

THE AERO PHILATELIST ANNALS



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APRIL 1964

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THE AERO PHILATELIST ANNALS



Vol. XI, No. 4
APRIL 1964

Henry M. Goodkind, Editor
Philip Silver, Assistant Editor

HONDURAS

Tracking Down A Rarity

By IRVING I. GREEN

The Philatelic Foundation of New York last year accorded me the privilege of assisting in its expertization of an unused vertical pair of the 50 centavos 1925 Honduras air mail stamps with overprints *tete-beche* (Fig. 1). With the kind permission of the Philatelic Foundation and also of the present owner of the pair, Mr. Max L. Simon of Passaic, New Jersey, I am pleased to record my findings.

Historical Background

For the uninitiated, here is a brief explanation of the intriguing Honduras air mail stamps of 1925 and the air service that utilized them.

The distance between Tegucigalpa, capital of Honduras, and Puerto Cortes, a seaport on its North Coast, is approximately 150 miles. Due to the inter-

vening mountainous terrain and the almost complete absence of roads, it required, as late as 1925, from three days to a week, depending on the weather, to transport mail overland between these two points.

In 1922, Dr. T. C. Pounds, an American residing in Tegucigalpa, convinced the Honduran government that an airplane could easily span this distance within two hours; and, as a result, he was awarded a contract to transport mail by air.

By mid-April, 1925, after many delays, including a full-blown revolution, Dr. Pounds was prepared to fulfill his contract with a service comprising one small plane piloted by Sumner B. Morgan, also an American. This service, ultimately a financial failure, began officially on May 1, 1925,⁽¹⁾ and operated sporadically until December 22, 1925, when the pilot Morgan, severely sprained his ankle during a forced landing.

Both regular and air mail stamps were required on air mail, the proceeds from the sale of the latter going entirely to Pounds as compensation for his service. Originally, the government intended to issue special air mail stamps, but, instead, shortly before the start of the service, gave Pounds a small quantity of sheets of the demonetized regular issue of 1915. The government authorized him to convert the stamps into air mails by overprinting them AERO CORREO.⁽²⁾

Now to track down the rarity pictured in Fig. 1. Among the stamps allotted to Pounds were four sheets of the 1915 50 centavos postage stamp (Scott #180) each with 50 stamps (5x10) and without basic *tete-beche* varieties.

Producing The Air Mails

Dr. Pounds and his associate, Karl Snow, a job printer of sorts, hurriedly prepared the provisional air mail issue, utilizing a small hand-operated portable printing press⁽³⁾ that could accommodate only 12 stamps at one operation. Due to this limited capacity, each of the four sheets of the 50 centavos was separated, prior to the overprinting, into 1) one horizontal strip of ten, from either the left or the right side of the sheet; 2) one horizontal strip of four, from either the top or the bottom of the sheet; and 3) three blocks of twelve stamps each (4x3). The horizontal strip of ten was further separated into two vertical strips of three and one vertical strip of four.⁽⁴⁾

If this last vertical strip of four came from the right side of the sheet, it

1. There was a flight on April 28, 1925, from Tegucigalpa to Puerto Cortes and a return flight the next day. Mail was carried on both these flights, but no air mail stamps were used. These were demonstration flights.

2. Total number of stamps surcharged in both the first and second printings.

1 centavo chocolate	—	500	—	5 sheets of 100 (10 x 10)
5 centavos milky blue	—	1000	—	10 sheets of 100 (10 x 10)
10 centavos dark blue	—	500	—	5 sheets of 100 (10 x 10)
20 centavos red brown	—	1000	—	20 sheets of 50 (5 x 10)
50 centavos red	—	200	—	4 sheets of 50 (5 x 10)
1 peso yellow green	—	100	—	2 sheets of 50 (5 x 10)

3. The Excelsior Self-Inking Portable Printing Press made by the Kelsey Company, Meriden, Connecticut, U. S. A.

4. Karl Snow's letter of December 21, 1961, in reply to my inquiry for an explanation of his printing procedure in 1925, was given in full in the January, 1963 issue of AERO PHILATELIST ANNALS. My findings confirm the following excerpt from his letter: "I tore the sheet into blocks of 12, and what was left I printed four across and others part strips either up and down or across."



Fig. 1. An enlarged photograph of the tete-beche pair of the 50 centavos 1925 Honduras air mail stamps.

would have been from one of the following three basic positions: (a) 5, 10, 15, 20 — (b) 20, 25, 30, 35 — (c) 35, 40, 45, 50. If it came from the left side of the sheet, it would fall into one of the three following basic positions: (d) 1, 6, 11, 16 — (e) 16, 26, 31 — (f) 31, 36, 41, 46.

The press operated on the clamshell principle: the type, inked by rollers, remained stationary while the tympan-covered platen carrying the basic (unoverprinted) stamps moved up against it. Stamps were fed into the press, head down against guide clips fastened to the tympan both sides and top, to control the position of the block or strip to be overprinted.

Each basic sheet of the 50 centavos had its three blocks of 12 overprinted with the complete AERO CORREO setting of 12 subjects (4x3); its single horizontal strip of four received the top line of the setting, positions 1, 2, 3, and 4; and the two vertical strips of three were inserted to the left of the press and received setting positions 1, 5, and 9.

The Remaining Vertical Strips

The remaining vertical strip of four (one from each of the four sheets, about which this article is principally concerned), was fed into the press to the left. Since the vertical limit of the press was three stamps, Snow* overprinted the three top stamps with setting positions 1, 5, and 9. Since it was not feasible to separate and overprint the fourth, or bottom, stamp by itself, the printer reversed the entire strip of four so that the bottom stamp became the top one, in an inverted position. Placing a blank piece of paper over the three overprinted stamps, Snow then proceeded to overprint this stamp with setting position 1.

*Karl James Snow, aged 78, of New Bern, No. Carolina died on February 18, 1964 in the local County hospital. He had kept up his correspondence with the writer until a short time before his passing. His letters have been of great assistance to aero-philately because he vividly recalled most all of the production of the first Honduras air mail stamps that he personally overprinted.

As a result, the two bottom stamps of the vertical strip of four became a pair with *tete-beche* surcharges.⁽⁵⁾ The sketch shows the six possible combinations of basic stamps where this error could occur. "N" indicates the normal surcharge and "I" inverted.

