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Table Of Contents

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[Click here to view the entire Volume: 52 No: 3 Chronicle: 187](#)

	<u>Starting Page</u>
Front Cover (1 page)	Front Cover
Display Advertisement (1 page) Advertiser: Jack E. Molesworth, Inc.	Inside Front Cover
Display Advertisement (1 page) Advertiser: Shreves Philatelic Galleries, Inc.	157
Display Advertisement (1 page) Advertiser: Spink	158
Masthead (1 page)	159
Display Advertisement (1 page) Advertiser: Victor B. Krievins	160
Table of Contents (1 page)	161
Prestamp and Stampless Period	
A Conjunction of Features, and an Unusual Reversion (5 pages) <i>Frank Mandel</i>	163
Display Advertisement (1 page) Advertiser: Robert A. Siegel Auction Galleries, Inc.	168
1851-61 Period	
Additional Canceled Postmarks: Part II (7 pages) <i>Hubert C. Skinner</i>	169
Display Advertisement (1 page) Advertiser: Museum of United States Essays and Proofs	175
Display Advertisement (1 page) Advertiser: Matthew Bennett Inc.	176
Display Advertisement (1 page) Advertiser: Schuyler Rumsey Philatelic Auctions	177
1861-1869 Period	
Civil War Patriotic Covers (6 pages) <i>James W. Milgram M.D.</i>	178
Display Advertisement (1 page) Advertiser: Brad Sheff	183
Display Advertisement (1 page) Advertiser: Charles G. Firby	184
1861-1869 Period	
The 1867-68 Grills: What We Know and What We Don't Know (6 pages) <i>Michael C. McClung</i>	185
Bank Note Period	
Take Me to the Fair: Postal Markings on Mail Addressed to Persons at the World's Industrial and Cotton Centennial Exposition, New Orleans, Louisiana 1884-1885 (4 pages) <i>David C. Hufford</i>	191
Display Advertisement (1 page) Advertiser: Stephen T. Taylor	193
Display Advertisement (1 page) Advertiser: Guido Craveri	195
Display Advertisement (1 page) Advertiser: Nutmeg Stamp Sales, Inc.	196
Display Advertisement (1 page) Advertiser: Andrew Levitt, Inc.	197
Special Printings 1875-84	
Some Data on Continental Bank Note Company Ribbed Paper Stamps (5 pages) <i>William E. Mooz</i>	198
Some Context for the 1875 Special Printing Program (1 page) <i>William E. Mooz</i>	202
Display Advertisement (1 page) Advertiser: U.S. Philatelic Classics Society	203
Display Advertisement (1 page) Advertiser: U.S. Philatelic Classics Society	204
Officials	
Usage of Official Stamps in Washington, D.C. 1873-1874 (11 pages) <i>Alan C. Campbell</i>	205
Display Advertisement (1 page) Advertiser: United States Stamp Society	215
Display Advertisement (1 page) Advertiser: Edelman's Loan Office	216
Foreign Mails	
Unusual Royal Mail Steam Packet Company (RMSP Co.) Cover (5 pages) <i>Richard F. Winter</i>	217
Book Review: "Early Routings of the Royal Mail Steam Packet Company, 1842-1879" (3 pages) <i>Richard F. Winter</i>	221
Display Advertisement (1 page) Advertiser: Leonard H. Hartmann	223
Display Advertisement (1 page) Advertiser: U.S. Philatelic Classics Society	224
The Cover Corner	
Additional Answer to Problem Cover in Issue 183 (1 page) <i>Ray W. Carlin</i>	225

Additional Answer to Problem Cover in Issue 185 (3 pages) <i>Ray W. Carlin</i>	225
Answers to Problem Covers in Issue 186 (1 page) <i>Ray W. Carlin</i>	228
More Answers to the U.S. "Steamboat" Cover Parade (6 pages) <i>Ray W. Carlin</i>	228
Problem Cover for This Issue (1 page) <i>Ray W. Carlin</i>	234
Index to Advertisers (1 page)	235
Classified (1 page)	235
Display Advertisement (1 page) Advertiser: Ivy & Mader Philatelic Auctions, Inc.	236
Display Advertisement (1 page) Advertiser: James E. Lee	Inside Back Cover
Display Advertisement (1 page) Advertiser: Robert A. Siegel Auction Galleries, Inc.	Back Cover

