

Study group unveils PNC numbering

It has long been evident that PNC collectors find Scott catalog numbers frustrating. You almost always have to look up a number to find out what stamp it describes. For this reason, for example, *Linn's* and *The Plate Number* do not use Scott numbers in articles, but prefer such descriptives as "a 3¢ Columbian" or "a 3.4¢ School Bus."

To add to our misery, Scott has changed some of the numbers once and cautions that it may do so again.

Further, Scott has not assigned numbers to some stamps. It has been inconsistent. The first omission was the B Press version of the 14¢ Iceboat. It is listed in the 1988 *U.S. Specialized Catalogue* as a "no joint line" subtype of the Cottrell version, without a catalog number of its own. We do not yet know whether it will assign numbers to the B Press version of the 12¢ Steamer. It did assign a major number to the B Press version of the 8.3¢ Ambulance precancel. The 22¢ Flag Test coil was given a subtype number among the 22¢ Flags.

Also, when a new stamp is issued, collectors and dealers invariably have to wait two or three months before they learn the Scott number. That's why one often sees "NEW" instead of a catalog number on many dealers' lists.

Scott will not even tell *Linn's* anymore. It makes *Linn's* wait until *The Scott Monthly Journal* assigns a

number. This hangup caused the third edition of the PNC catalog to go to the printer last year with Scott numbers Scott knew would be out of date by the time of

National PNC society is formed. Page 27.

publication. But Scott would not reveal its numbers even though it knew them and was assured that publication of the PNC catalog would follow that of its monthly magazine. We did make a good-faith effort to make sure our Scott numbers were correct and up to date.

This is the age of the computer. Many collectors keep an inventory of their collections in a computer. It is all very good to know that the 22¢ Flag is Scott 2115, but the computer cannot tell Plate 1 from Plate 13.

To make a computer work, it therefore needs a second piece of information. It cannot work by the Scott number alone.

Fine, we now need two fields to identify a stamp. But what if it is precanceled? Add another field. What if there

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Scarcity table of FDCs updated

By Ken Lawrence

The new first-day cover total released by the Postal Service on Jan. 8 allows us to calculate the scarcity listings for most of the PNCs issued last year, shown in the table on Page 25.

Although I still use the same basic calculation, which estimates the number of PNC FDCs according to the typical format for each stamp employed by the major cachet makers, it is now necessary to revise these basic

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The Plate Number

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Scott's *Specialized* doesn't do the job

By Stephen G. Esrai

The 1988 Scott *Specialized Catalogue of United States Stamps* does a disservice to collectors of plate number coils.

- It still does not give a separate number to the B Press version of the 14¢ Iceboat (although it prices a no-joint-line strip from Plate 2).

- By not having a footnote at the start of the Transportation Series to what Scott calls the second set of that issue, the collector is left hunting for the listing for the 1985-87 issues. There is a footnote to the reissues of the 1-, 2-, 4- and 8.3-cent stamps (Scott's third set).

- Scott continues to price Plate 7 of the 18¢ Flag at a hefty \$65 for a strip of three, despite the fact that a large find of these has depressed prices drastically. The price was dropped from the \$175 in the 1987 catalog.

[It was my report of that find that caused dealer (advertiser) pressure on *Linn's* that resulted in my being fired as the PNC columnist for "conflict of interest" because I am a dealer. Some of the dealers who complained shared in the find.]

- Scott did not even bother updating the introduction, where on Page 18 we find this:

"Plate Number. On a rotary-press coil the top or bottom part of a plate number may show. The number was entered on the plate so as to be cut off when the web was sliced into coils, and could be found only when the web was sliced off center."

This paragraph was accurate before plate numbers were intentionally put on stamps in 1981. Seven years is too long to wait for Scott to wake up.

- Scott bull-headedly continues to price only strips of three (even though it now acknowledges in a full-page house ad on Page 9 that collectors do want the Scott PNC al-

bum to accommodate strips of five. When the album was in the design stage, Dr. Robert Rabinowitz and I tried to indicate to Scott that forcing collectors to use an album fit only for strips of three was an error.)

- Also bull-headed is Scott's continued insistence that a precancel is a used stamp. Now that we must hand in letters bearing precancels to have them date-cancelled in red, there really are used, canceled precancels. But what would you call a gummed, never-hinged, unused precancel strip? Despite Scott, the answer you are likely to give will not be "used."

- In its pricing of first-day covers, Scott pays no attention to plate numbers or precancels. It ignores the controversy about the B Press reissues completely.

- There is a great deal of fault to be found in Scott's pricing. For example:

—9.3¢ Mail Wagon, Plate 8, \$25 for a strip of three. Too low. The most recent *Linn's* "Price Trends" quoted it at \$65.

—9.3¢ Mail Wagon, Plates 5 and 6, \$80 for a strip of three. Too low. The most recent *Linn's* "Price Trends" quoted Plate 5 at \$135.

—17¢ Auto, Plates 6 and 7, \$7 for a strip of three. Plate 6 should be more than Plate 7.

—All 22¢ Flag strips are priced alike at \$3. Some strips are much scarcer than others. The most recent *Linn's* "Price Trends" quoted Plates 1 and 3 at \$9, Plate 6 at \$8. Scott should read *Linn's* "Price Trends."

Does this mean that other prices in Scott are also way off?

- According to Scott, Plate 111121 does not exist on the unprecanceled version of the 21.1¢ Letters.

Since Scott describes this as a specialized catalog, one could expect better.

Well maybe next year when Scott

puts its own computer on line and can finally edit the material in its catalogs.

According to Charles M. Pritchett, publisher of the Scott catalogs, when Amos Press bought Scott Publishing Co., the New York outfit had no computers of its own. The printer in Pennsylvania provided two computer printouts, one for editorial matter, one for prices.

To make any editorial correction cost Scott a small fortune, Pritchett said.

These two films were printed by laying one over the other. Scott could update the prices, but could do nothing with the editorial matter, which was even paginated.

Pritchett complained that this left hundreds of pages in white space in the full five volumes, white space Scott could do nothing with unless it was fortunate enough to sell an ad on that page.

This explains why such misspellings as "Amoskeg Engine" to describe the 20¢ Fire Pumper, continue from one edition to the next.

It may be of interest that Artmaster did not accept the USPS misspelling in its original news release. On Artmaster FDCs, the name is given correctly as "Amoskeag."

So, despite the promises from Amos Press, we can expect no real improvement until those new computers are on line.

To quote Pritchett, "If we are successful in putting the 1989 Scott Catalogue on the computer ... you are going to have the opportunity to use the best catalogue in our 124-year history."

At any rate, maybe next year Scott will be able to update its "Information for Collectors" to tell the great unwashed that coil stamps do not have to be miscut to have plate numbers.

PNC numbers are designed for use on computers and never require to be hunted up in the catalog

Continued from First Page

are five precancel styles on a given stamp, as on the 17¢ Auto? Add yet another field.

The 1988 *Plate Number Coil Catalog* will solve these problems by giving its own numbers to all PNCs.

- The numbering system is self-explanatory, so one need not look up the number in the book.

- The system is self-updating, so a new stamp can immediately be given a number by one and all.

- It allows computer users to use a sequential "number" to differentiate each strip.

- And it is expandable to permit those who wish to do so to add more data to the numbers.

The word "number" is in quotation marks because it is really not a number, but a text field.

Here's how it works:

Example: 2T2

The first component is a number taken from the face value of the stamp, including its decimal point, if any.

The second component is a letter indicating the series, C for Consumer Education, F for Flag, T for Transportation, etc.

The third part is the plate number.

What we have so far describes Plate 2 of the 2¢ Locomotive.

But here we have to differentiate some more. What would happen if a B Press version of the 2¢ Locomotive were to come out on Plate 2? Simple, we would add a "C" for Cottrell or a "B" for any other press.

Thus we now have 11T1B (the Caboose) and 11T1C (the Stutz Bearcat).

We need to add this letter only when it is important to distinguish between two stamps of the same series, value and plate number. If the face value, series and plate number are unique to one stamp, this letter should be omitted.

To mark a precancel, a "P" goes after the press designator, if any. If a press designator is not necessary, the

"P" goes after the plate number.

Example: 11T1BP

This example describes a precanceled Caboose.

If there are various precancel styles, the letter or letters designating the style go after the "P." To avoid confusion, these are in lower case.

Example: 17T6Pab

This describes the 17¢ Auto, Plate 6, Style AB.

If a Style X were to be discovered tomorrow, every user of the system would know that its number would be 17T6Px.

Should a dealer want to distinguish in his stock between strips of 3, 5 or 6, that's easy, too. After the basic number, he puts a hyphen followed by the length of the strip: 18F6-5. That's a valuable strip of five of the 18¢ Flag in the rare Plate 6.

The same applies to precancel gaps: 9.3T8P-2L-5.

This describes the precancel-only Plate 8 of the 9.3¢ Mail Wagon, which is known only with the gap at 2L. In this instance, it is a strip of five. Purists might call this 9.3T8-5 because Plate 8 is known only precanceled and the only gap known is 2L. But that's up to the user.

So, we now have a totally descriptive catalog numbering system. To a computer, this number would be the only field it would need to search for to report on such a strip.

