

PNC Meeting Set for Boston in August

Collectors of plate number coils may want to circle August 20 to 23 on their calendars. Those are the dates of the American Philatelic Society's STaMpsHOW 87 in Boston.

The Plate Number Coil Study Group will meet at STaMpsHOW from 2 to 3:50 on Saturday, Aug. 22.

Last year, at AMERIPEX, about 40 collectors attended the study group's meeting although several members of the study group had to be absent because the Bureau Issues Association was meeting at the same time.

But we never got to transact any business at AMERIPEX. We saw a slide show prepared for the APS by Ken Lawrence, who now wants to update it because so much has changed in just one short year. And we had a wonderful bull session, too. Still there were a few points that were supposed to be discussed, not only by members of the study group, but also by PNC collectors

who attended:

- Is there any interest in establishing a larger, dues-paying organization of PNC collectors? (Members of the study group pay no dues; they work.)

- Would anyone in attendance want to take on the duties of running such an organization?

No agenda has yet been set for the Boston meeting. Lawrence does hope to show his revised slide show, but that is not yet firm. One thing is positive: After the meeting, those in attendance will adjourn to another site to swap and talk. The meeting in Chicago made no provision for any post-meeting activity and it seemed such a waste to have come so far and to leave so soon.

By the way, if you're puzzled by the peculiar way the APS spells Stampshow, it's because it tried to be modest. The letters "aps" are all lower case in STaMpsHOW.

Collector Upset by Designs, Proposes His Own



William R. McMurray of North Stonington, Conn., said he was not overly happy with the Tractor and Tow Truck stamps because "I failed to see their role in Transportation."

So he designed his own stamps and sent off the proposals to the Citizens' Stamp Advisory Committee. There's little chance that McMurray's designs will ever become stamps because the committee usually orders designs from artists after it has agreed on a stamp proposal. But McMurray's ideas at least have merit. These are his explanations as submitted to Washington:

Steamboat stamp: Steamboats...became America's grand passion and steamboat days marked the passing of isolation and the beginning of travel in America....

Shallow waters were deepened and made navigable at private expense. Steamboats grew in size and in such numbers that 800,000 tons were added in a single year. Journeys which had required weeks to make were accomplished by steamboats in as many days. Pioneer wilderness blossomed into cities and towns almost overnight....

When New England coast towns were burned by the British

in the War of 1812 and their people settled anew on western land grants, the shipbuilders among them continued in the one trade they knew. Pittsburgh became a shipbuilding port with anchor forges, block factories, rope walks and shipbuilding yards; not alone for river boats which later came in such numbers, but sea-going ships. Pittsburgh and Marietta (Ohio) built full-rigged ships that sailed all over the world.

For 25 years steamboats alone provided transportation and later, when they divided the business with railroads, the steamboats' share was largest and of primary importance for the rail-
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The Plate Number

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All the News of PNCs That's Fit to Print

Al Haake ordered a box of 8.5¢ Tow Truck stamps from the Philatelic Sales Division in Washington. (A box contains eight rolls of 3,000 stamps, so Haake was ordering some 480 numbered strips.) To his surprise, the box arrived with the plate number printed on the outside along with a notice saying that the stamps were from selected stock.

Haake had never seen such a convenient way to find out what plate number was contained in a roll. So he checked at Belleville, Ill., a nearby post office that does not have a philatelic boutique.

The boxes at Belleville contained no such helpful inscriptions.

A quick check on boxes that had contained 50 rolls of 500 of the new 4¢ Stagecoach and the 22¢ Flag at a philatelic boutique in Ohio showed that postiques do not get boxes like Haake's, either.

Kim Cuniberti did not realize it, but at the moment he phoned to report his latest find, Steve Esrati was typing the chart on Cottrell press precancel gaps for the 1987 PNC catalog. The result of the call was that Esrati had to redo the page. Cuniberti had found the first reported roll with the gap at 3L on Plates 2 and 4 of the 9.3¢ Mail Wagon.

That table was getting to be a nuisance, because that very morning, Dr. John Greenwood checked in with a Line Gap on Plates 5 and 6 of the 4.9¢ Buckboard.

Also in regard to gaps, another correction to the table published in *TPN* in January was left out of the last issue. If you have been looking for a Gap 2L in Style AB of the 17¢ Auto on Plates 3 and 4, stop hunting.

That gap position should not have been recorded by the Study Group at all because it had been reported by a novice collector who thought it was so rare that he would not let anyone inspect it. When one of the members of the study group finally offered a trade for the "precious" object, he found that he was looking at a strip that contained only Style A, a low-scarcity item that almost everyone has.

The apology in this instance must come from Steve Esrati, who should not have added the position to the chart until Larry G. Haynes or another member of his committee had seen the strip in question. If the erroneous report caused anyone any trouble, this is the open apology.

