



Shanghai Local Post: The 1865 Large Dragon Provisionals



In July 1863, the multinational Shanghai Municipal Council opened a subscription-based local post office to collect and distribute mails between the foreign settlement in Shanghai and Hong Kong and to deliver local Shanghai letters for both the resident foreign and Chinese populations. The Shanghai Local Post Office soon became one the most important communications hubs in nineteenth-century China.

The Shanghai Local Post handled two kinds of letters - letters from subscribers which did not need postage stamps, and letters from non-subscribers that did require postage stamps. In mid-1865, the Municipal Council ordered postage stamps to be printed by Nissen and Parker in London. Those stamps did not reach Shanghai until 5 March 1866. In the interim, a provisional issue of stamps, featuring a dragon as a central motif, was produced locally to serve the need of the non-subscribers. Four values (2, 4, 8 and 16 candareens) were issued in August 1865 and a further four values (1, 3, 6 and 12 candareens) were added in conjunction with a revised rate structure in November 1865. In 1872, the one, two and three candareen values were officially reissued using new center dies.

The stamps were printed on a hand press using a forme that consisted of a carved wood center surrounded by printer rule as well as Chinese and English fonts. A single forme was used to print all values. This required the breakdown and re-assembly of the forme with each change of denomination. Stamps were printed as needed. A wide variety of paper was employed as convenient. Examples on wove, pelure and mesh papers are most often seen while the laid and watermarked paper varieties are infrequently seen. Varieties exist within each print run. Many were caused by individual, or groups of fonts becoming displaced.

This exhibit is organized by denomination with the stamps of the August 1865 issue followed by the November 1865 issue and ending with the 1872 official reissues. Each denomination is presented in the order they were printed. This format highlights the differences but lessens the connections between the sequential printings of the different denominations. The numbers assigned to the 78 printings by Wei-Liang Chow and updated by Fortune Wang are used.

Both sets of denominations continued to be used until well after the new permanent issue of stamps arrived. It should be remembered that most mail was handled for subscribers who did not need to use adhesive stamps. The resultant scarcity of postally used material is notable. Two of the three known uses on full cover are included in this exhibit. These two were used from the Paou Shun branch post office in the native city of Shanghai serving Chinese writers.

**two candareens
first printing**

**large garter cancel
(in use from 1866)**

**only known example
on this printing**



The first stamp issued by the Shanghai Local Post was the two candareens denomination. The stamp was needed to prepay the postage on town letters sent by non subscribers. The earliest reported postmark on a stamp is dated 2 August 1865. Fifteen different printings have been identified. The early period two candareens prints on this page have antique numerals, plural "S" on "CANDAREENS" and the Chinese character *liang* for the denomination at top of left center panel.

Only stamps from the first printing show the very fine lines around the central woodblock.



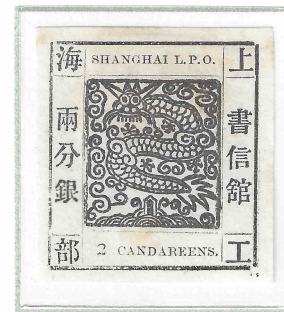
Print #1, wove paper
top "S" close to line



Print #6, pelure paper
left inner frame smudge



Print #13, yellowish wove paper
faint line under center image



Print #14, pelure paper
weak numeral "2"



Print #21, wove paper
ink line above "S."

