

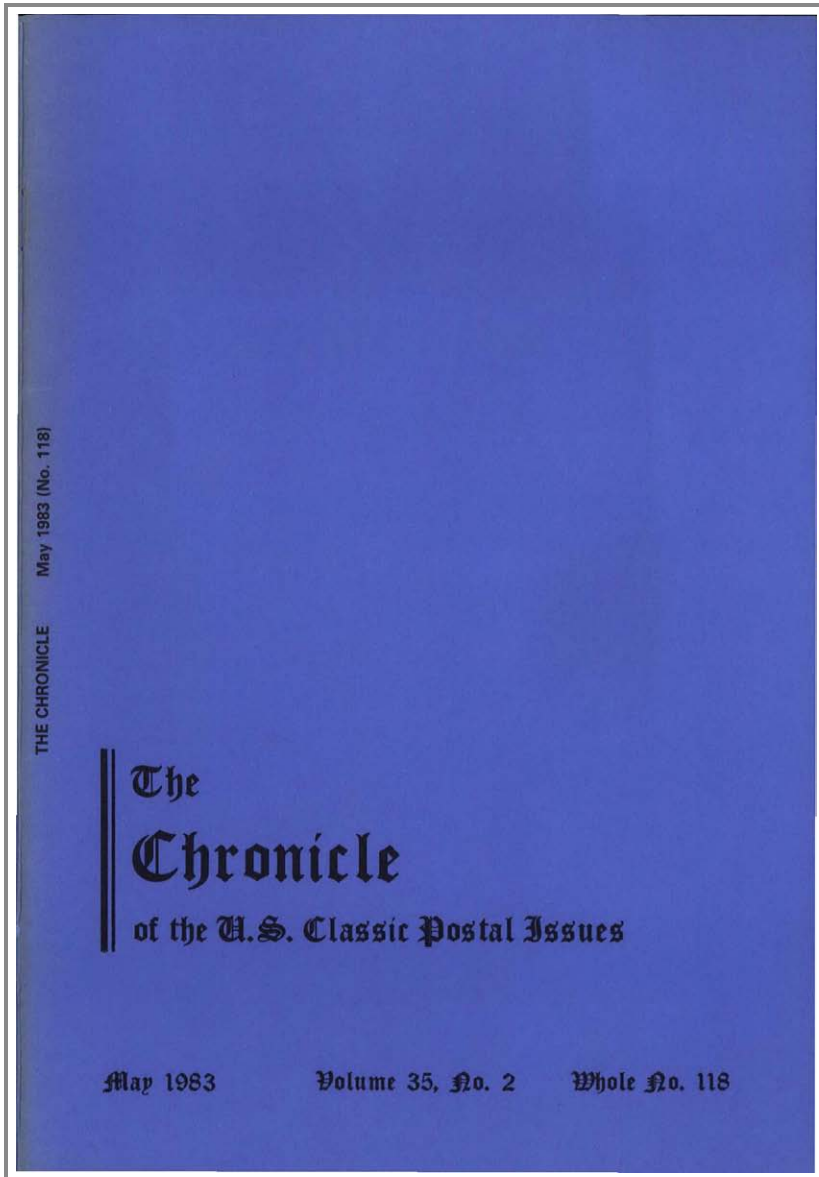


# U.S. Philatelic Classics Society

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## THE BANK NOTE PERIOD

RICHARD M. SEARING, Editor

### RARE BANKNOTE STAMPS AT AUCTION

For the second time in recent memory, the Robert Siegel Auction Galleries conducted a sale consisting of only stamps and covers from the period 1870-1888 of U.S. postal issues. The last such sale was the noted collection formed by Jay Braus which was auctioned in April 1974 and reviewed here by then section editor Maury Waud in *Chronicle* 83. The recent sale took place on January 25-26, 1983, and was in some ways more comprehensive in depth than the Braus sale, but there were some notable omissions we shall list these in the following review.

#### NATIONAL BANKNOTE ISSUES (GRILLED)

A full and nearly complete range of the grilled stamps, both on and off of covers, was offered in 110 lots of the sale. The highlights included mint singles excluding the 12 and 24¢ values, 1¢ to 10¢, 15¢ values in mint blocks, a pair of 30¢ stamps paying a triple rate to India from the Bissell correspondence, and several scarce foreign rates. Missing were the very rare mint 12¢ (fewer than 10 recorded) and the mint 24¢ (three recorded; the best sold last year in LA for \$220,000.00 plus 10 percent). The Braus sale included the unique mint 12¢ block of four. Also missing were 12¢ grill on cover (fewer than six covers recorded), the 24¢ on cover (two are rumoured to exist somewhere), and of course the 90¢ value (last seen nearly 75 years ago). Does any reader have any information on the 24¢ grill on cover or has anyone seen one?

