

Yesterday in Mekeel's:

The U.S. One Cent 1861 Issue, Part III

by E. Tudor Gross (From *Mekeel's Weekly*, April 21, 1941, with images added)

(As noted last month, this is a rather lengthy article, so I am breaking it up over a series of USSN issues and trimming out less relevant sections. It is one man's approach to collecting one specific issue and can be emulated for this or any number of less expensive and/or more recent issues. JFD.)

B. Unused and Shades

In spite of the fact that these stamps were first issued eighty years ago, unused copies are not scarce, although mint copies, that is, with full original gum, are by no means common. The issue ran from August 17, 1861 to 1867 (without grill), and it is probable that the "grilled" stamp, according to figures in Luff's book, did not appear until the beginning of 1868.

The subject of "grills" will be discussed later on, and although I consider this stamp a separate issue (it has different numbers in the catalogue, according to the size of the grill), I feel it must be included in any study of the 1¢ 1861.

There is a somewhat limited field for the specialist in unused copies of any stamp. Shades, of course, vary, and as this stamp was in use for over six years, it is natural that the printings would not always be of the same degree of coloring. Consequently, we find shades varying from light blue to dark blue, ultramarine and indigo. Even these classifications can be sub-divided, so that we frequently meet with gradations in each division. Then too, we may try to secure blocks of four, as well as singles, of the various shades, so that the field of completeness is somewhat extended. Every now and then a single copy or a block shows up, differing in shade from those we already have, and so the quest goes on.



Left to right, Sc. 63, blue, 2020 o.g. SCV \$275;
63a ultramarine, SCV \$2,500; 63b, deep blue, SCV \$800

It is impossible for the makers of the catalogue to list all the shades known. An ultramarine, for example, may be light, pale, or dark, and the same qualifications would apply to blue, dark blue and indigo. This goes to prove that, for the specialist, there is no such thing as "completeness", and that only "time, patience and perseverance" will eventually produce a truly comprehensive showing.

It has been said that an unused stamp lacks character, that it was produced for a certain mission and that it has not fulfilled that mission. It was intended to prepay postage on correspondence and, if not used for that purpose, it "missed

its calling". While I, myself, prefer cancelled copies, provided that they are in fine condition, I must admit that a superb mint 1¢ 1861 is a "thing of beauty and a joy forever". Furthermore, consider the small number of these stamps that were never put to use. Collectors in the early days were not numerous, and hoarding of unused copies, such as we have witnessed in the last ten years, among twentieth century enthusiasts, was unheard of. Moreover, in the early days of collecting, hinges were unknown, and collectors "plastered" their unused copies on album pages, thereby destroying the original gum. This, therefore, greatly reduced the "floating supply" of mint copies. In my opinion, the quantity of 1¢ 1861 unused, in full original gum condition, is far scarcer than anyone appreciates.

Some may say, and frequently do, "what difference does it make if the stamp hasn't gum, provided it has never been used?" The answer is that at least the stamp with gum has not had a cancellation removed, and that it is in the same state as put out by the Post Office Department a little less than a century ago. It will never be possible to determine accurately how many of these stamps, in mint condition, survive today. Suffice it to say that the supply is very limited and that it is getting scarcer every year.

One more word about shades. The *Specialized Catalogue* lists the rarer shades, used, in the following order: Dark blue, indigo, bright blue and ultramarine.

The same shades in unused condition price a bit differently, but the fact remains that certain shades are rare whether used or unused, and the safest course for a collector to adopt is to "follow the catalogue". Personally, I consider bright blue one of the rarest of all shades, although a bright ultramarine, used or unused, is probably as difficult to find as any. There is, however, a shade which I call a steel blue. It is seldom found, and may possibly be a "changeling". I have only three or four copies and none unused. They are very hard to classify.

Under the head of shades, I feel I should mention "pastels", a peculiar "washed out" impression which has never been truly explained. I have a page of these in my collection. Stevenson, so far as I can learn, was the first to record this unusual impression, and although it is not a shade, it is a decided variety. If held horizontally to the light, the entire design looks "washed out", and yet it is not a blur. Nor do I think that the result is due to fading. My copies are in various shades and chemists tell me they are not changelings. What they are, I do not know, but, whatever they are, they are rare, and I have seen very few. I believe it was Stevenson who first called them "pastels", and as such I rate them in my collection. I would be at a loss to tell the cataloguers how to describe them for specialized listing.

