

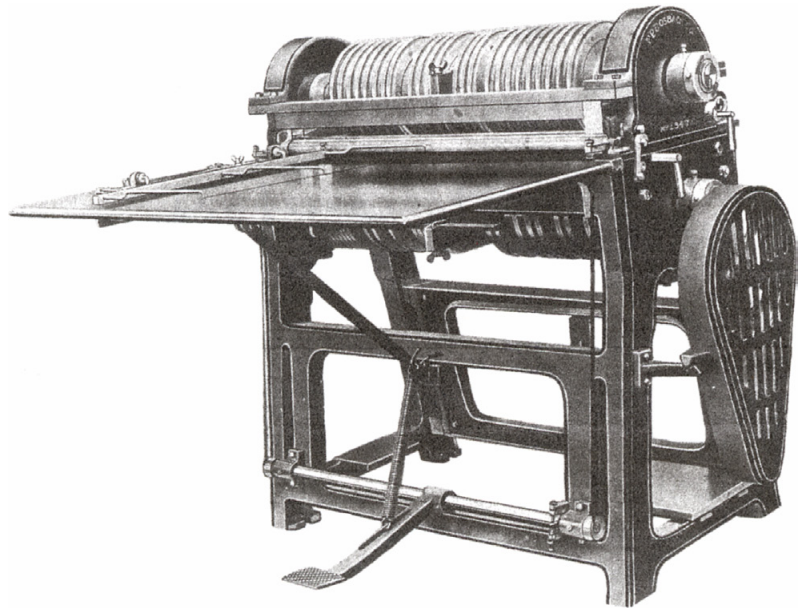
The One Cent Issue of August 15, 1919

The Rosback Perforating Machine - A Failed Experiment

Dramatic changes at the United States Bureau of Engraving and Printing (BEP) occurred in the decade of 1910-1920, partly caused by the onset and then enduring the conditions of the Great War, World War I, and partly because new technology was being studied for possible inclusion into the BEP's printing processes.

From 1911 to 1919, the Bureau changed its perforating wheels from perforation gauge 11 to perf gauge 11 x 10 and then to perf gauge 10 x 10. Some stamps even had multiple sided perforations which were not planned but were caused out of need (i.e. Scott 423A, 423B, etc.).

In early 1919, the Frederick P. Rosback Co. offered the BEP a new foot-powered machine for testing which perforated at a gauge of 12.5 x 12.5. Allegedly, the BEP tested this machine on not only the one cent stamp, which was eventually issued, but also on the two cent denomination, which was never formally issued, although rumors of two sheets of this stamp have circulated in the philatelic community for years.



The perforating machine did not pass muster with the Bureau. Of the initial printing runs of 6641 sheets, only 3175 sheets (48%) were usable. Philatelists have long known that well centered and properly inked 12.5 gauge stamps are rare. One sheet of 100 even missed receiving vertical perforations. My research indicates that the sheet was a left side pane from plate 9985 (Duckworth Collection, Lot 990, Harmer Rooke & Co., Inc. 1962).

Seven plates were used to print this short lived issue. One sixteen hundred subject plate number 9993, divided into 4 sheets of 400 subjects each, was the only one of that size used for this stamp. The other six plates, numbers 9985, 10001, 10025, 32, 33 and 52 were all 400 subject plates which were guillotined into 100 subject panes. Plate numbers were found on the top, left, right and bottom of the sheets, in the approximate center of the row which was spaced 10 x 10. The plate number probably appeared at position six at the top and side or bottom and side (two plates per pane).

For more than 30 years, this collector has searched for a plate number piece from plate 10033 which Durland catalogue had included in the numbers assigned to this stamp. The listing originated in an unconfirmed report from more than 50 years ago. and although reported, no example has ever been seen by plate number specialists to verify its authenticity. No one has ever been able to match all seven plate numbers from all positions.

As can be seen from examining the material in this exhibit, color, shade and spacing varieties abound. The stamp has been found in almost a gray shade, although clearly with green showing, to the scarcer deep green shade.

