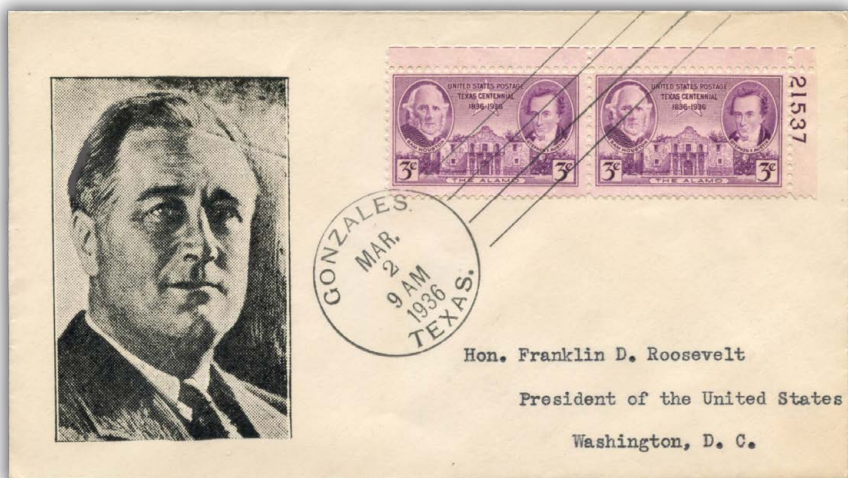




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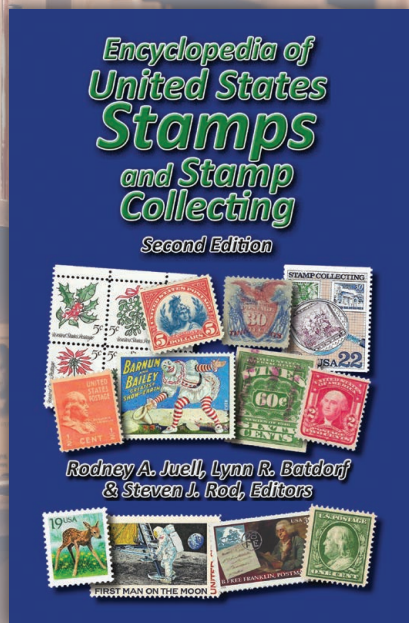
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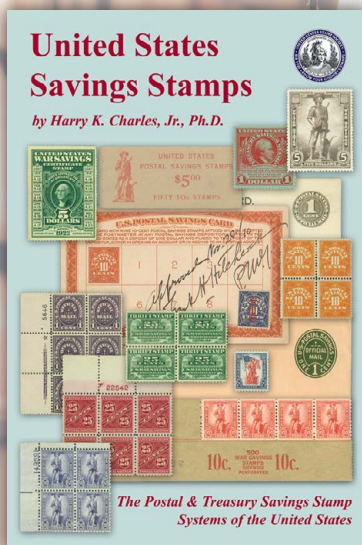
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by James Robinson and Jay Stotts

Andrew S. Kelley, Editor
9038 East 25th Drive
Denver, CO 80238
(720) 839-5848

email: editor@usstamps.org

www.usstamps.org

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THE UNITED STATES SPECIALIST
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EDITOR

ANDREW S. KELLEY

9038 East 25th Drive
Denver, CO 80238
email: editor@usstamps.org

**United States Stamp Society
Bureau Issues Association, Inc.**

P.O. Box 1602
Hockessin, DE 19707-5602

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Roger S. Brody

P.O. Box 5836
Somerset, NJ 08875-5836
email: brody@usstamps.org

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Nicholas Lombardi

P.O. Box 1005
Mountainside, NJ 07092
email: 8605@comcast.net

VICE PRESIDENT

Jeffrey Shapiro

P.O. Box 3211
Fayville, MA 01745-3211
email: coverlover@gmail.com

SECRETARY

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10703 Kings Riding Way, Unit T-1
Rockville, MD 20852-5420
email: cohenji@comcast.net

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email: stottsjd@swbell.net

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email: MOPerry@mac.com

DURLAND EDITOR

Kim D. Johnson

310 E N 3rd Street, Georgetown, IL 61846
email: westhome1@aol.com

ESSAY-PROOF

James Patterson

1850 North Central Avenue, No. 1400
Phoenix, AZ 85004
email: jhpatterson@yahoo.com

EXHIBIT PDFs

Chris Steenerson

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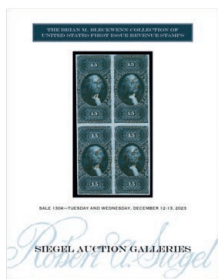
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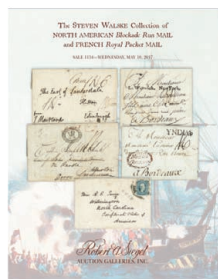
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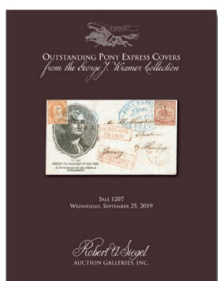
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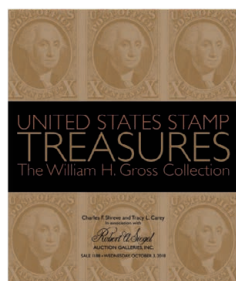
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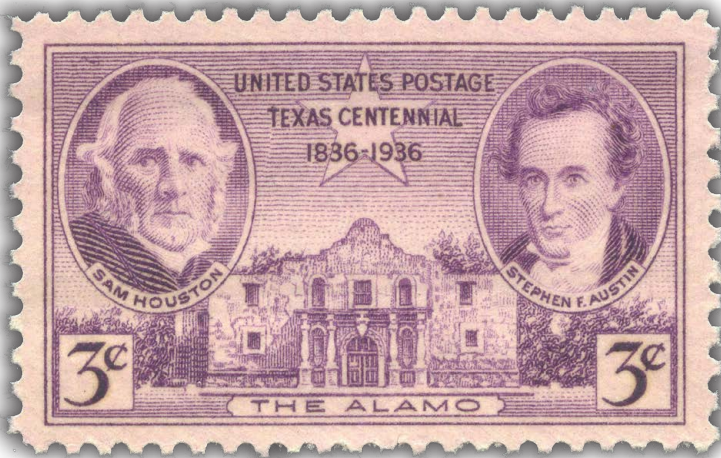


From The Farley Era Committee

FDR and the 1936 Texas Centennial Stamp

by **Paul M. Holland**

USSS #16849 | ✉pholland.thorleaf@gmail.com



“ It is with pleasure that I send you this letter bearing the special 3-cent postage stamp issued by the Department to commemorate the Centennial of Texas Independence.

Included in the central design of this stamp is a reproduction of the historic Alamo, with portraits of Sam Houston and Stephen F. Austin, heroic figures in the movement for Texas freedom.

This letter is being mailed through the Gonzales, Texas, post office, the scene of the first conflict on the day which marks the centennial anniversary of the adoption of Texas independence. ”

—From a signed March 2, 1936, letter sent with a Favor First Day Cover of the 3¢ Texas Stamp to Master Eddie White by Postmaster General James A. Farley

The origin of a commemorative postage stamp to celebrate the centennial of Texas independence can be traced to July 1935, when the Post Office Department instructed the Bureau of Engraving and Printing (BEP) to prepare preliminary designs, as shown in Figure 1.¹ Both designs feature a portrait of Sam Houston, the Alamo, and the Battle

of San Jacinto, the final and decisive battle of the Texas Revolution that was fought on April 21, 1836. Note especially the 1835–1935 dating on these essays.

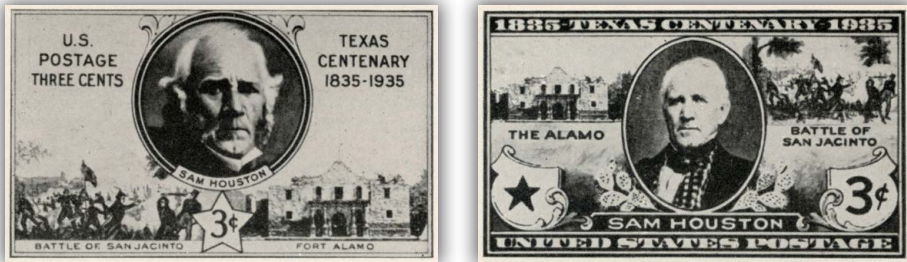


Figure 1. Initial 1835–1935 BEP essays for the Texas Centennial Stamp.¹

Curiously, at the time it seemed reasonable to issue this stamp in 1935, to coincide with the 100th anniversary of the 1835 convention of San Felipe-de-Austin, where a provisional government seeking independence for Texas was organized, and Sam Houston was appointed to lead the army. Doing so would have followed the lead of the earlier 1935 Michigan Centennial stamp, whose issue date was based on the centenary of a constitution to establish statehood and not the actual 1837 date when Michigan was finally admitted to the Union after state boundary disputes had been resolved.

However, it was decided to delay the release of the stamp to 1936 to coincide with celebrations planned in Texas. In the meantime, the Texas Centennial Central Exposition had commissioned a Dallas newspaper artist, Anne Prescott Toomey, to create prospective designs for a commemorative stamp, as shown in Figure 2. These added a portrait of Stephen F. Austin, founder of the first colony of American settlers in Texas, who was widely regarded as the “Father of Texas.” The design on the left displays the six flags that have flown over Texas, including those of Spain, France, and Mexico, the lone star flag of Texas, the flag of the Confederacy, and the United States flag. The essay on the right shows in addition to portraits of Houston and Austin, the Alamo, and Battle of San Jacinto. Both show 1836–1936 dates.



Figure 2. Stamp essays for the 1836–1936 Texas Centennial Stamp by Anne Prescott Toomey.

New 1936 dated designs were also produced at the BEP. These are shown in Figure 3. The essay on the left simply alters the dates on an earlier essay to 1836–1936, while that on the right adds a portrait of Austin, drops the Battle of San Jacinto, and now shows on an enlarged image of the Alamo.



Figure 3. Updated 1836–1936 BEP essays for the Texas Centennial Stamp.¹

As the dual portrait design was finalized at the BEP, the label “Fort Alamo” was replaced by “The Alamo” in the drawing and essay by Alvin R. Meissner shown in Figure 4. Note how the essay on the right closely resembles the final stamp design except for “3¢” replacing the numeral “3” in the value blocks at the bottom corners.



