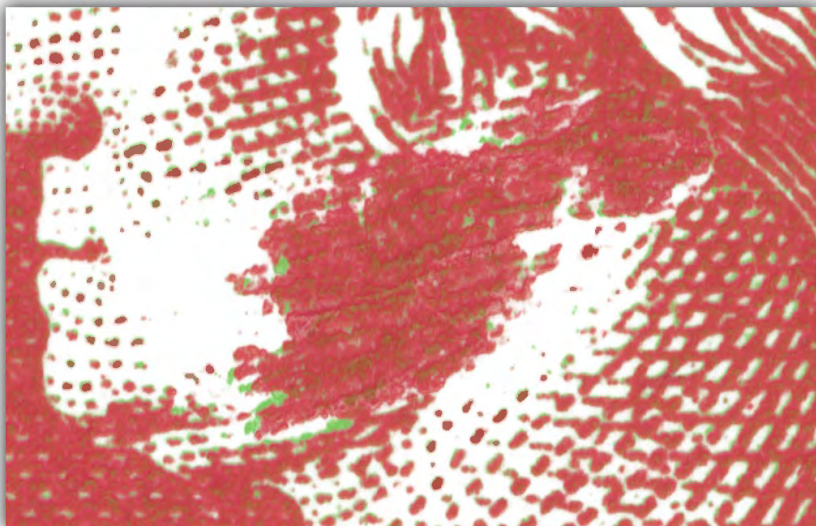
of the heavy retouch on the Internet, at stamp shows, and by polling members of the Washington-Franklin Head Committee. I have found none.

There are three possible sources of the two types: (1) two different retouches, applied to different subjects on a plate or a master negative; (2) two different retouches applied to the same subject on the same plate; or (3) a single retouch, which wore away over time.

To assess these alternatives, I compared the two retouches using Adobe Photoshop. In Figure 8, the light retouch, in red, is layered on top of the heavy retouch, in green. The green color shows the portions of the heavy retouch that do not appear on the light retouch. Figure 9 is the reverse, with the light retouch on the bottom and the heavy



**Figure 8.** Comparison of light and heavy retouch. Green shows areas on the heavy retouch that are not present on the light retouch.



**Figure 9.** Inverse of Figure 8. Green shows areas of the light retouch that are not present on the heavy retouch.

retouch on the top. The green shows portions of the light retouch that do not appear on the heavy retouch.

As these two figures demonstrate, the light retouch is almost completely contained within the area of the heavy retouch. However, there are small portions of the light retouch that do not appear on the heavy version.

These images give important clues to the genesis of the variety. We can quickly rule out the first explanation, that the two retouches come from different positions on the plate or master negative. The overlap between the two varieties is too perfect for them to represent separate free-hand retouches.

The second explanation, that the plate was retouched twice, is slightly more plausible. On this theory, the light retouch came first and was later re-retouched to make the heavy version. This could explain the lack of complete overlap between the heavy and light retouches—part of the design wore away before the second (heavy) retouch. However, this explanation strikes me as unlikely. There is little aesthetic difference between the light and retouches; why bother with a second retouch? Moreover, the horizontal lines (brush strokes?) on the two retouches overlap almost perfectly, which seems unlikely if portions of the design were applied twice.

That leaves the third explanation, that the light retouch is a worn version of the heavy one. This is the best explanation for the nearly-total overlap between the retouches. This attribute strongly suggests that the retouches are the same but part of the retouch wore away or flaked off after the heavy retouch was printed. Also, the light retouch example shows some other signs of wear: some of the shading dots outside of the retouch are darker on the heavy retouch than the light. While there are a few small areas in the light retouch that do not show up in the heavy retouch, these minor differences can be explained by the vagaries of offset printing and poor-quality paper. Minor sample-to-sample variations on offsets stamps are typical

I welcome reports of examples of the retouched on cheek variety.

Thanks to Larry Weiss and Tom Bodem for helpful comments on a draft of this article, and to the members of the Washington-Franklin Heads Committee for reviewing it.

#### Endnotes

1. This variety is sometimes called the “birthmark variety.” See, for example, Weiss, “Why Collect the U.S. Washington-Franklin Heads? A 100th Anniversary Tribute Part III,” 42. However, this article will use the Scott *Specialized Catalog* description “retouched on cheek” while acknowledging that it is grammatically awkward.
2. This figure is my recreation of an illustration from Lybarger, *The United States Issues of 1918-20*, 5. For more information about offset plate-making and printing please refer to his book.
3. French, *Encyclopedia of Plate Varieties*, 115.
4. Johl, *United States Postage Stamps 1902-1935*, 179; Lybarger, *The United States Issues of 1918-20*, 23; Sloane, “1920, 2c Offset Printing Retouch on Cheek”; Bennett, “Varieties on the Offset Printing Issue of 1918-20,” 277; Hoeft, “U.S. 2c. Postage Stamp of 1920 and a Description of the Offset Method of Printing”; French, *Encyclopedia of Plate Varieties*, 119.
5. Lybarger, *The United States Issues of 1918-20*, 23 (“One of the stamps . . . developed a large white spot on the cheek of Washington’s portrait . . . The zinc plate was therefore retouched by a series of horizontal strokes which partially covered the spot.”).
6. Sloane, “1920, 2c Offset Printing Retouches” (“Because of the limitations of the offset printing process, it is not possible, I understand, to retouch the plate itself, and any spot or other defect noticed in the negative must



be corrected, wherever correction is possible in the negative, or the imperfection will be reproduced in the zinc plate”).