Usages of the stamp are most difficult since the small quantity of stamps was apparently issued almost entirely through the Washington, D.C. post office and used from mid August, 1919 to late November, 1919. While usages from other cities such as New York and Philadelphia have been located, it is the collector's belief that these were mainly from stamp dealers with Washington connections. Virtually all known usages are on post cards from two Washington D.C. machines, #1 and #2, located in the main post office.

Within the last decade, a Rosback machine similar to the original one used to perforate these stamps was donated to the American Philatelic Society and is now located at the APS headquarters.

The Stamp

Colors, Papers and Positions



Grey-green



Light green



Green



Deep green



Light cream paper



Dark cream paper



Light cream paper



Positioning lines and arrows



The Stamp

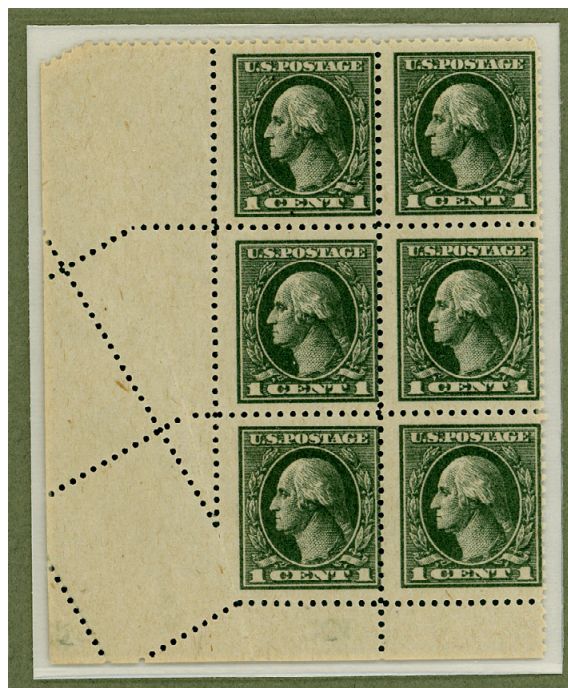


Typical perforation centering problem



Vertical imperforate pair from left pane, plate 9985

Perforation Varieties



Pre-printing paper fold

Constant Plate Variety



Slanted plate number



The Stamp

Inking Varieties



Ghosted plate number in lower margin, position 98



Damaged 'E'