Figure 4. More finalized drawing and essay for the Texas Centennial Stamp.¹

Approval of the design was announced by Postmaster General (PMG) James A. Farley on January 17, 1936. The portrait of Sam Houston was engraved by C. T. Arlt, while that of Stephen F. Austin was by L. C. Kauffmann. The vignette showing the Alamo was engraved by Frederick Pauling, with the frame and lettering by W. B. Wells.¹

The die proof was approved by PMG Farley on February 14, with the first rotary press printing begun at a special ceremony at the BEP on February 20 in the presence of Farley, Vice President John Nance Garner, and other dignitaries.²

The city selected for the first day of issue was Gonzales, Texas, the site of the first skirmish of the Texas Revolution on October 2, 1835. The stamp itself was issued on March 2, 1936. My favor first day cover (FDC) for this stamp with letter signed by PMG James A. Farley in his trademark green ink, is shown in Figure 5. This was sent to a young Master Eddie White, who came from a family of famous diplomats dating back to William Pinkney (1764–1822), who had served under President James Monroe.

Figure 6 shows an FDC sent to FDR that is franked with a corner margin plate number pair of the Texas Centennial stamps. This is from the upper right pane. Also note the printed portrait of FDR on the envelope used for this cover. This unusual cachet type was almost certainly sent to FDR by postmaster Fred Boothe of Gonzales, Texas, based on its similarity to other portrait-type covers attributed to Boothe.^{3,4}

The cachet on my FDC shown in Figure 7 helps to illustrate why Gonzales, Texas was chosen for the first day of issue of the Texas Centennial stamp. This depicts the famous

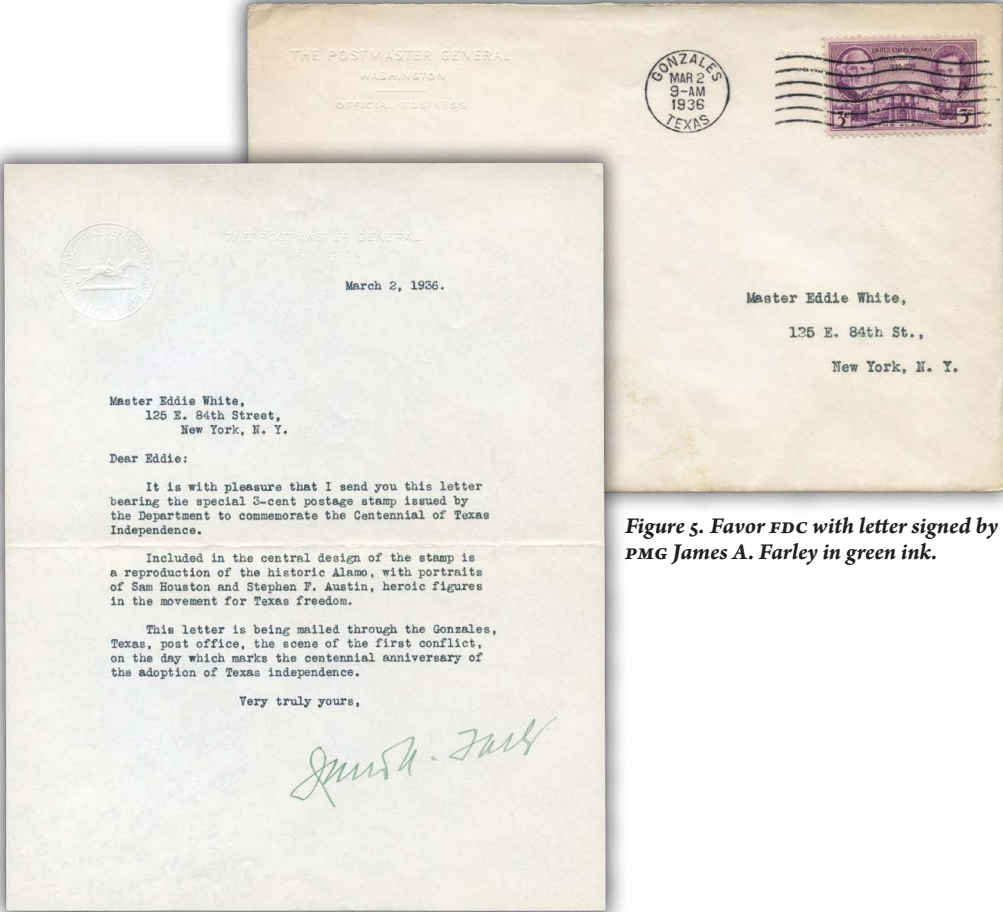


Figure 5. Favor FDC with letter signed by PMG James A. Farley in green ink.

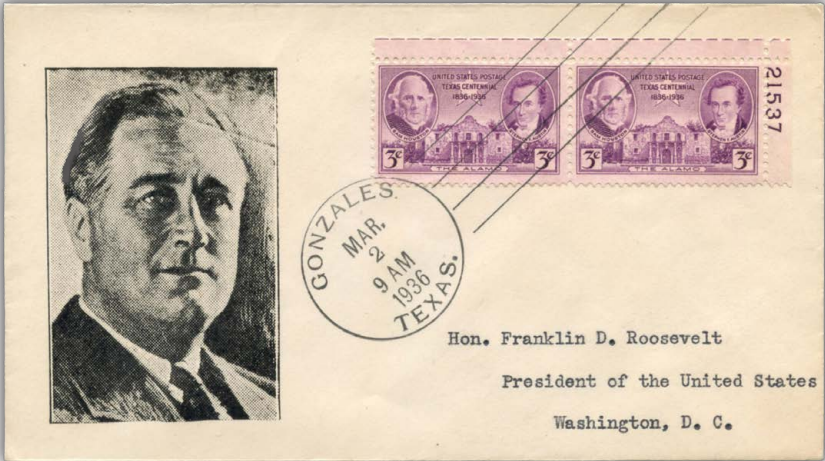


Figure 6. FDC sent to FDR franked with plate number pair of Texas Centennial stamps (courtesy Ron Westerman).

"Come and Take It" cannon whose wheels had been improvised from sections cut from the trunks of cottonwood trees. In defiance of Mexican forces, this canon was employed in the first skirmish in the war for Texas independence. The importance of Gonzales to the cause was further cemented when 32 volunteers from Gonzales arrived to help defend the Alamo on March 1, 1836. Along with American folk heroes Davy Crockett, Jim Bowie, and other defenders, all were killed in the final battle a few days later, with the 32 from Gonzales becoming known as the Immortal 32. Note that this FDC with cachet (Texas 4) by the Centennial Service Bureau⁴ has been signed by both Mayor S. M. Ainsworth and Postmaster Fred Boothe of Gonzales.



Figure 7. FDC signed by the Mayor and Postmaster of Gonzales, Texas.

At the White House, where FDR was an avid stamp collector, employees were allowed to employ official White House stationery for FDCs. An example for the Texas Centennial stamp shown in Figure 8.

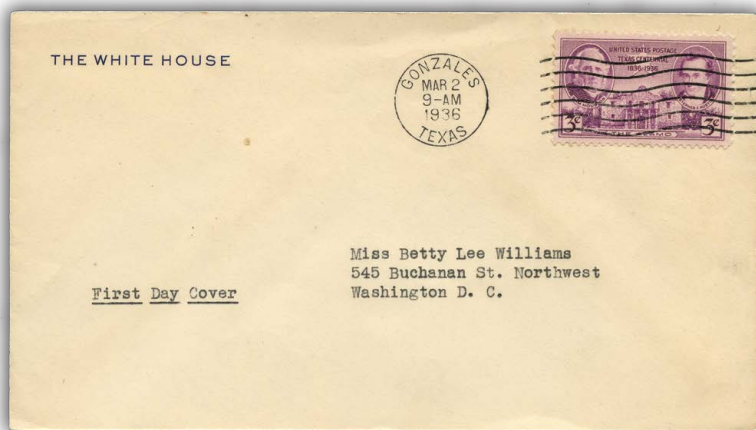


Figure 8. FDC on official White House stationery franked with Texas Centennial stamp (courtesy Ron Westerman).

Interestingly, about two months later, the Third International Philatelic Exhibition was held in New York City, from May 9–14, 1936. For this, a special imperforate TIPEX souvenir sheet that included the Texas Centennial commemorative stamp was issued on May 9. This offered collectors an opportunity to divide the souvenir sheet into quarters for use on FDCs. An example of this usage from my collection for the Texas Centennial Stamp is shown in Figure 9. Note the beautifully engraved TIPEX exhibition label printed in green by the American Bank Note Company.



Figure 9. TIPEX FDC showing usage of imperforate Texas Centennial Stamp.

The Texas Centennial Stamp was also used on mail sent to FDR. An example from my collection with a special cachet commemorating both the Texas centennial and the official opening of a deep water port at Brownsville, Texas, on May 16, 1936, is shown in Figure 10. This marked the completion of a 1933 Public Works Administration project



Figure 10. Cover sent to FDR celebrating the opening of a deep water port in Brownsville, Texas on May 16, 1936.

under FDR's New Deal, resulting in a much-needed 17-mile-long channel and terminal facilities. The cachet on this cover is one of 42 "official" cachets produced for various cities by the Texas Centennial Commission between March 6–December 29, 1936.^{4,5}

It should also be noted that 1936 was a Presidential Election year. In June, FDR made a highly publicized trip around the country by train, visiting Texas from June 11 to 13, 1936. I show my June 11, 1936, cover sent to FDR during this presidential trip in Figure 11. Unusually, this is addressed to the "Hon. Franklin D. Roosevelt, Union Station, Houston, Texas" with an added notation "To arrive at 9:00 A.M." The back of the cover bears the H. R. Harmer auction handstamp showing that although it was mailed to him at a train station, FDR received it without problems. Furthermore a special Texas Centennial cachet is printed on the back flap. This shows a design consisting of portraits of Houston and Austin, along with the six flags that have flown over Texas. This special stationery with the Centennial Exposition logo printed on the back flap had been sold in matching sets of envelopes and letterhead by the Ben Franklin Company's five-and-dime stores throughout Texas. When used for FDCs it is listed as Texas 233 and Planty 89.⁴



Figure 11. Cover sent to FDR at Union Station, Houston, Texas on June 11, 1936.

After arriving in Houston that morning FDR visited San Jacinto. FDR then continued on by train to San Antonio, where he visited the Alamo as shown in Figure 12. In his speech, FDR proclaimed that "Without the inspiration of the cry 'Remember the Alamo,'

the great Southwest might never have become a part of the Nation.” This refers to the fact that it was the admission of Texas to statehood in 1845 that triggered the 1846–1848 Mexican War, an event that ultimately led to annexation of the southwestern United States, including the state of California.



Figure 12. FDR visiting the Alamo on June 11, 1936.

The following day, June 12, FDR visited the Texas Centennial Exposition in Dallas. Here he gave a major speech at the Cotton Bowl as shown in Figure 13. FDR's words included “I have come here to bear the tribute of the Nation to you on your 100th birthday... This great Centennial Exposition is not for Texans alone—it is for the people of the other forty-seven States as well.”



Figure 13. FDR at the Texas Centennial Exposition in Dallas, June 12, 1936.

