



U.S. Philatelic Classics Society

Volume: 49 Number: 4 Year: 1997 Chronicle: 176

Article: The Knapp Shift Revisited

Author(s): Philip T. Wall

THE CHRONICLE November 1997 (No. 176)

The Chronicle of the U.S. Classic Postal Issues

November 1997

Volume 49, No. 4

Whole No. 176

Table Of Contents

items marked with * cannot be viewed as an individual PDF document

[Click here to view the entire Volume: 49 No: 4 Chronicle: 176](#)

Starting Page

Front Cover (1 page)	Front Cover
Display Advertisement (1 page) Advertiser: Jack E. Molesworth, Inc.	Inside Front Cover
Display Advertisement (1 page) Advertiser: Robert A. Siegel Auction Galleries, Inc.	217
Display Advertisement (1 page) Advertiser: Shreves Philatelic Galleries, Inc.	218
Masthead (1 page)	219
Display Advertisement (1 page) Advertiser: Victor B. Krievins	220
Table of Contents (1 page)	221
Display Advertisement (1 page) Advertiser: Regency Stamps, Ltd.	222
Guest Privilege	
A Preliminary Census of Earliest Dates and Largest Multiples on Scott 1-245 (9 pages) <i>Eliot A. Landau</i>	223
Display Advertisement (1 page) Advertiser: Jesse L. Coburn	231
Guest Privilege	
Robbery of Mail in the Classic Period (11 pages) <i>James W. Milgram M.D.</i>	232
Display Advertisement (1 page) Advertiser: U.S. Cancellation Club	243
Display Advertisement (1 page) Advertiser: Steven Hines	243
Display Advertisement (1 page) Advertiser: USPS Publications Committee	243
Carriers and Independent Mails	
Collecting Carriers and Locals in the 1860s - George Hussey and His Reprints and Imitations (8 pages) <i>Herbert A. Trenchard</i>	244
Display Advertisement (2 pages) Advertiser: Andrew Levitt	252
Carriers and Independent Mails	
Census: Covers Carried by Private Mail Posts in Baltimore, Maryland (An Update) (2 pages) <i>Steven M. Roth</i>	254
Display Advertisement (1 page) Advertiser: U.S. Philatelic Classic Society	255
Display Advertisement (1 page) Advertiser: Guido Craveri	256
1847 Period	
The Knapp Shift-U.S. Philately's Great Controversy (3 pages) <i>Wade E. Saadi</i>	257
The Knapp Shift Revisited (4 pages) <i>Phillip T. Wall</i>	259
Plating the 5¢ 1847 (1 page) <i>Malcolm L. Brown</i>	262
Display Advertisement (1 page) Advertiser: Philatelic Literature U.S. Stamps Postal History	263
Display Advertisement (1 page) Advertiser: Brad Sheff	264
1851-61 Period	
Extended Date for the Bold Single - Bar Integral Postmark of New York City (2 pages) <i>Hubert C. Skinner, James A. Allen</i>	265
1861-1869 Period	
Fradulent Use of a Double Bisect Grilled Stamp (3 pages) <i>Richard B. Graham</i>	267
Review: "The United States 1¢ Franklin 1861-1867" (2 pages) <i>Michael C. McClung</i>	270
Society Information (1 page) Advertiser: U.S.P.C.S.	271
Society Information (1 page) Advertiser: U.S.P.C.S.	271
Display Advertisement (1 page) Advertiser: Spink	272
S.C.R.A.P.	
10¢ 1869 to France (2 pages) <i>Jeffrey M. Forster</i>	273
Display Advertisement (1 page) Advertiser: Taylor Made Company	274
Officials	
24¢ Interior Double Impression (2 pages) <i>Alan C. Campbell</i>	275

24¢ Justice Short Transfer (3 pages) <i>Alan C. Campbell</i>	276
Display Advertisement (1 page) Advertiser: Charles G. Firby The Cover Corner	279
Answer to Problem Cover in Issue 173 (2 pages) <i>Ray W. Carlin, Scott Gallagher</i>	280
Additional Answer to Problem Cover in Issue 174 (1 page) <i>Ray W. Carlin, Scott Gallagher</i>	281
Answers to Problem Covers in Issue 175 (5 pages) <i>Ray W. Carlin, Scott Gallagher</i>	281
Problem Covers for This Issue (3 pages) <i>Ray W. Carlin, Scott Gallagher</i>	285
Display Advertisement (1 page) Advertiser: Leonard H. Hartmann	287
Index to Advertisers (1 page)	288
Classified (1 page)	288
Display Advertisement (1 page) Advertiser: Ivy & Mader Philatelic Auctions, Inc.	Inside Back Cover
Display Advertisement (1 page) Advertiser: Raymond H. Weill Co	Back Cover

Upon viewing the stamp at the auction house the day before the sale, I was unable to ascertain if the doubled lines were legitimate. There was not a strong enough light source for the higher magnifications required to scrutinize the doubling. I was permitted to take the stamp overnight to continue the inspection.