- | | |
|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| (1) 5N, 10N, 15N, 20I. | (4) 1N, 6N, 11N, 16I. |
| (2) 20N, 25N, 30N, 35I. | (5) 16N, 21N, 26N, 31N. |
| (3) 35N, 40N, 45N, 50I. | (6) 31N, 36N, 41N, 46I. |

Plating and similar margins definitely prove that both these stamps are next-door neighbors in the same sheet. The one with normal surcharge plates as position 15, and the one with inverted surcharge as position 20. Thus, this pair was originally part of the vertical strip of four basically positioned as Nos. 5, 10, 15, 20 in the original sheet.

The Pedigree

Now permit me to trace the history, after overprinting, of this pair, perhaps unique, now in Mr. Simon's possession. In my files, as a gift from the late Hugh M. Clark of Scott Publications, Inc. of New York, is the original correspondence between the late John L. Luff, the foremost authority of the 1925 Honduras air mails, and Raul Duron Membreno, of Tegucigalpa, who supplied Mr. Luff with most of these Honduras stamps.

On March 16, 1927, Duron Membrano wrote Luff: "I want to report to you that I have two pairs of #403 (the 10 centavos 1925 airmail) and one pair of #407 (the 50 centavos value) in the same variety. They are vertical pairs with *tete-beche* overprints. They were bought by me at the Post Office around May 3, 1925 . . . I recall now that when I bought these varieties, they were separated by me from broken blocks (not from original blocks of 12), and these had four stamps, vertically placed, and the blocks had been very much cut into. This I recall now and I'm sorry I didn't buy the entire blocks then. Really these stamps didn't awaken much enthusiasm at the start, for everyone expected they would be printed in very great numbers afterwards."

To which Luff replied to Duron on April 2, 1927: "You write that you have pairs of #403 and #407 with *tete-beche* surcharges. I also have a #403 in that shape. I have never put it in the catalogue because, for some reason, we have not usually listed *tete-beche* surcharges. You will notice that we list #405, 406, and 411 (Scott's 1964: C6, C7, and C13) *tete-beche*, but there we are listing the brown stamp (Scott's #179) and not the surcharge."

As Mr. Luff showed no interest in buying the *tete-beche* surcharged pairs, Mr. Duron rubberstamped his initials "RDM" on the back of the 50 centavos pair (and possibly on the others) and then sold it. Eventually, it was examined and declared genuine by the late Nicolas Sanabria of New York, who pencilled his signature on the back.

As to the other three pairs of this 50 centavos variety, they also were on sale to the public, but were probably not detected. One thing is certain. If they had been sent to the same post office that Mr. Duron visited, they were sold prior to his purchase, because he usually examined all available material for errors with an eagle eye, and seldom allowed anything to slip by him.

5. In this connection, Henry M. Goodkind of the Philatelic Foundation comments: "To confirm your theory about the method of overprinting vertical strips in two press operations, I found ink spots on both stamps [of the pair]. This to me means that the paper Snow laid on the stamps already overprinted had been used for a similar purpose and had a little ink on it that came off on the stamps."

A

				5
				10
				15
				20
				25
				30
				35
				40
				45
				50

B

1				
6				
11				
16				
21				
26				
31				
36				
41				
46				

C

1				
6				
11				
16				
21				
26				
31				
36				
41				
46				

D

				5
				10
				15
				20
				25
				30
				35
				40
				45
				50

Sketches A-B-C-D show the four possible ways to separate the sheet of fifty (5x10) of the 50 centavos basic stamps to overprint the words "Air Mail" on Mr. Snow's small printing press. The vertical strips of ten were further divided into two vertical strips of three and one of four. The tete-beche overprint occurred only in the vertical strips of four. (Sketch by Mr. Franc Ritter)

Both the Scott and Sanabria catalogues now list the 50 centavos pair with tete-beche surcharges; the former as C8b at \$400, and the latter as 10b at \$500.

When this pair was offered at a New York auction sale in 1963, its status as a rare item was not as yet realized. It was only after the purchaser, Mr. Max L. Simon of Passaic, N. J., had submitted it to the Expert Committee of the Philatelic Foundation, 22 East 35 Street, New York, N. Y. 10016 that its true classification came to light. The reason was because the members of the Expert Committee had examined this pair very carefully to see how it fit into the original setting. Now, it can be seen that this tete-beche pair is one of the scarcer items of the 1925 Honduras air mail issue, and possibly may be the only one to have survived.

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UNITED STATES

Bottom Shifts on the 24c Air Mail Stamp of 1918

By PHILIP SILVER

Two articles about the "grounded plane" variety on the 24c air mail stamp of 1918 have appeared in previous issues of this magazine.¹ Illustrated in the first were mint examples of this uncatalogued variety as well as a cover with this stamp used on the first transcontinental flight of July 1, 1924. The second article called attention to the fact that many copies purporting to be "grounded plane" stamps were being offered for sale and in auction, which were, in fact, nothing more than copies showing a shift of the blue vignette to the bottom.

The question, which naturally comes to mind, therefore, is, "How low does the plane have to be to qualify as a 'grounded plane'?" Mr. Goodkind answered that quite succinctly, "the wheels of the airplane must touch the bottom frame with the word 'Cents.'"

In view of the fact that several clear examples of these stamps have been illustrated in the pages of this magazine, it is perhaps advisable to show examples of the 24c red and blue air mail stamp of 1918 with marked shifts to the bottom. These remarks are prompted by the fact that several members have submitted stamps which they believed to be "grounded planes" but which were, in fact, shifts to the bottom, and not the desirable variety.



Fig. 1. The 24c air mail stamp with bottom shift variety on a Boston to New York first flight cover, June 11, 1918. (Collection of Sam Rodvien.) (Photos by Boutrelle)

Figure 1 illustrates a cover flown on June 11, 1918 on the first flight from Boston to New York. It will be noted that the stamp is well-shifted to the bottom. However, the wheels just touch the red horizontal line placed slightly above the word "Cents."