FDR received lots of mail at the White House, and this included covers franked with the 1936 Texas Centennial Stamp during the 1936 presidential campaign. An example from my collection is shown in Figure 14. This cover addressed simply to “The President,” was sent to FDR from San Antonio, Texas, and has a slogan cancel reading “Buy U. S. Savings Bonds, Ask Your Postmaster.” It was posted on September 2, 1936.

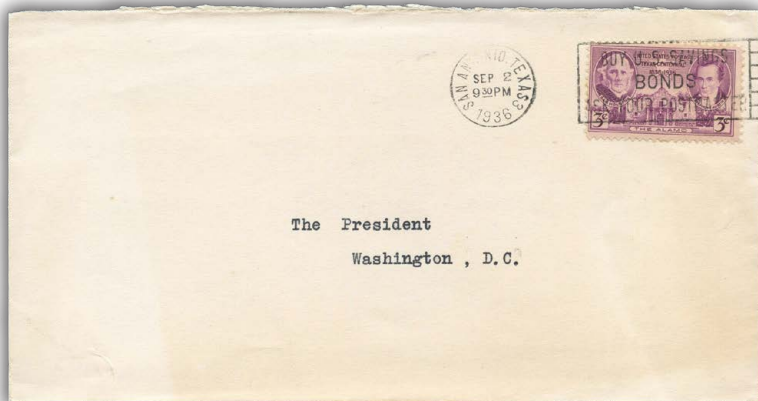


Figure 14. Cover sent to FDR at the White House with the Texas Centennial Stamp during the 1936 Presidential campaign.

Postmaster General Farley remained Chairman of the Democratic National Committee, as well as serving as the campaign manager for FDR’s 1936 reelection effort. A master politician, Farley thus presided over FDR’s great landslide victory over Alf Landon, who carried only two states with eight electoral votes, compared to FDR’s massive total of 523 electoral votes. This led Farley to coin the phrase “as goes Maine, so goes Vermont,” parodying the earlier aphorism that in presidential politics, “as goes Maine, so goes the Nation.”

The 1936 Texas Centennial Stamp represents another FDR-era classic. Celebrating the Lone Star State for its former status as an independent republic, this same design was also used to advantage in the special four-stamp souvenir sheet prepared for the Third International Philatelic Exhibition in 1936.

Acknowledgment

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From The Booklets and Booklet Panes Committee

The Monthly Random Booklet: BK156

by **Dieter R. Kohler, Ph.D.**

USSF # 12538



Figure 1. BK156, front and back cover.

Introduction

Towards 1988, The United States Postal Service (USPS) had an unusual problem: booklets had become too popular! Vending machines were everywhere and were increasing in numbers. Booklets to feed the machines were not, however. The intaglio presses and Goebel booklet forming machines at the Bureau of Engraving and Printing (BEP) were operating at full capacity but still there was a shortage of booklets to feed the vending machines. So the BEP decided to produce booklets out of regular stamp sheets as a stopgap solution until more booklet forming equipment could be procured. The choice fell to the 22¢ Flag and Fireworks sheet stamps and an unusually large-sized booklet containing one pane of 20 stamps was made. Fifty million booklets were ordered. The 22¢ Flag and Fireworks booklets were issued on November 30, 1988. A short article by Belmont Faries¹ appeared in this journal soon after, but contained a few errors.

The booklets were announced in two *Postal Bulletins*⁵ with the following instructions:

Existing booklets for small booklet vending machines, models PBM 1, 2, 4, 5 and 6 and SVBM 3, are in short supply. Thus window clerks are urged to reduce over-the-counter sales of those existing booklets and to offer their customers the new Flag With Fireworks booklets...

...These new booklets are a response to the nationwide shortage of stamp booklets with traditional outside dimensions. However, stamp requisitioning personnel and window clerks must deploy the new booklets properly to relieve the shortage. They should restrict the booklets, whenever possible, to over-the-counter sales.

This article details all the collectible varieties of the booklet, it has something for every collector grade (for defining grades, check the introductory article²).

Getting Through the Grades, One at a Time

Only one booklet cover design was used during the production of the booklets. There were no changes in the subscription programs during the printing period so no change in the back cover writing was needed. This was the largest booklet containing “normal” stamps to date (not counting the American Expedition Forces WWI booklets which were never available to the general public). Cover stock reacts with a strong bluish-white glow under both long wave or short wave UV light.

BK156 with one pane of 20 sheet stamps	□
--	---

Table 1. Basic level of collecting BK156

Table 1 gives us the first look at the basic collectible varieties. Only one booklet is needed for the entry level collector. A few booklets were found that erroneously contained two panes, and at least one booklet was reported containing three panes (a real bargain for the finder!).

Plate Layout for the Stamps

The plate layout for the stamps is shown in Figure 2. The stamps were printed on the Andreotti gravure press which allowed for very colorful stamps. The press could print up to seven true colors, meaning the inks are not mixed but every print station transferred the final color. Usually the last print station was used to apply the surface tagging. The Flag issue was printed in four colors, yellow, red, royal blue and background blue, so five of the seven possible print stations were engaged. The web roll ran vertically, its width being 20 stamps, intended to be cut up into the usual four regular sheets of 100 stamps.

The key difference between ordinary sheets and booklet pane sheets is the necessity to have tab areas on the latter in order to glue the booklet panes into the booklet covers. This explains the large size of the BK156 booklets as only two columns of free area could be used for pane tabs (only one size of panes was planned to reduce complexity).

The printing plate for the stamps also contained an “invisible” vertical electric eye bar between the blue and red bar. Most likely this bar also existed on the web for the

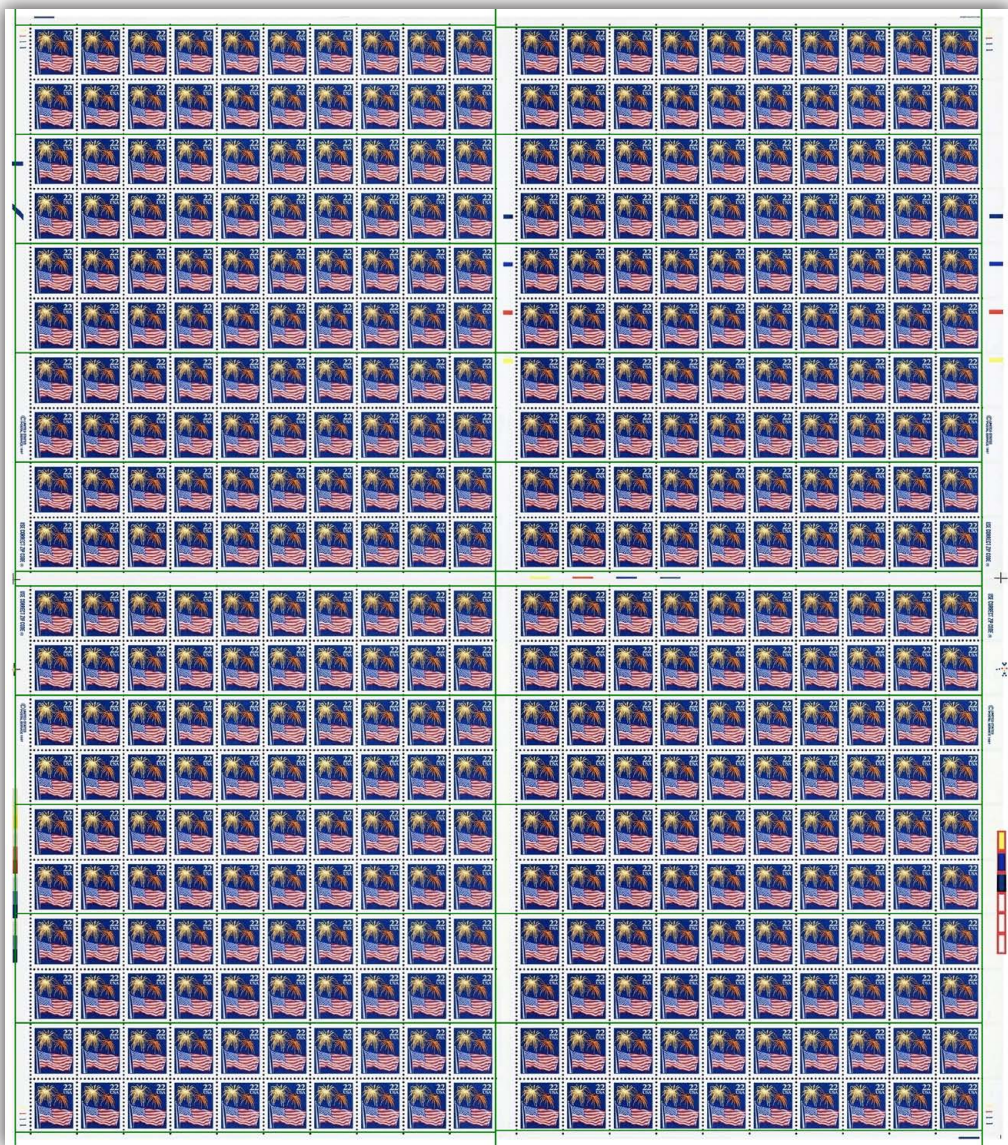


Figure 2. Plate layout for the Flag and Fireworks stamps with perforations and cutting lines for booklet panes drawn in green added.

booklet panes print run but as the right selvage was trimmed off, the bar does not appear on booklet panes. See Figure 3.

Figure 2 also includes the perforations required for producing booklet panes. As a different perforator setup was required, the panes for the booklets came from an entirely new perforation run and not from print runs intended for sheet stamps. A jury-rigged Eureka perforator was used. Every second perforation pin wheel was omitted, and the horizontal perforation holes did not extend into the edges on both sides of the web, unlike the perforations on the regular sheet stamps that ran the entire web width. No unfolded panes were produced, everything went into booklets.



Figure 3. “Invisible” electric eye mark from the top right of Figure 2, seen under uv light.

Booklet collectors at that time quickly observed that the centering of the stamps on the panes was all over the place from booklet to booklet. Also observed were some panes that were smaller in height than the booklet cover they were glued into. The centering can easily be explained with the web layout shown. While the plate contained the usual cutting marks to cut the web into regular sheets of 10 by 10 stamps, there were no marks suitable for cutting up the web into booklet panes (with the exception of a cross mark at right, below the ZIP Code line on the bottom left sheet).

Given that we have booklets that consistently contain the “shortened height” panes, we can second guess the sequence of how the web was cut up into booklet panes. The cutting lines are drawn in green into Figure 2.

1. The web roll was cut into a left and a right half, trimming the left side using the left cross mark. The right side of the left half was trimmed close to the rightmost stamp column hence no sheet margins from the right side survived (except on widely miscut panes). The vertical cut through the middle of the web was not very precise. Sometimes it was so close to the stamp column that an entire perforation hole remained on the tabs of booklet panes from the right web roll.