For most collectors, however, the numbering system could be a quick shorthand for making up want lists. It certainly is easier than having to look up a catalog number and then adding all the descriptions needed to identify a strip.

The system was designed by the Plate Number Coil Study Group after suggestions from George Kuhn, A. S. Cibulskas and Glenn A. Estus. The system as adopted most closely resembles the suggestions of Cibulskas, but includes ideas of the others.

For computer users, however, the system has a "bug."

Because the catalog "number" is a

text field, data base programs such as dBase III or Microsoft File cannot sort on the catalog number.

This bug was discovered by the astute Ken Lawrence, who does not even own a computer.

The fix can be totally ignored by collectors who do not have a computer. But for those who do want it to work on a computer, please see the bug fix on Page 32 of this issue.

Update

New Stamps

5.2T3P-Ln and 5.2T5P-Ln — Line gaps of Plates 3 and 5 of the 5.2¢ Sleigh, previously known only in strips of four, have been found in a partial roll.

5.2T3P-2L and 5.2T5P-2L — A partial roll has been found of the 5.2¢ Sleigh, Plates 3 and 5, with Gap 2L. A new gap position.

8.3T2BP — An expected precancel turned up in February.

8.5T2P — An unexpected precancel also turned up in February.

12.5T2P — Plate 2 of the precanceled 12.5¢ Pushcart was found in December.

18T2BP — Plate 2 of the B Press version of the 8.3¢ Ambulance made its appearance in February.

18M3P — 18¢ Monument has been found, Plate 33333 precancel only, with Type I paper having dull, instead of shiny, gum. All previous Monument stamps had shiny gum. The stamps also have block tagging.

Corrections:

In the BEP report published in January, data were transposed for the 21.1¢ Letters stamps.

Plate 175584-2 was the blue plate. Plate 176367-1 was for ZIP+4.

The impression totals make it appear that Plate 2 tagged, printed only for collectors, may have a low total.

If your label says "2-88," please renew now.

FDC scarcity table updated through 1987 PNCs

Continued from first page

calculations upward a bit to take into account those that are being created disproportionately, specifically in response to the PNC market.

The chart addenda also include some rarities that turned up after last year's PNC catalog went to press.

As far as anyone knows, the 9.3¢ Mail Wagon Plate 3 and 4 FDCs are unique, although, oddly, those are the only plates ever reported on USPS souvenir pages.

The 6¢ Tricycle precancel FDCs are another story. Actually they are combination covers, with plate strips of three or four of the tagged stamps and PS/3 of the precancel on the same hand-canceled ArtCraft envelopes.

When R&D Enterprises first placed them on the market at \$125 each last July, the advertising circular claimed that only eight were known. The price quickly doubled, and doubled again. Although I personally know of more than eight in existence — my estimate would be about a dozen — they are, nevertheless, scarce enough to support the current retail prices in the \$750+ range.

Early last year, Stewart Kusnitz offered a 5.2¢ precanceled FDC for sale priced at \$1,000. At this writing, he still has not sold it, but others that have come on the market have brought \$600 and \$750 in collector-to-collector deals, so Stu's price does not appear to be out of line, despite what some skeptics have written.

Since the 20¢ Flag Plate 3 is probably scarcer than the 5.2¢ precancel, it is probably underpriced, even though the retail value has crept up to the \$450 level. The discrepancy may mean that I am wrong about the quantities that exist — I guess 20 or fewer for the Flag, about 25 to 30 of each for the Sleigh precancel plates — but it may also be an indicator of the Transportation coils' greater popularity.

Now that I have revised my estimates of the 22¢ Flag scarcity because it is clear today that Plate 1 is much harder to find than Plate 2, the pressure is growing to change my listing for the 20¢ Fire Pumper Plates 1 and 2 on the evidence of the market.

The chart shows these to be the most common, yet the prices are much higher than Plates 3, 4, 5 and 6. (Prices have reached the stratosphere for Plates 7 and 8, which everyone agrees are really rare.) How can that be reconciled?

I don't deny that Plate 1 and 2 Pumper FDCs are hard to find, but I still believe that is because those were the first ones made and the first ones sold, mainly to collectors of line-pair FDCs, who, back in 1982, had no notion of PNCs, and most of whom still don't.

In fact, the high prices these plates bring have lured several onto the market in recent months, most from casual collectors and non-specialist dealers who have no particular interest in PNCs. To my knowledge there is no comparable trend occurring with other PNC FDCs that are truly scarce.

A similar situation arose with mint strips, when the

extreme difficulty of finding Plate 3 of the 18¢ Flag coil brought that number on the market, mainly from collectors and dealers who had bought rolls when they were widely available without regard to plate numbers, but, by contrast, the amazing escalation in Plate 6 prices has not succeeded in uncovering naively acquired supplies.

In the case of the 20¢ Fire Pumper FDCs there is another factor at work — the tendency of collectors and dealers to transfer the price ratios of the mint strip market to the FDC market.

There is no logical reason why Plate 1 should be more common than Plate 2 on FDCs, since I've never seen any evidence that covers were prepared from the Plate 1-Plate 5 pairing. Yet when they appear on the market, Plate 2 FDCs usually are priced about three times higher than Plate 1, and collectors are definitely finding Plate 2 more difficult to acquire. I'm confident this means they are being held back by people who believe that Plate 2 must be scarce, based on misunderstanding the reason for high prices for strips of three and five of Plate 2.

This same misunderstanding has affected the used singles market as well. Plate 2 is not a rare number used, but some copies have brought high prices anyway, because neither buyers nor sellers realized how common they are.

In the current market, the 20¢ Fire Pumper Plate 1 FDCs sell for up to \$250, and Plate 2 for \$750. If those prices hold, I'll be forced to conclude that my estimates are probably mistaken, and I'll have to revise the chart in the catalog, probably reversing the listings of Plates 1 and 2 (now "B") and 3 and 4 (now "C"). But I'll be vindicated if prices settle as more Plate 1 and 2 FDCs appear, or if Plates 3 and 4 rise to the Plate 1 level.

It is very likely that there are still some unreported PNC FDCs waiting to be discovered. I have in my collection FDCs of the 4.9¢, 8.3¢ and 12¢ precancels (all from the Cottrell printings), while others have precanceled FDCs of the 3.4¢, 7.4¢, 9.3¢, 10.1¢, 11¢ and 12.5¢. None of these have plate numbers, but the fact that these exist at all means there might be others prepared at the same time that do have plate numbers.

Also, souvenir pages exist with the 5¢ Motorcycle Plates 3 and 4. Neither number has yet been confirmed on FDC.

But if someone offers you a 4¢ Stagecoach precancel FDC or a precanceled 17¢ Auto FDC, watch your wallet. The tagged versions of both these stamps were issued on their first days, but in both cases the precancels were not made available until several months later.

Key to FDC table

A = Common (10,000 or more)

B = Available (2,000 to 10,000)

C = Possibly difficult (500 to 2,000)

D = Scarce (50 to 500)

E = Very scarce (fewer than 50)

