

Yesterday in Mekeel's:

Stamp Market Tips: The "I" Grills

by John F. Dunn

On the next page we present a page from our Reference Manual section for the United States Grills, with an Addendum to incorporate the new, major listing of the "I" Grills.

In reading the Burns article in the 2013 *Specialized*, which was referenced in the Scott announcement and our Addendum, it is clear that valuation was an important motivator in finally creating these new major numbers. The "I"'s had been recognized as separate grill patterns from the "H"'s going back for decades. Then the auction houses in particular began to properly describe them as being scarcer and as they were realizing considerably higher prices, it became imperative that Scott recognize them for what they are and alert collectors to their considerably higher values.

The reason I offer this as a "Tip" is because we have seen this before. In the 2003 *Specialized*, Scott sorted out the Washington-Franklin Compound Perforations as major numbers and here is what happened:

Scott #	2002 (minor #)	2003 major	2004	2013
423A mint	2,750 (424a)	4,500	7,500	15,000
423A used	3,000 (424a)	4,000	5,000	7,500
423B mint	10,000 (425d)	25,000	30,000	175,000
423B used	4,500 (425d)	5,000	10,000	25,000
423C mint	-- (428a)	--	--	--
423C used	7,000 (428a)	7,000	12,500	27,500
423D mint	-- (424b)	--	--	--
423D used	3,000 (424b)	4,500	7,500	15,000
423E mint	-- (425c)	--	--	--
423E used	-- (425c)	--	--	--

To summarize, when Scott majored the Compound perms, they significantly raised values for most of them in the 2003 book. A year later, as auction realizations came in for the new majors, the values were boosted even more—and by now most are up by multiples of the 2003 and 2004 values.

So...I have no reason to believe that something similar will not hold true for the "I" Grills. In this case we do not have former minor listings to start from; rather the prices for the "H" and "I"'s were lumped together, so the growth in the "I"'s may be even greater. Here are the comparisons between 2012 (H and I lumped together) and 2013 iwth the Is separated as new major numbers. (Interestingly, Scott did not change the prices for what is now only the H listings, Sc. 234-244.)

2012 Sc. #	2013 #	Mint 2012	Mint 2013	Used 2012	used 2103
134	134A	2,000	2,750	210	275
135	135A	1,000	1,750	80	225
136	136A	575	1,000	32.50	95
137	137A	5,000	7,000	575	900
138	138A	4,250	6,750	550	1,500
139	139A	7,000	--	850	6,000
140	140A	27,500	35,000	3,750	--
141	141A	7,500	17,500	1,400	7,500
142	---	--	not listed	7,500	not listed
143	143A	20,000	75,000	4,000	--
144	144A	25,000	--	--	15,000

You may not be able to go after the highest value "I" Grills, and that is where the most appreciation most likely will take place, but we may well see some significant gains in the lower priced items. If nothing else, if you collect this area, you will want to acquire any that you can afford as quickly as possible.

Do not, however, assume that you just pay ANY price. Here's why:

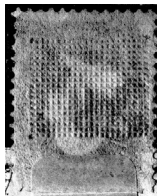
This 7¢ "I" grill, Sc. 138A, sold for \$4,250 in the recent Siegel Auction Galleries sale of the Nick Kirke Collection of Gem-Quality Used U.S. Stamps, but the same stamp fetched \$8,500 in December 2010 Auction #1000. (In the Kirke Auction Catalogue, the Scott listings of "I" Grills was noted, but the value used were the 2012 values, before Scott provided their 2013 prices, so bidders would not have been aware that the value had gone from \$550 in 2012 to \$1,500 in the 2013 book.



I don't have any lesser value examples to offer from this Gem sale, but despite the experience with this Gem-Quality stamp (PSE Grade Superb 98, the highest for any 7¢ "H" or "I" Grill) you can expect most realizations—and subsequent Scott prices—to be moving up, rather than down.

One vital word of caution: the Grills in general are tough to identify, and they also are subject to faking, so you will want to be sure they are genuine, and supported by an expertizing certificate.


