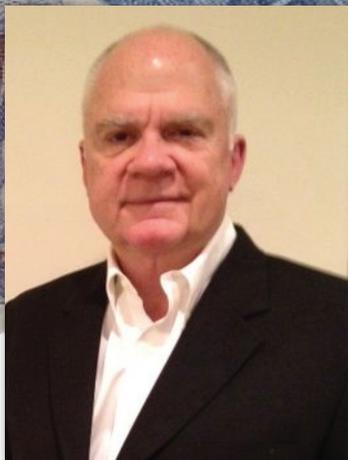


# The

# Expert's Corner

A New Column By

Figure 3.



Stamp images courtesy of Robert A. Siegel Auction Galleries, Inc.

## Plating the Classic United States Issues

To ascertain the correct identification of a stamp's *Scott Catalogue* number, it is often helpful, and indeed necessary, to plate the position that the individual stamp comes from in the original plate (or plates). To accomplish this, plating required years of work and the combined efforts of many of the brightest students of stamp production and the use or loan of substantial amounts of stamps, especially in strips and other large multiples. These building blocks help to develop all the positions in a plate.

Typically, the first two United States stamps printed for the government were issued in sheets of a single pane of 100 positions. From 1851 to 1857, they were printed in sheets of two panes of 100, side by side.

Despite exhaustive study and research published on the early issues of the United States, more information continually comes to light. While past philatelic students laid the groundwork (i.e. - Stanley B. Ashbrook, Mortimer L. Neinken, Morris Fortgang and Dr. Carroll Chase, et al), others have carried on from there such as Richard C. Celler on the 1c 1851-61 issues. The cumulative work of all these pioneers can only be judged by the extreme value they have given the hobby. Without this information, proper identification and opinions on genuineness would be no more than problematic in many cases. Major works have been done on U.S. No. 2, U.S. Nos. 5-26A and U.S. Nos. 31-36.

Our first case in point on the merits of plating is shown in Fig. 1. Essentially, you have two stamps from the same relief (both images coming from the 'E' Relief of Row 9 of Plate 4). This research shows that there are three distinct catalog numbers possible. (See Figure 5 for a complete image of Type 1 as it was originally designed). The differences, besides minor plate scratches and dots, is the amount of wear on the plate from use over time and the burnishing of the reliefs at top and bottom necessary to accommodate

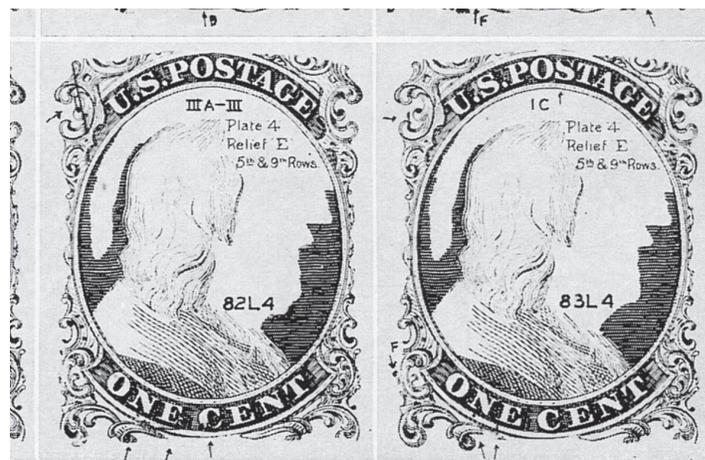


Figure 1.

the spacing required for the perforations between stamps. As you can see by examining the top and bottom lines above the 'POS' of POSTAGE and below the 'E C' of the bottom line, there is a wide break at top and a complete line at bottom (a bit faint at right). These characteristics define this position as a Type IIIa - break at top or bottom but not both. However, over time due to wear on the plate surface, Pos. 82L4 changes as the bottom line begins to wear away and causes a break in the bottom line too, approaching 1mm wide. At this point, stamps printed from this position have a break at top and bottom both and become Type III.

Thus, if you follow the plating guide by Mortimer L. Neinken, you can more easily identify the point where Pos. 82L4 changes from a Type IIIa to a Type III. Position 83L4 has the break in the top line but the left plume is nearly complete to complete. The near complete to complete plume and break in top line defines this position as a Type Ic which is actually a variety of Type IIIa but having

