

## Self-adhesive coil stamps exist with many differing die cut varieties:

In order to separate individual self-adhesive stamps from the coil roll, it is necessary to cut the stamps apart without cutting the backing paper on which they are placed. This is accomplished using a cutting die located in the finishing equipment. The design of the die varies with the producer of the stamps, with some producers using multiple die designs.

**Die varieties are the modern day equivalent of perforation varieties.** As with perforation varieties, most are quite common, but some are extremely rare, with only a few examples known for a given plate numbered coil issue.

The task of distinguishing between the various dies ranges from simple to complex. The U.S.P.S. determined that self-adhesive stamps should appear similar to traditional stamps having perforations, so cutting dies were constructed to produce a serpentine shape, resulting in "peaks" and "valleys" on each side of a coil stamp. The most obvious distinction is the count of those peaks and valleys. Descriptive shortcuts have been developed to identify the dies. One may see the descriptor such as "11/10 PP/VV" used. This means that there are 11 peaks on the left side of the stamp and 10 on the right side. The left side has a peak at the top of the stamp and at the bottom, and the right side a valley at top and bottom. Some die varieties of the 32¢ Flag Over Porch series produced by the Bureau of Engraving and Printing are shown below:



11/10 PP/VV



10/10 VP/PV



12/12 VP/PV



9/10 VV/PP

Other manufacturers may use their own die designs. Though similar in appearance, in that most employ the familiar serpentine shape, the peak and valley count is usually different. More subtle differences also occur, and add more thrills to the chase. These may include:



9/10 VV/PP from  
Banknote Corp. of America



13/12 PP/VV from  
Stamp Venturers



15/15 PP/PP from  
Sennett Security Printers



4-Sided Serpentine Die  
from Ashton Potter

When the stamp is incorrectly aligned with respect to finishing equipment, some interesting die cut conditions can occur. Given whimsical names by discoverers, the anomalies, though not rare, can form an interesting collecting sideline. The following examples are encountered on issues produced by Avery Dennison and Sennett Security Printers:



"Bell" @ bottom right  
(Avery Dennison)



"Knoll" @ bottom left  
(Avery Dennison)



"Thimble" @ bottom right  
(Avery Dennison)



"Cobra" @ bottom right  
(Sennett Security Printers)

The observed preferences of the mailing public for self-adhesive stamps (both for 1st class usage as well as special-rate postage) dictates that the majority of the stamps of the future will be die cut. Knowledge of the die cut varieties (and the rarities) will benefit the collector of United States stamps.