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Type 1



Type 2



Type 3



Type 4



Four SPECIMEN overprint types exist on card proofs of most classic United States stamps. The total number of items is over 600 and each is unique. In a major study in our Essay-Proof section, starting on page 227, Michael Plett traces the origins of the card-proof SPECIMEN overprints and provides detailed census information.

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OFFICIALS

ALAN C. CAMPBELL, EDITOR

CONSTANT PLATE VARIETIES OF THE 1873 OFFICIAL STAMPS: TREASURY DEPARTMENT

GEORGE G. SAYERS

This is the eighth of nine studies documenting the constant plate varieties currently reported and verified in the philatelic literature both public and privately distributed, for the 1873 Official stamps. Definitions and historical references are found in the introduction to the series preceding the first article.¹ Most plate varieties not illustrated but described in these studies can be found as printed, enlarged scans in the author's book, "Departmentals Plate Varieties" at the American Philatelic Research Library.² These studies are intended to be informative and useful to the interested non-specialist collector. Suggestions to further these goals will be welcomed.

This study of the Treasury Department stamps illustrates for the first time several major plate varieties listed in the *Scott Specialized Catalogue of United States Stamps and Covers* which have not been depicted in the philatelic literature. For the catalog-listed plate varieties, no additional reports are cited except *Chronicle* articles. Most Treasury stamps are readily available, including the five denominations reprinted on soft paper. Most of the plate varieties are not difficult to find, but the Treasury ink reformulation for the soft paper tended to minimize the appearance of the double transfers and the smaller plate damages. Few plate varieties on certified soft paper stamps have been reported. For eight of the 11 1875 Special Printing stamps, fewer than 100 were sold, and plate varieties are rare.

The 1¢ and 2¢ stamps were printed from plates of 200 impressions. The 3¢ stamp was printed from two plates, 29 and 33, both of 200 impressions. All four plates have engraved top and bottom arrows marking the interpane cut between columns 10 and 11. For the 3¢ stamp, Plate 33 was used for the 1875 Special Printing and the post-1884 proofs.³ The 3¢ plate or plates used for the 1873 India-paper proofs, the soft paper printings, the trial-color proofs and the first and second printings of the proofs on card stock have not been identified. For all other values, the same plates were used for all printings.

The other eight stamps were printed from plates of 100 impressions. As with previously described plates of 100, some plates show partial vertical lines and one or more dots in the margin between columns five and six, partial horizontal lines in the margin between rows five and six, and a dot or dots in the geometric center of the plate at the intersection of these two lines. It is beyond the scope of these studies to identify these markings by position, although the author may comment on them. Some varieties have been found on cover.

Treasury Department: 1¢ (Scott O72)

The catalog-listed double transfer refers to many positions. Double transfers of the top and/or bottom frame lines and adjacent design elements can be seen on possibly as many as 80 positions of this 200-impression plate. Die assembly reference dots are found close to the top left and bottom left corners of the design, and are doubled into vertical

dashes which vary with the separation of the two impressions. One stamp with a left-shifted double transfer and a left straight edge has been reported, and is probably from the first column of the right pane.

Treasury Department: 2¢ (Scott O73)

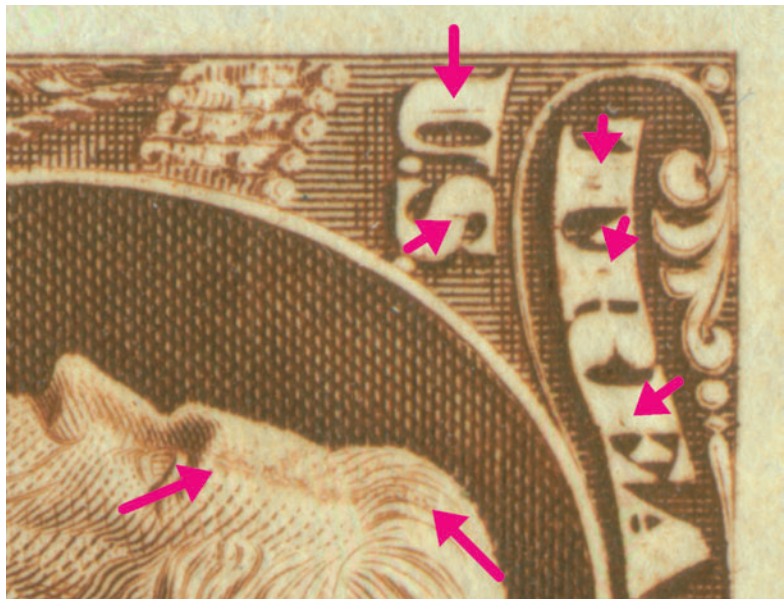
The catalog-listed major scratch in the top of Position 3 of the right pane is shown as Figure 1. The scratch runs from the margin through the “S” of “TREASURY”.