Use of 50 watt narrow-beam quartz lighting with a stereo microscope proved to be telling. All of the lines of the shift were expertly drawn in with a viscous ink that emulated engraved lines. The color of some of the lines was just dissimilar enough to differentiate them from those on the actual stamp. When compared to real examples of the known 10¢ double transfers, it was made all the more obvious. Furthermore, all of the attributes supposed to be in position 23L were still there; an impossibility if there had been a re-entry. To help make the counterfeit more believable, the forger had painted red canceling ink over parts of the forged lines, making it appear the lines were there before the stamp had been used.

The skill necessary to accomplish this forgery leads me to presume that only a person with the adroitness of an engraver could have drawn these lines. Someone took a 10¢ 1847, from position 23L, possibly canceled, then drew in lines to simulate a double transfer and added red ink over parts of the drawn in lines. In doing this, they created one of philately's greatest forgeries. □

THE KNAPP SHIFT REVISITED

PHILIP T. WALL

(Editor's Note: Mr. Wall wrote the following evaluation of the Knapp Shift prior to the 1996 Siegel sale. It's an exceptional analysis, which employs different methodologies than those used in the preceding article to reach the same conclusion. The two independently written articles complement each other, and should be read in conjunction.)

Lester G. Brookman once wrote that the Knapp Shift is the most interesting single 10¢ stamp in existence.¹ With this I wholeheartedly concur. At one time in the late 1970s I owned over 200 off-cover copies of Scott No. 2, and in addition I have examined over the years another 150-200 copies. None of these 350-400 stamps has for me the fascinating intrigue of the Knapp Shift.

This controversial stamp entered the philatelic world in 1935 in a very unobtrusive manner, having been part of a stuck-down collection of U.S. stamps purchased by a stamp dealer located on New York's Madison Avenue.² When the dealer, Paul Albertis, worked up the collection for stock he noticed the 10¢ 1847 with the big shift and set it aside to show to his regular visitor and customer, Edward S. Knapp, a wealthy New Yorker. Knapp was one of this country's most avid collectors in the 1930s and when he saw this unusual stamp he quickly purchased it for around \$100.

A second copy of the 10¢ 1847 stamp with the same characteristics as the Knapp Shift has never been found. It is unique.

Knapp was eager to publicize his new prize and proudly showed it to the leading collectors and dealers of his era. Most of these viewers quickly pronounced it as a new double transfer, but when Elliott Perry and Frank R. Sweet were independently able to plate the stamp as coming from position 23 on the left pane a controversy erupted like nothing seen before or since in American philately.³

¹Lester G. Brookman, *The United States Postage Stamps of the 19th Century*, Vol. I (New York: H.L. Lindquist Publications, Inc., 1966), p. 68.

²Creighton C. Hart, "More About the 'Knapp Shift'," *The Chronicle of the U.S. Classic Postal Issues*, Vol. 24, No. 1 (Whole No. 73), p. 11.

³Excerpt from a two volume collection of letters written to Edward S. Knapp, 1935 - 1937.

Stanley B. Ashbrook was the most widely-recognized authority to consider the stamp as genuine. Based on copies of letters to Knapp that I have recently been privileged to read, Ashbrook must have spent at least 1,000 hours in studying the stamp and in correspondence with Knapp and Perry and possibly with other philatelists.⁴ In return, Ashbrook received at least one check of an undetermined amount from Knapp.⁵

After he correctly plated the stamp as 23L, Frank R. Sweet pronounced the doubling to be a “paint job.”⁶ Sweet owned almost 500 10¢ 1847 stamps, including the ex-Gibson complete plate reconstruction. He was the most experienced 10¢ 1847 plater in America except for Perry and his assistant John Sherrod. Sweet died about a year later without changing his view on the Knapp Shift. H.R. Harmer, the English auctioneer, also said the “shift” was a fake made by painting in the extra lines.⁷