The September 15, 1918 cover in Figure 2 shows a more marked bottom shift of the vignette. Here, the wheels actually touch the top of the "C" in

1. "United States, The Grounded Plane Variety on the 24c Air Mail of 1918" by Henry M. Goodkind, *AERO PHILATELIST ANNALS*, Vol. III, No. 4, April, 1956.

"United States 24c Air Mail of 1918 — Grounded Plane" by Henry M. Goodkind, *AERO PHILATELIST ANNALS*, Vol. IX, No. 2, October, 1961.



Fig. 2. Cover cancelled September 15 1918 with marked bottom shift variety. (Author's collection.)

"Cents." This, however, is still not enough to qualify it as a "grounded plane."

On the true "grounded plane" varieties, the wheels actually cut approximately half way down into the word "Cents." This is not the case with the shifts on the 2c air mail stamps shown on the two 1918 covers illustrated as Figs. 1 and 2. If these covers were franked with "grounded plane" varieties, they would show usage more than six years earlier than the July 1, 1924 covers known to United States air mail specialists. Both merely show good examples of bottom shifts, not "grounded plane" varieties of Scott C3, Sanabria No. 1.

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VENEZUELA

Varieties On the Air Mail Stamps of the Two Sport Issues

By HENRY KRAEMER

Venezuela has issued two Sports sets. The first one in 1944 honored the Seventh World's Amateur Baseball Championship Games played in Caracas. The set consisted of nine air mail stamps. It was printed locally by lithography by the firm of Litografia del Comercio in Caracas.

The word "Aereo" was later overprinted on the sheets in the upper left portion of each stamp. The perforations gauge 12.

Over the years, a number of varieties have been found, some being listed in the Sanabria Catalogue and others not. Here follows a tabulation of all the varieties found so far on this 1944 issue.

	5c	10c	20c	30c	45c	90c	1B	1.20B	1.80B
Imperforate	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Horizontal Pair, Imperf. Betw.	x				x			x	
Vertical Pair, Imperf. Betw.	x		x		x	x	x	x	x
Imperf. Horizontal	x			x				x	
Imperf. Vertical	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x

- Double impression — 20c (San. 367a) and 45c (San. 369a).
- Double overprint — 10c (San. 366a), the 20c and 30c (unlisted).
- Inverted overprint — 1.20 Bs. (San. 372a).
- Imperforated between both horizontally and vertically in blocks of four on the 5c, 45c, 1.20 Bs. and 1.50 Bs. (Fig. 1).



Fig. 1. (All photographs by Boutrelle)



Fig. 2

Furthermore, on the 20c, 30c, 45c and 90c one finds a condition of over-inking that almost gives such copies the appearance of a double impression. These, however, are much more in the nature of a "kiss" and not a true double impression.

A most interesting variety appeared at a New York auction sale of December 5, 1947. One lot had a cover with an imperforated pair of the 30c and also lacking the overprint "Aereo." The writer tried to purchase this exceptional item for his Venezuela air mail collection, but he was to lose out to a Sports collector, Mr. Ira Seebacher, now the President of AERO PHILATELISTS.

There was to be a wait of fifteen years until similar items could be found. It was before Christmas 1962 when a complete set of the nine denominations in blocks of four without the overprint "Aereo" was offered to the writer and, of course, eagerly purchased. Since another specialist also was seeking this variety without the overprint, the blocks of four were divided into pairs, one for the author's collection, the other for his friend.

Investigation brought out the story how the complete set of nine without the overprint in blocks of four came on the philatelic market. In the archives of the Post Office in Caracas originally was one complete sheet of each of the nine denominations without the "Aereo." They were not well protected and over the years, mice, cockroaches and other vermin feasted on this stock in the Post Office until there was little or nothing left. From this original stock, outside of the blocks of four that the writer purchased in 1962, he learned that all that survived is as follows:

- a) a complete set of nine in blocks of four, now in a collection in Caracas. (These are similar to the set purchased in New York.)



Fig. 3



Fig. 4

- b) a complete set in vertical pairs (Fig. 2).
- c) a lightly cancelled copy of the 30c (Fig. 3).
- d) the cover with the 30c pair from the 1947 auction, now in the Seebacher collection.
- e) three very badly mutilated copies (Fig. 4).

The Second Sports Issue

On March 10, 1959 for the Eighth Central American and Caribbean Games held in Caracas a set of ten (five postage and five air mail stamps) was issued. This set, too, was printed locally by the Pan-Americana Lithografia of Caracas in sheets of 100 (10x10). The stamps were perforated 13½ by 13 and sold ungummed. Some varieties were found and these are listed in the Sanabria Catalogue as follows:

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Fig. 5

- a) 5c orange instead of yellow (San. 870a).
- b) 30c vertical pair imperforate between (San. 873a).
- c) 50c vertical pair imperforate between (San. 874a).
- d) 50c horizontal pair imperforate between (San. 874b).

Recently, a friend from Venezuela came to New York for a visit and had with him some new (unlisted) varieties for the writer's collection. They are as follows:

- a) seven denominations of which three are air mails imperforated (Fig. 5). The air stamps are the 10c, 15c and 30c.
- b) three denominations—5c, 15c and 30c—imperforated horizontally between (Fig. 6).



Fig. 6



Fig. 7

Furthermore, remainders were found by the Government that were to be destroyed as printer's waste. Such material was earmarked by snipping off the top right corner of the upper stamp in the block of four (Fig. 7). This originally was a block of four that the writer divided into pairs to have one for his collection and the other for a specialist friend. The only denomination in philatelic hands with this corner cut off is the 30c gray air mail.

Also from this friend in Venezuela who visited New York, a few pairs that were all cut into on the right were secured. They were to be destroyed by the Post Office. These are not illustrated.

The assistance by our editor, Mr. Henry M. Goodkind, in the preparation and publishing of this article is greatly appreciated.