SOME DATA ON CONTINENTAL BANK NOTE COMPANY RIBBED PAPER STAMPS

WILLIAM E. MOOZ

The subject of ribbed paper has been mostly academic until recently, when this paper was used as the basis for authenticating a copy of Scott #164, the 24¢ denomination of the Bank Note series which was printed by the Continental Bank Note Company (CBNC). Since then, there has been more interest in this paper variety. The purpose of this article is to provide some statistics about the use of this paper, to discuss methods of identifying it, and to offer some thoughts on its use.

Perhaps the best written description of how ribbed paper is made appears in R.H. White's book, *the Papers and Gums of United States Postage Stamps 1847-1909*.¹ On page 56, White describes that the ribs result from either a "dandy roll" or a "pull roller" which has had spirally wound wire on it, which increases the traction of the roller on the moist paper which is being pulled along. Figure 1 illustrates the sequence of operations of a paper making machine, and shows the rollers. From the White discussion of the paper making process, and the wire wound rollers, it is clear that the ribbing results from a process variable which was intended to facilitate the production of the paper. White makes no mention of any paper characteristic which was to be improved by using rollers which produced ribbing, and it would be hard to intuit that there were paper quality objectives as well as manufacturing objectives.

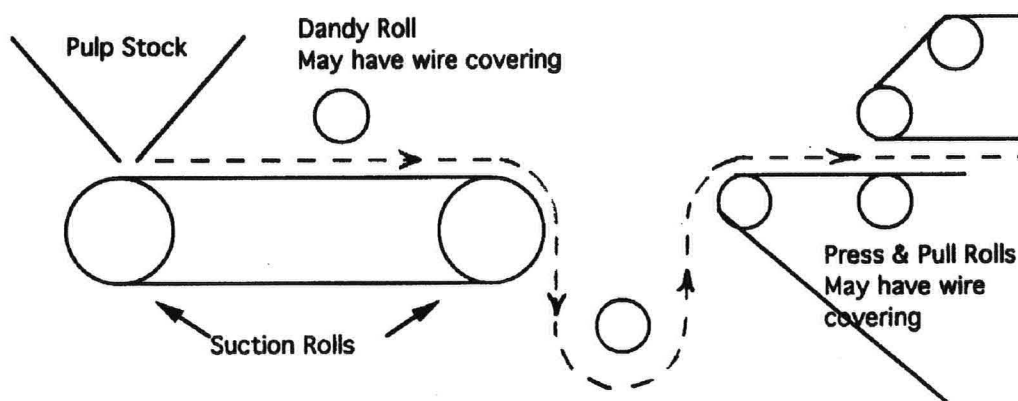


Figure 1. Sequence of operations of paper making machine

Historically, CBNC used a paper described variously in the Scott catalog as "thin hard" or "hard white." This paper was used by CBNC in early 1875 for the special printing program. The stamps which were printed on this type paper included Scott #40-47, O1SD-O93SD, 167-181, LO5, LO6 and PR33-56.

¹R.H. White, *The Papers and Gums of United States Postage Stamps 1847-1909* (Germantown, Md.: Philatelic Research Ltd., 1983), pp. 56-57.

When the sales of some of these stamps began to deplete the stock on hand, a second printing of them was made by CBNC in late 1875, which was on ribbed paper. This second printing included Scott numbers O1SDc, O10SDc, O25SDc, O57SDc, PR33a and PR34a. The paper is horizontally ribbed, with approximately 40 ribs per inch. To view the ribs, the stamp must be held at a flat angle in a strong light, and viewed at right angles to the ribbing, looking obliquely at the stamp. A Tensor light is a good source, but any bright, concentrated light will work. Some practice is necessary before one gets the knack, but after the ribs become apparent the first time, it is relatively easy to identify them thereafter. The ribs may be either on the face of the stamp or on the reverse side.

For this study, approximately 200 copies each of Scott O1SDc, O10SDc, O25SDc and O57SDc were used, totaling about 800 stamps. These stamps were categorized as to whether they were ribbed on the front or on the back. The results appear in Table 1.