7. Sloane, “1920, 2c Offset Printing Retouch on Cheek.” Opaque in this context is a thick fluid used on photographic negatives to block out unwanted specks, portions of an image, etc.
8. Bennett, “Varieties on the Offset Printing Issue of 1918-20” (“While many collectors may have seen pictures of this variety, we doubt that more than a very few have seen the actual stamp itself. We have found it to be quite scarce. In over 30 years of constant searching, we have come across exactly four examples of this variety”).
9. Johl, *United States Postage Stamps 1902-1935*, 179 (“For some unknown reason, this variety is generally found off center”).
10. Bennett, “Varieties on the Offset Printing Issue of 1918-20,” 278. Bennett reports a rumor that the flaw might be from plate 13026, but he was unable to corroborate that information.
11. *Ibid.*, 277–78 (“All efforts to establish its position in the pane, including examination of the proof plates at the Smithsonian Institution,

proved fruitless. All we can say about it is that it occurs in the 8th row of an upper pane, and that it occurs on one plate only.”).

12. I have found nine illustrations of the variety; all show the light retouch, though with slight variations from example to example: “Shift Hunter Letter”; Sloane, “1920, 2c Offset Printing Retouch on Cheek”; Johl, *United States Postage Stamps 1902-1935*, 179; Lybarger, *The United States Issues of 1918-20*, 23; Hoeft, “U.S. 2c. Postage Stamp of 1920 and a Description of the Offset Method of Printing,” 67; Bennett, “Varieties on the Offset Printing Issue of 1918-20,” 277; 42; French, “Important Plate Varieties on the Bureau Issues”; French, *Encyclopedia of Plate Varieties*; and Weiss, “Why Collect the U.S. Washington-Franklin Heads? A 100th Anniversary Tribute Part III,” 42. (Some of these illustrations may be of the same stamp.) Additionally, my example of the heavy touch appeared in two recent articles in the *Specialist*: Kelley, “New Variety Reported on Scott #528A - Foreign Object on Offset Roller,” 516; Weiss, “Chasing the Dr. David M. Bennett Collection of 1918-20 Offset Issues,” 130.

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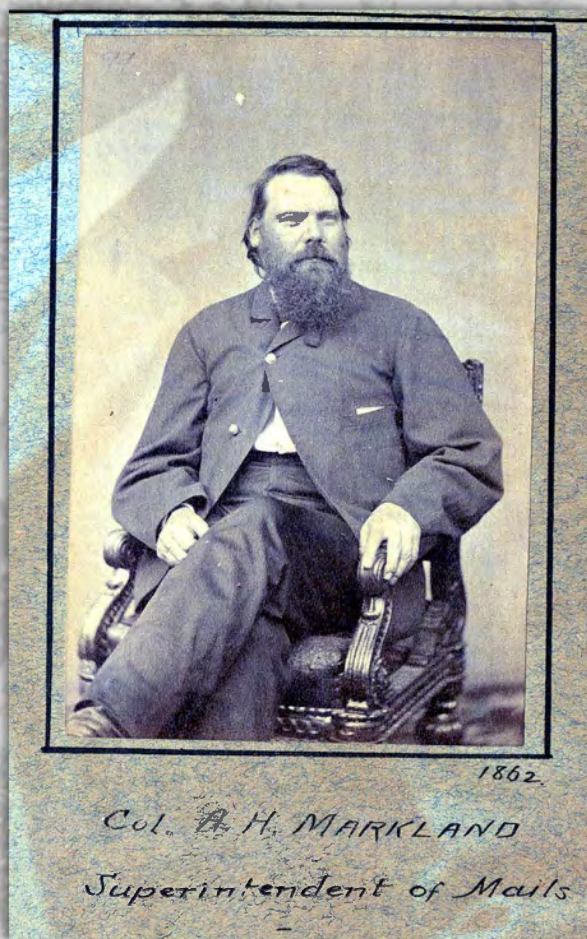
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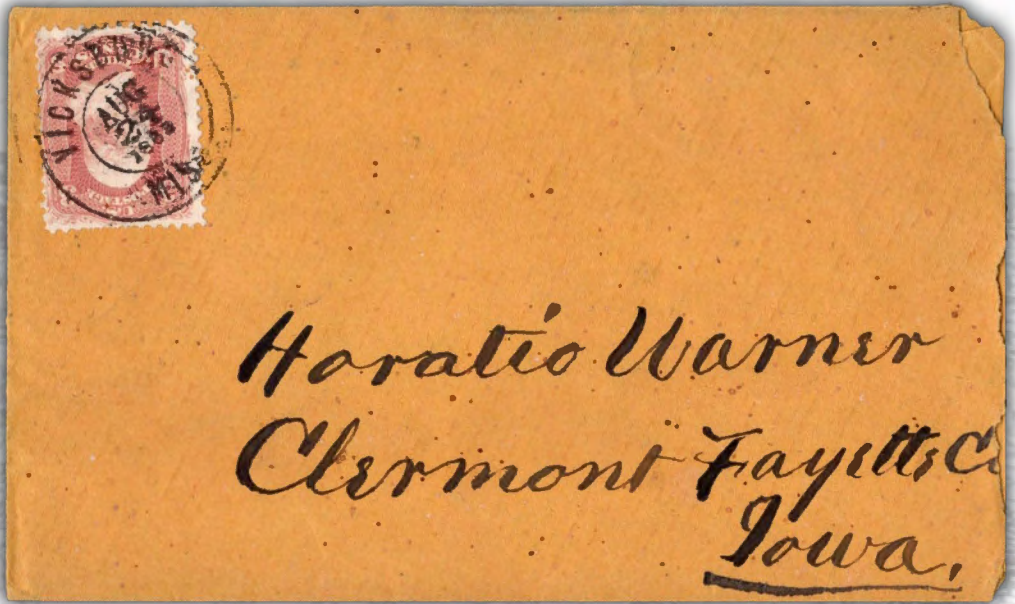
## Absalom Markland, Special Agent of the US Post Office Department

by **Rodney A. Juell**

USSS #13852 | P.O. Box 3508, Joliet, IL 60434







Absalom Markland, shown in this month's vintage photo, a Special Agent of the United States Post Office Department, and organizational genius, was an unsung hero of postal operations during the Civil War. (His title of "colonel" was honorific. He was a civilian.) He efficiently supervised the movement of vast quantities of mail to and from members of the Federal forces, even while they were on the march. As areas of the south were liberated from Confederate control, Markland was right behind the army, quickly reestablishing civilian mail service under the jurisdiction of the US Post Office Department.