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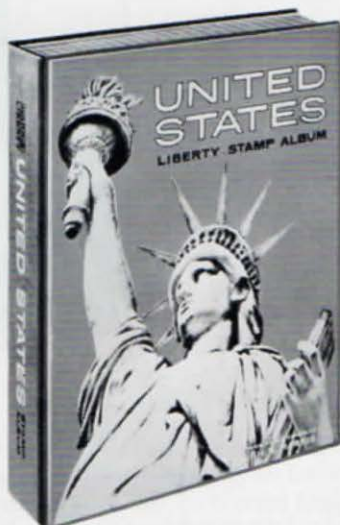
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UNITED STATES

The 5c Beacon Air Mail Stamp of 1928

By HENRY M. GOODKIND

(Part 2, Continued From Page 73)

Three Plate Errors

There were only *three* errors made in engraving the plates, so far as known, one of which was corrected. The first is the double "TOP," previously mentioned.

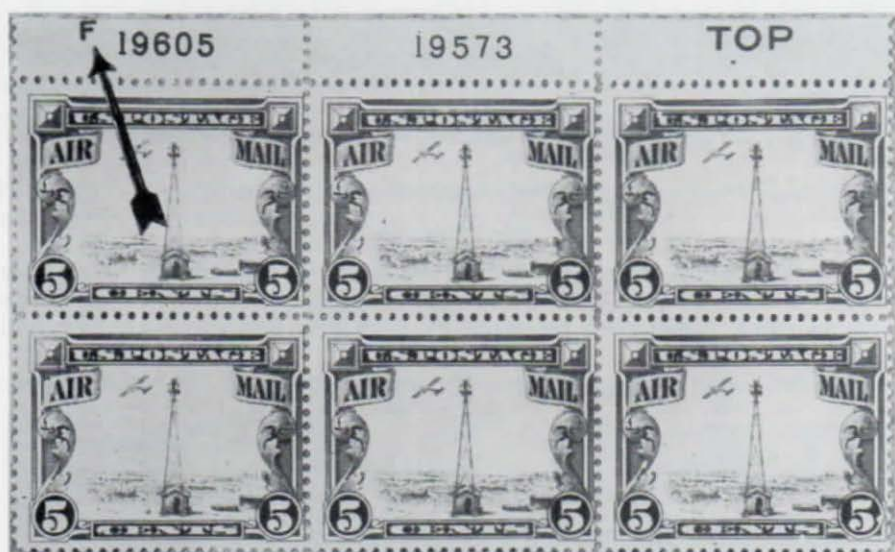


Fig. 14. Left pane of red frame No. 19605 with an "F." This was engraved on the plate in this position by mistake. (All photographs by Boutrelle)

The second is the misplaced "F" on the red (frame) plate No. 19605. The letter "F" was always placed on the right pane for the printer's convenience. But on red No. 19605, the "F" was engraved by mistake on the left pane. (Fig. 14). Thus, one can collect two blocks with the red plate No. 19605, the left pane having the "F" by mistake, and a multiple piece from the right pane lacking the "F" before the red No. 19605. (Fig. 15).

Fig. 16 of a block of six with the red plate No. 19605 having the "F" is exceptionally interesting. Since the blue plate No. is 19597, the position 3 stamp in this block has the double "TOP" above it. *Therefore, this block shows two of the three known plate errors.*

The third plate error occurred with the red (frame) plate No. 19626. This was corrected. It seems the last number on the plate was in error. So, it had to be corrected to a "6." This was done by burnishing out the wrong number and remaking it "6." The plate was thinned by burnishing at this point,

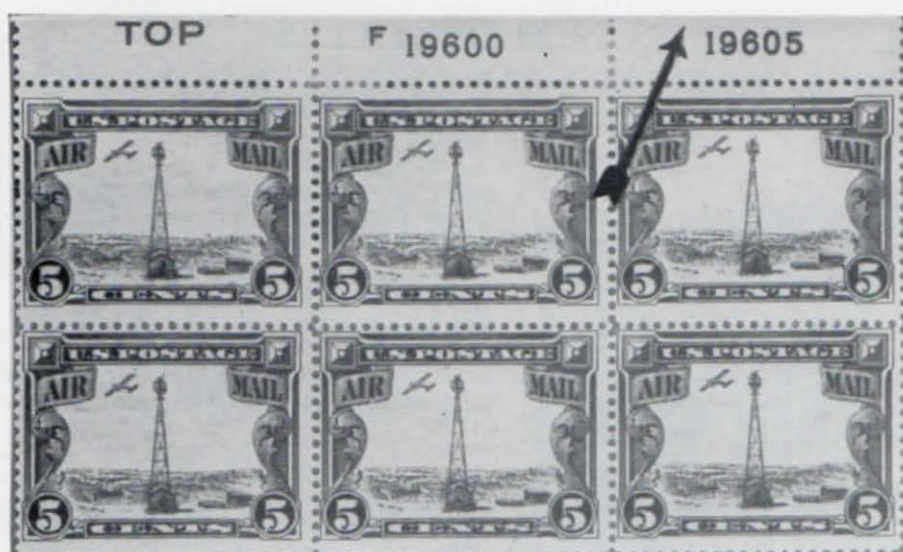


Fig. 15. A right pane with red plate No. 19605 without the "F." It should have been engraved on the plate here and not on the left pane plate No. 19605 as shown in Fig. 14.

and as it wore from use, a red disc appeared around the number "6" (Fig. 17).

Plate Varieties

As written before, many problems arose with the printing of the 5c Beacon air mail. One of the chief difficulties was caused by the red ink, which wore out the plates much faster than the blue ink, probably because the former had a greater acid content.

The plate wear is most evident on the ornamentation at the left side between



Fig. 16. Two of the three known plate errors on one block of six, the double "TOP" and the misplaced "F."



Fig. 17. The final number on the red plate No. 19626 was corrected to a "6." As the plate began to wear, a red disc appeared where this correction had been made.

the numeral "5" and the label with the word "AIR" (See Fig. 18).

When this wear was noticed, the frame plates were not discarded but repaired. This work is called *recutting*. The "Scott's United States Stamp Catalogue, Specialized" lists and prices the recuts. A recut variety is currently priced at \$5 unused and \$1.50 for a used copy.

Seventeen different recuts are described in great detail and illustrated in Johl's book. The writer sees no point in repeating that information here. However, he was fortunate to secure some of the original sketches used for illustration in Johl's book and five of them are shown (Fig. 19). They graphically indicate where the recutting was done, and aid the specialist in spotting copies with this variety that Scott prices at a premium. These five recuts are found on the illustrated block of eight (Fig. 20). This piece originally was in the Max G. Johl collection.