The U.S. Reference Manual!



New Pages!!

The United States Grills

Sc. 79 // 122







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United States Grills, Part 4

by Wm. L. Stevenson, Revised by L. G. Brookman (*From Mekeel's Weekly, July 27, 1942*)

Issue of 1870

The issue of 1870 is our most difficult period, simply because the work done averages so very poor in quality. Some sheets show some stamps well grilled, other stamps poorly grilled, and still others with no traces of embossing.

Some part of the mechanism failed to do its part of the work. I see no evidence that the steel units in relief on the cylinders ever wore out or in any way failed. All the results seen seem to indicate frequent and irregular failure of the bed to hold the paper up against the pressure of the cylinder. As the units are really of very slight relief at best, a very slight failure of the bed to properly perform its functions would produce pronounced results.

Two families of grills are clearly indicated. While there are definite differences within each family, I here list but the two fundamental differences as families and will describe the others.

H Grill: Cross grill, points down 13 x 15*



H Grill



I Grill

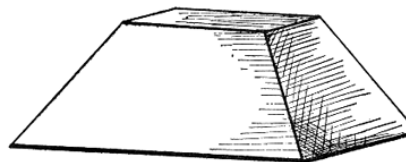
I Grill: Flat-topped grill units, points down, 11 x 12*

(The * indicates a row of incomplete units, at one or at both sides of the rectangle in the indicated direction.)

The impressions of the H grills are all those of cross-grill units. Two general differences are shown. Some come from pyramids with definitely dull points, but distinctly pyramidal. Others come from units of slight relief, very erect sides, and rather sharp, pointed tops which barely penetrate the paper.

While the two kinds of [H Grill] impressions can hardly come from one condition of the cylinder, I class them as all of the same family in this size, 13 x 15*. It seems probable that the second described units are due to a sharpening of the units of the other description.

The impressions of the I grills are also of two kinds. The commoner ones show definitely that the units used were flat-topped or truncated pyramids. These show rather broad bases, somewhat slanting sides, and relatively large plane tops parallel to the faces of the stamps. The bottoms of the pits in the faces of the stamps come from just such pyramidal units, with no traces of a pointed pyramid acting. The other kind of impressions come from units with very small and irregularly flat tops, small bases and very erect



This cut shows the general appearance of the truncated pyramid units of the 1870 I grill. The sides of these pyramids are probably a bit more erect than here shown and the bases, relative to the tops, also smaller.

sides. These are very rare. I have found but five or six in the 3¢ value to date, from as many different sources. All the I grills come in the one area, 11 x 12* units.

While there are comparatively few specimens from this period that show clearly every detail as de-

scribed above, there are few, very few, with distinct traces of grill that cannot be readily placed in one of these four classes by anyone with a proper knowledge of the details here given, study of the cuts, and study of some decent specimens. The descriptions sound complicated. The facts are much less so.

That about ends the discussion and description of the issued grills, except for a number of things that could not readily be handled directly in the body of this article, in which I wished to cover only the fundamentals.

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First published 07/27/42

Addendum: Scott Elevates "I" Grills

In the Scott 2013 *Specialized Catalogue of United States Stamps and Covers*, Scott recognizes the "I" grills from the 1870-71 Bank Note issues (Scott 134-144) as new major catalogue numbers. These new listings appear in their own section immediately following Scott 144, and are numbered with a capital "A" suffix. (Lower case letters identify varieties of the major, issued stamps, for example the airmail invert variety, Sc. C3a; major letters are used to insert a new major listing where there is no gap between major numbers, for example, between Sc. 144 and Sc. 145, where the I Grills are now placed with "A" suffixes.)

In a special feature article in the 2013 *Specialized*, Bank Note expert Ronald A. Burns explains the history behind the initial grouping of the "H" and "I" grills. In his article he cites his more than 20 years of methodical research to conclusively demonstrate that the "H" and "I" grills belong to two different families, "just as the 1867-68 grills belong to distinct grill families."