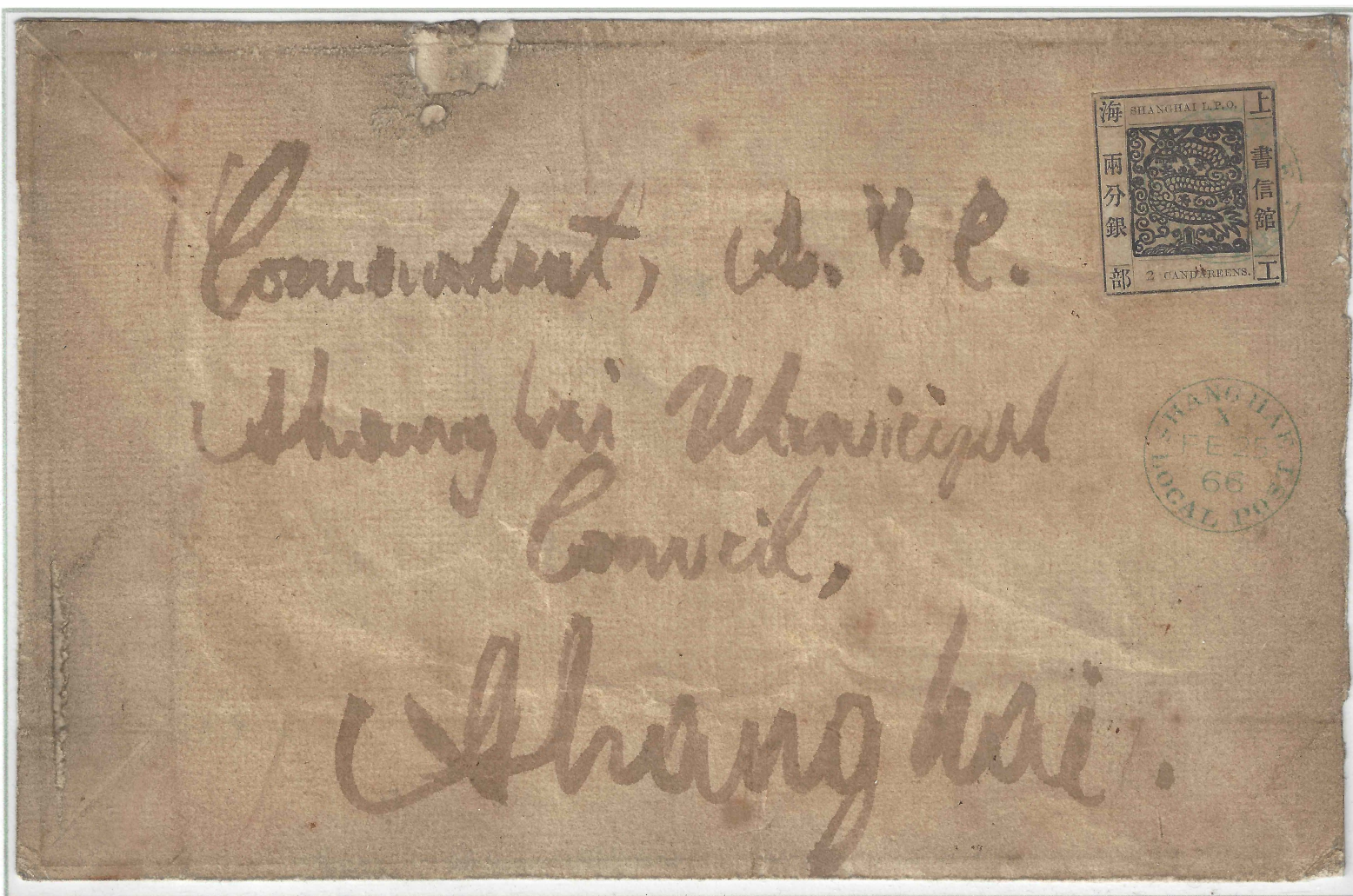


Print #21, pelure paper

The Shanghai local post handled two kinds of letter - covers from subscribers which did not need stamps and cover from non-subscribers which did need stamps. A subscription only paid for delivery within the foreign settlement of Shanghai. This cover, addressed in the brush hand of a Chinese writer, enclosed a map and report of the Volunteer Corp's policing patrols over the six bridges that crossed Soochow Creek into the foreign settlement in Shanghai.

In the Report of the Monthly Meeting of the Shanghai Municipal Council held on 5 September 1865 it was noted under the heading "Local Post Office" that:

A branch office has been established in the eastern suburb of the native city (as opposed to the foreign settlement where the main Shanghai Local Post Office was located) for the sale of postage stamps and collection of native correspondence. A contract has been made with Paou Shun, for the sum of \$600 per annum, he is allowed to collect and forward a portion of the Chinese postal matter.



25 February 1866 Shanghai "town letter" prepaid 2 candareens (print #14)
blue-green Shanghai Local Post postmark and cancel, use from a non-subscriber
addressed to the Commandant of the SVC, Shanghai Municipal Council, Shanghai

probably deposited at the "Paou Shun" branch post office and subject to the 2 candareens rate

one of three known Shanghai Local Post large dragon stamps on cover

Feb. 66

D.V.C.

R. A. Z.

The earliest reported postmark on a two candareens stamp without an "S" on "CANDAREENS" is dated 27 December 1865. The printing #26 stamp on laid, watermarked paper is a rarity.

Antique Numerals, Singular (no "S")



Print #25, wove paper
slight split of right frame



Print #25, wove paper
smear below "S" at top



A PIRIE & SONS

watermark at 50% of original size

Print #26, laid paper showing part of "A PIRIE & SONS" watermark
line over bottom right corner square is lower

