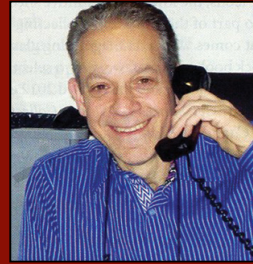


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Stamp Identification: **The Bluish Papers**

From the Stamp News Publishing United States Reference Manual

This article is part of our United States Reference Manual Washington-Franklin Issues section. See page 21 for information on this and other sections.

Section One

The Bluish Paper Printings Of The 1908-9 Regular Issue: *Fact, Fiction, And Conspiracy*

by Roy H. White

Introduction

The bluish paper varieties of the 1908-9 double line watermark issue have been the subject of numerous philatelic writings for almost eighty years. Virtually every writer of a publication associated with a newspaper column has produced one or more articles relating to the blue papers.

The blue paper story has been convoluted and confused from the outset. Not one writer did a thorough research of archival material; or they failed to report it accurately, presumably to avoid criticism of one of their cronies.

On February 16, 1909, A. L. Lausche, the Third Assistant PMG acted upon a communication he had received from J. E. Ralph (Director of the Bureau of Engraving and Printing) on February 2, 1909 advising that he had printed about 1,600,000 of the One and Two Cent denominations on rag



Sc. 357

paper. Ralph asked for and received permission to include those stamps in regular shipments. Lausche modified the request by authorizing the delivery to the Postmaster at Washington, and asked



Sc. 358

that the clerks report on any improvement on curling and the tendency of the stamps to separate due to poor paper strength.

Ostensibly, the purpose of adding cotton fiber to the normal wood pulp was to improve the stability of the paper fibers by reducing the shrinking of the dampened sheet during the drying cycle.

Though this “official” reason for using a rag-filled stock was put forth in the June 30, 1909 report of the Third Assistant Postmaster General, the real objective of the Post Office Department was to produce stamps which would not curl, a chronic complaint of the clerks at the stamp windows. W. S. Boggs¹ and George Sloane² have reviewed that aspect of the story. (See page 12 for all footnotes.)

The First Gambit

The scheme to print more than just the One and Two Cent denominations, and the Lincoln Commemorative on a paper containing cotton linters was thrust upon Ralph by A. M. Travers, acting Third Assistant Postmaster General in early Spring 1909.

The precise date of Travers’ visit to Ralph has not been established, but the Director did advise Travers that the printing of the One and Two Cent denominations of rag paper had almost depleted the stock of that paper.

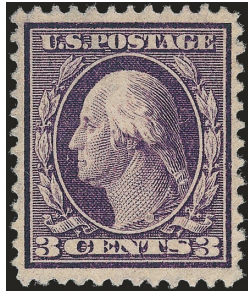


Sc. 369

In addition, the Two Cent Lincoln Commemorative had not been printed. On February 5, 1909, 1,754 sheets of the remaining stock were used to print the Lincoln stamp. Of that total, 637,000 stamps (6,370 panes of 100) were delivered to the main Post Office, Washington, D.C., and were issued in late February, 1909³.

Thus, the printing of the One and Two Cent regular issue and the Lincoln Two Cent had consumed 9,764 sheets of the 10,000 originally delivered to the Bureau for experimental printings.

J. E. Ralph had not planned to print any of the higher values, and in any event only 236 sheets were available to print the Three Cent to Fifteen denominations.



Sc. 359



Sc. 360



Sc. 361



Sc. 362



Sc. 363



Sc. 364



Sc. 365



Sc. 366

When Travers suggested to the Director that he print a limited number of sheets of 400 stamps of the higher values it must have caused Ralph to wonder why, but since Travers was the Acting Third Assistant PMG he did not question the request.

The Three Cent to Fifteen Cent stamps were printed during February and early April, 1909.

In April 1909 Ralph purportedly advised Travers that the special printing of the Three to Fifteen Cent stamps was ready. Once again Boggs is mute on the actual date, and it is difficult to reconcile some discrepancies in his dating certain incidents⁴.

During March and early April 1909 several communications between Travers, still the acting 3rd APMG in

Lausche's absence (due to illness), and the Director of the Bureau were concerned with the delivery of the first printings of the One and Two Cent stamps. The reports of the Postmaster at Washington were also recorded.