Shown above is a cover mailed from the United States post office in Vicksburg, Mississippi, shortly after the decisive July 4, 1863 battle in which Ulysses Grant reclaimed that city from the confederates. Markland reopened the federal post in Vicksburg the next day.

For a worthwhile biography of Markland, readers are referred to the recently (2023) published *Delivered Under Fire* by Candice Shy Hooper.



*From The Farley Era Committee*

## 1938 Bi-Color Airmail Stamp: FDR, Farley and National Air Mail Week, Part II

by Paul M. Holland

usss #16849 | ✉ [pholland.thorleaf@gmail.com](mailto:pholland.thorleaf@gmail.com)



*Postmaster General James A. Farley poses with mail from National Air Mail Week.*

During National Air Mail Week (NAMW) May 15–21, 1938, more than 16.2 million items were sent by airmail, the majority franked using the newly designed 6¢ bi-color airmail stamp. With the slogan “Receive Tomorrow’s Mail Today” Postmaster General James A. Farley had requested that everyone send an airmail letter during the week. The massive increase over the usual amount of airmail that resulted helped promote the use of airmail service across the nation. Locally produced artwork appeared on distinctive NAMW cachets that were produced by volunteers and civic organizations. These celebrated local attractions, products and historical events linked to the numerous cities and towns participating in National Air Mail Week. This outpouring of authentic Americana provides collectors today with fascinating mementos of a bygone era. I’m fortunate in having a number of both Farley and FDR covers from NAMW in my collection that help illustrate the wide variety of artwork produced.





Figure 1. Farley NAMW cover from New Britain, Connecticut.

The cachets used for these NAMW covers were not always printed on the envelope. Addressed to Farley and shown in Figure 1 is my Sunday May 15, 1938, example from New Britain, Connecticut that employs a printed label instead. Proclaiming New Britain as the “Hardware City of the World,” it shows the city seal with reference to native son Charles K. Hamilton, a famous early aviator whose June 13, 1910, round trip flight from New York to Philadelphia was the first flight between two major US cities, winning him a \$10,000 prize. Nicknamed the “crazy man of the air,” Hamilton was especially known for his dangerous dives and spectacular crashes.



Figure 2. Farley NAMW cover from Ellsworth, Maine.

Custom rubber stamped cachets were more commonly used on NAMW covers, such as my Farley example shown in Figure 2. This May 15 cover from Ellsworth, Maine, displays a map showing various local attractions including The Black House (museum

and estate), Acadia National Park, a local art and music colony, and the nearby Bar Harbor airport.

A more finely printed Farley example for Richmond, Virginia is shown in Figure 3. From May 16, this commemorates the 1865 Richmond post office as “the only building left intact in the burned Area at the Evacuation of Richmond” during the American



Figure 3. Farley NAMW cover from Richmond, Virginia.

Civil War. With a modern airplane flying above this picture of devastation, the cachet proudly proclaims that “Out of the Ashes of 1865 Richmond has triumphantly arisen”.

I have an especially wide range of National Air Mail Week covers sent to FDR in my collection, including many shown in this article. That these were preserved in FDR’s personal stamp collection is shown by the presence of H.R. Harmer auction authentication handstamps on the back (or front) of each cover.



Figure 4. NAMW cover sent to FDR from Hartford, Connecticut.

An example sent to FDR by the Chamber of Commerce of Hartford, Connecticut on Sunday May 15 is displayed in Figure 4. The cachet proclaims Hartford as being the "Home of the Aviation Industry in the East" having had the first Aero Club of America in 1908, having the first municipally owned airport in 1921, and touts that Hartford was served by the First Contract Air Mail Route in 1926. Note that the cover is franked by an upper left corner margin copy of the 6¢ bi-color airmail stamp that clearly shows the bi-colored cross used to help ensure against inverted printing of these stamps. It's also clear that this stamp is from plate position one of the pane.

In Figure 5, is shown a May 15 NAMW cover sent to FDR by airmail from Indian Head, Maryland a mere 30 miles from Washington, DC, a distance that certainly did not require the use of airmail. Nonetheless, fancy calligraphy was used in addressing it to FDR, and there is a brightly printed Indian chief in headdress on the cachet, reflecting the name of the town.



Figure 5. NAMW cover sent to FDR from Indian Head, Maryland.



Figure 6. NAMW cover sent to FDR from North Judson, Indiana.



Another May 15 cover sent to FDR, this time from North Judson, Indiana, is shown in Figure 6. The name of the local postmaster has been typed above, and the cachet proclaims that North Judson is "In the heart of the Nation." A locator map in the shape of a heart is also conveniently provided.

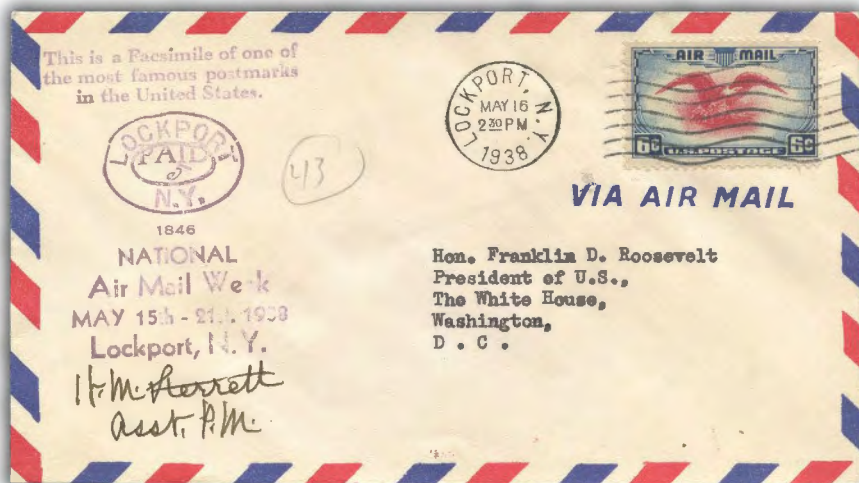


Figure 7. NAMW cover sent to FDR from Lockport, New York.