* = Estimate or date not based on USPS reports

NR = Not yet reported

Scarcity table and checklist for FDCs

STAMP	DATE	PLACE	PLATE	RARITY
TRANSPORTATION SERIES				
1¢ Omnibus	Aug. 18, 1963	Arlington VA	1, 2	B
Re-engraved	Nov. 26, 1966	Washington DC	1	C
2¢ Locomotive	May 20, 1962	Chicago IL	3, 4	A
Re-engraved	March 6, 1967	Milwaukee WI	1	B
3¢ Handcar	March 25, 1963	Rochester NY	1, 2, 3, 4	A
3¢ Conestoga Wagon	Feb. 29, 1968	Conestoga, PA	?	NR
3.4¢ School Bus	June 8, 1965	Arlington VA	1, 2	A
4¢ Stagecoach	Aug. 19, 1962	Milwaukee WI	1, 2, 3, 4	B
Re-engraved ¹	Aug. 15, 1966	Washington DC	1	E*
4.9¢ Buckboard	June 21, 1965	Reno NV	3, 4	A
5¢ Motorcycle	Oct. 10, 1963	San Francisco CA	1, 2	A
5¢ Milk Wagon	Sept. 25, 1967	Indianapolis IN	1	NR
5.2¢ Sleigh	March 21, 1963	Memphis TN	1, 2	A
same, precanceled			1, 2	E*
5.5¢ Star Route Truck	Nov. 1, 1966	Fort Worth TX	1	A
same, precanceled			1	C
5.9¢ Bicycle	Feb. 17, 1962	Wheeling WV	3, 4	A
same, precanceled			3	E*
6¢ Tricycle	May 6, 1965	Childs MD	1	A
same, precanceled			1	E*
7.1¢ Tractor	Feb. 6, 1967	Sarasota FL	1	A
same, precanceled			1	C*
7.4¢ Baby Buggy	April 7, 1964	San Diego CA	2	A
8.3¢ Ambulance	June 21, 1965	Reno NV	1, 2	A
B Press, precancel ¹	Aug. 29, 1966	Washington DC	1	E*
8.5¢ Tow Truck	Jan. 24, 1967	Tucson AZ	1	A
same, precancel			1	C*
9.3¢ Mail Wagon	Dec. 15, 1961	Shreveport LA	1, 2	B*
			3, 4	E*
10¢ Canal Boat	April 11, 1967	Buffalo NY	1	NR
10.1¢ Oil Wagon	April 18, 1965	Oil Center NM	1	A
10.9¢ Hanson Cab	March 26, 1962	Chattanooga TN	1, 2	B
same, precanceled			1, 2	E*
11¢ Caboose	Feb. 3, 1964	Rosemont IL	1	B
11¢ Stutz Bearcat	June 11, 1965	Baton Rouge LA	3, 4	B
12¢ Stanley Steamer	April 2, 1965	Kingfield ME	1, 2	B
12.5¢ Pushcart	April 18, 1965	Oil Center NM	1	B
14¢ Iceboat	March 23, 1965	Rochester NY	1, 2	A
B Press 2	Sept. 30, 1966	Washington DC	2	E*
17¢ Electric Auto	June 25, 1961	Greenfield Village MI	1, 2	A
17¢ Dog Sled	Aug. 20, 1966	Anchorage AK	2	B
17¢ Racer	Sept. 20, 1967	Indianapolis IN	1	NR
same, precanceled			1	NR
18¢ Surrey	May 18, 1961	Notch MO	1, 2	B*
			3, 4	E*
			5, 6, 8	C*
			7, 9, 10	D*
20¢ Fire Pumper	Dec. 10, 1961	Alexandria VA	1, 2	B*
			3, 4	C*
			5, 6	D*
			7, 8	E*
25¢ Bread Wagon	Nov. 22, 1966	Virginia Beach VA	1	B
FLAG ISSUES				
18¢ sea to shining sea	April 24, 1961	Portland ME	1	B*
20¢ Supreme Court	Dec. 17, 1961	Washington DC	2, 3, 4, 5	D*
			1, 2	B*
			3	E*
22¢ Capitol	March 29, 1965	Washington DC	1	C*
			2	B
22¢ Capitol Test	May 23, 1967	Secaucus NJ	T1	B
OTHER ISSUES				
(22¢) "D"	Feb. 1, 1965	Los Angeles CA	1, 2	B*
20¢ Consumer Education	April 27, 1962	Washington DC	1, 2, 3, 4	B*
18¢ Washington Monument	Nov. 6, 1965	Washington DC	1112, 3333	B*
same, precanceled			11121	C*
			33333	C*
21.1¢ Letters	Oct. 22, 1965	Washington DC	111111	B*
same, precanceled			111111	C*
20¢ Official	Jan. 12, 1963	Washington DC	1	C*
(22¢) "D" Official	Feb. 4, 1965	Washington DC	1	B*

Note 1: These listings are not official FDCs. These are earliest dates known.

Sleaze factor pops up again on PNCs

By Steve Esrati

It has been some time now since I wrote about the Slob from Lower Slobbovia, a dealer who offered rare PNCs at inflated prices to dealers, usually saying the supply was limited when he knew he had tons of material available for the gullible to buy.

But the sleaze factor in PNCs will not go away.

- There appear to be supplies around of Plates 3 and 4 of the 10.9¢ Hansom Cab. The prices being asked do not reflect this.

- Some dealers know what post office gets what numbers even before the post office's own employees know they have arrived.

- And the price of the 18¢ Flag, Plate 7, is still going down.

Let's take them one at a time.

First there was a very ominous sign in *Linn's* when a dealer who runs buying ads suddenly stopped looking for the rare strips of the 10.9¢. Previously, he was buying strips of five for \$350 and up.

After a decent interval, his ads again carried the listing,

but instead of quoting a buying price, the ads now said "POR," a strange thing to put in a buying ad.

The conclusion to be drawn was that the person who found the supply of Hansom Cabs must have sent a shipment off to the avid buyer. But having now obtained some, our buying dealer would have been surprised to find a second shipment a few days later. Assuming he had bought 10 strips of each number, that first outlay would have been \$7,000, a considerable sum, even among the big-buck operators.

The second shipment probably got sent back with a courteous note that supplies are adequate just now, thank you, and I have stopped advertising for these stamps.

Just what "POR" means is only a guess, but other buying ads for the same strips are looking only for No Gap and 1R strips. This leads to a guess that the big find was of Line Gap strips.

So, if you have the desired gaps, the "POR" price will be up there around \$300, but if you have Line Gap strips, you'll have to wait to sell. (It doesn't work the other way around. If you are buying, you'll pay the price dealers are asking.)

The 1988 *PNC Catalog* will carry a warning about these strips' prices.

I imagine your surprise if you were working in the accountable paper section of a major post office and you were to get a call like this:

"Hi. I know you have just received a shipment of 8.3¢ precancels off the B Press with the plate number two. I'd like you to ship me a box of 50 rolls of 500, please."

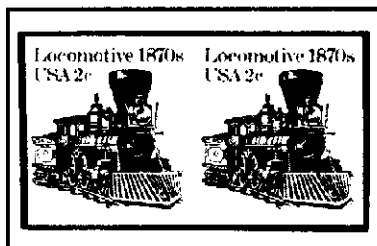
The reason for your surprise would be multifold. You just got the stamps in this morning. You have not opened them yet and do not know what plate number is on them. Your philatelic clerk did not even know that Plate 2 had been printed yet because he is not a subscriber to *TPN*.

You open a box and, lo! The caller was right. They are Plate 2 and they do not have a joint line.

Collectors, who have been told repeatedly that they cannot order specific plate numbers from USPS should take some offense at this because it indicates that some dealers, at least, can do what collectors cannot do.

The way it is done is quite simple. They ask USPS in Washington — the very same people, in fact, who will no longer answer questions from legitimate journalists, referring them instead to the Stamp Information Department. Although forbidden by USPS rules from talking

Special Offer!



I have a limited number of imperf Locomotive pairs (#1897Ae VF NH) at \$50 postpaid, insured.

Wm B. Robinson

1641 Bruce Ln.
Green Bay, WI 54313



17700

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PNC society is formed

The Plate Number Coil Collectors Club has been born and is applying for affiliate status with the American Philatelic Society.

PNC³, as the group will be known informally, hopes to have a meeting at STaMpsHOW in Detroit this summer.

The provisional officers will be:

Acting president — Gene Trinks of Michigan.

Acting vice president — Don Eastman of New Hampshire.

Acting secretary — Eric Russow of Wisconsin.

Acting treasurer — Rob Washburn of Maine.

Trinks asks that membership applications be requested from him (SASE, please) at 3603 Bellows Court, Troy, MI 48083. Dues will be \$10 a year.

Among the benefits of membership will be a reduced cost of subscribing to *The Plate Number*, \$8 a year.

PNC³ will send its membership list to *TPN*. New subscribers who are on that list pay \$8. The same applies to renewal subscriptions.

Some PNC dealers are expected to offer additional discounts to members of PNC³. Steve Esrati has indicated that he will give an additional 5% off on his PNC prices

to members. Members will also be able to buy the 1988 catalog at \$1 under the price generally charged, now expected to be \$12.50.

Watch *TPN* for names of other dealers who wish to underwrite and show their support of this group by providing discounts.

You should also be seeing news about PNC³ in the philatelic press in the coming weeks.

In case you wonder how to pronounce the short form of the name, Trinks says it is "Pee En Cee Three."

5.5¢ puzzle (Sorry, no prizes)

Here's a puzzle for you to solve.

Suppose you find a strip of the 5.5¢ Star Route Truck that is cut so high that there are no plate numbers on it. Since the stamp was printed on the B Press, there are no joint lines.

How do you exhibit a "no number" strip without having to mount a strip of 52 to prove that there are no numbers?

It can be done in a strip of five. How?

The answer was provided by A.S. Cibulskas. You will find it on Page 29.

KIM CUNIBERTI, APS

RARE PLATE NUMBER STRIPS!!!

Some available nowhere else

Cottrell Gap Strips:

- * 10.9 #3,4 Gap 4R
- * 9.3 #2,4 Gap 3L (on Type IIa paper)
- * 10.9 #1,2 Gap 3R
- * 9.3 #3,4 Gap 4L
- * 5.2 #3,5 Gap 1L and Line Gap

Numbers on Top:

- * 17 #3,4 Type C (Gap 3L)
- * 17 #3,4 Type BA (Gap 4R)
- * 17 #5 Type AB (Gap 5R)

Constant Plate Varieties:

- * 10.9 #2 Low Cab at 2L
- * 4.9 #1,3,4 with various low entries
- * 4.9 Rain Crack, Split 6, Rein Whip and Buggy Whip
- * 8.3 Low 1 Varieties

Largest Inventories of:

- * 4.9 Double Gap (all 5 known types)
- * B Press Gap Strips (some within PS/51)
- * Paper Types (Incl. 17¢ #3/4 on Ty II)
- * I also stock every known plate # strip from 1¢ #1 to rare 18¢ Flag #6!

Send 39¢ #10 SASE and tell what you're looking for. I can make the impossible Possible!

CONTEMPORARY COILS P.O. BOX 3654 DANBURY, CT 06813-3654

USPS souvenir pages also have PNC strips

By Gerald Blankenship

I collect USPS Souvenir Pages with plate numbers.

This combines two collecting interests listed by the American Philatelic Society, souvenir pages and coil stamps.

Souvenir pages were added to the list of collecting categories because of their increased popularity, as shown by the fact that the Postal Service now has 50,000 subscribers for the pages.