The writer has examined copies carefully for recuts and finds that Johl was very accurate except for three instances. On blue (vignette) plate No. 19666, the recut is on Position 7, not 1. On blue plate No. 19576 there is prominent indication of recutting on Position 3, which Johl does not mention. And on blue plate No. 19626, no recutting could be found on Position 44, although Johl described and illustrated it.

A second plate variety, that "Scott's United States Catalogue Specialized" also lists and prices the same as the recuts, is a *double transfer*. Great difficulty was encountered in trying to locate a copy that plainly shows where the transfer roll had been rocked in the plate twice leaving doubled lines in a part of the design. Johl says that on red (frame) plate No. 19659, Position 40, has a shifted transfer around the inner and outer framelines as well as in the



Fig. 18. The space between the two arrows indicates that part of the frame in the design where the red ink caused the greatest plate wear.

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EXTRACTS FROM BY-LAWS, ARTICLE III—MEMBERSHIP

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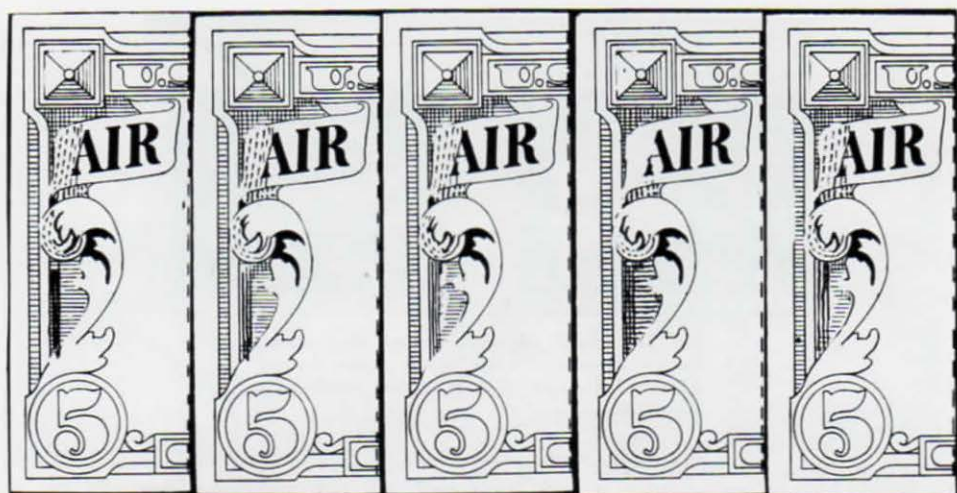


Fig. 19. These five sketches are the originals used for illustration in Johl's book to show recuts.

shading lines in the left ribbon with "AIR" and the acanthus scroll. This could not be confirmed.

There are a few other plate varieties that are very minor. Some of the plates were scratched and, thus, the printed stamps evidence a few extra marks. Two of the more outstanding examples are shown (Fig. 21).

The "Blue Moon" Variety

On the blue (vignette) plate No. 19618, because of some slight damage to the plate between the "P" and "O" of "POSTAGE," a small blue circle was printed in the right pane on Position 6. In the complete sheet of 100, it is Position 16. It was described in many of the stamp papers, being called the "Blue Moon." This is perhaps the best known of the Beacon stamp varieties. Although not catalogued in Scott's, it has become a popular collector's item,



Fig. 20. A block of eight from the left pane with five recuts, each indicated by an arrow.



Fig. 21. (Left) A plate scratch that caused the appearance of a red streak across the sky. (Right) A diagonal plate scratch produced a blue streak.

commanding a premium price (Fig. 22).

"Open Door" and "Worn Tower" Varieties

As previously mentioned, the red ink caused faster plate wear than the blue. Nevertheless, the latter also affected the plates, especially in the later printings. This plate wear in the blue vignette created two interesting plate varieties that are shown in Fig. 23. The first one, called the "open door" variety, had the plate worn exactly where the door to the storehouse in the central foreground is located. The fact that the blue ink did not register on this small place, gives the appearance of the door being open.

The other variety came about as the plate wore on the central vignette. The struts and steel framing on the tower printed very faintly, making what is popularly known as a "worn tower" variety (Fig. 23). Actually, the entire design is poorly printed, not just the tower, as one can notice in the illustration.

Printing Oddities

There are a number of printing freaks that add to the pleasure of collecting the Beacon air mail stamp, perhaps more than most United States modern stamps offer. These were caused by printing, not by a plate flaw. The latter are constant, whereas these printing oddities are not, a philatelic fact that too few properly understand.

For example, on blue plate No. 19674, the copy below this number sometimes has a red ink smudge around the letters "U. S." Two strips of three with blue plate No. 19674 are illustrated (Fig. 24). The one below does not have the red ink spot, showing this is not a constant variety.

Another fascinating printing oddity was caused by a small blot of ink in the design's center portion. The two examples shown here have been named by the writer "plane dropping a bomb" (Fig. 25).

On some copies, there are blue ink streaks. Also these were not caused by plate scratches because they are not constant. One is seen near the nose of the plane, so that it gives the illusion of the airplane "shooting a rocket" (Fig. 26).

There are a few more varieties, which can be described, but because of their nature cannot be illustrated. On the left pane with red plate No. 19615 and blue No. 19619, the word "TOP" in red is printed very faintly.

Also on some of the sheets with red plate No. 19670 and blue No. 19666 above the red "TOP," one can see a very indistinct blue "TOP" that was very faintly printed in the top sheet margin.

These are not all the printing freaks found. But only a few of the more



Fig. 22. The best-known plate flaw, the "Blue Moon" variety, a small blue ink stain appears on position 6 of the right pane with blue plate No. 19618.

interesting ones are described and illustrated.

Registration Of The Vignette

In the book on the first air mail stamp of the United States * (C3), much attention was paid to one outstanding variety. Incidentally, it is not listed in any catalogue, but it often commands a better price than catalogued items such as the centerline block. This is the "*Grounded Plane*" variety caused by the vignette being so poorly registered in printing that the bottom portion of the blue central design runs into the red frame on Scott C3.