Equally relevant, recent discoveries and auction realizations of stamps designated as "I" Grills clearly show that stamps with "I" grills are noticeably scarcer and more valuable than their "H"-grill counterparts. In light of these findings, it is logical to elevate the "I" grills to major-number status.

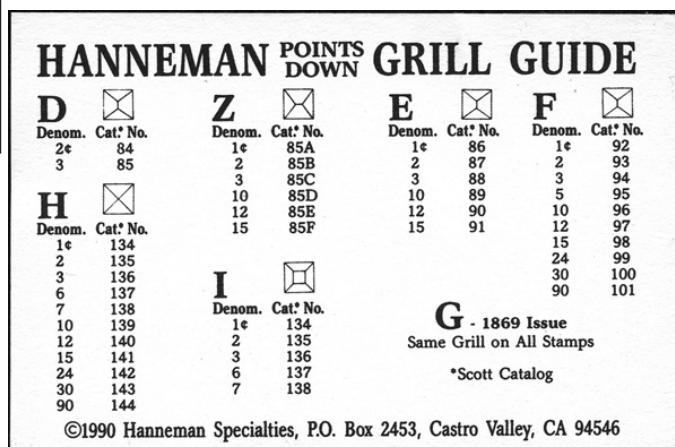
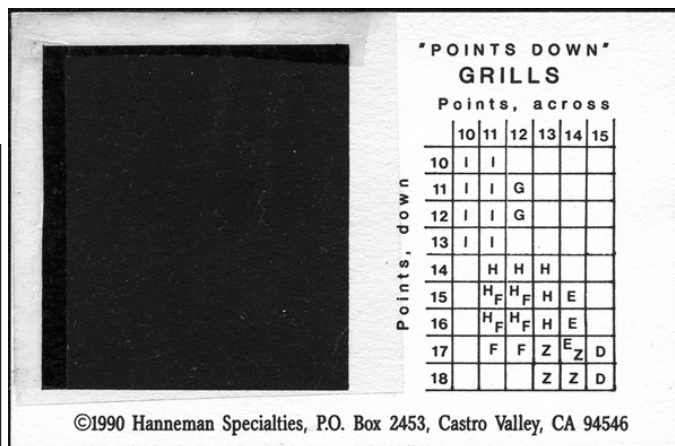
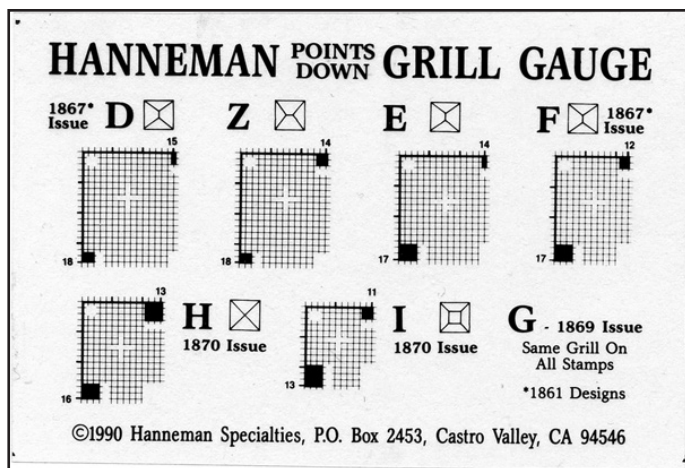
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Addendum published 11/23/12

The Hanneman System:

How to Characterize "Points Down" Grills

In our November 23, 2012, issue we carried an article on the upgrading of the U.S. "I" Grills by the Scott Catalogue editors. Prompted by that article, long-time *Mekeel's & Stamps* subscriber Mark Sommer of Teaneck, N.J., sent me a booklet, titled above,



along with a gauge to use to measure Points Down grills.

Shown above, is the see-through plastic Grill Gauge, and to the right the stamp holder/Points count, and the Grill Identification Guide. I kept everything at actual size.