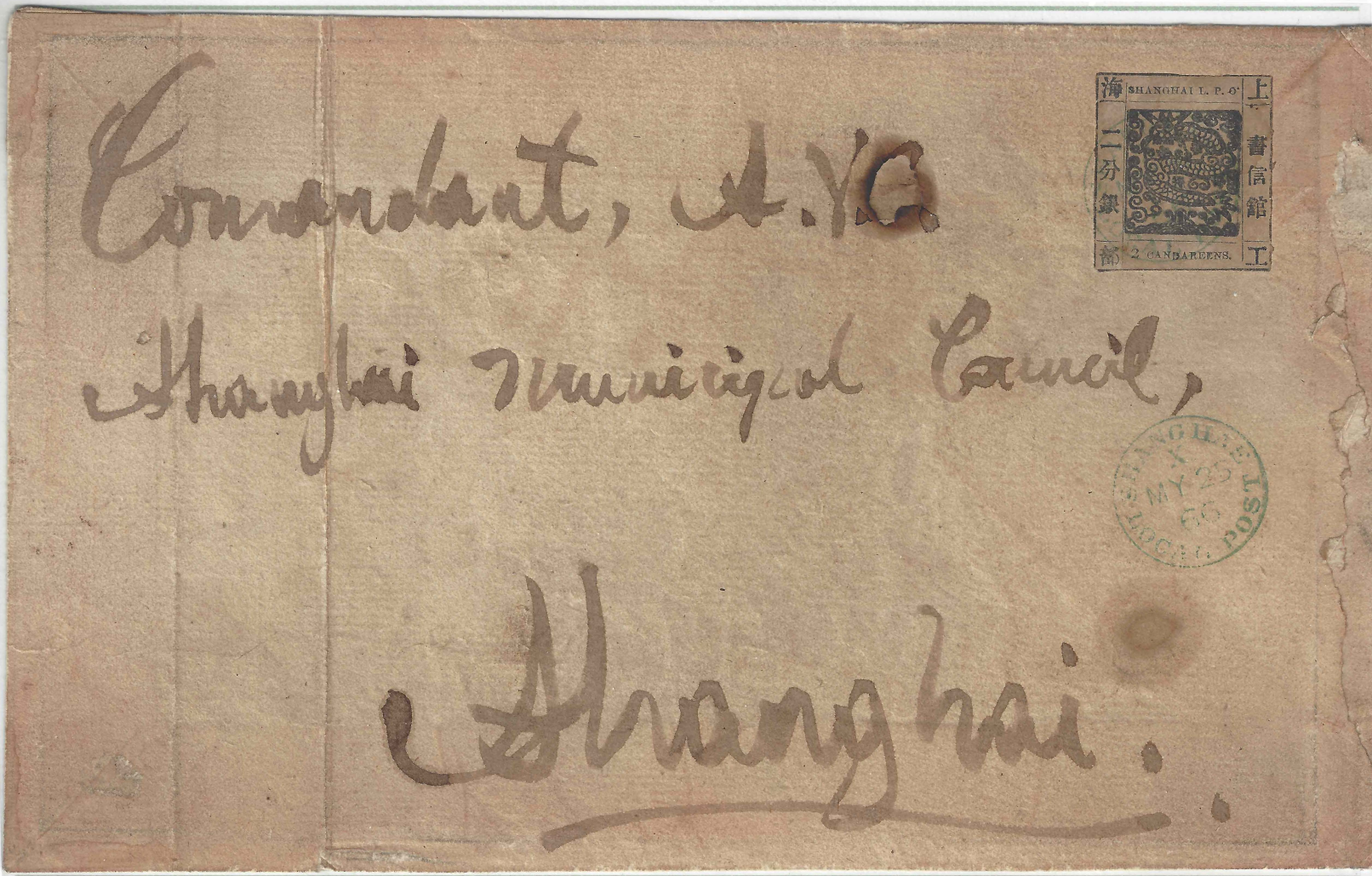
Antique Numerals, Plural (with "S")

(two) erh 二



Printing #41
period after "O" is inverted
dropped "D" in "CANDAREENS"

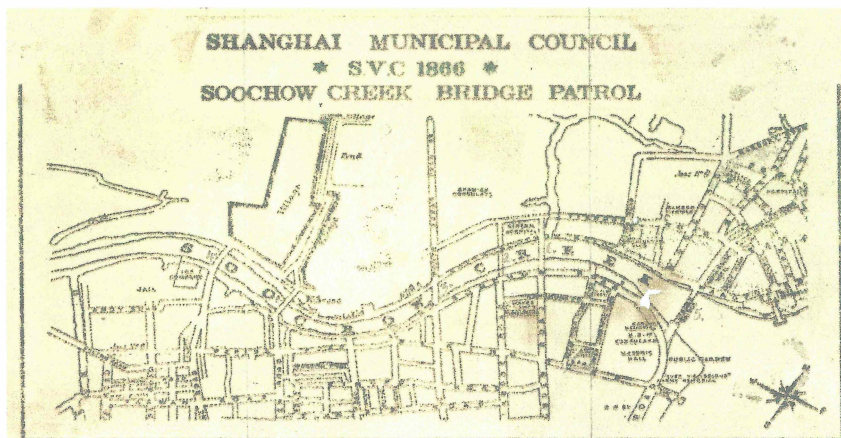
Following printing #26 the Chinese character *liang* for the two candareen denomination is replaced by the "short" Chinese character *erh* in the left panel.



25 May 1866 cover from a non-subscriber to Shanghai, prepaid 2 candareens (print #41) blue-green Shanghai Local Post postmark and cancel addressed to the Commandant of the SVC, Shanghai Municipal Council, Shanghai

probably deposited at the "Paou Shun" branch post office and subject to the 2 candareens rate **one of three known uses of the Shanghai Local Post large dragon stamps on cover**

Reduced and cropped image of the original enclosure, dated on reverse, May 1866. The map is imprinted "Shanghai Municipal Council *SVC 1866* Soochow Creek Bridge Patrol" and includes manuscript numbers on the bridges. Three covers from the original find accompanied five dated maps. One cover had a the stamp removed, two are shown.



The two candareen stamps from printings #41 to #78 have the Chinese *erh* in the left panel for the denomination. The Chinese *pu* font in lower left corner became damaged before print #65.

Modern Numerals, Plural (with "S")



Print #51, wove paper in grey black shade



Print #51, wove paper small line over top "S"



Print #51, wove paper dropped "S" at top



Print #51, wove paper original gum

Antique Numerals



Print #54, toned thick wove paper



Print #54, pelure paper ink dot in fen



Print #54, wove paper ink dot in fen

Antique Numerals, Damaged pu



Print #65, toned wove paper, lowest frameline doubled



Print #70, mesh paper "N" at foot defective



Print #78, mesh paper



Print #78, mesh paper damaged "2"

Modern Numerals, Damaged pu



normal and damaged pu

The top left of the Chinese *pu* font in lower left corner became damaged. Stamps from printings #63 to #78 show the flaw.

The four candareens denomination was one of the first denominations issued along with the 2, 8, and 16 candareens in August 1865. Fourteen different printings have been identified. A major font substitution error occurred in printing #19 (8 candareens) when the Chinese character for candareens was replaced by the character for mace. The error was corrected after printing #20.