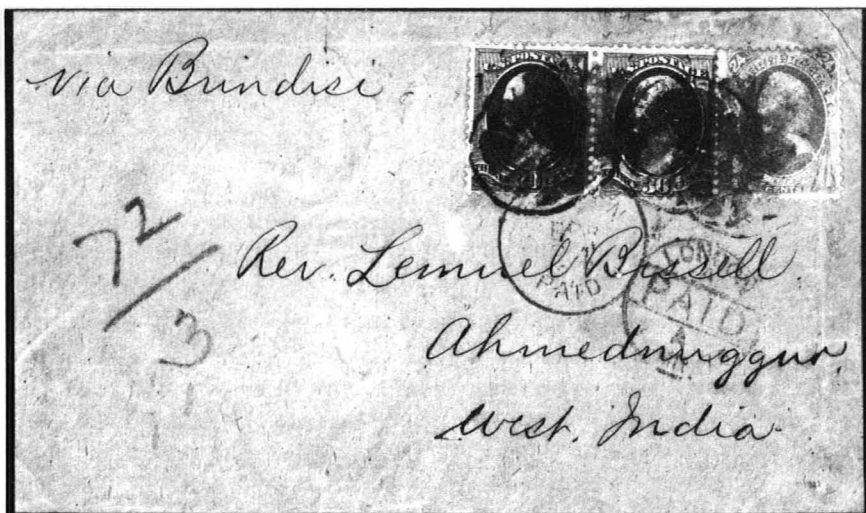


Figure 1. Triple rate cover to Ahmednuggur, India, via Brindisi bearing a pair of the 30¢ grilled banknotes and a 24¢ ungrilled stamp from the Bissell correspondence.

The scarce foreign destinations included covers to Brazil, Peru, China, and India. Figure 1 shows the triple rate Bissell cover to India. The original find included 18 copies of the 30¢ grilled stamp on cover;<sup>1</sup> I record four pairs in my records.

#### NATIONAL BANKNOTE ISSUES (UNGRILLED)

This section of the sale included a full set of die proofs sunk onto white cards, India plate proofs, and full sets of mint singles and blocks. The most spectacular of the blocks were a 12¢ block of eight and a 90¢ block of six. All values were represented on cover; no fewer than 10

1. Jere H. Barr, "The Bissell Correspondence 1868-1875," *19th American Philatelic Congress Book*, 1953, p. 62.

covers were available bearing the 24¢ and 30¢ values. These included five Bissell covers, two covers from the Landfear correspondence to South Africa, two covers to Mexico, and one to Peru. The 90¢ stamp was present in the form of the ex-Newbury courthouse cover illustrated in Volume II of Brookman's study of U.S. classic stamps.<sup>2</sup> There are presently three undisputed authentic covers with this stamp.<sup>3</sup>

#### CONTINENTAL BANKNOTE ISSUES



Figure 2. Unique set of Continental Special printings in plate number singles from the Lord Crawford collection.

The Continental issues were well represented in the auction. The proof section included a full set of die proofs on white cards, India and card plate proofs in full sets, many of the Atlanta trial colors in sets and blocks, and several examples of the "SPECIMEN" overprints. This last is believed to have been "liberated" from the files of a foreign government.

The stamps were present in profusion as mint and used singles, blocks, and larger multiples. The most noteworthy were an imprint and plate number block of 14 of the 6¢ value, a plate number block of nine of the 7¢, and a used block of 12 of the 90¢ stamp.

Notably absent in the Braus sale were examples of the very rare Continental special printings. In contrast, this recent sale showed full sets including the unique plate number

2. Lester Brookman, *Nineteenth Century U.S. Postage Stamps*, II, Figure 295.

3. R.M. Searing, *Chronicle* 106:127. A fourth cover has been reported (*Chronicle* 116) but the authenticity is doubtful; see *Chronicle* 117 for comments.

singles that once belonged to the Earl of Crawford. Very few readers have ever seen the genuine special printings so this unique set is shown in Figure 2. The colors are very striking and distinct from the issued stamps and the perforations are generally very ragged. Not shown in Figure 2, but available at the sale were the rare 2¢ carmine vermilion and the most valuable special printing of all, the 5¢ bright blue.

There were over 125 cover lots offered which included the only recorded usage of these special printings on cover. This unique 3¢ cover is shown in Figure 3 and is postmarked March 5, 1876, and canceled with the special exhibition cancel. Since it is believed that these special stamps were not on sale at the Centennial Exhibition grounds,<sup>4</sup> this stamp was purchased at the Washington, D.C., Post Office and brought to Philadelphia to be used on this letter.