The catalog-listed double transfer refers to at least three distinct types in this 200-impression plate. Part of the right-shifted overall double transfer is shown as Figure 2, from an unknown plate position in an early India-paper proof block (Scott O73P3). This position shows remnant lines in many of the letters and a smear in Jackson’s forehead (indicated by the red arrows). Not included in the illustration is a notable vertical smear in the right margin from the erasure and several small remnants throughout the design. At least two positions show downward shifted double transfers which include the dark shading lines below and to the right of the “2”. One example is at Position 94 of the right pane. A few positions show narrowly spaced doubling of the bottom frame line and rarely the adjacent design elements.



Figure 1. 2¢ Treasury, Right Pane Position 3, scratch from the margin through the “S” of “TREASURY”.

Figure 2. 2¢ Treasury, part of a double transfer from an unknown position. The red arrows mark the vertical remnant lines in the letters and the smear through Jackson’s forehead. From an early India-paper proof (O73P3).



Treasury Department: 3¢ (Scott O74, O109 soft paper)

The double bottom frame line is seen on die proofs. It is not a double transfer. The 3¢ Treasury has 400 positions to consider. Surprisingly, no double transfers have been reported. Full sheets of the right pane of Plate 29 and the left pane of Plate 33 are being studied.

The catalog-listed “shaded circle outside of right frame line” has not been verified. The author has noted one 1875 Special Printing stamp from the Lewenthal collection⁴ showing a small circular blob outside the right margin next to “CENTS” which may be the source of this listing. The stamp shows the wide right margin and straight edge found on the right side of many 1875 Special Printing sheets, indicating it is from the right column of the right pane of Plate 33. This plate was retained after the destruction of obsolete plates authorized in 1884, and used to print the later card and India-paper proofs. No other example of this variety on stamps or proofs has been reported. Lewenthal was an influential collector of the 1873 Official stamps active from the late 1920s to the 1950s. His collection was a primary reference for W. V. Combs’ pamphlet on the Officials 1875 Special Printings.⁵

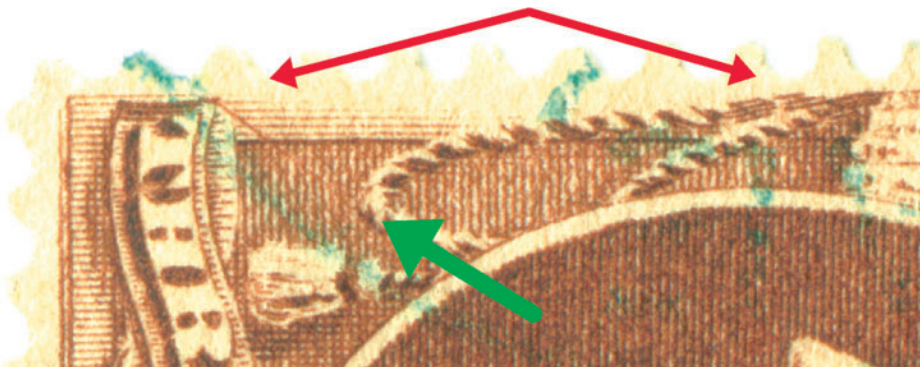


Figure 3. 3¢ Treasury, Plate 29, Left Pane Position 6, erasure of the lower left vertical frame lines indicated by the red arrows and plate scratch indicated by the green arrow.

Figure 3 shows the plate scratch and erasure of some vertical frame lines found in the lower left of Position 6 of the left pane of Plate 29. The erasure is indicated by the red arrows, the scratch by the green arrow. Some copies show a partial capture of the top imprint.

The erasure of some lower left frame lines of Position 31 of the right pane of Plate 29 is shown as Figure 4 indicated by the red arrows. There is an almost identical erasure of the lower left frame lines found in the left column of the left pane of Plate 29. The stamp from this position frequently shows a wide left margin. Copies of 6L29 (noted above) found without the scratch, or 31R29 with perforations, will be difficult to distinguish from the other two very similar positions. No proofs of these three positions have been reported.

