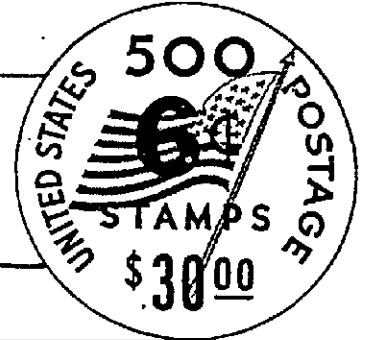


LABEL MANIA

a Newsletter for Collectors of U.S. Coil Labels



#3, AUGUST 1990

Before I forget, this is the "September" issue promised back in July, 1989. Some things get easier as time goes by; labels do not! We're obviously not able to do this on a bi-monthly basis; instead, we'll try for quarterly issues. "Label Mania #4" should be out in November ... provided we ever finish #3!

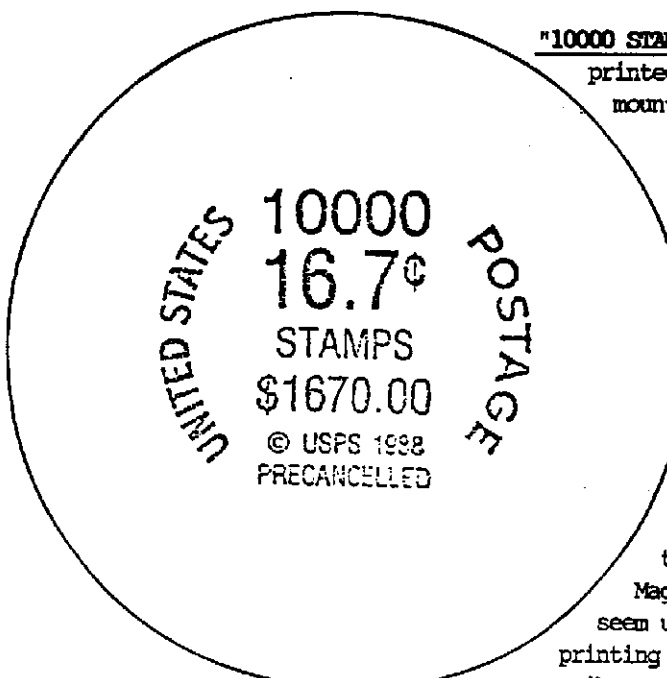
This issue contains frequent references to non-"Transportation/PNC" labels. We greatly underestimated your interest in labels from older coil series (Americana, Prominent Americans, Liberty) and have decided to broaden our study to cover all coil wrapper labels produced since their introduction in 1959. In time, we may even make a stab at cataloging Stickney Press "lead-in" strips! The feature article in this issue was written to reflect this new "All Labels" policy, and future newsletters will likewise backtrack through the maze of Oldies but Goodies. Stay tuned!

On other fronts, we're making slow but steady progress on a revised "Key to U.S. Coil Labels" and hope to have it ready by Summer, 1991. The new "Key" will organize the piecemeal revisions presented in "Mania", re-examine label paper/adhesive types, expand coverage of Box labels, and explore label design suites. We also hope to have enough verified information from the B.E.P. to include an accurate history of how labels have been produced, modified and used, and a reasonable explanation for why so many varieties exist!

The Revised Key will lead directly into our next mega-project: the Illustrated Catalogue of All Known Coil Labels. We prepared a set of catalogue essay pages (available on request) for World Stamp Expo, but need more collector input. What kind of information would you like to find in a "Labels Catalogue"?

We seem to be nearing the end of Known Label Types for some issues, especially for older PNC releases. Completely new label designs still surface from time to time, though less frequently. We're also getting a good grip on the most probable label-to-plate-#/press run correlations. Our data bank is weakest in "Box" stickers and "3000 STAMPS" labels; we definitely appreciate your information, corrections and discoveries!

This issue was inspired, hastened, occasionally delayed by more than a hundred fellow Maniacs; special THANKS go out to Al Cibulskas, Don Eastman, Steve Esrati, Ed Gould, Mike Lipson, Gil Mattox, Bill McMurray, Rich Nazar, Gene Paquette, Bob Rabinowitz, D.J. Schultz, Scott Smith, and the whole Precancel Stamp Society. As always, we rely on your time and effort, your willingness to share information, your donations of spare labels and postage. We love hearing from you and hope you continue to enjoy our - and your! - work.



"10000 STAMPS" Labels The Good News is that these labels are all printed on the same @ 89mm blanks used for "3000 STAMPS", then mounted on @ 7 $\frac{1}{4}$ "-wide cardboard disks. This one Codes as:

16.7¢ S.I. Popcorn Wagon 10000 (Plate #2)
S48 $\frac{1}{2}$ /20; Label Stock IV; Magenta; 1988.

The Bad News is that these labels will probably be very hard to locate! The dispensing machines that use these mammoth rolls cost @ \$9,000 - which means that most coils will end up going to the small clique of professional Volume Mailers not generally renown for passing out labels to needy collectors!

More bad news surrounds the "Fifth Denomination". Rolls were announced for 25¢ "P" Flag, 16.7¢ Popcorn, 13.2¢ Coal Car, 10.1¢ Oiler; earlier, tests were made using the 2¢ "B" Locomotive! We tracked down one of the "test" customers, here in New England, who recalled that his supply came under "hand-written labels in black Magic Marker". With only @ 750 "Test" rolls made, it does seem unlikely that the B.E.P. would have made a special label printing die. 2¢ "Ten Grand" labels will be both scarce and impossible to authenticate. Beware of impostors and "facsimiles"!

"EXTRAordinary" Labels? World Stamp Expo gave us the opportunity to see full rolls of the "EXTRAordinary" self-adhesive coil, something which - for those of us who do not live near one of the Test Cities - had so far been impossible. While others in the PNC community puzzled out the colored boxes and scratches on the backing paper, I went a' hunting labels! This coil was triply unique: first self-adhesive coil, first coil produced outside the B.E.P., first to be released in rolls of 5,004 stamps. The companion Booklet versions came with printed deck cards facing each bundle of 100; the coils, though, had no labels ... Or did they?

On request, a philatelic clerk at Expo hauled out an intact roll, still sealed in cardboard-stiffened shrink wrap. To my great disappointment, the roll bore no label whatsoever. My clerk volunteered that one might not have been thought necessary since "We're only supposed to sell these in strips of 18, not in full rolls!", ruling out need of a Quantity/Denomination/Price tag. But on closer inspection, I caught sight of a small white sticker, @ 1" x 2", inside the roll core (these stamps were wound around short sections of cardboard tubing) that did bear lines of print - plus a penned-in "inventory" number! As I began copying down the inscription (reproduced here from memory), the clerk mentioned that she also had a partial roll of 90 stamps; if I was interested, I could pick up the empty core in an hour or two. For a minute there, I almost decided to buy the five strips of 18 just to get it over with but ... BIG Mistake! At day's end, I trotted over to collect my promised bit of postal garbage only to learn that the Postique supervisor had emphatically nixed the deal. Seems each individually numbered core had to be turned in after sales as an "Inventory and Sales Control"!

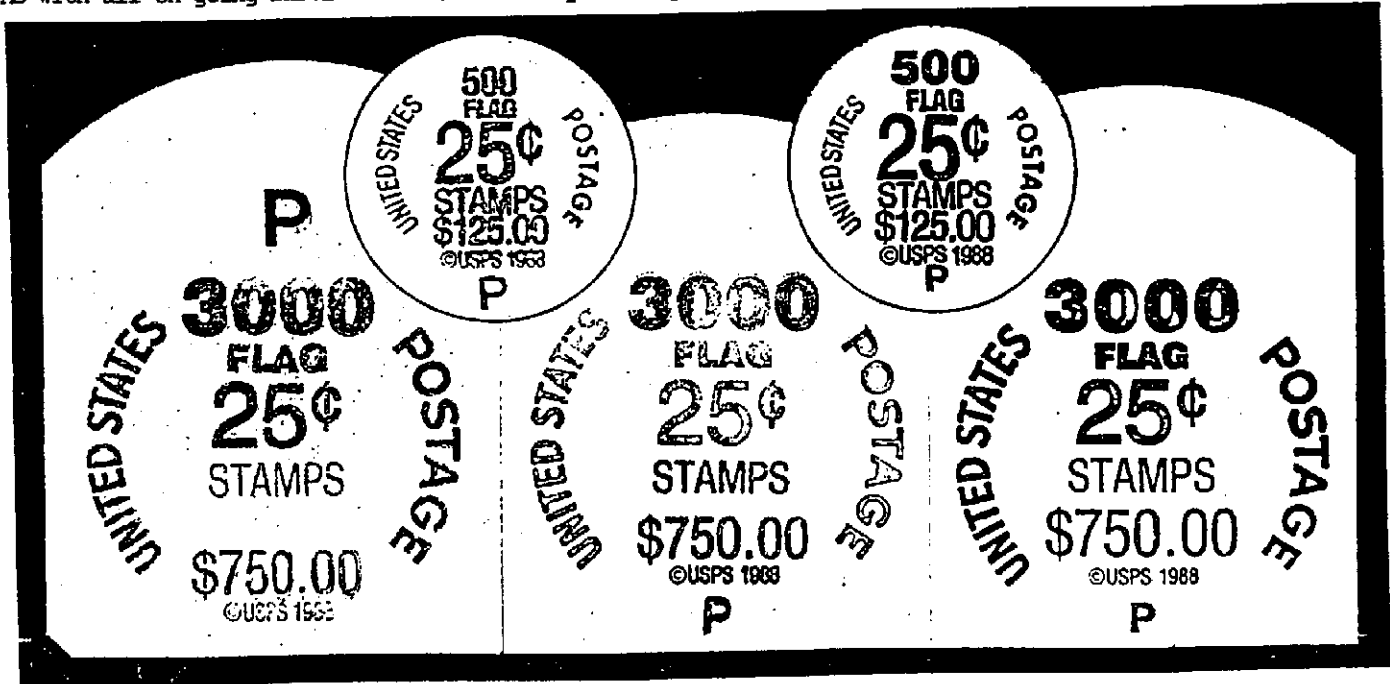
AMERICAN BANK NOTE CO
Pressure-Sensitive Coil
5,004 - 25¢ # _____

At first, I suspected deliberate Postal orneriness but, on second thought, the policy does sound more or less plausible for what is, after all, a very experimental coil issue. Contacts in the Test Cities have likewise failed to obtain a "stickered" core and, though I hate to say it, I smell another bona-fide rarity coming on! Have any of you triumphed where we so miserably failed? Can you provide a clear Xerox?

* * * * *

"P" is for "Phosphored Phlags"! By now, you're probably aware that the B.E.P. is printing nearly all new 25¢ Flag/Yosemite coils on pre-phosphored paper and sealing them under "P"-inscribed labels. The first "P" labels were apparently printed from reworked dies filched from the block-tagged Yosemite, but two entirely new label dies have been created since. Though they differ in other respects, four sizes of the letter "P" distinguish these labels! We thought it best to alert you now, while most varieties can still be located.

An @ 7½mm-tall "P" crowned the "3000 STAMPS" labels reported on rolls of plate #8, the first "phosphor" Flag believed printed. A shorter @ 4½mm letter, placed under the copyright, is known on "3000"-size labels sealing rolls of plate #2; this same "P" - in at least two slightly different positions - was also used on "500 STAMPS" labels sealing rolls of #2, #3 and #8. These basic label designs - but without that "P" - had previously served block-tagged coils. Recently, two entirely new designs have surfaced. The "3000 STAMPS" version sports an @ 4mm-tall "P" while the "500 STAMPS" label (with its distinctively larger "500") bears an @ 3½mm-high letter; both labels have been seen on rolls of plate #1. "10000 STAMPS" Flag rolls are also labeled with a "P"; though we haven't seen one yet, we assume only one die - thus one size of "P" - exists. As with all on-going label series', we need your help to uncover other designs and plate sightings.





More about Emblems A stupid mistake sneaked into Label Mania #2 : I meant to say that 18¢ Flag and Surrey were the first PNC "Emblem" labels! The pictorial design we term an "Emblem" actually premiered on labels prepared for the 6¢ Flag coils of 1969. The concept was so well received that similar "Emblem" labels were made for most subsequent First Class coils till budget considerations forced the B.E.P. to request cheaper, "plain" wrapper labels in late 1981. "Emblems" were made in "100", "500" and "3000 STAMPS" sizes for seven pre-PNC coils; listed by name, Scott number and basic label color, they are: 6¢ Flag, #1338A, in Blue (see front page); 8¢ Flag, #1338G, in Blue (same basic design as 6¢ Flag); 10¢ Crossed Flags, #1519, in Blue; 13¢ Flag Over Independence Hall, #1625, in Brown; 13¢ Liberty Bell, #1618, in Chestnut (see page 8); 15¢ Fort McHenry Flag, #1618C, in Blue; 16¢ Liberty Head, #1619, in Apple Green. The last-mentioned item, the 16¢ "Head" coil, was not First Class but, in 1977, Postal Service was so convinced that rate commissioners would approve a 3¢ increase, it instructed the B.E.P. to prepare 16¢ coils in "First Class" quantities with "Emblem" labels. Unfortunately, First Class rate only reached 15¢! A similar case of "rate anticipation" was probably responsible for the 17¢ Electric Auto "Emblem" essay shown in Label Mania #2, page 5.