4 Mace Error

mace 錢 →

One mace was equal to 10 fen (candareens). The error was corrected after printing of #20.



Print #20, pelure paper ink smudge NE corner

Antique Numerals, Singular (no "S")



Print #24a, wove paper "CAND" below "AREEN"



Print #27, laid paper dot under "AR"

Antique Numerals Singular (no "S")



Print #28, wove paper "AREEN" slightly raised

Antique Numerals, Plural (with "S")



Print #42, wove paper period after "L.P.O." inverted ink traces 2ca print #41



Print #44, wove paper, period after "L.P.O." is raised

Antique Numerals



Print #56, wove paper broken yin



Print #56, wove paper small garter cancel



Print #57, wove paper broken yin, higher center

Modern Numerals



Print #72, mesh paper extra ink dots SE corner

The eight candareens denomination was one of the first denominations issues along with the 2, 4, and 16 candareens in August 1865. Nine different printings have been identified. One of the major font substitution errors occurred with printing #19 when the Chinese character for candareens was replaced by the character for mace. It was corrected after print #20.

Antique Numerals, Plural (with "S")



Print #7, wove paper
line over "8" angles up

fen
分



Print #16, wove paper
line over kung is higher

mace
錢

8 Mace Error



Print #19, pelure paper

Antique Numeral, Singular (no "S")



Print #32, wove paper
right compartment line lower
low "I" in SE corner

Antique Numeral, Plural (with "S")



Print #43, wove paper
dot after "O" of "L.P.O."
is in middle



Print #59, wove paper
blind eyes, broken yin

Modern Numeral



Print #74, mesh paper
top frame line doubled
slightly at top right



Print #74, mesh paper

The sixteen candareens denomination was one of the first denominations issues along with the 2, 4, and 12 candareens in August 1865. Nine different printings have been identified.

Roman Numeral "I," and Antique Numeral "6", Plural (with "S")



Print #5, wove paper
"SHANGHAI" set high



Print #5, wove paper
defective SW corner



Print #18, soft pelure paper
left frame line doubled

Antique Numerals, Singular (no "S")

Antique Numerals, Plural (with "S")

ink traces 1ca
print #30 on
center left
frame line



Print #31, wove paper
"ARRREN" raised

Print #5, wove paper
"SHANGHAI" set high



Print #62, wove paper
broken yin

Modern Numerals



Print #76, mesh paper
"16" on same plane
broken yin and pu



Print #77, mesh paper
"1" is raised, broken yin and pu

Sixteen Candareens



Print #62 complete sheet of six one forme impressed six times

The one candareen denomination was introduced when the rate structure was changed on 15 November 1865. The earliest known dated postmark is 2 December 1865. Twelve printings have been identified. All printings below have antique numerals except print #38 with a Roman numeral.



Print #23, laid paper



Print #23, laid paper
vertical watermark line



Print #29, wove paper
"N." is further from right



Print #30a
left outer frame broken



Print #38, wove paper
Roman numeral
inverted period after "O"



Print #48, pelure paper, "1" with top serif
left stamp doubling of side framelines



Print #49, pelure paper
figure "1" has no serifs



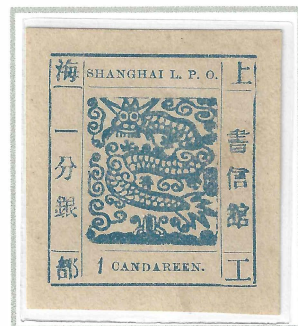
Print #52, wove paper
"1" with serif at foot
smudge on right eye, light and heavy prints



Print #52, wove paper
double period after "N"



Print #52a
raised "1" at foot



Print #63, toned
wove paper



Print #69
mesh paper

The three candareens denomination was introduced along with the 1, 6 and 12 candareens when the rate structure was changed on 15 November 1865. Nine different printings have been identified. The earliest date for a used copy is January 6, 1866.

Antique Numerals, Plural (with "S")



Printing #34, wove paper raised "S."



Printing #45, wove paper low "D," dot in kung



Printing #45 March 2, 1866 cancel



Antique Numerals, Plural (with "S")

Modern Numerals, Singular (no "S")



Printing #50, wove paper "L." shaved at foot



Printing #50, pelure paper ink dots and smudges



Printing #53, pelure paper right stamp faint double impression at left



Modern Numerals, Plural (with "S")



Printing #55, wove paper with and no period after "S"

The top left of the Chinese pu font became damaged. Stamps from printings #63 to #78 show the flaw.



normal and damaged pu



Printing #67 toned wove paper damaged pu



Printing #71, mesh paper no period after "S" damaged pu

The six candareens denomination was introduced along with the 1, 3 and 12 candareens when the rate structure was changed on 15 November 1865. Five different printings have been identified. Printing #53 with missing "S" on "CANDAREENS" was printed after a printing of the one candareen.

