

Stamp ID: **American Clock Update, A Parcel of Postage Due Varieties**

By Rudy de Mordaigle (*From U.S. Stamp News, September, 2013*)

(This column is presented as an example of what you will find each month in the USSN "Modern U.S. Varieties" feature by Rudy de Mordaigle. JFD.)

The Postal Service has been cranking out new stamps, but the definitives that provide the variation that makes it interesting are straggling out. It seems odd that two booklet versions of the (46¢) Flag for All Seasons Forever definitives are appearing in August, particularly if the USPS asks for what is now an annual rate increase, but unlike in the before-forever-stamp-days, these will go right on being used after any rate change. Poof, there goes the search for a definitive, issued near the end of a rate period, that is hard to find postally used.

We can look for usages while the first class one-ounce rate is 46¢, and we can look for usages under the new rate, whatever that turns out to be, but you'll most likely have to save covers to show this, as the sprayed-on cancels usually don't get the date on the stamp, if it's readable in the first place.

Anyway, the promised All Seasons Flags key will wait until I finally see those last two booklets, a convertible booklet of 10 printed by Sennett Security Products and a double sided convertible booklet of 20 printed by Avery Dennison. Whether or not the stamps in Sennett's 10-stamp booklet vary from the stamps in their previously issued 20-stamp booklet remains to be seen, but Avery's will definitely be different.

Clock update

...Collectors have noticed shade differences in the Clocks, with the 2006 coil having a grayish clock face and the 2008 coils having a yellowish face. Usually we attribute shade differences in the modern U.S. issues to the idiosyn-

crasies of process color printing, where tiny cyan, magenta, yellow and black dots are used to make the colors of the rainbow. But Sennett actually printed the original clock coils differently from the two subsequent versions, using horizontal rows of gray dots on the clock face.

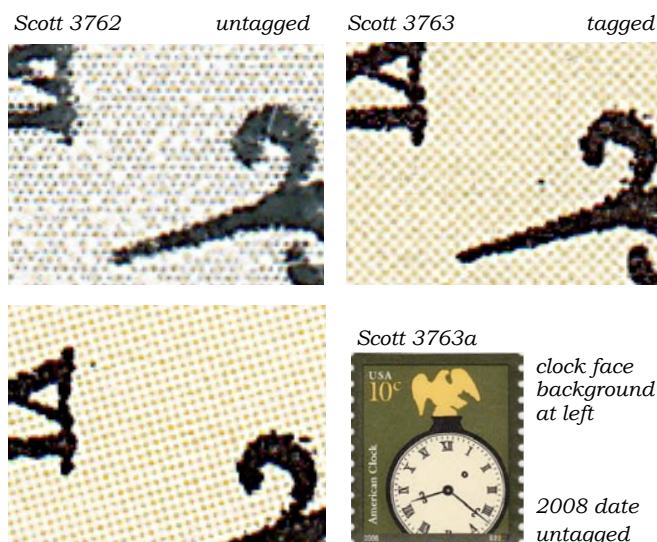


Figure 1. Another way to look at American Clock coils. The shade difference of the clock face is not due to the usual process color printing. In this case the dots used for shading the clock face were grey on Scott 3762 and tan on 3763 and 3763a. Unlike in process color, all the dots were one ink shade. The dot pattern also differs.

The two following Sennett varieties used rows of pale yellow or tan dots arranged at an angle as shown in Figure 1.

These dots are all one shade of ink, so the clock face shade differences are as real as the shade differences in the engraved stamps printed by the Bureau of Engraving and printing, where a printer took a slightly different can of ink off the shelf. Not anything to jump up and down about with Clock, since there were other differences that got each of these stamps a different Scott number, but should something like this occur in stamps that are otherwise the same, then you'll have something really interesting.

In the October 2012 "Modern U.S. Varieties," I gave you a short list of shade varieties in the Great Americans series that are not listed in Scott. They do exist, but some are elusive. Reader Sherman Foote reports that he's found them all after a long and entertaining search. Dealers don't pay attention to varieties when there's little demand. There's little demand when collectors don't know something exists. Here's a chance to find some really elusive stamps without paying a premium.