A May 16 NAMW cover sent to FDR, from Lockport, New York, and signed by the assistant postmaster is shown in Figure 7. The cachet celebrates the famous 5¢ Lockport Postmaster Provisional hand stamp of 1846, reproduced in facsimile. With only a single example known, the Lockport Provisional is one of the great rarities of US philately, and this NAMW cachet must have appealed to FDR as an avid stamp collector. Lockport itself was a key part of the Erie Canal, where its locks allowed canal barges to traverse a 60-foot natural drop in the waterway, an impressive engineering feat that was completed in 1825.



Figure 8. NAMW cover sent to FDR from Marlton, New Jersey.



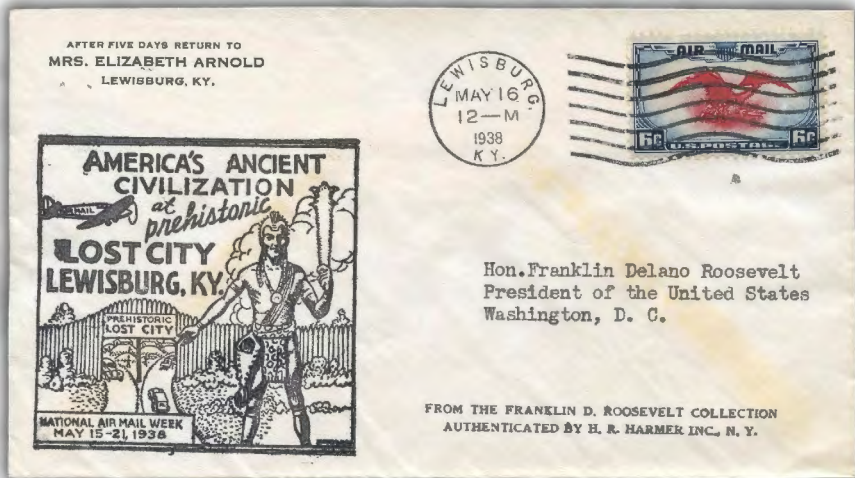


Figure 9. NAMW cover sent to FDR from Lewisburg, Kentucky.

Unique local products were also featured on NAMW covers sent to FDR, such as the one in Figure 8 from Marlton, New Jersey. The cachet shows the mining of marl, an unconsolidated sediment of carbonate minerals, clays and silt, used as fertilizer, after which Marlton was named.

Besides local postmasters and civic organizations, private individuals also mailed NAMW covers to FDR. A May 16 example from a Mrs. Elizabeth Arnold from Lewisburg, Kentucky, is shown in Figure 9. The cachet touts a nearby "Prehistoric Lost City" consisting of earthen mounds built by Native Americans that was first excavated in 1929 and then operated as a tourist attraction for a few years after 1936.

By far the most interesting day of National Air Mail Week was Thursday, May 19, 1938. This was designated as a special day when even the smallest towns and hamlets without nearby airports might receive airmail service using special airmail flights with the help of

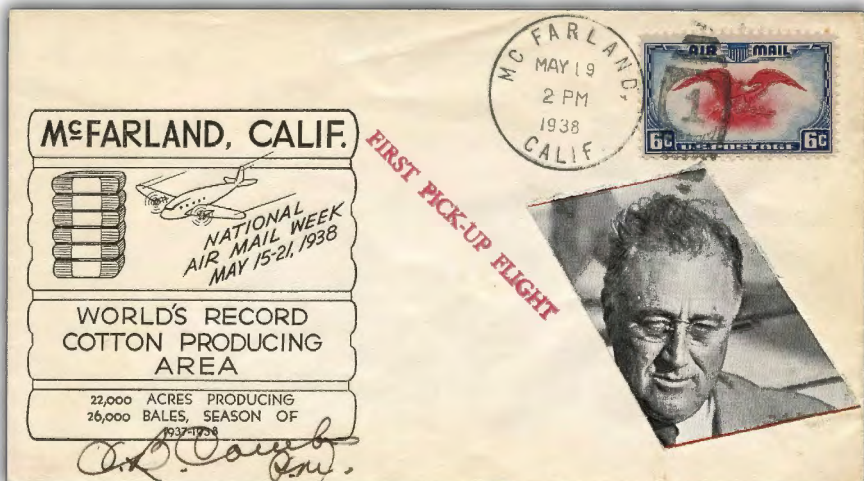


Figure 10. NAMW cover sent to FDR from McFarland, California addressed to FDR using a photograph.

volunteer pilots and pick up points. In some cases, farmer's fields, blocked off portions of country roads and even a pond for landing a seaplane were utilized.

Perhaps my favorite May 19 NAMW cover sent to FDR is the one from the small city of McFarland, California, shown in Figure 10. Situated in the San Joaquin Valley about 25 miles north of Bakersfield, California, the cachet touts McFarland as being the "World's Record Cotton Producing Area" with 22,000 acres producing 26,000 bales of cotton during the 1937-38 season. The cover is handstamped "FIRST PICK-UP FLIGHT" and is signed by the postmaster who has cleverly addressed it by simply pasting on a photograph of FDR cut out from a magazine. The H.R. Harmer auction backstamp demonstrates that FDR received it without problem.



Figure 11. NAMW cover sent to FDR from Oriskany Falls, New York.

Small towns and villages often cooperated during National Air Mail Week, as shown in Figure 11 on a cover sent to FDR on May 19, 1938. The cachet lists the names of five small communities in upstate New York over a half-tone printed photograph of Oriskany Falls signed by the local postmaster. Hand addressed to President Franklin D. Roosevelt, note especially the "FEEDER SERVICE MAY 19th" handstamp above the address.