What do you do when someone reports a find that cannot be? Here are the facts, because as Sgt. Friday of "Dragnet" fame used to say, "All we want is the facts, ma'am."

At issue was a purported variety on the 8.5¢ Tow Truck with red service indicator (precancel). Under the left rear wheel, a collector found a smear in the color of the stamp design. He quickly dubbed it "The Tow Truck Tire Smear," a reflection on the valid variety found on the 5.5¢ Star Route Truck, where we see "burned rubber."

But there was more to it than that. The "variety" was reported as constant because it was repeated on every 33d stamp! 33d stamp? These stamps were printed on the B press with the plate number repeating every 52d stamp. Anything that repeats at a different frequency, obviously, is not a plate variety but a printing freak. (The explanation is elementary, Dr. Watson. If something repeats at an interval of, say, 33, then it must be the result of something on the press, like an ink roller that has a different number of revolutions in relation to the stamps than does the printing cylinder.)

So, says Sgt. Friday, "Close, but no cigar!"

If you collect first-day covers with PNCs on them, things are going to get a little easier when the 1987 PNC catalog appears later this month.

The catalog lists every known PNC that was used on FDCs and also lists all the known cachets. And, in the appendix, a scarcity table is given for each FDC by plate number. We have not yet got so far along in our work that we can estimate prices, but that may come in a future edition.

Other new features of the catalog are Wayne L. Youngblood's marvelous drawings of many of the known plate varieties and the first attempt to rank precancel gaps by scarcity.

Rob Washburn has found two new plate cracks on Plate 3 of the 1¢

Omnibus. One is one stamp left of the numbered stamp and consists of a vertical line that extends from the lower right hand corner of the stamp toward the right wheel.

The second is what he calls "Rocks" under the right wheel at 8R.

That, in itself, might not be a major accomplishment, but for Washburn it is because he collects PNCs on commercial cover.

At last count he had 2,076 covers and he keeps meticulous records not only of the number of covers he has of each plate number, but also of the earliest cancel for each number.

When it comes to some stamps, he has more than 200 covers (such as Plates 5 and 7 of the 22¢ Flag). But a breakdown of tough items is even more stunning.

He has five covers with Plate 3 of the 18¢ Flag; one of Plate 6 of the 22¢ Flag, 27 with the 20¢ Official and 13 of the "D" Official. He needs Plate 6 tagged of the 4¢ Stagecoach and Plate 8 of the 9.3¢ Mail Wagon. Also lacking is Plate 4 of the 10.9¢ Hansom Cab. Still, it's a very impressive collection.

Washburn needs a few other items and asks collectors of commercial covers to contact him at 5 1/2 Coburn Ave., Skowhegan, Maine 044976.

Dr. Joseph Agris of Houston is publishing a book, *Transportation Series and Other Plate Number Coils*. He supplied no details but it seems to be a work similar to the PNC Catalog.

Among the prices realized at the Feb. 22 auction at Sam Houston Philatelics was a \$525 bid for a sensational imperforate strip of five of the 17¢ Electric Auto, Plate 2, that was also miscut to put the plate number wholly at the top. An XF strip of five from Plate 2 of the 20¢ Fire Pumper was sold for \$390. A strip of seven of Plate 4 of the 22¢ Flag with the Capitol in blue brought \$200. And, surprise!, a strip of five of the 20¢ Flag from Plate 4 sold for \$130. All these prices are before commission.

The culprit has been found. It was the Postal Service that came up with the description of the 20¢ Fire Pumper as an "Amoskeg engine purchased by the city of Alexandria, Virginia, from a Philadelphia Volunteer Fire Company in 1871."

At issue is the spelling of "Amoskeg." The catalogs took their spelling right out of the USPS news release. It had been thought that "Amoskeg" was a misspelling for "Amoskeag." If there is a PNC collector who likes to chase fire engines, maybe he could track this one down.

We wouldn't want a misspelling in our writeups, would we?

Anyway, someone living near Alexandria could do us all a service by going to Station 51 of the Alexandria Fire Department, where the old engine is supposedly still on display. Failing that, someone in the Washington area might call them up.

Sometimes you just can't win.

TPN reported in its last issue that the "blown tire" variety is being dropped from the 1987 PNC catalog because no one had reported it other than *Linn's Yearbook*.

This upset Thomas Beschormer just a wee bit. He wrote to say he had one in his collection.

Voilà! The variety had been found. It will be illustrated in the next catalog, thanks to Beschormer's willingness to lend one for illustration.

New Plate Numbers Reported:

22¢ Flag, 12, 13, 14, 16, 17.

2¢ Locomotive (B Press), 1.

5.5¢ Star Route Truck, 1, 1 precanceled (in black).

