

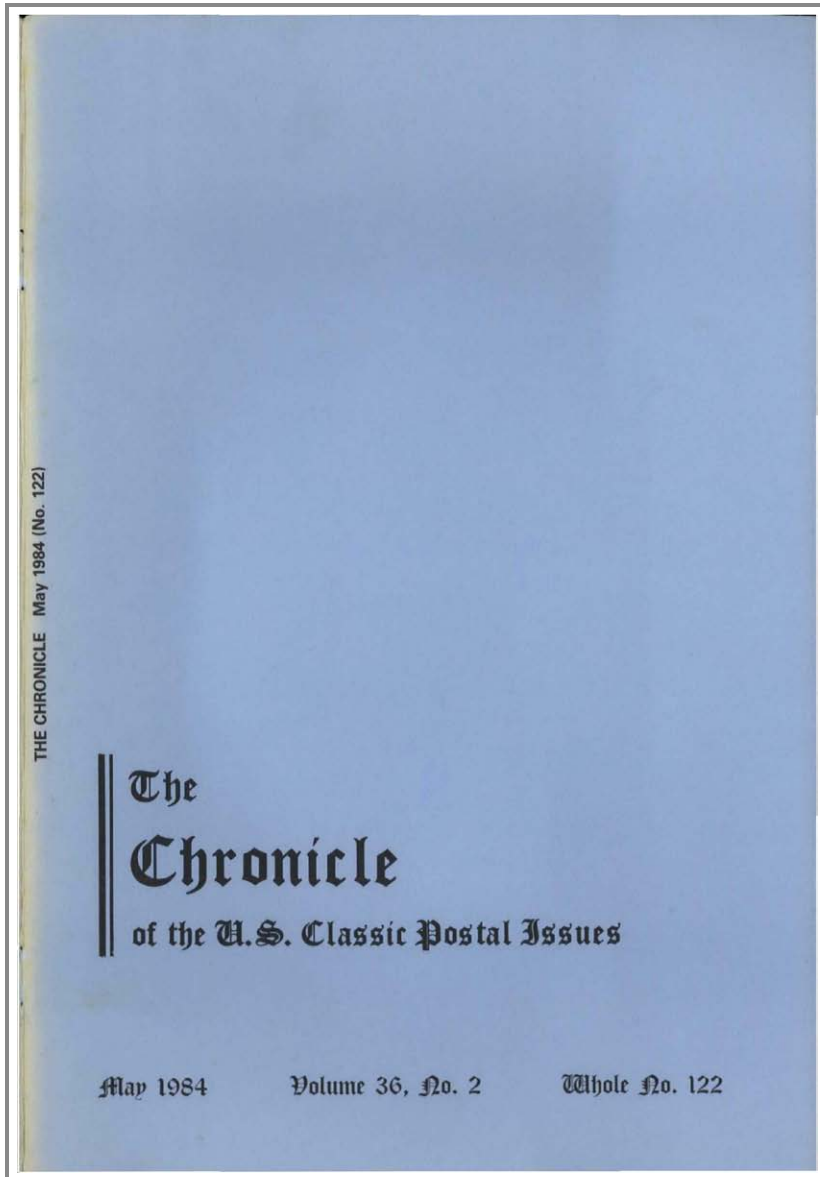


# U.S. Philatelic Classics Society

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Author(s): Donald B. Johnstone



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**FRANKLIN AND EAGLE CARRIER STAMPS****DONALD B. JOHNSTONE**

A great deal of background information concerning the issuance of the Franklin and Eagle carrier stamps has appeared in print. The early work of Luff<sup>1</sup> and subsequent articles by Perry and others have been summarized as part of *The Carrier Stamps of the United States* by Elliott Perry, a portion of which appeared serially in the *Philatelist* under the editing of Maurice Williams.<sup>2</sup> A continuation of this work, edited by Robert Meyersburg, is currently appearing serially in the *Chronicle*. The Franklin and Eagle carrier chapters in Perry's work were devoted largely to Post Office records, Acts of Congress, newspaper announcements, numbers of stamps ordered and issued, and some plate data. Elliott Perry's intent was to provide information on usage of these carrier stamps in those chapters designated by city names. It was my pleasure to have worked on this with him from 1951 to 1971. I would like to add that he was also assisted over the years by a number of dedicated people with advice, items to photograph and record, as well as monetary contributions, to facilitate his research on the carrier stamps. To these great and generous philatelists goes an acknowledgement from one who realizes and appreciates their participation in this effort. Most of the individuals have passed on, but much of their knowledge and help is entwined in the writing and records of Elliott Perry.