The last communication on that subject was dated April 21, 1909⁵. Then, strangely enough, all concerned fell silent on the fate of the limited printings of the Three to Fifteen Cent denominations. A few cursory inquiries directed to the Assistant Postmaster-General occurred during August and early September 1909, but none hinted at any irregularity within the Department until J. A. Klemann of the Nassau Stamp Co., New York, in a letter dated September 16, 1909 asked for a "...list of the values and total number of each printed on this paper."⁶

Events Leading To A Public Disclosure Of The Bluish Paper Printing

The first public acknowledgement of the existence of the higher values came as a result of a letter from Stanley Gibbons of New York apprising the Post Office Department that two sheets of the 10 Cent stamp had been purchased in New York City, presumably at the City Hall postal station⁷.

The first hint of the culpability of A. M. Travers came in his reply to the Gibbons letter. On December 14, 1909, and still as Acting Assistant PMG, Travers' reply was the essence of ambiguity:

"Referring to your letter of November 30, submitting two 10 cent stamps, series 1908, one of which you assume, on account of its slightly darker color, to have been printed on the experimental part-rag paper, and asking as to the number issued, you are advised that some of these stamps were printed for the purpose of observing the color combination. The Department is not prepared to state the number so printed."⁸

That letter was the beginning of the furor leading to Travers' indictment, along with one of the several dealers who conspired with him in the crime of embezzlement.

Travers knew only too well how many stamps had been printed, for on September 1, 1909, he had written to J. R.

Ralph: "Referring to the one sheet of 400 each 1¢, 2¢, 2¢ L(incoln), 3¢, 4¢, 5¢, 6¢, 8¢, 10¢, 13¢, and 15¢ stamps, series 1908, printed on the special 'rag' paper for the purpose of showing the effect of the various colors of ink printed on the tinted paper, you are advised that these stamps will be included in the Purchasing Agent's order of September 15. Please deliver them to the Third Assistant Postmaster General, Division of Stamps.

Respectfully,
Acting Third Assistant
Postmaster General"

This was a most convenient arrangement, since Travers was to receive the stamps personally.

In early 1910 Travers continued to becloud the information provided to both collectors and dealers, although it was now obvious to the public that a number of all values to the Fifteen Cent stamp had been printed and distributed to some post offices.

The whole matter became the focus of attention of the Department when an irate collector addressed a somewhat abusive and insulting letter to Postmaster General Frank Hitchcock. The letter essentially identified recipients amongst the general public and dealers in the United States who were in possession of the majority of the stamps which had inadvertently found their way into the normal distribution channels of the Department. Mr. C. Lomber writing on February 10, 1910 concluded his letter to Hitchcock as follows:

"...As this is an important matter I hope you will have the same investigated by your own office and not through the Third Assistant Postmaster General....

Thanking you in advance, I remain
Respectfully,
C. Lomber
2778 8 Ave., New York

The Postmaster General, on February 12th in a cautious yet strong reply, discounted the charge of collusion by stating:

"The very fact of the wide distribution which you indicate

shows the absence of irregularity in the issuance of the stamps. Collusion as you suggest is manifestly improbable under such condition....”⁹

Unfortunately he had no inkling of what would happen to the 4,000 or more stamps of the Three to Fifteen Cent stamps. Earlier in his reply to Lomber the PMG had acknowledged:

“For the purpose of insuring perfect specimens, several sheets of each were printed. The best of these were delivered to the Post Office Department where they are still held. The Director of the Bureau of Engraving and Printing issued instructions to destroy the remaining sheets, but inadvertently they were mingled with other stamps in the process of production and placed in stock....”

Throughout 1910 the disposition of the ten to thirteen sheets (4,000 to 5,200 stamps) would evolve, but never were all of those stamps accounted for.

Distribution Of The Bluish Papers

In February 1910 Postmaster General Hitchcock acknowledged publicly that 4,000 to 5,200 bluish paper varieties of the 1908-9 regular issue had been inadvertently released to various Post Offices. Within a few weeks many inquiries relating to their availability were received by the Third Assistant Postmaster General.

A. M. Travers, the acting 3rd APMG, replied to all inquiries advising that the bluish paper stocks had been merged with other printings and distributed in the normal course of business. What he failed to mention in his replies was the fact that 400 copies (4 panes of 100 stamps each) had been retained by the Department.