Thus, it was logical that when the 5c Beacon air mail was being collected,

*"The First Air Mail Stamp Of The United States" by Henry M. Goodkind. Published by Aero Philatelists, 22 East 35 Street, New York, N.Y. 10016.

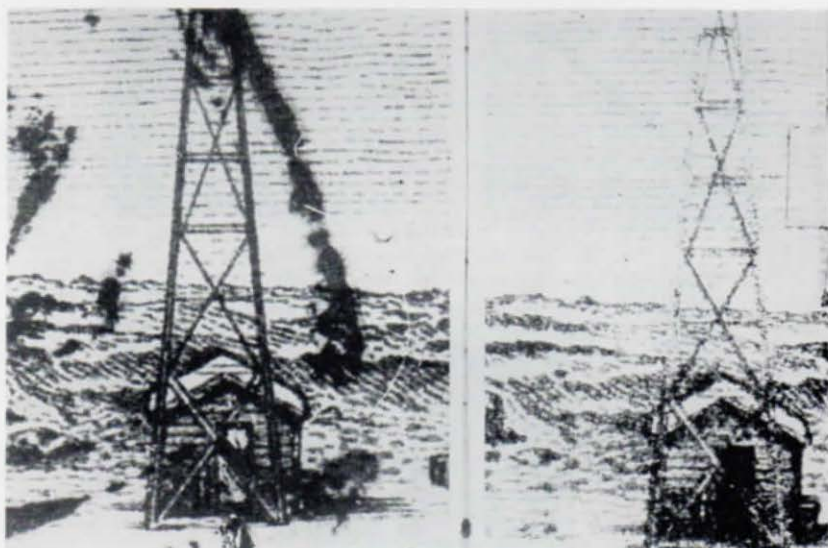


Fig. 23. (Left) The "Open Door" variety and (right) the "Worn Tower."

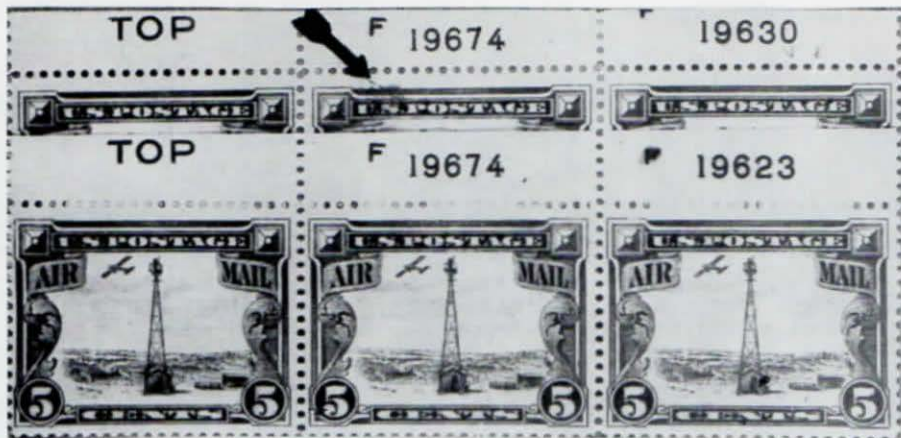


Fig. 24. Some blue plate No. 19674 copies have a red ink spot over "U.S.," but others do not.

close attention was paid to the shifts of the vignette, seeking a variety similar to that on the 1918 air mail stamp.

As previously noted, great difficulty was experienced by the Bureau's printers when the second printing of the blue vignette took place. Central registration was exceedingly difficult. This is borne out by the examination of thousands of 5c Beacon air mail copies. The central portion seldom, if ever, is well registered. Just as it is difficult to find well centered copies, it is equally hard to find well-printed ones. Although the U.S. Bureau of Engraving and Printing took great care to achieve good central registration, the problem could not be solved.

Therefore, as with badly centered copies, examples were selected that evi-



Fig. 25. Two examples of "plane dropping a bomb"; (left) is a red dot and (right) a blue one.



Fig. 26. "Plane shooting a rocket" variety.

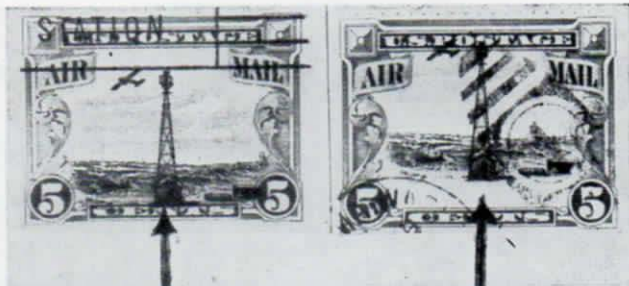


Fig. 27. (Left) Poor registration of the center design. The tower is printed on the lower part of the red frame, and (right), Fig. 28. The vignette is shifted so much to the top that the blue airplane and the tip of the beacon tower are on top of the red frame.

denced about the poorest registration of the blue vignette.

The closest the writer has been able to come to a C3 "Grounded Plane" variety is a cancelled copy where the storehouse and the bottom of the beacon tower touches the frame with the word "Cents." Numerous copies were found with the blue design shifted to the bottom but the one illustrated has the most pronounced shift to the bottom (Fig. 27).

The blue vignette also comes with a shift to the top. One copy shown has the plane and the tip of the tower printed on top of the red frame (Fig. 28). Notice also the wide white space between the lower part of the red frame and the bottom of the blue vignette.

Copies also can be found with extra shifts of the blue vignette both to the right and left (Fig. 29). An example to show such a shift of the blue central design must have a part of the blue ink printed upon the red frame, not just touching it.

Paper Differences

Another troublesome problem with the printing of the Beacon air mail was caused by *paper shrinkage*. In a two-process printing, the paper had to be wet twice. This caused an unequal shrinkage of the paper, making the size of the sheets not uniform. This resulted in difficulties with a careful registration of the blue vignette when printed in the red frame, and also with the perforating.

A number of experiments were tried because the paper shrinkage caused an excessive amount of printer's waste.