* * * * *

"Computer-Printed" Labels The B.E.P. is currently experimenting with cheaper methods of producing labels for the cardboard containers used to ship and store quantities of coil rolls. "3000 STAMPS" coils are sent out in "Cases" of 64 rolls broken into 8 "Boxes" (AKA "Trays") of 8 coils apiece. "500 STAMPS" coils are packed 50 to a Box, 400 rolls (8 Boxes) to a full Case. "100 STAMPS" coils are shipped in "Sheets" of 50 joined Bubble Packs, 800 rolls (16 Sheets) to a Case. Each of these quantities (Sheets excepted) is individually labelled to allow your local P.O. to order coils from Regional Depot inventories in small quantities (lots of 8 and/or of 50) to best match specific customer requests.

Case and Box labels are usually printed on @ 3" x 4" rectangles of gummed paper. Flag boxes often bear descriptive legends printed into the cardboard, and rubber stamps are occasionally used, either on round label blanks OR on naked cardboard, to itemize box contents. The new labels are "printed" in tiny color-dot patterns similar to the script produced by computers; thus our provisional name for these items.

These new labels are "printed" on self-adhesive paper, many on round-cornered strips measuring @ 22 x 100mm. Depending on length, two or more texts can be printed on the same strip, later manually cut in halves or in thirds before use; thus "Left", "Right" or "Center" strips - identified by the rounded corners - can exist.



The shorter strips noting "B-PRESS", "C-PRESS" or merely "D", are being tacked onto conventionally-printed Box labels of 8.4¢ Wheelchair, 21¢ Mail Car, 25¢ Flag and 25¢ Honeybee shipped to philatelic centers; only collectors would find Press designation remotely important! For the items illustrated, the PC 12.5¢ "Box" label is Blue, the PC 13.2¢ "Box" strip is Red, the "P"-designated half-strip is in Pale Green (a similar strip without "P" is known in Gray), the thirds-length "D" strip is in Dark Blue. Other texts and colors are anticipated. Once again, we desperately need your help to monitor this new experiment in labelling.

Precanceled

... a History of Overprinted Labels

Since 1984, all labels made for rolls of precanceled coil stamps have included the word "PRECANCELLED" as a planned part of their designs. Previously, the B.E.P. had printed only a "basic" label for each coil denomination, and then overprinted these "basic" items to meet precanceled packaging requirements. For the purposes of this study, an "overprint" is any word or phrase added to a label during a separate printing procedure which changes or modifies the original use-description of the label.

We have a fairly accurate idea how coil wrapper labels are currently made, but have less reliable data covering older systems and technologies, particularly those used to "overprint". The details of processing and packaging were rarely publicized; the B.E.P. never expected collectors would show any real interest in such un-exciting, peripheral matters. Devotees of early precanceled coils were far more interested in the stamps than in the wrapping! The late-1970 conversion to generic "mute" precancels, and the 1981 advent of Plate Numbered Coils, sparked phenomenal interest in precancel gap positions ... and sent collectors back to examining labels for possible clues to help in the search for specific Plates and Gaps.

In order to understand overprints, we should first know something about basic label production methods. Here again, the records are incomplete. Though we are gradually unearthing solid data, much of our "information" is only theoretical, based on observations of the end results and assumptions back to what we think were their most likely causes. We apologize for these numerous uncertainties and hope to weed out our most grievous errors in future. Please let us know if you have any confirmed information that could help.

In 1959, the Bureau of Engraving and Printing began converting coil packaging methods from manually-attached "Lead-In Strip" closures to automated "Cellophane Wrapping". Lead-In Strips - so called because they were commonly used to thread rolls into coil dispensing machines - were lengths of paper gummed to the first stamp of a coil and then wrapped around the whole roll to protect contents before use. The outermost wrap of the lead-in bore a brief printed text identifying the contents of the sealed package. Denomination, roll quantity and coil direction ("side-wise" or "end-wise", important considerations when loading vending machinery) were usually printed in the same color as that of the stamps being wrapped. "Sales Price" was rarely noted; coiled stamps were not, at this time, commonly intended for use by the general public. When required, "PRE-CANCELED" was printed in a contrasting color across the basic lead-in inscription.



Lead-In Strip ... also called a "Leader" or "Header", these strips sealed all Stickney Press coils and a few early Cottrell products. The strip shown here was photographically cropped from the original @ 272mm length. Basic roll information was printed in the same shade of Dark Green as the attached stamp (1¢ Washington; #1054) while "PRE-CANCELED" was added in Bright Red ink.

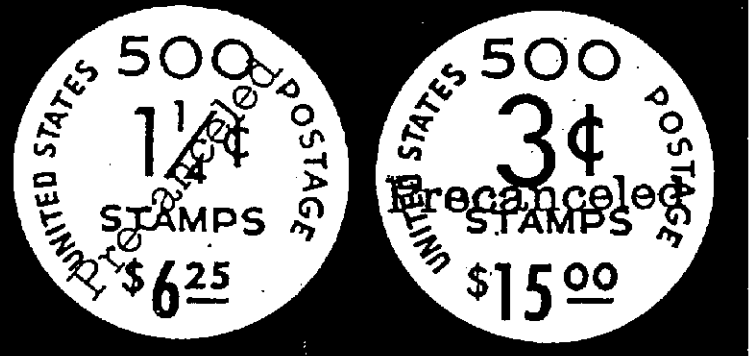
The new Cellophane Wrapping system completely enveloped coil rolls providing superior protection, but also demanding some sort of external seal to keep the tucks and folds of cellophane from working loose. The system further required that individual rolls be closed before wrapping with short strips of masking tape. Though enough stamp was usually visible, the tape strips occasionally made it difficult to quickly identify roll contents. "Wrapper Labels" neatly solved both problems.

Early Wrapper Labels were most likely printed on long strips of paper. Strips were later gummed onto large rolls of backing paper while simultaneously being scored into circular disks. Finished "Label Rolls" were subsequently fed into a "Label-Affixing Press" which mechanically transferred labels from the backing paper onto freshly-wrapped coil rolls. This "Label-Affixer" - coupled to the adjoining "Coil Wrapper" and "Coil Counter/Winder" units - was the final component of the new, fully-automated Huck Coil Processing System installed by the B.E.P. to maximize the output of the powerful Cottrell stamp presses.

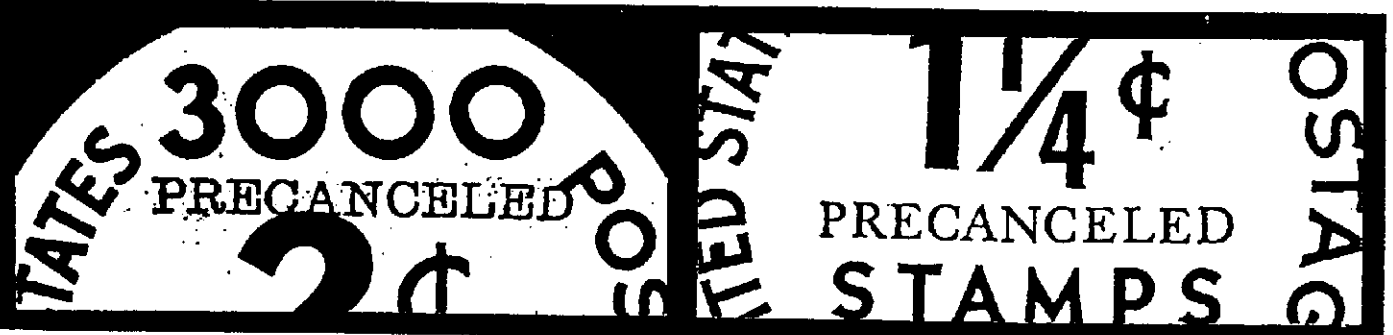
Label design and production were the responsibilities of a small in-house print shop maintained by the B.E.P. to handle non-security work. The first labels - those made to replace lead-in strips on the Liberty Series coils - were modeled on a set of design patterns, one in each roll size, with blank spaces for later insertion of paired denomination/price values. These patterns boldly listed "UNITED STATES POSTAGE", stamp denomination and roll quantity. A new Sales Price replaced layout direction, reflecting a shift in postal marketing strategy than began in 1957 with the introduction of a new, consumer-oriented "100 STAMPS" coil size. Final printing dies were crafted to withstand years of repeated use, and ink mixtures were carefully monitored to ensure that labels from different printing runs would be virtually indistinguishable. With, originally, only a handful of coil issues in steady production, it was well worth the extra effort to make top quality, absolutely identical Wrapper Labels for each denomination and every roll size.

Precanceled

... measures @ 37mm long and is distinguished from a similar @ 35mm style by the lower-case Roman letter "a". One of the first overprint "devices" made, it has been confirmed only on "500 STAMPS" labels for 1 1/4¢ Palace of the Governors (#1054A), and 3¢ Statue of Liberty (#1057). Color may be Black, Blue or Red; strike is usually fine, occasionally blurred; position varies considerably, but is normally on or near label center. This overprint probably served other Liberty Series labels, possibly also the Great Americans coils. Both labels shown above were modeled on the generic "Liberty" patterns of 1959.

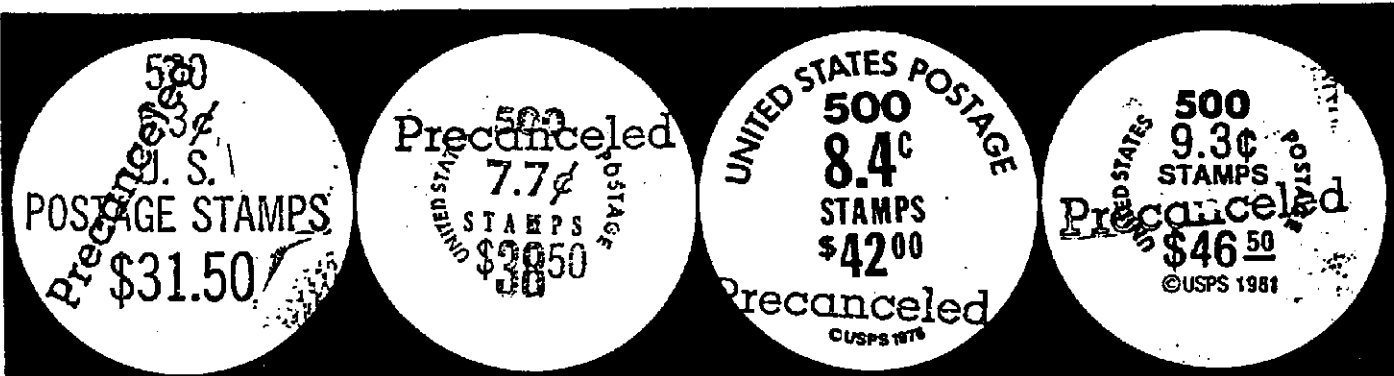


As previously noted, the B.E.P. had routinely produced two different versions of most lead-in strips, the second of which was marked "PRE-CANCELED" during printing. From this, one might reasonably expect that a similar series of service-indicated wrapper labels would have also been printed alongside the "regular" types. Instead, we have reports of boxes of 2¢ "City" precancels being shipped out, as late as 1960, with labels in no way specially marked to advertise their unusual contents. Given that stamps could now be seen and identified through the clear cello-wrappers, it seems possible that the Bureau had decided to dispense with special service-use labelling altogether. More likely, this omission was merely one of the many temporary oversights that occurred during the long, drawn-out transition from Stickney Press to Cottrell, from Lead-Ins to Wrapper Labels. Precanceled coils were all made to order for individual U.S. cities, usually at the request of local commercial mailers. Shipments rarely lingered in Post Office storage long enough to accidentally slip into normal sales stock but, just in case ... B.E.P. engineers worked out an easy way of adding, "on line", a service indicator to the labels sealing precanceled coils.



PRECANCELED ... measures @ 54mm long and can be distinguished from the similar @ 53mm style by the conspicuous hook in the tail of the letter "R" and the trio of strong serifs on the letters "E". This overprint has only been confirmed on "3000 STAMPS" labels of 2¢ Jefferson (#1055), though it was probably also used on other labels of the Liberty coil series. Color may be Red, Orange, Brown, or Black; impression can be fine or blurred; position is usually centered near the top of the label.

PRECANCELED ... measures @ 53mm long. The tail of the letter "R" is a straight stroke; upper and lower serifs of the letters "E" are gently angled outwards. This overprint has only been confirmed on "3000 STAMPS" labels of 1 1/4¢ Palace of the Governors (#1054A) though it may have also seen use on other Liberty coil series labels. Color is Black; strike is usually fine and centered near the top of the label.



