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Article: Three Cent 1857 Perforated Stamps (S5) from Plate 15 (Scott No. 26)

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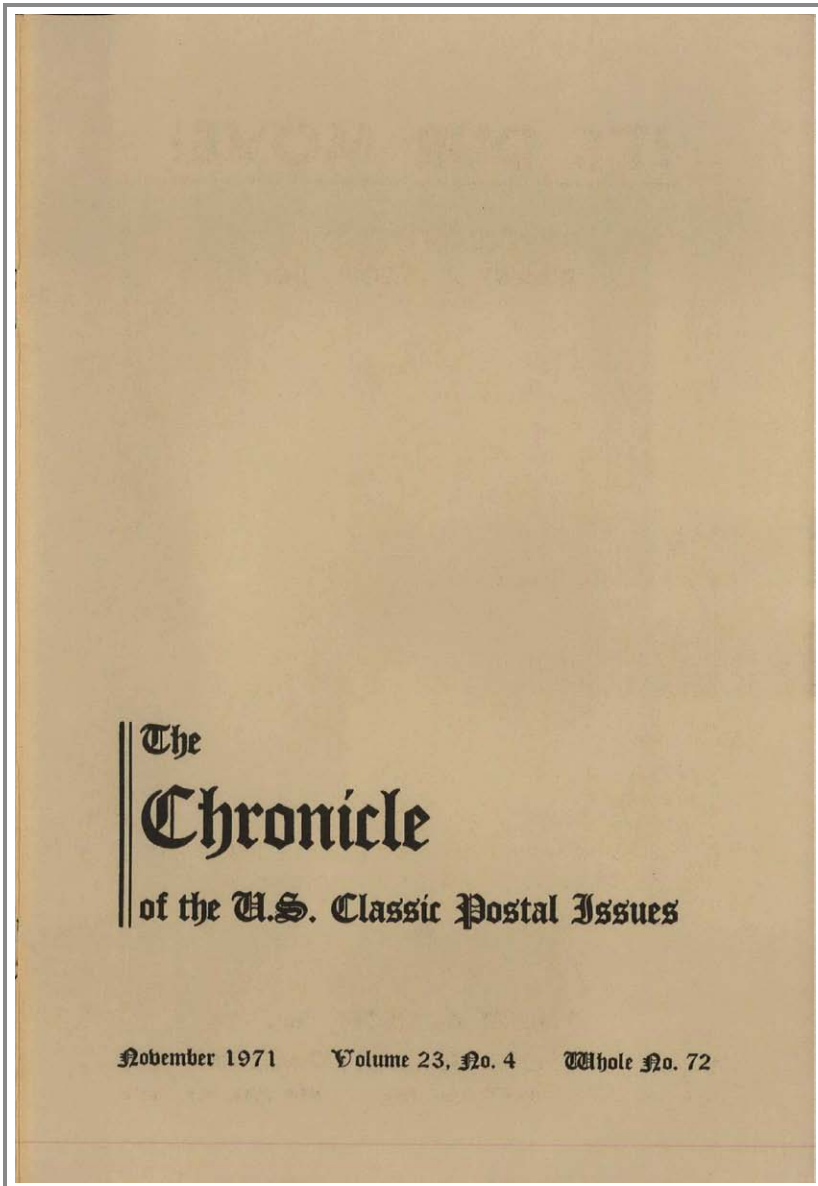


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THE 1851-'60 PERIOD

THOMAS J. ALEXANDER, Editor
DAVID T. BEALS III, Assoc. Editor

STAMP CODE

In the first issue of *The Chronicle* (1:1-2) a "code" or shorthand method of notation was adopted for the various types of the 3c 1851-61 stamp in the interests of conserving space. Later, when *The Chronicle* was first expanded to include the entire issue, the code was expanded to cover the other denominations. The 3c designations have taken root in our literature, while the others have fallen into disuse. Since many of our members do not have the early issues of *The Chronicle*, and since the new *Index* will include references to articles that may contain these code designations, the Index Committee has asked that they be reprinted in this issue.