Hollow frame lines with hollow shadows
1 cent 1



Upper right top stamp - plate wiped incorrectly



Upper left top stamp - plate underinked







Wide margin pane cut

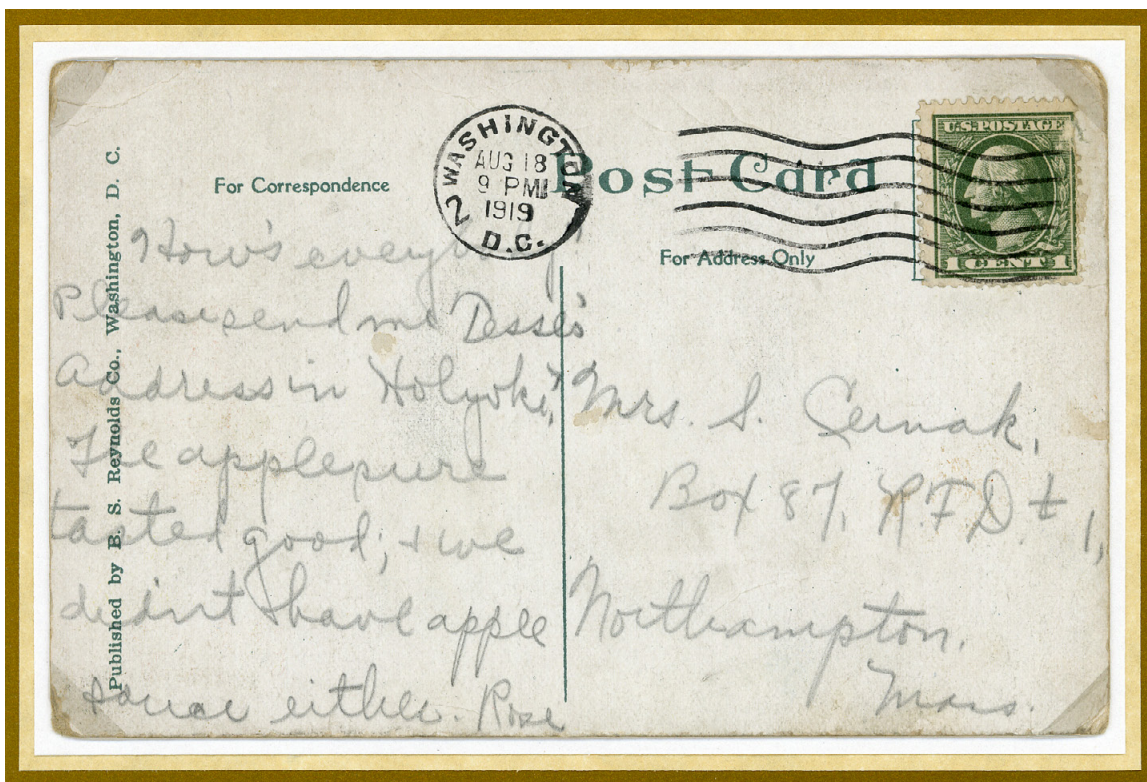


Narrow margin pane cut



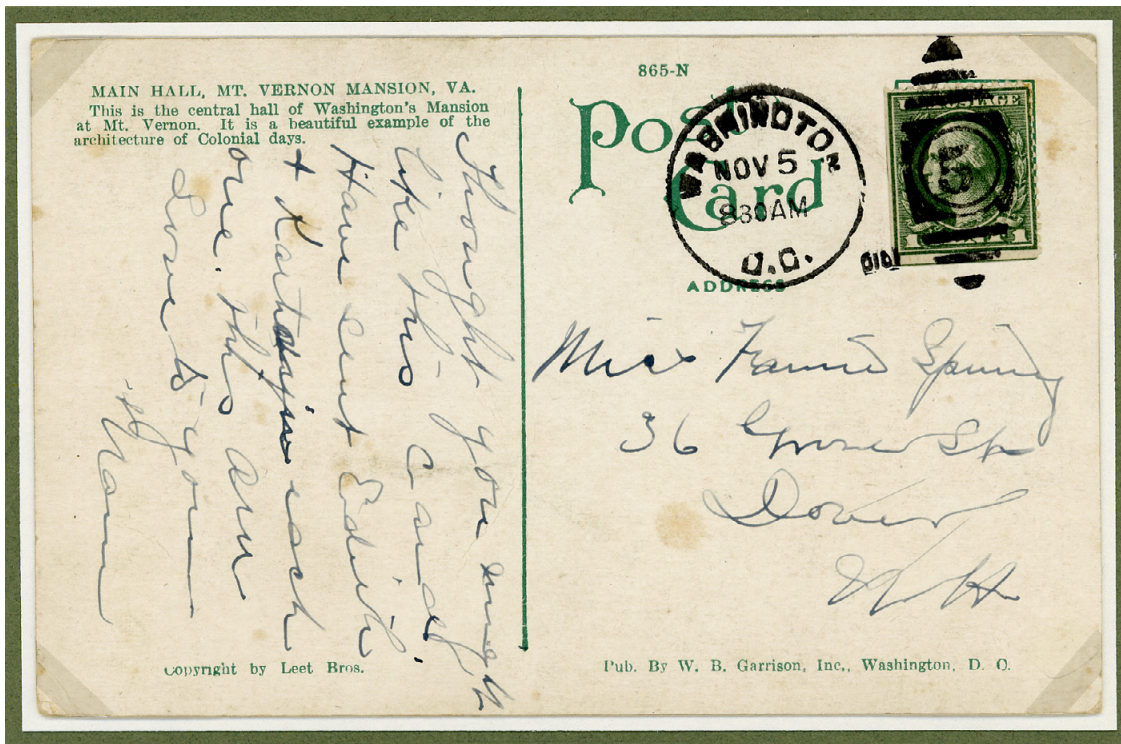






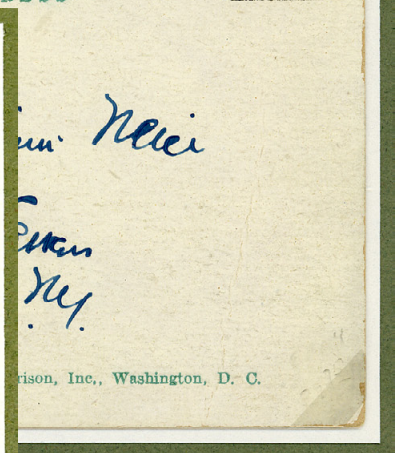
Washington, D.C. (2) to Rural Free Delivery 1 (RFD1) Box 87, Northampton, Massachusetts
18 August, 1919, 1¢ post card rate

