

G80 - The Mother of "Grinnell" Type 2 Hawaiian Missionary Forgeries.

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"Many a small thing has been made large by the right kind of advertising."
Mark Twain (A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court).

Introduction

A robust advertising campaign has once again brought these small pieces of paper into the limelight. Three brochures, a hardbound summary of findings by the RPSL expertising committee, numerous newspaper articles and a website⁽¹⁾ discussion board dedicated to the "Grinnell" Missionary stamps of Hawaii has caught the attention and imagination of a host of collectors, dealers and researchers.

The age-old method of identifying a forgery was simply to point out differences in the design. But the "Grinnells" are a unique frustration within the world of philately because their advocates suggest the "Grinnells" are a special/unique/different printing using similar but sometimes different designs, numerals and letters. Any matches in design support their claims, any differences are explained away because of the nature of the printing process, different type being employed, etc.

So how is one to hit this difficult yet constantly moving target in order to prove the "Grinnells" are forgeries? The break came when two genuine 13¢ Missionary stamps were found among the "Grinnell" Missionaries mounted on a never-before shown card of 10. This card contained 8 "Grinnells" and two genuine 13¢ Missionaries.

The two genuine Missionaries in Grinnell's possession were both the 13¢ value with one being Type 1 (P of Postage indented relative to the H of Hawaiian) and the other Type 2 (P of Postage aligned beneath H of Hawaiian) and have been identified in a census as #G81 and #G80 by George Grinnell and published by Linn's.⁽²⁾

It has been suggested that the genuine Missionaries were used as a model for manufacturing the "Grinnells" as forgeries, and if so, how does one go about proving this?

The answer came to mind, largely from my study of Uruguay's Cifras issue where printing varieties abound. The goal is to find a printing feature unique to the genuine stamp in Grinnell's possession that is reproduced on the "Grinnell" Missionaries. Hopefully on every "Grinnell" of the same value and type. And with great luck, on every "Grinnell" of every denomination of the same type.

Results

My study fell to the genuine 13¢ Type 2 in Grinnell's possession shown in Figure 1, and this article is limited to this stamp. Further research on the other genuine 13¢ Type 1 is continuing.

Figure 2 shows a close-up of the lower right corner of #G80 with the split "s" that occurs in the "s" of "Cents".

The split "s", is a triangular blue mark that extends from the left central portion of the letter "s" downwards towards a 7 o'clock position. The "s" also shows a line of white (an absence of blue ink) through the "s" and extending towards the 7 o'clock position.



Figure 1. Genuine 13¢ Type 2.
Photo Credit : Arrigo, G80.



Figure 2. Enlarged area "S" spur, Genuine #G80.
Photo Credit: Arrigo G80

It would appear that the split "s" is caused by a crease in the paper that this particular stamp was printed on. The pre-printing crease appears to extend beyond the letter "s" to the lower frameline and to the frameline at right as well. This feature is unique to this stamp. This, in effect, could be an example of "DNA proof" that is passed on from the mother, or model to the other "Grinnells". But let us now examine both the genuine and "Grinnell" 13¢ Type 2s.

13¢ Type 2 Missionaries.

An examination of genuine 13¢ Type 2 Missionaries, census #G87, #G92, #G103, #G109, #G138 do not show this split "s". #G87 and #G109 did have a smudge but in a different location and a different shape.

The next step was to examine the "Grinnell" Missionaries. Every 13¢ Type 2 "Grinnell" Missionary I could examine showed this split "s". That included census #G13, #G30, #G37, #G38, #G40, #G65, #G79, #GC7⁽³⁾, and #CG8⁽³⁾. An example is shown in Figure 4.

So the only genuine type 2 13¢ Missionary to show this feature is the one in the possession of Grinnell and every 13¢ Type 2 "Grinnell" Missionary shows this feature? This would appear to be quite damning evidence. But what about the other values, the 5¢ and 2¢ Type 2s?



Figure 3. 13¢ “Grinnell” #G30 showing the split “s”.

Photo Credit : Arrigo #G30.

5¢ Type 2 Missionaries

An examination of genuine 5¢ Type 2 Missionaries #G22, #G24, and #G27 did not show the split “s”.

The next step was to examine the “Grinnell” Missionaries. Every 5¢ Type 2 “Grinnell” Missionary examined showed the split “s”. This included #G19, #G24, #G58, #G60, and #G63. An example is shown in Figure 4.

No genuine 5¢ Type 2 Missionary stamps showed the split “s” feature yet every “Grinnell” Type 2 Missionary does show the feature. How did a printing feature, unique to the genuine 13¢ #G80 in Grinnell’s possession suddenly jump to ALL of the 5¢ Type 2 “Grinnells”?



