

Address all
Communications
and make payments to
L. M. RYER,
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SEATTLE
WASH.

The SHIFT HUNTERS

AN ORGANIZATION OF STUDENTS OF PLATE RESEARCH PROBLEMS—
Acting as the PLATE VARIETIES COMMITTEE of the BUREAU ISSUES ASSOCIATION

SHIFT
HUNTER
LETTER
VOL. VI, No. 4
WHOLE No. 69
APR. 1934

Subscriptions to Shift Hunter Letters \$2 per year, starting with January

SUMMARY OF ALL VARIETIES IN 1¢ 1894-98 IN PRESENT SHIFT HUNTER FILES

(Clockwise Twist)

Both doubled Upward

upward

Downward and Right

Doubled Strongly Right

straight edge at Left

Downward

upward

Downward and Right

Downward

(Clockwise Twist)

Downward to Left

Downward and Right

These thirteen varieties are all that have so far been reported in the 1¢ of 1894-98. Doubtless there are many more, and some of our readers may have position data for some of these. Please check your collection or records and send in any new ones you may have, to be illustrated in a future report. Also report items in the other values of this issue, as soon as you can....

Give us your opinion on this type of report, and any suggestions you may have to offer !!

CORDIALLY YOURS, *L. M. Ryer*

As Confucius said nearly 2500 years ago: "One picture is worth ten thousand words!" Use MATS for mounting and illustrating plate varieties. Prices from \$1.25 to \$1.75 per 100 postpaid - less than 2¢ each!



Committee On Plate Varieties

L. M. RYER, Chairman *BS 7/34*

1932 Calhoun St., Seattle, Wash.

With the coming of Summer and the usual slowing down of stampic activities, we want to request that all our members give serious consideration to building up the Plate Varieties Committee so that it will be in a position to function fully and smoothly in the fall. It is our plan to apportion the various fields of study among the members according to their greatest interest and some steps have already been made in this direction. However, several posts remain to be filled and we are calling for volunteers who will seriously undertake to complete this proposed organization.

The tentative outline of the Plate Varieties Committee organization as we would like to see it is as follows:

General Chairman in charge of all study and clearing all publicity except that of the sub-committee on Commemoratives and New Issues which will report direct to the *Specialist*.

Sub-Committees

1. Triangle Issues, 1894-98. Charles L. Palmer
2. Regular Issues, 1902 to date except Offset Issues, Rotary Press Coils and Special Service Issues. General Chairman
3. Offset Issues, 1918-20. (open)
4. Rotary Press Coils. W. M. Miller
5. Special Service Issues (Parcel Post, Airmail, Special Delivery, Postage Dues, etc.). (open)
6. Bureau Revenues (open)
7. Colonial Issues (open)
8. Commemoratives and New Issues Frank D. Halsey

Mr. Southgate has suggested an additional sub-committee on Booklets, and this is agreeable if we can find someone to take charge of it. In the event it were added it would be #5, stepping the following committees up one place.

Here's the way the subcommittees would function. The subcommittee Chairmen would be listed in the *Specialist* and other publications of the Association and would correspond directly with the members and others on subjects under their jurisdiction. The General Chairman would refer all matters in their field to the subcommittee Chairmen, together with illustrations and records already in existence pertaining thereto. The subcommittee Chairmen would requisition any mats required from the General Chairman, and would be expected to return illustrations of all major varieties for the centralized files maintained by the General Chairman. Once a month, each subcommittee would furnish a report of its activities and discoveries, together with any feature articles prepared by its members. These reports would be forwarded to the General Chairman and would then be included in the General Committee report furnished to the *Specialist*; the feature or special articles being scheduled for appearance in either the *Specialist* or in *Gossip* at the discretion of Mr. Bryant.

Give this matter your serious consideration, please, and let us have your comments and suggestions, in order that the entire group may "get down to brass tacks" this fall. Scattered among our members and the many "Shift Hunters" are hundreds of items of valuable information which have never been published or permanently recorded, and it is essential to our efficiency and progress that these data be centralized at the earliest opportunity.

Our group has been "hard hit" repeatedly during the last year, by the loss of its untiring leader, the late C. W. Bedford; then the resignation of Max Johl from the sub-committee on Commemoratives and New Issues, and lastly, the resignation of Don Lybarger from the Association and the "Offset" subcommittee. It is unfortunate that death and increased responsibilities should have combined in this fashion to deprive us of the skill and knowledge of these three gentlemen, but the work must go on and those that are left must put their shoulders to the wheel with greater energy than before.

Please look over the foregoing list of vacancies, decide what you feel you are most capable of taking over, and drop us a line at once! Let's get going, for there are years of work for all of us!

* * * * *

The April issue of the *Shift Hunter Letters* (SHL #69) contained illustrations of 13 different plate varieties in the 1¢ 1894-98, but unfortunately, none of the varieties was accompanied by position data. It is, of course, desirable that all available information be secured on every plate variety, and with the hope that some of our readers may be in a position to furnish such data, we will send a copy of the Rotaprint report to any of you who will send a stamped return envelope for it. If you are at all interested, you are most welcome to a copy.

* * * * *

A number of new and interesting varieties have been submitted during the current month, and we give in the following a description of some of the most outstanding:

2c "Flags", 1902.

Albert Ondik sends a new Double Transfer in this stamp, showing an Eastward displacement at left of the medallion, in and around both numerals of value, and in the dates 1732-1799.

4c 1902, No. 303.

From the same source comes a new Double Transfer, showing the upper right quarter of the design doubled sharply upward. This looks like a Re-entry, for the two designs are of about equal strength, with no evidence of erasure.