Only recorded example



Washington, D.C. (5) to Dover, New Hampshire
5 November, 1919 (year inverted), 1¢ post card rate

Washington, D.C. (1)
to Port Evan, New York
16 September, 1919,
1¢ post card rate

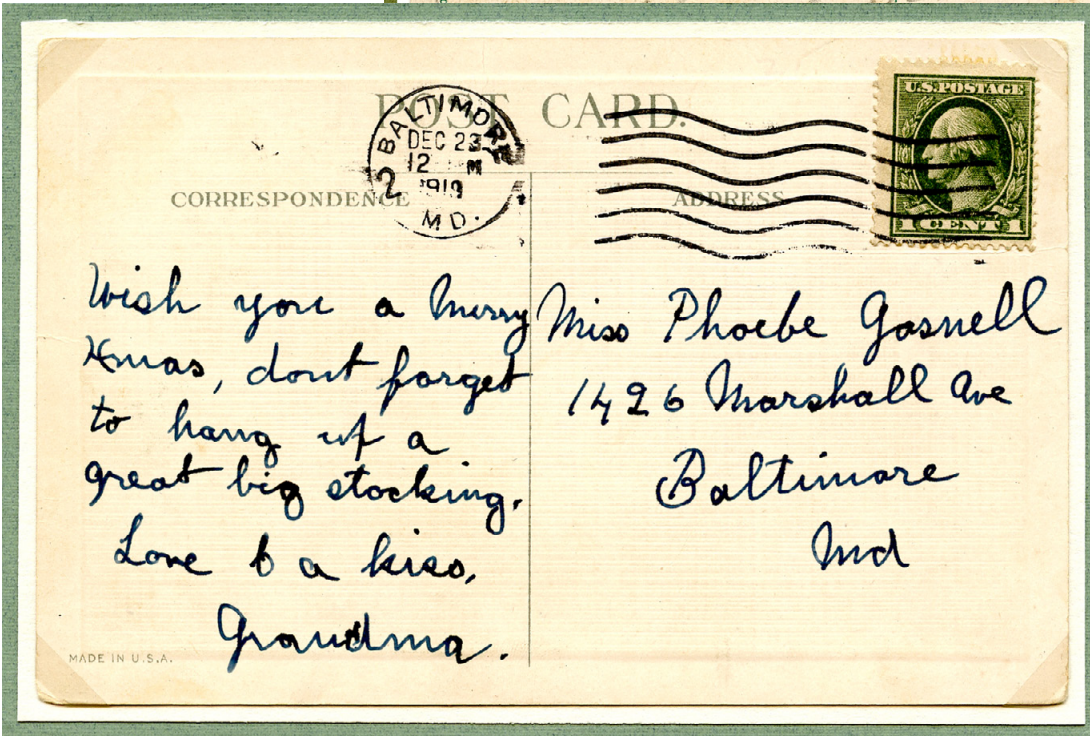


Washington, D.C. (2)
to Rural Free Delivery
Route 5 (RFD5) Box 38,
Hilston, Arizona
11 September, 1919,
1¢ post card rate

Usages

Post Card Rate
Outside Washington, D.C.