At first, Elliott Perry said the stamp was a fake, but after conferring with officials of the American Bank Note Company changed his position to say that the “shift” was due to an accident of printing—an offset from a slip sheet.⁸ Many years later, Lester Brookman adopted the offset theory.⁹

Later in 1939, Knapp employed the Philatelic Research Laboratories, Inc., owned by the flamboyant dealer known as Y. Souren, to determine the genuineness of the shifted lines. In a 22-page report replete with the most extensive series of photographs ever made of any postage stamp, the laboratory pronounced the shift as a genuine double transfer. It is not known how much Knapp paid for this opinion.¹⁰

Knapp died about a year later and the big shift came up for auction in the settlement of the Knapp estate. On May 10, 1941 it realized \$1,100 as lot 2248 in part one of the Knapp Collection sold by the Philatelic Research Laboratories, Inc.

As far as I have been able to determine, this stamp next appeared at auction in the 203rd Robert A. Siegel sale held October 7, 1957. As lot 218 in that sale it realized only \$340, or approximately one-third what it sold for in 1941.

The Knapp Shift was apparently submitted to the Philatelic Foundation in 1951 and was definitely submitted to the PF in 1996. The 1996 Foundation opinion said “it is a genuine stamp with a small thin spot but it is not a genuine shift.” So far so good, but this opinion, as I interpret its wording, does not tell us if the extensive extra lines, dots, etc., are (1) a paint job, (2) an offset from a slip sheet, or (3) something entirely different.

When I learned the Knapp Shift would appear at auction in Siegel Sale 775, to be held on April 23, 1996, I made arrangements to examine the stamp.

The shift arrived accompanied by its 1996 PFC, and two volumes of letters written to Knapp between the fall of 1935 and the spring of 1937, primarily by Ashbrook, with some letters by Perry and a few by other individuals.

In anticipation of the arrival of the Knapp Shift I had assembled my working tools; including a 7X magnifier with a built-in 20mm scale, microscope with built-in light and interchangeable 15X and 30X lens, and an ultraviolet light with both short wave and long wave rays.

⁴*Ibid.*

⁵*Ibid.*

⁶*Ibid.*

⁷Brookman, p. 69.

⁸Letters to Knapp, 1935-37; Brookman, p. 69; Elliott Perry, *Pat Paragraphs*, No. 42 (January 1942) [p. 62 in the Turner/Stanton compiled edition of 1981], Creighton C. Hart, “The ‘Knapp Shift’ as Told to Me by Elliott Perry,” *Chronicle*, Vol. 23, No. 3 (Whole No. 71)(August 1971), p. 118.

⁹Brookman, p. 68.

¹⁰Philatelic Research Laboratories, Inc., *Philately of Tomorrow*, Vol. I, No. 2 (1939). This report was repeated verbatim in Vol. I, No. 3.

Before examining the stamp for the possible source of the extra lines I wanted to ascertain that the stamp was from position 23L—the third stamp on the third row of the left pane. Using Perry's description in the *Collectors Club Philatelist*¹¹ and the millimeter scale on my 7X magnifier I was able to verify the position on the plate as 23L.

My next task was to determine if the red grid cancels on the stamp are over or beneath the extra lines. Some very knowledgeable philatelists tell me this cannot be ascertained—and this may be the case in some situations—but I am completely satisfied that the grid cancels on the Knapp Shift are on top of the additional lines found on the stamp. Had the cancels been found to be beneath the additional lines then the shift would have to be a "paint job."

Then I began to study the extra lines found in "POST OFFICE" and in "US" since these areas seem to have been the focal point of most if not all of the previous studies. At first the lines of the shift appeared to be constant—upward and ever so slightly to the right. The "U" and the "S" of "US" look good as do the letters of "POST," with a couple of minor exceptions which are no cause for undue alarm. The letters of "OFFICE" begin correctly. The "O" and first "F" appear to be in alignment, but then I begin to have problems. Why is there not a substantial upward shift of the second "F" as in the letters "T" and "O" and the first "F"? The curve in the shift of the letter "I" is too gradual and the shift in the letter "C" is too far to the right. In addition, the extra lines near the base of the letters "FFI" and "E" become more and more slanted as you read to the right.

At this point I shifted my focus to the doubling near the bottom of the stamp. At first all of the lines in the shift seemed to be directly upward from the original lines. Then I noticed that the extra line in the right arm of the left "X" is vertical whereas this same line in the right "X" is diagonal. The doubling of the right frame line near the bottom shows a shift to the right rather than upward. In addition this extra line is closer to the original frame line at the top than it is at the bottom.

