

From the Stamp Specialist:

Preliminary Report on the Survey on Condition

(From The Stamp Specialist Books #2-4, published in 1940-41)

In presenting this article from more than 70 years ago I am as much interested in bringing you the opinions on condition from that time as I am on your opinions on how much (or how little) things have changed regarding condition and how it is defined. JFD.

Part 1 (From Book 2)



Hundreds of readers of THE STAMP SPECIALIST have participated in this survey on stamp condition, not only by returning the questionnaires which we mailed them, but also by submitting long, detailed analyses of the problem.

It has been very evident that this condition question has been a difficult problem for many collectors and dealers alike, and they would welcome any move that would tend to clarify the situation.

Our readers have shown such a gratifying interest in this work that we are undertaking to delve very deeply into the subject in an endeavor to prepare a chart and a series of definitions that will really mean something and that will be generally used by the stamp collecting fraternity.

We propose to approach this subject by three stages:

The first of these is this preliminary report, prepared on the basis of the hundreds of questionnaires which we have received and analyzed.

We now solicit further comment and discussion on these tentative suggestions, so that we can in the next issue present a second, revised report, based upon the further data that will be received.

We expect to have this revised report again submitted to scrutiny and discussion, so that we can prepare a third and, we hope, final report that can be submitted to representative groups of collectors and dealers all over the country for their adoption. If the support justifies carrying through this

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plan, it should result in a set of terms and definitions that would be so generally agreed upon that both collectors and dealers could buy and sell on that basis with more confidence than heretofore.

The greatest divergence of opinion seems to lie in auction catalog descriptions. Collectors seem to feel that any dealer is inclined to be a little too optimistic in describing the stamps, but usually this situation can be solved when a collector becomes familiar with the dealer's ideas of condition and bids accordingly. However, almost every dealer, for lack of a uniform guide, has his own ideas on condition, and what one dealer would classify as "good" another may classify as "fine." This does not necessarily mean an effort to misrepresent the stamp, but is the honest opinion of that particular dealer. Our endeavor, therefore, is to make certain terms mean definite things, and we hope to accomplish this largely by means of illustrations.

Definition of Terms

One thing that must be made clear at the outset is that the terms used in describing stamps may not always be their dictionary definition. This is a problem faced by many industries, and several of our correspondents have suggested that we adapt some of the plans used in industrial grading or bond grading to the philatelic field. In the lumber business, in particular, a good merchantable grade of lumber will have its many super-grades, and as a result the language has been sort of twisted into superlative contortions that end in confusion unless one knows the descriptive power and attitude of the describer. In the lumber trade, while lumber is still purchased on grade ratings, such as firsts and seconds (F&S), the sawmill grade "A" is better than the sawmill grade "B" and commands a better price. The dealer in stocks and bonds, where minute steps in grade are important, has done a particularly good job in grading. Here the letters follow the "AAA" grade for maximum safety and marketability through to the "D" grade where the value indicated is slight or nil. The application of their 12 degrees of letters to the 12 degrees of stamp grading suggested in the questionnaire, although not exactly perfect, is at least applicable. It is suggested that there be three brackets, A, B and C, of four degrees each, and that the first four numbers be brought into the first bracket and designated as "AAAA," "AAA," "AA," and "A," and the four lower grades be designated "CCCC," "CCC," "CC," and "C."

The principal objection to such a system, however, is that most collectors would be at a loss to understand just what was meant. The idea of using letters or numbers has been suggested many times in the past, but it has never met with much success as the average collector and dealer prefers descriptive terms which really mean something to him, and to some qualifying expression of the actual condition of the stamp. There has been an almost unanimous feeling that the 12 degrees of condition suggested in

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the original questionnaire are far too many, and that too fine a hair-splitting might result in a confusion that would defeat the purpose intended. Most of the objections are to the lower grades, the general consensus being that "good," "fair," and "poor" adequately describe stamps in these brackets.

There has also been a general feeling that the term "very good" could be dispensed with, as the distinction between "fine" and "good" gives sufficient latitude.

Some have suggested that a limit to the classifications be set at 4, while others have gone as high as 10, but the majority as shown in the accompanying table, favor 6 or 7 terms and in this preliminary survey we are advocating that 6 terms be used. One suggestion was made that a supplementary letter be attached to the grade number to signify certain defects in the stamps, such as a blurring of the cancellation, the lack of gum, and similar slight defects that detract from the appearance or value of the stamp. This has its good points, but the objections that have been raised seem to out-weight them for practical use.

There has been considerable discussion on the use of the terms "perfection" and "superb" as applied to condition. Many seem to think that these are identical, while others see a very definite demarcation. The term "superb," according to the best authorities, signifies "beyond reproach or betterment." In other words, "superb" stamps are the cream of perfection in condition. As a matter of fact, the term has been so broadly used in the philatelic sense that it has come to mean any condition above "fine" and still not quite reaching the scale of "perfection." These two terms seem necessary in order to adequately present the claim of a really perfection copy. The term "superb" over the years has taken on a broader and looser meaning than originally intended and now covers a considerable latitude in a descriptive sense.

The degree of condition should be on an absolute rather than on a relative basis. The descriptive term "fine for this stamp" should be entirely eliminated, according to many. If a very rare stamp that is quite old comes in "good" condition only, it should be described as "good" and then the explanation could be added that "this is the best condition in which this particular stamp is ever found."

The use of adjectives such as "glorious," "marvelous," "excellent," "nice," and other ambiguous terms, brought a decided negative response from approximately 96% of those returning the survey questionnaire. Most of such adjectives used in describing stamps are the result of personal attitudes and opinions and might be used as supplementary descriptions.

The use of a chart showing illustrations of actual stamps which describes in picture form the various degrees of centering and cancellations has been approved by practically all of the collectors reporting. By standardizing the terms so that everyone interested in the sale or purchase of stamps will understand what is meant when such terms are used, a decided

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advance will be made in our hobby. We do not underestimate the difficulty in having such a chart generally accepted, but unless a start is made in such matters nothing will ever be accomplished.