In 1984, the American Society for Philatelic Pages and Panels (ASPPP) was formed. Its purpose is to stimulate interest in souvenir pages and panels. It has grown to 600 members and publishes *The Page and Panel Journal*.

PNCs are difficult to find on souvenir pages because of the distance between plate numbers. Because the people who make up the pages usually were unaware of the need, many pages have the number on the wrong side of the joint line.

Souvenir pages are available only on a subscription basis. A subscriber pays \$20 and is sent pages every three months. The probability of receiving a page with a PNC is low.

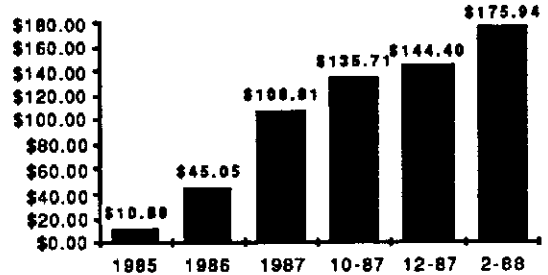
Originally, USPS placed one coil stamp on a page and added a different stamp to make up the difference between the coil and the normal postal rate. Starting around 1981, they affixed a strip of two (or more if needed to meet the first-class rate). Now they affix a strip of five to each page, since that is the popular way of collecting PNCs.

ASPPP President Bud Scrantom was partly responsible for this as a result of his suggestions to the Postal Service.

The following is a listing of all known souvenir pages with PNCs. They are listed chronologically:

Cat.	Face	Stamp	Plate Number	Date
18F1	.18	Flag	1	04/24/81
18T1,2	.18	Surrey	1,2	05/18/81
17T1,2	.17	Electric Auto	1,2	06/25/81
20T5,6	.20	Fire Pumper	5,6	12/01/81
9.3T3,4	.093	Mail Wagon	3,4	12/15/81
20F1	.20	Flag	1	12/17/81
5.9T3,4	.059	Bicycle	3,4	02/17/82
10.9T1,2	.109	Hansom Cab	1,2	03/26/82
20C3,4	.20	Consumer	3,4	04/27/82
2T3,4	.02	Locomotive	3,4	05/20/82
4T1,2,3	.04	Stagecoach	1,2,3	08/18/82 ¹
20o1	.20	Official	1	01/12/83
5.2T1,2	.052	Sleigh	1,2	03/21/83
3T3,4	.03	Handcar	3,4	03/25/83
1T1,2	.01	Omibus	1,2	08/19/83
5T1,2,3,4	.05	Motorcycle	1,2,3,4	10/10/83 ⁴
11TC1	.11	Caboose	1	02/03/84
7.4T2	.074	Baby Buggy	2	04/07/84
22D2	(.22)	"D" Eagle	2	02/01/85
22o1	(.22)	"D" Official	1	02/04/85
14T1,2	.14	Iceboat	1,2	03/23/85
22F2	.22	Flag	2	03/29/85
12T1,2	.12	Steamer	1,2	04/02/85
10.1T1	.101	Oil Wagon	1	04/18/85
12.5T1	.125	Pushcart	1	04/18/85
6T1	.06	Tricycle	1	05/06/85
3.4T1,2	.034	School Bus	1,2	06/08/85 ³
11TB3,4	.11	Stutz	3,4	06/11/85

TPN Average



The TPN average climbed \$29.54 since the last report, mainly because of increased prices of off-sale items. Other material held steady.

According to a poll among dealers, the October 1987 stock market crash did not affect PNC sales or prices. Demand continued firm.

The TPN average in this issue uses the same divisor as used in January 1988 (page 5).

4.9T3,4	.049	Buckboard	3,4	06/21/85 ²
8.3T1,2	.083	Ambulance	1,2	06/21/85
21.1L1	.211	Letters	11111	10/22/85
18M3	.18	Monument	3333	11/06/85
17T82	.17	Dog Sled	2	08/20/86
5.5T1	.055	Star Truck	1	11/01/86
25T1	.25	Bread Wagon	1	11/22/86
8.5T1	.085	Tow Truck	1	01/24/87
7.1T1	.071	Tractor	1	02/08/87
2TB1	.02	Locomotive	1	03/06/87
10T1	.10	Canal Boat	1	04/11/87
22FT1	.22	Test Coil	T1	05/23/87

Note 1: This page should also be available with the other plate number in that coil. That means Plate 4 should exist.

Note 2: Buckboard pages come with two strips of stamps. One page is known with a PNC 4 in each strip; another copy is known with a PNC 3 in the top row and a PNC 4 in the bottom.

Note 3: School Bus pages come with two strips of stamps. One page is known with a PNC 2 in both rows.

Note 4: Plates 3 and 4 are not known on first-day covers.

Editor's note: You may contact the author at 539 N. Gum Golly, Crosby, Tex. 77532. His telephone number is (713) 324-2709. Or you may reach ASPPP at P.O. Box 64, Hillsdale, N.J. 07642-0064.

ADLETS

Classified ads are 15 cents a word. There is no charge for your address.

17¢ Electric Auto specialty price list available upon request. This 12-page list is richly illustrated, and includes Cottrell gap positions, plate varieties, plate singles, and FDCs. Write for it; even if you don't order from it, you'll find the browsing pleasant. Tom Maeder, 1604 Bardale, San Pedro, CA 90731. (2-88)

BUYING PNC FDCs. Write first. Thomas Gift, 1959 Haviland Ave., Bronx, N.Y. 10472. (4-90)

Guide to PNC specialist dealers

Who deals in what?

As an aid to readers, *TPN* is listing specialist dealers by their area of specialization.

This annual list is not all-inclusive, but should help you when you are looking for something. Save it.

Readers are invited to add names to this list. If a dealer is not listed here, it simply means he is not known as a PNC specialist among his colleagues.

It should be obvious, but it may be best to say so anyway. The fact that a dealer is listed here or not listed here has nothing to do with whether he advertises in *TPN*.

Auctions: Sam Houston Philatelics, Steve Ivy, Michael Karen, M&M/Southwest.

Commercial covers: Rick Lancaster.

FDCs: Dennis Chamberlain, Ed Denson, Steve Esrati, H&H Stamps, Joe Lane.

Long strips, precancel gaps: Chamberlain, Kim Cuniberti, Al Haake, Tom Maeder, Dr. Robert Rabinowitz, Lee Warzala.

Mint pairs: Haake, Stamps 'n' Stuff, Dr. Rabinowitz.

Mint singles: Haake, Dr. Rabinowitz, Warzala.

Number at top: A. S. Cibulskas.

Paper types: Cuniberti, Maeder.

PNCs, general: Chamberlain, Cibulskas, Cuniberti, Ron Czaplicki, Dale Enterprises, Elmer Degon, Denson, Discovery Stamps, Esrati, H&H, Stamps 'n' Stuff, Haake, Deberah Helman, Karen, Vern Kraus, Stewart Kusnitz, Steve Levine, M&M/Southwest, Frank Marrelli, Miller's Mint, Gene Paquette, Dr. Rabinowitz, Stamps in Motion, Warzala, Terry L. Wike.

PNC rarities: Kusnitz, Sam Houston.

PNC varieties: Chamberlain, Cibulskas, Cuniberti, Esrati, Maeder, Dr. Rabinowitz, Warzala.

Precancel gaps: See "Long strips" above.

Used singles: Denson.

Wholesalers: Haake, Langs, Dr. Rabinowitz.

Dealer directory:

- Dennis D. Chamberlain, P.O. Box 560, Davis, CA 95617.
 A. S. Cibulskas, 28 Westwood Rd., Stamford, CT 06902.
 (203) 327-9676 (evenings and weekends).
 Kim Cuniberti, P.O. Box 3654, Danbury CT 06813-3654.
 Ronald Czaplicki, P.O. Box 1812, Bellflower, CA 90706.

Answer to puzzle on page 27

You need only mount a strip of five. You will still have ample proof that this is a "no number" strip because the "Burned Rubber" variety is at 2R. If you show a strip of five and the rightmost stamp has burned rubber under the wheel, you prove that it is a plate strip.

Dale Enterprises, Inc., P.O. Box 539, Emmaus, PA 18049.
 (215) 433-3303.

Elmer Degon, 5 S. Belfast Ave., Augusta, ME 04330.

Discovery Stamps, P.O. Box 2502, Syracuse, NY 13220-2502. (315) 652-5517.

Ed Denson, P.O. Box 158, Alderpoint, CA 95411. (707) 926-5312.

Steve Esrati, P.O. Box 20130, Shaker Heights, OH 44120-0130. (216) 561-9393.

Al Haake, Rt. 1 Box 65, Germantown, IL 62245. (618) 523-4716 (evenings and weekends).

H&H Stamps and Coins, P.O. Box 853, Addison, IL 60101. (312) 628-0273 (after 7 p.m.)

Deberah Helman, P.O. Box 110822, Anchorage, AK 99511.

Sam Houston Philatelics, 13310 Westheimer #150, Houston, TX 77077. (713) 493-6386.

Steve Ivy Philatelic Auctions, Inc., 311 Market St., Dallas, TX 75202-9990. (800) STAMPS-1.

Michael M. Karen, 1025 Rosedale Rd., Box 517, N. Woodmere, NY 11582.