Back of the book

The Scott catalogs logically put postage stamps up front. Other kinds of stamps, revenues, test stamps, postage dues and a host of others are at the back of the catalog. Postage due catalog numbers start with a “J” and follow closely the postage stamp section, so are actually forward of the middle of the over one thousand page *U.S. Specialized*. There are some interesting and challenging varieties in the Postage Due issue of 1959, a plain Jane group of stamps that nevertheless can sharpen your eye for details.

The Bureau of Engraving and Printing printed these stamps on the Cottrell press. The web first passed the intaglio station, where engraved curved metal plates applied the carmine rose ink. The web then encountered the letterpress section, where rubber mats mounted on a cylinder overprinted the denomination in black. The last operation was application of the shiny dextrin gum, abandoned in 1980 with the adoption of pregummed paper. There are variations in the black overprinting, in the gum and in the paper finish that are all interesting to look for, if you know they exist. All but three have an issue date of June 19, 1959. Those three don’t have any known varieties.

This series starts with Scott J88, denominated 1/2 cent. There are no known variations of this one, possibly because its denomination resulted in no need for reprints. Scott J89, denominated “1 cent,” has three versions to look for. Scott mentions shiny gum and dull gum, but no mention is made of differences in the black lettering.

The shiny gum variety has “cent” in lettering that is short and thick. You can use this one as a standard. The dull gum variety exists with the same short lettering and also with lettering that is taller and thinner. Figure 2 shows the difference. So for J89, you



Figure 2. Scott J89 has two lettering styles for ‘cent,’ **short** and **tall**, and two gum varieties, **shiny** and **dull**. The dull gum stamp occurs with both short and tall lettering styles. Short will be hard to find.

have shiny gum-short lettering, dull gum-short lettering and dull gum-tall lettering to look for. The dull gum stamp with short lettering will be a challenge.

Dull gum variations

Starting in 1980, pregummed paper with dull gum was used for the postage due series. This gum is either colorless or pale yellow and is diagonally striated — it looks like plowed furrows roughly a half millimeter apart. You'll have to look closely and tilt the stamp back and forth under strong magnification to see this, but once you spot it, you'll know what to look for. There are two types of printing with this gum. In Type 1A, the Bureau applied water to the ink side of the web prior to the intaglio station, resulting in finished stamps with a surface sheen on the printed side. This paper tends to curl around the vertical axis toward the print side.

The web was not moistened after the spring of 1981, resulting in dull gum stamps that have a dull printed surface and no tendency to curl. As with the Type 1A stamps, the gum is diagonally furrowed. This dull gum style is Type 1B.

The second dull gum paper, Type 2, has a smooth, unfurrowed yellow gum. This paper was used occasionally in the second half of 1981 and the first half of 1982. The gum does not extend to edge of the web. Since the yellow-gum paper was used after spring 1981 and not moistened, Type 2 stamps also have a dull printed surface and do not curl.

Scott mentions both shiny and dull gum versions of J90, but provides no further detail. The only dull gum that occurs with J90 is Type 1B, so you can use this one as a reference. I found it easy to find both the dull and shiny gum varieties.

J91 cost you three cents when it showed up on a letter in your mailbox. When I was a kid, we would either leave three pennies in there for the mailman to pick up the following day or hand them to him when he knocked at the door. Seems quaint. Until you consider that a gallon of gas was 18¢.

There are three versions of J91 to look for. The shiny gum stamp has two varieties, with the variation, this time, in the black overprinting. The space between “3” and “cents” is either wide or narrow. See Figure 3. The dull gum is known only with the wide spacing, so there’s another stamp you can use as a reference.