In the following list, the code symbol is at the left of the hyphen, and the equivalent *Scott's U. S. Specialized Catalogue* number or other designation is at the right of the hyphen.

ONE CENT: R1-5; R2-6a; R3-6a (less distinct); R4-7 (Plates 1 Early and 2); R5-84 (Plate 1 Early); R6-8 (99R2) R7-7 (Plate 3); R8-6; R9-Plate 4, Type IC; R10-7 (Plate 4); R11-8 (Plate 4); R12-8A (Plate 4); R13-9; R14-4R1^L. If any of the preceding are perforated, affix the word "perf." R15-24; R16-Ty. VA (right 14 rows of Plate 5); R17-20 (Ty. II, Plates 11 and 12); R18-22; R19-18.

THREE CENTS: S1-10; S2-11 (including Plate 1 Late orange brown); S3-25; S4-26A; S5-26. S1, S2 and S3 Types are: Type I—recut vertical inner lines at right and left; Type IA—inner line recut only at left; Type IB—inner line recut only at right; Type IC—no recut inner lines.

FIVE CENTS: V1-12; V2-27; V3-28; V4-28A; V5-29; V6-30; V7-30A.

TEN CENTS: X1-13; X2-14; X3-15; X4-16; X5-31; X6-32; X7-33; X8-34; X9-35 (one pearl); X10-35 (2 or 3 pearls).

TWELVE CENTS: T1-17; T2-36 (Plate 1); T3-36 (Plate 3).

The 24c, 30c and 90c stamps are designated as such.

THREE CENT 1857 PERFORATED STAMPS (S5) FROM PLATE 15 (SCOTT NO. 26)

THOMAS J. ALEXANDER, R. A. 562

From the point of view of the plating specialist, Plate 15 is one of the most interesting plates produced by the firm of Toppan, Carpenter & Co. Unlike most of the Type II plates, it abounds in recuts, double, triple, and split frame lines and plate flaws. In consequence, many stamps from it may be readily plated.

Dr. Carroll Chase reported in our *Perfex* book (issued in 1957) that he had plated 67 copies in the left pane and 90 in the right. These, with copies he later plated, were acquired by Mr. Tracy W. Simpson, who, with the aid of photos of missing positions supplied by others, added considerably to the list. So, including some positions that the author was fortunate to acquire, the plating is 95 per cent complete.

This article endeavors to bring together our present knowledge concerning the plate, to illustrate its major varieties, and to solicit the aid of our membership in filling in the gaps.

Period of Use

The earliest reported date of use is October 30, 1857. Stamps were printed from this plate well into 1860 (according to Dr. Chase), but probably not to the end of our period, as evidenced by there being no remainders in the hands of

Southern postmasters at the end of the Civil War. Late uses show considerable wear, leading us to believe that this was the reason it was eventually retired. Because it was used for such a long period of time, stamps from Plate 15 are relatively common.

The Reliefs

The new six relief transfer roll which was used to produce all Type II plates was used to enter this plate. It is in the usual form, consisting of two panes of 100 stamps each, divided by a center line. The regular relief entry was used, relief A entering the top row, B the second row, C the third and seventh rows, D the fourth and eighth rows, E the fifth and ninth rows, and F the sixth and tenth rows.*

*Dr. Chase's article in the *Perfex* book described these reliefs and *Chronicle* Issue 9 (still available) shows four-time enlargements with accented points of identification. The collector should prepare his own vertical "strip" showing all six reliefs. For that purpose, any S4 or S5 stamps may be used, regardless of plate.

Peculiarities of the Plate

Plate 15 stamps generally are quite unlike those produced by other plates. It is suspected that conditions during laydown were such that the plate maker felt it necessary to add many recut vertical side lines and doublings to improve its appearance. Also, the extra-strong lines of the folds of Washington's toga that appear in many positions require explanation. The following is the author's hypothesis. While it appears to account for the odd appearance of many of the stamps, it is at this point a theory only.