J. A. Ross sends a second Double Transfer in this stamp, showing a Northwest displacement above the top frame line, at left of the tip of the left flag and lower left corner, in several letters of the upper label and in the left numeral.

5c 1902, No. 304.

Another variety from Ondik is a true Double Transfer in this number, showing a downward displacement below the top frame line, in and below the left numeral of value, and below the bottom frame.

1c 1908-10, No. 374.

Everett H. Townsend adds a new Double Transfer to the records of numerous such varieties in this issue; his copy showing an Eastward displacement of both side frame lines and in all letters of the bottom label.

2c Offset, No. 526.

From Delbert Osborne and F. Jorn come duplicate copies of an unknown position showing a heavy horizontal line across the upper part of the left numeral and the EN of CENTS. Anybody know the position of this variety, or other pertinent information?

12c 1922, No. 564.

Boleslaus Jarzembowski sends two different Double Transfers on this stamp, the first showing an upward displacement above the top frame line, in N of UNITED, AT of

STATES and POT of POSTAGE, and at each side of the circle in the lower left corner. The second copy shows a Southwest displacement at both upper corners, in U of UNITED and S—A—E of STATES, in E of CENTS and outside the left frame line.

4c 1926, No. 585.

Everett Townsend sends a "Back Shift" in this number, showing the right inner frame lines doubled to the right.

5c 1927-31, No. 637.

Boleslaus Jarzembowski sends us a copy of this common stamp showing a Twisted Shift (clockwise) of the vertical lines and details at upper right. This is especially clear at the upper right corner and right frame.

* * * * *

Here's wishing you an enjoyable vacation and hoping that you may find just a few minutes to dig up some more varieties so that we will be sure to have enough to keep this department supplied with information during the rest of the summer! And don't forget the subcommittee vacancies. Help us complete the organization as soon as possible!

Notes On The U.S. Offset *BS 7/34* Printing Issue Of 1918-20.

DON F. LYBARGER

The Offset Printings of 1918 comprised the first departure from engraved plates for U.S. stamps. Scott's catalogue lists 7 major varieties, Nos. 525 to 536, but there are numerous Types, Plate Varieties, and Ink Varieties as well as a most interesting history of the sequence of plates to be traced through the Plate Numbers which vary from plate to plate and even vary on a single plate. It is no easy matter to get together a comprehensive collection of even one of these stamps.

Many collectors have already contributed to the data which has been gathered for publication in these columns. We will have occasion to frequently refer to the writings of A. E. Owen and of the late J. B. Leavy.

Reasons for the Offset Issue

The offsets are a by-product of the World War. At that time the demands on the Bureau were burdensome and speed was essential in turning out postage stamps. Materials for their proper manufacture became somewhat scarce or poor in quality. The barites used as a base in printing inks grew inferior, contained considerable grit and rapidly wore out the plates. Also it was difficult to obtain the necessary quality of steel for the making of engraved plates. The order was therefore issued early in 1918 temporarily to make the 3¢ stamp by the offset printing process.

The Photographic Process of Plate Production

The method of making plates for the printing of stamps by the offset process is ably illustrated by C. W. Bedford in the accompanying report.

1. The Bureau struck a proof from the original engraved die of the stamp to be produced.

2. A photographic negative was then made from this proof and greatly enlarged.

3. A print from this enlarged negative (or the negative itself) was cleaned and touched up so that its lines were clear and sharp.

4. This retouched design was next reduced to normal stamp size and the negative thus created became the SINGLE MASTER NEGATIVE.

5. The single master negative was placed in a "step and repeat" photographic machine, and a large sensitized plate (doubtless of glass) was placed in the portion of the machine under the negative. The apparatus then flashed an impression of the single master negative on the photographic plate beneath it, moved to the next position on the plate where it likewise left an impression, and so on back and forth across the plate until the imprint of 400 stamps was made. The glass plate was then developed and became the 400 SUBJECT MASTER POSITIVE. It is understood that the guide lines and arrows were placed upon this positive by hand.

6. From the positive was made a colluloid negative which may be called the 400 SUBJECT MASTER NEGATIVE.

7. This master negative was next used to impress its design of 400 stamps (by contact photography) upon a thin plate of zinc which had been sensitized much in the manner of an undeveloped photographic plate. The plate was developed and the 400 stamp design was etched in with acid in much the same way that zinc etchings are made commercially by photo engravers.

The Printing Process

The zinc plate was now placed on the revolving shaft of the offset printing press. Being very thin and flexible the plate readily conformed to the cylindrical shape of the shaft. The longest portion of the plate extending along the length of the shaft. As the shaft revolved the plate first made contact with a wetting roll which moistened it. It was wiped by a roll which touched the surface of the plate but permitted the etched portions to remain moist. Then the plate was inked by rollers which for the purpose of distributing the ink smoothly were several in number. Since ink will not mix with water no ink found its way into the crevices of the plate, and thus the etched parts of the plate are the colorless portions of the printed stamp.

The plate in its revolution having been wet, wiped and inked, left its impress upon a large rubber cylinder known as the "blanket". Paper fed into the press came in contact with the blanket which transferred the impression it had received from the plate to the paper. The plate "offset" its impression on the rubber cylinder, and the latter in turn printed it upon the paper.

For this reason the process is known as "offset printing". Since the surface of the plate reproduced the printed portions of the stamp, "surface print" is the term often used to designate a stamp of this issue.

(Reprinted from SHL 37, issued with the Bureau Specialist, September, 1931)

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12¢ 1922, No. 584.
Boleslaw Jarczewski sends two different Double Transfers on this stamp, the first showing an upward displacement above the top frame line, in N. of UNITED, AT of

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L. M. RYER, Chairman
1932 Calhoun St., Seattle, Wash.

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