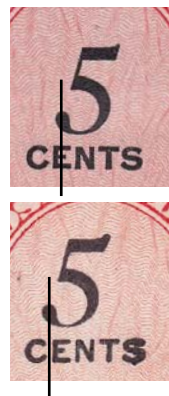
Figure 3. Scott J91 shiny gum comes with either a narrow space between the ‘3’ and ‘cents’ or a wider space. The dull gum version occurs only with the wide spacing. Note the position of the knob on the ‘3’ and the ‘E’ in ‘cents.’

The “5 cents” J93 issue has a number of variations. Scott notes shiny and dull gum. With the shiny gum stamps you have the normal version and also a pop-up “5” from position 66 in the pane of 100, where the “5” is higher than normal. Figure 4 shows an example of this one. The dull gum stamps come in four flavors. Type 1A (surface sheen, tendency to curl) has two black imprint types, one with the knob on the tail of the “5” over the “E” in “cents” and the other with the knob between the



Figure 4. Scott J93 shiny gum has one stamp in each pane of 100 with the ‘5’ higher than normal.

There are two dull gum types, each with two printing variations. Stamps with both type 1A and 1B dull gum have the knob at the tail of the ‘5’ over the ‘E’ in ‘cents’ or between the ‘C’ and ‘E.’



“C” and “E.” Type 1B gum (no surface sheen, lies flat) also has two imprint types, knob over the “E” and knob between “C” and “E.” Who would guess, from a look at the *U.S. Specialized*, that there was so much to look for in this one stamp?

J95, the “7 cents” postage due, has both shiny and dull gum varieties. These are shown in the Scott catalog. As

with J93, there's a pop up of the "7" in position 66 for the shiny gum stamp, so there are two shiny gum varieties to look for. The pop-up, with the "7" higher than normal, will be tough to find, as it is one out of 100. You might find sheets for sale reasonably on eBay or elsewhere, and find a nice example that way.

The dull gum version of J95 is Type 1B (paper surface dull, no tendency to curl). It's not at all common, and if you find it properly described by someone who knows what he's doing, it will be pricey.

The "8 cent" due was issued with shiny gum only. J96 had two pop-up-8 positions on some panes of 100, where the "8" is farther from the "cents" than normal. These pop-ups are in positions 28 and 52. (As far as counting to find a position number, you start at top left, count across that row, drop down a row and again count from left to right. That makes the bottom right stamp in a pane of 100 "position 100.") Your chance of finding one of these pop-ups used is pretty slim, so if you want a challenge, here's one for you. Even mint, it will take some looking.

J97, the "10 cents" due, has three shiny gum varieties and five dull gum versions to look for. The shiny gum versions all have the short thick lettering of "cents," but the "0" is low in one version. The other two have the numerals in alignment.

Varieties of 10 Cents Postage Due, Scott J97

<i>gum type</i>	<i>black overprint has...</i>	<i>lowest point of '0' is...</i>
<i>shiny</i>	<i>low '0' and short thick 'cents'</i>	<i>above the 'T'</i>
<i>shiny</i>	<i>numerals aligned and short thick 'cents'</i>	<i>above the 'T'</i>
<i>shiny</i>	<i>numerals aligned and short thick 'cents'</i>	<i>between the 'N' and 'T'</i>
<i>dull type 1A</i>	<i>numerals aligned and short thick 'cents'</i>	<i>above the 'T'</i>
<i>dull type 1A</i>	<i>numerals aligned and short thick 'cents'</i>	<i>between the 'N' and 'T'</i>
<i>dull type 1B</i>	<i>numerals aligned and short thick 'cents'</i>	<i>between the 'N' and 'T'</i>
<i>dull type 1B</i>	<i>numerals aligned and tall thin 'cents'</i>	<i>above the 'T'</i>
<i>dull type 2</i>	<i>numerals aligned and short thick 'cents'</i>	<i>between the 'N' and 'T'</i>

Dull gum paper: 1A = shiny printed surface, tends to curl

1B = dull printed surface, no curl

2 = dull printed surface, no curl, yellow smooth gum

The vertical alignment of the very lowest point of the “0” varies from being above the “T” to falling between the “N” and “T” of “cents.” Figure 5 shows what to look for. The trickiest alignment is that of the lowest point of the zero with “T” in “cents.” It

varies a hair, from being perfectly centered over the “T” to lining up over the left side of the cross arm. I call both of these as falling over the “T.” When the lowest point of the “0” is aligned between the “N” and “T,” you will see it instantly. I had to look at lots of stamps to even find this one.