2. The two rolls were horizontally cut into individual “booklet sheets”, five panes in height. Notice it required a double cut in the center of a 400-subject sheet, where the three regular horizontal color bars were placed. No panes have been reported that show traces of those three color bars. Five booklet panes were then cut from every left and right sheet. Notice the regular cut markings at the bottom and top of the plate could not be used as guides for the booklet panes, they are too far away from the stamps. So the rolls were cut from the center outwards.

Two peculiar cuts happened on the right web half (for unknown reasons). The top pane on the top sheet and the bottom pane on the bottom sheet were cut smaller than all the other panes. When the top panes were inserted into booklet covers, there was a

gap at top as seen in Figure 4, the panes are not flush along the top of the covers. Equally with the bottom panes, they are not flush along the bottom of the covers.



Figure 4. Position R1 pane in a booklet cover. The pane is smaller than the cover.

Seven plates in three combinations for three plate number combinations were used to print the booklets. Maybe plate 2122 was an oversight when the plates were changed from the first plate set to the second set and the red plate 1 was not exchanged (plate 2122 is less commonly found than plates 1111 and 2222). Given that the left side marginal markings survived the cutting process, we have the following collectible varieties for collecting grade 2. The nomenclature of M. Perry’s checklist³ is used for the left and right positions:

Position	Selvage mark	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
L1	Plate number 1111 or 2122 or 2222 at upper left	<input type="checkbox"/>
L2	Blue bar and diagonal	<input type="checkbox"/>
L3	Plain—no perforation hole in tab	<input type="checkbox"/>
L4	Copyright notice at lower left	<input type="checkbox"/>
L5	USE CORRECT ZIP CODE message at lower left	<input type="checkbox"/>
L6	USE CORRECT ZIP CODE message at upper left	<input type="checkbox"/>
L7	Copyright notice at upper left	<input type="checkbox"/>
L8	Blue, Red and Yellow color blocks	<input type="checkbox"/>
L9	Blue color gradient blocks	<input type="checkbox"/>
L10	Plate number 1111 or 2122 or 2222 at lower left	<input type="checkbox"/>
R1	Plain tab, top edge not flush with cover	<input type="checkbox"/>
R2	Blue electric eye bar at lower left	<input type="checkbox"/>
R3	Red and Blue electric eye bars	<input type="checkbox"/>
R4	Yellow electric eye bar at upper left	<input type="checkbox"/>
R5–R9	Plain tab with (partial) perforation hole	<input type="checkbox"/>
R10	Plain tab, bottom edge not flush with cover	<input type="checkbox"/>

Table 2. Grade 2 level of collecting BK156

To overall tag or not to overall tag, that is the question

Figure 5 shows the left halves of two booklet pane under short wave UV light. At right, the normal block tagging covering the stamp design (slightly shifted to the bottom left) can be seen. At left, the pane is uniformly overall tagged. However, overall tagged stamps have not been reported for the Flag and Fireworks sheet or booklet stamps.

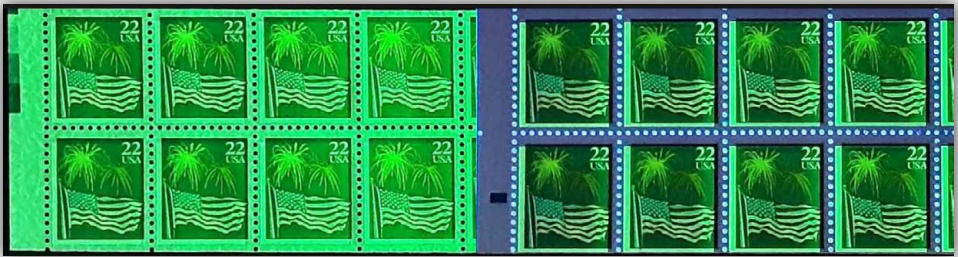


Figure 5. Overall tagged and block tagged panes in BK156.

Looking at the two panes in Figure 5, it could be argued that two different tagging methods were used for the web rolls that went into booklet production. However, the tagging story is much more convoluted than it seems at first. Examining many panes under short wave uv light, the process seems to have rapidly changed block tagging into overall tagging. Tag smearing can be found for all plate number panes.

Figure 6 shows the earliest stages:

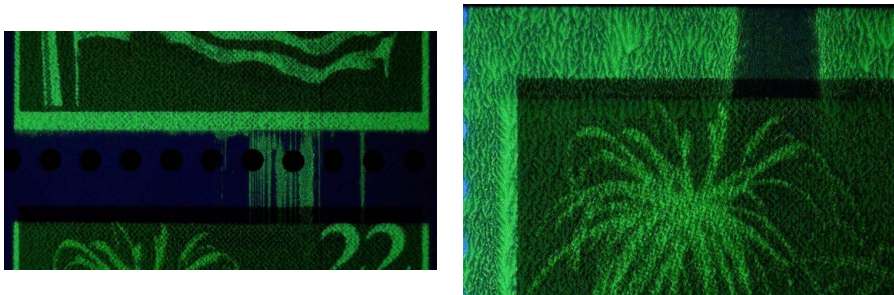


Figure 6. Early and later stages of tag smearing.

In the earliest stages, streaks of taggant start to bleed from the bottom of the tagging blocks into the unprinted areas, in the direction of the web flow. In the example, the tagging blocks are misplaced about one millimeter low compared to the stamp vignettes. Notice there seems to be a small gap at the top of the stamp vignette border in the earliest stages. There is, however, faint bleeding through this seemingly untagged gap which does not reproduce well in the left image in Figure 6 but can be seen in the right image.

Towards the end of tag smearing, the sharp streaks smear into uniform tagging and the tabs are eventually completely tagged. On some panes, there are areas above the stamps that seem to “resists tagging” as shown in Figure 7. These “tagging resistant” areas coincide with the ink used for the dark blue background color. Even on block tagged panes, the dark blue area of the stamp design show a weaker glow under UVC



Figure 7. Late stage of tag smearing.

light. Maybe the background dark blue dye rejected or absorbed some taggant or simply doesn't reflect the emitted green light as well as the other colors.

In the latest stages, the pane is almost completely overall tagged. Figure 8 shows a pane where only three areas above the blue background ink still offer some resistance to the taggant.



Figure 8. (Almost) final stage of tag smearing.

This gradual (but seemingly rapid) conversion of block tagging to overall tagging was observed in a block of around 40 booklets bought as bulk lot from Jacques Schiff auctions not long after the booklets were issued. No panes from the right half of the web roll show this overall tag smearing effect. Sheet stamps have been reported where the red color reacts to UV light with a strong glow. This effect was not seen in any booklet samples at hand.

The cause of the smearing is most likely connected to a local, specific tagging mat defect or wiping problem. In any case, the cause must explain that the (partial) smearing has only been seen on panes from the left side of the web (position L panes).

Hence booklet collectors are encouraged to check their BK156 collection if they possess the same tagging freaks.

Varieties

For the stamps issued in sheet form, several errors, freaks and oddities (EFOS) are known. Some blocks and single stamps are known with misregistered colors, and in

rare cases additionally missing the yellow color. These varieties have not been reported in booklet panes. Booklets are known containing more than one pane. Other known varieties are shown in Figures 9 to 14.

Figure 9 shows a pane with a wide enough miscut at right, showing a small piece of the tab mark of the adjoining pane at right in the web.



Figure 9. Wide cut position L3 pane, showing a piece of position R3 tab markings.

Figure 10 shows an opened booklet forming a “Butterfly” arrangement. Similar butterfly miscut booklets are known for other issues. This happened when the finished booklet stacks were vertically cut at an angle.



Figure 10. Butterfly cut position L7 booklet.

Two booklets were recently sold at auction⁴ containing miscut panes that have the tab at right (positions R3 and R7). The panes are rotated by 180 degrees in the booklet covers. One of the panes is shown in Figure 11. The panes do not have a perforated tab at right. Although both booklets have a 2008 Philatelic Foundation certificate, none of the booklet collectors the author contacted knew about these two panes.



Figure 11. Position R7 pane mounted inverted, miscut with full tab markings at right.

Panes with plate scratches (position L1 panes from plate 2222) through the leftmost two stamps can be found. The scratches run vertically through the middle of the stamp vignettes but can only be clearly seen in the white stripes of the flag (as marked by black arrows in Figure 12).

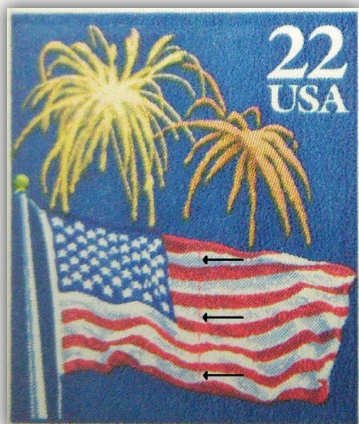


Figure 12. Vertical plate scratch through the flag, visible in the white stripes of the flag.



Figure 13. Imperforate between booklet stamps due to a fold-over error.

One booklet is known with a pane paper fold-over at right, resulting in a full pair of stamps horizontally imperforate between.⁶

An interesting tagging freak exists on position L6 panes, and may also exist on position R6 panes, as shown in Figure 14:



Figure 14. Mistagged position L6 booklet.

Position L6 and R6 are the top panes of the bottom halves of a 400 subject sheet. In the case of this L6 pane, the tagging gap is wider than it should be. The gap corresponds to the distance between the last pane of the top half of the sheet and the first pane of the bottom half of the sheet. Hence on this pane, the printing cylinder holding the block tagging mats lost the alignment with the other cylinders. This shows a disadvantage of

block tagging against overall tagging. The latter just distributes taggant all over the web, independently of the color cylinders. The former needs exact synchronization of the tagging cylinder with the color cylinders.

As a consequence of the tagging cylinder shift, it could well be that panes from this print run exist with an untagged top stamp row or an untagged bottom stamp row.

Despite being produced for a high demand, Flag and Firework booklets BK156 are not hard to find on the market.

The experiment with using regular sheet stamps processed into booklets was a one-time excursion into uncharted territory and did not continue.

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3. Michael O. Perry, *Folded-Style and Pressure Sensitive Booklet Checklist*, available on the Society website.
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5. Postal Bulletin 21644, Nov 5, 1987 and Postal Bulletin 21647, Nov 26, 1987.
6. Last sold at Daniel F. Kelleher Auctions LLC Sale 752, Feb. 23-24, 2021

Figure 15. Quality
Figure 16. United States Stamps
Figure 17. (1847-1945)

Singles (mint and used)

Plate Blocks

Booklet Panes plus Complete Booklets

Figure 18. Price lists-\$2.00 each category

Price lists free on web:

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Figure 19. We also buy quality U.S.