This article is designed to supplement the above by providing some detailed information on the stamps, proofs, essays, reprints and imitations, as a guide to collectors who often fail to distinguish these various items. Some of the information has appeared in print before, but in scattered sources. Most of the items considered here formed the basis of a presentation I made at a meeting of the Essay Proof Society in the New York Collectors Club in 1956.

**THE FRANKLIN CARRIER**

To introduce this subject, a brief chronological review of the bank note company contract is included. The bid proposal by the firm of Toppan, Carpenter, Casilear & Co. on April 23, 1851, and accepted with some revision that same day, was based upon submission of die essays for a 3¢ postage stamp. It was not, however, until June 10 that the Post Office Department finally provided a completed contract for signature. The contract covered six years from June 10, 1851, to June 10, 1857. It called for 1¢, 3¢, and 12¢ postage stamps and a carrier stamp, as well as other denominations as might be needed. The contract made specific mention of a carrier stamp "and that they will in like manner engrave and furnish and keep in continual repair without charge to the P.O. Dept. such steel dies and steel plates as may be ordered for printing carriers stamps."<sup>3</sup> The contract also made provision for the dies and plates to be carefully sealed, when not in use, and placed in the Office of the U.S. Treasurer in Philadelphia for safe keeping. This contract made no mention of the transfer rolls. On August 2, 1851, the contractors were requested to furnish carrier stamp impressions in green and yellow and any other color that might be distinguishable by candle light from the stamps then in use. The contractors prepared large die proofs in black and at least one other color, red, as well as plate proofs in green on India and in orange on wove stamp paper. The green and orange plate impressions are known as trial color proofs. The contractors were notified on

1. John N. Luff, *The Postage Stamps of the United States*, Scott Stamp & Coin Co., N. Y., 1902, pp. 192-94.

2. Elliott Perry, "The Carrier Stamps of the United States," (Maurice Williams - Ed.) *The Philatelist* (Robson Lowe) 40: 1973-4.

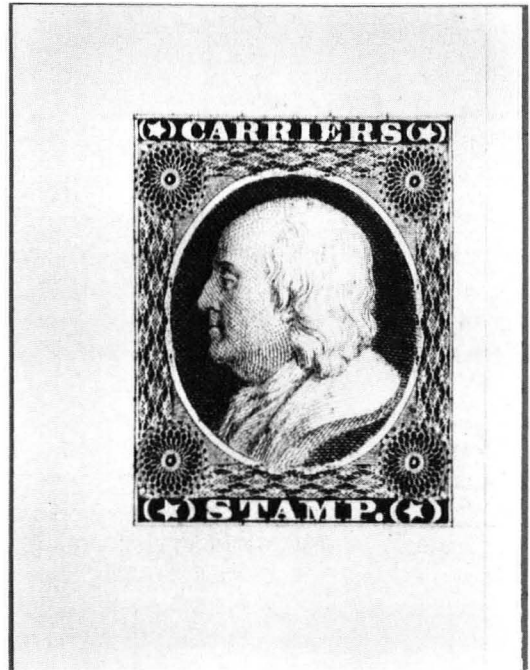
3. Clarence W. Brazer, "1851 Essays and Proofs," *National Philatelic Museum* 3: 435, 1951.

August 12, 1851, to furnish the P.O. Dept. with 300,000 Franklin carrier stamps printed in blue ink on pink paper.