The dull gum stamps have these same characteristics with the addition of the tall thin lettering of “cents” on one variety. All of these are summarized in the nearby table to keep your head from spinning and to serve as a checklist.

There are three later printings in this series of postage dues, Scott J102, J103 and J104 that represent the denominations of 11¢, 13¢ and 17¢ respectively. J102 and 103 were issued on January 2, 1978, both with shiny gum. J104 appeared on June 10, 1985, on Type 1B dull gum paper. There are no reported varieties of these three, but you never know. Take a close look at what you have.

A “30 cents” due, Scott J98, was issued with shiny and dull gum. There are two dull gum varieties to look for. The first has Type 1A dull gum — this was printed before the BEP stopped moistening the web ahead of the intaglio station, so the paper has a slight surface sheen on the printed

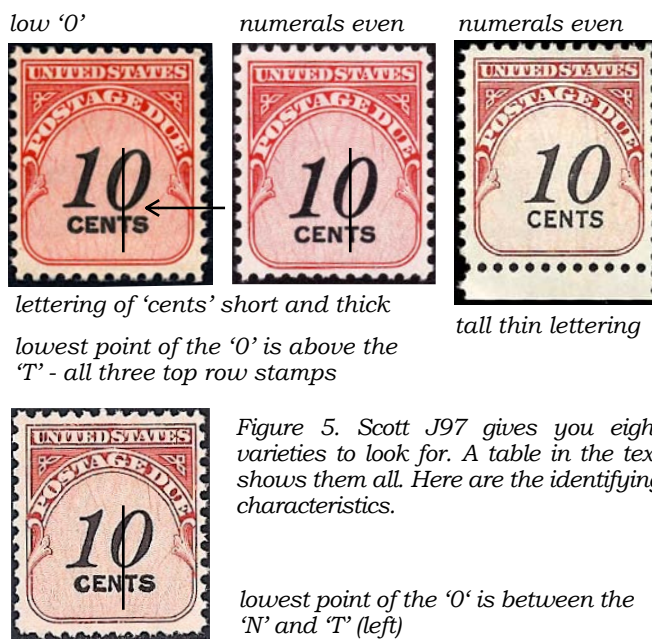


Figure 5. Scott J97 gives you eight varieties to look for. A table in the text shows them all. Here are the identifying characteristics.

lowest point of the ‘0’ is between the ‘N’ and ‘T’ (left)

side and there's a tendency to curl toward the printed side around the vertical axis. This stamp has the lowest point in the "0" in "30" aligned over the "T" in "cents."

The second dull gum variety, Type IB, went to press after the spring of 1981 so was printed dry. The finish on the printed side is dull and there is no curl. The lowest point of the "0" in "30" aligns between the "N" and "T" in "cents."

There are more fun postage due varieties in the three higher values, but those will wait until next month. Most of these are cheap fun, though not all are easy to find. Consider the dull gum version of the 7¢ Scott J95. It was valued at \$650 in the 2012 *U.S. Specialized*. A plate block of four was ten times that value. Wouldn't this be fun to find at anything significantly below the catalog value?

Tiny differences

When the BEP prepared the printings of some of the Liberty Series, which ran from 1954 to 1973, they perforated some of the stamps with large holes and others with small holes. Don't expect to see a startling size difference here — the difference is subtle and you can easily convince yourself that you are seeing something you are not. As an example, look at Figure 6a. The top pair is Scott 1055. The bottom pair is Scott 1055a. The difference in catalog numbers stems from the tagging applied to 1055a. The earlier stamp is untagged. But that's not what I want you to look at.