Four thousand stamps each (ten sheets of four hundred) of the 3¢, 5¢, 8¢, 10¢, 13¢ and 15¢ denominations were printed as were eleven sheets (4,400) of the 4¢ stamp and thirteen sheets (5,200) of the 6¢ value. Except for the 4¢ and 8¢, all other values between the 3¢ and 15¢ appeared for sale at various post offices: The 5¢ in St. Louis, the 6¢ in Chicago, the 10¢ in New York, and the 15¢ in Cleveland. Distribution was not restricted to those cities.

The 13¢ stamp purportedly went to Saginaw, Michigan,

although several sheets were offered to dealers in New York City, source unknown.

The 4¢ and 8¢ stamps never appeared at any post office. What happened to them?

Events Of 1910—P.O.D. Communications

Prior to release of information by the Postmaster General (February 12, 1910) acknowledging the existence of 4,000 or more stamps of the 3¢ to 15¢ stamps, Travers, in a curious letter dated January 20, 1910, responded to an inquiry by the Stamp Security Company of St. Louis:

“...The Department is not prepared to state the number of these stamps printed above the 2¢, nor to what post offices (they were) issued because they were merged into regular stock. The 10¢ stamp, however, has been reported as sold through the New York Post Office.”¹⁰

Earlier, on January 27, 1910, W. C. Fitch, Superintendent of the Stamp Division, delivered 100 copies of all values of the bluish paper stamps to Travers,¹¹ who sent them to the Chief Clerk of the Department for the “Department’s collection in the museum.” By mid-summer there were requests for information concerning the “rag” paper printings.

There are two or three logical scenarios to explain what was about to unfold. Travers may have recognized that the increasing requests for the bluish paper stamps would be enhanced by a shortage in one or two values, and these stamps in particular would be in great demand. Or he may have reasoned that a total absence of any one or two values would make those items a rarity. The third possibility could have been initiated by someone outside the Department, who, like Travers, recognized the speculative potential of this limited issue.

Throughout the Spring and Summer of 1910, Travers continued to deflect inquiries concerning the availability of the blue papers, but by November 1910, he could no longer conceal the fact that the Office of the Third Assistant PMG had in its possession 200 each of all values between the 3¢ and 15¢, for on November 2nd the Superintendent of the Stamp Division wrote to Travers:

“...One set of 100 each of the part-rag stamps has been placed in the Department’s collection in the museum; one set (except the 2¢ Lincoln) is held in your office; one set is held in the official collection of the Division of Stamps. This leaves the following stamps which are handed you herewith.”¹²

100 each of the 1¢ through 15¢ and 200 of the Lincoln were itemized. Fitch recommended that the stamps be destroyed.

On Dec. 28, 1910, Travers appears to have written his last Department communication to Hon. W. S. Greene, a member of Congress from Massachusetts. Subsequently, an inter-departmental inquiry, initiated by Postmaster General Hitchcock, into the questions being raised by collectors concerning the bluish paper printings, resulted in the following course of events:

On March 6, 1911 it was announced that Travers had been dismissed from his position, as a result of his confession that he had stolen and sold more than \$10,000 worth of stamps.”¹³

On March 9, 1911, C. H. Mekeel, Editor of the *Philatelic Journal of America*, wrote to Hitchcock requesting a clarification of the blue paper story. There was a considerable delay in replying to Mekeel’s request presumably as a result of Travers’ dismissal. But on April 11th, the newly appointed Third Assistant PMG, James J. Britt, responded:

“...In answer to your letter of April 9th which the Postmaster General has referred to me, you are advised that the matter to which you refer is now in the Courts, and it is deemed not advisable to comment upon it.”

With his letter to PMG Hitchcock, C. H. Mekeel also forwarded to the PMG a “Memorandum” which he had prepared for distribution to readers of the *Philatelic Journal of America* relating to the experimental paper printings. In part, he said:

“...It has been known in the trade that certain dealers in Philadelphia connected with a stamp company in that city were alleged to have had an “inside pull” and to have

been able to secure them from the Post Office Department or from someone connected there with these special supplies.”