The following information concerning the role of individuals in the bank note company involved with the Franklin carrier stamp has been gleaned from a variety of sources, and represents the writer's best judgment at this time. The designer of the stamp may have been E. Pitcher. The vignette of Franklin was engraved by Joseph Ives Pease after a marble bust by Caffieri. Pease is the same portrait engraver who provided vignettes for the other stamps in the 1851 issue. The frame is thought to have been the lathe work of Asa Spencer, and the lettering was by Henry Earle. Henry Saulnier was the siderographer responsible for the transfer work at the time.

#### LARGE DIE PROOF

**Figure 1. Original large die proof of the Franklin carrier in black on white India paper. Note the layout lines as well as the top and bottom stamp frame lines.**



Original large die proofs of the Franklin carrier stamp, though extremely rare, are known on thin India paper. One in black showing layout lines is illustrated in Figure 1. The original large die proof is characterized by several layout lines as well as top and bottom stamp frame lines. As shown in Figure 2, partial impressions of the rosettes can be seen in the lower right corner of the die proof. The latter item is in red on thin green India paper. The extra rosettes appear to have been an engraver's trial of a stock die transfer roll on the lower left corner of the steel die in order to orient these oval rosettes for the corner designs of the stamp. The die sinkage shows the die was approximately 50 mm. high by 57.5 mm. wide. A large die proof in black, at one time in the Brazer reference collection, was illustrated previously.<sup>4,5</sup> Unfortunately, the illustration was mislabelled in the *Essay Proof Journal*, though a correction was stated in a subsequent issue. The only other original large die proof known to me belonged at one time to Dr. Carroll Chase, and was last seen in the Miller collection on display in the New York Public Library prior to the 1977 theft. It too was in black on white India paper.

4. Brazer, *ibid.*, p. 432.

5. Carroll Chase, "Remarks on the Die and Plate Proofs of the Franklin Carrier Stamp," *Essay Proof Journal* 1: 123-128, 1944.



**Figure 2. Original large die proof of the Franklin carrier in red on thin green India paper. Note the trial impressions of the rosettes in the lower right corner as well as the die sinkage of 50 x 57.5 mm.**

### THE PLATE

The Franklin carrier soft steel die used in preparing the large die proofs was hardened and a soft steel transfer roll was prepared containing three relief impressions. The transfer roll, after hardening, was used to rock in the plate subjects. The plate contained two panes side by side of 100 entries each in rows of 10. The panes were separated by a vertical gutter. It is interesting to note that the plate impressions have no top or bottom frame line, a major difference from the original die proof.

There was only one plate made for this stamp.<sup>6</sup> An imprint of the contractors appeared at each side of the plate. Therefore, the left pane of 100 subjects bore an imprint on the left margin, and the right pane an imprint on the right margin. The imprint reads "Toppan, Carpenter, Casilear & Co., BANK NOTE ENGRAVERS, Phila., New York, Boston & Cincinnati." The plate was not numbered. There was a vertical line separating the panes. A similar line separating the panes of the Eagle carrier is known to be 5 mm. from each pane. Over the years, there has been some question as to when the imprint was added to the plate, but the following information may help to answer this.

My files confirm existence of a block of twelve proofs from the left pane showing a complete imprint in the left margin. I have recorded a stamp from the right pane with a partial imprint in the right margin. A complete left pane of India proofs formerly in the Ackerman collection, and now housed in the Smithsonian Institution, contains no imprint. This shows that the imprint was not on the plate when the earliest impressions were made. This sheet of India proofs also confirms the existence of the major crack prior to the addition of an imprint. Moreover, since some of the original stamps show portions of the imprint, the India paper proofs were printed prior to the stamps. A reconstructed vertical pair in orange on stamp paper, showing a partial imprint in the left margin, was at one time in the B. K. Miller collection in the New York Public Library.