7.1¢ Tractor, 1, 1 precanceled (in black).

8.5¢ Tow Truck, 1, 1 precanceled (in red).

10¢ Canal Boat, 1.

BACK ISSUES OF TPN: If you missed an issue, you can still catch up on anything you missed. Volume 1 contained 7 issues. This is the third issue of Volume II. Each issue is \$1. Stephen G. Esrati, P.O. Box 20130, Shaker Heights, OH 44120-0130.

'Rain Crack' Becomes Most Dramatic Variety

When Tom Maeder found the variety pictured on Page 14 of January's *TPN*, he went through several exercises in advanced philately to make sure that what he saw was what he thought he saw. Because the 30 or more cracks were found on a precancelled stamp of the 4.9¢ Buckboard—on the stamp showing plate number 5—he was not certain that the many fine lines were actually caused by the plate, especially since the color of the Buckboard stamp is not that much removed from the black of the precancel.

As he reported at that time to *TPN*, "At first I thought that these had to be caused by inking from the [precancel] mat, but now I've concluded that they must be in the [printing] plate.

"The reason: The ends of the parallel [precancel] bars move throughout the roll in relation to the perforations. So do the two lines of text in the precancel. But the vertical hairline cracks remain stationary. They are also constant.

"If they are cracks, they are certainly the most dramatic in American philatelic history."

Maeder did not know the half of it.

The other half came more recently from Larry G. Haynes, chairman of the plate gap committee.

Haynes found a strip from Plate 5. He had already obtained one of Maeder's finds. Unlike Maeder's, where both the top and the bottom precancel line had what looks like an extra gap at 2L, Haynes was looking at a strip in which only the top row had the additional gap.

Haynes examined the stamp with the plate number carefully. What he found made philatelic history!

There, clearly visible, were another 20 or so cracks, going down only to the top of "Buckboard." Haynes called his find the "Rain Crack Extension."

So what we have here are two things:

•A series of cracks that extends from just below "Buckboard" on the

top row which continues right down to "Buckboard" on the row below.

•A classic stress fracture of a rotary plate.

The find is so sensational that it will be depicted on the cover of the 1987 *Catalog of Plate Number Coils*.

Lest we lose our perspective, it should be noted that the 1¢ Franklin of 1873 has a classic plate crack which Clyde Jennings was able to track down over seven stamps. The *Scott Specialized Catalogue* prices this gem at \$500 (without mentioning that seven stamps show it and without even bothering to illustrate it).

But from our viewpoint, this is a first, a crack across two rows of PNC stamps.

Let no one say that PNC collecting is dull. But, as Jimmy Durante used to say, "You ain't hoid nuttin yet!"

Having found one crack continuation, Haynes took out his magnifying glass and promptly found two more.

• On Plate 3 of the 1¢ Omnibus, there are two long plate cracks on the stamp to the left of the plate number. One extends from the roof of the bus toward the "0" of "1890s." The other runs vertically right through the "s." Haynes found the second crack continuing into the row above, but he said, there is not much to see there.

• Next he turned his attention to Plate 3 of the 2¢ Locomotive, which has two known plate cracks on the stamp with the plate number. One, "the smoking t" runs upward from the top of the "t" in "Locomotive" and it is this crack which Haynes found at the bottom of the stamp from the row above.

As long as you collect PNCs, you may as well get out your magnifying glass and have a look-see. You never know what you may find. And it is this sort of challenge that makes collecting stamps fun again.

No wonder that so many collectors of PNCs no longer say "Goodbye." They say: "Happy Hunting!"

Collector Upset by Designs, Proposes His Own

Continued from Front Page

roads were, at first, but feeders and extensions of steamboat routes.

Credit is commonly given to railroads for the expansion of America, but it was the pioneer steamboats out of Pittsburgh that opened the Ohio and Mississippi valleys....

The steamboat stamp is based on photos and drawings of the S.S. *Sabino*. The *Sabino* is the last remaining coal-fired, steam-powered passenger boat in operation in the United States. Built in 1908 in Boothbay, Maine, by H. Irving Adams, she spent most of her career forging passengers and cargo between Maine cities and islands.

She was purchased by the Mystic Seaport Museum in 1974 and serves as a working exhibit of a steam-powered vessel at Mystic Seaport in Connecticut.

Trolley: The trolley directly influenced the development and growth of our cities and suburbs for almost a century, encouraging expansion or urban areas and making possible the separation of residential areas from business centers and industrial districts.

The interurban electric railway, within a brief span of 20 years, reduced the isolation of the thousands of rural communities which it served, bringing the facilities of the city within convenient range.

After the 1920s, however, the electric railway began to decline, pressed by rising costs and the serious inroads on passenger revenue made by inexpensive automobiles....