The prompting by C. H. Mekeel no doubt accelerated the investigative process initiated by Hitchcock. On March 22, 1911 A. M. Travers and Joseph A. Steinmetz, a Philadelphia stamp dealer, were indicted for violation of Sections 190, 208 and 225 of the Penal Code on evidence presented to the Grand Jury by Post Office Department Inspectors Carter B. Keane, H. N. Mosby and James B. Robertson.¹⁵

A protracted investigation by the Post Office Department as to the disposition of 200 copies of each of the 2¢ to 15¢ stamps resulted in the recovery of a small quantity of the 4¢ and 8¢ stamps. There was no precise accounting of the other denominations—approximately 160 each of the 3¢, 5¢, 6¢, 10¢, 13¢ and 15¢ stamps—the disposition of which was obscured by the issuance of more than 3,000 each of those values to numerous offices.

The Final Actions

The indictment of Travers and Steinmetz stated in part:

“...The said A. M. Travers and the said Joseph A. Steinmetz ...did and with other persons to the Grand Jurors aforesaid, unknown, feloniously conspire, combine, confederate and agree together to commit an offense against the said United States...”¹⁶ and, Steinmetz did, “in a particular manner to the Grand Jurors aforesaid unknown” obtain and delivered forty of each value, including the 4¢ and 8¢ to the Philadelphia Stamp Company.”¹⁷ and further, “...that the said Joseph A. Steinmetz on the twenty eighth day of January...” (1911)... and at the City of Philadelphia... pursuant to the said felonious conspiracy...did receive from the Philadelphia Stamp Company...a check... drawn on the Girard Trust Company for the sum of five hundred dollars....”¹⁸ He had given the stamp company 26 stamps of each value.

On Sept. 28, 1911 Steinmetz acknowledged indebtedness to the United States of \$500. The case against him

was settled.

Travers had pled “not guilty” to the indictment charges, but withdrew that plea on October 12, 1912, and changed it to “nolo contendere.” He was sentenced to pay a fine of \$1,500.¹⁹

What is not known by most philatelists is the fact that during the interrogation of Steinmetz (before the United States Commissioner for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania), he identified Philip S. Ward as one of the recipients of some of the stolen stamps.²⁰ It appears conclusive that Steinmetz and Ward, along with other dealers familiar with the transactions of the Philadelphia Stamp Company who knew of the source of the stamps, were culpable in the matter of receiving stolen United States property.

In one of the last pertinent inter-departmental communications, G. G. Thompson, Chief Clerk of the Post Office Department, received the following letter from James J. Britt, 3rd APMG.

“Referring to your letter of Dec. 5, requesting to be advised of the disposal of certain stamps, specimens, records, etc., recovered in the A. M. Travers case... you are informed that, by my direction, Mr. C. B. Burrey, Chief Clerk of the Bureau, Mr. W. C. Fitch, Superintendent of the Division of Stamps, and F. R. Barclay, a post office inspector...have destroyed by burning the so-called ‘blue rag’ experimental postage stamps recovered from Mr. Travers. A copy of the report of the Committee is handed you herewith.

Respectfully,
Third Assistant
Postmaster General.”²¹

Conclusions

- Two hundred stamps each of the 3¢ to 15¢ denominations of the bluish paper printing were illegally removed from the Post Office Department, some of which were given to J. A. Steinmetz for sale through the Philadelphia Stamp Company to certain dealers.

- Some of the 4¢ and 8¢ stamps were recovered by the Postal Inspectors and destroyed. The following tabulation,

while not totally accurate, is probably as close to a factual accounting as is possible:

Recovered and destroyed by postal inspectors:

4¢, 67 (52 from Travers, 15 from Steinmetz)

8¢, 70 (60 from Travers, 10 from Steinmetz)

200 each of the 4¢ and 8¢ held by Travers:

4¢, 133 not recovered and probably not destroyed

8¢, 130 not recovered and probably not destroyed

Diverted to dealers and collectors:

4¢, 133 + 95 from Smithsonian Collection

8¢, 130 + 95 from Smithsonian Collection

- Of the 4,400 (11 sheets of 400 each) of the 4¢ stamps and 4,000 (10 sheets) of the 8¢ stamp purportedly printed by the Bureau, only 400 stamps of each were delivered to the Third APMG. J. E. Ralph, Director of the Bureau, probably never saw them, and the Superintendent of Stamps never had them. They simply either disappeared or never existed!

The last comment is pure speculation but it is virtually impossible to believe that none of the 19 sheets, or parts thereof never turned up at any post office if they too had been mixed with normal sheets.

- For the other values, no accounting is possible since thousands of each were distributed through the Postal system.