Results of Survey

The terms having the most number of backers in the survey total 6, and these are as follows:

1. Perfection. 2. Superb. 3. Fine. 4. Good. 5. Fair and 6. Poor.

The percentage results of the survey on stamp condition follows:

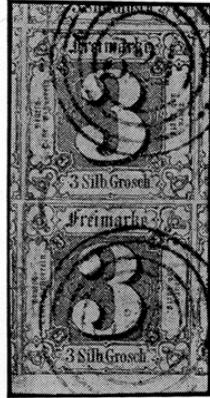
	Yes	No	No Comment
Those who have applied such a scale in determining the grade of CONDITION	45.6	51.2	3.2
Those who believe a carefully worked out chart would tend to clarify the situation.	86.8	8.8	4.4
Those who believe an illustrated chart would be helpful	95.6	2.4	2.0
Those who would use such a chart.	92.4	4.2	3.4
Those who believe adjectives and other ambiguous terms should be included in the chart	4.0	94.4	1.6
Those willing to purchase stamps below SUPERB condition provided the price is right.	81.4	16.4	2.2



The illustrations shown on the following pages follow closely the survey findings. This list is only tentative and is open for improvement and suggestions. If you have definite suggestions for improvements in the illustrations or the descriptions accompanying them, be sure to send in the stamp you have in mind that should represent your suggested change.

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PERFECTION



Stamps to be "Perfection" must be every bit "Superb" plus additional qualifications. A perfection stamp should be something unusual. No defects

If Mint—full O.G. unhinged, brilliant

If used—very light or clear cancel
Perfectly centered with extra wide margins that may take in parts of adjacent stamps. Unusual qualities.

SUPERB



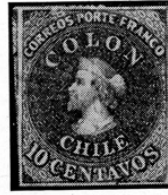
Stamps should have no defects. If Mint—full O.G., unhinged or very lightly hinged. Gum may be cracked slightly and hardly noticeable. No perforations missing.



If used—cancellation very light, clear, or cancellation perfectly centered or what is known as "socked on the nose." Very fine margins with centering practically perfect and not off more than $\frac{1}{2}$ mm. in any direction.

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FINE



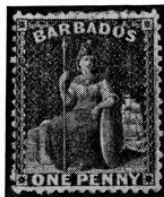
No defects. If Mint—nearly O.G., or show only light hinge marks, fresh appearance.



If used the cancellation should be light and not obscuring face.



Margins all around, and never off over 1 mm. in any one direction. No straight edges



Off center
left



Off center
right



Off center
bottom



Off center
top

GOOD



Paper may have slight defect. Example shows defect at lower right.



A corner perf may be missing. Illus. shows perf missing at upper left.



Stamp may have light crease in any direction. Illus. shows top to bottom crease.



1 or 2 perforations may be missing. Illus. shows perfs missing right and bottom.



Stamps may be heavily cancelled with circular cancels.



Stamps may have slight thin spot. Illus. shows thin spot at top right.



Stamps may have heavy bar cancels.



Stamps may have blurred cancels.



Stamps may have perfs snubbed. Illus. shows this at top.



Stamps may have heavy box cancels.

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FAIR



Stamps may have slight tear. Above shows tear at right.



The design may be cut into. Above shows cut at left.



Stamp may have several perfs missing and design cut into.



Design may be cut into on two sides. Above shows this right and bottom.



Above shows design cut into at left and top.



Above shows design cut into left and bottom.



Stamps may be cancelled and have straight edge. Above is an example.



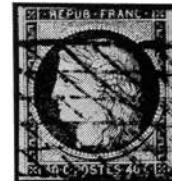
Stamp may have noticeable tear. Above shows tear at upper right.



Stamps may be cut into. Above shows cut at top.



Above shows tear and slight thin spot at top.



Above shows cut at top and heavy cancel.



Stamps may be heavily cancelled. Above shows design cut into and heavy cancel.



Above shows blurred pen cancel.



Above shows perfs missing and design cut into.

POOR



Stamps may have face peeled. Above is an example.



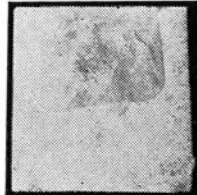
Stamps may have bad crease and thin spot. Above shows crease top to bottom, thinned on left.



The design may be cut and stamps have a slight tear. Above shows cut at left and tear at upper right.



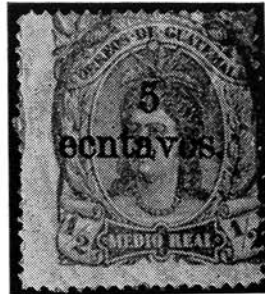
Stamp may have large thin spot. Above shows thin spot center towards top.



Above shows large thin spot above center.



Stamps may have a decided tear. Above shows tear and large pin hole near center.



Stamp may have design cut into heavily. Above shows cut badly top and right.



Stamp may have heavy smudgy cancel. Above shows smudgy cancel at lower left.



Stamps may have noticeable tear. Above shows such a tear at right.



Above shows heavy cancel, design cut into and perf missing.

Revised Report on the Survey on Conditions



The preliminary report on the survey of condition, which appeared in Part 2 of THE STAMP SPECIALIST, has aroused considerable interest and discussion. It ranked first in the popularity report, the total vote being as follows:

1st, 23% ; 2nd, 15% ; 3rd, 9% ; 4th, 6%
5th, 10% ; 6th, 7% ; 7th, 3% ; 8th, 1% ;
9th, 8% ; 10th, 1% ; 11th, 1%—and those
without comment, 16%.

A number of constructive suggestions have been made and we shall now discuss those that tend to improve and clarify the definitions and the chart.

The subjects coming in for the greatest amount of comment were those relating to the distinction between “superb” and “perfection”; the word “mint” as defined in every-day use; the suggestion that really rare stamps be very explicitly described; that United States stamps be especially featured; that there be separate ratings for 19th and 20th Century stamps; a discussion of the terms “o.g.” and “n.g.”; and suggestions that special ratings be considered for cancellations and covers.

In our original questionnaire, 12 degrees of condition were suggested, and the opinion was practically unanimous that this was altogether too many so we selected the 6 that received the most support. Many of those commenting on the 6 degrees have suggested that the term “very fine” should be inserted and this is a question that we are leaving open for further discussion. The definition offered for “very fine” is as follows:

“Must meet the qualifications of superb condition on face. If mint there may be hinge marks, or slight cracking of gum. Perforations bent, but intact.”

In this issue we are submitting some additional illustrations under the heading of “perfection.” As was described in the preliminary report, a “perfection” stamp must be every bit “superb” and in addition have some additional qualifications. These would include such things as corner sheet margins, rare cancellations, or some other quality that adds unusual distinction to a “superb” stamp. We show two corner margin copies of the 5c and 10c 1847, and while we do not endeavor to cover the subject of covers in this particular survey, we

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are showing one that to our mind answers the description of "perfection" for in addition to being the most desirable of the 1c 1851, the 99R2, it has a sheet margin and an unusually interesting and rare cancellation which ties the stamp to the cover.