Vern Kraus, 3513-107th St., Kenosha, WI 56142.

Stewart Kusnitz, 17 Second St., Fall River, MA 02720. (617) 674-3595.

William S. Langs, P.O. Box 851, Ansonia Station, NY 10023. (212) 724-7340.

Rick Lancaster, P.O. Box 428, Skowhegan, ME 04976. (207) 474-8276.

Joe R. Lane, 11135 Kitty Brook, Houston, TX 77071. (713) 774-3970.

Steve Levine, Linden Hill Station, P.O. Box 951, Flushing, NY 11354.

Tom Maeder, 1604 Bardale Ave., San Pedro, CA 90731. (213) 833-7937.

M&M/Southwest, 1344 W. University, Mesa AZ 85201. (602) 890-2924.

Frank Marrelli, 4617-23rd Ave., Kenosha, WI.

Miller's Mint, 313 E. Main St., Patchogue, NY 11722.

Gene Paquette, P.O. Box 6398, Scottsdale, AZ 85201. (602) 948-7429.

Dr. Robert Rabinowitz, 37 Stanwick Pl., Stamford, CT 06905. (203) 325-2312 (evenings and weekends).

Stamps in Motion, P.O. Box 490, Lewisburg, PA 17837.

Stamps 'n' Stuff, 2700 University, Suite 204, W Des Moines, IA 50265. (515) 224-1737.

Lee Warzala, 10 St. Mary's Court, Springfield, IL 62702. (217) 753-4045.

Terry L. Wike, 1169 Three Forks Dr. S., Westerville, OH 43081. (614) 895-374.

PNC exhibit takes a silver

Wayne Anmuth won a silver medal at the annual convention of the American First Day Cover Society at Virginia Beach, Va., with "Plate Number Coils Canceled First Day of Issue and on General Mail." His exhibit also won as the best topical and earned a silver from VAPEX.

Anmuth works for USPS as a writer and as an aide to the Benjamin Franklin stamp clubs.

Legal precancel use still runs into snags

Precanceled stamps cannot be used on First-Class mail according to the SCF (Sectional Center Facility) at Orlando, Fla. A similar ruling appears to have been made in Atlanta.

This ruling flies in the face of rules set out in *The Postal Bulletin* of July 10, 1986, which said:

Although precanceled stamps typically are used to pay postage on bulk mailings, they also may be used on single piece or limited size mailings as long as the proper amount of postage is paid. Bulk rate discounts do not apply under such usage.

The Postal Bulletin said such mail may not be deposited in collection boxes. It specifically permitted the mixing of precancels with tagged stamps. It specifically said precanceled stamps with such endorsements as "Presorted First Class" may be used in any mailing.

In December, George E. Kuhn of the Plate Number Coil Study Group sent a letter to fellow member Tom Maeder. The letter bore a 12.5¢ Pushcart precancel and a 10.1¢ Oil Wagon precancel. Under the stamps, Kuhn had indicated that he held Precancel Permit #1 but had neglected to write "First-Class Mail."

Kuhn handed the letter to a clerk at his post office in Leesburg, conforming to *Postal Bulletin* rules.

"She gave me and my envelope a blank look," Kuhn said, "obviously not knowing what to do with it, and I'm reasonably certain that all she did with it was to toss it into the normal mail flow to be canceled in Orlando. This is how 95% of the outgoing mail is done — very little receives a Leesburg cancellation."

When Kuhn handed the letter in, a counter clerk should have canceled all the precancels with a circular date stamp. This has two reasons:

- It indicates that the mailpiece has been examined by a postal clerk and that postage is sufficient.
- It defaces the reusable precancels in a cloud of red ink.

When the letter got to Orlando, it was rejected by the facer-canceler be-

REVENUE PROTECTION REVENUE PROTECTION REVENUE PROTECTION

Payment of Postage by Precanceled Stamps

There has been a significant increase in the use of precanceled stamps noted recently on the GMF [General Mail Facility] workroom floor. All employees should be informed of the need for caution in handling mail bearing precanceled stamps.

ONLY PERMIT HOLDERS MAY PURCHASE PRECANCELED STAMPS FOR OTHER THAN PHILATELIC PURPOSES.

Precanceled stamps bearing the legend "Presorted First-Class" can be used only for the First-Class Presort rate with postcards and mail of letter size, mailed as part of a qualifying (500 or more pieces) Presorted First-Class mailing.

Precanceled stamps of any other type cannot be used on First-Class mail. Third-Class Single Piece Rated mail may use precanceled stamps, however, mail bearing postage must be presented to weigh units, window units, or detached mail units of the post office where the permit is held. Deposit of mail bearing precanceled postage in collection boxes is not permitted and should be returned to the mailer for proper presentation.

Notice sent out by Orlando sectional center.

cause it bore no tagged stamps. As in many such cases, the letter next went to the Revenue Protection department.

A clerk in Orlando then applied a four-line cachet:

**RETURNED FOR POSTAGE
POSTAGE IS INVALID WHEN IT IS
NOT CANCELABLE, DEFACED, NOT
GENUINE, MUTILATED OR RE USED**

"He was right," said Kuhn, "in the sense that the envelope with precanceled stamps could legitimately be used only in the post office where the permit was held.— Leesburg."

When the letter came back, a hassle developed between postal officials in Leesburg and those in Orlando. Leesburg took Kuhn's side.

Kuhn said Leesburg officials were "impressed by my accumulation of precancels on envelopes from all over the country. I'd deliberately hung on to them for posterity, as I feel they'll ultimately be interesting items of postal history for generations to come, not realizing that they might be vital for now."

Orlando was sent proof of the acceptability of precancels, but fired back the notice reproduced above. What the *Postal Bulletin* authorized, Orlando forbade.

Later, a friend of Kuhn's mailed a letter containing a check. This letter was franked with a 4¢ Stagecoach and an 18¢ Washington Monument. The Monument stamp was not precancel-

celed.

Orlando sent this letter back, too with the "Returned for Postage" cachet.

The postmaster at Leesburg told Kuhn's friend that the 18¢ stamp was invalid. He said it was a special stamp only for use by bulk mailers of presorted first-class mail.

Kuhn asked the postmaster where it said this on the stamp and the postmaster later agreed it was OK.

Meanwhile, the friend's credit rating might have suffered because the check was late. Nice going, Orlando!

In Atlanta, the following took place. Peter C. Tukker of Douglasville, Ga., has a precancel permit. Here's his story:

"My wife is normally the one to use the precancel permit; she works close to the post office and by now is famous for her insistence that she can, indeed, use precancels on first-class mail because of our permit.

"Back in October she mailed our garbage bill and remittance to our garbage service, which is in another county.

"The letter was properly franked and stamped with the permit number; however, our post office somehow did not cancel the stamps.

"Wouldn't you know it; the letter came back, marked:

"RETURNED FOR POSTAGE."

In addition, a three-line cachet proclaimed:

in Florida, Georgia and Cleveland

STAMPS VOID WHEN COATED, COVERED, DEFACED OR REUSED. RETURN FOR POSTAGE.

That cover is illustrated on the right.

Steve Esrati had another precancel problem when he mailed out his last price list.

He had a roll of 12.5¢ precancels, but knew he needed a second roll for the mailing. Three area post offices could not supply 12.5¢ precancels. A snow storm made a trip downtown difficult.

Esrati used 7.4¢ precancels with 5.2¢ precancels on some; 8.3¢ precancels and 4.9¢ precancels on others.

On his certificate of mailing he explained he could not get 12.5s anywhere and the bags were accepted at the Shaker Heights post office.

The bulk-mail center at the Cleveland GMF [General Mail Facility] called to object:

"We'll let it go through this time because you couldn't get stamps, but don't let it happen again."

To end this review, take this example from St. Louis where George V.H. Godin received a letter bearing two unprecanceled 17.5¢ Racer stamps and one Hammarskjöld invert, all together making up the correct rate of 39 cents.

But the mailman insisted that Godin pay 35 cents postage due because the sender had neglected to put his return address on the envelope.

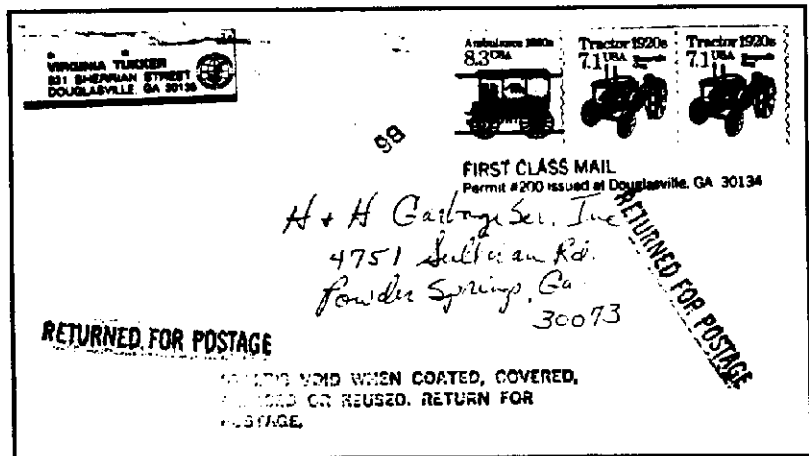
Godin took one look at the envelope, saw the word "VOID" hand-stamped across the two 17.5s, and took it to his post office, asking: "How do you explain this?"