The distinction of operating the last open trolleys for public service in the United States goes to the Connecticut Co., which used them annually until 1947 in New Haven. These veterans survived for one reason alone—the Yale Bowl.

Enormous crowds attending the football games at the Bowl swamped all ordinary transportation facilities; only the open trolley with a capacity of 105 passengers (seated and standing on the running boards) could begin to handle the traffic. For this reason, on such occasions, the Connecticut Co. brought out its entire fleet of more than 100 open trolleys to absorb the passenger load.

Operating bumper-to-bumper and strung out for more than a half

mile along Chapel St., the trolleys made several round trips.

By evening, when all had quieted down, the big trolleys returned to the James St. barn, where they reposed until the next transportation crisis.

The open trolleys were also in heavy demand for chartered outings to Lighthouse Point, Momaguin Beach and to Savin Rock Amusement Park.

The design for this stamp is based on line drawings of the No. 923 Connecticut Co. open trolley which currently resides at the Brantford (Conn.) Trolley Museum. During the summer, a ride down memory lane may still be taken aboard the No. 923.

Conestoga Wagon: Early America needed an all-purpose vehicle to haul furs, goods and farm produce so she developed the famous Conestoga wagon. During the century of expansion from 1750 to 1850, when the frontier moved from the Appalachian piedmont to the far west, this wagon was the chief means of overland freight transportation.

The Conestoga wagon originated in the Pennsylvania Dutch section of southeastern Pennsylvania between 1720 and 1750. ...During the Revolutionary War, Pennsylvania supplied most of the wagons used by the American Army, and these were Conestogas.

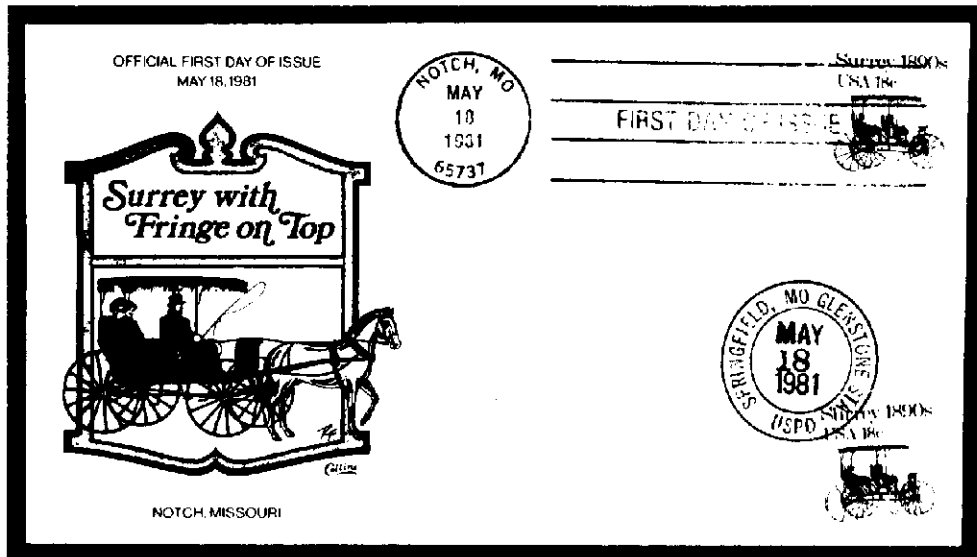
The Conestoga wagon is a distinctly American vehicle, developed to meet the rugged requirements of the frontier.

McMurray obviously doesn't think much of push carts and railroad handcars as part of the Transportation Series. He might have noted that so far there have been no stamps for water or aerial transportation. The only boat (before the Canal Boat), the iceboat, wasn't a boat.

You may never have noticed it, but the United States joined the international observance of the centennial of the bicycle with the 6¢ bicycle stamp, killing two birds with one stone.

The subjects proposed by McMurray are eminently fit for the series—if it was the original intention of the Postal Service really to picture the key forms of transportation. But that can hardly be the case, if one considers the inclusion of the baby buggy.

FDCs With PNCs Come of Age



The Notch post office was re-opened for just one day by order of Postmaster General William F. Bolger for this stamp's FDC. The ZIP code in the FDOI cancel is that of Reed Springs, Mo. The cancel at the lower right proves that this cover was canceled on the day of issue. The cachet is hand-colored by Collins.

By Ken Lawrence

After a five-year gestation period, PNC first-day cover collecting has been born, to the delight of many collectors and some dealers, to the dismay of others.

To a certain extent this was a logical development. Once the first generation of PNC collectors had nearly completed basic collections of mint strips, or used singles, or both, it was natural that they would seek other PNC areas.

Those who had a yen for varieties and a wallet to support it filled their album pages with imperforates; plate, mat and tagging varieties; perforations, trimming, and inking freaks; interesting cancellations, and so forth. Several dealers specialized in meeting these needs.