It would be difficult, and we believe, confusing, to establish two degrees of condition for 19th and 20th Century stamps. A table of condition, to be of definite use, should show the degrees in a positive and absolute basis rather than that of the more flexible and therefore more easily spread relative basis. As we explained in our preliminary review, the term "fine for this stamp" should be entirely eliminated and the real condition stated, whether it be "fair" or "good," with the qualifying explanation that this particular stamp does not come in any better condition.

There seems to be general agreement on the fact that rare stamps should have additional description relative to their rarity. On stamps of which there are but few known copies existing, they should have a more carefully worded description than one that is fairly common. There is also a growing tendency particularly in auction sales, to show illustrations of the rarer items, and this will go a long way to solving this particular feature.

Stamps having original gum (o.g.), in mint condition, still have a decidedly increased commercial value over equally fine stamps without gum (n.g.). There is a possibility that the time will come when collectors and dealers will generally agree to wash all gum off their mint stamps, but until this practice becomes general, the condition of the gum will still be an important consideration.

We are in complete sympathy with the suggestion that charts be worked out to cover cancellations and covers, but we feel that this is a distinctly different problem and should not be attempted in the present survey. There have been a number of suggestions that all stamps below the grade of "fair" should be rejected, and especially any showing the following defects:

(1) a part missing; (2) holes; (3) skinned face; (4) creases that break through design; (5) all perfs clipped on two or more sides; (6) 100% smudge cancel; (7) large thinned spots; (8) large tears.

However, it seems desirable to maintain this degree in our table of condition, especially as a means of fixing a valuation for stamps falling within this category.

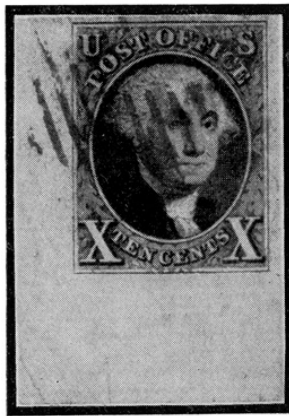
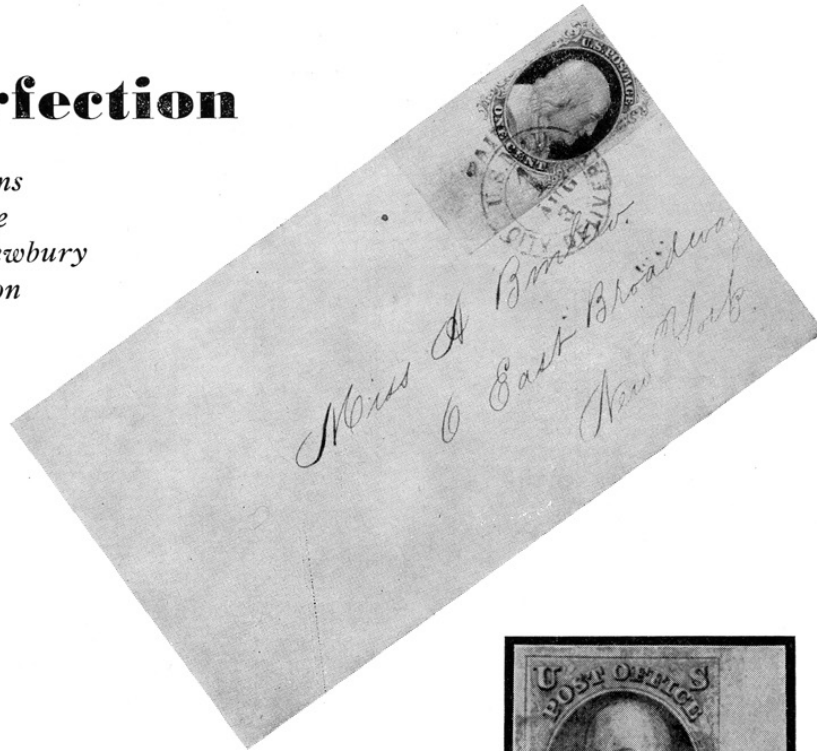
We are now submitting a group of United States stamps graded according to these classifications, and we solicit further comment and suggestions on both reports, on which we will prepare a third and final report, which will be submitted for discussion and possible adoption to philatelic organizations, dealers and collectors. If a substantial number of dealers and collectors use such a chart as the basis of their descriptions, it will do much to clarify the situation and remove one of the most frequent causes for misunderstanding.

We have endeavored not to repeat the data which accompanied the Preliminary Report as given in Part 2 of THE STAMP SPECIALIST, so we suggest that you refer to the previous article as well as this one in order to get the complete picture of the problem as presented so far. It will be noted that the grade "Poor" has been omitted from this section as we feel that this was sufficiently covered in the first article.

We are specially indebted to SAUL NEWBURY, SIDNEY BARRETT and NORMAN SERPHOS for the specimens used to illustrate the Condition series.

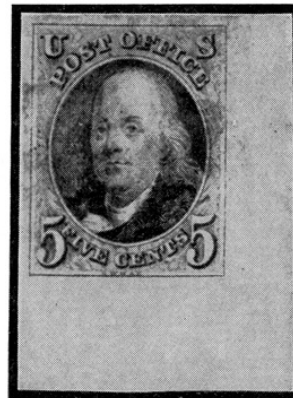
Perfection

Specimens
from the
Saul Newbury
Collection

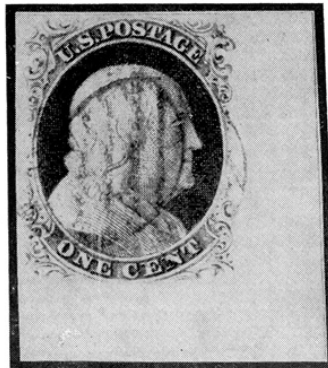


10c, black, 1847 with complete corner margins, red cancel.

A perfectly centered copy of the Type III 99R2 One Cent 1857 with bottom sheet margin, used on cover and beautifully tied on with "Paid U. S. Mail City Delivery" cancel.



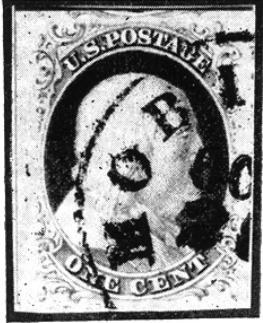
5c, brown, 1847 with complete corner margins, red cancel.