The St. Louis post office said it had all happened at the point of mailing, Madison, Wis. Then they handed Godin a form to fill out and promptly refunded him his 35 cents.

USPS has a form for everything. But the fact is plain that there is confusion about the use of stamps.

It would seem that it's time for the Postal Service to get its act together.

The confusion is intolerable.



ATLANTA OBJECTS: A properly franked letter, bearing the correct mailer's cachet, is rejected by the GMF in Atlanta, Ga.

The hangup is that the *Domestic Mail Manual* has to be updated to make it absolutely clear what is and what is not required.

It is not apparently good enough to put out the information in *The Postal Bulletin*. It needs to be set in stone and only the DMM is the place to do it.

Further, as the publisher of *Stamp*

Collector points out on page 39 in this issue, there's even a lawsuit in the works by the American Stamp Dealers' Association, to make USPS clean up its act.

Meanwhile, *Linn's* reports that the Stamp Information Branch promises to clarify matters pertaining to the resale of precancels.

Stay tuned.

Precanceled Monument found with block tagging and Paper I

When the precanceled Monument from Plate 33333 turned up on paper usually used to print on the Cottrell presses (Paper I), it caused a small sensation among those PNC collectors who watch paper types.

But then the real news broke. The stamps have block tagging! Precanceled stamps are not supposed to be tagged. It defeats the whole idea of automated mail handling.

On the Cottrells, this was avoided easily because the presses had to be configured for either the precancel mat or the tagging mat. But on stamps where the service indicator is printed along with the stamps, this safeguard is lacking.

Wayne Youngblood, a member of the PNC Study Group, believes the

tagging was inadvertently applied along with the lacquer used on Monument stamps to prevent reuse. But so far, no facts are known.

IN an unrelated development, Study Group member Wolfgang Schön, who needs information on such things to prepare Lighthouse albums, noted that the traditional 1987 Christmas stamp has overall tagging, although it was printed on the Andreotti press, which usually provides block tagging.

He theorized that the stamps may have been printed on phosphored paper used for the Test coils, but USPS shot that down. An explanation from official sources has not come in time for this edition, but will be reported when it arrives.

How to fix the bug in the PNC numbers for computer use

For computer users, there are several things that should be noted about the PNC numbering system.

Because the entire "number" is a text field, sorting will be a surprise. The first digits will all be "1s." So the 10.1¢ stamp will follow the 1¢ stamp.

Similarly, in sorting the 22¢ Flag, the plates will be arranged weirdly, 1, 10, 11, 12 ... 19, 2, 20.

This should present no problem in hunting for a strip if a computer user indexes by catalog number. But it's a pain if one wants to print out a report in proper sequence.

There are two solutions. You can add a field for the face value. Sorting is then done first on face value, then on catalog number.

The other solution is neater. You add a place-keeping zero to single-digit numbers: 03.4T1, 02T02, 22F03. This will sort correctly.

You need this place keeper on plate numbers only for the 2¢, 18¢,

and 20¢ Transportations and the 20¢ and 22¢ Flags. All of these values have plate numbers that run into two digits.

Adding a place keeper looks like this:

02T02

That's Plate 2 of the Locomotive.

But that's only for use on the computer. The catalog number is still:

2T2

The order in which the "number" is built up is very important in sorting. In the case of the 17¢ Auto, for example, the computer will sort all the tagged values first, then all the "P" values for each plate number. All your Plate 5 precancels would appear in this order: Plate A, AB, B, BA, C.

If you desire to change the order, you need only rearrange the number. Thus, if you want all the Style A stamps grouped, you will have to put the "a" after the plate number instead of after the "P":

17T3aP-No, 17T4aP-No

For most collectors with computers, however, all this computer talk is unnecessary. To call up a stamp, you ask for it by number and voilà!

In most data bases, it would be a good idea to index on the catalog numbers to make finding and sorting faster.

Steve Esrati, who keeps several thousand PNC files in his computer — on other dealers' prices, on BEP reports, on his own inventory — does not need to sort the entire data base, because he usually needs to call up only all strips of the same plate number.

To do so, he asks the computer to find, for example, 5.2T3, and up come all the strips of that value, in all lengths and in all precancels gaps.

But if you print reports which you want in correct order, you should consider the bug fixes.

Happy hacking!

Sleaze factor pops up again on PNC market

Continued from Page 26

to journalists, these USPS employees are allowed to tell an inquiring dealer, "Oh yes, we shipped 1,000 boxes of those stamps to Lower Slobbovia Friday. They should get there tomorrow."

This explains why some dealers, for example, were able to find out how the Cincinnati post office received Plates 5 and 6 of the 4¢ Stagecoach off the Cottrell presses when not one other dealer in the country could find them.

All you do is call Washington. Then you buy the stamps at face and charge all the traffic will bear. When the other dealers finally find out where to get them, you can always drop your price. You've made yours.

There has been suspicion that this is going on for some time, starting with those stamps we originally thought were printed for the Disabled American Veterans near Cincinnati.

Later examples include precancels on Plate 2 of the 5.5¢ and 12.5¢ stamps. Some dealers had them on their price lists before the stamps had even been reported to have been sent to press, just on the basis of inside information from a friendly postal employee who can tell dealers what they need to know.

The 18¢ Flag Plate 7 saga is a sad commentary on what goes on. Early supplies were really found by the Slob from Lower Slobbovia. He offered them

to dealers at a fairly high price. They paid — and got stuck.

I reported the first find in my PNC column in *Linn's* and by the time the column appeared, a second find had been made and split among four large dealers.

These dealers, of course, thought they'd keep their find a little secret and continued to charge the then-current price, around \$75, for the strips.

When they read my column, they protested to *Linn's* that since I, too, was a dealer, I had a conflict of interest. My list that expired Dec. 15, 1986, offered \$125 for a VF strip. That was before I learned of the first find.

My next list, which expired March 15, 1987, offered VF strips of five at \$70. That was after I had learned of the first find and bought some at what I thought was a fair price, \$40.

As major *Linn's* advertisers, they got their wish. Dr. Bob Rabinowitz and I were fired from our respective columns on plate numbers and PNCs.

But now the price being offered in the back pages of *Linn's* for these "valuable" strips has dropped to \$150 for 10 strips, or \$15 each. Other dealers are giving them away free as a lure to customers. The Slob from Lower Slobbovia has triumphed.

The strips I bought for \$40 are now in my list at \$17.50.

Some conflict of interest!

Mint plate number singles and line pairs

Sales of mint singles have been brisk, to say the least. Collectors have been buying the common as well as the scarce numbers. I'm buying all common fine and better mint singles at double face and all precanceled mint singles at triple face. Naturally, more on better issues.

Collectors have again been buying the VF-XF grade, but sales of F-VF have gone well, too. I've decided to sell in three grades to give the collectors a better choice of material. Grading will be based upon traditional grading for U.S. stamps. The base price is for fine.

I plan on being a market leader in these as I have the plate number strips. You may find some dealers with some issues lower than mine, but you'll find my fast and friendly service second to none! Ask around. Word-of-mouth advertising has been my best asset in the PNC business.

Prices are for F (number clear, design not cut) Add 20% for VF Add 50% for XF Add 10% for Line pairs

