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Article: Combs' Broken 'C' at Position 28: Confirmation of a Constant Overprint Variety of the Official Stamps Specimen Second Special Printing

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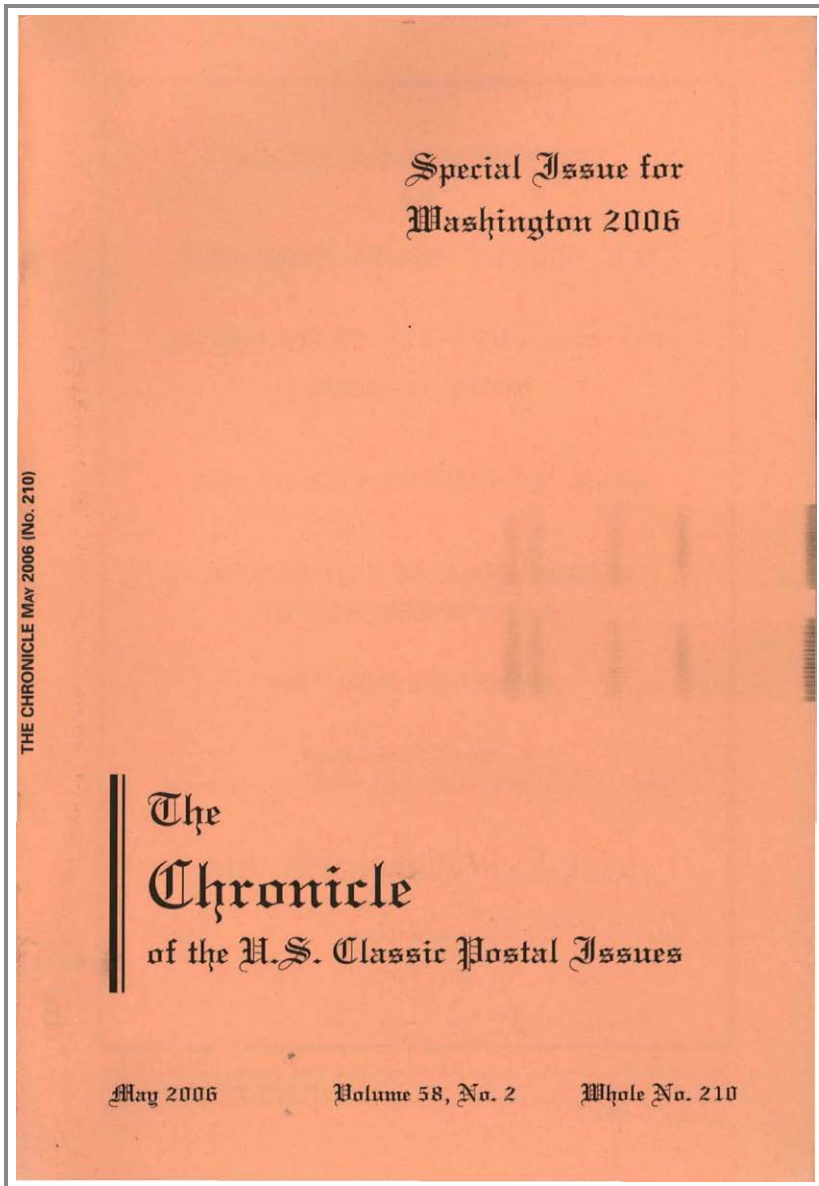


Table Of Contents

items marked with * cannot be viewed as an individual PDF document

[Click here to view the entire Volume: 58 No: 2 Chronicle: 210](#)

Starting Page

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.	81
Display Advertisement (1 page) Advertiser: Spink	82
Masthead (1 page)	83
Display Advertisement (1 page) Advertiser: Matthew Bennett Inc.	84
Table of Contents (1 page)	85
Display Advertisement (1 page) Advertiser: Schuyler Rumsey Philatelic Auctions	86
The Editor's Page	
Special Washington 2006 Issue (1 page) <i>Michael Laurence</i>	87
Guest Privilege	
United States Classics at U.S. International Exhibitions (21 pages) <i>Herbert A. Trenchard</i>	88
Prestamp and Stampless Period	
E.S. Zevely Makes Postmasters' Handstamps (12 pages) <i>James W. Milgram M.D.</i>	109
Carriers and Independent Mails	
Wiley's Washington City Despatch Post: a Sesquicentennial Commemoration (5 pages) <i>Gordon Stimmell</i>	121
Display Advertisement (2 pages) Advertiser: Nutmeg Stamp Sales, Inc.	126
1847 Period	
Plating the 5¢ 1847 Block of 16 (4 pages) <i>William H. Gross</i>	128
Display Advertisement (1 page) Advertiser: United States Stamp Society	131
1851-61 Period	
A Very Early Use of the 1¢ Circular Rate and Some Observations about eBay (3 pages) <i>Hubert C. Skinner</i>	132
1869 Period	
The Experimental Washington Postmarks of 1862 - 63 (7 pages) <i>Richard B. Graham</i>	135
Display Advertisement (1 page) Advertiser: Stephen T. Taylor	141
1869 Period	
The Pembina Post Office - Red River B.N.A. Mail Service: a Further Update (2 pages) <i>Jeffrey M. Forster</i>	142
Display Advertisement (1 page) Advertiser: Leonard H. Hartmann	143
Bank Note Period	
Resurrection of the Columbus, Ohio, Seven - Bar Grid in a Square (3 pages) <i>James Doolin</i>	144
Display Advertisement (1 page) Advertiser: Robert A. Siegel Auction Galleries, Inc.	147
Officials	
Combs' Broken 'C' at Position 28: Confirmation of a Constant Overprint Variety of the Official Stamps Specimen Second Special Printing (2 pages) <i>Alfred E. Staubus, George G. Sayers</i>	148
Foreign Mails	
Letter Mail between the United States and Germany Under the Anglo - Prussian Convention, Part Two (12 pages) <i>Dwayne O. Littauer</i>	150
Display Advertisement (1 page) Advertiser: Kristal Kare, Inc.	161
The Cover Corner	
Answers to Problem Cover in Chronicle 209 (1 page) <i>Greg Sutherland</i>	162
Problem Cover for This Issue (2 pages) <i>Greg Sutherland</i>	162
Cover Corner on Line (1 page) <i>Greg Sutherland</i>	163