Antique Numeral, Plural (with "S")



Print #33b



Print #46

The top of the Chinese yin font, located at bottom of center compartment on left side was damaged. All stamps from print #56 (4 cand.) to print #78 (2 cand.) show the flaw.



normal and damaged yin



Print #58, wove paper
damaged yin



Print #58, wove paper
damaged yin
no period after "S"
dot at top left of fen



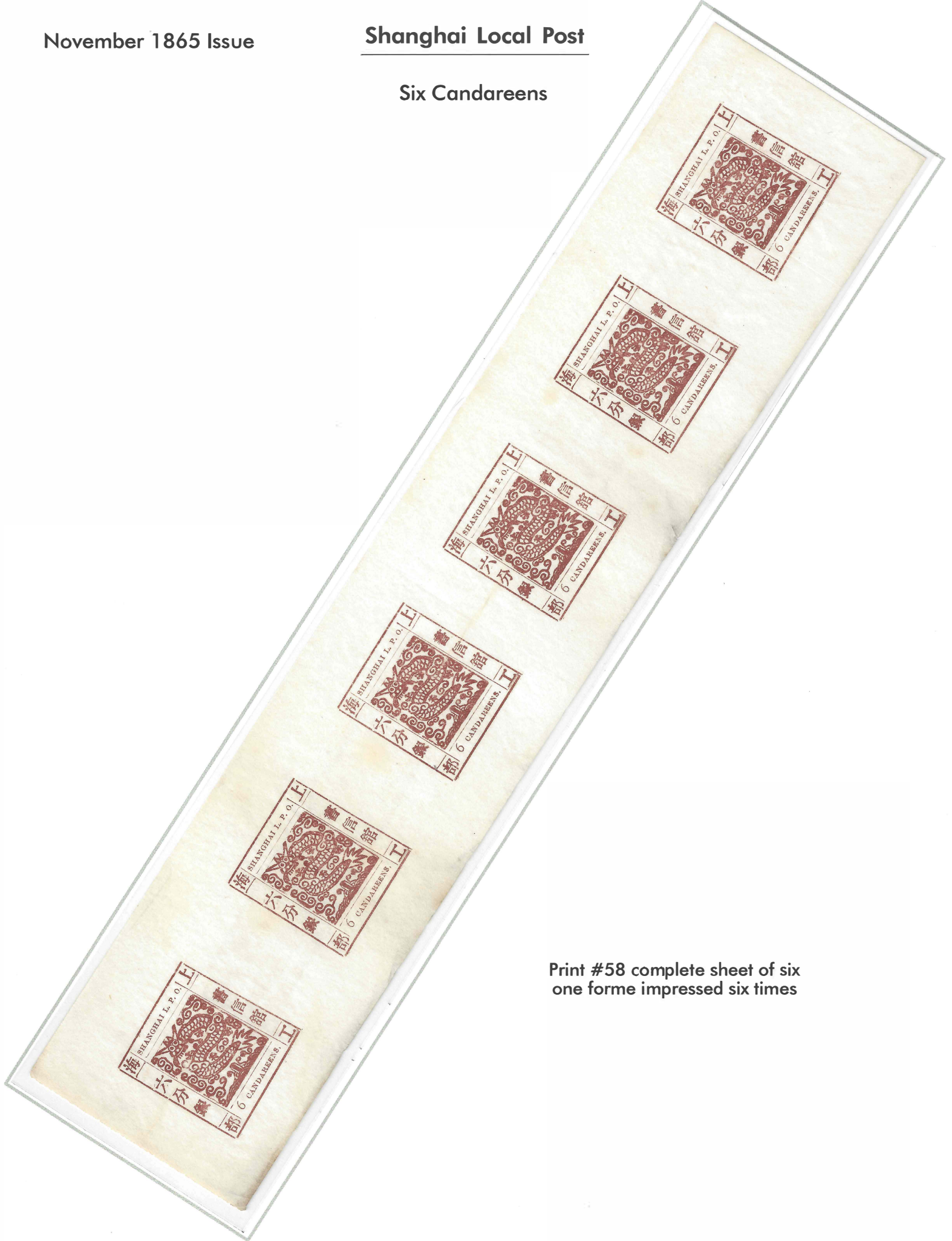
Print #58, wove paper
damaged yin
two periods after "S"

Modern Numeral, Plural (with "S")



Printing #73, mesh paper
"C" of "CAN" almost closed

Six Candareens



Print #58 complete sheet of six
one forme impressed six times

The twelve candareens denomination was introduced along with the 1, 3 and 6 candareens when the rate structure was changed on 15 November 1865. Five different printings have been identified. The earliest dated cancel is 2 March 1866.

Roman Numeral "1" and Antique Numeral "2"



Print #35, wove paper
period after "O." is high



Print #47, wove paper
heavy print and clear print
both show extra dot in SE corner



Large Numeral "1" and Small Numeral "2"



Print #60, wove paper
extra dot in left panel
broken yin and pu



Print #60, wove paper, extra dot in left central panel
both show broken "N" and "E" of "CANDAREENS"
broken yin and pu

Large "1" and Small "2"



Print #61, wove paper
broken yin and pu



Modern Numerals



Print #75, mesh paper
broken yin and pu

The three lowest denominations of the large dragons were officially reissued in 1872. The first group of prints all have large, modern numerals. The one candareen was printed only with a new woodblock, Die 1, for the center. For the two and three candareens a second new woodblock, Die 2, was used in conjunction with Die 1 to print the stamps in pairs.

One Candareen



Die 1 center
(solid ovals at top)



Die 1 center, hard wove paper
gummed



Die 1 center
soft pelure paper

Two Candareens



center Die 2
(open ovals at top)



Die 1 and Die 2 centers
soft pelure paper



Printed in pairs with center Die 1 at left and center Die 2 at right. The combination forme was struck four times on a strip of paper producing a sheet of four pairs.