Precanceled ... measures @ 35mm long and is distinguished from the similar @ 37mm style by the lower-case *Italic* "a". This overprint premiered on Americana roll labels, though it also marked late printing runs of earlier-issued coils, and was kept in use for the first Transportation values. It has been confirmed on "500 STAMPS" labels of 3¢ Parkman (#1297), 3.1¢ Guitar (#1613), 3.5¢ Violins (#1813), 6.3¢ Bells (#1518), 7.7¢ Saxhorns (#1614), 7.9¢ Drum (#1615), 8.4¢ Piano (#1615C), 9¢ Capitol Dome (#1616), 10¢ Jefferson Memorial (#1520), 10¢ Petition (#1617), 12¢ Torch (#1816), 13¢ Liberty Bell (#1618), and on "3000 STAMPS" labels of 3.1¢ Guitar and 7.9¢ Drum. It probably served other labels in the Americana series and could also have been employed on those of the Prominent Americans. On Transportation/PNC coils, it marked "500 STAMPS" labels of 5.9¢ Bicycle (both substitute "Split" and reduced "Arch" designs), 10.9¢ Hanscom Cab (both "Split" and "Arch"), 17¢ Electric Auto and 9.3¢ Mail Wagon (also on "3000 STAMPS" labels). Color on printed labels can be Black, Blue, Green or Red; on "substitute" labels, color normally matches that of the standard data (Black, Purple, Red) but can occasionally differ by several shades. Strike ranges from fine to blurred (see the 5.9¢ "Arch"!); position varies enormously, especially on "substitutes".



In early 1961, at least two of the four operating Label-Affixing Presses were outfitted with printing units attached midway between label feed rolls and label applicators. Overprint "devices" were installed into these printing units which were then timed to strike as the label rolls advanced. We suspect a series of heaters and/or blowers were installed just below the printers to keep the fresh ink from smudging; heat would not only help dry the ink, but may also have been instrumental in activating the thick adhesive resin used on most early label papers. These "devices" were solid metal casting reading either "PRECANCELED" or "PRESORTED FIRST CLASS"; master dies kept in the B.E.P. print shop guaranteed that identical slugs could be periodically cast to replace worn-out copies and maintain style continuity. During the twenty years that this "overprinting" system was in use, at least nine style-different "devices" were created to modify coil wrapper labels; four were used exclusively on "3000 STAMPS" labels, four solely on "500 STAMPS" labels, the last was used on both sizes. Precancels were rarely (if at all!) processed in "100 STAMPS" rolls; to our knowledge, no "device" was made for this label size. Minor variations caused by faulty casting or damages sustained during use are known for several styles. Major variety exists in overprint position and color!

Position of overprint relative to label depended on the alignment of the "device" within the printer's chase (holder), and on the precise timing of print stroke to label roll advance. "Devices" were cast in various lengths to best mark the two different label diameters. Those made for "3000 STAMPS" labels probably occupied the full length of the chase, but even the longest overprint (@ 61mm) could be severely misaligned yet still show up somewhere on a 98mm-wide label surface. Those created for "500 STAMPS" labels, however, were nearly as long as the 45mm-wide labels themselves! If a slug were not perfectly centered in the chase, the overprint could wander horizontally across the label face. Similarly, if roll advance were not properly synchronized to print stroke, the overprint could scroll vertically up or down. Either distortion could effect missing letters and/or a completely unintelligible marking. Finally, even a minimal loss of tension in the label feed roll could flutter the strip against the inked "device" between printing strokes, causing full or partial doubling of the overprint.

We believe these printers were small Platen-style letterpress units; if so, then many overprint "variations" can be readily explained. Platen-style presses use rollers, sweeping back and forth between print strikes, to transfer ink from an offset palette onto the typeface. By intent, overprints were positioned horizontally, paralleling standard label data. But the constant roller agitation could gradually dislodge a poorly mounted type slug and - more significantly - slowly pivot the chase (with "device") around its mounting screw, thus accidentally creating diagonal, vertical or even inverted overprints.

Ink selection seems to have been left up to the operator monitoring the machines. A contrasting color would, ideally, make an overprint stand out against background label data. There are many examples of such foresight - Red on Black, Blue on Green, Black on Gold, etc. - especially in early overprinting; later on, color choices narrowed to whatever leftover inks could be spared from more exalted press-room activities. Uniform inking was particularly important. A small dab of color spread onto the palette would sufficiently ink both rollers and typeface. Too much ink would clog the "device" and produce a blurred, illegible smear; not enough ink, and the wording would gradually fade away; add a dab from a different color batch, and the overprint would shift through an uncontrolled succession of intermediate shades.

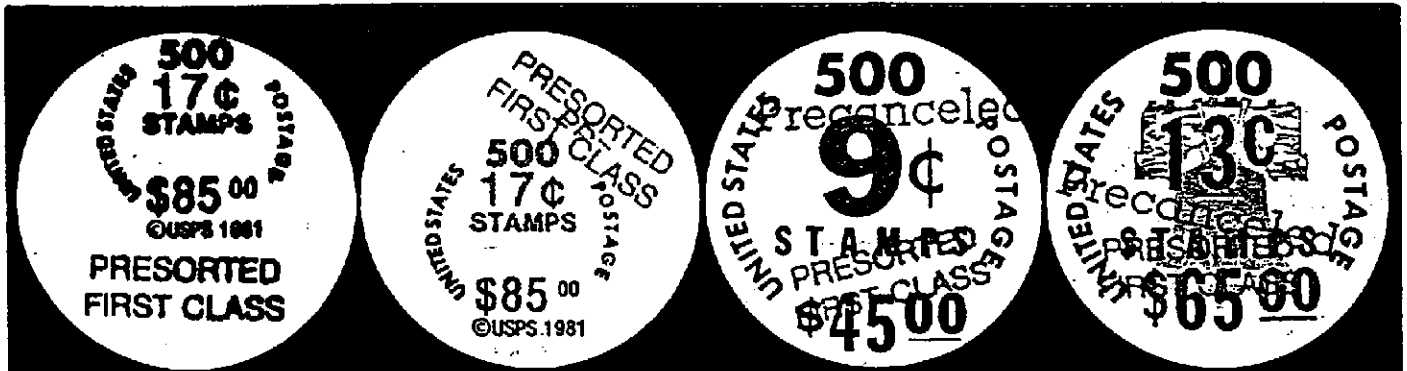
These position permutations and color variations are all highly collectable and eagerly sought, but we must emphasize that they are merely the by-products of an improvised system, hardly constant, often "one of a kind". Do try to assemble a representative collection of overprint positions and colors but don't expect to locate one of every known type. Frankly, the possibilities are endless!

<p style="text-align: center;">\$252⁰⁰ PRECANCELED ©USPS 1978</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">\$510⁰⁰ ©USPS 1981 PRESORTED FIRST-CLASS</p>
<p>PRECANCELED</p>	<p>... measures @ 46mm long. A broad stroke caps the letter "A", and there are no serifs on the mid-strokes of the letters "E". This overprint has been confirmed on "3000 STAMPS" labels for 2¢ Jefferson (#1055), 7.7¢ Saxhorns (#1614), 7.9¢ Drum (#1615), 8.4¢ Piano (#1615C), 9¢ Capitol Dome (#1616), 10¢ Petition (#1617), and "substitute" labels for 9.3¢ Mail Wagon and 10.9¢ Hansom Cab. On printed labels, color can be Black, Brown, Purple, Red or Blue; on "substitutes", it is usually identical to the shade of the basic label data. Strike runs from fine to coarse; position is generally at label top or bottom.</p>
<p>PRESORTED FIRST-CLASS</p>	<p>... measures @ 61mm long and has, so far, been confirmed only on "3000 STAMPS" substitute labels for 17¢ Electric Auto. Color is usually the same as that of the basic label data (Black, Brown, Rust-Red). Impression varies from fine to coarse; position is generally at label top or bottom. This overprint may have also marked rolls of 9¢ Dome (#1616), 12¢ Torch (#1816), and 13¢ Bell (#1618).</p>

As long as the overall U.S. coil program remained modest, printed wrapper labels sealed all rolls. By the mid-1970s, however, so many new issues had been added to the programme that the harassed in-house print shop could no longer comfortably maintain full label inventories for every denomination and roll size. The process was too complicated, too time consuming, to adequately handle the onslaught of new demands. Label shortages started holding up coil processing. Bureau technicians took another hard look at the system and suggested that - since they were already managing on line overprints - the Label-Affixing Presses could be further modified to produce temporary on line labels, as well.

A second printing unit, probably also a Platen press, was coupled to the Affixers to accommodate rough copies of print-shop label dies; rolls of blank label stock were fed into the machines. The results were acceptable, but hardly aesthetic! These "substitute" labels couldn't match the crisp, clean imagery of the originals, and the problems that plagued overprints - wandering position and erratic inking - wreaked havoc with "substitutes". Worse, both printing units were increasingly linked in tandem to produce "overprinted substitutes". Here, two print strokes had to be synchronized to roll advance, as well as to each other, if both sets of data were to appear whole and reasonably well related; two "devices" had to be firmly mounted to keep inscriptions from crossing and blotting each other out; two palettes had to be separately inked to provide sufficient contrast between "label" and "overprint". Inevitably, variations proliferated. No two labels could be guaranteed "absolutely identical" - much less "top quality"! - even if produced during the same processing run. This "substitute" system was only a temporary expedient used whenever printed labels were momentarily out of stock. Unfortunately, "temporary" has a bad habit of slowly becoming "permanent".

The advantages of on-line label printing outweighed any merely aesthetic drawbacks. Instead of having to print, gum, score and back a different label for each individual coil variety, a single roll of "blanks" could serve all needs; instead of removing Label Rolls, returning (and inevitably damaging) partial Rolls, and calling up new Rolls from storage, issue changeover simply involved switching printer dies. By 1977, "substitutes" had become commonplace, while printed labels appeared with regularity only on rolls of First Class issues, standard definitives and a few workaday Bulk Rate values.



PRESORTED FIRST CLASS

... this is the only two-line overprint recorded to date. "PRESORTED" measures @ 24mm and "FIRST CLASS" is @ 25mm long. By itself, it has been found only on "500 STAMPS" substitute labels of 17¢ Electric Auto in a color either identical to, or a few shades from, basic label data (Purple, Rust, Red, Orange). Strike can be fine or very blurred; position varies greatly, though label top or bottom seem preferred; full or partial doubling is common. This overprint also shares labels for 9¢ Capitol Dome (#1616) and 13¢ Liberty Bell (#1618) with the 35mm-long "Precanceled". Though often made in the same color (Black, Blue, Red), the overprints were occasionally rendered in different shades; if positions (normally near label center) intersected, the fresh inks could blend together on the paper to create yet a third overprint color.

Defying their diminished roles in production, the print-shop crew created an entirely new set of label designs. For eighteen years, most labels had copied the patterns established @ 1959 for "Liberty Series" coils with only minor renovations and incidental alterations. The "substitutes", once firmly established, also mimicked "Liberty" models, though the limitations of on-line printing demanded plainer type-fonts and encouraged random colors. "Emblems" - labels featuring stylized renditions of stamp artwork - were printed for nearly all First Class coils since the 6¢ Flag issue of 1969, but even these lovely pictorials were, in basic configuration and typography, essentially "Liberty"-styled designs.

In 1977, expecting an increase in rates, U.S. Postal Service placed an order with the B.E.P. for a 16¢ First Class coil. To seal these new products, print-shop designers drew up an "Emblem" with "UNITED STATES POSTAGE" in an unbroken arch above the coil data. All previous "Liberty"-based designs had split the semi-circular title with the roll quantity - 100, 500, 3000 - OR, on many "100 STAMPS" designs, had placed title along with other coil data in a pattern of parallel lines. This "Arch" was complimented at label base with a smaller arc innovatively providing the stamp copyright date. Like the earlier "Liberty" designs, the new date-inclusive "Arches" were probably first drafted as generic models with blank spaces for later insertion of pertinent data. Though copyright dates soon became a new constant in labelling, "Arch" designs enjoyed sporadic use for only five years before they - along with all print-shop works - were entirely scrapped.

Several radical changes in labelling were linked to dramatic innovations in basic B.E.P. technologies. For over a century, the Bureau had gummed its own postal paper either before printing or, on Cottrell Press produce, during printing. In 1978, safety considerations forced the B.E.P. to uncouple the beta-ray gauges used to monitor gum thickness on the Cottrells. Inevitably, removing the gauges led to coils that were too heavily gummed or had no gum at all, to ruined printing runs and angry customers. The Bureau had experimented with commercially manufactured pre-gummed paper as early as 1971, on 8¢ Eisenhower booklet panes. This "Davac"-gummed paper, supplied by Nashua Corp., was decidedly superior to B.E.P.-gummed printing stock but considerably more expensive. Nonetheless, no better solution to the problem could be found and, as "Davac" entered the press rooms, the Bureau slowly dismantled its gumming machines.

Since 1959, the B.E.P. had gummed wrapper labels in ways generally similar to those employed for stamp papers. Techniques were simpler, tolerances broader, customer complaints - given that the Bureau was sole user - were not at issue. But with stamp gumming being phased out, it would have been foolish to retain the system any longer than necessary merely for labels! Meanwhile, self-adhesive label stock made by the Fasson Division of Avery Inc. was inexpensive enough to be widely used in supermarket "Price Changer Guns" - mini-versions of the B.E.P.'s fancy "Labels-Affixing Press". Fasson label stock could be easily adapted to extant printing, scoring and affixing systems at costs acceptable to B.E.P. management.