1887 Omnibus	1e	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6	40	2259 Boat	10e	1	1.00	1891 Flag	18e	1 (F-VF only)	70.00
2221	1e	1	40	2130 Wagon	10.1e	1	1.00		2	2	16.00
1897a Train	2e	2, 3, 4, 6, 8, 10	40	2130a P/C	10.1e	1, 2	1.00		3 (F-VF only)	200.00	
				1904 Cab	10.9e	1, 2	12.00		4, 5	4.00	
2226	2e	1	40	1904a P/C		1, 2	12.00		6 (VF only) LP	1000.00	
1898 Handcar	3e	1, 2, 3, 4	75	1905 Caboose	11e	1	4.00	1895 Flag	20e	1	9.00
2123 Bus	3.4e	1, 2	75	1905a P/C	11e	1	3.00		2, 3, 5, 8, 9	4.00	
2123a P/C	3.4e	1, 2	75	2131 Stutz	11e	1, 2, 3, 4	1.00		10, 12, 13, 14	40.00	
1898a Coach	4e	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6	1.00	2132 Steamer	12e	1, 2	1.25		4, 6	5.00	
2228	4e	1	1.00	2132a P/C	12e	1, 2	1.50		11	5.00	
1898ab P/C	4e	3, 4, 5, 6	1.00	same, B Press	12e	1	2.75	1895a P/C	20e	14	5.00
2125 Buckboard	4.9e	3, 4	.80	2133 Cart	12.5e	1	2.00	2115 Flag	22e	1, 3, 6, 17	6.00
2125a P/C	4.9e	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6	1.20	2133a P/C	12.5e	1, 2	2.00		7, 11, 13, 14	5.00	
1899 Cycle	5e	1, 2, 3, 4	1.00	2134 Iceboat	14e	1, 2, 3, 4	1.00		17, 20	5.00	
2255 Wagon	5e	1	1.00	same, B Press	14e	2	2.00		2, 4, 5, 8, 10	3.00	
1900 Sleigh	5.2e	1, 2	70.00	1906 Auto	17e	1, 2, 3, 4, 5	2.00		12, 15, 16, 18	3.00	
		3, 5	5.50			6	16.00		19, 21, 22	4.00	
1900a P/C	5.2e	1, 2	9.00			7	4.00	2005 Consumer	20e	1, 2, 3, 4	4.00
		3, 4, 5, 6	1.00	1906a P/C	17e	1C, 2C	7.00	2112 Eagle "D"	22e	1, 2	4.00
2125 Truck	5.5e	1	1.00			3A, 4A	4.00	2149 Wash.	18e	1112, 3333	2.00
2125a P/C	5.5e	1, 2	1.00			5A, 6A	4.00	2149a P/C	18e	11121, 33333	2.00
1901 Bicycle	5.9e	3, 4	6.00			7A, 5B, 6B	9.00	2150 Letters	21.1e	11111, 11121	2.00
1901a P/C	5.9e	3, 4	10.00			3C, 4C	6.00	2150a P/C	21.1e	11111, 11121	2.00
		5, 6	20.00			5BA, 6BA	60.00	O 135 Official	20e	1	15.00
2126 Tricycle	6e	1	1.00			(LP)	17.00	O 139 Official	22e	1	25.00
2126a P/C	6e	1, 2	1.25	2135 Sled	17e	2	2.00				
2127 Tractor	7.1e	1	1.00	2264 Racer	17.5e	1	2.00				
2127a P/C	7.1e	1	1.00	2264a P/C	17.5e	1	2.00				
1902 Buggy	7.4e	2	6.00	1908 Surrey	18e	1, 3, 4, 7	10.00				
1902a P/C	7.4e	2	3.50			2, 5, 6, 8	2.00	18e Surrey	#1 Light ning bolt (F Only)	30.00	
2128 Ambulance	8.3e	1, 2	1.25			9, 10	2.00	18e Surreyn	#9, 10 Lightning bolt (F)	20.00	
2128a P/C	8.3e	1, 2	1.25			11, 12, 13, 14	4.00	11e Caboose	Brake shoe	20.00	
		3, 4	3.75			15, 16, 17, 18	4.00		Brake shoe (P/C)	20.00	
2231(B Press)	8.3e	1, 2	1.25	1908e Pumper	20e	1	10.00		Hoseline (P/C)	20.00	
2129 Truck	8.5e	1	1.00			2	80.00	20e Flag	Flying foot prints	15.00	
2129a P/C	8.5e	1	1.00			3, 4, 5, 9, 10	3.00	8.3e	Misplaced #1	10.00	
1903 Wagon	9.3e	1, 2	9.00			6, 13, 15, 16	4.00		Same, P/C	10.00	
		3, 4	14.00			11	25.00	20e Pumper	#2 Smoking "e"	100.00	
		5, 8	110.00			12, 14	60.00	4.9e Buckboard	Buggy whip #4	15.00	
1903a P/C	9.3e	1, 3	18.00			7, 8	30.00	4.9e Buckboard	Rain crack #6	75.00	
		2, 4	11.00	2136 Wagon	25e	1	2.00				
		5, 8	3.00								
		8	70.00								

Plate Varieties

18e Surrey	#1 Light ning bolt (F Only)	30.00
18e Surreyn	#9, 10 Lightning bolt (F)	20.00
11e Caboose	Brake shoe	20.00
	Brake shoe (P/C)	20.00
	Hoseline (P/C)	20.00
20e Flag	Flying foot prints	15.00
8.3e	Misplaced #1	10.00
	Same, P/C	10.00
20e Pumper	#2 Smoking "e"	100.00
4.9e Buckboard	Buggy whip #4	15.00
4.9e Buckboard	Rain crack #6	75.00

As always, satisfaction guaranteed with full 14-day return privileges. Stamps purchased from me guaranteed genuine. Mint postage accepted at face value in payment. Mint precancels accepted in strips of three or longer at 90% face. DISCOUNTS, TOO! 5% on \$75 orders and 10% above \$150. Visa and MasterCard welcome.

No discounts on orders paid with stamps.

Al Haake

RR1 Box 65

Germantown, IL 62245



BIA



(618) 523-4716 (Best after 5 p.m.)



APS

Index to Volumes I and II of *The Plate Number*

This index does not include regular features, such as the variety report, letters to the editor, "All the PNC News"

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Letters stamps					They're not DAV stamps	KLawrence	II	5	62
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Letters stamps					Plate 5, rain crack, numbers cut		II	6	69
Letters stamps					5¢ Motorcycle				
Letters stamps					Color variety		II	4	45
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Rare gap strip found as PS/5

Until a few weeks ago, it was believed that the line gap on Plates 3 and 5 of the 5.2¢ Sleigh existed only in strips of four. Until then, the only such gaps had all been stripped out as fours by Dennis Chamberlain.

But a new find of a partial roll has made a very few longer strips available. Also found was a totally new gap, 2L, on the same plates.

The find was by Diane Thompson, a Washington lawyer who takes the search for off-sale items seriously. Nice going!

In the last issue, Lee Warzala's offer of a 9.3¢ Mail Wagon, Plate 4, with Gap 3L, was commented on with surprise. It should not have been. The 1987 PNC catalog listed it under Plates 2 and 4, but it was omitted from the gap table.

Kim Cuniberti found a partial roll with this gap position and it is the only one known. More to the point, it is the only roll ever found that was printed by a Cottrell press on Type IIA paper. Most of the stamps on that roll are positioned low.

All the PNC news that fits we print

Meanwhile, Warzala has put out his new price list, the first from any PNC dealer in full, living color. The reproductions are just plain gorgeous. He's also advertising for mint singles, a field that Al Haake got into a few months ago.

Tom Maeder's new list is the first to illustrate most of the plate varieties he has for sale. The list, in ordinary black and white, is nevertheless a knockout.

If you want any of these dealers to send you their price lists, send them an envelope with 39 cents in postage.

All early copies of the 10.1¢ Oil Wagon off Plate 2 have had a line gap.

Dr. Robert Rabinowitz, writing in *Linn's*, said he called Don McDowell, director of the Stamps Division to inquire why there was never a 22¢ stamp in the Transportation Series.

The answer was that stamps for the first-class rate (the 18¢ Surrey and the 20¢ Fire Pumper) were needed to meet demand, but by the time the 22¢ rate came along,

press capacity had been increased enough to be able to produce all the coil stamps needed in the Flag Series.

In case you're wondering, the Postal Service disdains suggestions for stamp designs that come in from artists. Over-the-transom ideas hardly ever make it.

This fate befell *TPN* reader William R. McMurray, who proposed a Conestoga Wagon for the Transportation Series (see *TPN* for May 1987). His design lost, but the publicity it received may have helped bring about the new 3¢ Conestoga Wagon.

According to the Postal Service, McMurray was one of many who made that very popular suggestion.

More news from Cuniberti: There is no double gap on the 4.9¢ Buckboard in Style Ic (top bar broken). Type Iic is the only one with a break in the bottom line.

Work has started on the 1988 PNC catalog, due out at the end of May.

Index to TPN (cont.) Vol.

	Author	Vol	No	Pg
8.3¢ Ambulance				
Plate 1, low number	GVHGodin	I	4	25
Plate 1, double number	ACibulskas	II	1	6
9.3¢ Mail Wagon				
Plates 2-4, Gap 3L		II	3	26
Plates 1-4, never paired	KLawrence	II	5	49
10.9¢ Hansom Cab				
Plate 3, unprecanceled	KLawrence	I	2	13
Plates 3-4, numbers on top	DDNelson	II	4	35
Plate 2, low entry		II	5	62
11¢ Stutz				
Plate 3 full of varieties		II	5	55
12¢ Steamer				
Precancel on B Press		II	5	47
17¢ Electric Auto				
BA mats plated	TMaeder	II	6	65
18¢ Surrey				
Numbers printed	SEsrati	I	5	33
20¢ Pumper				
Numbers printed	SEsrati	I	1	4
Is it "Amoskeg" or "Amoskeag"?		II	3	26
Varieties (Not specific ones)				
Mat varieties	KLawrence	I	2	14
Constancy	KLawrence	I	4	27
Hash marks	KLawrence	I	4	27

Hash mark found on 8.3¢ Crack continuations

Yellow plate numbers
Blue cellophane helps

Author	Vol	No	Pg
SEsrati	II	5	50
KLawrence	II	4	35
		1	2
			12

2-88 in your mailing label?

The first issue of *TPN* was free, so many of you began your subscription with Issue 2. If your label now has "2-88" after your name, this is the last issue on your subscription. "3-88" indicates that Issue 3 will be your last.

TPN is not a money-making proposition. Please help keep it alive by sending in your \$10 renewal without a reminder. Add \$2.50 for first-class mail, if desired.

