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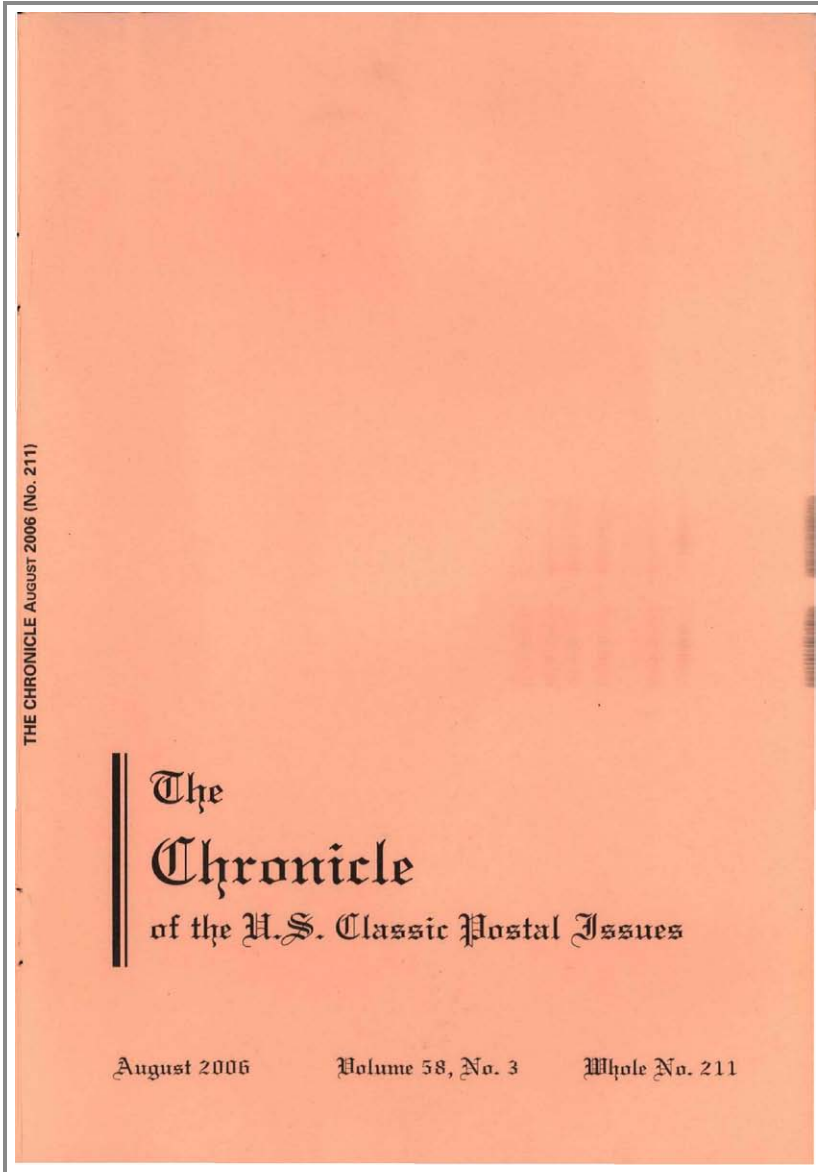


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LANGUAGE ABUSAGE

Reference to any dictionary will reveal that **use** and **usage** are not synonyms. The “-age” suffix, a French import, transforms a concrete word into an abstraction. In “usage” the suffix implies duration, use over an extended period of time. This durational construction appears frequently in English, and makes a distinction worth preserving: bag/baggage, bond/bondage, coin/coinage, wreck/wreckage, there are many examples.

With the growth of postal history exhibiting, stamp collectors have taken to calling covers “usages.” Presumably “usage” sounds more learned than “use” and thus seems more appropriate to a scholarly write-up—two syllables being weightier than one.

But a cover shows a use of a stamp, not a usage. While the cover survives forever (we hope), the use of the stamp was a fleeting, ephemeral event. It’s proper to write about the usage of Bank Note stamps on transpacific covers, but to call an individual cover a “usage” violates fundamental principles of the English language. When the focus is on the stamp, the cover shows a use, not a usage.

Your editor realizes he’s fighting an uphill battle here. Misuse of usage is well entrenched in the philatelic vocabulary. The Elliott Coulter 1869 collection (the sale of which is reviewed by Jeffrey Forster on page 192 of this issue) included a cover exhibit called “Usages Around the World.” This designation was picked up by the Siegel firm on the title page of the Coulter catalog. Worse, “usage” is now hard-wired into the computer at the Philatelic Foundation. Whenever PF certifies a cover, it calls it a “usage” instead of a use.

This *Chronicle* strives for linguistic purity as well as factual accuracy. For as long as we can hold out, we’ll continue to refer to covers as uses, rather than usages.

In addition to the Coulter write-up just mentioned, this issue contains a wide range of fascinating and insightful information. In an important article in our Essays and Proofs section starting on page 196, Stephen Tedesco describes the development of the 15¢ Webster large Bank Note stamp, a story that has eluded philatelists for generations. The 1999 dispersal of the Falk Finkelburg essay-proof collection, and subsequent access to the Brazer/Finkelburg records, provided keys. Tedesco has now completed the puzzle. His research should change the catalog sequence and listings for the long-misunderstood Webster essays.

In a highly visual article beginning on page 215, Alan Campbell lays out in considerable detail the various vulcanized rubber killer cancellations to be found on U.S. official stamps. In his poignant conclusion, Campbell asks some hard questions about the current rules governing the exhibition of postal history. Are these rules stifling the exhibition of attractive stamps and covers?

And in a provocative article beginning on page 189, Stephen B. Pacetti discusses the color ultramarine and poses two tough questions: What is true ultramarine for the 1¢ Franklin stamp of 1861 and does it actually exist as an issued stamp (Scott 63a)? Because the *Chronicle* is currently limited to black-and-white reproduction, the images that accompany Pacetti’s article necessarily can’t do full justice to his thesis. For this reason, we’ve posted the images in color in the Members’ Domain section of our society website. So if you’d like to see color images supporting Pacetti’s ideas, and at the same time learn more about the color ultramarine, go to the Society website (www.uspcs.org), click on the “Members’ Domain” link, and follow the instructions for registration. Use your Route Agent number as ID and your ZIP+4 address as password. If you encounter problems, contact Michael Heller (mi.heller@verizon.net) or Charles DiComo (Charles.DiComo@uspcs.org). ■