Some areas of the plate in its "softened" state to receive the relief entries and recutting were apparently much harder than normal. As a result, greater than normal mechanical pressure was applied to the transfer roll in order to obtain satisfactory relief entries. This created two peculiarities on the plate when relatively softer areas were encountered by the transfer roll. First, the vertical frame lines on the reliefs, which rarely if ever transferred to a plate, transferred as fairly clean (although faint) lines on many positions. Second, the unusual pressure created the so-called "recut bust" positions. These positions, in early printings, show unusually strong lines in the folds of Washington's toga. However, they differ in no respect from the lines on the die and hence are merely the result in increased pressure on the transfer roll. Many Plate 15 stamps show this "recut bust", but the most prominent examples are 54, 56, 57, 58, 59 and 96L15,



Fig. 1. 10R15, showing the weak entry at the upper right corner of the stamp as well as the complete absence of the right frame line.



Fig. 3. 87R15, the only double transfer on the plate.



Fig. 2. Both imprints and plate numbers.

from which it appears that the plate was softer under the sixth row than elsewhere, as well as under parts of the bottom row.

Whereas the most prominent "soft" spots on the plate were under the left pane, the right edge of the right pane must have been particularly "hard" and difficult to enter. Even in the earliest impressions, the right frame lines of the 10th vertical row of this pane are quite faint and within a very short time most of them disappeared. 10R is an outstanding example of the unevenness of the hardness of the plate during entry. Early impressions from this position appear to be normal, but as the plate wore slightly, the entire upper right quarter of the stamp began to fade out, as shown by Figure 1. This phenomenon is so consistent that it is not believed to be the result of dry paper (a condition along the edges of certain sheets that produces similar effects).

The hardness of the plate in its "softened" condition also gave the engraver great difficulty in recutting the vertical frame lines. This resulted in several slips of the engraver's tool as well as many faint frame lines, since the engraver used no mechanical device to increase pressure on his engraving tool as was done with the relief roller.

All of the stamps produced by Plate 15 are Type II with continuous frame lines drawn from the top of the top row stamps to the bottom of the bottom row. There are, however, a few exceptions to this general rule. In several instances, the engraver stopped the drawing of the frame line at the top or bottom of a stamp design and resumed the line at the edge of the next stamp. In most cases, this was done because the straight edge that was used to guide his engraving tool was not quite parallel to the stamp design or because of poor alignment of the stamp designs, either cause resulting in the frame lines tending to be too close to the stamp designs at some particular point. On none of the positions, however,

do both frame lines terminate at the top and bottom of the design, creating a true Type IIa as is found on stamps from the Plate 10 Group.

Imprints and Center Line

Both imprints read "Toppan, Carpenter & Co. BANK NOTE ENGRAVERS, Phila. New York, Boston & Cincinnati". The left imprint is about $1\frac{1}{4}$ mm. from the stamps of the left pane, while the right imprint is about 2 mm. from the stamps of the right pane (measured from the right diamond blocks, since the right frame lines are very faint or non-existent). Because of a short transfer of the imprint roll, the word "Cincinnati" on the right imprint reads "Cincinnati".

The plate numbers read "No. 15P." Each is 1 mm. from the imprint.

The distance between the two panes is $1\frac{1}{2}$ mm. They are divided by a center line that is single and heavier than the adjoining frame lines. It is not evenly centered between the panes, being slightly closer to the right pane at the top and closer to the left pane at the bottom. The center line extends above the top of the top row stamps at least 3 mm.

Double Transfers

There are four double transfers on the plate. One, 87R15, is a major double transfer with all rosettes strongly doubled to the northwest and with lines through "POSTAGE" and "THREE CENTS." The remaining double transfers (1L, 8 and 97R15) are slight.

Recutting

The recutting on this plate may be divided into three general categories: first, repair of the damaged "A" reliefs; second, internal design recuts; and third, frame line recuts.