1c 1851, Pl.I (early) Type IIIa 100R, with extra large margins, light oval grid cancel.

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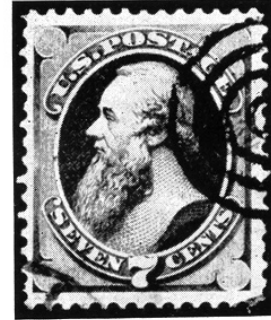
Superb



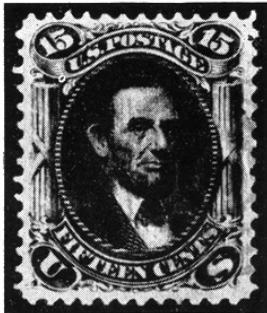
1c 1857 (42L2), fine margins, red cancel "Mobile."



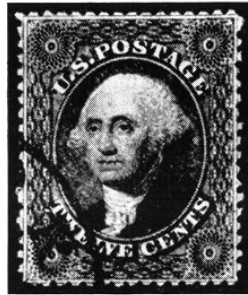
10c 1847, wide margins, clean, red grid cancel.



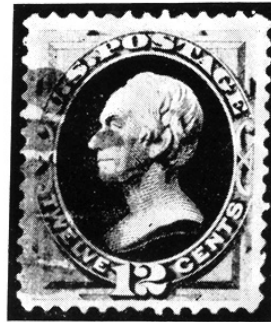
7c 1870, clean, fine margins, light cancel.



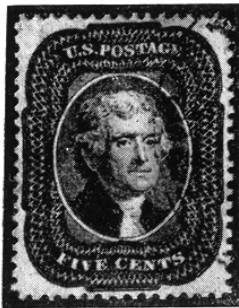
15c 1862, clear copy, very light cancel.



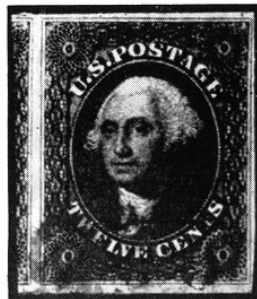
12c 1857, even perforations all around, light cancel.



12c 1870, even centering, light red cancel.



5c 1857, light brown cancel in black, perfect centering.



12c 1851, fine margins with full margin at left, light cancel.

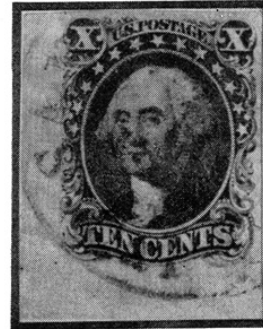


3c 1857, straight edged but large margin, unusual shade green "Paid 3" cancel "socked on the nose."

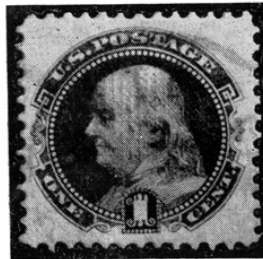
Superb



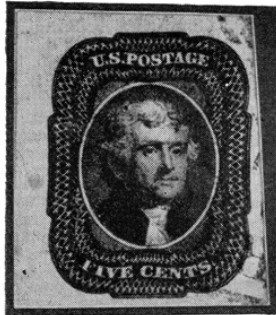
16c 1862, fine centered, light town cancel in black.



10c 1851, corner margins, "San Francisco" cancel over face.



1c 1869, perfect centering, light town cancel in blue.



5c 1851, light cancel "Richmond" in black, fine margins with extra margin.



3c 1861, perfect centering, clean, cancel in red.



10c 1869, perfect centering, red "PAID" cancel.



2c 1862, fine centering, black six-leaf cancel, unusual.



12c 1861, fine centering, light red star cancel.

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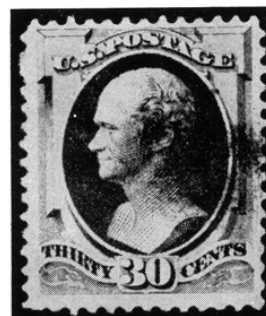
Fine



1c 1851, fine margins,
light cancel.



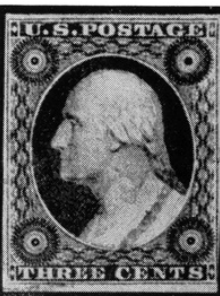
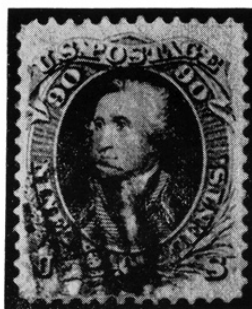
24c 1861, light cancel,
slightly off center.



30c 1870, light cancel,
slightly off center.



1c 1861, date cancel, slight
off center.



3c 1851, good even trim,
light cancel.



5c 1857, off center, clean
cancel.

90c 1861, light grid cancel,
off center.



15c 1869, off center, four-
dot cancel.



90c 1870, slight off center,
light cancel.

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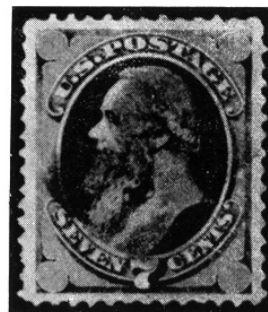
Good



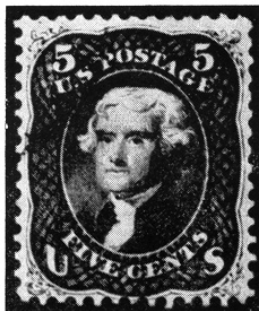
1c 1851, heavy face
cancel.



10c 1857, off centered.
fair cancel.



7c 1857, perfs snubbed.
cancel over face.



5c 1861, perfs cut design,
light cancel.



24c 1857, cancel heavy
on face.



5c 1847, cut close and
cancel on face.



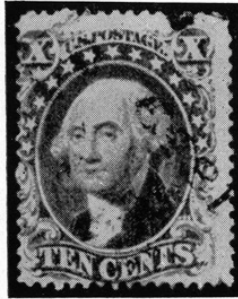
12c 1861, heavy circular
cancel on face.

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Fair



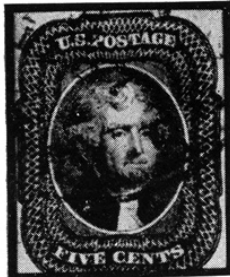
1c 1857, close two sides,
design cut into, pen
cancel.