One of the more unusual May 19 NAMW covers sent to FDR is the one from Woburn, Massachusetts, shown in Figure 12. The printed cachet was sponsored by the Woburn Lodge of the Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks, touts Woburn as "Leather City," and shows a picture of Dan Doherty, National Commander of the American Legion. Most interestingly, there is a handstamp showing that special May 19 airmail service was provided by a seaplane landing in Horn Pond!

A NAMW cover with a half-tone printed photograph that was sent to FDR is shown in Figure 13. From Catawissa, Pennsylvania, this photo shows its 1789 Quaker Meeting House. It is signed by the postmaster who has made a special notation that this was the first cover canceled. Also note that this was franked by a plate number single showing part of the arrow in the sheet margin. Analysis reveals that this 6¢ bi-color airmail stamp must therefore be from plate position two of the stamp pane.

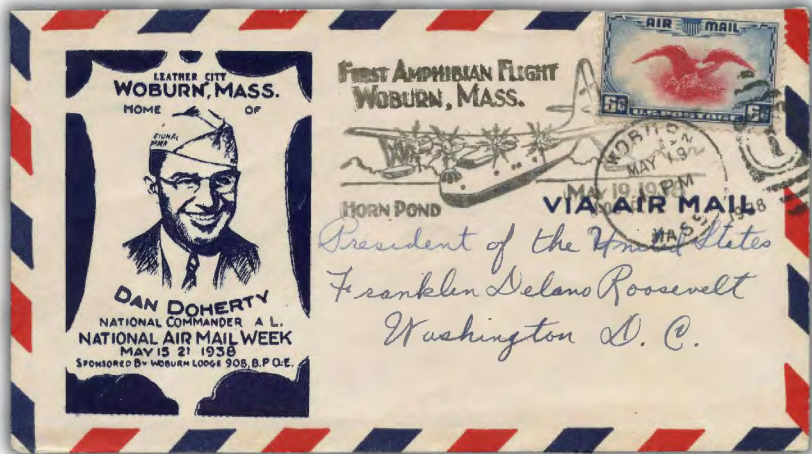


Figure 12. NAMW cover sent to FDR from Woburn, Massachusetts.



Figure 13. NAMW cover sent to FDR from Catawissa, Pennsylvania.



Figure 14. NAMW cover sent to FDR from Beatrice, Nebraska.



Another May 19 dated NAMW cachet printed on the cover is shown Figure 14. Sent to FDR from Beatrice, Nebraska, it has been signed by the postmaster and touts the very first homestead in the United States under the Civil War era Homestead Act. Interestingly, this homestead was claimed just after midnight on January 1, 1862, near Beatrice when a clerk was persuaded to open the local Land Office.



Figure 15. NAMW cover sent to FDR from Rushville, Nebraska.

A more generic hand stamped NAMW cachet from Rushville, Nebraska, is shown in Figure 15. Sent to FDR by the local postmaster, this shows a locator map for Rushville within a large outline map of the United States. At the bottom Rushville is touted as "The Home of Old Jules." This refers to an award winning biography Old Jules about Jules Sandoz, a Swiss immigrant and early pioneer in the area that was written by his daughter.

Among my favorite NAMW cachets with local flavor is the one on the May 19 cover sent to FDR from Fitchburg, Massachusetts. Shown in Figure 16, this features the



Figure 16. NAMW cover sent to FDR from Fitchburg, Massachusetts.



Rollstone Boulder, a massive ten-foot-tall, 110-ton porphyritic granite glacial erratic, resembling a giant potato that was re-located in 1930 to a traffic island in downtown Fitchburg. Signed by the postmaster, the cachet is from the Fitchburg Chamber of Commerce, courtesy of George R. Wallace.



Figure 17. NAMW cover sent to FDR from West Warren, Massachusetts.

Figure 17 shows another May 19 NAMW cover sent to FDR from Massachusetts. From West Warren, this has a cachet sponsored by Wm. E. Wright and Sons Co, well known manufacturers of Bias Tape used in sewing. While celebrating the twentieth anniversary of airmail service, the cachet also shows a small image their product at the left.

Shown in Figure 18 is a May 19 NAMW cover sent to FDR from Laconia, "City of the Lakes," in New Hampshire. The detailed locator map commemorates the 1925 route of the first Aero-Marine Mail Service (via seaplane) in the United States flown by pilot Bob Fogg on Lake Winnepesaukee.



Figure 18. NAMW cover sent to FDR from Laconia, New Hampshire.



Figure 19. NAMW cover sent to FDR from Brunswick, Maine.

Industry and learning are promoted on the NAMW First Flight cover sent to FDR from Brunswick, Maine, in Figure 19. The cachet shows the Androscoggin River providing water power for industry which included lumber, ship building and textiles, with learning highlighted by Bowdoin College.

The NAMW cover shown in Figure 20 was sent to FDR from Plainview, Minnesota. Signed by the postmaster, the theme of the Plainview cachet is "The horn of plenty" and "the fertile fields of Greenwood Prairie."



Figure 20. NAMW cover sent to FDR from Plainview, Minnesota.

Even tiny communities participated in NAMW. Perhaps my favorite example is the one sent to FDR from Crab Orchard, a small village in Johnson County, Nebraska, shown in Figure 21. The cover uses an envelope with two-color printed cachet depicting the

Nebraska state capitol building in Lincoln (35 miles away) with the name Crab Orchard separately stamped below.



Figure 21. NAMW cover sent to FDR from Crab Orchard, Nebraska.