Three Candareens



Die 1 and Die 2 centers, se-tenant
soft pelure paper

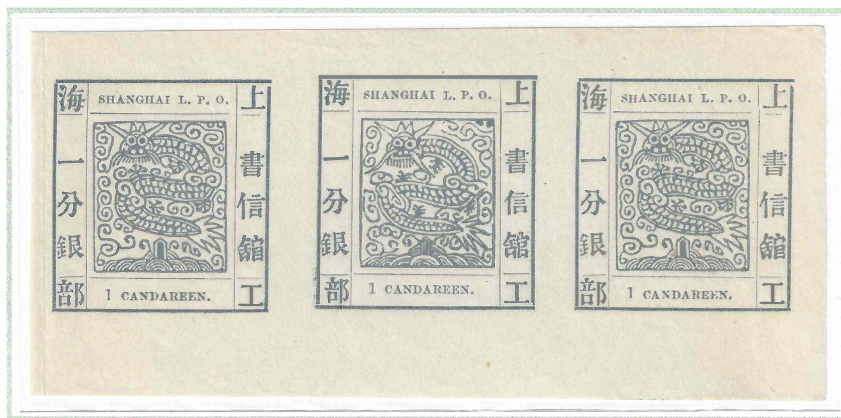
An additional reissue of the one and two candareens have small, modern numerals. They were printed in pairs from combination formes with Die 1 and Die 2 centers se-tenant. The outer framelines have been redrawn to correct distortions.

The Small Numerals stamps with type Die 1 center have a distinct Chinese *pu* font in lower left of SW corner square that has a long tail. Stamps with Die 2 center do not. This is reverse of the Large Numeral printings that have the long tail *pu* in conjunction with the type Die 2 center die.

One Candareen



Die 1 and Die 2 centers, se-tenant

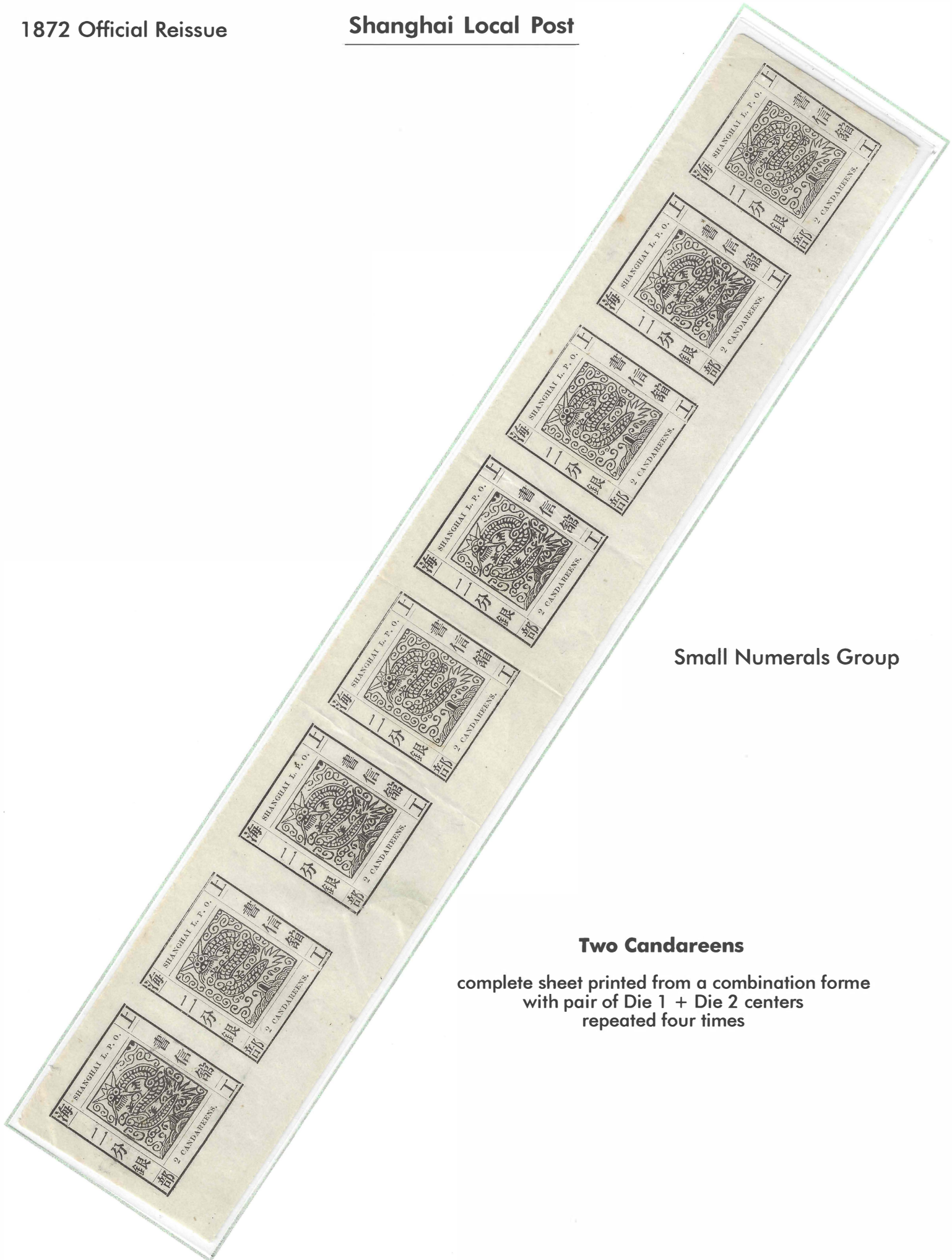


center types Die 2+Die 1+Die 2, soft pelure paper

Two Candareens



Die 1 and Die 2 centers, soft pelure paper



Small Numerals Group

Two Candareens

complete sheet printed from a combination forme
with pair of Die 1 + Die 2 centers
repeated four times