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1. W. S. Boggs, "United States, Note on the Bluish Papers of 1909," *The London Philatelist*, July/October 1960.
2. G. B. Sloane, "Sloane's Column," between 6/16/34 and 1/30/54, *Stamps*, H. L. Lindquist, New York.
- 3,4. Boggs, *ob cit.* p. 6
- 5-9. Archival Records, 3rd Assistant Postmaster General, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.
- 10-12: Post Office Department Records, for the Postmaster General and Third Assistant PMG, for the years 1909-1912, Philatelic Archives, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.
- 13-16. Post Office Department Records, for the Postmaster General and Third Assistant PMG, for the years 1909-

- 1912, Philatelic Archives, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.
- 17-19. Supreme Court of the District of Columbia, January Term 1911, Case File #27515, Record Group 21, United States vs. Arthur M. Travers. National Archives, Suitland, Md.
20. Records of the District Courts of the United States, Record Group 21, Case File #27516, United States vs. Joseph A. Steinmetz. Testimony before United States Commissioner for Eastern District of Pennsylvania.
21. Post Office Department Records for 1912.

Section Two

The Bluish Paper Story

by George B. Sloane

(From "Sloane's Column", STAMPS Magazine, May 3-Aug. 15, 1947)

From STAMPS, May 3, 1947: For years we have been told that the existence of the Bluish Paper stamps of 1909 came about through the laudable efforts of the Bureau of Engraving & Printing and the Post Office Department to improve the centering of stamps. Copies of letters from the Steinmetz-Travers papers, loaned me by courtesy of Herman Herst, Jr., indicate that the subject of centering was an afterthought—after the experiment had been abandoned.

Actually, the Department was troubled by constant complaint from postal clerks on stamp windows because of the tendency of stamps to CURL UP and break down along the perforations so that their stocks became messy, and difficult to handle. The P.O.D. passed the problem over to the Bureau where the stamps were printed. The paper in use had a high wood-pulp content and because of the need of wetting it down prior to intaglio plate-printing, its shrinkage was unpredictable, so the Bureau experimented on the paper.

Joseph E. Ralph, then Director of the Bureau, wrote A. L. Lawshe, Third Assistant Postmaster General, on February 1, 1909, that he had been testing a paper of rag stock (the Bluish Papers), and had printed about 1,600,000 each

of the 1¢ and 2¢ stamps thereon. He said that the paper, “is in all respects equal to the present paper except that it is of a slightly different color which makes the impressions vary slightly from the standard,” but the variation was not sufficient to justify destroying the printed stamps and he asked authorization to deliver them on regular orders.

Mr. Lawshe gave approval in a letter of February 16th advising that requisition would be made for delivery of the stamps to the Washington post office. He told Ralph that the Postmaster of Washington would be instructed to place the stocks on sale and to give them special attention and report, “whether they display less tendency to curl than stamps made of the regular wood-pulp paper and are found otherwise satisfactory.” On the same day, these instructions were dispatched by Lawshe to the Postmaster of Washington, with the added comment that, “the samples submitted to this office show it (the paper) to be a blue-white shade which improves the appearance of the stamps.” He also requested that stamp clerks report not only on their freedom from CURLING but to observe, “whether the greater strength of the paper facilitates separating and minimizes the tendency to tear away from the line of perforations.”

However, when Mr. Lawshe, in 1910, wrote his annual report for 1909, he referred to the blue rag paper experiment as an effort to overcome excessive waste stock due to “imperfect perforating.” Meanwhile the Bureau was back to its wood-pulp after a brief interlude with a 2% China Clay paper.

From STAMPS, June 7, 1947: The circumstances which brought about the Bluish Paper experiment of 1909, and the printing and subsequent issue of the 1908 (design), 1¢ and 2¢ stamps [Sc. 357 & 358], and the 2¢ Lincoln commemorative of 1909 [Sc. 369], were detailed in column of May 3rd. We will continue with the story of the other denominations.

Joseph E. Ralph, then Director of the Bureau of Engraving & Printing, had made a large printing of these three denominations on the Bluish experimental “rag” paper,

but had no intentions of carrying the tests into further denominations. The higher values from 3¢ to 15¢ inclusive [Sc. 359-366] came into being on suggestion from a postal official who was acting beyond his ordinary duties. This official was A. M. Travers, Chief Clerk in the office of A. L. Lawshe, Third Assistant Postmaster General. Due to illness, Mr. Lawshe was frequently absent from the Department, and for long periods Mr. Travers took over the functions of his division.