In Memoriam

In Memoriam: Roy Weber, 1945 - 2005 (1 page)	164
<i>W. Wilson Hulme II</i>	
Display Advertisement (1 page) Advertiser: The Collectors Club New York	165
Display Advertisement (1 page) Advertiser: U.S. Philatelic Classics Society	165
Display Advertisement (1 page) Advertiser: Charles G. Firby	166
Index to Advertisers (1 page)	167
Classified (1 page)	167
Display Advertisement (1 page) Advertiser: H.R. Harmer, Inc.	168
Display Advertisement (1 page) Advertiser: James E. Lee	Inside Back Cover
Display Advertisement (1 page) Advertiser: Robert A. Siegel Auction Galleries, Inc.	Back Cover

**COMBS' BROKEN 'C' AT POSITION 28:
CONFIRMATION OF A CONSTANT OVERPRINT VARIETY
OF THE OFFICIAL STAMPS SPECIMEN SECOND SPECIAL PRINTING**

GEORGE G. SAYERS and ALFRED E. STAUBUS

In 1965 the American Philatelic Society published as a pamphlet W. V. "Vince" Combs' landmark study¹ of the 1875 and subsequent special printings of the Official stamps.² On page 32 of that pamphlet, Figure 22 illustrates the 1¢ State Department overprinted SPECIMEN with "Broken 'C' in overprint." The related text describing the second special printing of the 1¢ State Department states simply, "A copy, position unknown, shows a broken 'C' in the overprint." Combs does not report this variety for the other stamps of the second special printing, and the authors have not found any discussion of this variety in the literature.

The authors are pleased to present in Figures 1 to 4 (opposite page) contrast-enhanced examples of Combs' Broken 'C' in the SPECIMEN overprint from the four stamps of the second printing, establishing this variety as a constant overprint variety of the second special printing, as rare as the 'SEPCIMEN' error. From his full sheet of the 1¢ Justice second special printing, author Al Staubus has identified this variety as from position 28 of the overprint. From his full sheet of the 1¢ Agriculture Second Special Printing, William E. Mooz has confirmed this variety as from position 28.

As a reference, Figure 5 shows the normal overprint. Here the gap between the prongs of the 'C' is comparatively narrow. On the broken 'C' examples, it's clear that a piece of the top prong of the 'C' has broken away.

The other recognized overprint variety from the second special printing, the "small dotted 'i' in SPECIMEN" variety from positions 7 and 26 of the overprint, is presented as Figures 6 and 7. These examples are identified by position from complete sheets.

These two overprint positions are generally considered not distinguishable by students of the issue, although the underlying stamps may show small repeating variations which allow position-specific identification. This question is the subject of ongoing research by William E. Mooz and others, and will be the subject of an article in the future. ■

¹ W. V. Combs, *U. S. Departmental Specimen Stamps* (State College, Pa.: The American Philatelic Society, 1965).

² Even though there were many sheets of Official stamps in the Stamp Agent's inventory, late in 1874 the Post Office Department ordered 10,000 complete sets of the 88 small-size Official stamps reprinted and overprinted 'SPECIMEN'. These were the first special printing, available in March, 1875. The supplies of the 1¢ Agriculture, 1¢ Executive, 1¢ Justice and 1¢ State stamps from this printing were exhausted late in 1875, and ten thousand each of these four stamps were again reprinted and overprinted 'SPECIMEN' from a new rack of type. These are the second special printing. There were three subsequent reprints of one or two Official stamps overprinted 'SPECIMEN'. For details, see Combs' pamphlet.



Figure 1. 1¢ Agriculture.



Figure 2. 1¢ Executive.



Figure 3. 1¢ Justice.



Figure 4. 1¢ State.

Above, broken 'C' in 'SPECIMEN', from position 28, second special printing, shown on stamps of four different departments. On Broken 'C' examples, the gap between the prongs of the 'C' is quite wide. The scans of the overprint images on this page have had contrast enhanced and include portions of the side ornaments from the stamp design for identification. The stamps in Figures 1 and 2 are shown courtesy of William E. Mooz.



Figure 5. A normal example of the second special printing 'SPECIMEN' overprint, here on a 1¢ Justice stamp. Note that the gap between the prongs of the 'C' is much narrower than the examples in Figures 1-4.



Figure 6. 1¢ Agriculture.



Figure 7. 1¢ Justice.

Above, two examples of the Small 'i' in 'SPECIMEN' variety. The example in Figure 6, on a 1¢ Agriculture stamp shown courtesy of William E. Mooz, is from position 26 of the second special printing. The example from the 1¢ Justice stamp in Figure 7 comes from position 7 of the second special printing.