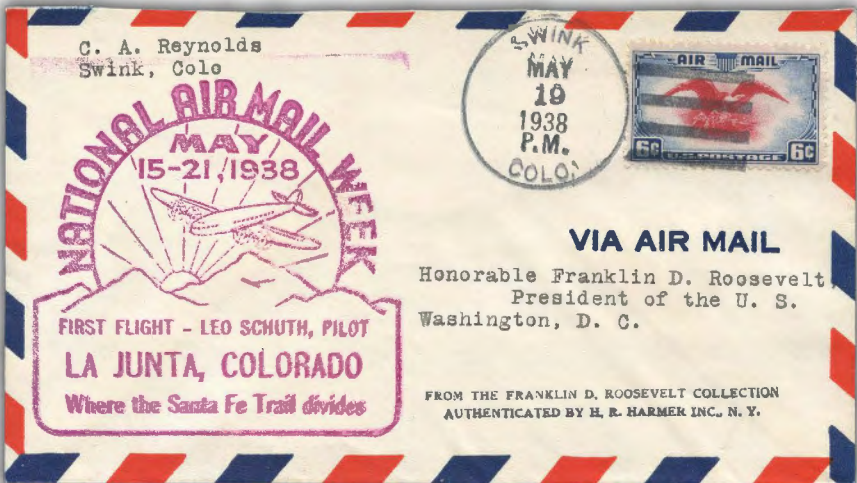


Figure 22. NAMW cover sent to FDR from Swink, Colorado.

Another May 19 NAMW cover mailed to FDR from the small town of Swink, Colorado, is shown in Figure 22. The cachet is actually from La Junta, the nearby county seat, “Where the Santa Fe Trail Divides.” The pilot of this first flight cover is listed as Leo Schuth.

A May 19 NAMW cover mailed to FDR by the secretary of the Iron River Business Men’s Association from Iron River in the upper peninsula of Michigan is shown in Figure 23. Its cachet depicting a large tree and touts Iron River as “Gateway to the Ottawa National Forest.”





Figure 23. NAMW cover sent to FDR from Iron River, Michigan.

A cacheted NAMW cover from Kansas City, Kansas, sent to FDR is shown in Figure 24. Note that this shows a special flight was made from Fairfax Airport on May 19, 1938.

Figure 25 also shows a special flight cover sent to FDR, this time from Oyster Bay, New York. Oyster Bay is the historic home of the Theodore Roosevelt branch of FDR's extended family, with the cachet depicting an airplane flying above a sailboat, superimposed over a stylized marine compass. Unusually detailed routing for this May 19 airmail cover is revealed by two machine cancellations on the back. Following the originating Oyster Bay postmark at 10:30 AM, these indicate routing via Floyd Bennett Field in Brooklyn, New York, at noon and Newark, New Jersey at 4:30 PM, before going on to its final Washington, DC, destination.



Figure 24. NAMW cover sent to FDR from Kansas City, Kansas.



Figure 25. NAMW cover sent to FDR from Oyster Bay, New York.

Early transportation by train is the theme of the cachet on the NAMW cover sent to FDR from Bordentown, New Jersey shown in Figure 26. The cachet depicts the original 1831 “John Bull” locomotive that operated in New Jersey from 1833 to 1866 and is now preserved in the Smithsonian museum. More interestingly, the cover was apparently sent to FDR by the volunteer NAMW pilot, C. J. McKenna, who both flew the airplane from Bordentown and autographed the cover. Routing was via Camden, New Jersey, as indicated by the machine cancellation on the back.



Figure 26. NAMW cover sent to FDR from Bordentown, New Jersey with autograph from pilot C. J. McKenna, who flew the cover and sent it to FDR.



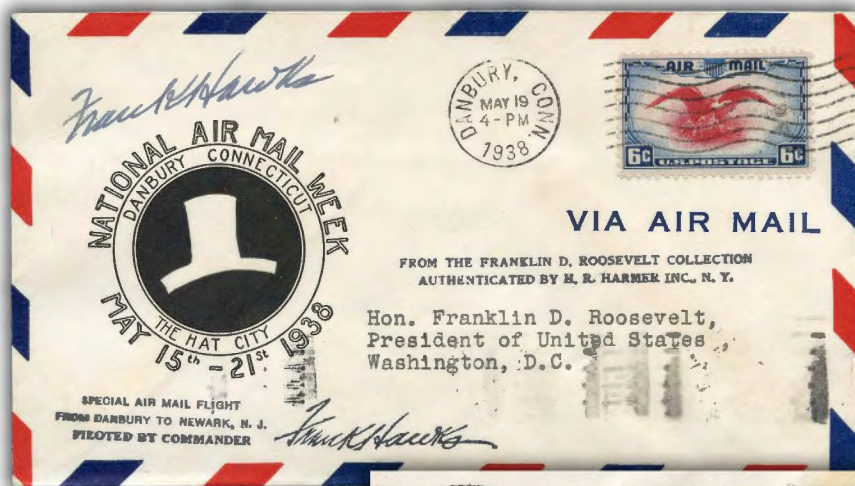
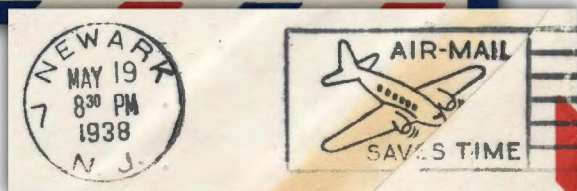


Figure 27. NAMW cover sent to FDR from Danbury, Connecticut and autographed by pilot Frank Hawks.



Another pilot autographed May 19 cover sent to FDR is shown in Figure 27, this time from Danbury, Connecticut, described as “Hat City” on the cachet. Note the printed signature “Frank Hawks” below the cachet, with another hand signed in blue ink above. Frank Hawks was a famous aviator known as the “fastest airman in the world” who