Plate scratches in the margin to the right of Position 10 of the right pane of Plate 29



Figure 4. 3¢ Treasury, Plate 29, Right Pane Position 31, erasure of the lower left vertical frame lines, indicated by the red arrows.

Figure 5. 3¢ Treasury, Plate 29, Right Pane Position 10, scratches in the right margin indicated by the red arrows.

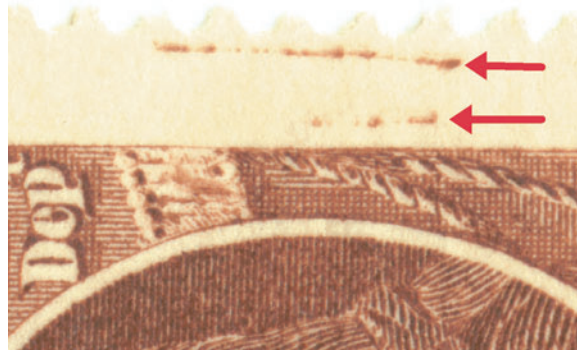


Figure 6. 3¢ Treasury, Plate 29, Right Pane Position 36, short transfer/erasure of the bottom indicated by the red arrow.

are shown as Figure 5, indicated by the red arrows.

The catalog-listed short transfer/erasure of the bottom at Position 36 of the right pane of Plate 29 is shown as Figure 6, indicated by the double-headed red arrow.

There is a short thick horizontal plate scratch found in the “3” of Position 80 of the left pane of Plate 33.

Rollin C. Huggins reported a scarce plate crack found in the lower right corner of an unknown position.⁶ The only example the author has seen of a plate damage in the lower right of the 3¢ is the plate scratch seen in the lower right of Position 91 of the right pane of Plate 33. This damage, from a trimmed stamp, is shown as Figure 7, indicated by the red arrows. This position occasionally shows the top of the bottom interpane arrow in the bottom left margin. This damage may not be the crack described by Huggins.

Several positions show small erasures of the lower section of the left vertical frame line.

Luff records Plate 29 was used for soft paper printings;⁷ the varieties listed above from that plate should be found on soft paper. The author has not recorded any. Plate 33 was also in use at that time and may have been used to print some soft-paper stamps with the above listed plate varieties.

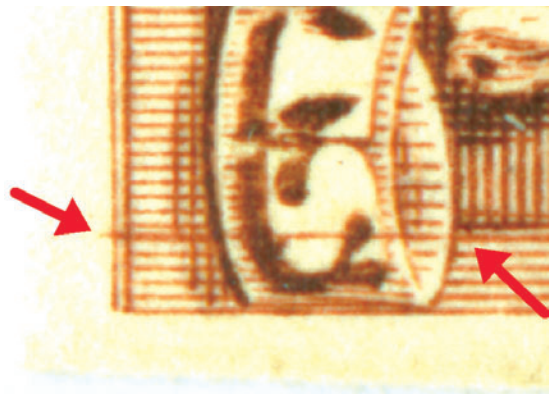


Figure 7. 3¢ Treasury, Plate 33, Right Pane Position 91, scratch through the “S” of “CENTS” indicated by the red arrows.

Treasury Department: 6¢ (Scott O75, O110 soft paper)

The catalog-listed dirty plate variety has been a subject of debate since noted professional philatelist Charles J. Phillips described this variety on hard paper as a “worn plate” in 1931.⁸ Scott continued to describe the variety as “worn plate” into the 1990s. The issue is that the later soft-paper printings show little evidence of a worn plate or of re-entry, while the 1894 card and India-paper proof multiples do show some evidence interpretable as a worn plate. Phillips correctly notes that the 6¢ transfer roll produced relatively shallow impressions on the plate. The shallow engraved fine lines can be susceptible to the problem pressmen called “plugging,” if ink dries quickly, resulting in the appearance of a worn plate. As the author has previously noted, the inks had to be reformulated to print on soft paper about 1879. Probably, the plates were given a thorough cleaning as part of the process of reformulation to get a good print. Examination of 1873 India-paper proofs, 1881 “Atlanta” proofs and the 1894 proofs supports the description as a dirty-plate production variety, not a constant plate variety. Nonetheless some of the stamps are spectacular production varieties worthy of inclusion in any Officials collection.