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Figure 1. Vintage Photo of the Month

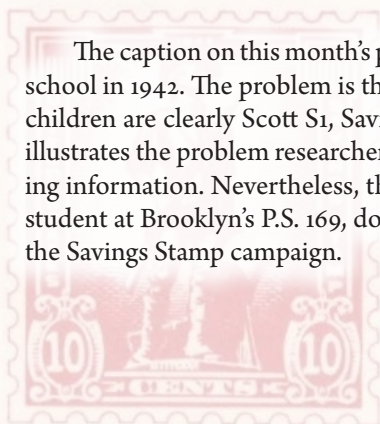
NYC School Children Buy Stamps

by **Rodney A. Juell**

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



The caption on this month's photo simply states that it depicts a New York City school in 1942. The problem is that the Savings Stamps on the table in front of the children are clearly Scott S1, Savings Stamps that were not issued until 1954. This illustrates the problem researchers sometimes face when confronted with conflicting information. Nevertheless, the scene, which reminds me of my own days as a student at Brooklyn's P.S. 169, does illustrate how school children did their part in the Savings Stamp campaign.





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The Great Americans

Great Americans Issue Part VII— The A Press Dollar Sheetlets

by Jay Stotts

USSS #10921 | ✉ stottsjd@swbell.net



Figure 1. \$5 Harte color transparency publicity photo.

The United States Postal Service (USPS) had a policy of selling plate blocks of four of the dollar values as requested through its philatelic windows and philatelic centers. The remainder was often an unsold sheet of 96 stamps minus the corner block of four. The 96 stamps were left to be somehow sold or, more likely, destroyed. Printing thousands of stamps cost pennies on the dollar, but the thought of all the waste being destroyed led to the new practice of printing the \$5 Bret Harte stamps in sheetlets of 20 stamps.

Figure 1 illustrates a color transparency of the publicity photograph announcing the \$5 Bret Harte stamp. Such transparencies were often distributed by the USPS along with notices announcing stamps. The USPS distributed black and white glossy photographs to publications such as newspapers that were likely to announce the upcoming stamp, but color transparencies were distributed to publications that were known to have color printing capability.

The \$5 Bret Harte Sheetlet

A layout of 20 stamps (four rows of five subjects) was decided on. Each corner carried a block of four with an adjacent printing sleeve number, creating four saleable "plate blocks," leaving four stamps in a center column that could be sold as individual stamps. The proportion of a single stamp and a plate block of four probably closely matched the USPS' sales experience from dedicated philatelic windows.

Figure 2. shows a \$5 Bret Harte sheetlet. In their selection of a 20-stamp sheetlet, the USPS may have had in mind that a certain percent-



Figure 2. \$5 Brett Harte sheetlet.

age of collectors might succumb to the temptation of buying an entire sheet. This would amount to the USPS collecting \$100 for their coffers without the obligation to provide any mail handling services and only a minor printing cost. If the USPS wasn't thinking in these terms, collectors certainly were.

Collector thoughts ranged the gamut between being bilked by USPS to admiration for the new format. The sheets were attractive and fit nicely on album pages. In fact, many album producers started printing pages for the full sheetlets. Other collectors protested the considerable expense of filling a printed spot in their albums. But the die was cast; sheetlets were here to stay after the release of the \$5 Harte stamp. The stamp was issued in a small town, Twain Harte, east of San Francisco, on August 25, 1987.

Charles Snee, in his "Dollar Signs" column in the May 3, 2004, *Linn's Stamp News*, reported on a full sheetlet of \$5 Harte stamps canceled with four strikes of a four-bar hand cancel from Waterford, Wisconsin, dated April 13, 1987. As Snee writes, "...slightly more than four months before the \$5 Bret Harte stamp was officially issued August 25, 1987, in Twain Harte, Calif." Snee continues, "Nonetheless, given what I know about this pane, I'm willing to accept it as the EKU [earliest known use]. Any challengers out there?"

The Bureau of Engraving and Printing (BEP) continued using the workhorse A Press and the Eureka perforator to produce the \$5 stamp. Two 20-stamp sheetlets were engraved side-by-side with generous margins between them and along each side of the sleeve. This pattern was repeated eight times around the circumference of the A Press drum, printing 320 stamps per revolution. Comparing the 320 stamps to the 800 subjects printed for conventional Great Americans sheets, there was considerable paper waste, but the purchase price of these stamps more than made up for the extra cost.

In addition to the sleeve number markings, a USPS copyright symbol and “1986” appear either above the center stamp or below the center stamp of the bottom row, depending on the sheetlet position on the printing sleeve. New male and female perforating pattern dies were made for the Eureka perforator, but the gauge stayed the same as for the 100-subject panes. As with those issues, these stamps were large block tagged and had dull gum.

The \$5 Harte Transfer Shift

Soon after the stamp was issued, George W. Brett reported that he had examined multiple sheets of the \$5 Harte stamp and that in position two (the second stamp from the left in the top row), of just one of those sheets, he reported a darker subject. This, he concluded, was the result of a shifted entry during the image-transferring process to the printing sleeve for this single stamp position. He wrote an article about his discovery, “\$5 Harte Stamp Shows Double Entry,” on pages 926–27 of the October 1987, *American Philatelist*. Brett credits the discovery to *American Philatelist* editor Bill Welch, but Welch credits it to Jane Andrews, then assistant editor of the *American Philatelist*. When she first saw the sheet, she remarked, “This stamp is darker than the others.”

In his article, Brett surmises that the darker image results from a shifted transfer. He concluded that the lines are not doubled (as in a re-entry or a double transfer) but are a little thicker vertically. With a shifted transfer, the results occurred in one operation where the metal was displaced. Brett speculates that the sleeve metal will not always be completely uniform throughout the sleeve, and a deeper entry occurred in this case.

A double transfer would have meant that an original transfer of the design would have taken place, followed by a subsequent transfer (typically after the first transfer was burnished out of the sleeve). Brett says that this was not the case. A re-entry would have meant that the plate was used and then returned to the plate makers for burnishing the old image out and re-entering a new image, but Brett excludes this option as well. The plate variety seems to have been present since the first issue of the sheets, as Andrews saw the sheetlet with the variety in late August 1987.

In his article, Brett provided two enlarged photos, one of the variety and one of the same area of an adjacent stamp. After viewing both photos and knowing what to look for, the difference is so subtle that it seems almost impossible to detect. Readers are invited to see if they can track down the article and view the two photos. Brett acknowledges that, “The doubling is not outstanding...” Welch wrote, “I looked at the stamp under a thirty-power magnifier and compared it with others on the sheetlet. The difference was subtle but distinct: In the No. 2 position, the engraved lines in the hair were thicker.”

The conclusion is that only one position experienced the shifted transfer on sleeve 1, so one in 320 stamps printed from that sleeve has the variety. Scott does not list the variety in the *Specialized Catalogue*.

The \$1 Johns Hopkins Sheetlet

The Citizens’ Stamp Advisory Committee (CSAC) had a rule, established in 1968, against commemorating an anniversary of a specific college or university because so many of them were approaching key anniversaries. But they often bent their own rule, and the Great Americans Series has its share of examples:

- 20¢ Thomas Gallaudet—issued in 1983. Gallaudet University is the namesake of Thomas Gallaudet. College courses were offered for the first time at the school in 1863.
- 7¢ Abraham Baldwin—issued in 1985. Baldwin was the founder of a school that became the University of Georgia (est. in 1785).
- 56¢ John Harvard—issued in 1986. Harvard left the majority of his estate to founding Harvard University (est. in 1636).
- \$1 Bernard Revel—issued in 1986. Revel was the first President of Yeshiva College, which was established in 1886.

Now, the USPS was adding a stamp honoring Johns Hopkins on the centennial of the university's hospital opening in 1889. The stamp was released on June 7, 1989, at the Baltimore Convention Center. Baltimore is the home of Johns Hopkins University.

The \$1 Johns Hopkins stamp, pictured in Figure 3, became the second Great Americans stamp issued in the 20-stamp sheetlet format. All the details discussed about the \$5 Harte stamp also apply to this printing of the \$1 Hopkins stamps. They were printed on the A Press in 16 panes of 20 stamps per printing drum revolution. They were perforated on the Eureka perforator, are large block tagged, and have dull gum. Note in Figure 3 that the center horizontal perforation now completely crosses the sheetlet, probably to aid philatelic sales clerks in separating plate blocks from the sheetlet.



Figure 3. \$1 Johns Hopkins sheetlet.

Both issues exist with tagging omitted varieties, which are listed in the *Scott Specialized Catalogue*. And, both issues are known with perforation shifts from the Eureka perforator. An example is shown in Figure 4.



Figure 4. A perforation shift example on the \$1 Johns Hopkins stamp.

The \$1 Hopkins Plate Gouge

Philatelic reporter Ken Lawrence broke the story of a spectacular plate flaw on the \$1 Hopkins sheetlet in a front-page article published in the July 16, 1990 edition of *Linn's Stamp News*. A double gouge, or "double dig" as the Bureau termed it, appeared in stamp position 6 (the furthest left stamp in the second row) of a sheetlet printed from sleeve 1. The double gouge can clearly be seen between Hopkins' bowtie and the bottom of his coat lapels. Figure 5 shows a portion of a pane of 20 bearing the plate flaw, and Figure 6 shows a closer view of the flaw.

Lawrence wrote that the plate flaw was first reported in the collecting community by Jack Haney of Vicksburg, Mississippi. The flaw was probably caused by a tool or other hard object that was dropped on the sleeve. It is unknown if the gouge was present when the sleeve first went to press, but to our knowledge, it has never been reported on a first day cover or souvenir page.

Apparently, prior to the *Linn's Stamp News* article, the Bureau also discovered the plate flaw. The article reports that the BEP removed the sleeve from service and repaired it, presumably by burnishing out the old image and transferring a new image onto the sleeve in its place. The single plate flaw would have occurred once in every 320 stamps according to the sleeve format layout. Discounting any sheets printed before the first occurrence of the double gouge and any sheets printed after the Bureau re-entered the image, examples of the flaw could be quite elusive to locate. There has been no census of known copies.

Scott lists the plate flaw in the *Specialized Catalogue* and has named it "Lipstick on Shirt Front." In the 2023 catalog, a stamp containing the plate variety is priced at 167 times the normal mint stamp. The price is in italics, meaning that it is difficult to value accurately or is seldom sold. Collectors should consider this variety elusive, but we believe that used copies may exist in accumulations and possibly even on covers, yet to be discovered.

What's to Come?

Both the \$5 Harte and \$1 Hopkins stamps will reappear in an upcoming chapter of this series of articles with different tagging varieties.



Figure 5. Portion of Hopkins sheetlet with double gouge plate flaw indicated by red arrow.



Figure 6. Detail of the Hopkins plate flaw.