Sc. 358

In January, 1909, Travers visited the Bureau of Engraving & Printing to discuss various stamp matters with Mr. Ralph. During this discussion, Mr. Ralph drew attention to his Bluish rag paper experimental printings of the 1¢, 2¢, 1908, and 2¢ Lincoln stamps, remark-

ing that practically all of the initial supply of this special paper had been used up in the printing of these three stamps. Travers suggested that Bluish paper printings be made of the higher denominations of the set, "for the Department's files," and the "Museum Collection," before



Sc. 369

the plates, currently in use, develop any signs of wear. He asked Mr. Ralph if there was enough of the Bluish paper left for such a printing. Ralph said there was and thereupon called the Assistant Director, Mr. Ferguson,

instructing him to see that as soon as plates of each of the denominations from 3¢ to 15¢ were at press, that “perfect specimen sheets” be printed on the Bluish paper and delivered to the Department. The 50¢ and \$1 values were omitted because Ralph pointed out that these plates went to press only occasionally and wore little, hence specimens on Bluish paper could be secured at any time. (Ultimately they were never printed.)

In April, 1909. Ralph advised Travers that the printings of the Bluish paper stamps from 3¢ to 15¢ inclusive were ready for delivery. The printing comprised 4,000 each of the 3¢, 5¢, 8¢, 10¢, 13¢ and 15¢; 4,400 of the 4¢, and 5,200 of the 6¢. Four-hundred each of these stamps were delivered to the Post Office Department, but the rest, due to a mis-

understanding at the Bureau, were mixed with ordinary stock and distributed to post offices. Most values were later discovered in various cities, but the 4¢ and 8¢ were never found.



Sc. 361, 5¢ on Bluish paper (Sc. 361), tied by “Kansas City Mo. Sta. E. May 18 6 P.M. 1910” duplex cancel on cover to Bogota, Colombia, one of five known used and three known on cover.

From STAMPS, July 19, 1947: ...Travers requested that four sheets of each denomination be printed and delivered to his office before the stock of the bluish paper was exhausted. This order was accepted although the Bureau found it necessary to print from nine to twelve full sheets of 400 stamps each (the full plate size) in order to make a selection of well centered sheets for the postal officials. This special printing on bluish, rag paper, according to a letter from Mr. Ralph, comprised the following number of sheets (after they were divided into post office panes of 100 stamps each): 3¢, 5¢, 8¢, 10¢, 13¢, and 15¢: 36 sheets, each of 100 stamps; 4¢, 40 sheets of 100 stamps each; 6¢, 48 sheets of 100 stamps each.

For identification, in the case of these denominations, the Bureau marked each of the sheets in the margins with an “x” penned in black ink, and in April, 1909, 400 stamps of each value were delivered to the Post Office Department. These were distributed, according to Travers’ later statement (after his indictment, separately, and again jointly with Joseph A. Steinmetz, for alleged, irregularities in the subsequent disposal of some of the stamps), as follows: 100 each to the Third Assistant’s office, and placed in the office safe; 100 each to the Postal Museum for the official stamp collection; 100 each retained for official files; and 100 each held as surplus.



Sc. 361, with ‘x’ in sheet margin

The balance of the printing was to have been destroyed but through an error at the Bureau, the stamps were mixed with outgoing stock and distributed to post offices. The 4¢ and 8¢ were never found in issue but all the other denominations turned up in various cities, readily identified by the penned “x” in the sheet margins. Meanwhile supplies of all values were reaching the market, distributed from Philadelphia at good prices. Postal inspectors soon determined these stamps were from the Department’s “files” and a thriving trade suddenly ceased.

From STAMPS, July 26, 1947: ...When it was learned that the bluish paper stamps were in issue, anxious collectors and dealers all over the country watched their post offices, no one knowing where the lightning might strike....The 3¢ value turned up in New York City, the 5¢ at Rockford, Ill., the 6¢ at Chicago and elsewhere, the 10¢ at New York City, the 13¢ at Saginaw, Mich. and the 15¢ at Buffalo, N. Y. The 4¢ and 8¢ values were never discovered but were probably used in a big city and escaped the attention of philatelists.