TABLE 1 - ANALYSIS OF RIBBING

Scott number	O1SDc	O10SDc	O25SDc	O57SDc
	1¢ Agriculture	1¢ Executive	1¢ Justice	1¢ State
Ribbed front	77=35.8%	68=37.8%	101=50.2%	35=17.9%
Ribbed back	138=64.2%	112=62.2%	100=49.8%	160=82.1%
Total	215=100%	180=100%	201=100%	195=100%

Grand total: 791 stamps examined, of which 281 (or 35.5%) were ribbed on front, and 510 (64.5%) were ribbed on back.

Several conclusions can be reached from this analysis. The first is that these stamps were oriented in the printing press both with the ribs on back, and with the ribs on front. Furthering that finding, there appears to be a completely random distribution of how the stamps were oriented in the press. While approximately half of the Justice Department, O25SDc, were printed with the ribs on front, only 17.9% of the State Department, O57SDc, were printed with the same orientation. About 1/3 of the Agriculture and Executive stamps were printed with the ribs on front. This distribution seems to strongly suggest that there was no reason for the paper to be placed in the press with either the ribbed side to receive the printing or the flat side to receive it. Not only do the ribs appear to randomly appear on one side or the other, there is no distinguishable difference between the appearance of the printed images on stamps oriented one way compared to stamps oriented the other way. One might intuit that the press operators were supplied with stacks of paper stock which were either ribbed side up or ribbed side down, and they simply took sheets of paper from the stacks with no regard to the ribbing. In fact, they might not have even known that the paper was ribbed, or if they did, they might have had no reason to use it one way or another.

Do we have any hints about why this ribbed paper was used? Not really. It may have been that CBNC simply bought paper from a different supplier, or it may have been that the existing paper supplier changed their manufacturing process by using wire wound dandy or pull rollers. Perhaps the ribbed paper cost less than the hard white paper used in the first printing. These suggestions have nothing to do with the quality of the final product, and, as pointed out above, it seems unlikely that quality was a consideration. But whether quality was or was not of concern, the orientation of the paper in the printing press did not seem to enter into that question. Also, one cannot say that the quality of the printed stamps from this late 1875 printing on ribbed paper is distinguishably different than the quality of the first printing on hard white paper. So quality considerations probably had little or nothing to do with the choice of paper.

One might speculate that CBNC logically would begin receiving stocks of ribbed paper while they still had some hard white paper left. If true, this raises the question of

Table 1 — Synopsis of Stamps Included in Special Printing Program

Original Issue	No. of stamps in printing	Scott Numbers	Order date	Bill Book Date	Issue date	Printed by
1847	2	3,4		6/30/75	1875	BEP
1857-1860	8	40-47		6/30/75	1875	CBNC
Franklin & Eagle Carriers	2 (note 1)	LO3, LO4, LO5, LO6		6/30/75	1875	CBNC
1861-1866	10	102-111	8/26/74	6/30/75	1875	NBNC
1869	10	123-132	8/26/74	6/30/75	1875	NBNC
1865 Newspaper & Periodicals	3	PR5-7		6/30/75	7/21/75	NBNC
1874 Newspaper & Periodicals	24	PR33-56		6/30/75	2/23/75	CBNC
Departmentals	92	O1SD-O93SD		6/30/75	2/23/75	CBNC
1873	11	167-177		6/30/75	5/5/75	CBNC
1875	2	180-181		12/31/75	1876	CBNC
1874 Newspaper & Periodicals	2	PR33a*, PR34a*		12/31/75	1/3/76	CBNC
Franklin & Eagle Carriers	2	LO3a*, LO5a*		12/31/75	1/3/76	CBNC
Departmentals	4	O1SDc, O10SDb, 025SDc, O57SDc		12/31/75	1/3/76	CBNC
Postage Due	7	J8-J14		10/31/79	10/25/79	ABNC
Postage Due	7	J8a*-J14a*		11/14/79	1879	ABNC
1869	1	133a		3/31/80	1880	ABNC
1879	13	192-204		7/31/80	7/16/80	ABNC
Franklin & Eagle Carriers	2	LO3b*, LO5b*		2/28/81	1881	ABNC
1865 Newspaper & Periodicals	1	PR8		2/28/81	1881	ABNC

Table 1 (continued, p. 2)