10c 1857, design cut into
two sides.



30c 1861, design cut into,
light cancel.



5c 1851, cut into bottom,
cancel over face.



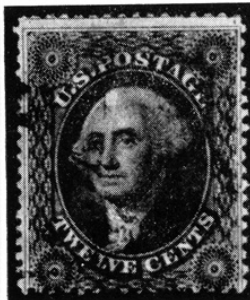
12c 1867, design cut into
two sides, light cancel
on face.



30c 1857, one straight
edge, grid cancel over face



1c 1851, cut close, pen
cancel, smudgy cancel.



12c 1857, design cut into,
cancel over face.



10c 1851, design cut into,
heavy grid cancel over
face.

Final Report on the Survey on Condition



The interest stimulated by the preliminary report on the Survey of Condition which appeared in Number 2 of THE STAMP SPECIALIST has continued with the revised report appearing in No. 3, and these two reports must be considered in connection with what follows as we are not repeating any of the previous data. In the original questionnaire upon which the Preliminary Report was based we included twelve degrees of condition, but it was apparent from replies received that collectors and dealers alike felt that this was too many and that the descriptions should be materially simplified.

One suggestion received has reduced the number to three, but we feel that if these three were generally used there would be more rather than less confusion, especially in connection with auction descriptions.

The three suggested terms offered by *F. J. Corey, M. D.*, are as follows:

- (1) *Perfection*—a stamp perfectly centered, clean and bright, all perforations intact and gum all right. No other adjectives are needed to describe it.
- (2) *Good*—a stamp not well centered and perhaps one or two perforations damaged or smudge cancellation.
- (3) *Bad*—describes all damaged stamps.

Many letters received have suggested that this work is of “high practical importance,” should be “followed to the end,” and the classification kept as “simple as possible.” Many readers have voiced their opinion that there should be a classification between *superb* and *fine* and that stamps rating a trifle better than *fine* but not reaching *superb* should be entered in such a class. This classification would apply to many of the 19th century classics and a far greater number of the 20th century stamps where finer selection is possible.

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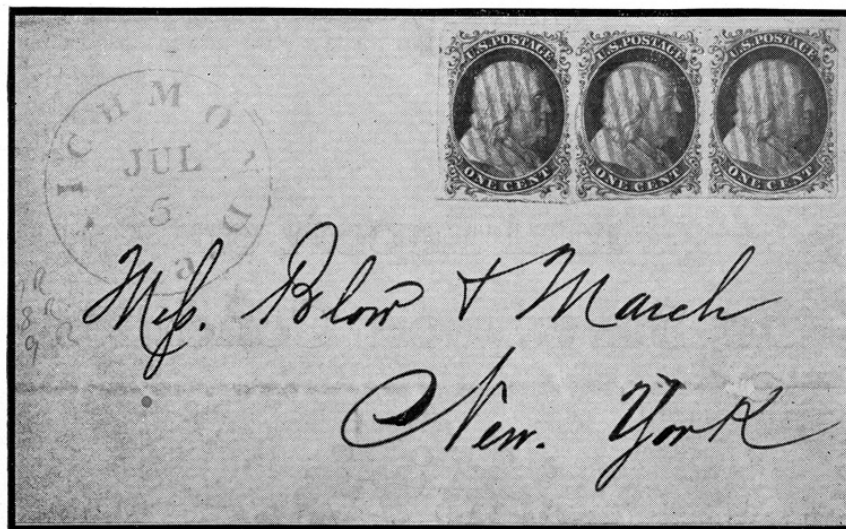


Figure No. 1. A superb piece, shows the 7 R 1 E, S R 1 E and 9 R 1 E, two of them being the rare type 1 B.

The request for such a class far outweighs the opponents of any additional classifications and taking all points into consideration we feel that by adding *very fine* to the descriptions previously suggested that much confusion may be eliminated in proper rating and describing certain stamps. Again we repeat the definition offered in No. 2 (page 457) for *very fine* and which seems to be acceptable to the majority:

“Must meet the qualifications of superb condition on face. If mint there

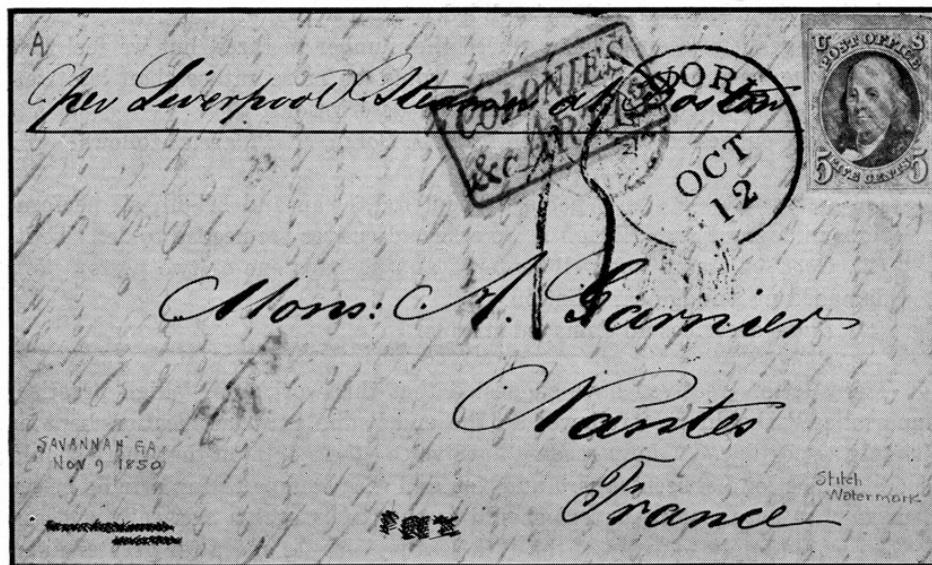


Figure No. 2. A 5c 1847 used abroad, paying U. S. domestic rate only—ship to shore.

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may be hinge marks, or slight cracking of gum. Perforations may be slightly bent, but intact.”

This third article completes our exposition on the subject of CONDITION and the consensus of opinion by collectors and dealers alike agrees that some well defined plan of this kind should be developed and accepted by all parties concerned.

In order to really make this plan a practical one it is necessary that a schedule of terms and degrees of conditions be drawn up that is concise and complete, and one in which each degree of condition is thoroughly understood and adopted by every dealer and every philatelic organization.