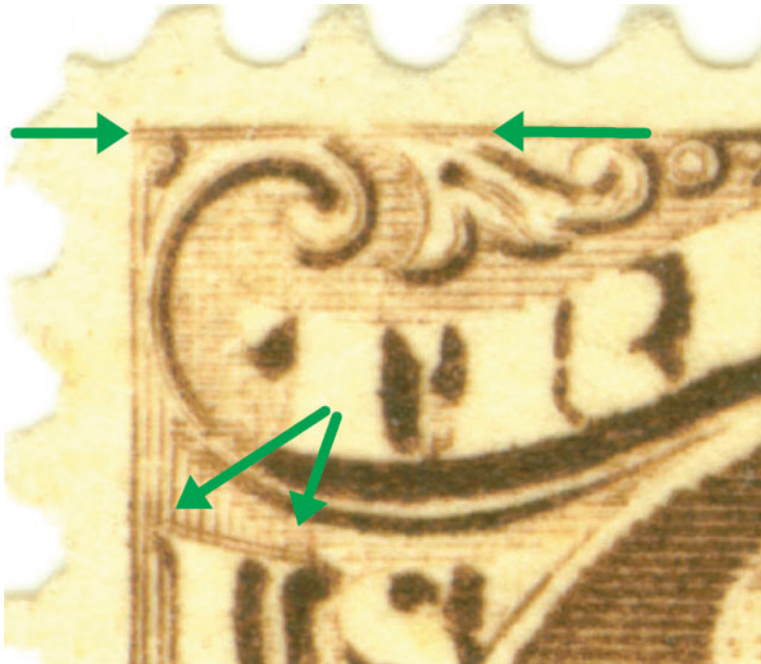


Figure 8. 6¢ Treasury, double transfer of the top left frame and the top of the “U” of “U.S”, indicated by the green arrows, from an unknown position. Illustrated through the courtesy of Alfred E. Staubus.

The catalog-listed double transfer shown as Figure 8 occurs in a few unidentified positions in the top left corner as a doubling of the top frame and a few horizontal design elements, indicated by the green arrows.

Treasury Department: 7¢ (Scott O76)

The double bottom frame line is seen on the die proofs. It is not a double transfer. Examination of an India-paper proof pair from the Markovits exhibit collection shows double transfers of the top frames and a few adjacent design elements of both stamps. Partial capture of the bottom imprint proves these are Positions 91 and 92. The variety is too small to be seen on most production stamps. Lot 820 of Simmy’s sale 139, February 3, 1982, of the Wolf and the Hatton collections, was an 1875 Special Printing stamp described as having a double transfer at the top.

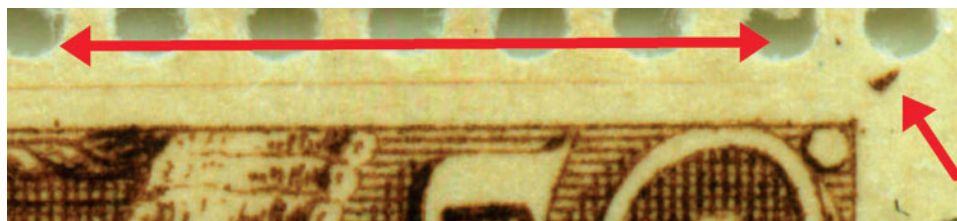


Figure 9. 7¢ Treasury, Position 3, small damage and scratch descending from it indicated by the red arrows on this slightly enhanced image from an 1875 Special Printing (O76S), courtesy of Alfred E. Staubus.

There is a small plate damage and vertical scratch descending from it in the left margin of Position 3 shown as Figure 9. The plate damage and scratch are indicated by the red arrows, shown from an 1875 Special Printing stamp (O76S).

Treasury Department: 10¢ (Scott O77, O112 soft paper)

The double transfer catalog-listed since 1935 has not been confirmed by modern students. No literature references reporting this variety have been found. It may have been reported from examination of India-paper proof sheets done in the early 1930s, or it may be a reporting error. No other plate varieties have been reported for this stamp.

