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Answers to Questions on *U. S. 1861 ISSUE*

Wherein Mr. Perry replies to Mr. Rich, who requested 'factual information' on certain aspects of premieres gravures.

By ELLIOTT PERRY

THE COLLECTORS CLUB PHILATELIST for January, 1947 (pages 20, 21 and 22), contained an article by Stephen G. Rich entitled "Facts Wanted on U. S. 1861 Stamps," wherein the work of several writers (including the subscriber) on subjects relating to the 1861 issue was commented upon more or less accurately for having failed to supply the facts which are needed, or were alleged to be needed. Mr. Rich summed up by stating;

"We need factual information, which ought to be supplied by the men who have made the most extensive studies of the 1861 U. S. stamps, on at least one of these aspects."

Mr. Rich then asked seven questions, as follows, to which frank answers are hereby appended:

QUESTION: Did any of the Premieres Gravures actually go into the keeping or possession of the Post Office Dept. at any time?

ANSWER: No factual proof has been found. Some records may (or do) indicate that the National Bank Note Co.'s motive in printing, gumming and perforating some or all of the premier plate impressions, which are included in Scott Catalogue Nos. 55 to 62, was to submit them to the Post Office Department to help to obtain the 1861 contract, by demonstrating that suitable perforated stamps could be supplied by that contractor.

QUESTION: What is the real history of the copies of the Premieres Gravures now in philatelic possession?

ANSWER: This is a \$64 question, which requires tracing the history of dozens of stamps for dozens of years. Mr. Rich may be as competent to tackle this job as anyone else. Nearly all of the 3c stamps (Scott No. 56) are known to have come from one source in the United States, and there is good reason to believe that this supply was never in the Post Office Department. Very few other "premieres" are known to have been found in this country. Many of them have been traced to Europe. There is evidence that at least one set was found in the records of a postal administration there.

Catalog Listing

QUESTION: What facts, if any, justify the continuance of listing of the Premieres Gravures as stamps in the standard catalogs?

ANSWER: This question involves a legal technicality. The 1861 issue has never been demonetized. Is the burden of proof upon the Department or upon the holder of the stamp as to whether a premier impression is valid or invalid for postage? If the Post Office is obliged to accept such an impression as valid now, it is certainly a stamp now, regardless of the reason for its existence, or how it got into circulation. Hence any premier which the Department would knowingly recognize as valid is a postage stamp, and is entitled to be so classed in catalogs of postage stamps.

The Post Office might refuse the 1c, 3c, 5c,

12c and 90c because the designs of those five "premieres" differ from those of the regularly issued stamps of those values (Scott Nos. 63, 64, 65, 67, 69, 72, 75, 76, 78), but would have no such ground for refusing the 24c and 30c—or even the 10c. The premier plates of those three denominations were also used for regularly issued stamps, and the hues of the premier impressions closely approximate those of the issued stamps. In fact, the color difference between any premier and the same denomination of the regular issue is less than the color differences which are found between various printings of the regular stamps—particularly the "regular" 5c.

"Essays" or "Sample Labels"

QUESTION: What facts (if any) justify the attempt to use such terms as "sample label" instead of "essay" for some of the Premieres Gravures?

ANSWER: No facts justify a change of nomenclature which is contradictory and confusing, as well as needless. A "label" is intended to be affixed to something. But the author who uses "sample labels" instead of "essays" contends that those "labels" were never intended to be used for postage stamps and, moreover, that impressions from the premier plates of the 1c, 3c, 5c, 12c and 90c could not legally be issued for postage.¹ If 99, 103, etc. that is so, they were not intended to be affixed to anything. Therefore they were not labels at all, and the misborn term "sample label" is repudiated by its author's own argument.

24c—Three Die Designs—One Plate

QUESTION: For what factual or other reason have the differences between the 24c Premiere Gravure and the 24c regular 1861 stamp, in actual design, been ignored by students of these issues since these differences were put on record before 1942?

ANSWER: (a) The differences are not what Mr. Rich's article claims them to be; (b) they have not been ignored.

As shown in an article by Clarence W. Brazer in THE COLLECTORS CLUB PHILATELIST for July, 1941, there were two die blocks of the 24c 1861. On one of these die

blocks the 24c design had existed in two states, on the other in one state only. The three states showed that the original design had been altered by strengthening a few lines, and then similarly altered again.

In studying proofs from these dies, the A. P. S. Handbook Committee and others agreed partly, but not wholly, with the sequence of alterations as given in Dr. Brazer's article. The Committee decided that the only plate (No. 6) from which the 24c stamps were printed was both entered and (at a later date) re-entered with the design on the single-state die which Dr. Brazer called Type II, and therefore *no other state of the 24c design had been used for the 24c stamps*. Dr. Brazer believes his Type II was replaced by the second state of the other die (Type III) for reentering the plate.

The premiers and all other 24c stamps and plate proofs differ from the die design which Dr. Brazer called Type I because *no plate was made from Type I*. Any impressions from the 24c plate in its first condition differ from the design Dr. Brazer called Type III, because Type III was not used until later, if at all. The later impressions from the 24c plate agree with, or differ from, Dr. Brazer's Type II or Type III according to which of those two states of the 24c design was used when the plate was re-entered.

The difference between the 24c die designs which Dr. Brazer identified as Types I, II and III was the discovery which Dr. Brazer made. This is the "difference in design" which misled Mr. Rich into asserting that other writers had ignored Dr. Brazer's discovery *that there were differences between the design on the Premieres Gravures and later impressions from the 24c plate*—a discovery which Dr. Brazer never claimed to have made.