For a short time, some sheets were printed with the paper's grain horizontal instead of vertical. This changed the overall dimensions of such stamps,

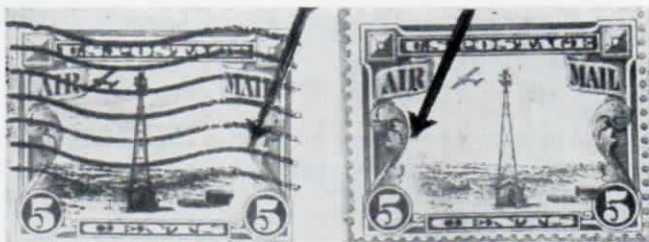


Fig. 29. Two copies showing pronounced shifts of the blue central design, one to the left, the other to the right.

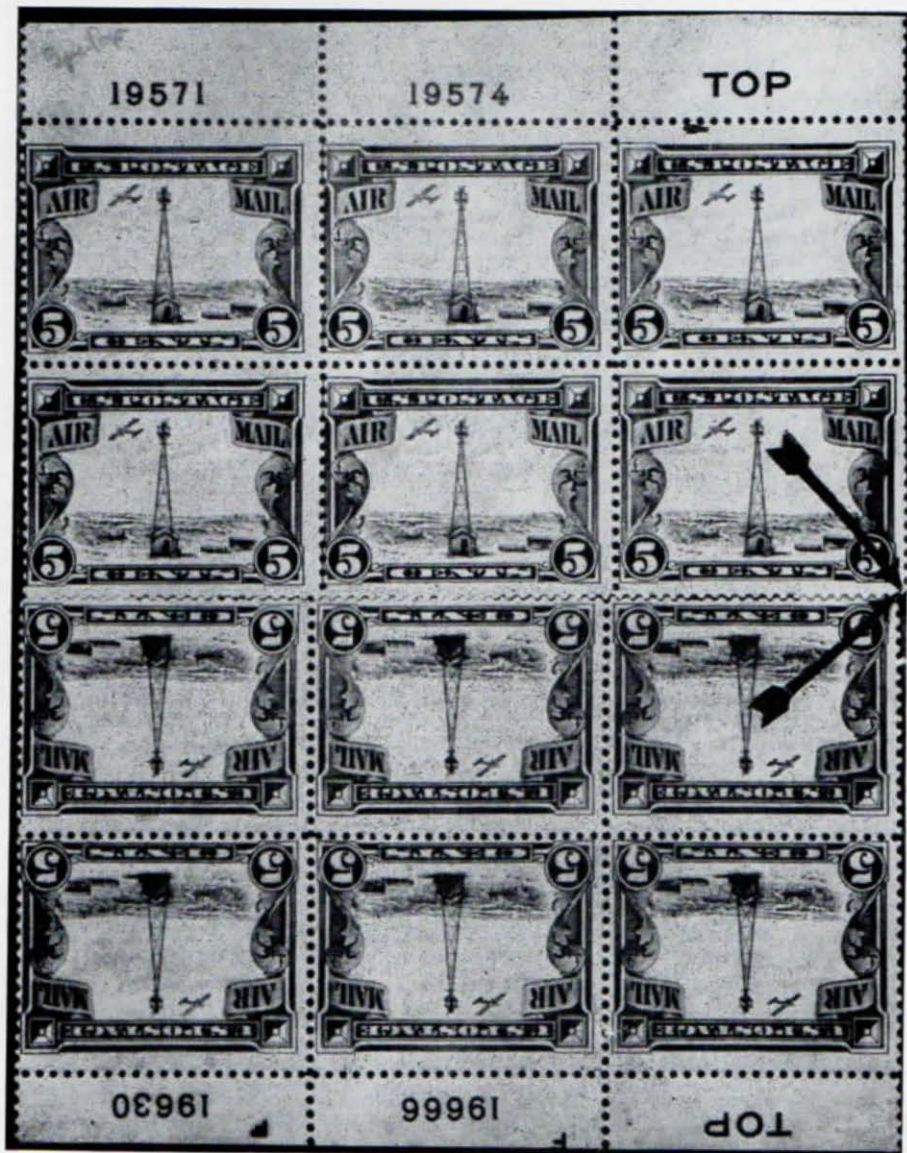


Fig. 30. Two blocks of six placed to show the paper differences caused by shrinkage in wetting the paper twice for the two printings.

measuring about a $\frac{1}{2}$ m.m. wider and also the same distance shorter than the normal copies (Fig. 30).

Also some experimental plates were made in a smaller size than the normal to see if the paper variations could be avoided. This was not successful so that this experiment was discontinued. None of the few smaller sized plates ever went to press, and, of course, no copies from blue plate Nos. 19636-39 and red plate Nos. 19640-43 have come into philatelic hands.

Paper Tinting

Another interesting matter about this air mail stamp is the wide range of



Fig. 31. The best centered copy out of several thousand examined.

tints found on the paper caused by the inks. Some sheet margins are on pure white, others come on yellow paper. At times the blue ink dyed the paper, so that it then has a pronounced bluish tint, and the red ink gives some paper a pink appearance.

There is a page in the writer's collection with copies of the Beacon air mail called "from dawn to dusk," showing these marked variations in paper tinting. The more pink paper represent "dawn" and as the sun rises towards noon, the paper progressively becomes whiter. As the afternoon sun sets, the "dusk" copies have a heavy bluish shading.

Perforating

Coupled with the paper shrinkage problem was that of perforating the stamps. Few realize how badly centered most all copies of the Beacon air mail come. These days, the perforating of U. S. stamps has been so vastly improved

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Fig. 32. Four copies selected to show an individual example of bad centering. (Top left) centered to the top, (Top right) centered to the bottom, (Bottom left) centered to the left and (Bottom right) centered to the right.

that collectors have very little difficulty procuring well-centered copies. Those from new issues now rejected as poorly centered, would be considered very finely centered examples of the 1928 Beacon air stamp.

Examine the copy shown in Fig. 31. Out of the many thousands of Beacons handled (5,000 is a conservative estimate), this is the best-centered copy found. The left margin is a trifle close, but the other three are about the most even yet seen. 999 out of 1000 Beacon air stamps come poorly centered.

In sharp contrast, copies showing about the worst centering also were sought. A copy was collected that showed - a) centering to the top with the bottom margin so wide it shows a part of the design from the stamp below it; b) centered the same but the bottom; c) the left and d) the right (Fig. 32).