A smaller group of us interested in PNC postal history—mostly non-philatelic usages of PNCs on covers—had to find sources of material outside the collector-dealer circuit.

These are the ways that every successive philatelic specialty reaches maturity. While we have been filling out our coil collections, for example, a smaller group of our philatelic colleagues has concentrated its collective attention and zeal on the stamps, varieties, and usages of the Great Americans sheet stamp definitives.

What set our specialty apart was, in the first place, the degree to which our interest in PNCs proved to be contagious, and, in the second, the initial failure of catalog and album publishers, and general U.S. dealers, to meet our needs.

During those formative years for the PNC fraternity, very few collectors chased first-day covers. There was simply too much else to be done. But those few who did collect them faced even more difficulties than the rest of us had to contend with.

First there was the problem of finding out what exists. In a majority of cases, only one or two plate numbers have ever been found with PNCs. But ten 18¢ Surrey plates exist on FDCs, and some were not known to PNC collectors until long after the stamp was issued. Plate 5 on the 18¢ Flag FDC was a sleeper, not noticed until last year.

Another problem was peculiar to FDCs. They are collected mainly according to their cachets, not the stamps—that is, as works of art, with

a high degree of collector loyalty to favorite cachet makers, none of whom paid much, if any, attention to the plate numbers. Yet there is no cachet with every PNC, so collectors whose concern is to find as many numbers as possible must collect a large variety of cachets.

This, in turn, requires shopping among a number of different FDC dealers, each of whom must be educated to the needs of PNC collectors, and many of whom don't want to be bothered. Some refuse to say what numbers they have, and simply sell "line pair" covers.

One dealer was an exception. Thomas E. Gift began accumulating a stock of all the PNC FDCs he could buy, shrewdly anticipating the day that PNC collectors would want them. At the same time one collector, Glenn A. Estus, compiled a list of every known plate number on FDC.

Estus published his first checklist in the July 1, 1985, issue of *First Days*, which brought forth reports of numbers he had not previously found. The 1986 edition of *The Catalog of Plate Number Coils* carried a fuller listing.

These publications provided basic information so that collectors could know what to look for in the stocks of FDC dealers and in trades with fellow collectors, but they did not provide enough information to establish a market in PNC circles.

Our collecting criteria are quite different from those of FDC people. We price our material principally according to the scarcity of the plate numbers, then according to format, then according to condition.

For me, and I think for most other PNC specialists, concerns like cachets and types of cancels would rank last.

When I got heavily involved in FDCs early last year, I learned that the experts, Tom Gift and Glenn Estus, had identified a few plate numbers as probably scarce—20¢ Flag Plate 3 and 18¢ Surrey Plates 3 and 4—but had come up with no overview of the relative availability of other individual plate numbers.

Last summer, I began intensive research to learn how many covers should exist for each reported plate number. This required looking at as many FDCs as possible with as wide a variety of cachets and formats as anyone had in stock.

By combining what I learned this way with the official USPS re-

FDC Collecting With PNCs Comes of Age

ports of the number of FDCs canceled, I was able, in some instances, to estimate some totals with a high degree of confidence.

However, in cases where more than one or two plates are known on FDCs, or where there is no official report of the numbers of covers canceled, or both, my estimates were more tentative, and subject to revision.

I published my findings six months after I began, in the Dec. 27, 1986, and the Jan. 24, 1987, issues of Stamp Collector, along with a detailed description of my method.

My system rates each plate number on a scale from A to E, where A is common, 10,000 or more FDCs with that number, and E is very scarce, 50 or fewer.

That availability chart broke the logjam, and for the first time PNC collectors and dealers had a scale that could be roughly converted to value according to the criteria of our specialty. Horsetrading among collectors increased dramatically, while dealers began to publish buy ads and price lists.

Meanwhile, I have continued my research. I now rank the 20¢ Flag Plate 3 FDC among the very scarce. I think it is possible that there may be as few as 20 of these. And I now believe there are fewer than 500 of the 18¢ Flag Plate 2, which would raise that to level D.

Recent USPS reports now allow us to rank the 25¢ Bread Wagon Plate 1 FDC at level B and the tagged 5.5¢ Star Route Truck Plate 1 at Level A. Without the benefit of an official report I'm estimating the re-engraved 1¢ Omnibus Plate 1 at level C for now, but these may turn out to be more common. My advice: Get it now, while it's widely available.

After a lengthy discussion with Ray Novak, creator of Colorano silk cachets, I now know that some plates are more plentiful than I originally thought, although they are still not common.