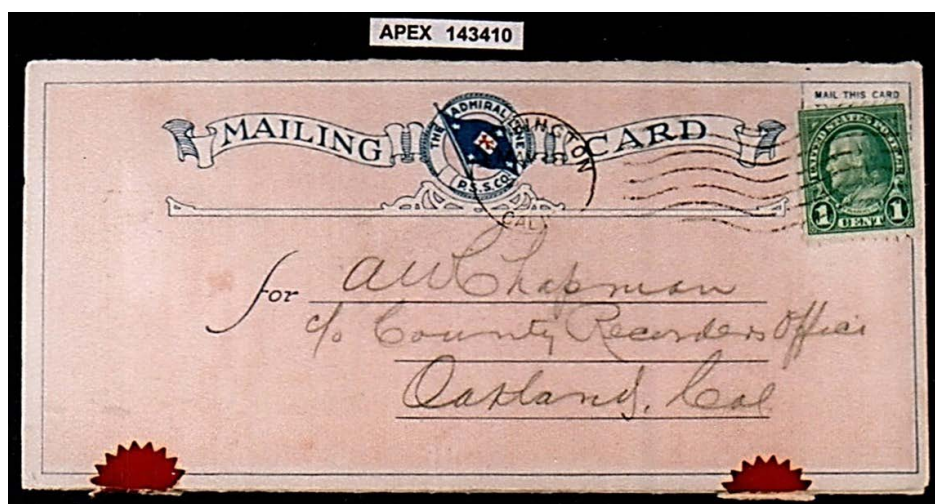


The Fourth Bureau Issue

The Unprecanceled Scott 581 1¢ Rotary Sheet Stamp EDU is Fraudulent—Part II

by James Robinson and Jay Stotts

USSS # 12386 and # 10921 | ✉jsr.new2019@gmail.com; stottsjd@swbell.net



The fraudulent cover. (Photo courtesy APEX.)

Section III. “How Did We Get Here? What Prompted and Allowed Deception?”

The Background and Release History Surrounding the October 17, 1923, “First Day of Sale.”

Table 1 lists a 100-year chronology of information and sources pertinent to the earliest distribution and sale of unprecanceled Scott 581. Until 1996, the accepted “first day of issue” for the FBI 1¢ rotary sheet stamp in unprecanceled format was October 17, 1923. For most collectors, the basis for the date was as follows: On November 5, 1923, in the “Chronicle of New Issues” column in *Mekeel’s Weekly Stamp News*, Philip Ward first announced that the 1¢ rotary without precancel had been “placed on sale” at the Philatelic Stamp Agency in Washington, DC, on October 17 (Table 1, Item 4).⁷

Regular readers of Ward’s column were aware that the rotary sheet stamp had been issued in Bureau-precanceled format much earlier in the year.^{8,9} But both the purchase and use of precanceled stamps required a special permit from the Post Office Department

(POD). Most precancel permits were held by businesses for commercial mailing, and precanceled stamps were expressly barred from sale to customers who were not permit holders. A secondary constraint was that precancel permits were valid only at the local post office named in the permit. This means even a permit holder could not order, buy, or use precanceled stamps from a different post office.

As a result, for the first 9½ months of 1923, most collectors could only obtain “used” (no gum) copies of the precanceled stamp off commercial mail. Amplifying the difficulty, such mail could originate from a limited list of only 20 large cities for which Bureau precancels had been printed and shipped prior to October. Only a lucky collector or stamp dealer with access to a firm holding a local precancel user permit, valid in one of those cities, could potentially obtain gummed “mint” copies of precancels.

Until Ward’s November 5th report, apparently the pioneer FDC servicers, stamp dealers, the philatelic press, and the general collecting public shared a common understanding that no unprecanceled stamps had yet been circulated. But finally, Ward published the welcome news that the unprecanceled format was now available. Collectors could obtain a mint copy of the new sheet rotary, unobscured by a precancel, from the Philatelic Agency.

Nonetheless, the issuance and first day of sale of this stamp was not officially announced. Preannouncing official first days was a POD practice that had begun only one year earlier on October 4, 1922, commencing with the release of the 11¢ denomination of the new Fourth Bureau series. Each subsequent new denomination in the series to appear was assigned a preannounced and officially designated first day of issue, a first day ceremony, and associated “first day cities” where the stamps first would be available on a limited basis before widespread distribution. But in the case of “production format varieties,” such as coils, booklet panes, perforation varieties, and waste issues, the POD did not recognize the format variety as a distinct “new stamp type.”

In other words, no fanfare from the POD was associated with “format variant” releases. In the case of the rotary perf 10 × 10 Scott 581, neither the earlier precanceled format nor the unprecanceled format received any official publicity. To the POD administration, both formats of the 1¢ rotary press stamp were considered perforation and production varieties of the 1¢ denomination flat plate sheet stamp (Scott 552) that had been issued with an official first day ceremony on January 17, 1923. It was left up to collectors and the cadre of pioneer First Day Cover (FDC) servicers like Ward, Worden, Hammelman, Seaver and Siebold to discover variant format stamps and report them to the philatelic press.

With the popular specialty of FDC collecting still in its infancy, terminology was also loosely defined. In modern collecting parlance, the October 17, 1923, cover showing Scott 581 might best be considered an EDU or “earliest known use” (EKU), but not a first day cover. Today, only a stamped cover dated on the officially documented first day of sale is considered a FDC.

The point is this: Ward seemed confident in his “first placed on sale” report, but his column appeared 19 days after the fact, and his source for the information was uncited. He also made no claim to have personally seen any dated item. He wrote, “Those that I have seen are from plate #14349...”¹⁰ which suggests that the stamps Ward encountered were mint and from a plate block or sheet.

In theory, due to the solitary announcement by Ward, with an otherwise undocumented actual first day of sale, a chance existed that an earlier dated item would appear. Perhaps it was the lack of official documentation of the date that planted the very earliest seeds of creativity in the minds of philatelic fakers. The first October 17, 1923, FDC to appear was, in fact, a fake (Figure 5).



Figure 5. The first fake, declared fraudulent between 1967¹¹ and 1983.¹²

The authors could not discover when the fake FDC first appeared, but some context is available. By 1934, Scott's *Specialized Catalogue of United States Stamps* included a separate section devoted to First Day Covers. That year, in the catalog's main section, no issue date for Scott 581 is listed (Table 1, Item 5). In the foreword to the volume, the editor noted that dates of issue had first been added in the previous year's catalog (1933). He explains, "where a 'first day' of the issue was designated by the Post Office Department, we have accepted that date as the date of issue and have made no mention of the various instances where stamps have been known to be used prior to the official date set by the Department." With no "official release date" on record, the "first day covers" section excludes Scott 581 entirely.¹³

The next year, 1935, Max Johl's landmark reference *The United States Stamps of the Twentieth Century, Vol III, 1922–1925* was published. His listing for #581 reads, "Issued October 17, 1923." He offers no discussion regarding first day covers, but writes that the stamps were, "first placed on sale at the Philatelic Agency, Washington, DC, on October 17, 1923, for the benefit of collectors, but it was quite some months later before it was decided to use this form of issue for general distribution" (Table 1, Item 6).¹⁴ Like Ward's announcement in 1923, there is no citation for the date or other information.

Leaping ahead almost 30 years, in 1962 Ray L. Newburn described the known first days for the entire 1922–35 series in *First Days* magazine. He wrote, "Perhaps the rarest of them is #581, the 1¢ perf. 10 of October 17, 1923. The author does not know of a single First Day Cover of this stamp having been auctioned in recent years. The retail value should be at least \$20.00 and perhaps much more."¹⁵

The Scott *Specialized* catalogues for 1965 and 1966 show the October 17, 1923, issue date in both the main section and First Day Cover section (Table 1, Items 7 and 8).^{16,17} The FDC price saw a five-fold increase between those two volumes, from \$3.00 in 1965 to \$15.00 in 1966.

Table 1. Resources Regarding the Issue Date of #581 Without Precancel.

	Proposed Issue Date	Information	Pub. Year	Source
1	After June 30, 1923 (Post Fiscal Year 1923)	1,220,400 1¢ series of 1922 sheet stamps delivered to postmasters by June 30, 1923.	1923	FY 1923 BEP Director’s Annual Report page 16
2		1,220,400 1¢ flat plate sheet stamps delivered (#552) to June 30, 1923. Zero 1¢ rotary press sheet stamps delivered (#581)	First Time Here (FTH)	G. Griffith unpublished notes from archives
3	9/12/1923	“First delivery” to the Postmaster at Washington DC	FTH	Info from BEP Vault Division (memorandum; G.G. research notes)
4	10/17/1923	“...they were placed on sale on Wednesday, October 17 th ...” at the Philatelic Stamp Agency. Plate #14349 (Set 4; at press 6/1/23 to 8/13/23)	1923	Ward announced in 11/5/23 article—Meekel’s “Chronicle of New Issues” column
5	N/A	Per Foreward: only POD officially documented first days of sale are listed	1934	Scott <i>U.S. Specialized Catalogue</i>
6	10/17/1923	“Issued October 17, 1923.” “First placed on sale at the Philatelic Agency, Washington, D.C., on October 17, 1923 for the benefit of collectors.”	1935	Johl, 1935 Vol. III p. 33 uncited
30 Year Interval 1935–1965				
7	10/17/1923	Main Section: Issue date 10/17/1923 First Day Cover Section: 10/17/1923, Price \$3.00	1965	Scott <i>U.S. Specialized Catalog</i>
8	10/17/1923	Main Section: Issue Date 10/17/1923 First Day Cover Section: 10/17/1923, Price \$15.00	1966	Scott <i>U.S. Specialized Catalog</i>
9	10/17/1923	Jack V. Harvey. 1 st Edition. Page 2, Figure II, illustrated a purported FDC of Scott #581 dated October 17, 1923 at Washington, DC. The item was a cover. His estimate of valuation \$100 or more.	1967	<i>FIRST DAY COVERS of the Regular Postage Issue of 1922-1935</i>
10	10/17/1923	AFDCS cert. obtained for 10/17/23 non-philatelic postcard. Item is genuine. Probably submitted for inclusion in the Lawrence S. Fisher Collection.	1981	The “Pioneer” Collection of 1922-35 Issue First Day Covers Auction Catalog, Lot 1055 text. (Bennett)
11	10/17/1923	Jack V. Harvey. 2nd Edition. Pp. VII–VIII, “List of Corrections and Addenda.” “Page 2—#581: date correct, but illustrated cover a fake. “Subsequent to original publication, the cover depicted in Figure II was examined by the AFDCS Expert Committee and adjudged to be a fake.” “Siskin has reported that that at least one genuine cover of #581 canceled at Washington on Oct. 17, 1923, had been discovered.”	1983	<i>FIRST DAY COVERS of the Regular Postage Issue of 1922-1935</i>