Treasury Department: 12¢ (Scott O78)

Part of the left-shifted double transfer at Position 1 is shown as Figure 10 from a proof block on card stock. The lines in the “VE” of “TWELVE” indicated by the green arrows are characteristic of this position. The position also shows segments of the partly erased left frame line and a pair of dark dots just outside the middle of the left frame. The red arrows indicate the doubled bottom frame lines.

Part of the up-and-left-shifted double transfer at Position 5 is shown as Figure 11 from a proof block on card stock. The doubled left frame line, top design element remnants and bottoms of “R” and “S” of “TREASURY” indicated by the red arrows are characteristic of this position. Tall copies can be identified by the bottoms of the script “No.” characters captured in the top margin. The position also shows extension of the central shading lines into white frame above and right of the “T” of “TWELVE” and segments of the remnant left frame line.

Part of the left-shifted double transfer at Position 21 is shown as Figure 12 from a proof block on card stock. The remnant marks in the “T” of “TREASURY” and in the “U.S” indicated by the red arrows are characteristic of this position, as is a dark line in the middle bar of the “E” in “CENTS”, not illustrated. The position also shows extension of the central shading lines into white frame above and right of the “T” of “TWELVE” and small remnants of the erased left frame line.

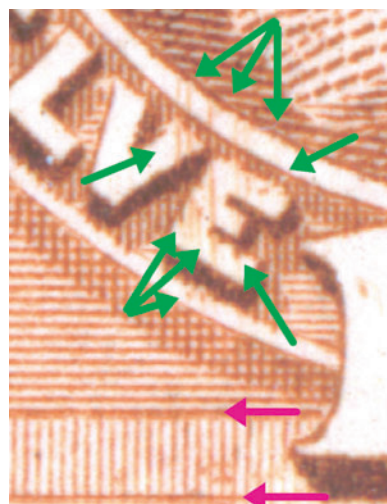


Figure 10. 12¢ Treasury, Position 1, part of the left-shifted double transfer. The green arrows indicate some doubled vertical shading lines in the letters “VE” of “TWELVE”. The red arrows show the doubled bottom frame lines. Illustrated from a proof on card stock (O78P4).

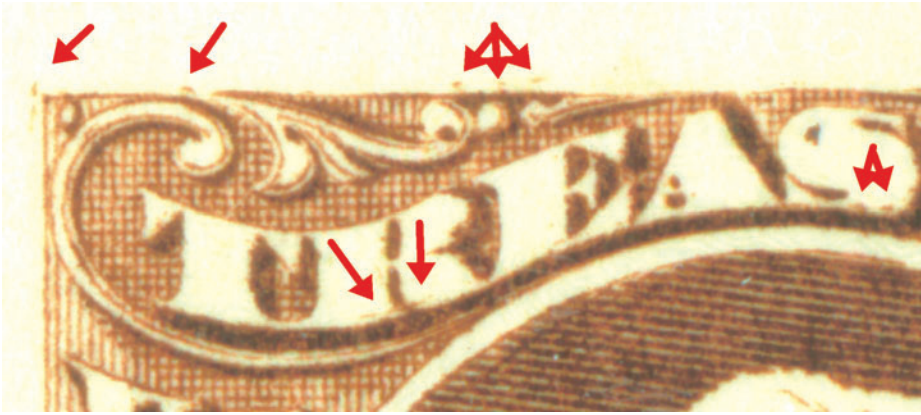


Figure 11. 12¢ Treasury, Position 5, some characteristic remnants of the up-and-left-shifted double transfer indicated by the red arrows, illustrated from a proof on card stock (O78P4).



Figure 12. 12¢ Treasury, Position 21, some characteristic remnants of the left-shifted double transfer indicated by the red arrows, from a proof on card stock (O78P4).

A few unidentified positions show additional small left-shifted double transfers of the left frame line. A few positions, notably Position 9, show small double transfers of the bottom right frame line. In a few positions, prominent vertical layout lines run through the position dot at the left edge of the central oval, appearing to be plate scratches.

Treasury Department: 15¢ (Scott O79)

The top right corner of the die proof shows two top frame lines. This part of the design appears to be a double transfer on some stamps, but is not.

A short transfer/erasure of the mid-left side frame is being studied.

Treasury Department: 24¢ (Scott O80)

The catalog-listed double transfer at the top of Position 16, consisting of two straight lines through “EAS” of “TREASURY” is shown as Figure 13, indicated by the red arrows, from an India-paper proof (O80P3).