The facts are that Dr. Brazer and other writers agreed (c) that all the Premieres Gravures, some proofs, and many regularly issued 24c stamps came from the first state of the 24c plate, and (d) other regularly issued 24c stamps and some proofs came from the later (re-entered) state of the 24c plate. Hence "the differences between the 24c Premiere Gravure and the 24c regular 1861 stamp, in actual design," which Mr. Rich considers to have been ignored by various

¹ *Stamp Specialist*, Yellow Book, 1942, pages 98,

writers, could not be "discovered" by anyone because they do not, and never did, exist. The only differences in design between the 24c premiers and any of the regularly issued 24c stamps (such as Scott Nos. 70 and 78) are the slight double transfers which come from certain positions on sheets which were printed after the 24c plate was re-entered.

The above facts which Mr. Rich's article claims "are not on printed record" were known to Dr. Brazer before the Brazer Essay Catalog was published by the A. P. S. Handbook Committee in 1941, and will be found on page 227 of that work, substantially as stated here.

30c "Deep Orange"

QUESTION: Is the ascription of the 30c deep orange to the Premieres justified?

ANSWER: This may be a matter of opinion rather than of fact. Some regularly issued 30c could be called "deep orange," and as the color of the premier is not exactly like that of any of the issued 30c (Scott No. 71), it might be helpful to give the premier a distinctive name, if such could be found.

The catalog designation "red orange" conveys the idea that the 30c premier (Scott No. 61) is redder than the orange of any of the 30c which were issued for postage. This idea may be merely a 50-year-old guess which has never been verified. Not only are variations of hue, shade and tint difficult to express accurately in words, but color perception varies between individuals, and also in the same individual at different periods of his life.

"Thin and Semi-transparent Paper"

QUESTION: What are the facts as to supposed or real differences of paper between the Premieres Gravures and early printings of the 1861 regular issue stamps?

ANSWER: This question is also in the \$64 class. The field has always been open to Mr. Rich or anyone else who yearned to tackle it. Perhaps those who gave thought to it before Mr. Rich did have realized its difficulties. The similarity between the paper of the premiers and many "regular" stamps which were issued for several months beginning in the latter half of August 1861 has been no secret. The

present writer and other students were aware of it before 1917. In the Scott catalogue the following note dates from 1922:

"The paper of Nos. 55 to 62 inclusive is thin and semi-transparent, that of the following issues is usually thicker and more opaque."

The present writer has personal knowledge that this note was inserted partly to afford a distinction between the scarce 24c "gray lilac," No. 60a, and the much commoner 24c "gray lilac," No. 78a—two stamps which are identical in design and which have been afflicted with an identical color name which may not be correct for either of them. Although the word "usually" may not apply throughout the late summer and fall of 1861, probably the catalog note is accurate for not less than 90 per cent of all the 24c and other values which were issued from August 1861 to the end of 1867. That note went as far as Mr. Luff was willing to go in 1922. Perhaps it should be considered to be truthful rather than wholly satisfactory. As late as 1866, stamps are sometimes found on paper as thin as, or even thinner than, is usually found on the premiers.

When it is remembered that used copies of the 10c and 24c so-called "premiers," if not most of those in unused condition (Scott Nos. 58 and 60), probably were not from a premier printing, but were printed along with other values of the so-called "regular issue," the difficulty of determining whether or not any of the "premier" paper was used for one or another stamp of the "regular issue" becomes more apparent. No rush to purchase 3c premiers at say \$25 each, for the purpose of subjecting them to chemical or other tests of their paper, is anticipated; or 3c pinks, 5c buffs, or 24c steel blues.

Conclusion

During the past quarter century, the writer has made several attempts to solve the problems connected with the 1861 issue, both by studying what has been printed by other writers, and by original research which has uncovered many new facts.² It has been like

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² Beginning in 1931, 40 or more installments in the series entitled "Seventy Years Ago" have appeared in *Pat Paragraphs*.

In addition to the album presented to the Secretary of the Navy, Mr. Lawler also presented albums to Andrew H. Hepburn, designer of the stamp, and to Eleanor R. Williams, daughter of a mail carrier who was in the Naval Service in World War II and killed in action. Miss Williams represented the school children of the United States whose efforts and contributions have kept the Constitution afloat. An album was also presented to the Most Reverend John J. Wright, D.D., Auxiliary Bishop of Boston, who pronounced the benediction.

Robert E. Fellers, Superintendent, Division of Stamps, Post Office Department, supervised first-day sales and cancellations.

A total of 4,700,000 stamps were sold, and 683,416 covers were canceled in Boston on the first day of sale.

Plate numbers used and dates to press:

- 23710 — to press September 30, 1947
- 23711 — to press September 30, 1947
- 23712 — to press October 2, 1947
- 23715 — to press October 2, 1947
- 23713 — to press October 7, 1947
- 23714 — to press October 7, 1947

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(continued from page 21)

trying to fill seven holes with six plugs. No matter how the facts were arranged a gap always remained in the story. The solution which was presented by Stanley B. Ashbrook in the *Stamp Specialist*, Yellow Book, 1942, fails to satisfy students who have studied the available data carefully because that "solution" states assumptions as facts, although they do not agree with the facts, and opens holes worse than those it attempts to fill.

For more than ten years the present writer has been convinced that the reason for using the premier plate (No. 4) of the 10c for postage stamps would appear,³ and other questions would have satisfactory answers, when the reason for using Brazer's Type II die for the 24c plate, and other facts about the 24c plate, became known.

³ Mr. Ashbrook's assumptions included a reason why the premier 10c plate *could have been* legally used, but his article is silent about why that plate *actually was used*—a question which still remains unanswered. (See also "An Echo from Bull Run" by E. P. in *Stamps* for September 2, 1933.)

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