	Proposed Issue Date	Information	Pub. Year	Source
12	10/17/1923	FD Unprecanceled: 10/17/1923 (FDPA) Note: "2 FDPA known"	1990	<i>Checklist Of First Days And Earliest Documented Covers 1847-1931.</i> Edward J. Siskin, Compiler
13	FDC 10/17/1923, not precanceled.	First Day Cover Section: 10/17/1923, not precanceled, Price \$2,000. Main section issue date 4/21/23 (Johl date for precancels; incorrect)	1994	Scott U. S. <i>Specialized Catalog</i>
14	FD cover 10/17/1923	FD cover 10/17/1923 Postcard offered for sale. Estimate \$2,000–\$3,000 with 1981 A.F.D.C.S. Certificate. Listing states: "an incredibly rare first day cover as this is one of only two in existence without a precancel."	1996	<i>The Lawrence S. Fisher Collection Auction, May 30, 1996.</i> (Shreves)
15	5/18/1923 EDU	EDU Discovery letter; October 20, 1996	FTH	G. Wagner Letter to G. Griffith
1997				
16	5/18/1923 EDU	Early use May 18, 1923, discussion re discovery and impact.	1997	Griffith 1922–26
17	5/18/1923 EDU	APEX Cert # 143410 dated 2002	FTH	Berkun submitter; certified as genuine and EDU
18	5/18/23 EDU	Lot 1054. EDU Unprecanceled: 5/18/1923 offered for sale. Estimate \$7,500 with 2002 A.P.S certificate. Listing states that the assumption that the first #581 examples shipped were entirely precancels is erroneous. New York precancels were not ordered until 5/31/1923 and not delivered until 6/6/1923. (This is likely based on Griffith text, 1997.)	2004	The "Pioneer" Collection of 1922–35 Issue First Day Covers Auction Catalog (Bennett)
	10/17/23 FDC	Lot 1055. FD cover: 10/17/1923 (same Postcard as offered in the Fisher sale). Estimate \$6,000 with 1981 A.F.D.C.S. & 1998 APS Certificates. The listing states it is the only FDC.		
19	5/18/1923 EDU	Griffith text reprised	2022	FBI Centennial Book
20	10/17/23 FDC	Most recent update 3/10/2023. Unprecanceled 10/17/23 (FDPA) "2 FDPA known"	2023	Siskin-Berkun List of FDCs and EDUs
		10/17/23, Single on post card, Washington, DC to Sherrill NY (AFDCS #770)		
	5/18/23 EDU	EDC (Unprecanceled): Berkun owns a 5-18-23 cover described in Gary Griffith's text pgs 151-155/ tied to menu from H.F. Alexander cruise ship / APS 143410		

In 1967, Jack V. Harvey included the Figure 5 fraudulent cover as an authentic FDC in *First Day Covers of the Regular Postage Issue of 1922–1935* (Table 1, Item 9).¹⁸ The authors believe this was the first time the cover was illustrated in the philatelic press. When Harvey issued a second edition of the work in 1983, the apparently “unique” October 17 FDC reported (Figure 5) had by then been declared fraudulent by the AFDCS expert committee (Table 1, Item 11).¹⁹ However, in 1981, within the interval between Harvey’s two editions, a legitimate October 17 item finally came to light and was certified genuine (Figure 6 and Table 1, Item 10).²⁰

Figure 6 illustrates the one reported legitimate cover (postcard) dated October 17 which ultimately appeared. It is believed to be unique. With its certification, a legitimate item was finally extant which conclusively proved that unprecanceled Scott 581 stamps were for sale and used on Ward’s issue date. Nonetheless, it did not conclusively prove that October 17th was the first day of issue or sale. Disregarding that distinction, across the seven-plus decades between 1923 and 1996, October 17 had become firmly established and Scott listed as the unprecanceled Scott 581 first day cover date.

[As a caution to readers, the authors note that the April 21, 1923, issue date that has appeared in the main section listing for #581 in the Scott *Specialized* since at least 1994 represents the Max Johl issue date for stamps in the precanceled format (Table 1, Item 13).²¹]

Correcting the Philatelic Record for the 21st Century. An Item Dated May 18th Cannot exist.

Table 1 shows that for most of the twentieth century (through 1996), Ward’s October 17, 1923, “first day of sale” went undisputed, apparently based on Ward’s well-regarded expert authority (Items 4–14). However, items 2 and 3 in this table, published for the first time here, not only support the October 17th date, but also serve as powerful additional evidence to refute even the possibility of the existence of a May 18 EDU. Both items surfaced in Gary Griffith’s unpublished notes made during 10 years of research and writing for the first of his landmark works. The notes were graciously supplied to the USSS Fourth Bureau Committee during compilation of the 1922 Fourth Bureau Issue centennial book, which reprises Griffith’s 1996 text wherever possible.

Item 2 in the table reflects Griffith’s hand-written notes recording Fiscal Year (FY) 1923 postage stamp shipments from the BEP, obtained from the National Archives. This information provides previously unavailable details concerning the breakdown of flat plate versus rotary press produced issues. Specifically, in reporting “1¢ Series 1922 sheet stamps” delivered, *The Annual Report of the Director of the Bureau of Engraving and Printing* for FY 1923 accounted for only 1,220,400 1¢ sheet stamps delivered by June 30, 1923 (Table 1, Item 1).²² In these annual reports to the Secretary of the Treasury, the BEP Director’s



Figure 6. Certified FDC postcard as listed by the Scott catalog; AFDCS 1981; APEX 2002.

official accounting did not normally differentiate flat press stamps (the production standard in 1923) from the new rotary press stamps (still considered experimental).

But the brand new “Bureau precancel” 1¢ stamps introduced that year were an exception. The total of precancel deliveries was recorded as a stand-alone quantity. However, the unprecanceled rotaries were not separately identified. This means that from data in the published *Annual Report* alone, a reader at any point during the last 100 years might surmise that the minuscule quantity of one-plus million unprecanceled 1¢ sheet stamps delivered also could have included a quantity of the new rotaries with no precancel. Even expert collectors and authorities on the issue were left to ponder that slight possibility, which is always fertile ground for fraudsters.

However, Griffith’s research notes transcribed from the internal BEP records do make the necessary differentiation. The 1,220,400 1¢ sheet stamps delivered were all product from flat plate production (Table 1, Item 2).²³ In other words, the internal record-keeping which supported the 1923 accounting report to the United States Treasury Secretary by the BEP Director makes clear that zero unprecanceled rotary press sheet stamps were delivered before July 1, 1923, which was the first calendar day of the next fiscal year, 1924.

A cover with a 1¢ unprecanceled sheet stamp produced by the rotary press and canceled on May 18, 1923, cannot possibly exist because none of these stamps were delivered by the BEP to the POD until after June 30, 1923.

Item 3 in Table 1 adds additional proof that a May 18, 1923, cover cannot exist. Griffith unearthed a memorandum from the BEP Vault Division from which stamps were supplied for shipment. Dated September 12, 1923, according to Griffith’s notes the memorandum stated, “First delivery of 1¢ ordinary, series of 1922, printed from rotary press was made on this date to PM at Wash, D.C.”²⁴ Based upon these two new sources of official government information, coupled with the study herein which demonstrates that the May 18th menu item is fraudulent, the authors propose that October 17, 1923, should be restored as both the listed FDC and EDU date for this issue in unprecanceled format.

Section IV. How and Why Did it Take 27 Years to Debunk the Fraudulent May 18, 1923, Menu?

The simplest answer is that a “perfect storm” of events occurred in 1996–97 to suggest legitimacy of the menu item before anyone but Griffith had seen it. That year, with Gary Griffith’s research, notes, and first book not yet published, the enticing possibility that some unprecanceled 1¢ rotaries might have “slipped out” from the Bureau in the earliest FY 1923 shipments lingered as it had for 73 years. Then on May 30, 1996, Charles Shreves Auctions conducted the sale of the Lawrence S. Fisher collection.

At the time, the Fisher Collection was regarded as the most significant collection of EDU and FDC material ever assembled. The sale included magnificent material, most of which had not been offered in the philatelic marketplace for over 20 years. As one example, the genuine October 17, 1923, FDC postcard for Scott 581 that was AFDCS certified in 1981 (Figure 6) was a featured item (Table 1, Item 14).²⁵

An “ex-Fisher” provenance lent weight to items from the collection. Delving briefly into a line of conjecture based on incredible coincidence, it seems possible in hindsight that “lesser” items in Fisher’s vast holdings may have made their way more quietly into the marketplace. Beyond stamp dealers and shows, it could be pertinent that the auction

site eBay was operating a precursor website with a more “wild west” aspect at the time. Perhaps Fisher had formed a reference collection of spurious material obtained during his lifetime, as do many expert collectors, and now it began to filter out. This suggestion is founded upon the fact that the long-standing philatelic status quo regarding the FDC/EDU date for Scott 581 was suddenly toppled only four-and-a-half months after the Fisher auction.

Regardless, returning to fact, apparently between the May 30th auction date and October 20th, well-known collector George Wagner located the dated steamship menu fold-out “Private Mailing Card” showing an unprecanceled 1¢ rotary stamp (Figure 2). Although only the “May 18” date in the machine cancel was legible, the preprinted menu date, May 18, 1923, verified the date of use. A handwritten message on the card was dated the same day.

Seventy-three years of philatelic history, research, official documentation and lore dictated that the item probably should not and could not exist, but it suddenly appeared. Wagner, clearly uncertain himself, wrote a letter dated October 20, 1996, to Gary Griffith (Table 1, Item 15). Enclosing a black and white photocopy of the menu, Wagner asked, “Was #581 really available without precancel this early, or could this have been from a sheet that was not completely precanceled?”²⁶

Griffith was nearing the final stages of manuscript preparation for the first of his two landmark volumes covering the Fourth Bureau Issue. Confronted with the “last minute” report, Griffith made the authorial decision to declare the date of the unexpedited item as the “Earliest Reported Use” within the listing for Scott 581 in his Chapter 11, “A New Sheet Rotary” (Table 1, Item 16). In the same discussion, Griffith mentioned the certified postcard dated October 17 but did not mention it as an EDU or FDC. De facto, the May 18th menu had been endorsed in publication by a respected expert and authority. Wagner’s find is also specifically called out in Griffith’s associated discussion of the “Earliest Usage.” However, Griffith was aware that the cover’s existence contradicted and drastically altered the long-accepted issue dates, history, and production sequence of both the unprecanceled and precanceled formats of the issue. As he introduced the topics, he noted bluntly, “Something is wrong here.”²⁷

In conjunction, he presented for the first time an unpublished document he discovered during his research. The item was a letter dated May 31, 1923, sent from the POD to the Treasury Secretary requesting direction and authorization be given to the BEP to produce new electrotypes precanceling plates for five cities, including New York. Griffith reasoned that since precanceled plates appeared not to be ordered until the May 31st letter, all the stamps under production prior to that date must have been unprecanceled. Note that he also had to posit that a second BEP letter regarding precancel shipping dates must contain a typographical or transcription error. But if Griffith’s two proposals were accurate, legitimacy of the menu was possible.²⁸

It was all simply an effort on the busy author’s part to suggest a reconciliation between his understanding regarding the 1923 stamp shipment history as it was known at the time, the newly discovered plate authorization letter, the “problem” May-dated menu which seemed to give credence to the letter, and vice versa. It is notable in hindsight that Griffith’s research notes also included items 2 and 3 from Table 1, which firmly

contradict all the possibilities suggested. But the power of the fraudulent “hard evidence” prevailed, and the item was included in the chapter as the new EDU.