Figure 6a. These 2¢ Jeffersons from the Liberty series have different sizes of perforations. Can you see the difference?

Do the perforations appear to be the same size on these two pairs? The top pair has larger holes, and to me, even in the size printed here, they look larger. Measured, they actually are larger, but just by a hair. The BEP perforations were punched through the paper by sets of pins, unlike the current perforations produced by pushing up

the paper from below and then shaving off the bump. So a difference in hole size, in the BEP stamps, was due to a different diameter of pin.

Twenty five years later the Bureau of Engraving and Printing produced a \$1 Seaplane coil in the Transportation series, Scott 2468b. Five years later they printed it again, on whiter paper and with low-gloss gum instead of shiny. This edition is Scott 2468c. At some point it was noticed that the 2468b version had larger perforations. Can you tell which one this is in Figure 6b? The difference again is measurable, but it's less than the difference in the Jeffersons.



Figure 6b. These \$1 Seaplanes from the Transportation series have different sized perforations. Or do they?

Perceptions are deceptive. I was in the habit of labeling all the lick-stick coils produced by Sennett — that's all of them today — by hole size. I just looked at them, and if the hole seemed larger than the space between holes, it was "large hole." If the hole seemed smaller than the space, that one was "small hole." And then I finally decided to measure. I ended up changing almost all of the descriptions. On lots of stamps. I wasn't seeing what I thought I was.

I actually measure the diameter of the holes and the width of the paper between perforations under 20x using a stereo microscope. The measurements are relative, since the scale changes with the focus, but if you divide the hole diameter by the paper width, you get a ratio that's useful for comparison and which is independent of the focus. The top Seaplane pair is Scott 2468b, with shiny gum and mottled tagging. The bottom pair is 2468c, with low gloss gum and a grainy solid tag. Did you see larger holes in the top pair? That's where they are. Do you have examples of each? I'd collect them as a pair, just because of the hole-size difference. Maybe, eventually, the catalog will say something about these.

The message here is that you should not just look at your stamps. Measure, or make gauges by cutting up stamps that have horrible cancels so you can compare image width or height, or the difference in space between rows of lettering as in the postage dues. It's easy to make an error of a few tenths of a mm when measuring directly unless you have a very finely marked tool. With a gauge you can see the difference without measuring, and differences are what we're looking for.

Reassembly

Or similarities. That plate block of 15¢ American Trees, Scott 1764-67, that Rob Loeffler reassembled over a period of six years, and which you read about in last month's *USSN*, would never have been reassembled without the knowledge of a contaminated taggant and without persistence. Rob had to know that despite different descriptions of the stamps offered by different dealers, these partial blocks had a similarity. A good part of the entertainment in philately is the assembly of knowledge and then its exercise.

In that line, I'd like to suggest that you consider membership in the United States Stamp Society. Their journal, *The United States Specialist*, is more than worth the \$25 annual dues. A membership form can be downloaded — just Google US Stamp Society,



Figure 7. Reassembled plate block of American Trees, Scott 1764-67, with taggant contaminated by black ink. The tagging blocks are apparent as gray rectangles. Rob Loeffler found the bottom block of four six years ago. It was described as a tagging variety. Then, this year, in eBay's EFO listings, he found the middle block of four described as a "color misregistration." The top block of four was offered by a different dealer about five weeks later, described as a "color shift." You would have to know of the taggant contamination to be aware this existed, and after that, just lucky!

or I can send you a paper copy of the form. Join now for \$15 and get the rest of 2013, or wait until October. Then \$30 will get you the last quarter of 2013 and all of next year's *Specialist*.

Thanks this month to Rob Loeffler for the research done on the postage dues and to Mike Lipson for bringing things to my attention. The sharing is much appreciated.

And on page 10 is the plate block that Rob reassembled, in Figure 7. Pretty amazing. I hope you have fun searching for postage due varieties, now that you're armed with what to look for. More next month.

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