Figure 4. 5¢ “Grinnell” #G19 showing the split “s”.
Photo Credit: Arrigo #G19-20.

2¢ Type 2 Missionaries.

None of the genuine 2¢ Type 2 Missionaries examined (#G5, G12, G15) showed the split “s” feature. Every “Grinnell” 2¢ Type 2 Missionary examined (#G1, #G7, #G8, #G12, #G15, #G50, #G55, #G56, #GC1, #GC3) did show the split “s” feature. An example is shown in Figure 5.

No genuine 2¢ Type 2 Missionary shows the split “s” feature yet every “Grinnell” 2¢ Type 2 Missionary examined shows the split “s”. How did a printing feature, unique to the genuine 13¢ #G80 in Grinnell’s possession, suddenly appear on ALL of the 2¢ “Grinnells” examined?



Figure 5. 2¢ “Grinnell” #G50 showing split “s”.
Photo Credit: Arrigo #G50.

How it is Made

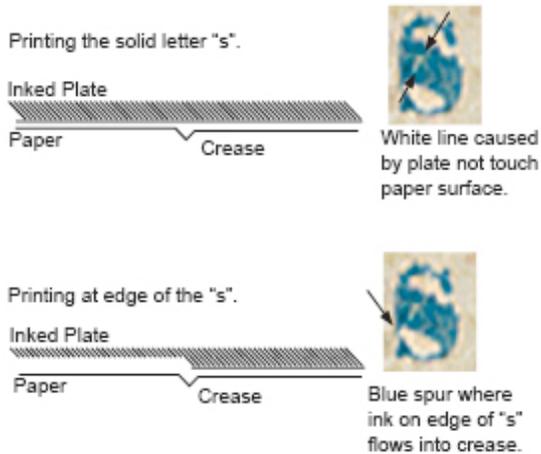
Scott Trepel’s article “Tiny Marks and Other Reasons Grinnells are Fake”⁽⁴⁾ describes a number of flaws in the Grinnells that are the product of a raised blemish on a solid printing plate that are transferred in the printing process.

Like his study, the split “s” shows a feature that was repeatedly transferred to the “Grinnells”. This study, however, takes the evidence one step further by demonstrating how the feature was caused -- the paper crease in the genuine Missionary (#G80).

The diagram in Figure 6 shows how the split “s” feature occurs when the relief printing plate comes in contact with the paper at the crease. In relief printing, the raised and inked surface comes in contact with the paper and transfers ink, in this case blue ink. The depressed areas transfer no ink and that is where the absence of ink or “white areas” are formed.

In the case of printing across a creased piece of paper, as shown in Figure 6, the areas intended to receive ink do not, and at the intersection of the crease and the edge of the letter “s”, ink flows into the depressed crease causing an ink impression where one is not intended, and hence the formation of the “s” spur.

Figure 6. Side profile of relief printing across creased paper.



Conclusions

I believe this unique printing feature, the split "s", being a white space in the letter "s" of "cents" and a blue spur centrally extending downwards towards the 7 o' clock position, was transferred, much like DNA from the mother (#G80) to EVERY Type 2 "Grinnell" (child) examined, for EVERY denomination and that this is clear evidence that the Grinnell Missionaries are indeed forgeries.

#G80, unknown for over 80 years on the "Grinnell card of 10", and never before examined by an expertising body, should be submitted to the RPSL for examination to confirm these observations.

Additional printing features, unique to the genuine Type 2 Missionary #G80 are likely to be found that were transferred to the "Grinnells". This work remains to be done.

Also, the genuine Type 1 Missionary that was in Grinnell's possession, #G81 has yet to be examined for similar evidence, and if it does, could be labeled the "father" of all Grinnell Missionaries.

Acknowledgements

Such research and study would have been impossible without Richard Frajola acquiring and hosting the images of the Grinnells and facilitating a discussion on his website at www.rfrajola.com.

The RPSL reference book, the Mystic Stamp Company booklets, Mr. Trepel's article, the scans posted on Mr. Frajola's board by the Arrigo and Culhane families as well as other owners contributed to the advancement of knowledge.

The banter, discussion and examination put forward by the participants on Mr. Frajola's board provided much of the inspiration for my study, a mystery that needed to be solved. I hope this article will take us one step closer to solving what has arguably been advertised as the biggest stamp sensation of this millennium.

The images used are found at <http://www.rfrajola.com/grinnells/grinnells.htm> and carry the following copyright notices:

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Endnotes

1 <http://www.rfrajola.com/grinnells/grinnells.htm>

2 <http://www.rfrajola.com/grinnells/Grinnellscansthirtcentcents.htm>

3 GC = Grinnell Card of 10.

4 <http://www.rfrajola.com/grinnells/ST1.pdf>