Each of the damaged "A" reliefs has been repaired by drawing a vertical line along the left edge of the flaw. The major flawed area is filled with short, thick dashes and a few longer dashes, all of which generally run in a northwest to southeast direction. One position, 7R15, has a double repair, showing two dots in the small break just to the right of the larger triangular break.

Plate 15 contains more internal recuts than any other Type II plate. This recutting is limited to the upper left triangle and the left edge of the tessellated work just below the upper left rosette. Positions 19, 59, 69L, 58, 59 and 85R15 each have one line recut in the upper left triangle as well as one or two vertical lines defining the left edge of the tessellated work.

In the very earliest printings from the plate, 57R15 shows two faintly recut vertical lines in the upper left triangle and a faint recut line below the upper left rosette. As the plate wore slightly all of these lines disappeared.

Position 17R15 is recut below the upper rosette, but has no recutting in the upper left triangle.

All of these recuts are very delicately done and all tended to fade as the plate wore.

The recutting of the frame lines is so distinctive that many copies in a representative accumulation of Type II stamps may readily be identified as coming from Plate 15 by reason of this characteristic alone. A part of this distinctiveness arises from the fact that many of the frame lines on the reliefs actually transferred to the plate as faint frame lines running from the top to the bottom of each stamp design. The hand drawn frame lines which extend from the top to the bottom of the plate frequently failed to "register" on top of the faint relief frames, creating what appear to be doubled frame lines.

On positions where this occurred, there will normally be one fairly heavy recut line and an adjoining faint frame line from the relief, which was not recut. However, because many of the recut lines are themselves faint, some of these "doubled" lines appear to be of equal strength. They can usually be distinguished



Fig. 4. Internal recutting.

19L15
59L15
69L15

57R15
58R15
59R15



Fig. 4A (Cont'd).
75-85-95R



Fig. 5. Right frame lines doubled (27, 37, 47R15)

from true double frame lines by the fact that the relief frame is often broken along its length. Where the registry was partial only, the frame line will appear to be split.

There are a number of true double frame lines on the plate. Admittedly, the distinction between the doubles described above and "True" doubles is somewhat

arbitrary on the part of the author. The two phenomena, however, arose from totally different causes; the "false" doubles are relatively common on the plate while the true doubles are uncommon and very striking varieties. In order to qualify as a true double, both lines must run from the top to the bottom of the stamp design (or nearly so), both must be of equal weight, and they must not touch each other. True doubles are the result of recutting of both lines that make up the double.

Six stamps from the seventh vertical row of the right pane (17, 27, 37, 47, 57, 67R15) show a double right frame. Here, the engraver drew the customary right frame line from the top to the bottom of the plate. This line did not coincide with any of the right relief frame lines adjacent to the stamps on these six positions, and so for some reason that is not clear, he proceeded to redraw an additional right frame line over these faint relief lines, being careful to draw these additional lines only from the top to the bottom of each stamp design, as was done on the Type IIa plates.

In this vertical row, 7R15 would also have shown this double right frame line, except that the two lines join at the top of the design, creating a split line. 77R15 is one of the positions that has not been placed and so it is not known whether it has a double right frame.

91 and 92R15 have true double left frame lines, although the line closest to the stamp design tends to fade out near the top on both positions.



Fig. 6. Left frame lines doubled (91, 92R15)



Fig. 7. Triple frame lines. 7R15, the center stamp in the strip of three, is truly remarkable. It has a guide dot near the upper right diamond block, the damaged "A" relief has a double repair, the left frame line is triple, and the right frame line is split!

98R15 has a double right frame line that is peculiar in that the inner line of the double touches both the upper right and lower right diamond blocks as well as the upper right triangle.

75L15 appears to be a "hybrid" double. Here, the recut right frame line is very far from the design and the original right relief frame appears between it and the stamp design. This original right relief frame is not recut, but is so heavy that on clearly printed copies it is almost as heavy as the recut line and, contrary to the appearance of the usual relief frame line, is not broken for its full length.