C. Cancellations

It is very noticeable that collectors of Twentieth Century stamps, go in for singles or blocks of four in unused condition. Why is this? My idea is, that postmasters are no longer allowed to use their own ingenuity in canceling the stamps emanating from their offices. Today, the government, or the Post Office Department, to be exact, prescribes the form to be used in



The Indigo shade is seen on the 1861 Premier Gravure 1¢, no longer listed as Sc. 63, but now Sc. 63-E11e in the *Essays* section, SCV \$50,000.



Varieties listed under Sc. 63 not given minor letters: left, pale blue, and right, bright blue, both SCV \$275

canceling stamps. If an eccentric postmaster wished to produce a variety of cancellations to fit his own community (like an oyster for Maryland or an orange for Florida or California), it would not be permitted at the present time. This was not the case during the Civil War period. Any letter passing through a given post office had to have the stamp cancelled, so that it could not be used again. The form of the cancellation, however, was not prescribed. Prior to the issuance of stamps, many postmasters, on receiving the cash for a letter, stamped the word "paid" on the envelope, or, after stamps appeared, on the stamp, and the form of type used varied in many localities.



Some postmasters simply cancelled the stamps with pen and ink, hence the style "manuscript cancellation".

While hand stamp designs like stars, targets, sunbursts and



grids were common, many postmasters preferred unusual "killers", so as to be different from their neighbors. The most noteworthy of these officials was the postmaster of Waterbury, Connecticut, who was said to have been an artist at whittling corks. The designs he made were used as canceling devices, and same are so sought after today that they bring big prices, even though the stamp to which they are applied may not be rare.



New York City Union Soldier's Head fancy cancel



New York double-circle date stamp and geometric accounts for the fact that more unusual cancellations, are found on the 3¢ stamp than on the 1¢ stamp.



Two unusual cancels: Left, "E.T.H. Gibson May 26, 1863" revenue use circular date stamp; right the rare Cumberland Me. precancel

Up to July 6, 1863, the drop letter rate had been one cent. That meant that letters mailed in a certain city, to be called for at the Post Office, required only one cent postage. For two years after that date, 2¢



A drop letter usage, sent within Chicago, in this case on a rare imperforate horizontally margin single, Sc. 63d

was required and the "Black Jack" or 2¢ Andrew Jackson stamp, came into general use for local mailing.

The 1¢ stamp, however, was used in combination with other stamps of this Civil War issue. Letters going to California, or down the Mississippi, or overseas, required considerable postage. Most of this was paid by stamps of the higher denominations, but occasionally a 1¢ stamp was needed to complete the rate. If the cancellation happened to hit the 1¢ stamp, like Wells Fargo Express the result constituted a rarity for this particular stamp. Cancellations on covers, however, will be considered later on.

It is interesting to watch for unusual cancellations. There are different types of "pays", "targets", "stars", "cogs" and even "town" cancellations. Some towns used a large type and also a small type, some had solid letters as well as hollow letters, and some used year dates while others did not.

To list all the various types of cancellations on this stamp would be an endless if not impossible, task. There are numerals, railroads, carriers (red, black and blue), steam boat, express company, supplementary mail, etc., to say nothing of the types of many of these which keep the specialist on the anxious seat. Then there are year dates, starting with 1861 and ending with 1867. "Paid" cancels run into all sorts of types, sizes and shapes, most of them being printed in black, although some few are in red and in blue. It should be noted that certain cancels, which are common on one stamp, are rare on others, so it is well to "know your stuff".



Left to right, Salem, Mass. "Witch Mark" on a 1¢ 1861; "Aug. 21, 1861" date stamp; red NY "Paid 1 Ct" Carrier cancel; Patent punch cancel, scarce as the cancel was designed to destroy the stamp

Patent Cancellations

These cancellations were designed to prevent the reuse of stamps, thereby defrauding the Post Office Department. These "patents" are of different types, but generally speaking, they consisted of incorporating in the "killer", or canceling device, a sharp blade or sharp disk, which cut the paper of the stamp and permanently spoiled its appearance.