FDCs of all these untagged, service-inscribed so-called precancels should be rated C: 5.5¢ Star Route Truck, 7.1¢ Tractor, 8.5¢ Tow Truck, 18¢ Washington Monument Plates 11121 and 33333, and 21.1¢ Letters Plate 111111. More than 500 but fewer than 2,000 of these exist. Of course, the tagged versions are much more common.

FDCs with Plates 4 and 5 of the 18¢ Flag should be rated D, which means fewer than 500 but more than 50 exist of each number.

Some collectors have questioned my estimates, noting that some of the covers I consider scarce or very scarce, such as the precancels, can be purchased at reasonable prices, while others I list as more common cannot be found so easily and are on many want lists. Examples of the latter are the 20¢ Fire Pumper Plates 1 and 2.

It may be that these are scarcer than my listings suggest, but I think the apparent scarcity is a consequence of those covers, as the first to market, being the ones that are in the collections of traditional FDC collectors who seek line pairs on their covers.

Especially for the PNCs issued in 1981 and 1982, FDC prices may stray from market projections based purely on the theoretical scarcity of specific plate numbers, and not only because we are looking for material that has already been consumed by the larger FDC community.

One consideration for PNC collectors is format. Although I'm happy to get a plate number any way it comes on FDC, the experience of Al Hagen of H&H Stamps and Coins, who has been issuing comprehensive price lists of PNC FDCs for the past few months, shows that PNC collectors will pay a premium for FDCs with PNC strips of three or longer over those with single stamps, pairs, or plate numbers in odd positions on a strip.

20¢ FLAG, PLATE 4 in superb PS/5 or PS/6. \$175. Esrati, P.O. Box 20130, Shaker Heights, OH 44120.

NEEDED: "Hoseline II" on 11¢ Caboose. Pay \$12.50 for PS/5 VF. Also, 8.5¢ Tow Truck with dot under 1st T at 2L. Pay \$5. Steve Esrati.

PNC EFOs: Please report all plate cracks, numbers at top, numberless line strips and other varieties to A. S. Cibulskas, 28 Westwood Rd., Stamford, CT 06902

RARE FDC: I have one copy of the FDC with the 18¢ Flag, Plate 5. The cachet is Colorano. \$150. First-come, first served. Steve Esrati, P.O. Box 20130, Shaker Heights, OH 44120.

Others among us are collecting according to traditional FDC criteria as well, seeking machine cancels, hand cancels, bullseyes, unofficals, combinations, and so forth.

Simple loyalty to certain cachets can affect the market. As nearly as I've been able to determine, the ArtCraft covers of the 18¢ Surrey Plate 2 were serviced from rolls of the 1-2 pairings, while those with Plate 8 came from the 7-8 pairing. Coloranos, by contrast, seem to have been prepared from the 2-8 pairing.

Common sense says there are a lot more covers with Plate 2 than the others, but that hasn't stopped collectors from keeping them paired by cachet.

This fascinating field is beginning to get the attention it deserves. The 1987 *Catalog of Plate Number Coils* will advance it further. In addition to carrying the latest revised edition of my availability chart and checklist, the catalog will list all the cachets that have been reported to date for each plate number.

This last feature will be the most incomplete and tentative aspect of the catalog, and we'll need a lot of help from collectors so that their actual findings can be added to the 1988 edition, but even the inadequate listing this year may turn out to be one of the most valuable elements in the book.

Collectors will be able to make up their want lists by plate number and then look up which cachets are known to have the plate numbers they need. Then, by browsing through dealer stocks or ordering by mail, they can search for their needs in the likeliest places.

For the PNC collector who has everything—a complete run of mint strips, precancel gap positions, Buggy Whips and other plate varieties, imperforates, mat varieties, tagging freaks, miscuts, and used singles—I recommend first-day covers.

Even if you don't have everything, I recommend them. It can be a whole new collecting experience.

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Tim Lindemuth Scores Another PNC Find



2L: Doubling on flagpole

The photocopies of the first draft of the 1987 PNC catalog had already gone out to co-workers but the checking and re-checking was still going on.

In came a letter from Tim Lindemuth, who first publicized the blue Supreme Court variety on the 20¢ Flag, his specialty.

Lindemuth enclosed a copy of one of his exhibition pages. In the middle was a strip of seven from Plate 2, with the plate number on the center stamp.

Above and below were blow-ups of the stamps at 2L and 1R (those are the stamps on either side of the numbered stamp). It is hoped that the poor photocopy will reproduce well enough here so you can see what Lindemuth found.

In brief, it is another set-off caused by the chill roller. Lindemuth's witeup puts it this way:

"Once mistaken as a double transfer, this double image of the 'USA 20c' and statue's base on the stamp right of the plate number (the left illustration above) is a 'set-off.' Ink is transferred to the chill rollers at the exit side of the dryer during start-up and then set off onto the stamps. Notice the double flagpole ball on the stamp left of the plate number (the illustration at the right above)."