Two positions, 7 and 99R15, show what Dr. Carroll Chase called triple frame lines. Here, our arbitrary definition of true doubles will not hold up, since the lines do not appear to be of equal weight and since they touch each other. Each splays out from a common apex. They were probably caused by slips of the engraver's tool or by slippage of the straight edge used to guide the engraver's tool.

Some split frame lines, as indicated above, were caused by the recut line touching the original (and unrecut) relief frame line at some point and

then diverging from it. The result is a frame line that is single for a part of its length and then appears to split into two separate lines. One branch is usually heavier than the other, although this is not always necessarily the case. As in the case of false doubles, there are many faint split on the plate. Some of the more prominent ones are listed below. It is not possible to tell in each case whether both branches were recut, although some, such as 7R15, certainly were. They vary from very tiny splits at the top or bottom of the frame line (18R15) to full length double lines that touch at the top or bottom of the design.

Just as the 7th vertical row of the right pane has a large number of double right frame lines, the 8th vertical row of the left pane has a large number of split right frame lines; all of them have both branches recut and would have been classed as true double lines had they not touched at some point.



Fig. 8. Split right frame lines from the 8th vertical row of the left pane.

38-39L15

Right frame line split: 18, 28, 38 (split top and bottom, joined in the middle), 46, 48, 58, 60, 68L, 7R15.

Left frame line split: 10, 85L, 8, 9, 10, 17, 18, 19, 20, 27, 30, 70R15.

Presumably, each stamp had two vertical recut frame lines when the plate was made. However, because of the difficulties in its manufacture, many of these frame lines were very faint. With Plate 15, we see just the reverse of the wearing process described by Dr. Chase in his discussion of Plate 1 Late. There, the reliefs had been entered to a normal depth, but the recut lines were deeper than the relief lines. As the plate wore, the relief design began to fade and the recut lines stood out in ever sharper contrast. On Plate 15, at least some of the reliefs were entered deeper than normal and the recut lines were relatively shallow. Thus, as Plate 15 wore, the recut lines were the first to grow fainter, and finally many of them disappeared. In consequence, copies may be found which were printed long before the plate was abandoned that show but one vertical frame line or broken vertical frame lines. Toward the end of its use, when the plate was badly worn, stamps were produced that show no trace of either frame line.

Very faint left frame lines are found on the following positions: 1, 11L15.

Very faint right frame lines are found on the following positions: 2, 3, 4, 63, 93, 94L, 10, 20, 24, 25, 30, 32, 40, 50, 60, 67, 70, 76, 80, 84, 87, 90 and 100R15. Six positions show both frame lines to be very faint: 22, 31, 32, 41, 42 and 73L15.

Slips

There are six recognized slips of the engraver's tool on the plate, all occurring on the frame lines. All are found on the left pane.

6L15: Slip on the right frame line starts 13 mm. from the bottom and runs up and slightly to the left for about 3 mm.



Fig. 9. Split left frame lines. Positions 20, 30 and 70R15 also show the complete disappearance of the right frame line from the 10th vertical row of the right pane.

8L15: Slip on the right frame line starts 8 mm. from the bottom and runs down and a bit to the right for about 4 mm.

9L15: Slip on the left frame line starts about 5 mm. from the bottom and runs up and slightly to the left for about 3 mm.

50L15: There are two slips on the right frame line. The first starts 4 mm. from the top and runs down and to the left for about 1½ mm. The second starts 6½ mm. from the top and runs down and to the left for about 3 mm.

96L15: Slip on the right frame line starts 5 mm. from the bottom and runs up and to the left for about 2 mm., touching the tessellated work.

99L15: Slip on the right frame line starts 11 mm. from the bottom and runs down and to the right for a little over 3 mm.



6L15

8L15

9L15

Fig. 10. Slips of the engraver's tool.

Flaws

In its original state, the plate was marred by needle point pits similar to those found on Plate 3 of the 1c denomination. The most prominent pitted area is along the left margin of the plate. In early printings, these pit marks show in the left margin of 51, 52, 61, 62, 71 and 72L15. As the plate wore slightly, the pit marks disappeared.