Medina, Ohio to
Frederick City, Maryland
6 September, 1919



Baltimore, Maryland (2)
Local destination
23 December, 1919

Late Use



Sherman to Austin, Texas
3 May, 1921



Philadelphia, Pennsylvania (1) to Detroit, Michigan (vertical pair is unusual)
22 October, 1919



Philadelphia, Pennsylvania (Germantown Sta.) to Indianapolis, Indiana, 28 June, 1920
1¢ stamp added to 1¢ stationery to make up 2¢ first class rate

Usages

First Class Double Weight



Philadelphia, Pennsylvania (1) Local usage
8 September, 1919

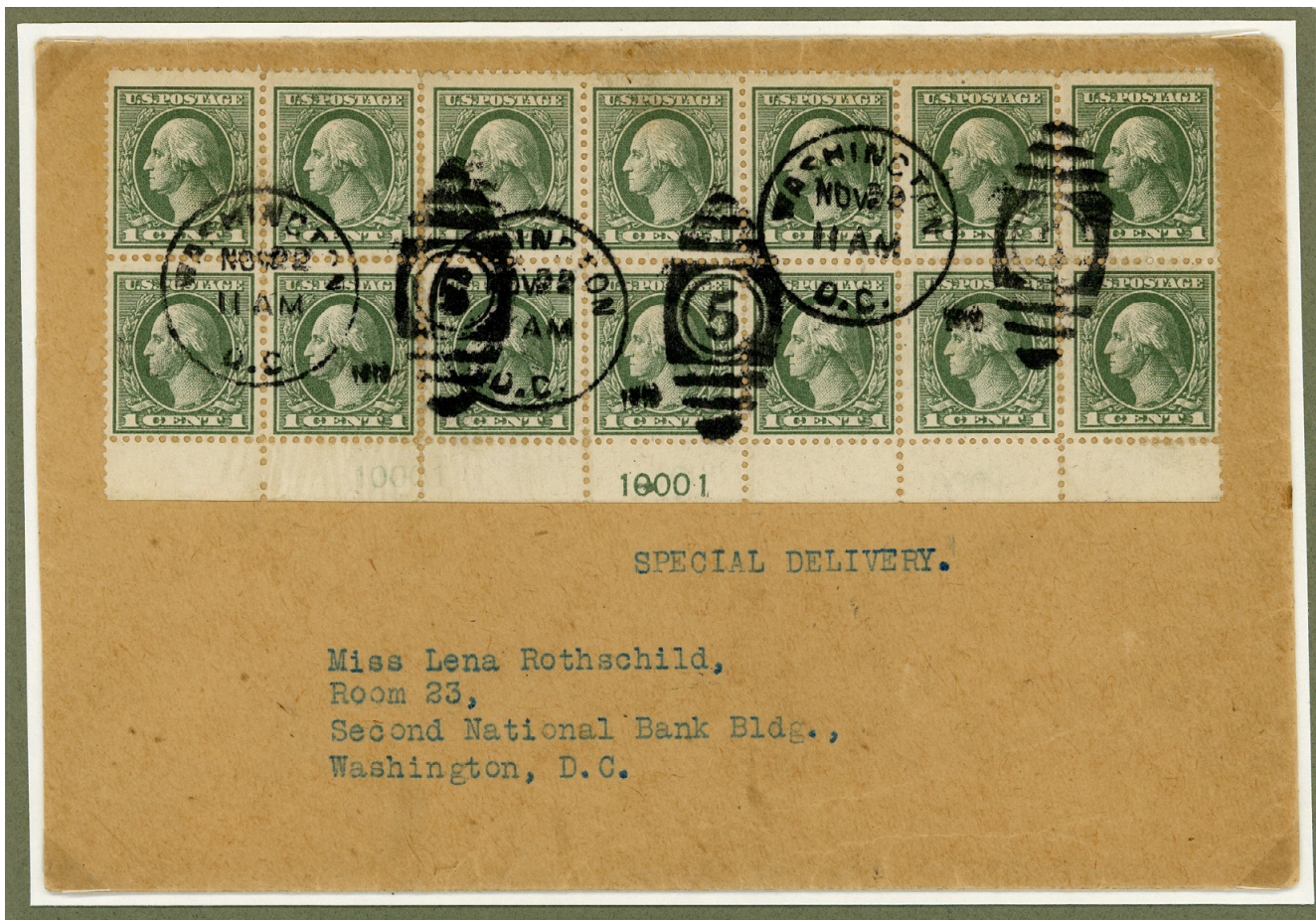
First Class Quadruple Weight



Washington, D.C. (5) Local usage
28 November, 1919

Special Services

Special Delivery Fee



Washington, D.C. (5) Local usage; 22 November, 1919
(4¢ double weight first class rate, 10¢ special delivery fee)