Following is the text of the booklet. Without the see-through Grill Gauge you will not be able to actually apply those instructions, and it may take a couple of reads to digest the instructions and the supplementary explanations, but doing so will give you a much better understanding of all Grills, how they are measured, and their identifying characteristics.

* * * * *

The HANNEMAN GRILL GAUGE is a tool designed to help the collector recognize and assign Scott Catalog numbers to U.S. "points down" grilled stamps. The HANNEMAN GRILL GAUGE also provides information relevant to the "genuineness" of an embossed grill. The heavy line markings on the gauge designate the proper sizes of the different types of grills. The lighter lines indicate the size and relative positions of the embossed points which make up each grill.

The accompanying HANNEMAN GRILL GUIDE lists those denominations known to have been issued with each type of grill. A Grill Table is also provided which, on the basis of the arrangement of the points in the grilled area, allows one to determine the only grill patterns which need to be considered.

Grills not matching all of the defined characteristics are most likely fraudulent.

CONTENTS

This kit contains the following items:

1. Transparent Hanneman Grill Gauge
2. Hanneman Grill Guide and Grill Table
3. Stamp Holder (black backing with transparent cover)
4. Magnifier with Light Shield

5. Stamp Tongs
6. Instruction Booklet

PRINCIPLES OF OPERATION

The original grilling process involved embossing the printed stamp paper. This was accomplished by means of a steel roller on which were machined rectangular groups of small square pyramidal bosses. These created a rectangular pattern of indentations on the face and protuberances (grill points) on the back of each stamp. When viewed under oblique lighting conditions, these features are easily seen. Comparison of the size, shape, and spacing of these features with the reference lines on the Hanneman Grill Gauge permits one to characterize the embossed grill.

OPERATING INSTRUCTIONS

1. Using the Stamp Tongs, carefully place the stamp face down on the black surface of the Stamp Holder and cover it with the protective transparent cover.
2. Place the Magnifier with Light Shield over the stamp and project light through the slit onto the stamp.
3. The resultant oblique lighting will create shadows of the grill points and the grill pattern will become visible.
4. Characterization of a grill.
 - a) Place the reference Grill Gauge for the D grill (This has the largest grilled area of any of the "points down" grilled stamps.) on

top of the transparent cover over the stamp and beneath the Magnifier Light Shield.

b) With the aid of the Magnifier, count the number of grill points, across and down in the rectangular grill. This is easily accomplished in the following manner: Find a row of clearly embossed points and align it just above the heavy line at the top of the grill design. Since the squares above the heavy line have no “top lines,” it is easier to see where the grill pattern ends and to determine the number of points in the row. The gauge has marks at five and ten units for easy counting. Rotate the stamp and gauge 90 degrees and then determine the number of grill points in a clearly defined column by using the heavy line designating the left edge of the grill pattern.

c) If the grill perfectly matches the grill spacings in the preceding step, skip to step d). If not, you should check the grill spacing. To do this, disregard the heavy lines and line up the light lines of the Grill Gauge with the grill on the stamp. The grill points should be positioned so as to occupy the centers of the squares. If the grill spacings are correct, this can be easily done. If the grill spacings are not correct and the spaces and points do not match, the grill is quite likely fraudulent. (One must remember that these stamps are over 125 years old. Some slight allowance should be made for dimensional changes in the paper.)

d) Refer to the Grill Table located to the right of the stamp on the face of the Stamp Holder. On the basis of the number of points across and down counted above in step 4c, determine the proper grill assignment (i.e. D, E, H, Z, etc.).

Take care to note the appearance of partial grill points at the edges of the gridded areas. A half point on each end should be counted as a total of only one point: If no “point match” can be made, the grill is quite likely fraudulent.

- The differentiation between E and Z grills which often show the same number of grill points is made on the basis of the shapes of the points of the bosses used for grilling. This is discussed below in Section 6.

- The differentiation between F and H grills is made on the basis of stamp issue (i.e. design).

e) If a “point match” is made, check that the denomination of the stamp and the type of the grill correspond to an “actually issued” stamp. A list of the valid combinations of grill type, issue, denomination, and corresponding Scott Catalog number is presented in the Grill Guide on the back of the Stamp Holder.

