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DIE VARIETIES
of
U. S. ENVELOPES
GEORGE W. LOOMIS

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HOW TO DISTINGUISH THE VARIETIES OF UNITED STATES ENVELOPES.

One of the very first discouragements that an American collector meets with is the United States envelope. He has little or no trouble with the adhesives, but the envelopes seem a well nigh impossible task. When he opens his album he finds page after page set apart for them, each with a group of issues, dies, and papers that almost distract him. He turns the pages over one by one, and wonders how one is ever able to distinguish the varieties. Often for years will he leave them severely alone, until at last, ashamed of the vacant spaces, he sets to work in desperation to study them out for himself.

And yet the task is not as difficult as it seems, and a little careful work will enable him to easily classify them.

The object of this article is to point out the important differences in the issues, and to aid the new collector in easily locating them. It is not intended to go completely into this—but merely to start him on his way—and if it so does, the writer will be more than repaid.

The issues of United States envelopes to 1887 will be found to be in three groups, named after the designers, called the Nesbitt, the Reay, and the Plimpton dies. The Nesbitts run to 1865, the Reays to 1874, and the Plimptons to 1887.

It is not necessary to refer at length to the Nesbitt dies, the five varieties of 1853-55 being the only ones requiring special attention, and these being easily distinguished at a glance.

These all have the same design—the head of Washington in profile in an oval frame, with the value above, and the word “cents” below.

The varieties are formed by the size and shape of the frame of the space containing the value. These are five in number.

DIE 1. Value in narrow curved label.



DIE 2. Value in narrow straight label.



DIE 3. Value in narrow straight label, with octogon ends—the “K” die.



DIE 4. Value in wide straight circle.



DIE 5. Value in medium wide curved label.



The Reay and Plimpton groups, however, require more careful study to distinguish between them, as the Plimptons are for the most part poor imitations of the Reay dies.

It will, perhaps, make the differences most easy to distinguish if we compare the two issues.

Reay.

1c.—Bust points to end of N in ONE.

Plimpton.

1c. Die A—The o in Postage a distinct circle—o. The bust forms a corner at the back; the neck bulges out at the back.



2c.—Figures of value small and thick. Back of bust on neck a long curve.



3c.—Queue projects below the bust.



1c. Die B—Bust points to end of E in ONE. Line of bust a t b a c k straight.



2c. Die A—Similar to Reay die. Distinguished by the P in Postage, the head being very narrow.



2c. Die B—Bust broad. Figures of value in long ovals, and quite large.



2c. Die B 2—Similar to Die B, but the tail of the figure 2 in the left oval touches the oval.



2c. Die B 3—Similar to Die B, but o in Two netted and blurred instead of clear, and C in Cents has a line across it.



2c. Die C—Numerals in oval short and thick.

2c. Die D—Bottom of bust cut almost in a semicircle.



3c. Die A—Letters in inscription thin. Large, thin figures of value in long ovals.

3c. Die B—Thick letters. Short, thick figures of value.

No 5c. in Reay issue.

6c.—Neck long at back.



7c.—Figure 7 normal.



10c.—Bust straight line down back. Hair curly.

12c.—Ear concealed by hair.

15c.—Forehead bald, no parting in hair.

24c.—Ornaments around inner oval end in squares.



3c. Die C—Top of head egg shaped. The knot of the queue distinctly notched, making a W standing sidewise.



5c. Die A—Figure of value with curved top.



5c. Die C—Figure of value with long, thin top.



6c.—Neck short at back. Lock of hair projects in point out over forehead.



7c.—Figure 7 curved at end.



10c. Die A—Head enormous, filling up oval.

10c. Die B—The knot of the queue stands out distinct and prominent.

12c.—Ear very prominent and easily distinguished.

15c.—Lock of hair over forehead. Distinct part in hair on side.

24c.—Ornaments end in points.



30c.—Labels containing figures of value exactly parallel.

90c.—Inner points of shields almost joined to line of oval.



30c.—Labels not parallel.

90c.—Points project into the oval.



Of the 1887 issue, the only special varieties to be noticed are the two dies of the 2c. Green, the others needing no description.

2c. Die A—The point of the bust being in line with the 4th notch of the inner circle, and the G of Postage having no bar.



2c. Die B—Bust points to 2d notch. G has bar.



Bearing in mind these distinctions, the collector ought to be able to classify the most of his envelopes without much difficulty; the various shades and colors of paper being easily distinguished at sight. The only other series of any special perplexity are the issues of 1883-4, from October, 1883, to July, 1884. These will be considered in another paper, as the varieties are so many that it is impossible to go into them in this article.

THE TWO-CENT UNITED STATES ENVELOPES OF 1883-1884.