Uncataloged Varieties

It is realized that not all the plate, printing, perforation, paper and inking varieties may have been described. Those commented upon happen to be the ones that held the greatest appeal to one individual. No doubt oddities and variations not described will be found of interest to other collectors.

A few words of advice to the less experienced collector seem in order. If one finds an oddity or variety of C11 not described, he must not jump to a conclusion that for this reason it represents a great new and valuable find. Such a printing freak may have been known years ago to Johl, Sloane, or Southgate. But in their opinion it was not of sufficient importance to record it.

Also one must bear in mind that stamps are collected by philatelic traditions. A catalogue lists plate varieties such as "recuts" and "double transfers," but not printing oddities such as C11's "Blue Moon" or C3's "Grounded Plane."

Proofs and Essays

United States essays and proofs represent a field that is considered

thoroughly recorded in past writings, specialized catalogues and the journals of the Essay-Proof Society. With the kind assistance of one active in this specialty, Mr. Solomon Altmann, a search was made in the Collectors Club Library, New York, N. Y., to learn what had been recorded about the 5c Beacon air mail's essays and proofs. Nothing was found, not even a listing in Brazer's Catalogue of United States proofs.

Consequently, outside of the mention by Johl in his book, that was previously noted, of the names of those at the Bureau of Engraving & Printing, who worked on the 1928 Beacon air mail stamp, past literature on United States stamps reveals nothing about the Beacon's essays nor proofs.

In the writer's more than forty years of experience with air mail stamps, he cannot recall even the mention of an essay of this 1928 air mail stamp. Therefore, it is extremely doubtful if essays exist.

As for proofs, it has been reported in the past that several (as many as six) exist. Inquiry among experienced aero-philatelists in New York City, both collectors and dealers, has revealed the existence of only two large die proofs, both similar.

These two die proofs are on India paper, approximately 7¾ inches long and 6 inches wide, signed by the Postmaster General, Harry S. New and noted "Approved June 18, 1928." One is illustrated, but slightly reduced to fit this page (Fig. 33). The other was in the collection of the late Mrs. Prentice Cromwell. This was sold at auction on February 7, 1957 by Irwin Heiman, New York, N. Y. and was purchased by Thomas A. Matthews of Springfield, Ohio.

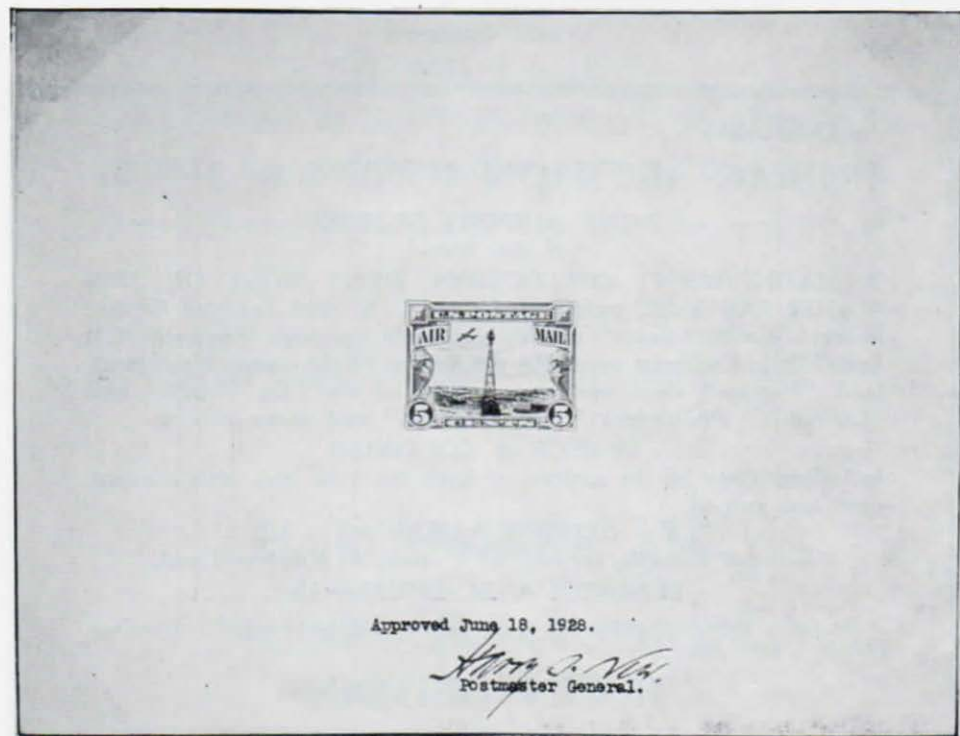


Fig. 33. One of the two known large die proofs printed on India paper and signed by the Postmaster General. It is of interest to note that the design was approved on June 18, 1928. (Courtesy of Philip Silver)

An attempt was made to pedigree these two large die proofs. One originally came from the late Hugh M. Southgate. The other was believed to have been in the Max G. Johl collection. But the auction catalogue of George B. Sloane of December 15-16, 1939 of the Johl collection lists no proof of the 1928 Beacon air mail stamp. Continued investigation has not as yet determined the pedigree of the second die proof.

In the President Franklin D. Roosevelt collection sold at auction by H. R. Harmer, Inc., New York, N. Y., in Part 1 on February 4, 1946, Lot 75 is described as follows:

"1930 (*sic*) Beacon 5c Carmine and blue. Appears to be printed on wove paper and is trimmed close to the design, and mounted in a block sinkage on usual six by eight inches proof card to look like a large die proof. Stamped on back of card is 333301 crossed out and pencil notation '333179 Frame, 333331 Picture.' This may not be a die proof. (C11) ———" The long dash at the end signifies there was no stated Catalogue Value.

Because the above description twice mentions that it is doubtful if this item is a die proof, the President Franklin D. Roosevelt piece is not included in this inventory of the Beacon 5c air mail die proofs.

In an attempt to complete this record on proofs, it will help if any reader who has information about same would communicate with us.

Also it seems appropriate to mention in this magazine that the only two die proofs presently known both are in collections of members of the Board of Directors of AERO PHILATELISTS — Philip Silver and Thomas A. Matthews.

(To Be Continued)

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