In contracting for the new label stock, the Bureau addressed another minor point. A surprise bonus of the change in stamp papers was the discovery that "Davac"-gummed coils could be wound tighter without harm, without fragments of stamp print being "lifted" by tacky, freshly-applied gum. Always eager to cut costs, Bureau engineers adjusted the Huck processors to spin tauter, more compact coil rolls which would require smaller portions of expensive Mylar-based cello-wrap. This correction yielded rolls that were barely wider than their labels and, consequently, labels that overhung roll edges. Cottrell Press gumming was still in operation while the Bureau used up its remaining stock of ungummed papers; "compact" coil rolls would not be formally introduced till 1983. But anticipating future policy, the B.E.P. ordered Fasson self-adhesives in narrower widths, reducing label diameters from @ 32mm to @ 26mm for "100 STAMPS", from @ 45mm to @ 38mm for "500 STAMPS", from @ 98mm to @ 89mm for "3000 STAMPS".

To summarize, there were three significant changes in labels during the late 1970s : dated copyrights were added to label designs; self-adhesive paper replaced Bureau gumming; label diameters were reduced to fit new, compact-sized coil rolls. These changes were implemented in gradual, piecemeal fashion to allow existing inventories of "old-style" labels, label dies and label papers to be completely exhausted before "revised" products were introduced.

Dated copyright notices premièred on coil labels sealing the new values generated by the rate increase of 1978. Except for inadvertent omissions, mostly on hastily-prepared "substitute" dies, "© USPS 19xx" henceforth appeared on all new labels. Even when later reprinted, labels on coils issued prior to 1978 remained un-dated; this was originally done to utilize stockpiles of older labels, but was continued to help distinguish these coils from new Transportation/PNC issues in same denominations. The last un-dated labels in general circulation were made for the \$1.00 O'Neill issue of 1967, recently replaced by the Seaplane PNC.

Self-adhesive "reduced-diameter" labels first appeared in late 1979 on "100 STAMPS" rolls of reprinted 15¢ Fort McHenry Flag and 15¢ Oliver Wendell Holmes. Designs were basically photo-reductions of original, "large label" artwork, though the "Emblem" was mildly redrawn to strengthen the Flag image, and the first printing of the new Holmes labels accidentally left out the copyright. All subsequent "100"s were printed on @ 26mm-wide Fasson paper till early 1982 when wrapping and labelling, in this roll format, were replaced by cheaper Bubble Pack encapsulation.

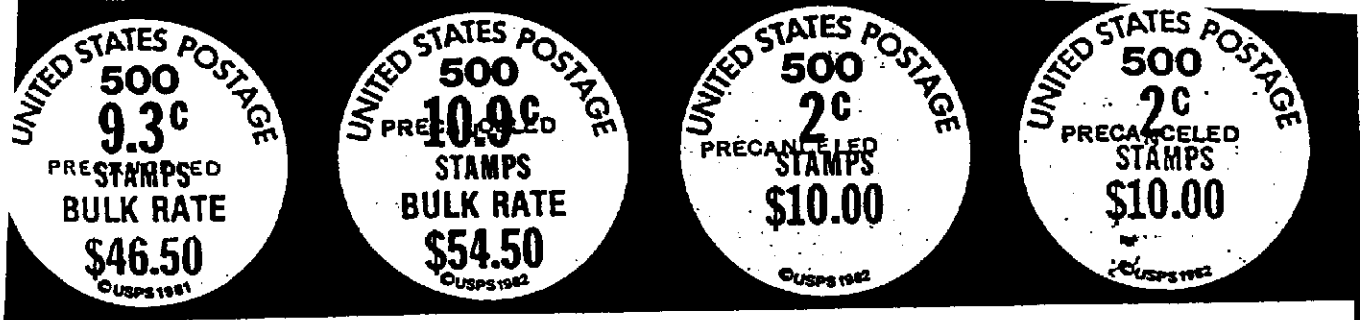
For "500" and "3000 STAMPS" labels, paper/diameter changes were intentionally delayed pending research into more efficient printing methods. Estimating future press needs, the print shop swelled label inventories of "standard" denominations, then processed much of the remaining Bureau-owned label paper into rolls of blanks for "substitutes". Enough remained on hand to cover the entire run of printed "Emblems", in both roll sizes, for 18¢ Flag and 18¢ Surrey, the "3000"-size "Emblems" for 20¢ Fire Pumper, and limited runs of 20¢ Flag "Emblems" and 2¢ Locomotive, both printed in "3000"-size only. "3000"s were first made on the new @ 89mm-wide Fasson paper in mid 1982, shortly after the introduction of "perfected" on-line label printing.

In late 1981, "500 STAMPS" 20¢ Flag and 20¢ Fire Pumper "Emblems" were printed on @ 38mm-wide Fasson stock. Nearly all other Transportation/PNC "500"s were sealed with @ 45mm-wide "substitutes" till the re-designed "Label Printer/Affixer" presses, specifically modified to use rolls of self-adhesive paper, went into operation. Nonetheless, small quantities of printed, "Arch" design "500"s were made on Fasson papers for 2¢ Locomotive, 5.9¢ Bicycle, 9.3¢ Mail Wagon and 10.9¢ Hanscom Cab.

This small cluster of Transportation "500"s, the last truly printed labels, begat our final overprint "devices". Though the older "devices" were still current, still in use on the @ 45mm-wide "substitutes", they were simply too wide for "reduced-diameter" labels.



PRECANCELED ... measuring @ 26mm in length, this overprint is confirmed only on the 38mm-wide "500 STAMPS" labels printed for 9.3¢ Mail Wagon and 10.9¢ Hanscom Cab. Slate, Pale Blue or Dark Blue are known on 9.3¢ labels; Black or Red on 10.9¢ items. Position usually crosses label center. A variety with a broken "C", found on numerous 9.3¢ labels, was probably caused by damage during printing. Other impressions, also on 9.3¢ labels, have letters so badly twisted and deformed that we suspect these were printed from an entirely different "device", possibly a copy cast in softer metal. Only the strikes on 10.9¢ labels seem uniformly clear, clean and error-free.



PRECANCELED ... measures @ 22mm long and has only been found on the 38 $\frac{1}{2}$ mm-wide "500 STAMPS" labels printed for 9.3¢ Mail Wagon, 10.9¢ Hanscom Cab and - by mistake - 2¢ Locomotive. Black is the only recorded color; position usually crosses label center but is often shifted far to left; impression varies from fine to thick, faint to heavy. Two very different settings exist for this "device". The original, "normal" setting was used on labels of all three denominations; the second setting, featuring a "dropped N", has only been confirmed on 10.9¢ and 2¢ labels. Locomotive coils were never issued in precanceled form; "PRECANCELED" labels were created when pressmen forgot to remove the overprint "device" from the machinery between runs of 10.9¢ and 2¢ coils.

The "500 STAMPS" overprint most commonly used since 1974 measured @ 35mm in length. While comfortably proportioned for 45mm-wide labels, the setting was simply not in scale to the new 38 $\frac{1}{2}$ mm-wide models. When pressed into service on 5.9¢ and 10.9¢ "reduced diameter" self-adhesives, the overprint had to be perfectly centered, or letters would spill out past label boundaries. Two smaller, shorter devices were hastily constructed in 1982; neither seems to have been made or used with much care. Like the printed labels on which they served, these overprints were already obsolete at creation; temporarily useful, but not worth a major effort. Nonetheless, some copies of the 26mm-long "device" were kept in service as late as 1984, despite scratches, gouges and severe wear - conditions that would have routinely scrapped earlier overprint slugs. The 22mm-long "device", shelved in 1983, may have actually been a loose hand setting, not a solid casting; one commercial printer has suggested that the "dropped N" variety produced by this instrument could be most easily explained as a fallen piece of loose type replaced upside down in its holder.

One last "overprint" curiosity needs explanation. In 1984, after twenty years of continuous service, the 2¢ Jefferson coil was withdrawn from production. The remaining stock of non-dated "500 STAMPS" labels, originally printed for Jeffersons, was recycled onto fresh rolls of new 2¢ Locomotive PNCs. To distinguish this novel usage, the old labels were marked "1982" for Locomotive copyright year. As expected, there were substantial color shifts (Carmine-Red to Brown-Purple), but the two distinctive sizes of "1982" and the incredible diversity of positions (no two are exactly alike) lead us to believe that the dates were added manually with one or more hand-stamps, either by the Labels Press operator or the coil packer.

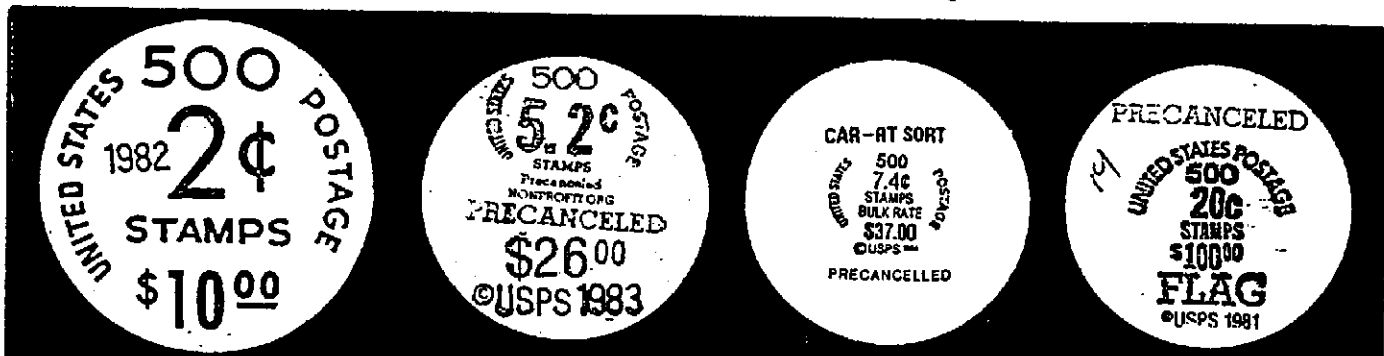
The final Labelling Revolution had been brewing for many years. Ever since "substitutes", the Bureau had increasingly come to rely on the convenience of on-line label printing. The substantial growth in coil popularity, the problems of preparing Label Rolls in advance, and the switch to self-adhesive label papers contributed to the obvious conclusion that it would be easier and cheaper to print all coil labels at point of use, directly on the Label-Affixer Press. In 1982, the "platen-style" printers attached to the Affixers were gradually replaced with more efficient letterpress models, and new "Label Dies" were prepared for each denomination, roll size and service use. Introducing the "Label Printer/Affixer Press"! Like most Revolutions, this one preyed on aristocrats; the sudden, cataclysmic loss of design standards points to the utter dissolution of the in-house print shop crew and their cadre of experienced, professional artisans.

Till 1985, most new label designs were rude, crude and thoroughly undisciplined. "3000 STAMPS" labels fared best, remaining 98mm-wide "substitutes" while experiments were conducted on the "500"s. When finally transferred to 89mm-wide pressure-sensitive stock, new "3000" designs were often merely photo-reductions of "large" artwork or adaptations of discontinued design suites. "500 STAMPS" labels underwent chaotic transformation as untested "trial-" and "prototype-design" dies were prematurely rushed into production to keep up with the stamp presses. One clutch of early PNC labels, called "Tiny Die" types, used such small print-fonts that the entire data configuration occupies less than a third of the label; this arrangement probably pleased printers struggling to keep designs centered on these smaller labels, but irritated postal clerks and customers who found the miniaturized data practically illegible. Other labels seem to have been made from composite dies similar to the "City/Date/State" cancels used in Post Offices. These "assembled" dies occasionally disassembled during use, skewering data into amazing new configurations! The composite labels also exhibit an unusually large number of varietal type-fonts, redundant inscriptions, odd-ball alignments, probably induced by the constant temptation to "improve" designs by juggling and/or replacing die segments. Occasional similarities did surface during the period, but a fully-organized suite of Label Designs was not established till the Bureau stepped in, @ late 1984, and restored the professional label draftsmen.

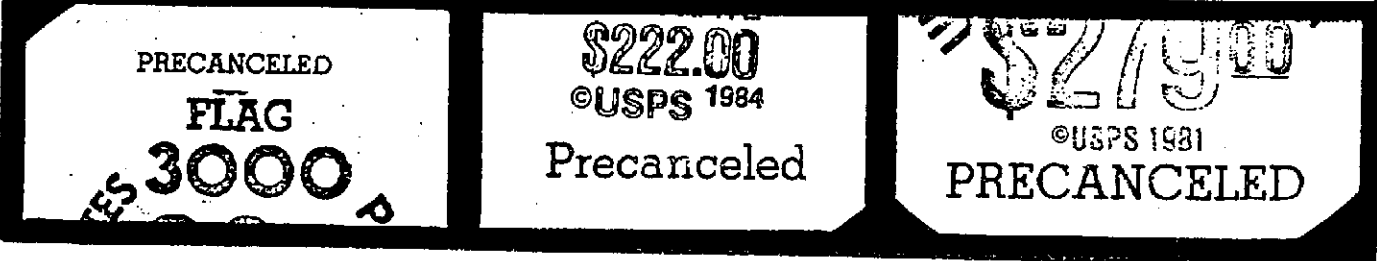
All coil labels produced since the mid-1980s are commonly termed "Rubber Stamps" though most dies were actually molded in hard vinyl. Because of their exceedingly fine script, some of the "Tiny Die" labels may have required "steel" printing dies. Current labels are reportedly printed from plastic, self-inking dies.