Meanwhile, however, some of the more prominent col-

lectors were purchasing, or being offered, complete sets in singles and blocks before supplies were located at post offices. It was subsequently disclosed that these came from the sheets set aside for the Department's files and an investigation was undertaken by postal inspectors who soon plugged the leak.

Some years later supplies of the blue paper stamps reached philatelic channels from the Government stamp collection.... A full sheet of each value had, in 1909, been allocated to the National collection and when a philatelist, the late Joseph B. Leavy, was officially appointed to put the collection in order a block of each stamp was kept for the collection and the balance of each sheet was traded off to dealers in exchange for other material needed in the collection.

From STAMPS, Aug. 16, 1947: According to information which was furnished in 1909 by Joseph E. Ralph, then Director of the Bureau of Engraving and Printing, the Bluish Paper printings were made on the dates which follow, and from the plates listed. It will be noted that there are several plates among them which previously have been unreported in the Bluish Paper series, and with the exception of the 1¢ and 2¢ ordinaries, the list, in my opinion, is complete.

- 8¢ ordinary. Printed Feb. 5, 1909.
Plates: 4919, 4922, 4923, 4924.
- 2¢ Lincoln. Printed Feb. 5, 1909.
Plates: 4976, 4977, 4978, 4979.
- 4¢ ordinary. Printed Feb. 10, 1909.
Plates: 4932, 4933, 4934, 4935.
- 2¢ Lincoln, Printed Feb. 19, 1909.
Plates: Same as February 5th.
- 3¢ ordinary, Printed Feb. 25, 1909.
Plates: 4918, 4925, 4926, 4927.
- 6¢ ordinary. Printed Mar. 9, 1909.
Plates: 4936, 4937, 4938, 4939.
- 1¢ ordinary. Printed Mar. 9, 1909.
Plates: 4991, 4993, 4994, 4995.
- 2¢ ordinary. Printed Mar. 10, 1909.

Plates: 4996, 5015, 5016, 5017.
10¢ ordinary. Printed Mar. 13, 1909.
Plates: 4940, 4941, 4943, 4944.
13¢ ordinary. Printed Mar. 20, 1909.
Plates: 4942, 4945, 4946, 4948.
5¢ ordinary. Printed Mar. 24, 1909.
Plates: 4928, 4929, 4930, 4931.
15¢ ordinary. Printed Apr. 6 1909.
Plates: 4949, 4951, 4952, 4954.

The 1¢ and 2¢ ordinaries listed were new additional printings and likely only a few sheets each, for the Post Office files. The original printings of the 1¢ and 2¢ were made in January, 1909, and according to one of Ralph's letters comprised a quantity of 1,600,000 each. Dates at press at this time, and full list of plates used, are unknown. They constituted the original experiment and were the subject of a letter, dated February 1, to the Department asking authority to issue the stamps. The Department, in reply February 16 authorized their sale through the "Washington post office, and somehow through a mutual understanding, 673,000 2¢ Lincoln stamps on Bluish Paper were added to the issue for public sale. The Lincolns were made in two printings on the dates given above. No Lincolns were in the original January printings since the new Lincoln design was not then approved and the issue of such a memorial stamp had not yet progressed beyond the discussion stage.

Because no images appeared in the original article, I have opted to show some examples on the pages that follow of comparisons between the bluish papers and other issues. JFD.



2¢ Bluish (Sc. 358, right stamp) used with 2¢ standard paper (Sc. 332) tied by “New York N.Y. Apr. 13, 1909” cancel on cover to Mt. Kisco, N.Y. In this instance there is a distinct difference between the Bluish paper and the “white” paper. Likewise, the Lincoln Bluish paper (Sc. 369), far right, shows a tint that could be described as bluish, compared with the “white” paper (Sc. 367).



Sc. 367

Sc. 369

On the other hand, when you look at the 5¢ Sc. 335 part imprint single on standard paper (right), it looks very much like a Bluish paper, but that is from the printing ink, not the paper; Meanwhile the Sc. 361, with the “x” in the sheet margin, identifying the Bluish paper sheets, looks much more like a standard paper.





Sc. 338

Finally, comparing the 10¢ stamps, the Bluish paper, Sc. 364, above, has a tint that is distinctive, particularly when compared with a standard paper, Sc. 338, right.

See page 21 for additional information on the Stamp News Publishing United States Reference Manual pages, including the full color Washington-Franklin Part One.

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