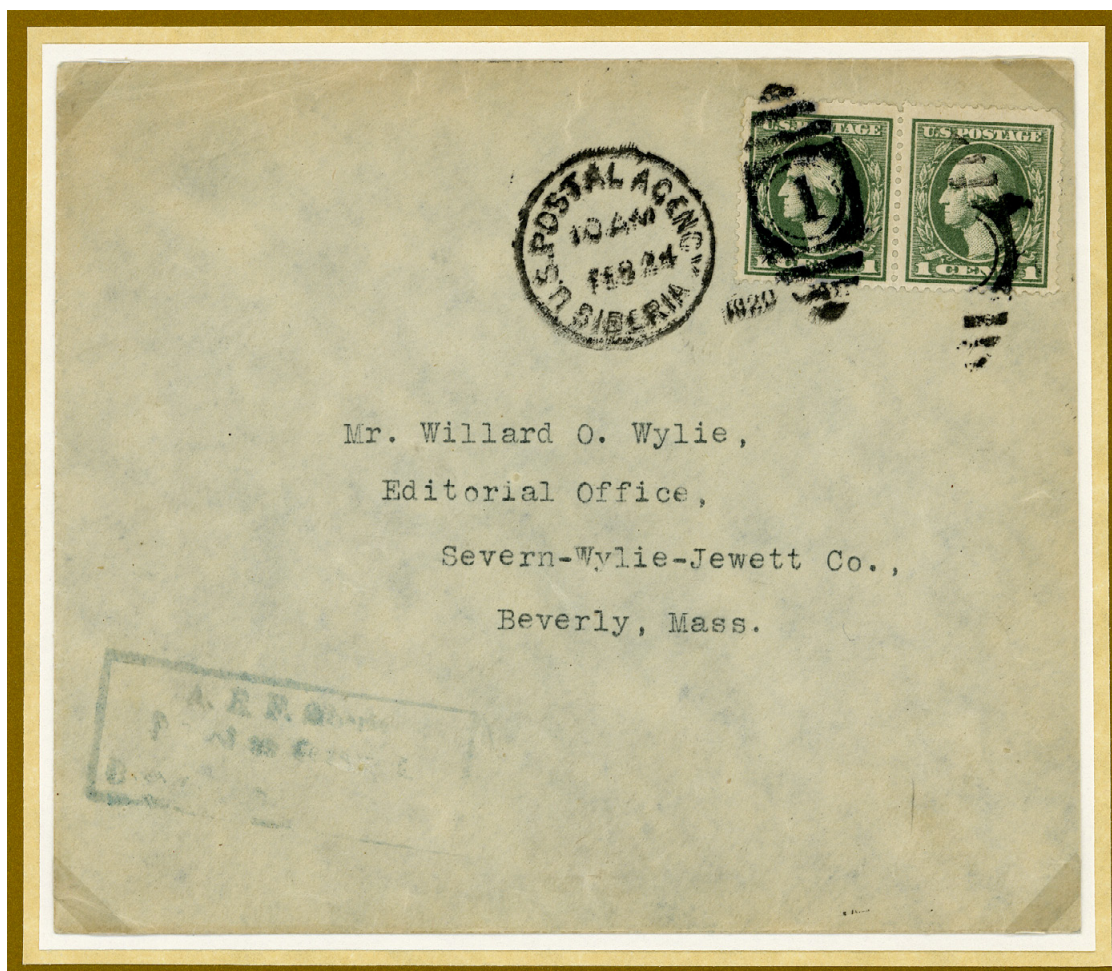
Return Receipt Fee



Holyoke, Massachusetts to Benton Harbor, Michigan
26 September, 1919 – received Benton Harbor on 29 September, 1919
(2¢ first class fee, 10¢ registration fee, 2¢ return receipt fee)



(Agana) Guam, Mariana Islands to Portland, Oregon, 17 November, 1919, 1¢ post card rate
Only recorded example



U.S. Postal Agency, Siberia (1) to Beverly, Massachusetts, 24 February, 1920, 2¢ letter rate
Two recorded examples from A.E.F. (only one with boxed origin cachet)