Once the Label Design Corps was revived, a separate printing die would be fashioned for each roll size of every coil denomination, "regular" and "precanceled". Meanwhile, the Bureau used up the last of its own label stocks to print and overprint large-diameter "substitutes" for early PNC values, while also exploring ways of adapting the varied lot of new, "Rubber Stamp" dies to also serve precanceled packaging needs. The "composite" dies assembled for 5.2¢ "500"s were easily revised by merely inserting additional lines of text into the holders. A completely new die was cast for 4¢ Bulk Rate, but several other "Tiny Die" "500"s were amended by cutting small slots directly into the die matrices to accommodate @ 15½mm-long "CAR-RT SORT" and/or @ 16mm-long "PRECANCELLED" detachable slugs. Unlike overprinting, this method produced labels that were practically identical; the additional service wordings occupied the same position on all copies, and always matched the color of basic label data. And yet, since slugs were rarely replaced in exactly the same spot twice, minor slug-shifts do exist, corresponding to different coil processing runs.

Converted much later, "3000 STAMPS" labels were spared most of these experiments. "Reduced-diameter" dies were individually made for "regular" or "precanceled" coil formats and molded directly from designers' artwork. Curiously, several "PRECANCELED"s on these new labels look remarkably similar to some of the discontinued overprints; apparently, some designs were modeled using salvaged "devices". Thus, the 47mm-long "PRECANCELED" on 9.3¢ and 17¢ labels, and the 34mm-long "Precanceled" on 7.4¢ labels, were pseudo revivals of older 46mm and 37mm overprints, enlarged or reduced to fit new design parameters.



Miscellany ... an assortment of trials, experiments and temporary designs. Surplus labels, originally printed for 2¢ Jefferson, used on 2¢ Locomotive with "1982" added in hand-stamp; on the example above, "1982" measures @ 3½ x 8mm; other labels bear an @ 5 x 14mm date. The illustrated "composite" label for 5.2¢ Sleigh includes two different settings of the term "precanceled"! "Tiny Dies" for 5.2¢ Sleigh, 7.4¢ Buggy, 11¢ Caboose and 17¢ Auto were outfitted with slugs noting "CAR-RT SORT" and/or "PRECANCELLED"; meandering slug positions are known on all four. Both "500" and "3000 STAMPS" dies for 20¢ Flag were rigged with identical "PRECANCELED" slugs; other "3000" dies, notably those for 17¢ Auto, 9.3¢ Wagon and 7.4¢ Buggy, were modeled using type-settings salvaged from retired overprint "devices".



In late 1984, in time for the crop of new coils attending the 22¢ general rate increase, label systems came full circle, returning to strictly controlled designs executed in a limited range of colors. Variety is heavily discouraged. The occasional (inevitable) errors are intentionally left uncorrected; thus the capricious spellings of "PRECANCELED"/"PRECANCELLED", the runs of "UPSP" labels for 7.6¢, 8.4¢ and 13¢, the randomly re-worked "P" labels for 25¢ Phosphored Flags. The crop of current labels contains few surprises. We're back to tame, consistent, boring products ... till the next "emergency" arises, hopefully soon!

Thanks to growing collector awareness, any future experiments in coil labelling or packaging will have proper documentation - or, at least, wide publicity! Meanwhile, we'll continue to investigate past methods, explore forgotten systems, seek realistic explanations. We'll always need new data, theories, "overprint" types, colors, positions, confirmations, ... Perhaps you can help !

* * * * *

CODE LISTING

"3000 STAMPS"

COIL LABELS

Over three hundred completely different "3000 STAMPS" coil labels have been made since 1959. Most can be easily identified without recourse to our complicated Code system by simply noting such readily obvious features as denomination, design, date or color; "Surrey Emblem", for example, is brief and unmistakable! But Label Codes are essential in dealing with the alarmingly large number of labels that seem identical, but actually differ in small, subtle, easy-to-overlook details.

Once every label variation has been confirmed, Coding will become less vital. Our future "Illustrated Catalogue" will retain Codes as supplements to simpler, literate descriptions, helpful double-checks when variations confuse, but otherwise redundant minutiae. Meanwhile, we Code all labels - even those which have no currently known varieties - until we can safely, confidently lay to rest every possibility of "variation".

A basic "3000 STAMPS" Label Code is written out in the following sequence: Diameter, Design, Dimension across "U.S. POSTAGE", Length (or absence of) Copyright Line, Vertical Span (if necessary); "3" Style; Stock Type; Color; Date. The alphanumeric Codes are often followed by additional notes, when required, for "Overprints", major errors and/or variations, and confirmed Plate Number/Gap Position attributions.

Diameter In 1959, at the beginning of the program, all "3000 STAMPS" labels measured @ 98mm in diameter; **J** this was reduced to the current @ 89mm width in late 1982, early 1983. Older "wide" labels are termed "Jumbo"s and prefixed with "J" in Label Codes. New "reduced" labels have no special Code letter.

Design Three basic design forms are used on "3000 STAMPS" labels: Emblems, Arches and Splits. "Emblem" **E** designs are dominated by a stylized representation of stamp artwork. Other details of typography are irrelevant; "Emblems" are always Coded "E". "Arch" designs feature the words "UNITED STATES POSTAGE" in an **A** unbroken semi-circle (or "arch"!) around the top of the label. Few "Arches" were designed in "3000" size (most of which are more accurately described as "Emblems"), but these are Coded "A", "JA" when they measure @ 98mm wide. In "Split" designs, the words "UNITED STATES" and "POSTAGE" lie roughly opposite each other, separated (or "split"!) by the quantitative "3000"; members of this very large, very diverse group of labels are Coded "S", "JS" if they measure @ 98mm in diameter.

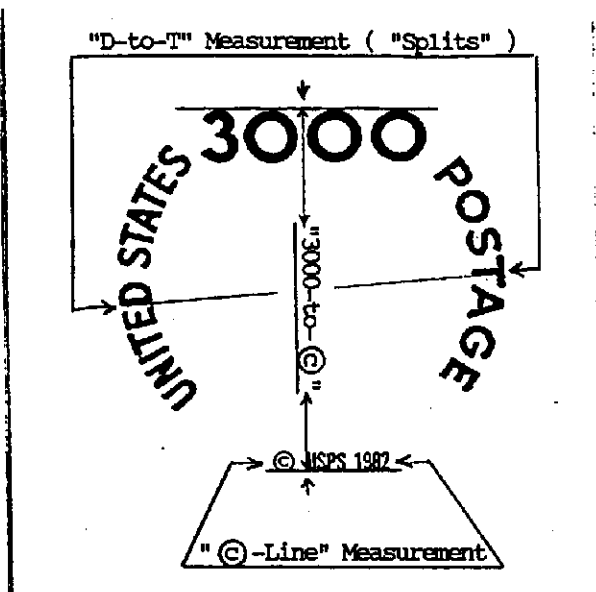
Dimensions All coil labels include the wording "UNITED STATES POSTAGE". This constant feature enables us to discriminate between different versions of same-denominated labels by measuring the variable distance between selected letters located roughly opposite each other across the total width of the design.

U-E On "Arch" designs, we measure from the outer edge of the upper prong of "U" in "UNITED" to the outer corner of the top angle of "E" in "POSTAGE"; this "U-to-E" span is measured to the nearest $\frac{1}{2}$ millimeter.

D-T For "Split" designs, we measure from the outermost angle of the letter "D" in "UNITED" to the final edge of the cross-bar of "T" on "POSTAGE"; this "D-to-T" measurement is taken to the closest $\frac{1}{2}$ millimeter.

© With few exceptions, labels printed for new coils issued after 1 January, 1978, feature a dated USPS copyright notice; we measure the full length of the copyright, from the outermost edge of the circled c to the farthest fragment of date. "©" lengths are taken to the nearest $\frac{1}{2}$ millimeter and listed immediately **NC** after the "D-T" or "U-E" measurement. Those older-issue labels that do not bear copyrights are Coded for "No Copyright" ("NC"); in those rare cases where they can yield essential, determining parameters for **\$** un-copyrighted labels, we measure the total length, to the closest $\frac{1}{2}$ millimeter, of the "Price Line" and substitute this "\$" span for the "NC" Code that would otherwise follow "D-T" or "U-E" measurements.

V A third, "Special Case" measurement is required to differentiate some extremely similar sets of "3000 STAMPS" labels, especially those for 17¢ Electric Auto. Listed as "V" for "Vertical", this is the overall distance, to the nearest $\frac{1}{2}$ millimeter, from an imaginary line drawn across the top of "3000" to an imagined line drawn across the bottom of the copyright notice, bisecting the design. Also known as "3000-to-©", we may have to use this (or a comparable vertical dimension) to help separate other complex Label groups.



3000

"Pointed"

3000

"Celtic"

3000

"Old Blunt"

3000

"New Blunt"

"3" Style This refers to the peculiar shape of the "3" in the label quanticator "3000". There are three distinctive styles : "Pointed", "Celtic" and "Blunt", with two sub-styles for the latter.

P3 "pointed 3" has a sharply pointed center bar; this style, Coded "P3", was used on many printed "Jumbo" labels, but was apparently phased out @ 1983, during the conversion to "reduced diameter" designs.

C3 "Celtic 3" resembles a double horseshoe with upper and lower strokes curled flatly past a long center bar; all three strokes are serifed, upper and lower serifs slant inwards. This unusual style, Coded "C3", seems restricted to Transportation/PNC labels designed and printed @ 1983-85.

B3 "Blunt 3" has two forms, both feature a squared, serif-less center bar set between two well-rounded strokes. "Old Blunt 3"s are fat, chubby numbers that appeared on many labels - especially "Emblems" - from the mid-1970s onwards; "New Blunt 3"s are a taller, thinner style introduced @ 1988. So far, the two forms have not been used on labels for the same coil issue, thus we can safely use "B3" to Code both variants.

Label Stock We have classed label printing stocks based on the paper-adhesive combinations found on PNC labels but, as we work backwards through older coil labels, we may have to re-evaluate our criteria and all categories. Currently, we list four Label Stocks, but only three have been found on "3000 STAMPS" labels.

LS I "Label Stock I" covers a broad range of papers from Glossy to matté, High-Brite to non-fluorescent, with either a crystalline or a wax-like adhesive base. "LS I" is exclusive to "Jumbo"-sized labels.

LS II "Label Stock II" is a self-adhesive paper introduced @ 1983 for "reduced" labels. "LS II"-Coded labels have a faintly shiny print surface and a highly glossy backing underneath the adhesive residue.

LS III "Label Stock III" is highly fluorescent and has only been found on "500" labels produced @ 1985.

LS IV "Label Stock IV" replaced "LS II" @ 1986. The paper is thinner, barely coated, often translucent, with a practically invisible matté backing underneath the residue of pressure-sensitive adhesive.

Color Label Color refers to the apparent shade or tint of the label data. Colors are matched and named according to the "Stanley Gibbons Colour Guide" with "pale" or "dark" occasionally used as color modifiers.

Date Label Date is taken from the label copyright when present. Label Dates are often convenient clues in separating same-denominated labels produced for one or more different coil issues as, for example, 25¢ Revere (un-dated), 25¢ Bread Wagon (1986), and 25¢ Honeybee (1988).

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COIL LABEL DEALERS ON PARADE !

In The Plate Number, March 1989, Steve Esrati indexed all PNC dealers according to their interests and specialties. We were initially overjoyed to find five concerns listed under "Labels", but later inquiries showed that most of these entrepreneurs - while genuinely interested - were not actually selling labels ... just yet! One dealer honestly pointed out that there is, at present, no reliable consensus on scarcity or price - which makes vending a risky proposition! Another equally honest gent admitted to owning "boxes and boxes" of labels - while lacking the time to properly organize this hoard for sales. As collector interest and demand increase, these (and other) PNC dealers may eventually add Labels to their future sales lists; meanwhile, we can recommend two major, established label venders who definitely deserve your attention!

Michael B. Lipson / P.O. Box 2543 / Reston, VA 22091 Mike is no stranger to PNC collectors. Famous for his long strips (P57 a specialty!), he jumped into Coil Labels in a big way, about a year ago. Mike offers a well-illustrated Catalog of Transportation/PNC labels, carefully written up according to our Code system and keyed to an accompanying Price List. A #10 SASE with 45¢ postage will bring you the Price List, which should be enough to draw up a reasonable order, but the additional \$2.00 requested for the Catalog is definitely worthwhile if for no other reason than to give you a good look at Mike's fat assortment of kinky varieties and unusual variations. His prices are slightly on the "high" side, but his service and quality are exceptional. He's receptive to "Want Lists" and can often succeed in locating that "Prize Item" you've almost given up on finding. He also operates a unique "Trade In" programme that allows you to swap some of your choicer spares for some of his better wares. This guy means business ... so give it to him!

Gene Paquette / P.O. Box 6398 / Scottsdale, AZ 85261 Gene is one of the best-kept secrets in labels! His massive sales list, available for 75¢ Postage, covers a large assortment of coil labels, booklet labels, routing labels, ... a wealth of "Back of Book" material! He's the premier source of "old" labels - Liberty through Americana - and also handles the crop of current Transportation/PNC types. He uses simplest terms in his listings - "Small", "Medium" and "Large" for the three roll sizes, "Printed" and "Rubber Stamp" for basic design types - and lists the number of available varieties (colors, designs, diameters, overprints) in parentheses after each basic listing. If you wish, Gene will send you one of each variety (and his eye for variance is phenomenal!) for any desired label, as many as your remittance and his holdings allow. On receipt, you can elect to keep everything OR return unwanted items for credit towards your next order. His prices are reasonable, service is prompt, quality is top-notch. Just wait till you see that Sales List!!!


