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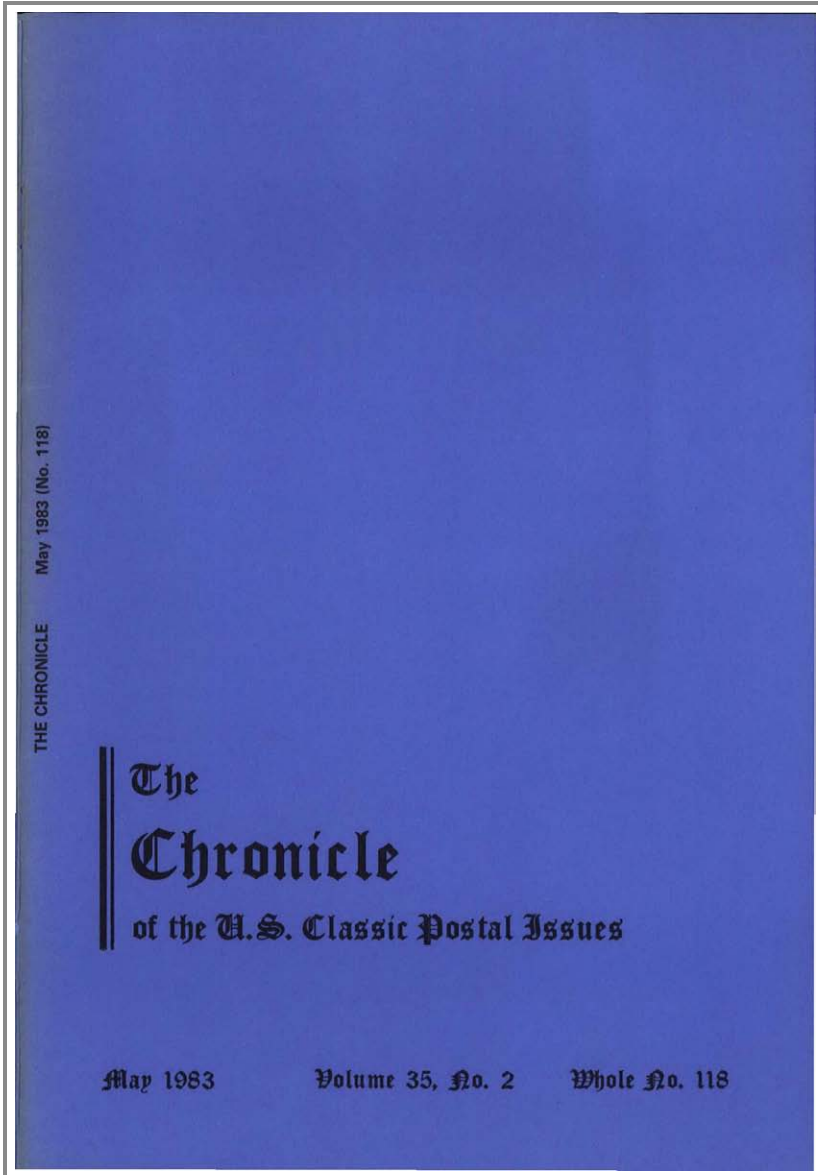


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Figure 4. A probably unique block of 16 of the 2¢ red brown (Scott 211B, 211Bc) showing an imperforate vertically block of four of the special printing from the steam press of the American Banknote Co.

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,

well reproduced. And there is a final — and important — section on the role of Wells Fargo during the strike. Rather than regurgitate the table of contents, however, some general comments.

The book is not flawless. A major problem is the syntax, which does not read easily. Possibly the editors and proof readers were so familiar with their material that poor sentence structure was overlooked. Often, the text virtually cries out for a “that,” or a “since.” For example, “These notes . . . indicate the concept for a stamp was first introduced . . . after plans were well advanced. [*That*] the idea was first presented on Friday evening confirms Banta’s claim . . . he was not a stamp collector.” And again, “[*Since*] the 5th of July fell on a Thursday, it seems likely that Friday, the 6th, was the correct date.” The eye is constantly retracing sentences, looking for a missing noun or adverb.

There might have been more emphasis on Fresno’s summer heat. In July, the temperature is usually in the 90s, often over 100°, and occasionally above 110°. The author does suggest the 1935 rerun was held in May because of the temperature. In any event, the heat must have been grueling for those relay riders whose assignments were in the San Joaquin Valley.

Such weather would not have been a problem for C. S. Shaffer, whose schedule for the original run was “Menlo Park to San Francisco, 30 miles, thence returning to Menlo Park for a distance of 60 miles without resting.” (Not very bright, perhaps, but a helluva biker!).

And a bit more might have been included relevant to the topography. Pacheco Pass today is 1368 feet high, crossed on a high speed road. In 1894 it was a rutted, dirt coach road; the passage over the summit was onerous, even dangerous. Until recently there were Fresnoans who delighted in regaling youngsters with tales of traveling by horse and wagon to the coast, or San Francisco. To make the run in 18 hours must have been extraordinary.

One of the non-mail items carried by the Bicycle Mail was a package of “negligee shirts” for men; a local geriatric haberdasher describes these as having been frilly, ruffled silk evening shirts. Only a stranger would wear such a garment in July in Fresno today!

The author himself is something of an enigma. His cryptic mention of “this investigation” beginning when Sloane was writing his columns — in the middle thirties — is the only personal reference in the book, and there is no biography. The only other article by Mr. Cooper this reviewer could find quickly is in the 1979 *Congress Book*.^{*} The publisher identifies Cooper as a retired business man and lifelong collector of “firsts,” including the Bicycle Mail.

Lastly, there is no pricing guide or rarity yardstick, although a dedicated student could construct a table using the information given. Interested readers can refer to Richard Wolfers’s August, September and December 1982 sales for recent activity. Stamps in panes and smaller multiples, and covers, were offered in these auctions.

In sum, the book will be a fine addition to any working library, and now might prove a good time to reserve a copy. The printing run is small, (500), and the subject has attracted interest from bicycle enthusiasts as well as philatelists. European bikers, apparently, are responsible for some large pre-publication orders. Like the recent Starnes book from the same publisher, the quality is top notch, using the same materials; this time, however, the buckram binding will be red.

Richard B. Jordan

^{*}Lowell Cooper, “Some Notes Concerning Paper and Paper Mesh with Focus upon the Bank Notes,” *Forty-Fifth Congress Book*, 1979.

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