5. Confirmation of Grill Type

With the stamp in the stamp Holder, as described above, compare it to the appropriate grill pattern on the Grill Gauge as determined by the “point match” from the Grill Table.

Align the heavy lines of the template along the left side and top of the gridded area. The right edge and the bottom of the gridded area should terminate in the dark squares marked at the ends of the heavy lines.

A notch has been cut into the grill spacing lines in the lower right hand corner of the grill pattern. If the grill matches the pattern, the lower right hand corner of the embossed grill points will be visible in this open space.

The grill points should all fall in the centers of the squares formed by the lighter lines. Allowances, of course, must be made for rows or columns of partial points at the top and left edges of the gridded area. A clear cross shaped area has been placed in the middle of each grill pattern on the Grill Gauge in order to make it easier to

check the alignment and spacing of the central portion of a grill.

Because of the thickness of the transparent protective sheet and the oblique lighting, the grid lines of the Grill Gauge may cast a faint shadow. This can cause some confusion until it is recognized for what it is. This shadow can be eliminated by removal of the protective sheet. However, this is not recommended as it exposes the stamp to the possibility of damage.

6. Additional Distinguishing Features

- D, E, F, and Z grills are found only on designs of the 1861 issue. These grills are usually very clearly embossed.

- On the face of the stamp, D, E, and F grills show impressed images having the shape as shown in the diagrams on the Gauge. This indicates the tips of the pyramidal bosses were actually short vertical ridges. This is similar to the shape exhibited by a hip roof on a house. The Z grill bosses produced the same shaped image except that it is rotated 90 degrees. This indicates the ridges on the bosses were horizontal. The effects of these ridges can also be noted when viewing the back of the stamp and serve to readily identify the Z grills. (See cover photo.)

- G grills are found on all the regular issue 1869 stamps. This grill is unique to this issue and poses no characterization problems.

- H and I grills are weakly or only partially embossed on designs of the 1870-71 National Bank Note Co. printings.

- H grills are notorious for showing only a few points. Overlaying the H pattern of the Grill Gauge on these points will define the precise areas where other faintly embossed points could occur. Frequently, these faint impressions then become more easily seen.

- I grills show a small square pattern rather than an X in the center of each grill square. This indicates the pyramidal bosses had a truncated shape.

- The presence of a grill on top of a cancel always indicates a fake grill. However, the presence of a cancel on top of a grill does not always signify a genuine grill.

By far, the vast majority of gridded stamps in the market today are genuine. Also, the vast majority of the faked grills are so poor that the average collector can easily identify them with the HANNEMAN GRILL GAUGE & GUIDE.

Actually, the greatest problem facing the average collector is that of improperly identified gridded stamps.

Due either to the lack of knowledge or to laziness on the part of collectors and stamp dealers, there are always a few valuable mis-identified gridded stamps waiting to be plucked by astute individuals. Unfortunately, for the same reason, there are also a number of cheaper stamps being offered as their rarer counterparts to unknowledgeable collectors. This still leaves a small number of stamps bearing “expertly” faked grills which must be considered.

One must remember that the grills were applied to already printed stamps by a relatively simple mechanical means. Consequently, in some few cases, it may be impossible to determine with absolute certainty whether a grill was actually applied by the National Bank Note Company or by someone else at a later date.

Although the HANNEMAN GRILL GAUGE & GUIDE will not teach the collector how to identify those few expertly crafted fake grills, the collector still has one other line of defense—the certificate. Those who supply certificates have studied this subject thoroughly and are well aware of additional definitive characteristics of both the genuine stamps and the genuine grills.

It would serve no useful purpose, other than to educate inept fakers as to how to correct their errors, to fully describe all these details here. To expose the experts' secrets would only serve to destroy their usefulness.

However, one must remember, that in a world where perception is reality and a certificate defines genuineness, there is no such thing as a "perfect fake." Should the faker ever manage to do a "perfect job," he would then earn his certificate and his fake would become genuine.