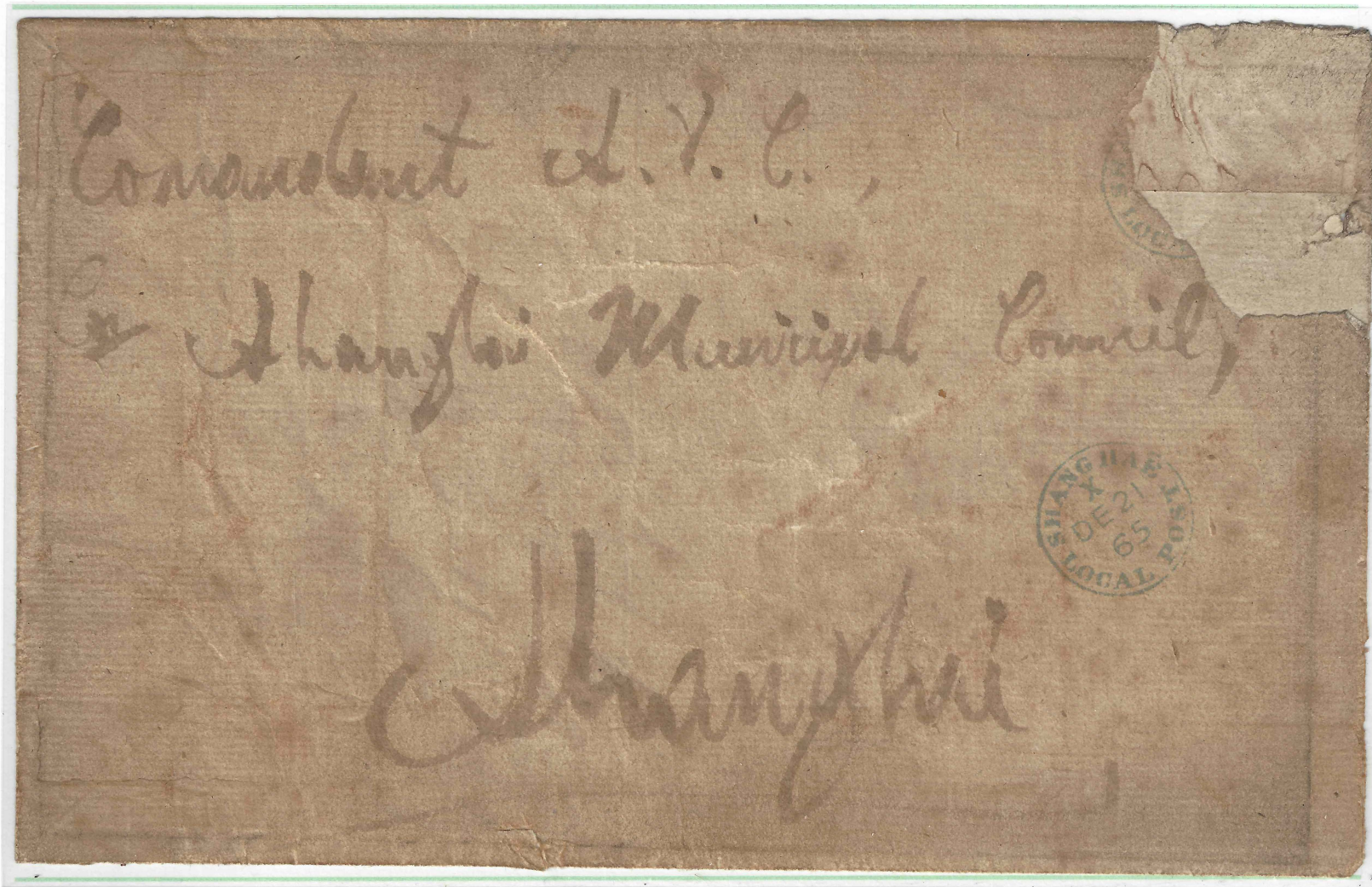
Shanghai Local Post



The earliest dated cover from a find of three covers, two bearing two candareens large dragon stamps (prints #14 and #41), and five maps is shown below. The original enclosure in the cover is the 1865 map of the Soochow Creek Bridges shown overlaid on the cover in a cropped and reduced image. The reverse of the map is endorsed "Dec. 65 / R.20 S.V.C." in the same "brush" hand as the address of the cover. The maps probably each accompanied a written report of the Volunteer Corp patrols over the 6 bridges shown.



The "Shanghae Local Post" datestamp struck in blue-green is reported used as a dispatch postmark on covers dated between July 1864 and June 1865 and is later found used as a cancel on stamps.