To do the most good and to properly accomplish its adoption its acceptance must be spontaneous and wholehearted, and we suggest that every reader who is interested in having the question finally settled and pushed through to adoption should give the subject real thought, and if any constructive plan is developed we will be glad to follow further on the subject.

In this book we discuss the subject of “covers,” classifying them in accordance with accepted cover specifications, as covers do not and cannot be classified according to stamps off cover. Such classification is at once more diversified and complex. Many elements enter into it, as the general appearance of the cover, the rarity of postal markings, the handwriting on the cover, the colors of the markings, clearness of cancellations and other such marks as are placed on the cover together with a fresh clean appearance. All of these points must be taken into consideration when classifying a cover as *perfection*, *superb* or otherwise.

There are two recognized classes of cover collectors, (1) those who collect for condition only, and (2) those who are primarily interested in what the cover itself shows, regardless of condition of cover or stamps.

Some collectors go in for scarce markings, scarce rates of postage applied, scarce combinations of postage and cancellations, scarce colors and other distinctive markings which make a piece desirable. For example, take a cover that shows an unusual rate and unusual markings, as well as an odd combination of stamps to make the rate. Such an item may be very rare, but the stamps may not all be in superb condition, that is, lightly cancelled, fine colors, superb centering, and so on, but nevertheless here we have an extraordinary piece and one which a cover collector might properly class as *superb*, even if the stamps themselves, off cover, would have a much lower rating.

There is much that could be written around the classification of covers, but a start should be made as a basis for future elaboration. In this article we will confine our remarks to concrete examples of early covers, as examples for consideration.

In the Richmond cover (Figure 1) a strip of three shows the 7 R 1 E, S R 1 E and 9 R 1 E, two of them being the rare Type 1 B. This superb piece originally was in the collection of the late Judge Robert S. Emerson and was acquired by Saul Newbury, in whose collection it now reposes. Although this strip is not actually tied, the cover otherwise has about everything that would make it highly desirable and it is a beautiful piece. Stanley Ashbrook in his

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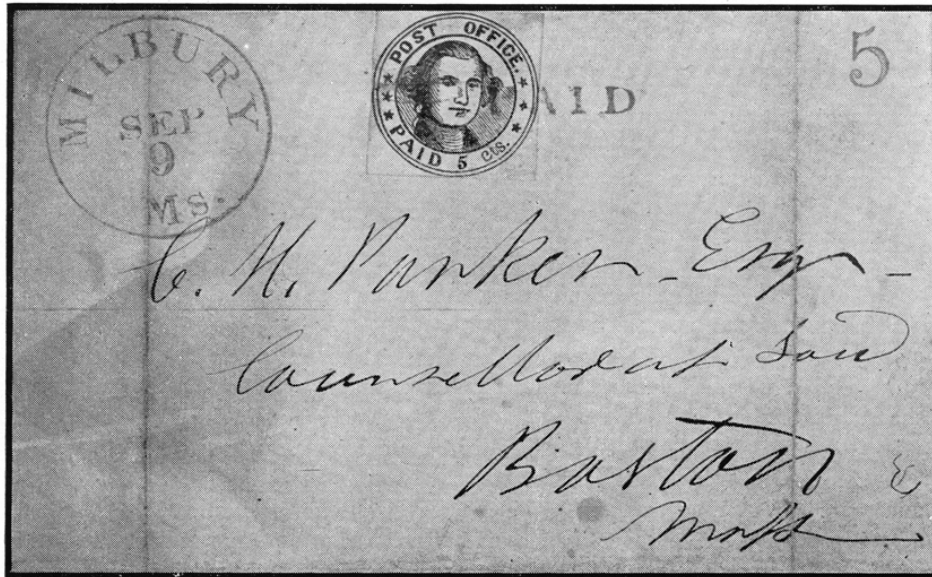


Figure No. 3. Superb condition in a Provisional cover, the Milbury.

book *The United States One Cent Stamp of 1851-1857*, Vol. 1, page 121 states: "I have no apologies to offer for the enthusiasm over this gem, which some day will out-rank in value the scarcest of our U. S. Postmaster's Provisionals."

Figure 2, a 5c 1847 on a cover to France, the stamp and cover both being in superb condition. This is no great rarity, but it is a beautiful cover and shows a rather unusual use—i.e., a 5c 1847 used abroad (paying U. S. domestic rate only—shore to ship). The N. Y. postmark is very unusual on such mail and is



Figure No. 4. The 10c 1855s are very fine early impressions and of superb color.

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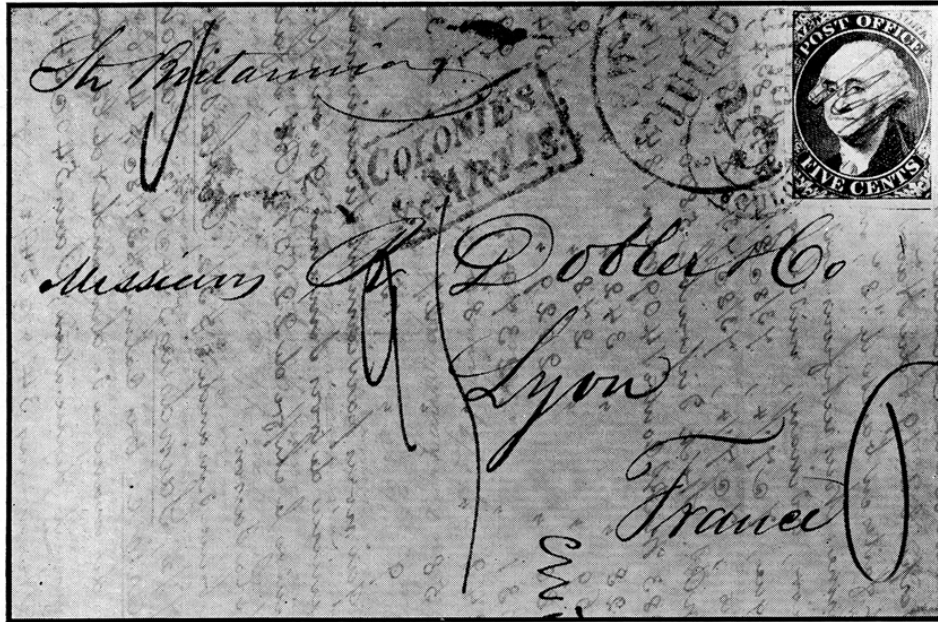


Figure No. 5. 5c New York tied to cover with very rare type of New York postmark.

what Ashbrook calls the *first Ocean Mail to California type*. This marking was mentioned in the recent Maurice C. Blake article in STAMPS entitled "The Earliest Known Use of the New York to California 'Ocean Mail' Postmark." (June 8, 1940, p. 341).