Like the grill process, the cuts caused by the patent cancellations helped to absorb the canceling ink, and thus still further spoiled the chances of using a stamp a second time. Mr. Fred R. Schmalzriedt of Detroit has published an exhaustive

account of these “patents”, so that further comment from me is unnecessary. Suffice it to say that only a few cities used these patents, and that they are scarce.

The catalogue lists six, from black to violet, and indicates the relative scarcity of all of them. Occasionally a new one, not listed, crops up, such as orange, which I recently found. Probably there are others, but I have never run across them. While red towns or carriers are not scarce, designs in red are far from common. Of the hundreds of red-cancelled copies sent me on approval during the last twenty years, and not considering the question of condition, those with designs were decidedly in the minority. The same cannot be said of blue cancels (a color seldom used for carriers) and “towns” and “designs” have been more equally distributed.

Green is particularly scarce, whether as a town or as a design, and magenta, the true magenta, ranks about the same. Until of late I have not appreciated this. It is sometimes difficult to distinguish between red and magenta, possibly due to fading, but the facts are that I have seen very few of the latter color. The same might be said of orange, a color not too easily distinguished from red. Here again fading has to be considered.

Up-to-date, I believe the scarcest of all color cancels is violet. The only one I have ever seen is in my possession. Naturally, I have not had access to every collection, and consequently cannot speak too positively, but this copy is the only one I have ever heard of. It is cancelled from Delaware, New Jersey (wherever that was), so others must undoubtedly have gone thru the mails.

I have not mentioned black as a cancellation, as this would, of course, be the popular color, whether used as a “town” or as a “design”. As a carrier cancellation, however, black is scarce, except on carriers used in Philadelphia, where, so far as I know, only black was employed.

Varieties of Use

The following are the various uses of the 1¢ stamp, so far as I have been able to note them:

- (A) Drop letters prior to July 1, 1863, and after July 1, 1865, in cities or towns which had no free delivery system.
 - (B) Three for the 3¢ rate.
 - (C) Circular mail.
 - (D) Two for dropped letters after July 1, 1863, except as noted in (A).
 - (E) Carrier fee, 1¢ plus 3¢, prior to 1863.
 - (F) Combinations with other stamps.
 - (G) Used as Revenue.
 - (H) Encased postage.
 - (I) Emergency Script.
- [These will be presented in the next section. JFD.]

D. Covers

No collection of any one stamp can be comprehensive unless it contains a general assortment of covers. Naturally, the cancellations will duplicate many already shown in the [previous] “off cover” section, but they will tend to establish the authenticity of the place of issue, and will add materially to the completeness of one's collection. We have learned from our study of this stamp that it probably first appeared on August 17th, from Baltimore.

No cover, used on that date from Baltimore or elsewhere, has yet been found. A single copy off cover and cancelled “Baltimore, Aug., 17th, 1861” [right] was discovered a few years ago. While the fact that it is not on cover proves nothing, I am inclined to feel that it is the earliest



Green wedges cancel; see p. 33 for a red NY Carrier cancel

“off cover” copy found. To be sure, I have a copy, cancelled on cover, in March, 1861. This, of course, is in error, as the stamp was not issued until August of that year. In the case of my copy, the postmaster, using a hand stamp where the date of the day, month and year were adjusted “personally”, failed to set the type properly and “1861” appeared in the canceling device where it should have been “1862”, or even “1863”.

As a boy I remember watching the Postmaster in a small Massachusetts town cancel the morning mail. He had a hand stamp, similar to what business offices today use in stamping their daily incoming correspondence. The type was set on revolving disks, and each morning the day of the month was supposed to be changed. The type for the month and the year, however, was not disturbed until called for by the calendar. Because of the human element, the year date might not have been changed at the proper time, and covers such as the one I have noted, resulted.