In March, 1883, the single rate of postage on letters was reduced from three to two cents per half ounce—this to take place on and after October 1, 1883. This change in the rate left the 3c. denomination of little utility, and it was determined to discontinue its issue.

Thinking, however, that the public would regard with disfavor the dropping of the head of Washington (which was on the 3c. envelope) from the series of portraits on envelopes, it was decided to use it on the 2c. issue, and to commence its use on the date fixed for the reduction in postal rates—namely, October 1, 1883.

This necessitated the making of a new die, and the limited time the contractors had in which to make the change caused the somewhat defective die of October, 1883, to be used.

Its unsatisfactory character resulted in its being replaced in November, 1883, by the really superb die of that issue.

The ink, however, used in printing so injured the working dies that they had to be constantly repaired (some of them having undergone the operation seven times), making what are called the "recut" dies.

This occasioned a vast number of varieties and differences, so many that but few are worthy of being distinguished or classified—partly in minute changes caused by the recutting, and partly by poor impressions as the dies became worn and defective.

During 1884, so much difficulty was found in printing clear impressions, owing to the double lines in the border of

the oval running together and blurring, that a new die was made with but two single lines in the border—called the July, 1884, issue.

This issue the contractors began to print in red, but before many had left the manufactory a brown ink was substituted, which will account for the high prices this issue commands in the red printing.

With this brief review we will now take up the issues in detail :

- I. **The October, 1883, Die.** It is impossible to make a mistake in this die—the letters in the inscription being large and thick.



- II. **The November, 1883, Die.** The letters in the inscription are small. The medallion stands out clear and distinct, and the impressions before the dies became worn are beautiful productions. There are four wavy lines in the border of the oval.



- III. **The May, 1884, Die.** Same as No. II, except the printing done in brown ink. Many of the impressions though are blurred and blotched as the dies began to suffer from the effects of the inks used.

- IV. **The June, 1884, Dies. The Recut Dies.** These are printed in both red and brown. Countless slight differences show the recutting. It will only be necessary to compare one of these with one of the original dies to classify it as a retouched die. The wavy lines and links in the border, the inscription, and even in the head itself, all show signs of alteration, and cause countless varieties.

These differences in general are so slight and unimportant that they hardly deserve classification, and will be of little interest except to the specialist.

There are four varieties though, that are possibly worthy of notice :

- a. **The Two Links variety.** Below right oval containing figure of value, there are only two links or diamonds.



- b. **The Spread 2 Variety.** In this the figure 2 in left oval broad and thick—in right oval slender.



- c. **The Round O Variety.** In this the letter O in Two is a perfect circle.



- d. **The 3½ Links Variety.** Above the left numeral are three and one-half links or diamonds.



Other distinctive varieties could doubtless be pointed out by those who are specially interested in this series of dies, but to the general collector these will perhaps suffice.

- V. **The July, 1884, Die.** This is distinguished by having two wavy lines in border of oval.



Two varieties recognized :

- Die A.** Extremity of the bust below the queue forms a point.



- Die B.** Extremity of bust rounded.




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U. S. ENVELOPES

CUT SQUARE  LARGE MARGINS

59th Cat. Number	UNUSED	59th Cat. Price	My Price
1347	1870, 24c purple on white	\$ 4.00	\$1.75
1477	1880, 5c brown on blue.....	5.00	2.50
1525	1886, 5c brown on o. buff.....	10.00	5.00
1531	1886, 30c black on blue.....	5.00	2.50
1539	1886, 90c carmine on manila	10.00	5.00
1545	1886, 30c black on amber m.....	5.00	2.50
1546	1886, 90c carmine on amber m.....	10.00	5.00
1561	1887, 2c green on o. buff	12.00	6.00
1396	1870, 1c blue on orange50	.15
1397	1870, 2c brown on orange.....	.25	.10
1415	1874, 30c black on white.....	1.50	.75
1416	1874, 90c carmine on white.....	2.00	1.10
1421	1876, 3c red, Centennial.....	.60	.30
1448	1875, 5c blue on amber.....	.25	.10
1463	1880, 2c vermilion on cream	1.50	.35
1492	Nov. 1883, 2c red on fawn.....	.25	.10
1504	June 1884, 2c red on fawn.....	.75	.25
1513	July 1884, 2c brown on amber.....	.50	.20
1515	July 1884, 2c brown on fawn	1.00	.40
1530	1886, 10c brown on blue.....	.40	.20
1565	1887, 30c chocolate on o. buff.....	1.25	.65
1671	1887, 30c chocolate on blue.....	1.25	.65
1708	1864, 2c black on manila, die 2.....	.65	.30
1724	1884, June, 2c brown on manila.....	.50	.25
1728	1884, July, 2c brown on manila.....	1.00	.50
1813	Postal Service, blue on blue.....	.10	.05

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