21 December 1865 Shanghai Local Post postmark and cancel, stamp torn away, to Commandant "Shanghai Municipal Council / * SVC 1865 * / Soochow Creek Bridge Patrol" map bridges numbered "1" to "6" by hand from left to right

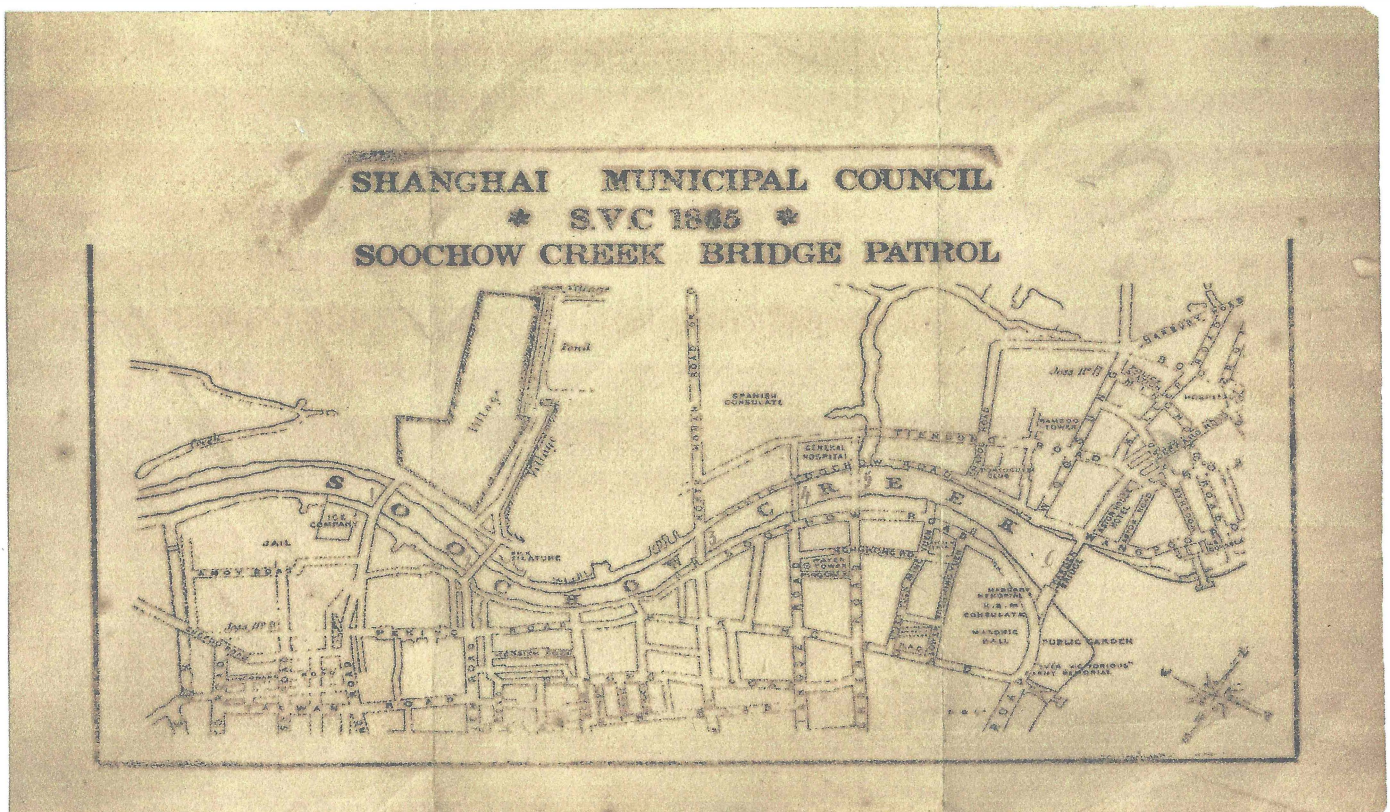
Dec. 65

R. 20. Ave.

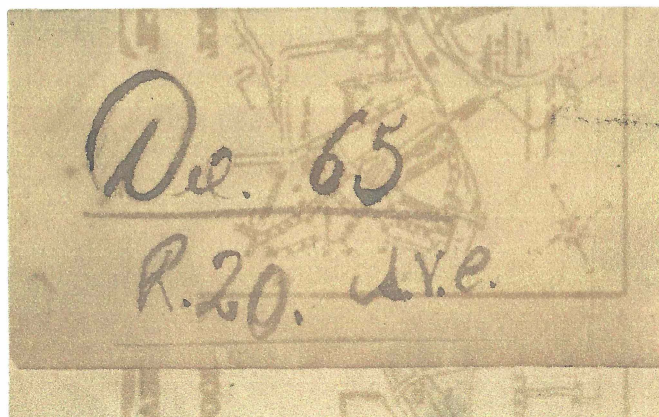
Shanghai Local Post



The earliest dated enclosed map from the find is shown below. It originated in the December 1865 cover that has stamp torn away. The endorsement on reverse is in the same Chinese brush hand as the covers. The find includes 5 maps and 3 covers. These apparently accompanied reports of the Volunteer Corps reports to Commandant Hornby. The 5 maps are dated November and December 1865, as well as February, March and May 1866. The maps differ in the numbering of the bridges in pen, two include "Senior Patrol") The three covers include the cover below (December 1865 with stamp torn away) and uses with two candareens stamps dated February and May 1866.



"Shanghai Municipal Council / * SVC 1865 * / Soochow Creek Bridge Patrol" map
bridges numbered "1" to "6" by hand from left to right, (reduced image)
endorsed on reverse "Dec 5 / R.20. S.V.C. in a "brush" hand



Mar. 66

W. V. E.

3.
R. E.