1R: Doubling of text

The variety was quickly added to the catalog.

So were several plate cracks that were left out of the original catalog draft.

You may wish to examine your holdings before the catalog comes out, so here are a few of them:

On the 9.3¢ Mail Wagon, Plate 3 is known with a "smoking g" (from the "g" in "Wagon") on the stamp with the plate number (found by Larry Haynes). This is the first plate crack found on the 9.3¢.

On the 10.9¢ Hansom Cab, Haynes found a plate crack that extends across two adjoining stamps, along with several other cracks.

The two-stamp crack looks like a horizontal smudge extending leftward from the numbered stamp into 1R across the joint line. It is at about the level of the cab's driver's seat. (If you don't know where the driver sat on a hansom cab, it is the object under "1890s" that extends backward from the passenger compartment.

In addition, there are two vertical cracks from the driver's seat to the "s" in "1890s" on the numbered stamp and a single vertical crack from the inside of the "H" in "Hansom" to the inside of the "U" of "USA" on the stamp at 1R.

Both finds were reported too late to be illustrated this year.

1987 Catalog of Plate Number Coils

Fully revised and ILLUSTRATED 3d Edition

Publication date: May 15, 1987

The only comprehensive guide to PNCs. Lists and prices all known plate numbers, imperforates, precancel gaps and constant plate varieties. Most varieties are illustrated. The entire work is the combined effort of the leading authorities in the field and is edited by Stephen G. Esrati. New features include listings of all known FDC cachets and scarcity tables for precancel gap positions and FDCs. Prices are given for used singles and used precancel singles. Price \$12.50 postpaid.

You cannot collect PNCs without a PNC catalog.

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Letters to TPN

A Magazine

Many compliments on the new format of *TPN*! Looks great and reads well. You are entirely justified in terming it a magazine. It's far more than a newsletter.

Gene Trinks
Troy, MI

Good Reading

I find *TPN* articles both good reading and very informative. Your new printing is quite impressive. Did you get a laser printer or are you having it typeset? (Answer: Yes, I have a laser printer.)

My only complaint is that I didn't know there was a 1968 issue of the *Catalog of Plate Number Coils* (page 18). I know it was supposed to be 1986.

Douglas Landon
Enterprise, Ala.

'VOIDED'

I mailed some drawings from my 4-year-old son to his friend in Redondo Beach and affixed 39 cents in postage in the form of two 4.9¢ precancels and three 10.1¢ tagged bulk rate stamps.

I then used my "First Class" rubber stamp three times. I dropped the envelope in the slot beside the San Rafael post office, where I have my permit to use precanceled stamps on file.

A week later, the envelope came back to me. Someone had carefully rubber stamped each stamp with "VOIDED." Beneath this, in handwriting, was a notation: "Non-prof stamps void for personal use."

There were also two "Returned for postage" rubber stamps on the envelope.

I went into the post office to complain and when the lady behind the counter confirmed that those stamps could not be used for personal mail, I went over her head to the postmaster and cited the new rules that went into effect in July. He looked it up and nodded, saying he was sorry for the trouble and said he would take care of it and see that the envelope got to its destination.

Excited to see just what it would look like when it got to Redondo Beach, I called our friends there and asked them to send the envelope back. When they did, I was startled to see that the only thing the postmaster had added to the envelope was that he had obliterated one of the "Returned for postage" rubber stamps with a "Returned for better address" rubber stamp and that he had hand canceled the postage stamps three times.

Jerry D. Moore
San Rafael, Calif.

Folded PNCs

Tell George Kuhn I had the same problem on folded strips from Washington. I started checking the Special Instruction block and asking for strips to be sent in rolls only—no folds.

They do a good job, and I have had no problems since.

David Weber
Kailua, HI

After receiving three shipments with my stamps coiled and secure in Styrofoam (Kudos to the clerk!), I was brought to reality with \$60 worth of coils all folded flat and in the wrong place. Maybe I should be grateful. Three out of four in Washington isn't bad.

Robert L. Schwab
Greendale, WI

Dealer Ethics

I have now purchased, traded or sold PNCs with a number of dealers and have made some judgments.

I had the unfortunate luck to deal with one man on two sales. On

both, his dealings were at best unethical, misleading and intended to rip off the customer. He raised prices after they were agreed on and delivered stamps that had the numbers cut on the bottom. Needless to say I will never do business with him again.

On the other hand, I have had the extreme pleasure to deal with Al Haake, who offers accurately graded stamps, at prices that stay the same, and delivers them in an expedient manner.

I get very tired of the prevailing attitude that the rule must be "Buyer Beware." I wish the hobby did not have to put up with that kind of might-makes-right bullying.

