

How one stamp can become a specialty: the Flag Over Porch issue:

The 32¢ Flag Over Porch (FOP) basic stamp design was truly a “workhorse”, serving as the basis for seven different coil stamp issues, as well as booklet and sheet varieties. Issued during 1995, 1996 and 1997, they remained in use until the 1st class rate increased to 33¢ in 1999.

The coils were manufactured by the Bureau of Engraving & Printing (BEP), as well as three private manufacturers:



BEP version



3M version



Avery Dennison version



Stamp Venturers version

The period of use for these issues saw the popularity (and, therefore, production) of self-adhesive stamps soar. Much experimentation was accomplished with the various FOP self-adhesive issues.

3M, Stamp Venturers and Avery Dennison produced self-adhesives under contract, with 3M producing a linerless version.

The BEP produced by far the largest quantity of FOP coil stamps. Traditional gummed stamps (issued 1995) were found having 14 different plate numbers. The innovative self-adhesives (issued 1996) were found in coils of 100 having 32 different plate numbers, each having one to five distinct die varieties.

The 1997 version in larger coils had one plate number with two distinct die varieties:



1995 BEP Issue



1996 BEP Issue



1997 BEP Issue

Some self-adhesive Flag Over Porch plate/die combinations are **extremely rare**. At this time there are three varieties that have **never been found in mint condition**, each of which have fewer than 25 used examples known in collector hands.

They are Pl# 66666 with 10/11 VV/PP die, Pl# 66666 with 12/11 PP/VV die, and Pl# 88888 with 12/11 PP/VV die.

Other rare combinations exist; the Pl# 78777 10/10 PV/VP die has only 4 **known mint plate strips of 5**, and Pl# 13231A with 10/10 VP/PV die has 8 **known mint plate strips of 5** and 6 known mint plate singles.

A used example (58 known copies; 44 used singles and 14 on cover) of this rare plate/die combination is shown below:



Extremely Rare FOP Plate # 13231A 10/10 VP/PV

The Flag Over Porch issues comprise the most extensive combination of PNC issues of a single basic design to date. There are well **over 100 collectable varieties** to be found among the products of the various printers. Specialists continue to make new discoveries, having not encountered the rare BEP-issued #88888 11/12 VV/PP variety (1996 issue) until early 2003.

It is entirely possible that there are still more varieties yet unknown.