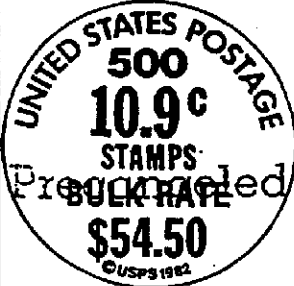
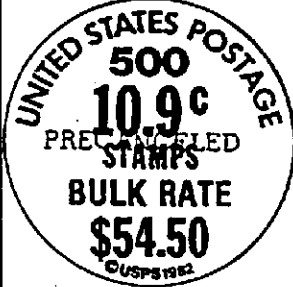

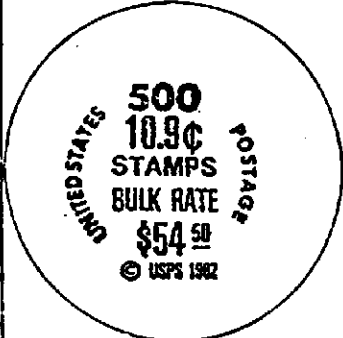
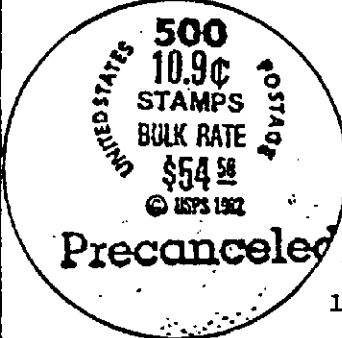
"LABELS ILLUSTRATED", PART THREE

"Labels Illustrated" will try to present all confirmed coil label designs and major design variations. Each entry gives label Date, label Identification Code and design parameters (D-to-T, U-to-E, ©line) in millimeters. Next come label Stock type(s), label Color(s) per Stock type, and confirmed Plate Number(s)/ Gap Position correlations, if known. Most labels can be initially identified by placing your copy against our illustration and then holding both up to a strong light; allow for minor variances caused by die and/or print fluctuations. Please report any new Designs, Colors, Stocks, Variations, Plates, Gaps, etc. to ...
 the Coil Label Study Group 27 Braddock Park Boston, MA 02116-5816

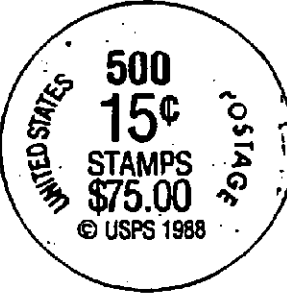
... a brief outline of some of the terms and abbreviations used to Code and describe "500 STAMPS" labels :

J : - refers to "Jumbo", the old-style @ 45mm-wide labels used from 1959 to @ 1983; see "stock I" below.
S : - refers to "Split" designs where "UNITED STATES POSTAGE" is broken by the quantifier "500".
A : - refers to "Arch" designs where "UNITED STATES POSTAGE" extends in an unbroken arch across the label.
D-T : - the measurement on "Split" designs from the "D" in "UNITED" across to the "T" in "POSTAGE".
U-E : - the measurement on "Arch" designs from the "U" in "UNITED" across to the "E" in "POSTAGE".
© : - the measurement of the total copyright notice "©USPS 19xx".

stock I : - paper-adhesive combo used on B.E.P.-made "Jumbo" labels; gum can be waxy or crystalline.
stock II : - first self-adhesive stock; shiny, coated paper with a highly glossy reverse-side backing.
stock III : - self-adhesive stock; highly fluorescent paper with no reverse backing; briefly used in 1985.
stock IV : - self-adhesive stock; thin, often translucent paper with a matté backing; used since 1985.

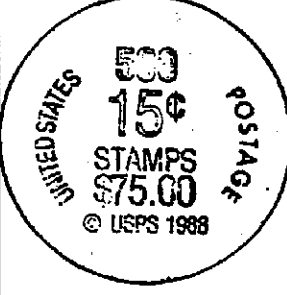
<p>10.9¢ Hanson Cab Cottrell Press, plates #1/2</p> <p>10.9¢ precanceled Hanson Cab plates #1/2 (6 Gaps); #3/4 (5 Gaps)</p>	<p>Scott #1904</p> <p>Scott #1904a</p>
 <p style="text-align: center;">1982 A34/11</p> <p>U-E : @ 34mm; © : @ 11mm stock II : Black (#1/2)</p>	 <p style="text-align: center;">1982 A34/11</p> <p>(same data as at left) "Precanceled", @ 35mm - in Black (#3/4; -4L)</p>
 <p style="text-align: center;">1982 A34/11</p> <p>(same data as given above) "PRECANCELED", @ 26mm - in Red (#1/2; -1R, -2R) - in Black (#1/2; -?) usually across label center</p>	 <p style="text-align: center;">1982 A34/11</p> <p>(same data as at above left) "PRECANCELED", @ 22mm - in Black (#3/4; -?) "PRECA CELED" variation - in Black (#3/4; -?)</p>
 <p style="text-align: center;">1982 JS25/12½</p> <p>D-T : @ 25mm; © : @ 12½mm stock I : Black (#1/2)</p>	 <p style="text-align: center;">1982 JS25/12½</p> <p>(same data as at left) "Precanceled", @ 35mm - in Black (#1/2; -1G) usually placed at label bottom, well clear of other label data.</p>

15¢ Tugboat Scott #2260
 Giori B Press, plates #1, #2



1988 S28½/16
 D-T: @ 28½mm; ©: @ 16mm
 stock II : Blue (#1)
 : Gray
 : Black

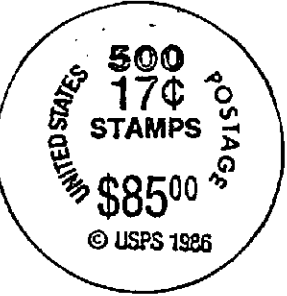
Numbers are usually solid.



1988 S28½/16
 D-T: 28½mm; ©: @ 16mm
 stock IV : Blue
 : Gray (#2)

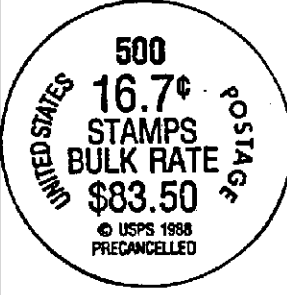
Numbers are usually hollow

17¢ Dog Sled Scott #2135
 Giori B Press, plate #2



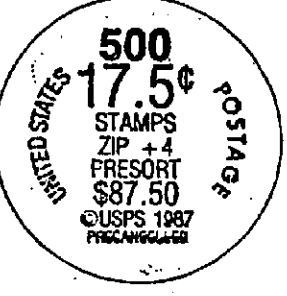
1986 S25/16
 D-T: @ 25mm; ©: @ 16mm
 stock IV : Gray

16.7¢ S.I. Popcorn Wagon Scott #2261
 Giori B Press, plates #1, #2



1988 S29/12
 D-T: @ 29mm; ©: @ 12mm
 stock IV : Gray
 : Blue

17.5¢ S.I. Racing Car Scott #2262a
 Giori B Press, plate #1



1987 S28½/15
 D-T: @ 28½mm; ©: @ 15mm
 stock II : Blue
 stock IV : Blue

NOTE: The non-inscribed, tagged version of this coil was released in rolls of "100 STAMPS" only, in un-marked Bubble Packs. No labels exist.


... coming in "Label Mania #4" ...

17¢ Electric Auto labels; "Auto-Exotica"!
 Plus "Labels Illustrated", 18¢ through 24.1¢.

ADDITIONS, CORRECTIONS AND NEW DISCOVERIES

... updates on data given in "Labels Illustrated", parts one and two, as contributed by our readers.

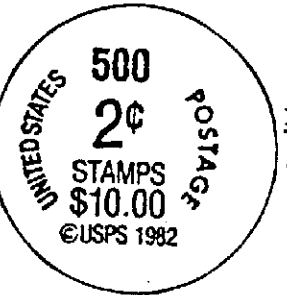
1¢ Omnibus Scott #2225
 Giori B Press, plates #1, #2



NEW LABEL

1983 S25½/15
 D-T: @ 25½mm; ©: @ 15mm
 stock III : Black
 stock IV : Gray

2¢ Locomotive Scott #2226
 Giori B Press, plate #1



NEW LABEL

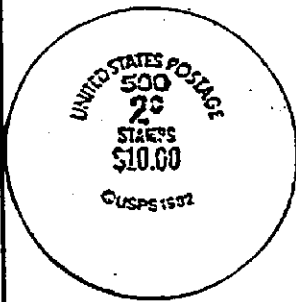
1982 S26/15½
 D-T: @ 26mm; ©: @ 15½mm
 stock IV : Gray

2¢ Locomotive Scott #1897A
Cottrell Press, plates #2/6, #3/4, #8/10

NEW STOCK

1982 A19/12

U-E: @ 19mm; ©: @ 12mm
stock III: Blue (#8/10)



5.9¢ Bicycle Scott #1901
Cottrell Press, plates #3/4

5.9¢ precanceled Bicycle Scott #1901a
Cottrell Press, #3/4 (5 Gaps); #5/6 (1 Gap)

NEW DESIGN

1982 A34/11½

U-E: @ 34mm; ©: @ 11½mm
stock II: Green

"Precanceled", @ 35mm
- in Black
- in Blue (#5/6; -LG)



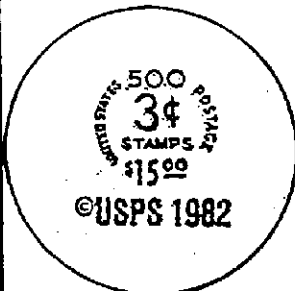
To date, this label has been seen only on precanceled rolls though, on some copies, the overprint may be so faint that the label appears to be virginal. The overprint is usually centered across the label; "Inverted" overprints are common on this label.

3¢ Handcar Scott #1898
Cottrell Press, plates #1/2, #3/4

NEW DESIGN

1982 S15½/20

D-T: @ 15½mm; ©: @ 20mm
stock II: Red

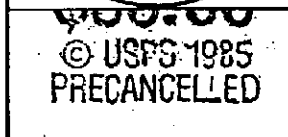
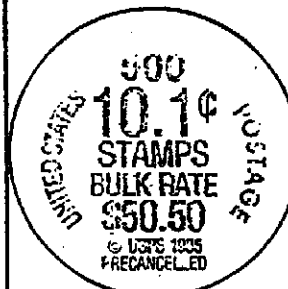


10.1¢ "Bulk Rate" Oil Wagon Scott #2130a
Glori B Press, plates #1 (8 Gaps); #2 (8 Gaps)

DIE VARIETY

1988 S29/12

D-T: @ 29mm; ©: @ 12mm
stock II: Blue (#2; -LG)



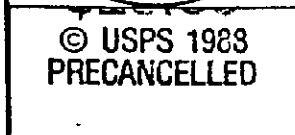
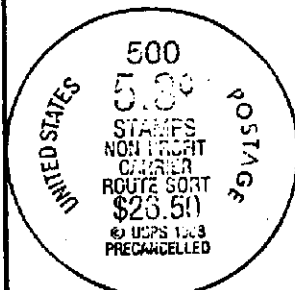
This label die appears to have been damaged during use. Copies of the late-use printings are missing all or most of the second "L" in "PRECANCELLED".

5.3¢ S.I. Elevator Scott #2254
Glori B Press, plate #1

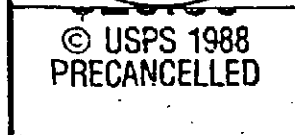
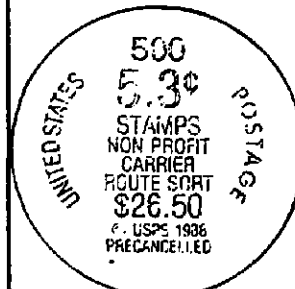
DIE VARIETIES

1988 S28½/12

D-T: @ 28½mm; ©: @ 12mm
stock IV: Slate



Two "rubber stamp" dies - one likely copied from the other - are used in printing these labels. Impressions from the two different dies can be easily distinguished by examining the stem of the letter "P" in "PRECANCELLED". The original die prints "P" with a thick, straight stem; the "copy" die prints a much thinner "P" with a stem bent conspicuously inwards.

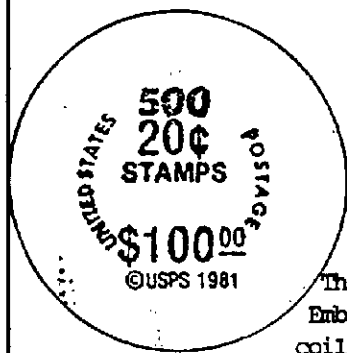


20¢ Fire Pumper Scott #1908
Cottrell Press, plates #1/2, #1/5, #3/4, #5/6, #5/13, #7/8, #9/10, #11/13, #12/14, #15/16.