Thoughts on Expertizing

A collector may wish to become his own "expertizer" or he can pay someone else to do the job for him. This is a decision only he can make. This can be especially important in the case of the grilled stamps.

It is always a good idea to get an expert's certificate when spending a great deal of money for a stamp. Also, this will usually facilitate the later sale of that stamp. However, one must remember that the fees that the current philatelic expertizing groups charge for certificates are based upon the "catalog value" of the stamp in question.

In the case of a superb, never hinged stamp, its selling price in an auction will be very close to or greater than the published "catalog value". Consequently, "insurance", in the form of a certificate, costs only about 4% of the purchase price. This appears to be a reasonable expenditure.

However, one must also remember that irrespective of the expertizing fee charged, an expert's certificate represents only personal opinion.

In difficult cases, it is not unknown for different experts, or even the same experts, to disagree at different times. A "good" stamp may be judged "no good" at a later date as the experts are constantly developing new information. Lately, it has become common for purchasers of stamps having certificates which are more than a year old to have them recertified.

In the case of a grilled stamp, it requires the same amount of time, effort, knowledge, and experience to attest to the genuine nature of the embossed grill on a \$10 stamp (e.g. Scott. No.136) as on a \$10,000 stamp (e.g. Scott No. 142). The huge difference in catalog value is, however, a result of the design printed on the paper, which even a 5 year old child can recognize.

The difference in expertizing fees charged for the above two stamps can be over \$300. This difference would certainly appear more justifiable if that fee represented some sort of an insurance premium protecting the owner from monetary loss in the event that the opinion was mistaken. But, it doesn't. The fact of the matter is that there is no financial liability of any sort assumed by the expertizer to cover any errors in judgment.

In essence, the certificate serves no real purpose other than that of an appraisal. It is intended to persuade a prospective purchaser that he will be getting his money's worth.

Unfortunately, the practice of tying appraisal fees to the value of the object being appraised raises the issue of "conflict of interest." Consequently, it is now "outlawed" by both of the national associations of personal property appraisers as well as the U.S. Bureau of Internal Revenue.

Because of the "blind trust" put in certificates by a great many collectors expertizing groups recognize that their certificates are powerful sales tools. When an expertizing agent provides a certificate

to a seller and ties his fee to the catalog value of the stamp rather than to the effort involved in the expertizing task, he is, in effect, claiming his portion of a future sales commission—in advance.

In addition to the above, certificates have been known to be altered or even to be fraudulent. Consequently, if one has serious doubts about the true nature of a stamp, the only expert opinion worth considering is the one you, the buyer, obtain from an expert that you trust, and you, the buyer, pay for.

Expertizing and the Average Collector

Experience shows that those grilled stamps the average collector is likely to encounter, or to be able to afford, will probably not be superb, never hinged specimens. Rather, they will be used and/or possess faults (i.e. thins, tears, no gum, reperfected, etc.). As a consequence of this, when selling these stamps the collector can expect to realize only a small fraction (5 - 15% is a reasonable estimate) of their "catalog values".

Under these circumstances, the cost of getting "insurance" in the form of a certificate can easily amount to as much as 50% to 150% of what the stamp can be sold for. This is certainly not a reasonable expenditure for any collector.

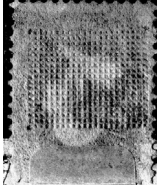
Consequently, it makes economic sense, in the case of, most grilled stamps, for the collector to learn to expertize his own purchases. Simple arithmetic indicates that if one does his own expertizing, he can still come out ahead, even if he is wrong one out of three times—a highly unlikely situation if he uses the HANNEMAN GRILL GAUGE AND GUIDE.

In those few cases of really choice but doubtful stamps, one can then decide either to avoid them completely or to purchase them only on the condition they receive a favorable certificate from a mutually agreed upon expert who is employed and paid by the buyer.

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Note that if you are interested in additional Grills reading, our Reference Manual pages are a comprehensive overview of the subject and do not include the material in the Hanneman Guide.


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