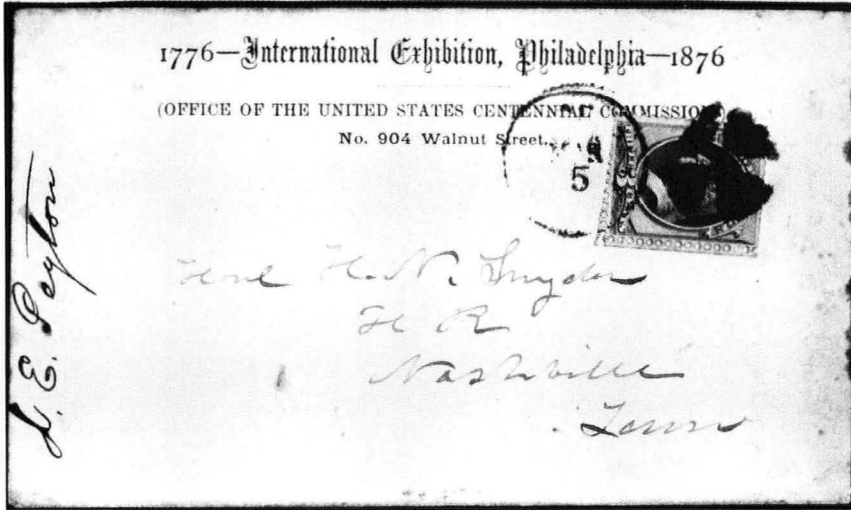


Figure 3. Unique cover with 3¢ special printing (Scott 169) mailed from Exposition station in March 1876.

Other scarce covers included 20 bearing 12¢ and 15¢ stamps to various destinations, and four letters bearing the 30¢ value, two from the Bissell find and two addressed to Mexico. The 90¢ stamp on cover was represented by the 1875 wrapper to Galveston, Texas, as shown in *Chronicle* 106, page 124. This cover is discussed in detail in that article.

#### AMERICAN BANKNOTE ISSUES

The last of the banknote companies was well represented in all areas of the sale. Full sets of die and plate proofs, many essays, and sets of "SAMPLE" overprints were on the block. The highlights included 2¢ and 5¢ die proofs on card with the original designer's signatures, a range of the very rare die proofs from the "Roosevelt" albums of 1904. These caused an uproar in their day comparable to the "Farleys" of a later era. Several die proofs of the 6¢ and 10¢ recut designs were offered dated and signed by the engravers, and the seldom seen India plate proof of the 1¢ new design (Scott #212p3) was offered as a single.

For the stamps, a full range of mint and used multiples was sold including a 1¢ block of ten, combination pairs of the 10¢ types I and II, and blocks of four of mint 30¢ and 90¢ values. Several large used blocks of the 90¢ in both carmine and purple shades were also offered.

In contrast with the Braus sale, a full set of the very rare special printings on soft paper was present, excluding the 24¢ value and the 4¢ new design. The very rare 5¢ grey brown Garfield was offered in extremely fine condition. For a final note on these issues, the relatively common special printing of the 2¢ red brown (Scott #211B) was present as a

4. Brookman, *op. cit.*, III, 203.





Figure 4. A probably unique block of 16 of the 2¢ red brown (Scott 211B, 211Bc) showing an imperforate vertically block of four of the special printing from the steam press of the American Banknote Co.

possibly unique block of 16 with two pairs of stamps imperforate vertically. This great block is shown in Figure 4.

Over 128 lots of covers were offered for this issue and included many multiple and foreign rates. There were six covers bearing the seldom seen 6¢ recut design in both shades, and the best was a pair of the scarce brown red shade on a registered cover. The elusive 3¢ vermilion was represented by over a dozen lots, two of which showed the single stamp overpaying the 2¢ rate. Among the higher values on cover were two very rare usages. The 30¢ orange brown was used on a cover mailed from the U.S. consulate in Shanghai and the 15¢ small banknote stamp was used with Samoan locals on a letter to Germany via New York.

The 90¢ carmine shade was missing on cover, but the 90¢ purple was used on a refolded package front to Germany. With respect to these covers of which I record at least six to the same firm, I have found some new details on the address which is usually incomplete. The addressee is: Messrs. Arthur Gwinner and Company Nachfolger von Messrs. Riess and Itzinger, Berlin, and the origin is: Speyer & Company and mailed via their office in England at Box 477 London.

This concludes my brief review of this sale. If past experience is any guide, it should be a few years before such a comprehensive offering of banknote material is again offered in one auction. Every banknote student should have this sale catalog as part of his reference library.

Your comments are most welcome and contributions for this section are earnestly solicited.

**Review: The Fresno and San Francisco Bicycle Mail of 1894.** By Lowell B. Cooper, 152 pages, 100 illustrations. Available from the publisher, Leonard H. Hartmann, P.O. Box 36006, Louisville, Ky. 40233. \$35.00 hard boxed, postpaid anywhere; \$42.50 airmail. Deluxe edition of 29, 25 to be sold, \$300.00 each.

This is a definitive study of a difficult subject. The "Bicycle Mail" was not a few days' advertising stunt; it was a legitimate service provided to fill a postal hiatus engendered by a railway strike: it involved stamps and stamped envelopes; dies that were original, altered, and counterfeit; commercial covers as well as philatelic mail; and some interesting, enigmatic personalities. The story of this active but short-lived service is told in detail, and all data necessary for identification and expertising are given.

The author first discusses the historic background, then details the post's organization, operation, and discontinuance. He analyzes the production methods of stamps and envelopes, provides timetables, and illuminates those enigmatic personalities. In short, it's all here. There are date tables in the Appendix to aid in chronology. There are pictures galore,