At this point I felt that the preponderance of the evidence indicated the stamp had an excellent "paint job." Yet at the same time I was of the opinion this evidence was not conclusive enough to condemn the stamp. Therefore I decided to conduct two tests on this stamp that had apparently never been done before.

The first of these involved careful examination of the three dots on the Knapp Shift that do not appear on the normal position 23L stamp. The first of these is outside the left frame line, about 2mm above the lower left corner. The dot is blacker and higher and unlike any dot I have ever seen on a 10¢ 1847 stamp. A numismatist would refer to this dot as a "high relief" dot. Then I moved to the dot that I will refer to as a black mole on Washington's nose. The dot is entirely in keeping with many extraneous dots of black color found scattered about on the plate of 200 subjects. The last dot or spur of color is found inside the right frame line, approximately 2mm below the upper right corner of the stamp. One look at this mark of color under 30X magnification gave me the philatelic shock of my life. The ink is not black, it is not even grayish, but is a distinctive brown or brownish color. This was conclusive evidence the Knapp Shift is a "paint job." Nevertheless I decided to go ahead with my second test.

It is hard to believe but apparently no one has ever examined this stamp under an ultraviolet light—or if they have done this test, their findings have never appeared in print. I knew full well I would find that a manuscript cancel had been removed. The only question was where it had been on the stamp. As soon as I turned on the long wave ray of my

¹¹Elliott Perry, "Plating the 10c 1847," *Collectors Club Philatelist*, Vol. 5, No. 1 (January 1926), p. 15.

Duo-Lite the location of the removed pen cancel immediately came into view. One arm of the rough "X" pen cancel was a slightly flattened oval beginning at the bottom sheet margin and extending upward between the legs of the left "X," through the "X," across the colorless oval and then curving to the right through Washington's cloak and just under his chin. At that point the removed cancel drops slightly lower as it crosses the background and ends near the right edge of the design. The crossing line is much shorter. It begins between the arms of the left "X," curving downward and to the right, and comes just under the base of the "TEN."

The red grids are entirely bogus and cover the removed pen cancels at the appropriate places. The vertical red mark at the bottom left, extending from the sheet margin through the legs of the left "X," is added to help hide the removed pen cancel. There is a second red cancel along much of the left margin that is apparently a part of the original cancel.

Thus ends the saga of the Knapp Shift. Who made it? I have no idea but in all probability the artist is no longer living. Why was it painted? Again we do not know but apparently monetary gain was not the objective of the painter. While the \$100 purchase price represented a sizable sum in the mid-1930s, the artist probably received considerably less than the price Knapp paid for the shift. When was it made? Probably in the mid-1930s, but it could have been produced at a much earlier date.

Since brown ink was used to produce the dot or spur at the upper right, I cannot help but believe this excellent paint job was done to hoodwink the so-called experts of classical U.S. philately. Who was the intended target? It could have been Ashbrook or Perry if done in the '30s or even in the '20s. The target may have been Dr. Chase or someone else if the painting was done in the 'teens or earlier.

It is a most fascinating stamp, but unfortunately all the extra lines, dots, etc., have been painted in by a skilled artist who then added bogus red cancels. □

PLATING THE 5¢ 1847 MALCOLM L. BROWN

The August 1997 issue of *The Chronicle* contained an article on "Some Observations on the Importance—or Lack Thereof—of Plating the Five Cent Stamp of 1847," by Jerome S. Wagshal. In a footnote to that article Mr. Wagshal offered thanks to me, along with several others, for conducting a pre-publication review. Further, I did give Mr. Wagshal permission to state that I had reviewed the article prior to publication.

However, as stated by Mr. Wagshal, the views expressed in his article are strictly his. I do not share the same views or the opinions expressed in the article.

Firstly, the significance of the newly discovered proof pane of the Five Cent 1847 is yet to be determined. One cannot, nor should not, prejudge the ultimate significance of the find.

Secondly, the significance of extending the plating of the Five Cent 1847 may not be best judged contemporaneously with its discovery. The future will determine its significance.

The lack of general use of plate positions of the Ten Cent 1847, or any increase or lack of increase in market value when plate positions are identified, does not in any way detract from the significance of the original plating work done by Chase, Perry, Ashbrook, Neinken, *et al.* on the early U.S. stamps. The fact that as a result of their efforts a single stamp CAN be plated speaks volumes concerning significance.

So it may be with the Five Cent 1847 some day. Whether the information ultimately obtained from the proof pane contributes to that end is yet to be determined. □