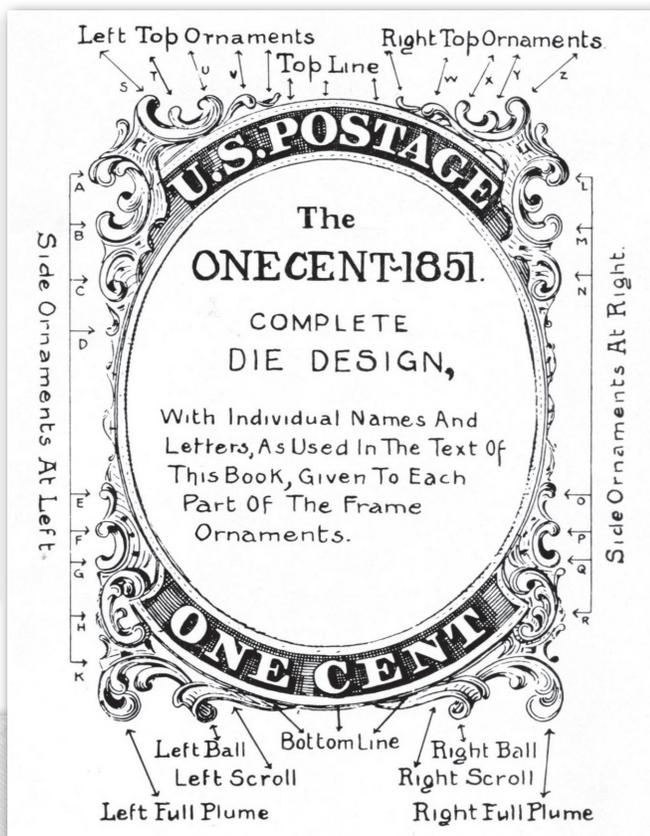
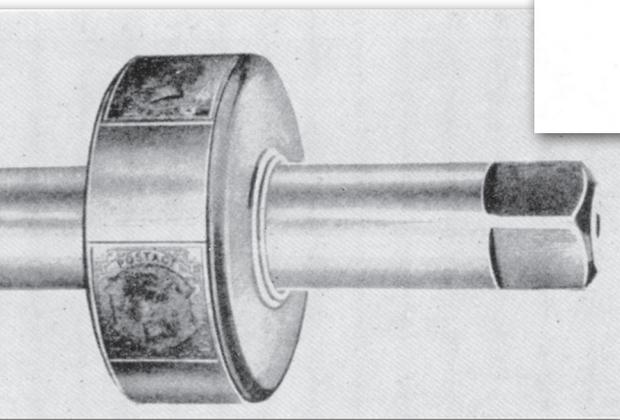
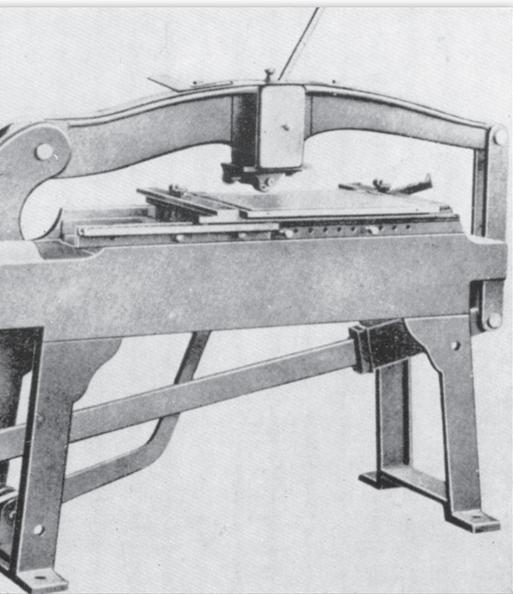
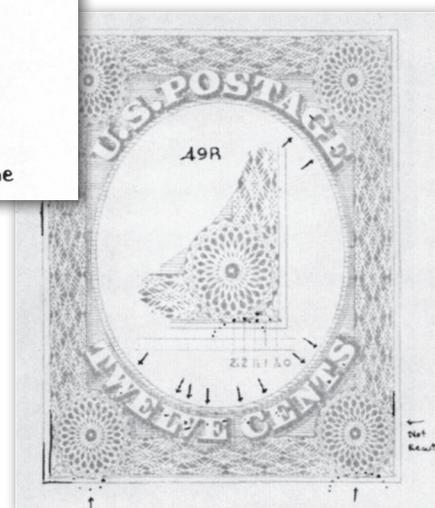


Figure 5.

Figure 2.

Figure 4.



a complete plume at left. This occurred on 8-9 positions on the 'E' Relief where the engraver failed to burnish the left plume away as in most all the positions from the internal portion of the sheet to make room for the perforation holes.

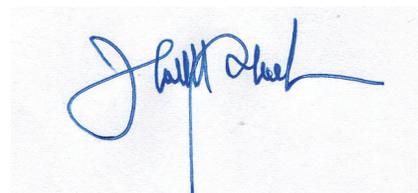
All told, you've got three different possible types from essentially the same relief from the same transfer roll. The *Scott Catalogue* values range from \$1,400 (Type IIIa), \$2,250 (Type Ic) and \$3,000 (Type III). And in order to properly and professionally attribute the correct catalog number, plating the position and referring to the Neinken book is invaluable.

Figure 4 is the plating diagram for the 12c 1851, Pos. 67R1 from the *Neinken United States 1851 to 1857 Twelve Cent Stamp* book. While all U.S. No. 17's come from one plate and come in only one type, it is still quite valuable to get the correct plate position. As you will note, this stamp is a MAJOR DOUBLE TRANSFER (Doubling of parts of the actual design), with partial doubling in all four 'rosettes' in each corner. Most notably, the rosette centers are doubled slightly at a 45 degree angle up to the right. While the premium for a Double Transfer is only \$25, Pos. 67R1 sells for considerably more and is the best position showing this variety. This is important information when pricing any item. There is no sense leaving money on the table.

The major plating books, charts and information include works on the 10c 1847 Issue, 1c 1851-61 Issue, 10c 1855-59 Issue and

the 12c 1851 Issue. The 10c 1855-59 Neinken book sells for as little as \$35 on eBay. The others sell for \$50 to \$250 and the 3c Plating Guide issued by the Smithsonian sells for about \$400-\$500 presently. The 10c 1847 Plating Guides are RARE. Pay whatever you have to if you ever find one for sale!

In summary, if you plan to specialize in early classic United States issues, it is very helpful to acquire these works as they will pay for themselves a thousand fold. Plating is a time consuming activity but after practice and experience, it definitely adds to the flavor of the hobby. "Flyspeck Philately" as some call it, will put you head and shoulders above most philatelists! Further articles will get into the finer techniques of plating and discuss the shortcuts, when and if they exist. ☒



[Editor's Note: Readers should feel free to contact Mr. Shoemaker with questions or info regarding this column and/or his company, Philatelic Stamp Authentication and Grading, Inc., at P.O. Box 37-2460, Satellite Beach, FL 32937. He will be pleased to hear from you.]