The catalog-listed short transfer across the top of Position 61 is a true short transfer caused by the transfer roll not completing its travel on the plate, not the result of an erasure.



Figure 13. 24¢ Treasury, Position 16, double transfer of two horizontal lines in “EAS” of “TREASURY” indicated by arrows. Illustrated from an India-paper proof (O80P3).



Figure 14. 24¢ Treasury, Position 61, short transfer across the entire top of the stamp. Most of the vertical shading lines are missing in the ornaments above “TREASURY” and the top frame line is weak. Illustrated from an India-paper proof (O80P3).



Figure 15. 30¢ Treasury, Position 41, short transfer of the top frame line and part of the adjacent ornaments across the entire stamp. Illustrated from an India-paper proof (O81P3).

This variety is shown as Figure 14 from an India-paper proof (O80P3). The vertical shading lines in the ornaments above “TREASURY” are largely missing across the entire top, and the top frame line is lighter than normal.

Treasury Department: 30¢ (Scott O81, O112 soft paper)

The catalog-listed short transfer/erasure of the left top of Position 95 was illustrated from an 1875 Special Printing in *Chronicle* 171, pg. 191.⁹ This variety is difficult to distinguish from the virtually identical erasure of Position 26. Side-by-side comparison of plated India-paper proof multiples shows the two vertical shading lines left of the pearl are slightly shorter in Position 95. However, variations in printing and possible travel wear on used copies may blur this difference.

The catalog-listed short transfer across the top of Position 41 is a true short transfer caused by the transfer roll not completing its travel on the plate. Similar to the preceding 24¢ short transfer, the 30¢ shading lines in the ornaments above “TREASURY” are largely



Figure 16. 30¢ Treasury, Position 45, erasure of part of the top right frame line and adjacent ornaments, indicated by the red arrows.

missing and the top frame line did not transfer. This variety is shown as Figure 15 from an India-paper proof (O81P3).

The catalog-listed short transfer/erasure of the right top of Position 45 is shown as Figure 16 indicated by the red arrows. The 1875 Special Printing of this stamp has been reported.

All four varieties have been recorded on soft paper.

Treasury Department: 90¢ (Scott O82, O113 soft paper)

A small erasure of the top left corner from an unknown position was reported in the “Plate Varieties” column of the *United States Specialist*, September, 1980, pg. 463. The author has noted the variety on stamps, but not on proofs or soft paper, indicating this may be a dirty-plate variety.

Endnotes

1. George G. Sayers, “Constant Plate Varieties of the 1873 Official Stamps: The Department of Agriculture, Introduction and Definitions,” *Chronicle* 219, pp. 218-220. Part 2, dealing with the Executive, appears at *Chronicle* 220, pp. 323-327. Part 3, dealing with the Department of the Interior, appears at *Chronicle* 221, pp. 63-71. Part 4, dealing with the Department of Justice, appears at *Chronicle* 222, pp. 155-162. Part 5, with co-author Dr. Alfred E. Staubus, dealing with the Navy Department, appears at *Chronicle* 223, pp. 229-239. Part 6, dealing with the Post Office Department, appears at *Chronicle* 225, pp. 51-60; Part 7, dealing with the Department of State, appears at *Chronicle* 226, pp. 129-137.
2. George G. Sayers, *Departmental Plate Varieties*, privately published, 2nd Edition, two volumes, 2005.
3. Dr. Alfred E. Staubus has identified Plate 33 as the plate used for the 1875 Special Printing. This information was left out of Luff’s listing of the officials special printing plates on pg. 261 of John N. Luff, *The Postage Stamps of the United States* (New York: The Scott Stamp & Coin Co., Ltd. 1902).
4. Lot 450, Simmy’s auction 104, January 18, 1978, of the Robert Lewenthal Specimen Collection.
5. W. V. Combs, *U. S. Departmental Specimen Stamps*, (State College, Pa.: The American Philatelic Society, 1965).
6. Rollin C. Huggins, Jr., *Official Chatter*, June, 1991.
7. Luff, *op. cit.*, pg. 215.
8. Charles J. Phillips, “U. S. Department Stamps—Plate Varieties,” *Collectors Club Philatelist*, July, 1931, pp. 245-246.
9. Roy D. Craig, Jr., “Plate Varieties on the 3¢ Justice and 30¢ Treasury Departmental Stamps,” *Chronicle* 171, pp. 190-191.