In the case of the off-cover stamp, cancelled Aug. 17, 1861, from Baltimore, Maryland, I feel the cancellation is authentic. From a photo I have seen of this stamp, it is evident that it was printed from the first plate, plate No. 9, and if the year date, “1861”, was in error, like “1862” or “1863”, the supply of the printings from the first plate at that time would very probably have been exhausted. I might add that the distinguishing characteristic of the first plate (No. 9) is the “Dot in U”, which does not appear on copies from the other four plates. It does, however, appear on the stamp in question, so I conclude that it is the earliest copy found.

Early dates of cancellation, however, do not necessarily rate stamps in the class of the “British Guiana 1¢ 1856”, a very small number of which were printed. Only one of these stamps exists and that was for years in the collection of the late Arthur Hind. The value of such a stamp is problematic, based on what anyone is willing to give for “the only one in the world”. This is not the case with a stamp issued to the extent of 130,000,000, even though it may bear a dated cancellation earlier by four days than any yet discovered. Should we assume that the stamp in question was on cover, and unquestionably used on August 17, 1861, its value would be limited to what some one would pay for a “first day”. The stamp, as such, is very common.

Here again, I should call attention to the distinction between the first and the second printings. The first, or “premiere gravure”, of the 1¢ stamp, were never issued to the public and have never been found on cover. Furthermore, there are certain marks (a dash and dots) which appear on the stamp finally put into use, which do not appear on the stamps of the so-called first printing. The copy cancelled “Aug. 17, 1861” is from the “second” printing, or, to be more exact, from the printing actually accepted by the government.



Only a [vertical] dash of color under the extreme right tip of the ornament at the right of the left figure “1” distinguishes the issued stamp from the Premier Gravure.

The above discussion may seem irrelevant, coming under the head of covers, but it is intended to show the importance of covers as a means of establishing philatelic facts.

Generally speaking, the remarks made about cancellations, apply equally to copies on cover, and I shall not attempt a repetition of them. Covers, however, have a charm all their own, and it is easy to see why they are so much sought after. To begin with, a cover offers many points of interest. It not only bears the stamp, or stamps, including the cancellation, but it shows the place of origin, the name of the addressee, and frequently contains a letter or circular of real historic interest. Many disputed points of history have been cleared up by finds of old correspondence, and family relationships, long in a muddle, have by this means been straightened out. In other words, covers seem to have a vital, living quality, which is not present when off-cover stamps are being inspected.

To be sure, covers are bulky and only two or three can properly be mounted on an album page. Let us remember, however, that covers of our early stamps are scarcer than the stamps themselves, and that while we may find off cover copies with rare cancellations, it is much harder to secure them on covers bearing the same cancellation. Again, covers prove the use of national and international rates, and those bearing a variety of denominations, especially to foreign countries, are scarce and fascinating.

D (a). Used As Carrier On Cover

Although in this section I include covers with other issues to show examples of the Carrier Fee subject, this cover shows the specific



subject of the articles, the 1861 1¢ Blue (Sc. 63). It bears a horizontal strip of four tied by circle of wedges and a "New-York 22 Jan. 1863" double-circle datestamp on a cover to Philadelphia, the four cents paying the 3¢ domestic postage plus 1¢ carrier fee.

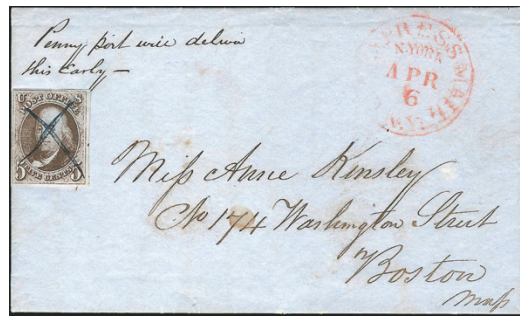
In Chapter 46, Vol. 11, of Stanley B. Ashbrook's remarkable book on the 1¢ 1851-57, there is a very complete account, written by Elliott Perry, of the use of 1¢ stamps as carriers.

To attempt to elaborate on this story would be but to carry "coals to Newcastle". Briefly, however, the facts are these. In the early days letters were mailed to a person "at the Post Office", and not to his home or business address. It was the common custom, especially in the smaller towns and cities, for people to call at the post office for their mail, which was held in "general delivery" or placed in private boxes for which a rental was paid.