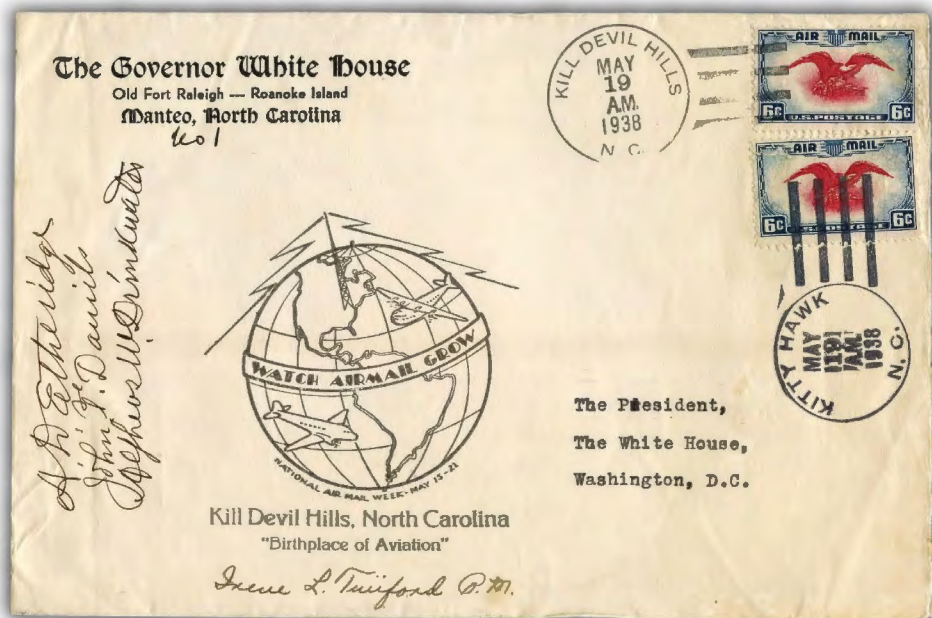


Figure 28. NAMW cover sent to FDR from Kill Devil Hills, North Carolina, and signed by local dignitaries.



had set more than 200 point-to-point speed records in the United States and Europe. Appropriately, there is machine cancellation shown on the back for Newark, New Jersey, with the slogan “Air-Mail Saves Time.” Hawks himself was killed while flying an experimental aircraft about three months after NAMW.

The oversize May 19 NAMW cover sent to FDR shown in Figure 28, commemorates the “Birthplace of Aviation” at Kill Devil Hills, North Carolina, where the Wright brothers made the first controlled, powered airplane flight on December 17, 1903. Note that the cover has been franked with two examples of the 6¢ bi-color airmail stamp, the second of which has a Kitty Hawk cancellation. This large cover has been signed by a number of local dignitaries including the postmaster. It must have arrived at the White House fairly quickly, as on the back (not shown) is a 2:30 PM Washington, DC, “Air Mail Field” machine cancellation of May 19, 1938.



*Figure 29. NAMW cover sent to FDR from Santa Barbara, California.*

In Figure 29, I show a May 20, 1938, NAMW cover franked with the 6¢ bi-color airmail stamp sent to FDR from my hometown, Santa Barbara, California. The cachet celebrates Earle Ovington, who in September 1911 piloted the first official airmail flight in the United States. Carrying mail from Garden City to Mineola, New York, this was flown using a French Blériot aircraft pictured on the cachet, the same type used for the first flight across the English Channel in 1909. Ovington moved to Santa Barbara in 1920 building his own landing strip, and this served as Santa Barbara’s airport until his death in 1936. The cachet also features an image of the 1786 Santa Barbara Mission, the oldest mission in continuous use in California.

It should be emphasized that not all NAMW covers were franked with the new 6¢ bi-color airmail stamp, and I show three examples of such covers from my collection sent to FDR in Figure 30. The first (without cachet) was signed by the postmaster of South Gouldsboro, Maine. Note the inverted year date slug in the cancellation. Another with cachet is from Sebasco Estates, Maine. The third, from Balwin, Kansas, is on 6¢ airmail postal stationery, this time with a cachet commemorating the Battle of Black

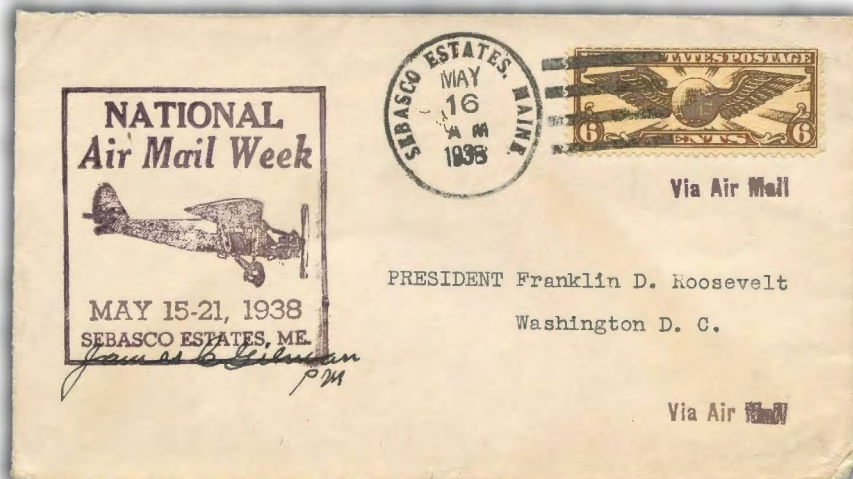


Figure 30. Various NAMW covers sent to FDR without the 6c bi-color airmail stamp.

Jack, between antislavery forces led by the abolitionist John Brown and pro-slavery forces in 1856.

Finally, things would seem incomplete without showing NAMW usage of the special delivery airmail stamp, whose vignette harks back to the first hurriedly prepared model that depicted using an eagle for 6¢ bi-color airmail stamp.<sup>1</sup> The NAMW cover shown in Figure 31 has an advertising cachet and TWA airmail etiquette, and was mailed to FDR from the W. D. Orr Studio and Gift Shop in Memphis, Texas, on Thursday, May 19, 1938. It arrived the following day in Washington, DC, as shown by the backstamp. The advertising cachet on this cover shows an outline map of Texas revealing the location of the town of Memphis (population ~4,000 during the 1930s) in the Texas panhandle. The ad itself touts “5 hour Kodak service” for black and white film, something that seems quaint today when instant color photography by cell phone is commonplace.



**Figure 31.** Special delivery airmail advertising cover sent to FDR during NAMW from Memphis, Texas, on May 19, 1938.

Together, the wide variety of locally produced and inspired cachet artwork used for National Air Mail Week offers collectors an intriguing range of authentic Americana, and provides highlights of what many cities and small towns believed made them special and interesting. In this article I've shown representative examples of these fascinating mementos that were addressed to President Franklin D. Roosevelt and his Postmaster General James A. Farley. Thousands more exist.