Figure 3. This is a reproduction of the Emerson "Milbury" cover. It is an example of superb condition in a Provisional—that is a very rare stamp which is in superb condition and tied to cover. Judge Robert E. Emerson paid \$5700.00 for this cover. He must have regarded it very highly.

Figure 4. This shows the 40c rate to Mexico and contains a very fine strip of four of the 10c 1855 tied to a neat cover with a red New Orleans and black grid cancellation. The stamps are very fine early impressions and are of a superb color.

Figure 5. This shows a 5c New York on a cover to France. A superb stamp that is also very scarce and tied by a very rare type of New York postmark. This is also ex-Emerson and was described in the MacGuffin booklet (by S. B. A.) on the 5c New York.

Figure 6. Here is a real "Pony" cover showing use before Wells Fargo took over. Just everything that could be desired in a real Pony cover.

Figure 7. A very desirable piece with the 1847 issue on one cover. The stamps are superb. This was the sensation of the Brown sale (Lot 175) and sold for \$1100. As a condition "item" fault could be found perhaps on the following points: (1) large size of cover; (2) location of postmark in far upper left corner.

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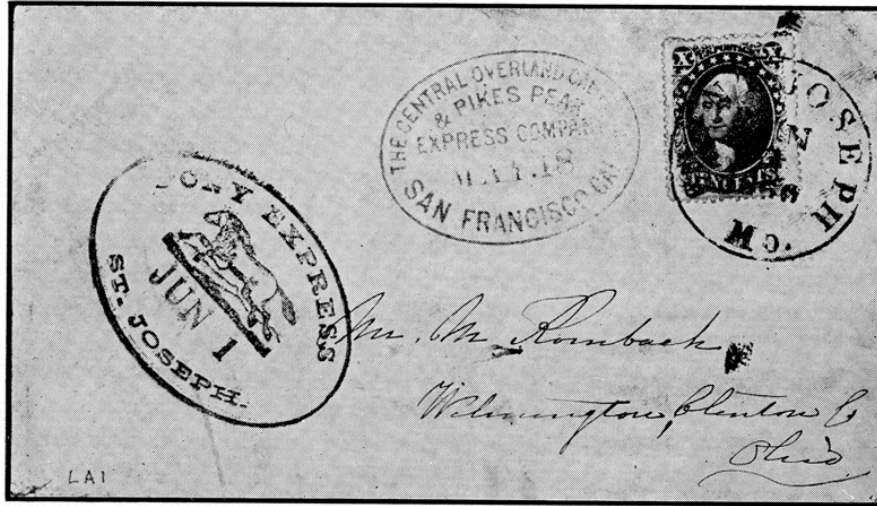


Figure No. 6. This cover has about everything that could be desired in a real Pony cover.

Competition in bidding made the record price as both values on individual covers are not extremely rare.

Figure 8. The finest example of the scarce One Cent 1851, Type III on a very neat cover. The stamp is the well known "99R2" and this position on Plate 2 happened to be the only position on the plate which furnished a Type III stamp. A single copy of this particular plate position on a neat little cover all by itself is indeed quite some item. But in addition, the stamp, which is of a very fine color and sharp clear engraving, is neatly tied by a brilliant red New York carrier postmark. Naturally when a rare type of the One Cent 1851 comes

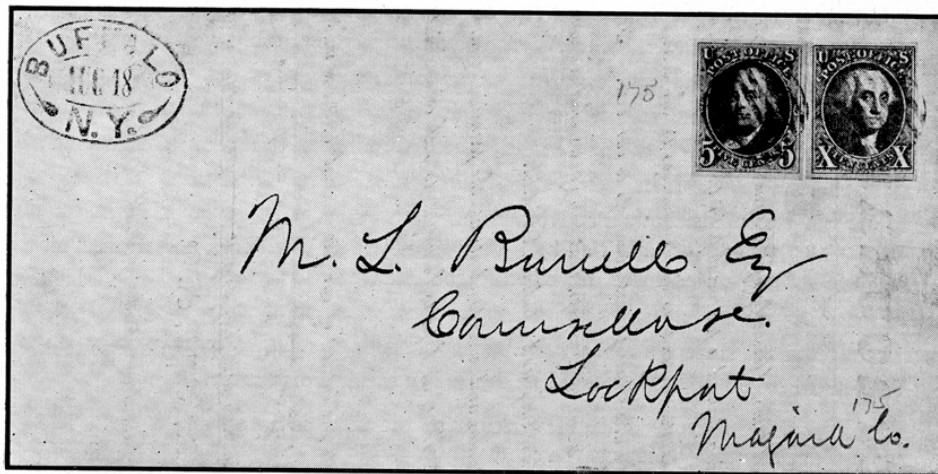


Figure No. 7. A very desirable cover with a superb 1847 issue.

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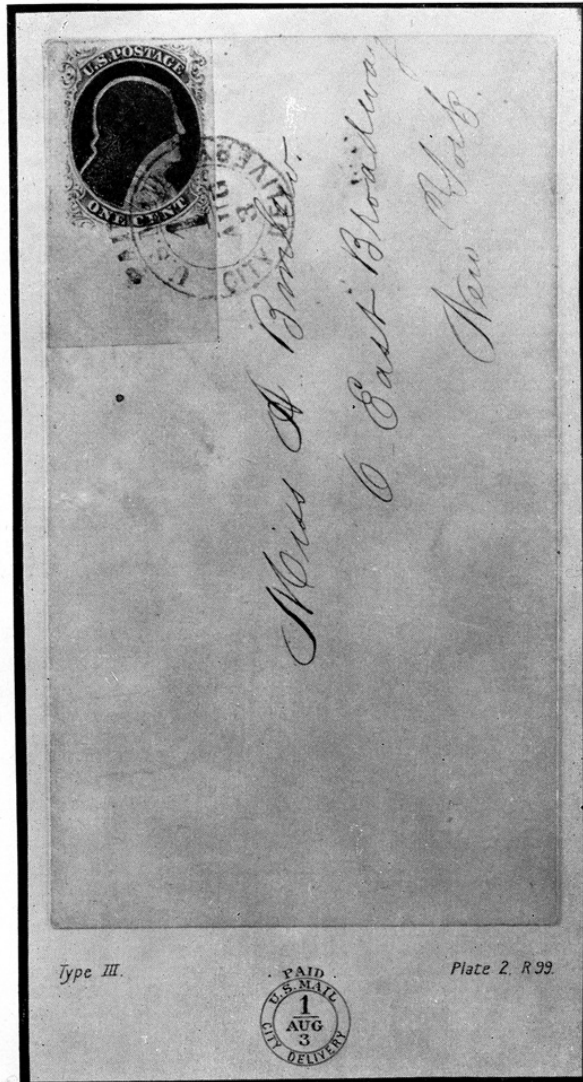