Preparation of the Franklin carrier plate was at a time when plate imprints as well as plate numbers were not the norm. For example, the first plate of the one-cent regular issue of postage stamps was without imprint or number until some time in 1852.<sup>7</sup>

### THE FRANKLIN CARRIER STAMP

The bank note company appears to have prepared some plate proofs of the Franklin

6. Luff, *op. cit.*, p. 193.

7. Mortimer L. Neinken, *The United States One Cent Stamp of 1851 to 1861*, U. S. Philatelic Classics Soc., 1972, p. 74.

carrier in a brown-orange color on stamp paper. Luff<sup>8</sup> referred to these brown-orange stamps and considered them late impressions. Elliott Perry believed they were early impressions, and I am inclined to agree. Luff learned from correspondence dated long before the 1875 reprints that the brown-orange Franklin carrier was known. In fact, he examined a copy purported to have a New York cancellation. Whether or not they were ever used, inadvertently or otherwise, for paying a carrier fee or for regular postage, is questionable, but copies in this color did appear on the scene. No reference has ever been found to suggest they were ever issued. It seems likely to me that the brown-orange stamps were printed in August of 1851 as a trial color. They may not have been accepted by the P. O. Department because they were difficult to discern on buff-colored paper of the day. A copy in my collection bears an indistinct postmark which suggests possible use.

The color that was printed in the amount of 310,000, and sent in October to New York, New Orleans, and Philadelphia, was in blue on a light pink or rose wove paper. They were issued imperforate in sheets of 100 subjects, and gummed. The blue color was sufficiently like the 1¢ regular postage showing the head of Franklin, that it was assumed a pink paper would be sufficient to make the carrier stamp distinguishable from the regular one-cent stamp. Pink paper was in use at the time for stamps of the Philadelphia letter carriers, and this may have been the reason pink was employed for the Franklin carrier. However, the short life of the stamp and replacement with the very different Eagle carrier suggests that the Franklin carrier in blue on pink paper was not sufficiently distinguishable to continue its use. This is confirmed in the correspondence of Montgomery, Asst. P. M. of Philadelphia.<sup>9</sup>

The bank note company of Toppan, Carpenter, and Casilear sent 250,000 Franklin carrier stamps to New York and 50,000 to New Orleans on October 11, 1851. On October 21 of that year, 10,000 were sent to Philadelphia. The New Orleans shipment was received on October 19, but New York did not record receipt of their stamps until April 15, 1852.<sup>10</sup>



**Figure 3. Original Franklin carrier stamp with blue Philadelphia postmark and part of the carrier star cancellation.**

With these data in mind, it has always seemed ironic that most of the very few covers known with the Franklin carrier prepaying the carrier fee, as well as singles off cover, originated in Philadelphia, the post office which received, by far, the fewest stamps. There are examples, however, that did originate in New York, though rare, as no collection fee was

8. Luff, *op. cit.*, p. 193.

9. Robert B. Meyersburg, Ed. "The Carrier Stamps of the United States - Elliott Perry," *Chronicle* 117, p. 28, 1983.

10. Perry, *op. cit.*, p. 6.

required. Covers from New Orleans are seen with the typical carrier postmark in the shape of a snow shovel. Elliott Perry never hesitated to make some humorous remark about the use of snow shovels in New Orleans.

A Philadelphia cover was illustrated recently in the Philadelphia chapter.<sup>11</sup> Others have appeared previously<sup>12,13</sup> and in the Caspary auction in 1957. Figure 3 shows the only recorded example of the stamp off cover, which bears both a blue Philadelphia postmark and the red star cancellation. An unused pair with gum was auctioned as part of the Lilly collection in 1967. This may be the only unused pair in existence. A pair of reprints has been masquerading as originals for many years. Distinguishing original Franklin carrier stamps from the reprinting of 1875 has concerned stamp collectors for a long time. A discussion of this matter appears under the section *Reprintings*.

11. Meyersburg, *op. cit.*, p. 25.

12. Perry, *op. cit.*, p. 5.

13. Elliott Perry, "U. S. Letter Carrier Stamps of Philadelphia Under the Fee System, 1849-1863," *National Philatelic Museum* 6: 482, 1954.

(To be continued)

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