Under the Act of 1860, at certain of the larger cities where there was a U.S. carrier system, an extra charge of one cent was required to pay the "postman" to carry the letter to the post office, or deliver it from the post office. These men, as well as those employed before 1860, were not salaried employees of the government, but received their pay from the carrier fees. As one cent, in this country, was commonly called a "penny" (even as it is today), the carrier was known as the "Pennypost", a designation very generally applied when the writer was a boy.

It should be borne in mind that I am not attempting, in this article, to discuss "carrier stamps", as such. The *Scott Specialized Catalogue*, lists these various issues, some of which were put out by the Government, and some by private individuals. My purpose is merely to discuss the use of the 1¢ 1861 as a carrier fee and to attempt to explain what it means when we find it used with a 3¢ of the same issue.

This cover shows payment of the carrier fee for delivery to the addressee before the Act of 1860: An 1848 folded letter to Boston with the



1847 5¢ brown (Sc. 1) cancelled by a manuscript "X", and a red "U.S. Express Mail N. York N.Y. Apr. 6" circular datestamp on blue, instructions at top "Penny Post will deliver this early." The instructions told the Boston post office to deliver this by carrier and the 2¢ carrier fee was collected from the recipient.

In New York, as in some other cities, "collection depots" had been established to accommodate those who did not wish to make the long trip to the Post Office. A one cent stamp was required to pay the "collection charge" to take the letter to the main office. The one cent stamp, therefore, was for "carrier use", and that is what we mean when we say that the 1¢, in connection with a 3¢, is "used as carrier".

For some time I had felt that it was perfectly possible for a person living in New York, let us say, to mail a letter to a street number in Boston, and pay the delivery fee (in Boston) in advance. This would mean that a letter, not deposited in the main New York Post Office, but in a "collection depot", would have cost the sender five cents (1¢ for collection fee, 3¢ for out-of-town postage, and 1¢ for delivery fee). But how would the Boston postman collect the delivery fee if it had been paid in New York? I put the question to Elliott Perry, our leading authority on the subject, and he replied, "I don't think the delivery fee in another city could be prepaid by affixing an additional U.S. postage stamp. When the letter was first mailed, all the U.S. stamps on it would have been cancelled."

Mr. Perry furthermore made the following important statement:

"All the 3¢ plus 1¢ combinations of 1861 stamps prepaid the collection fee to the post office of mailing. If the delivery fee in the city to which a letter was addressed had to be prepaid there was no way of prepaying it on letters "from the mails". If it did not have to be prepaid, the fee could be collected in cash from the addressee...and the letters bear no marking to indicate such delivery."

The same authority states that "at New York red was commonly used for markings indicating prepaid carrier fee and black for unpaid".

I later put the same question to Stanley B. Ashbrook, who, with due apologies to Elliott Perry, offered a suggestion. He wrote that he felt that a letter could be mailed with the "freight" paid all the way. In other words, he believed that a man sending a letter from New York to a street address in Boston could pay the collection fee to the New York Post Office and the delivery fee from the Post Office in Boston. This bore out my previous feeling that stamps, were originally designed to prepay postage, and that a sender of a letter who wanted the recipient to receive it without cost, could pay the whole bill in advance. If he put on the envelope a 3¢ stamp and two one cent stamps, it showed the postmaster that he paid the collection fee in New York and the delivery fee in Boston. Mr. Perry says "When the letter was first mailed, all the U.S. stamps on it would have been cancelled".

But, as Mr. Ashbrook writes, what difference does it make? Washington, after all, was the interested party, and if it sold a 1¢ stamp later used for collection fee in Boston, and afterwards was debited one cent for collecting this fee, the account was square. In other words, the Boston Postmaster did not charge the New York Postmaster (who sold the two, one cent stamps),

but debited Washington, which had already received the one cent carrier delivery fee when it sold the one cent stamp to the New York Postmaster.