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

Plate and mat varieties — Part VIII

By A. S. Cibulskas

2¢ Locomotive

a. Dot over "U" variety. Plate 1, B Press. Constant. Position not given. (Haynes)

4.9¢ Buckboard

a. Thin break in top precancel line, Plates 5 and 6. Found on copies with a double gap in the bottom precancel line about 1.5mm right of gap. (Russow)

6¢ Tricycle

a. Line at 2R of tagged Plate 1. Possibly an inking variety or plate crack. Similar to "Flying hyphen" but twice as large from left wheel to right side of stamp. (Cohen)

8.5¢ Tow Truck

a. Dot at 1R between the top left of the front roof and the period of "8.5." Constant. Found only on tagged stamp to date. (Cibulskas)

10.1¢ Oil Wagon

a. Possible crack from the decimal point of the denomination down at a 45-degree angle for approximately 1mm. Position and constancy unknown. (Helman)
 b. "Waving W" at 15R of precanceled (probably Plate 1). Constant. (Bartilotta)

12.5¢ Pushcart

a. Doubling of the horizontal cap of the "5." Position and constancy unknown. (Helman)
 b. "Negative 12.5." Constant at 4L of Plate 1. Elongated mark centered to the left of the denomination where a minus sign would be. (Maves)

17¢ Electric Auto

a. Dot variety on precancel mat between "e" of Electric" and "S" of "USA". Plates 3 and 4, Type C. (Eastman)

Note: In reporting mat varieties, please do not use the basic stamp as

a reference point, since precancels shift in relation to the stamp. Please use reference points in the precancel. This would make the above a dot 6mm over top precancel line, 8mm above space between "P" and "R" of "PRESORTED."

b. Constant 1mm vertical line below the first "1" of the date at 2L of Plates 1 and 2. Inking variety. (Caponi)

20¢ Fire Pumper

a. Additional report of cracks on 1L of Plate 2 (originally reported on Page 59 of the September 1987 TPN). All are below the date and extend down and through "USA 20c" and into the ram (that's the device to equalize water pressure atop the pumper, we are told). (Tukker)

b. All sorts of very visible vertical marks on Plates 9 and 10, all very dramatic but verification is needed on constancy because they could be inking or wiping varieties. The ones seen, all from the same roll of 3,000, appear identical in shape and intensity. They are at the following positions:

Plate 9: 5R and 10R.

Plate 10: 11L, 3R, 7R and 12R (Adams)

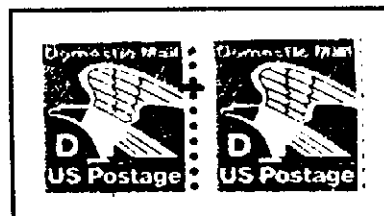
Editor's note: The author sent in a partial roll of these to be used for illustration in this issue's "Treasure Hunt." On magnified comparison between apparently identical marks it turns out that they are different, thus not constant and must be inking varieties. But because of their intensity, many more of these should be around.

c. "Smoking engine" plate crack.

Constant on Plate 11 at 1L. Runs upward for 4 to 5mm from top of ram (see item a. above to learn what a ram is). (Haake)

18¢ Monument

a. Pimple on Washington's lip at 2R now confirmed on precancel and tagged issues. Plate not stated. (Washburn)



22¢ "D" Eagle

a. Large green "Flying hyphen" (illustrated above) (about 0.25mm by 1.5mm) starting at far right of 1L on Plate 1 and going through the perfs into the left of 1R. Mark is about one-third of the way down. Constancy not confirmed. (Peszczynski)

22¢ Flag

a. Color variety on Plate 20. Blue plate number. Constant. Several finds. (Anon.)

Editor's note: This is probably an inking variety.

"D" (22¢) Official

a. Half-moon inking variety between the left perfs and the design at 1R in the middle of the stamp. Constant in roll of 100. (Marrelli)

Constant plate varieties

I am always seeking constant plate varieties, the kind that are illustrated in the PNC catalog. If you have Hoselines, Rain Cracks, Artillery Shells, Lightning Bolts, Sitting Ducks, etc., I pay half my sales price for VF, more for higher quality.

Tagged, precanceled Monument 33333, VF, PS/5 \$10.

Steve Esrati
 P.O. Box 20130

Shaker Heights, OH 44120 ☎ (216) 561-9393

It's moral to sell unused precancels

“ Although it is illegal for collectors and dealers to sell unused precancels, no regulation says it's illegal to buy them from the post office or a dealer for your collection. Nor, for that matter is it illegal for a dealer to buy them from the post office for collection purposes or from another person....

Writer James Kingman pointed out in his column "Precancel Ramblings" in the Jan. 23 issue of *Stamp Collector* that it is unlikely the Postal Service is going to attempt to enforce the regulations in a way that limits the buying and selling of unused precancels by dealers and collectors.

He almost certainly is correct.

The American Stamp Dealers' Association has its legal counsel working on the situation and hopefully will be successful in obtaining a change in regulations from the Postal Service.

Meanwhile, *Stamp Collector* will continue to accept ads from dealers who wish to sell unused precancels. It is legal for collectors to purchase them.

Dealers who also hold permits to use them on mail will need to decide whether they wish to risk their permits.

Under the circumstances, it seems to me that it is moral for dealers to sell unused precancels, even if it is not in technical compliance with postal regulations.

Jim Magruder
Editor and Publisher
Stamp Collector

Ken Lawrence reported on the front page of Linn's that a dangerous forgery of an 18¢ Flag on first-day cover has popped up. The ArtCraft cover is genuine and bears a single stamp.

What has been forged is the plate number "6."

Lawrence said the danger was in the cleverness of the production.

“ The color and texture of the counterfeit digit, and the width of the stroke, are remarkably accurate

Quotable Quotes about PNCs

reproductions of the genuine article.

“Viewed through a 30-power microscope with a very shallow depth of field, using low-angle raking cross-illumination, it is possible to demonstrate that the forged portion is not recess printed, because the numeral comes into focus in the same plane as the paper fibers rather than at the level of the raised ink image.”

“ New items [number at top or no-number strips] reported since the

last issue include the following: 14¢ B Press Iceboat...[and]...multiple recent finds...on the 3¢ Handcar....

Perhaps an editorial comment should be made. Since this item [the 3¢ Handcar] was issued almost five years ago, I find it difficult to believe that these have not been around all along. The key is, that up to relatively recent times, miscuts were considered by most to be something less than desirable and relegated to the postage pot.

Now, with the increased visibility of this subspecialty, they are actively searched for.

A.S. Cibulskas
Number at top Newsletter

PNC Treasure Hunt

By A. S. Cibulskas

To date we are batting .000 with this feature. There have been no reports to confirm the constancy of any of the items we have previously described.

Either we are being too esoteric in the material being described, or we have unfortunately chosen freaks rather than constant plate varieties.

Our original purpose here was to generate an additional means for ex-

changing information. Although we have received several favorable comments about this feature, we have yet to add to the bank of information.

This month we intended to show the dramatic strip of 20¢ Fire Pumpers described in the variety report, but they turned out to be freaks.

So we show a poor illustration [on Page 36] of the a "Flying hyphen" variety on the "D" stamp. Anyone seen anything like it?

Notice to dealers: The 1988 PNC Catalog is in the works and will be out in May. Advertising rates (despite an error in one of my mailings) are:

Back cover: \$150; inside back cover \$125.

Full page: \$100.

Half page (vertical or horizontal): \$60.

Quarter page (vertical or horizontal): \$35.

One-eighth page: \$20; one column-inch: \$12.50.

Space reservations needed by April 1.

Steve Esrati

P.O. Box 20130

Shaker Heights, OH 44120

Don't get so technical! Please explain what you mean

Maybe you could discuss the low-entry and high entry. I assume this is in reference to the over-all stamp design, or is it the precancel format?

Rick Sandford

Spring Valley, Calif.

In reply: It refers to the stamp. For a complete explanation, see "Information for Collectors" in the introduction to the Scott *Specialized Catalogue of United States Stamps*, which calls it a "transfer" because it results from the placement on the plate by the transfer roll. In this instance, the terms are synonymous.

In our case, a low entry is a stamp design placed too low in relation to other stamps in that row. On the 10.9¢ Hansom Cab, Plate 2, you can see this by placing a straight edge across "Hansom Cab." The stamp at 2L will appear about 2mm lower.

A high entry, obviously, is one in which the stamp is above the rest of the stamps in that row.

Letters to TPN

System wanted

Is there a systematic way to collect plate numbers? Specific numbers are not available from Washington and, as a resident of a rural community, I have no philatelic sales offices in my area. Subscribing to new issues services is fine, but this does not give access to strips to use for trading.

Edward Gould

Roscommon, Mich.

In reply: Dealers, who haunt post offices looking for numbers or have their agents do it for them, have the same problem. Some numbers are hard to find. There's no easy way out. It pays to examine offerings from dealers when the stamps are new where a modest premium is charged over face. As time passes and scarcity

becomes known, prices start to reflect rarity, not face value.

Just look at 22¢ Flag, Plates 1 and 3. They're now selling above \$10. Many dealers sold them near \$3.50 a strip of five when new. That was a markup from \$1.10 face.

Those dealers also had to get rid of 47 stamps without numbers, usually below face.

If they sold the waste at 90%, they got \$9.31. That makes total income of \$12.31 for 52 stamps. The strip had cost \$11.44 if the dealer could get it at face (not if he had to pay an agent).

Wow, the dealer sure overcharged when he set the price at \$3.50. Why he made all of \$1.37 on the deal — if he could sell the waste.

If he paid an agent, usually at twice face, then the agent had to get rid of the waste and the dealer's profit was \$1.30 per PS/5.