Mitchell H. Edelstein
Raquette Lake, NY

How to Tell Them Apart

Is there any sure-fire way to distinguish the re-engraved 14¢ Iceboat from the original when only singles or strips without plate number are available for comparison?

George E. Kuhn
Leesburg, Fla.

If you have a short-wave ultraviolet light (the kind used to see U.S. tagging phosphors), the test is easy. The Cottrell stamps had overall tagging; the B Press stamps have block tagging, meaning that only the design should be tagged and the perfs and the upper edges untagged. **Wear eyeglasses whenever you work with shortwave UV to protect your eyes from serious damage. Plain glass is a protection.**

Failing that, there are two other ways, neither very good. Using a very good measuring tool, you will find that the distance from the vertical shaft of the "I" in "Ice" to the end of the "s" is 17.5mm on the Cottrell and 17.2mm on the B Press.

Or, you can hold your stamps at about a 30-degree angle to a light source and see if you can see the outline of the tagging. This method is very unreliable.

If It's Not Broken

I am in total support of the opposition to the proposal by Jiri Chytil that a new method be adopted for designating the se-tenant 17¢ precancel styles. I have always gone by the philosophy of "If it isn't broken, don't try to fix it," and that's certainly the case here.

W. R. Kinsey
Monroe, Ohio

FDCs

I have a limited number of FDCs with PNCs featuring various cachets.

I have prepared a list of these FDCs and will be glad to ship it to anyone who sends in a franked (22 cents will do), self-addressed Number 10 envelope.

The covers are described as PNCs, with the condition and format of the strips given the way we collect them.

Most covers are one of a kind and are sold on a first-come, first-serve basis. You may return any cover for a full (no questions) refund at any time.

Stephen G. Esrati
P.O. Box 20130
Shaker Heights, OH 44120

Only 50 Combinations?

First-Class Rate: Counting All the Fractional Possibilities

By George L. Carroll, Jr.

I have been reading about the various combinations of the Transportation Series that can be used on first-class mail. Every time I read a reference to this subject, a little bell went off. When someone came up with the "fact" that he (or she) had come up with 50 or so combinations that came to exactly 22 cents, I mumbled something to myself, and set out to prove him wrong.

I based my work on certain conditions:

- The Transportation Series has existed through the 18-, 20- and 22-cent first-class rate. I decided to determine the number of rate combinations for the earlier rates, too.
 - I barred the use of a single to make up any of the rates.
 - All combinations had to come out exactly, without fractional remainders.
 - I barred multiple uses of any stamp because I wanted to see how many combinations could be made up without using, say three 6¢ stamps and a 4¢ stamp to make up the 22¢ rate.
 - I did permit the use of one Cottrell and one B Press stamp of the same denomination.
 - I did include the new 2¢ stamp and the forthcoming 10¢ Canal Boat.
 - I banned all precancels (this barred the use of the B Press version of the 8.3¢ Ambulance).
- First, there's the 18¢ rate (effective from March 22, 1981, to Oct. 31, 1981. The only stamps to be considered were the 17¢ and the 18¢. Thus, there could be no combinations.

Next we get to the 20¢ rate (effective from Nov. 1, 1981, to Feb. 16, 1985).

Stamps to be considered are all the foregoing plus, 1¢, 2¢, 3¢, 4¢, 5¢, 5.2¢, 5.9¢, 7.4¢, 9.3¢, 10.9¢, 11¢, 20¢.

The possible combinations: total six:

18+2; 17+3; 17+2+1; 11+5+4; 11+5+3+1; 11+4+3+2. None of the fractionals could be used without a remainder.

Finally, we get to the 22¢ rate. Before any more stamps were issued, this rate could be met by nine more combinations:

20+2; 18+4; 18+3+1; 17+5; 17+4+1; 17+3+2; 11+5+4+2; 11+5+3+2+1; 10.9+5.9+5.2.

Then came another batch of stamps. Now, including the use of all previously issued stamps, you can make up another 416 combinations. Yes, you see correctly. Adding the nine combinations possible from stamps issued before the 22¢ rate, I arrived at a total of 425 possible combinations for the 22¢ rate, or 431 for the 20¢ and 22¢ rates combined.

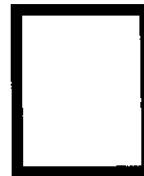
The person who counted 50 in all, allowed overpayment. With all these possibilities, that was not needed.

Still, my total of 431 may be wrong. I do not have a computer and when I tallied them up, I once came out with only 415 22¢ combinations. But I did come up with the 425 total twice.

I realize that I may have come up with a mass of absolutely useless information, but I found it interesting and wanted to share it with you.

Anyway, this may spur someone into trying it, too. I'd love to compare my results to see if I missed any. (Write me at 329 Wayne Dr., Wilmington, N.C. 28403-1239.)

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