There are two objections to this theory, both advanced by my friends, Dr. R.F. Chambers of Providence and Mr. Perry. Covers bearing the 5¢ rate at this period are practically unknown. They are possible but not probable. Furthermore, they advance the theory that the postmaster in Boston could not tell from the letter received by him that the carrier fee, paid in New York, paid the fee for the New York or Boston Carrier. If two one cent stamps were applied, this would be apparent, but if the letter were posted in the main New York Post Office, without any distinguishing mark, the Boston Postmaster could not tell if the 1¢ stamp was for collection fee to the N.Y. Post Office or for delivery fee from the Boston Post Office. So a New York cover with a 1¢, plus 3¢, to Boston does not necessarily prove that the carrier fee paid the delivery fee in Boston. Secondly, they say that covers of this period do not show by special markings or cancellations that the carrier fee was paid in advance, and so we cannot state too positively just what took place.

Per contra I offer the following:

I have in my collection two covers franked from New York to a street address in Boston by Martin Van Buren, a former President of the United States. The first was mailed with "free" written in the upper right hand corner, and franked "M. Van Buren". It also contains a 1¢ stamp, in the upper left hand corner, cancelled with a red carrier cancellation. This 1¢ stamp was evidently intended to pay the delivery fee in Boston to the street address of the recipient. The letter was held at the New York Post Office for additional postage, as the authorities apparently did not know that Mr. Van Buren enjoyed the franking privilege, as an ex-President. Two cents more were collected, and the letter finally sent to Boston, bearing the original stamp with the carrier cancellation and a pair of 1¢ stamps bearing a black New York town cancellation.

Although the two-week sequence referred to by Tudor Gross does not match up, these otherwise appear to be the same covers he describes.

Martin Van Buren. Free frank "Free M Van Buren" as ex-President on cover to Ithaca N.Y., 1¢ Blue (63) tied by "New-York May 9" duplex datestamp and target, rare use of 1¢ 1861 to pay carrier fee on cover franked by an ex-President (franking privilege did not apply to carrier fees).



Martin Van Buren. Free frank "Free M Van Buren" as ex-President on cover to Joseph Burnett & Co. in Boston, single 1¢ Blue (63) tied by red "U.S. Mail City Delivery" carrier datestamp, back of cover with "Held for Postage" straightline and "New-York May 6" duplex datestamp and target, same duplex (May 8) ties 1¢ Blue (63) pair that was added after post office notified sender.



Two weeks later, Mr. Van Buren sent a second letter to the same addressee, at his street address, but this time only one 1¢ stamp was applied, and "free, M. Van Buren" was written in the upper right hand corner. The stamp is cancelled with a circular town cancellation, reading "New York Free". Evidently, the sender had informed the N.Y. Post Office that he had the franking privilege, and that therefore his signature represented the equivalent of 3¢ in postage. Consequently, the 1¢ stamp must have been for carrier service and, in my opinion, paid the delivery fee in Boston. The Government received the one cent for this delivery fee, since it sold the stamp, but the postmaster in Boston, in paying one cent to the carrier, would charge it up to Washington, and the books balanced.

Here again my theory may be wrong, but I do not see how any other explanation can be given for these two covers.

One more example. Mr. Ashbrook showed me a cover mailed at Fort Lee, near New York, to a street address in the latter city. The cover bears a 1¢ and 3¢ stamp. As Fort Lee had no carrier system, it seems fair to assume the 1¢ stamp was intended to pay the delivery fee in New York. It is, of course, possible, as Mr. Perry suggests, that the postage was overpaid, but I cannot but feel that the public at that time knew what the correct amount should be. Even today we seldom overpay unless we fear the letter is overweight and, therefore, needs another stamp.

Perhaps some of the readers of this article can throw more light on this disputed question and if they can, I hope they will.

I have been interested to see how many covers I could find from different cities where a 1¢ 1861 stamp was used with 3¢ stamp presumably as carrier. To date I have found this carrier rate on covers from only the following cities, viz., New York, Boston, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Washington, New Haven and Brooklyn. There are doubtless others, but I have not seen them.

The whole subject of "carriers", as used in various sections, is fascinating and I recommend to those interested that they refer to the Ashbrook books on the One Cent 1851-5 for more complete information. As a matter of record, I might add that New York had a variety of carrier cancellations, mostly in red, but some in black. Philadelphia used two types, both in black, one, the rarer, being the U.S.P.O. Dispatch, and the other U.S. Penny Mail.

To Be Continued

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