Although the cover was not yet certified, Griffith’s looming publication date was likely another “perfect storm” factor in its inclusion. Full expertization and deeper study reached well beyond the scope of his book and were left to other authorities and future researchers. The menu and Griffith’s suggested reconciliation received only three lines of text in the book, but they were enough to alter the “FBI rotary press story” for the next 27 years (Table 1 Item 19).²⁹ When the May 18th ship menu received a 2002 APEX certificate as the “#581 EDU genuine in all respects” (Table 1, Item 17), Griffith’s authorial license appeared to be proven justified, and the unique item’s prominent place among FBI FDCs and EDUs seemed assured.

Yet keep in mind, foremost, that few collectors ever saw the menu. Griffith received a black and white photocopy from George Wagner with the 1996 letter but did not include the illustration in his book. Per APEX Director Ken Martin, the 2002 owner/submitter was Alan Berkun, who had followed in Lawrence Fisher’s footsteps to assemble an even greater collection of EDU and FDC material. Regarded as an expert in the field, Berkun apparently acquired the menu from Wagner or another collector, found nothing about the item to question, and submitted it for expertization.

It is unknown whether the menu appeared on the stamp show exhibition circuit before the 2002 certification. In August 2004, Berkun’s FBI First Day and EDU Cover Exhibit won gold at the annual AFDCS “Americover” show. It seems likely, but also has not been verified, that the showpiece menu was included in the exhibit. The Americover outing may have been the last time it was shown by Berkun.

Only three months later, on November 13th, the certified item was included as a featured lot in the Matthew Bennett “Pioneer Sale” of Berkun’s FBI FDC and EDU holdings (Table 1, Item 18).³⁰ An interesting footnote to the item’s history is that the “prices realized” for that sale indicate that the menu either did not sell, was withdrawn, or was “combined.” The authors contacted the Bennett firm for confirmation and assistance with this article, but no reply was received.

Two subsequent sales of portions of Berkun’s collection, the Alpha collection in 2006 (Washington-Franklin issues) and the Aristocrat collection in 2007 (early issues, back of book, and everything else) did not include the item as an individually listed lot.^{31,32} Since 2004, the provenance of the Scott 581 menu item is thus unknown.

New 21st Century Perspectives on the 1997 Griffith Text

Reducing the matter to its most basic elements, Griffith proposed that the precancel plate authorization letter dated May 31st could explain and justify the production of unprecanceled stamps before May 31st. That is, for the menu to be genuine, unprecanceled stamps must have been produced before that date. By Griffith’s interpretation of the letter, that could be the case. He reasoned that if no precancel plates existed before May 31, then early production must have been all unprecanceled stamps.

However, that assertion is incorrect. At the time, most collectors and Griffith himself may not have understood that unprecanceled FBI rotary sheet stamps were produced from the very first plate pair sent to press, along with precanceled stamps. For an author today, no explanation, justification, or “typos in official letters” are necessary to prove the

case. All the earliest plate numbers for Scott 581 are reported in the Durland Catalog in both unprecanceled and precanceled formats.³³ See plates #14205 and #14206 in Figure 7 for examples.





Plate #	Precancelled	Unprecancelled
14205		
14206		

Figure 7. Examples of plate #s 14205 and 14206, the first set of Scott 581 plate pairs sent to press, in precanceled and unprecanceled format.

Plates #14205 and #14206 were the first pair sent to press in April, 1923. Their press runs continued until June 6th and both plates were destroyed the next day.³⁴ During the two months of production runs, both precanceled and unprecanceled stamps were printed (Figure 7). Today it is a given fact that unprecanceled 1¢ FBI rotary stamps were under production at the BEP before or concurrent to the supposed May EDU.

But as an added contributor to the “perfect storm” surrounding the May menu, the Durland Catalog did not include precancel plate number information until 2012.³⁵ With regard to correlating the earliest #581 plates and their printing history, *BIA Research Paper #13 Printing History of the Rotary Sheet Plates, Series of 1922*, compiled by W. Wallace Cleland, was not released until May 1997.³⁶ As Griffith prepared his manuscript, lacking any catalog guidance or print history, and as a specialist collector of the 2¢ issue, he apparently did not realize the existence of unprecanceled early 1¢ plate blocks. Thus, his unnecessary attempt to justify their existence by May 18th.

With the undated stamp on the menu now shown to be fraudulently attached, the question of its possible shipment before May 18th is moot. But it is important to re-emphasize that today, the question is not whether unprecanceled stamps were produced during April and May, 1923. They clearly were. The correct query is, “When were unprecanceled stamps first shipped to post offices and first available for sale?” As outlined in detail above, supported by the sequence of official documents and memoranda in

Table 1, October 17, 1923, should be restored as both the FDC and EDU date for this issue in unprecanceled format.

In summary, for over two decades since its certification, the fraudulent ship menu cover has been a pivotal factor in any study of the “release history” of Scott 581 and rotary sheet-stamp production at the time. No official document or contemporary report could be entirely trusted. There was always a lingering question; a slight possibility. Regarding the menu, that is no longer the case. It is fraudulent. Unquestionably.

Section V. Expunging the Fake from the Current Philatelic Record.

Suggested Catalog and Listing Changes

The major current references that may require revision because of this study include the Scott *United States* and *Specialized* catalogs and the current update of the *Siskin-Berkun list of FDCs and EDUs* maintained at www.rfrajola.com (Table 1, Items 12 & 20).^{37,38} APEX may elect to add new notes to their permanent records for the certified #581 menu, cert #143410. Finally, readers of the now out-of-print 2022 FBI centennial book, *The United States Fourth Bureau Issue 1922–1938*, may wish to note that this article supersedes the Chapter 10 information regarding “Earliest Usage” and “First Day of Issue.”

To conclude, in keeping with the 101-year history of the October 17th First Date of Sale for Scott 581 in unprecanceled format, it seems fitting to close this study by posing one final lingering question:

Per the BEP Vault Division shipping records, there was a month-long interval (from September 12, 1923 to October 17, 1923, between the “first shipment” and the stamps being placed on sale (Table 1, Items 3 and 4). The delay between shipment and Ward’s announced sale date allows a tantalizing possibility that a cover dated between September 12th and October 17th could yet be discovered and reported. Can you find one?

To be continued: now recognizing that the ship menu is illegitimate, the authors will present a revisionist “new perspectives” look at the introduction of Bureau precancelling and the experimental development of rotary press stamp production at the BEP between 1922 and 1924 in a forthcoming article.

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#????

Pinback Buttons

P1111 UL UR LL LR

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



#????

Autumn Colors

P11111 ‡ ‡ LL LR

3r x 3c 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9*



#????

First Continental Congress

P1111 UL UR LL LR

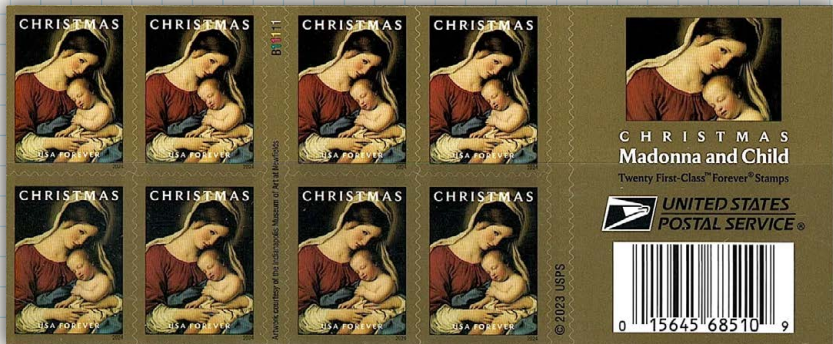
3r x 2c 1,2,3,4,5,6*



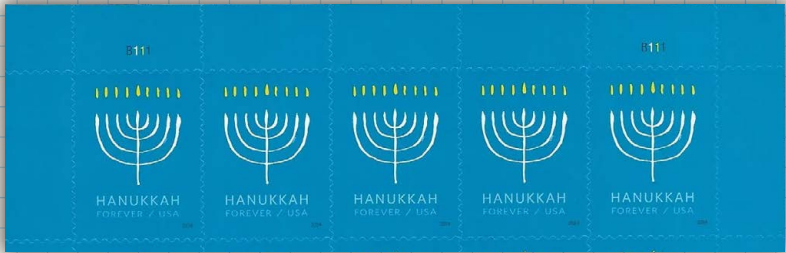
#????

Holiday Joy Booklet

B1111



▲ #??? Madonna Booklet
B1111



▲ #??? Hanukkah
B111 UL UR LL LR
2r x 4c 1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8*



▲ #??? Kwanza
P1111 UL UR LL LR
2r x 4c 1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8*

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17587 Mark Schiefelbein, Washington, DC		ADDITIONS:	
		New members	7
17588 Richard Plaskiewicz, Longwood, FL		Reinstated	1
		Total	+8
APPLICATIONS PENDING			
17580–17585		SUBTRACTIONS:	
		Total	0
NEW MEMBERS			
17573–17579		NET CHANGE	+8
REINSTATED			
16901 Douglas Jehle		TOTAL MEMBERSHIP	
		October 31, 2024	1411
DONATIONS			
(received outside of annual dues cycle)			

Richard Zane

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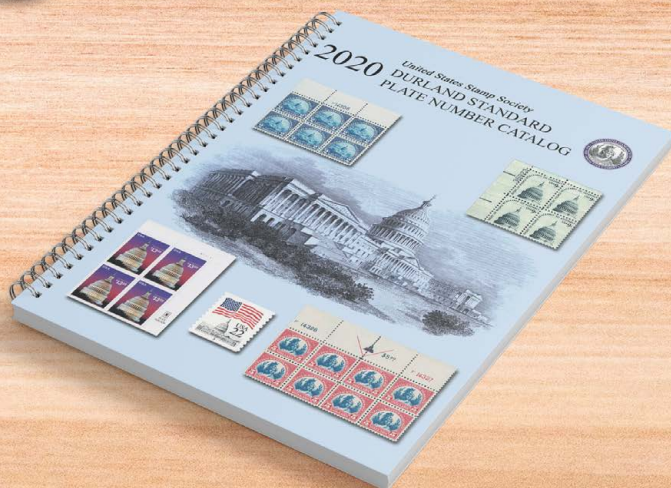
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