For example, in the collection of the National Postal Museum in Washington, there are 35 binders of National Air Mail Week material donated by PMG Farley. To give some idea of the breadth and scope of this collection, the listings include 69 NAMW covers from Alabama, 41 from Arkansas, 434 from California, 63 from Colorado, 143 from Connecticut, 33 from Delaware, 86 from Florida, 84 from Georgia, etc., totaling more than 6,100 from around the United States.

Auction catalogs from the 1946 H.R. Harmer auction of the Franklin D. Roosevelt stamp collection show more than 4,100 NAMW covers addressed to FDR,<sup>2</sup> mostly from



the July and December sales. These are typically grouped into large lots of up to 200 covers "addressed to the President" with NAMW cachets. Some smaller lots are described as having NAMW covers also signed by the local postmaster and/or the pilot. There are even a few lots of covers that were sent to FDR without cachets, some of these described as being signed by the postmaster. Of the overall totals listed from the FDR collection, about 17% are signed by the postmaster and about 1.7% by the NAMW pilot.

Although NAMW covers are widely available and inexpensive, determining the actual number of communities that participated in NAMW based on post office cancellations and the total number of different NAMW cachets that were produced based on distinct design types presents a philatelic research challenge. For this, the Smithsonian's collection of some 7,350 National Air Mail Week items donated by Postmaster General James A. Farley, including over 6,100 NAMW covers, should provide a good starting point.

### References

1. Paul M. Holland, "1938 Bi-Color Airmail Stamp: FDR, Farley and National Air Mail Week, Part I," *The United States Specialist*, March 2024, pages 115-126 (see Figure 2).
2. *The President Franklin D. Roosevelt Collection*: H.R. Harmer, Inc., New York, Parts One through Four: February, April, July and December 1946.

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– not pictured –

**#5756** (5¢) Patriotic Block Coil  
**B222**

**#5827** **\$9.85 Pillars of Creation**

**P1111** **UL** ‡ ‡ **LR**

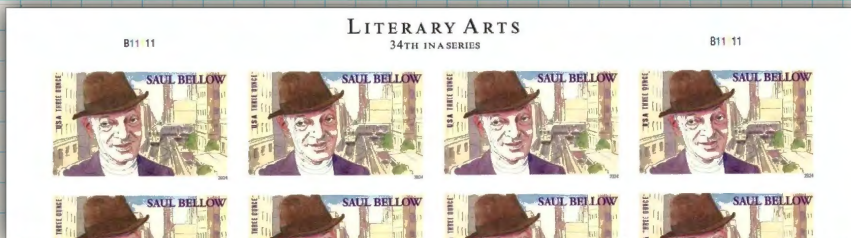
**1r x 6c** **1,2,3,4,5,6\***



**#5828** **\$30.45 Cosmic Cliffs**

**P1111** **UL** ‡ ‡ **LR**

**1r x 6c** **1,2,3,4,5,6\***



**#????**

**B11111**

**2r x 3c**

**Saul Bellow**

**UL** **UR**

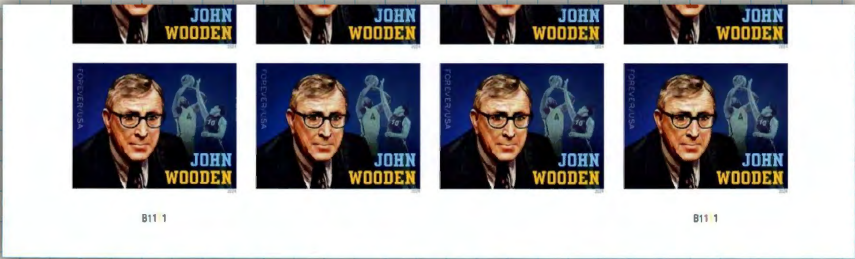
**1,2,3,4,5,6\***

**LL**

**LR**



#???? (10¢) Radiant Star Coil  
B111



▲ #???? John Wooden  
B11111 UL UR LL LR  
3r x 3c 1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9\*



◀ #REA79c 50¢ Beer Stamp  
18637

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17537	Michael Boush, Austin, TX		
17538	Michael Peich, West Chester, PA		
17539	Richard Yarnold, Portland, ME		
17540	Sharon McDonald, Quincy, MA		
		New members	9
		Reinstated	8
		Total	+ 17
APPLICATIONS PENDING		SUBTRACTIONS:	
17527–17534		Deceased	1
		Total	- 1
NEW MEMBERS		NET CHANGE	
17518–17526			+ 16
REINSTATED		TOTAL MEMBERSHIP	
		February 29, 2024	1354
11024	George Young	DONATIONS (received outside of annual dues cycle)	
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16777	Gary Rauch		
17029	Brian Selkow		
17123	Mark Swan		
17140	Steven Roth	Joel Cohen	
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## Index of Advertisers

### American Plate Number Single Society

([www.apnss.org](http://www.apnss.org)) ..... 166

### Barney's Stamps

([www.barneysstamps.com](http://www.barneysstamps.com)) ..... 188

### Boston 2026 World Stamp Show, Inc.

([www.Boston2026.com](http://www.Boston2026.com)) ..... 167

### Great American Stamp Show

([www.stamps.org/GASS](http://www.stamps.org/GASS)) ..... 157

### Alan Hovsepian

([www.USatFACE.com](http://www.USatFACE.com)) ..... 156

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([www.mountainsidestampsandcoins.com](http://www.mountainsidestampsandcoins.com)) ..... 188

### Precancel Stamp Society

([www.precancels.com](http://www.precancels.com)) ..... 192

### Robert A. Siegel Auction Galleries

([www.siegelauctions.com](http://www.siegelauctions.com)) ..... 150

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([www.shaulisstamps.com](http://www.shaulisstamps.com)) ..... 151

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..... 151

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([www.uspcs.org](http://www.uspcs.org)) ..... 192

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