Figure No. 8. The finest example of the scarce One Cent 1851, Type III on a very neat cover.

from a bottom row of a plate it is quite desirable to have the entire bottom sheet margin and what a coincidence that this beautiful copy with superb margins on three sides also has the entire sheet at bottom. The postmark could hardly have been applied in a more appropriate manner. This cover is an excellent example of many features which a superb cover can possess.

Figure 9. A cover in the Sam'l W. Richey (Cincinnati) collection. One of the few extremely fine examples of the "Philadelphia—Old Stamps Not Recognized." A reminder of quite an interesting period in our postal history. This cover is an outstanding gem of historical philately.

Figure 10. A second Sam'l W. Richey cover. More of an example of great rarity than of superb condition. Also an item of historical philately.

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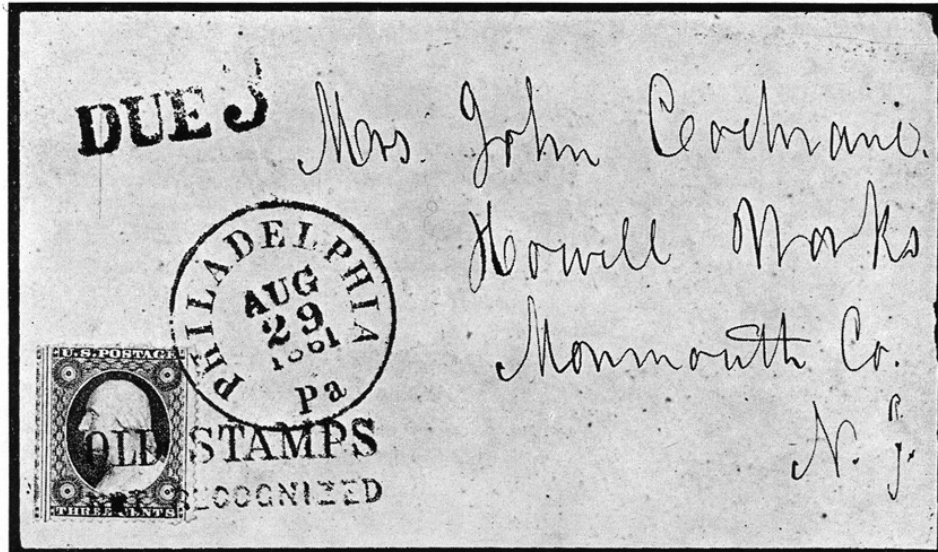


Figure No. 9. An "Old Stamps Not Recognized" cover, a gem of historical philately.

Figure 11. Neat markings, but the poor handwriting mars the beauty of a rare cover. A fine "Western" but stamps and markings poorly placed and the handwriting most unattractive.

Figure 12. A Western pictorial. Interest in this cover is not the 10c 1857 Type V stamp but the cut of the stage coach which was in reality the direction by which the writer wished the letter forwarded, i.e., via the Great Overland Mail Stage Route from San Francisco to St. Louis rather than by the Ocean Mail Via Panama.



Figure No. 10. An example of rarity rather than superb condition, an item of historical philately.

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Figure No. 11. A fine "Western" cover.

These few examples of what we consider superb items are enough to indicate that terms to describe the condition of covers must be comparative rather than specific and more latitude must be granted. Rare covers should be described in rather complete detail and collectors will do well to examine those of considerable value and place their own appraisal upon them.

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There have been numerous efforts made to develop an acceptable guide to describe condition so that it would be generally understood and agreed upon. Practically all of these efforts have come to naught because the effort got no further than its publication. This effort of ours will have no better fate unless

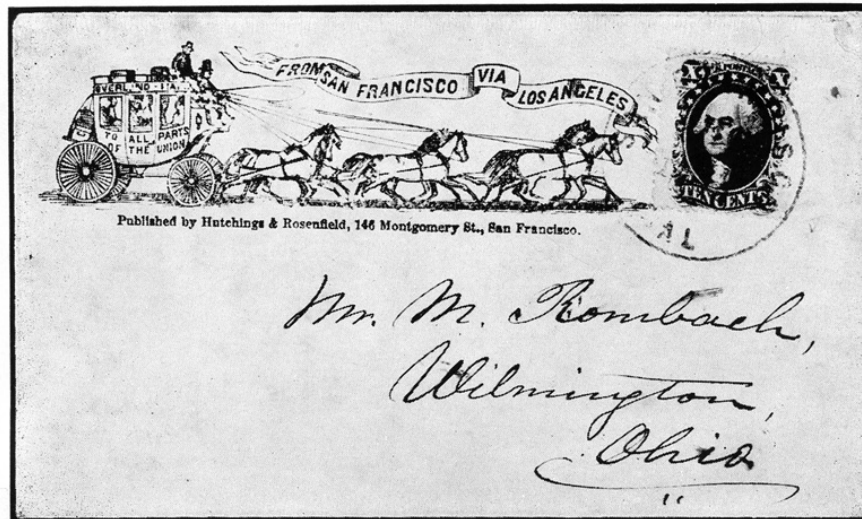


Figure No. 12. A Western pictorial with cut of old stage coach.

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it is persistently pushed until it is accepted. National and local clubs and societies must approve it. Collectors must insist on their stamps meeting these requirements so that dealers will naturally use them as a matter of course.

But as we stated previously in this article, the demand for such a campaign must be spontaneous. It is an expensive and thankless job to undertake missionary work of this kind and unless there is a demand for it the effort is apt to fail.

So we put it up to the readers of The STAMP SPECIALIST who represent the most advanced collectors and dealers in our hobby. If you are interested enough to lend your support we will gladly follow through, but if there is no "crying need" for such a guide, it will soon be forgotten.

Once again, we would appreciate your opinions on how much (or how little) things have changed when it comes to condition and how it is defined. JFD.

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