NEW DESIGN

1981 JS25/14

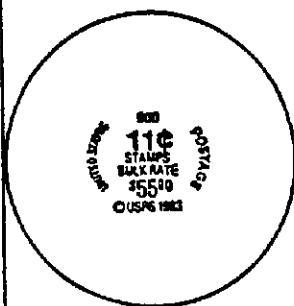
D-T: @ 25mm; ©: @ 14mm
stock I: Rose (#3/4)



The only "500 STAMPS" non-Emblem "substitute" known on coils of this issue,

11¢ Caboose
Giori B Press, plate #1

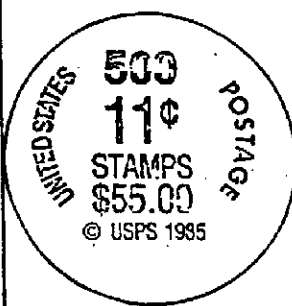
Scott #1905



1983 S16/09
D-T: @ 16mm; ©: @ 9mm
stock II : Black (#1)

11¢ Stutz Bearcat
Cottrell Press, plates #1/2, #3/4

Scott #2131

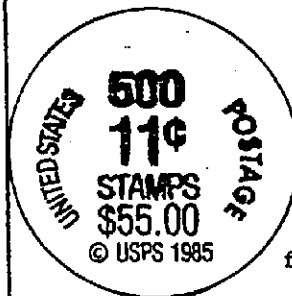


1985 S29/16
D-T: @ 29mm; ©: @ 16mm
stock II : Blue (#1/2)
(#3/4)

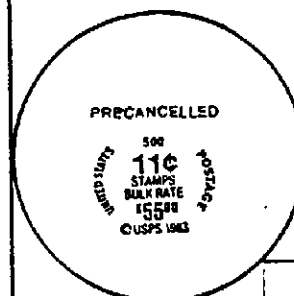
11¢ precanceled Caboose
Giori B Press, plate #1 (no Gaps)

Scott #1905a

The "regular" printing die was modified with a detachable slug reading "PRECANCELLED" (@ 16mm)
Three different slug-shift positions are known.

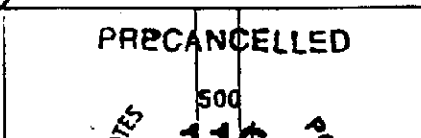


1985 S29/16
D-T: @ 29mm; ©: @ 16mm
stock III : Blue (#3/4)
Blurred printing is the norm for this label version.



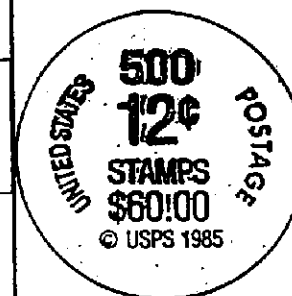
1983 S16/09
D-T: @ 16mm; ©: @ 9mm
stock II : Blue
: Red

"ANC" positioned over "500"

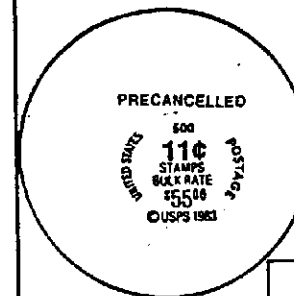


12¢ Stanley Steamer
Cottrell Press, plates #1/2

Scott #2132

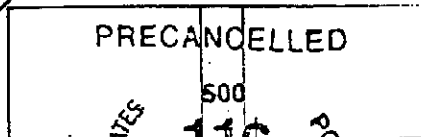


1985 S29/16
D-T: @ 29mm; ©: @ 16mm
stock II : Black
Image doubling is common
stock III : pale Blue



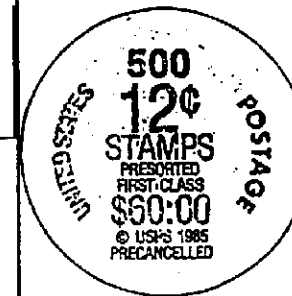
1983 S16/09
D-T: @ 16mm; ©: @ 9mm
stock II : Gray

"NC" positioned over "500"

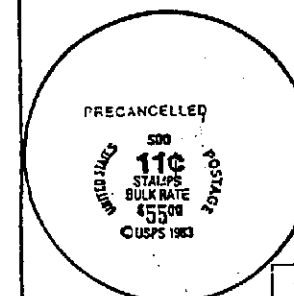


12¢ "PRESORTED / FIRST CLASS"
Cottrell Press, plates #1/2 (5 Gaps)

Scott #2132a

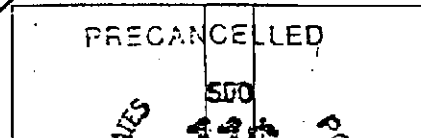


1985 S29/12
D-T: @ 29mm; ©: @ 12mm
stock II : Blue
: Black
stock III : Blue (-LG)



1983 S16/09
D-T: @ 16mm; ©: @ 9mm
stock II : Blue

"CE" positioned over "500"



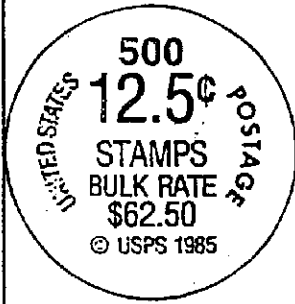
12¢ "PRESORTED / FIRST CLASS" (NO Scott #)
Giori B Press, plate #1 (1 Gap)

This re-issued precancel was only released in rolls of 3000; no "500 STAMPS" rolls - or labels - exist. With this rate level (ZIP+4, bar coded) about to be increased, "500" rolls seem unlikely.

12.5¢ Pushcart

Scott #2133

Glori B Press, plates #1, #2



1985 S29/16

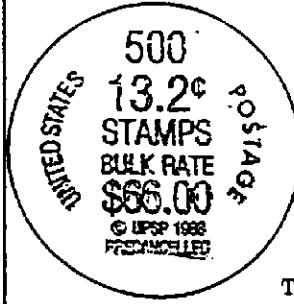
D-T: @ 29mm; ©: @ 16mm

stock II: Gray (#1)

13.2¢ S.I. Coal Car

Scott #2259

Glori B Press, plates #1, #2



1988 S29/12

D-T: @ 29mm; ©: @ 12mm

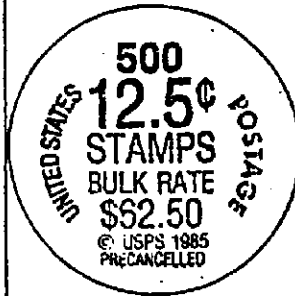
stock IV: Gray

"500" is thin; most copies are scratched under "ELLED". This may be the original die.

12.5¢ "Bulk Rate" Pushcart

Scott #2133a

Glori B Press, plate #1 (14 Gaps), #2 (7 Gaps)



1985 S29/14

D-T: @ 29mm; ©: @ 14mm

stock II: Blue (#1)
: Gray



1988 S29/12

D-T: @ 29mm; ©: @ 12mm

stock IV: Blue
: Gray

"500" is thick and hollow.

"UPSP" is constant on all labels.

1985 S29/14

D-T: @ 29mm; ©: @ 14mm

stock III: Blue
: Gray

Most copies are coarse or strongly blurred.



14¢ Iceboat

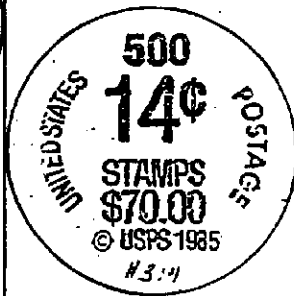
Scott #2134

Cottrell Press, plates #1/2, #3/4

14¢ Iceboat, Re-Issued

(NO Scott #)

Glori B Press, plate #2

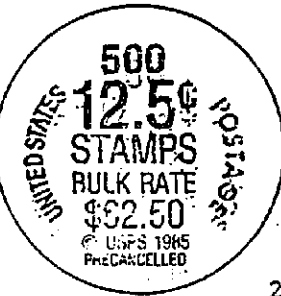


1985 S29 1/2

D-T: @ 29 1/2mm; ©: @ 16 1/2mm

stock II: Gray (#1/2)
: Blue (#3/4)

stock IV: Gray (#2, B)



1985 S29/14

D-T: @ 29mm; ©: @ 14mm

stock IV: Gray

Image doubling is common; some copies with as much as 2mm horizontal displacement.



1985 S25/16

D-T: @ 25mm; ©: @ 16mm

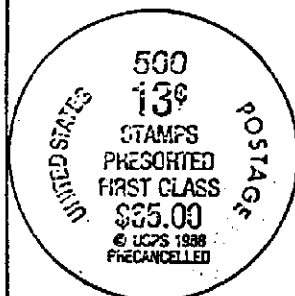
stock III: Gray

stock IV: Gray

13¢ S.I. Patrol Wagon

Scott #2258

Glori B Press, plate #1

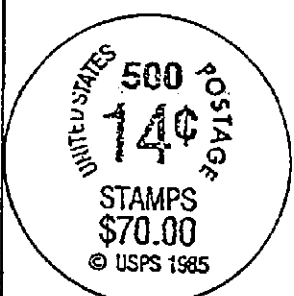


1988 S28 1/2

D-T: @ 28 1/2mm; ©: @ 12mm

stock IV: Gray

"UPSP" is constant.



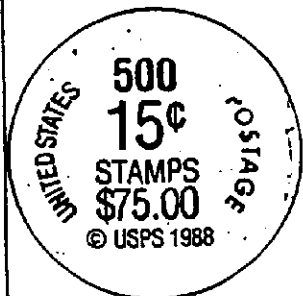
1985 S22 1/2

D-T: @ 22 1/2mm; ©: @ 16mm

stock IV: Blue (#2, B)

15¢ Tugboat
Giori B Press, plates #1, #2

Scott #2260

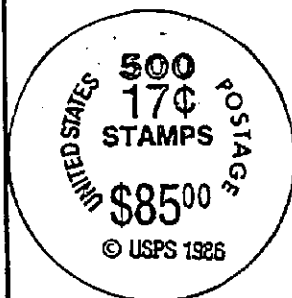


1988 S28½/16
D-T: @ 28½mm; ©: @ 16mm
stock II: Blue (#1)
: Gray
: Black

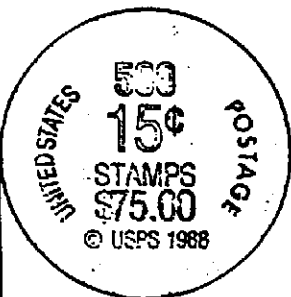
Numbers are usually solid.

17¢ Dog Sled
Giori B Press, plate #2

Scott #2135



1986 S25/16
D-T: @ 25mm; ©: @ 16mm
stock IV: Gray

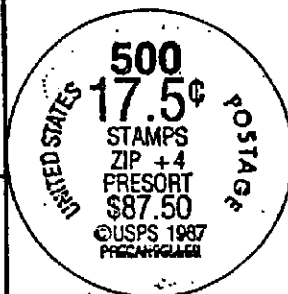


1988 S28½/16
D-T: 28½mm; ©: @ 16mm
stock IV: Blue
: Gray (#2)

Numbers are usually hollow

17.5¢ S.I. Racing Car
Giori B Press, plate #1

Scott #2262a

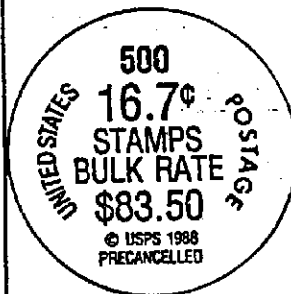


1987 S28½/15
D-T: @ 28½mm; ©: @ 15mm
stock II: Blue
stock IV: Blue

NOTE: The non-inscribed, tagged version of this coil was released in rolls of "100 STAMPS" only, in un-marked Bubble Packs. No labels exist.

16.7¢ S.I. Popcorn Wagon
Giori B Press, plates #1, #2

Scott #2261



1988 S29/12
D-T: @ 29mm; ©: @ 12mm
stock IV: Gray
: Blue

... coming in "Label Mania #4" ...

17¢ Electric Auto labels; "Auto-Exotica"!

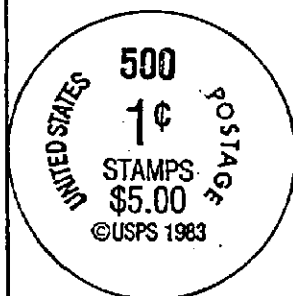
Plus "Labels Illustrated", 18¢ through 24.1¢.

ADDITIONS, CORRECTIONS AND NEW DISCOVERIES

... updates on data given in "Labels Illustrated", parts one and two, as contributed by our readers.