Four other plate flaws have been observed. 21L15 has a diagonal line of color about 1½ mm. long above the upper left diamond block. It starts above



50L15



99L15

95-96-97L15



Fig. 10 (cont'd).



21L15



9R15



10R15

Fig. 11. Plate flaws.

the diamond block without touching it and runs in a northeast direction. On 9R15 there is a strong, almost vertical dash of color on the right edge of the "S" of "POSTAGE", extending $\frac{1}{2}$ mm. up into the white margin above the stamp.

10R15 has a strong dot of color over the "O" of "POSTAGE", 2/5 mm. above the top label. On 23R15 there is a triangular wedge of color on Washington's shoulder on a line with the button and to the right of it.

What Remains to Be Done

Eleven positions remain unplaced on the plate. They are 13, 33, 74, 76L, 53, 54, 63, 73, 74, 75 and 77R15. If you have any of these positions in a multiple which ties to a known position, its temporary loan for photographing will be very much appreciated.

Note on the Illustrations

Illustrating the 3c stamp in a publication such as the *Chronicle* is notoriously difficult, while showing fine-line recuts from this plate is impossible. The illustrations shown here were produced by enlarging 1:1 photos to four diameters; the recut lines were then reinforced with india ink. For publication, the photos were reduced to conform with the mechanical requirements of *Chronicle's* 5" x 8 1/4", or 30 picas by 50 picas format.

Acknowledgment

This article would not have been possible without the generous assistance and encouragement of Mr. Tracy W. Simpson.

PLATE RECONSTRUCTIONS

TRACY W. SIMPSON

Dr. Carroll Chase, Stanley B. Ashbrook, Elliott Perry, and Mortimer L. Neinken established the fact that hand-made retouching of the plate after transfer-roll impression provides a means of identifying the plate position of individual 1ct, 3ct, 10ct, and 12ct stamps of many of the plates of the 1851-'60 issue, and they also identified the relief characteristics and number-per-transfer-roll for the 5ct, (Ty 2), 24ct, 30ct, and 90ct values. Earl Oakley* similarly identified the reliefs of the 5ct Ty I.

Publication of their results and the accompanying interest in this identification process—called "reconstructions"—led others to emulate the leaders by gathering such stamps as they could, sending them to the original reconstructors for "plating" by comparison with the originals, and thereby starting their own reconstructions. Occasionally incomplete portions of the original reconstructions were finished with the aid of these neophyte platers.

This plate-reconstruction activity became a principal avocation of perhaps a dozen collectors of the 3ct imperf stamp, though many more undertook the reconstruction of small groups, such as the three right rows of left pane of plate 3, etc. Similarly specialists in the 1ct, 10ct, and 12ct stamp began noting positions of their stamps, and a few reconstructions aside from those of the originators resulted. A few unsevered panes also were discovered.

Interest in reconstructions was further enhanced by release of photos of the Dr. Chase reconstructions of his working plates of the 3ct Nos. 10 and 11, and some do their own plating by comparing stamps with these photos. However, it is not recommended that these photos be the sole basis of plating, because sometimes fine lines tend to thicken in photo printing and significant differences of color intensity do not show. Wherever possible a plate position obtained by comparison with the photo should be checked with an original by a "plating authority" to whom the Society's sales manager can refer an inquirer.

The sale in 1961 of the Dr. Carroll Chase 3ct collection also included complete reconstructions of Scott No. 26a plates 10 and 11, each in three states. Fortunately the buyer is a cooperative philatelic student who shares his findings with others. Also in the sale there was a well-advanced reconstruction of plate 15, a few complete panes obtained from Southern postoffices after the War-Between-the States, and a quantity of plated perforated No. 26, including many plated top-row copies (showing repaired and unrepaired reliefs). The sale of these per-

*See *Chronicle* Issue No. 45, July 1963.