Departmentals	3	O10xSD, O35xSD, 083xSD**		2/28/81	1881	ABNC
Eagle Carrier	1	LO5c*,**		8/31/81	1881	ABNC
1869	1	133		8/31/81	1881	ABNC
Departmentals	1	O57xSD		8/31/81	8/21/81	ABNC
1882	1	205C		2/29/82	2/4/82	ABNC
1882	1	205Ca*		3/31/82	4/11/82	ABNC
1869	1	133b*		8/31/82	1882	ABNC
1874 Newspaper & Periodicals	1	PR80		4/30/83	1883	ABNC
Postage Due	1	J8b*		8/31/83	1883	ABNC
1883	2	211B, 211D		12/31/83	1883	ABNC
Departmentals	2	O1SDd*; O10SDd*,**		12/31/83	1883	ABNC
1865 Newspaper & Periodicals	1	PR8a*		2/29/84	1884	ABNC
1874 Newspaper & Periodicals	2	PR80a*,**;PR35a*,**		5/31/84	1884	ABNC
Total:		221	This sum includes five stamps of which all copies were destroyed			
		(note 1) Perforated & Imperforate	*Number suggested by author **All copies destroyed			

whether some CBNC stamps were printed on both types of paper. That is, the press operator could be working from a stack of hard white paper, and then this might have been replenished with ribbed paper, and whatever stamp he was printing at the time could then exist on both types of paper. We do not know, but it is an interesting possibility.

It is worth noting, parenthetically, that not all of the late 1875 CBNC special printing was on ribbed paper. The Franklin Carrier stamp reprint was on the same rose colored paper that was used for the original stamp and also for the first reprint. The Eagle Carrier stamp reprint was on a wove paper, and used a fluorescent ink. The rose colored paper was used for the Franklin stamp in order to keep the appearance of the original stamp. It is not known why the Eagle Carrier did not use the ribbed paper.

It is also worth mentioning that the analysis appearing in Table 1 did not include either of the second printings of the Newspaper and Periodical stamps, PR33a and PR34a. There was simply not a large enough sample of these available to have any statistical confidence in the results. □

SOME CONTEXT FOR THE 1875 SPECIAL PRINTING PROGRAM

WILLIAM E. MOOZ

Previous articles written in this series have mainly dealt with individual stamps for which there was more than one printing. Each of those articles was complete in itself, but did not discuss the relationship of the subject stamp to the program of which it was a part. Lacking was the context for the series which I have titled the 1875 Special Printing Program. This article is a short synopsis of the stamps in the program which will put the various issues of those stamps in perspective.

The data illustrated in this article were derived from several sources. In every case possible, data were taken from the "Bill Books,"¹ which are the official Post Office Department records of the expenditure of money for these stamps. These data were augmented by information published in Luff's *The Postage Stamps of the United States*.² Other sources refer to these stamps, but Luff presents the most complete and systematic data, which he apparently obtained from Post Office Department records which were subsequently destroyed.

As has been noted in previous articles, this program began in 1875 and continued until July 16, 1884. On that date, the remaining stamps which were unsold were counted and destroyed. Luff had access to these numbers, and from these data and the Bill Book information about the numbers of stamps ordered we can calculate the number of stamps sold.

During the program, the Bureau of Engraving and Printing and three printing firms participated in supplying the stamps. These firms were the Continental Bank Note Company (CBNC), the National Bank Note Company (NBNC) and the American Bank Note Company (ABNC). Each of these companies contributed characteristics to the stamps which are often important in distinguishing them from the regular issue of the stamp.

Table 1 summarizes the issues in chronological form. There was a total of 221 different individual stamps issued in the program. This is a number which may likely surprise many collectors, including U.S. specialists, and as will be seen in future articles, these include the rarest of all U.S. stamps. It would be virtually impossible for a person, regardless of wealth and dedication, to form a complete collection of them. □

¹Records of the Post Office Department, Record Group 28, Bill Book, vol. 1, Bill Book #3, Bill Book volume 4, Stamp Division, P.O.D., GSA, National Archives and Records Service, Washington, D.C.

²John K. Luff, *The Postage Stamps of the United States* (New York: Scott Stamp & Coin Co., Ltd., 1902).