1¢ Omnibus
Giori B Press, plates #1, #2

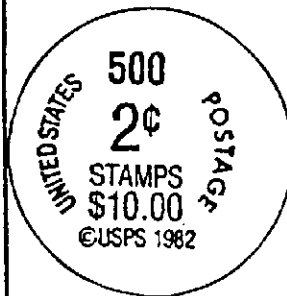
Scott #2225



NEW LABEL
1983 S25½/15
D-T: @ 25½mm; ©: @ 15mm
stock III: Black
stock IV: Gray

2¢ Locomotive
Giori B Press, plate #1

Scott #2226



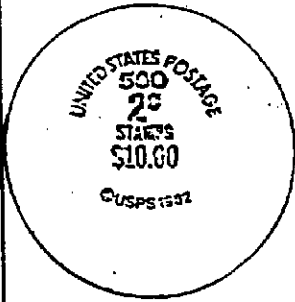
NEW LABEL
1982 S26/15½
D-T: @ 26mm; ©: @ 15½mm
stock IV: Gray

2¢ Locomotive Scott #1897A
Cottrell Press, plates #2/6, #3/4, #8/10

NEW STOCK

1982 A19/12

U-E: @ 19mm; ©: @ 12mm
stock III: Blue (#8/10)



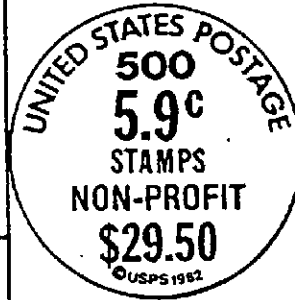
5.9¢ Bicycle Scott #1901
Cottrell Press, plates #3/4

5.9¢ precanceled Bicycle Scott #1901a
Cottrell Press, #3/4 (5 Gaps); #5/6 (1 Gap)

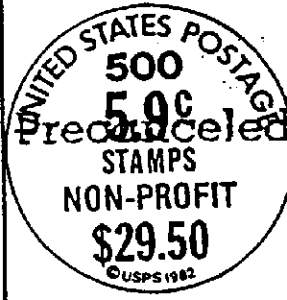
NEW DESIGN

1982 A34/11½

U-E: @ 34mm; ©: @ 11½mm
stock II: Green



"Precanceled", @ 35mm
- in Black
- in Blue (#5/6; -LG)



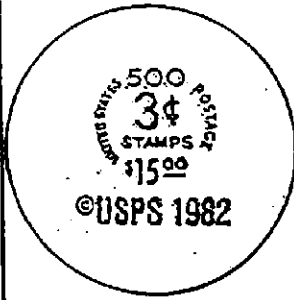
To date, this label has been seen only on precanceled rolls though, on some copies, the overprint may be so faint that the label appears to be virginal. The overprint is usually centered across the label; "Inverted" overprints are common on this label.

3¢ Handcar Scott #1898
Cottrell Press, plates #1/2, #3/4

NEW DESIGN

1982 S15½/20

D-T: @ 15½mm; ©: @ 20mm
stock II: Red

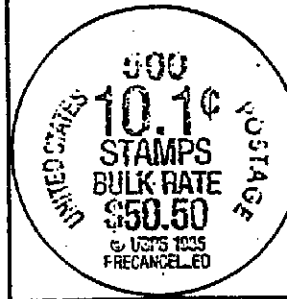


10.1¢ "Bulk Rate" Oil Wagon Scott #2130a
Giori B Press, plates #1 (8 Gaps); #2 (8 Gaps)

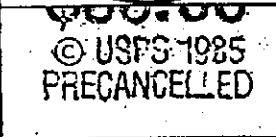
DIE VARIETY

1988 S29/12

D-T: @ 29mm; ©: @ 12mm
stock II: Blue (#2; -LG)



This label die appears to have been damaged during use. Copies of the late-use printings are missing all or most of the second "L" in "PRECANCELLED".

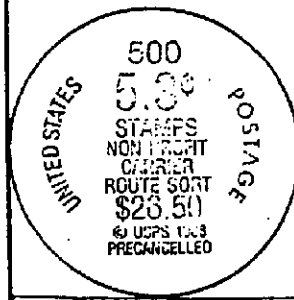


5.3¢ S.I. Elevator Scott #2254
Giori B Press, plate #1

DIE VARIETIES

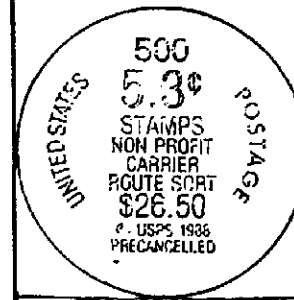
1988 S28½/12

D-T: @ 28½mm; ©: @ 12mm
stock IV: Slate



©USPS 1983 PRECANCELLED

Two "rubber stamp" dies - one likely copied from the other - are used in printing these labels. Impressions from the two different dies can be easily distinguished by examining the stem of the letter "P" in "PRECANCELLED". The original die prints "P" with a thick, straight stem; the "copy" die prints a much thinner "P" with a stem bent conspicuously inwards.



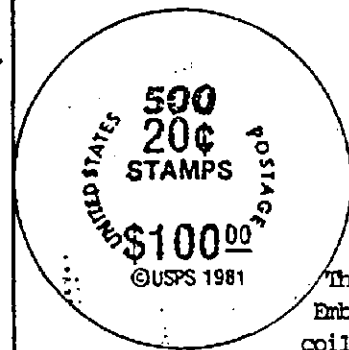
©USPS 1986 PRECANCELLED

20¢ Fire Pumper Scott #1908
Cottrell Press, plates #1/2, #1/5, #3/4, #5/6, #5/13, #7/8, #9/10, #11/13, #12/14, #15/16.

NEW DESIGN

1981 JS25/14

D-T: @ 25mm; ©: @ 14mm
stock I: Rose (#3/4)



The only "500 STAMPS" non-Emblem "substitute" known on coils of this issue,

Dear Friends and Fellow Maniacs :

This issue goes out to everyone who has ever written me concerning labels, to the other members of the PNC Study Group, and to those members of PNC³ who listed labels as an interest in the last Coil Line survey. All told, that's 187 people. If at all possible, I'd appreciate hearing from each and every one of you - a simple postcard would be great - if for no other reason than to confirm that you have received Mania #3.

The first two newsletters experienced scads of mail-oriented problems. Postal Service gave me intense grief on Mania's size, staples, tape closure, and franking (they do hate having to add up all those nasty fractionals!). Some copies were returned, some were scuffed and/or torn in handling, some simply vanished. At World Stamp Expo, last November, I met a discouragingly large number of dedicated label enthusiasts who were still waiting for a copy of Mania #2 ... and a few who hadn't even received #1 !

This mailing complies with every Postal Regulation that I (and my friendly Philatelic Clerk) know of. It should reach all 187 of you. PLEASE drop me a line to confirm receipt of #3 - and let me know if you're still missing #2 and/or #1, would like to receive (eventually) #4, and have not been mortally offended by my apparent boorishness. If you have time, add a word or two outlining your personal interest/involvement in labels. Tall tales, general gossip and philatelic musings/amusings are also always welcomed !

As some of you know, I am a geologist by degree, an environmental specialist by vocation. Though the bulk of my annual earnings come from more mundane 8-to-5 pursuits, my skills as a field surveyor of alpine ecotones are occasionally requested by diverse State, Provincial and Federal ministries. I travel to remote corners of North America, live in a tent, eat freeze-dried food, do my notes by candlelight. Very exciting, very romantic - till you factor in the lack of plumbing (no flush toilets, hot showers, proper laundry), the monotonous diet (by Day 10, my dreams are of Fresh Milk, Greasy Sausage Pizza, Taco Chips), the daily encounters with local fauna (bears can be a problem, but it's the swarms of black flies that quickly drive you insane), and the inability to take label notes, articles and correspondence into the field with me.

As best I can, I try to keep up with mail, especially from first-time writers. If the current field project is only semi-wilderness, letters are forwarded in a once-per-week pouch; if we're truly deep in the darkest boonies, correspondence just has to wait. Inevitably, some answers are badly delayed and, despite all efforts, a few letters get lost in the shuffle. Prompt answers are sometimes impossible.

Incoming mail has also had problems. Thanks to my "wild" profession, at least a few Registered pieces have been returned as "Undeliverable". Less rationally, some non-restricted mail (especially parcels and flats) have also been returned. It took two attempts (separated by a worried call from Steve Esrati) to get me my 1990 PNC Catalog, and I still have a shipment of books lost somewhere in "the System". Briefly, if you've sent me something which I have not acknowledged, had a package returned for no obvious reason, or are missing a treasured "loan", LET ME KNOW!!! Call me (617 247-1254) if it's serious !

On a happier note, Thanks to all who have donated postage to this project. Your spare stamps not only help these mailings, but also encourage and inspire the work. But please keep in mind that some of these mailings are made far from home - from P.O.s where my Precancel Users Permit carries no weight. For this reason, un-precanceled stamps (in any denomination) are especially welcomed.

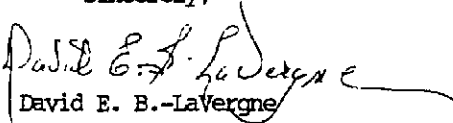
Thanks also to all who have donated spare labels! Though I'm not (repeat, not!) a dealer, I do get requests (especially from new-comers) for older labels; your contributed "spares" are recycled into small "Starter Kits", free to delighted new enthusiasts. Playing Santa Claus is the favorite job of Maniac #1 !

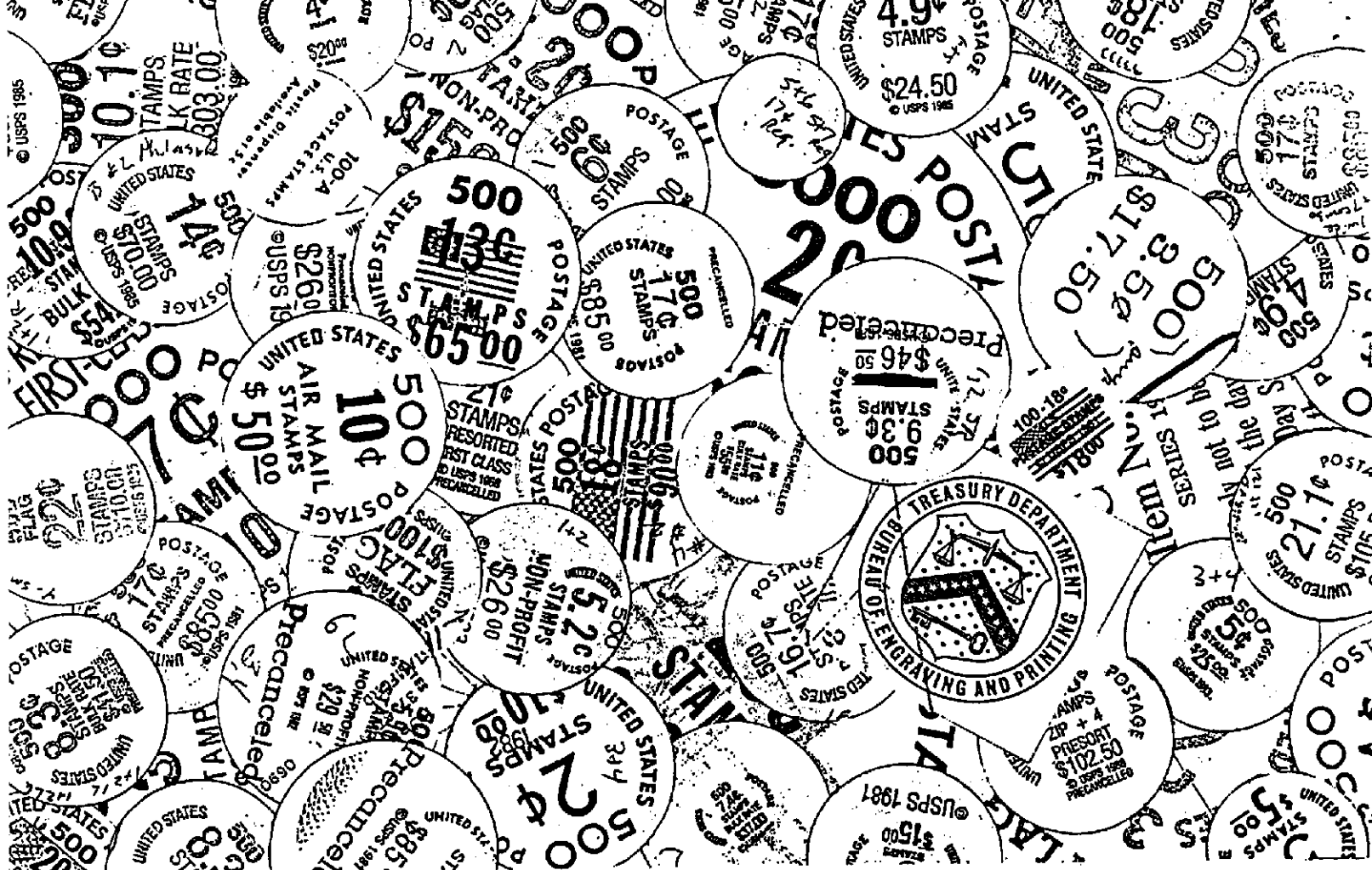
Mania #4 will be another "Special"; this time, we plan to focus on "Electric Auto" labels in all their insanely-varied glory! Please keep us in mind if you have any tidbits of information, queer-looking labels, zany overprints. We're also still looking for an 18¢ Flag "3000" Emblem and any confirmed "Consumer Ed" !

If you haven't already, you must get Ken Lawrence's superb "Linn's Plate Number Coil Handbook"! As an amateur scribbler, I'm in awe of Ken's lucid, literate prose; as a frustrated investigator, I'm amazed by the depth and success of his research; as a simple coil freak, I'm enraptured by the wealth of information, explanations and insights. This is definitely a "Must Have" book !

Finally, I'll be at STAMPSHOW '90, Cincinnati, from the 23rd through the 26th and would love chatting you up about labels, PNCs, ... whatever! If you also plan to attend, keep an eye out for a short, scrawny, exhausted-looking chain-smoker with a coil label pinned to his heart ... it'll probably be me !

Sincerely,


David E. B.-LaVergne



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FIRST CLASS MAIL