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The United States Specialist

FOR THE COLLECTOR OF POSTAGE AND REVENUE
STAMP ISSUES OF THE UNITED STATES



Transfer Roll Break Varieties of the
U.S. Special Handling 1925 First Printing
See p. 468.

U. S. Special Handling Issues – Part I: Transfer Roll Break Varieties of the 1925 First Printing

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“Sometimes I can’t see the forest for the trees!” This adage comes to mind as I grapple with how to simplify a subject that I have found, or have made, very complicated. Fortunately, looking at the whole “forest” allows a perspective from which to bring organization and clarity to the study of U.S. Special Handling stamps. For most collectors, these “common” stamps will remain plentiful and easy to collect. For specialists, the uncommon and rare stamp varieties will be identified, quantified and categorized, bringing challenge to their discovery, and maybe some appreciation. The explanation has now grown to become a series of articles that will continue in future issues of *The Specialist*.

Special Handling is a “back-of-the-book” subject area that is greatly oversimplified and often misrepresented. Familiar to collectors and dealers alike are the common stamps in the series, the original 25¢ value, which introduced the service in 1925, and the 10¢, 15¢ and 20¢ wet-printed rate change stamps of 1928. All of the above stamps have official First Days of Issue and are readily available in abundance, mint and used. It is also widely recognized that collectors will encounter difficulty locating commercial uses of Special Handling issues – the labels, wrappers and tags from commercial parcels used to ship live chicks, baby alligators and bees were usually discarded on the farm or in the factory or office.

What is NOT well known is how uncommon some of Special Handling varieties are. One particular example is the double transfer roll relief break of the original 25¢ printing, mint or used, which will be discussed in this article. Subsequent articles will address the 1928 (not 1929, as shown incorrectly in current catalogs and on album pages) yellow-green reprinting of the original 25¢ deep-green stamp and the 1955 dry-printings.

The research of printing data for these issues also sheds new light on color differences of the original 1928 wet printings compared with the later wet printings of 1940 to early 1955, which are also different from the experimental run of dry-printings in September/October, 1955.

Finally, as there is some movement afoot to change the catalog nomenclature to reflect the chronology and relative scarcity of these issues, this article will sidestep references to catalog numbers.

Transfer Roll Relief Breaks

Most collectors I engage in this subject, and many dealers as well, are not familiar with the transfer roll break varieties that occurred during the production of plate no. 17103 of the original 25¢ printing. One of these varieties is quite scarce. Collectors of Special Handling stamps refer to these as



Figure 1. Examples of the normal design and the two different transfer roll breaks. The normal stamp is shown at the top, the “A-T” in “STATES” variety in the center, and the “T-A” of the double break with both the “A-T” in “STATES” and the “T-A” in “POSTAGE” variety at bottom. The enlarged areas are from the plate number singles shown.

the “A-T” and “T-A” varieties, corresponding to whether there is the single break joining the “A” and “T” of STATES or the double break joining both the “A” and “T” of STATES and the “T” and “A” of POSTAGE. See Figure 1. The latter is hard to find for some very good reasons:

1. While the single break variety is not particularly uncommon, only 89,250 stamps of the double break variety, or 0.43% of the total number of 21 million stamps produced, were actually “T-A.” This sounds like a lot of stamps, but not many have survived. Five examples of the single “A-T” are known on cover, but none of the double break “T-A” have been identified on cover.

2. After the new, lower rates for Special Handling service were introduced in July of 1928, all the 25¢ stamps were called for redemption in August, 1928; however, the single break variety on plate no. 17103 from the 1925



Figure 2. Proof of full sheet of plate no. 17103.

initial printing was not reported to the BEP until March 7, 1929 (personal correspondence of Mrs. H. A. Somerfield, acknowledged by BEP Director A. W. Hall on March 14, in the files of the National Postal Museum). The "A-T" single break was eventually reported in *Mekeel's* by M. J. Boyer on January 25, 1932. The double break variety was reported in the March, 1932 issue of *The Bureau Specialist*, by Hugh M. Southgate.

3. These single and double breaks were not listed in the *Scott's Specialized Catalogue* until the 1934 and 1938 editions, respectively, by which time the majority of these stocks had been consumed or withdrawn from post offices.

Most collectors have never seen these varieties, especially the "T-A" example, and although they are listed in major catalogs, they have not yet

	17103					17103					
	normal	normal	normal	normal	normal	normal	normal	normal	normal	normal	
	normal	normal	normal	normal	normal	normal	normal	normal	normal	normal	
	normal	normal	normal	normal	normal	normal	normal	normal	normal	normal	
17103	normal	normal	normal	normal	normal	normal	A-T	A-T	A-T	A-T	17103
	A-T	A-T	A-T	A-T	A-T	A-T	A-T	A-T	A-T	A-T	
	A-T	A-T	A-T	A-T	A-T	A-T	A-T	A-T	A-T	A-T	
	A-T	A-T	A-T	A-T	A-T	A-T	A-T	A-T	A-T	A-T	
	A-T	A-T	A-T	A-T	A-T	A-T	A-T	A-T	A-T	A-T	
	A-T	A-T	A-T	A-T	A-T	A-T	A-T	A-T	A-T	A-T	
	A-T	A-T	A-T	A-T	A-T	A-T	A-T	A-T	A-T	A-T	
	A-T	A-T	A-T	A-T	A-T	A-T	A-T	A-T	A-T	A-T	
	A-T	A-T	A-T	A-T	A-T	A-T	A-T	A-T	A-T	A-T	
	A-T	A-T	A-T	A-T	A-T	A-T	A-T	A-T	A-T	A-T	
	A-T	A-T	A-T	A-T	A-T	A-T	A-T	A-T	A-T	A-T	
	A-T	A-T	A-T	A-T	A-T	A-T	A-T	A-T	A-T	A-T	
	A-T	A-T	A-T	A-T	A-T	A-T	A-T	A-T	A-T	A-T	
	A-T	A-T	A-T	A-T	A-T	A-T	A-T	A-T	A-T	A-T	
	A-T	A-T	A-T	A-T	A-T	A-T	A-T	A-T	A-T	A-T	
	A-T	A-T	A-T	A-T	A-T	A-T	A-T	A-T	A-T	A-T	
	A-T	A-T	A-T	A-T	A-T	A-T	A-T	A-T	A-T	A-T	
	A-T	A-T	A-T	A-T	A-T	T-A	T-A	T-A	T-A	T-A	
	17103					17103					

Figure 3. Key to transfer roll break locations for plate 17103.

been illustrated. Because of their scarcity, I have seen several “T-A” stamps misrepresented in internet offerings, probably because the serifs at the base of the letters are connected.

The National Postal Museum is in possession of proof sheets of five different plate numbers of the first issue – nos. 17102, 17103, both of which went to press, and nos. 17104, 17105 and 17106, which were not used. A full accounting of the probable causes and chronology of the transfer roll relief breaks was reported by Gilbert L. Peakes in *The United States Specialist*, November, 1972. Jim O’Donnell, Museum Specialist, provided an image of the proof sheet of plate no. 17103 (Figure 2; key to transfer roll relief breaks shown in Figure 3), and allowed me to photograph the stamps in positions UR16, 17, 18, 19, and 20, where the “A-T” single break is progressive, so

that each position example represents a unique variety. These are shown in Figure 4. By position UR 20, the first break is complete.

Scarcity of Relief Breaks

The “A-T” variety occurs in 164 of 200 positions of the four panes comprising plate no. 17103, and five of those positions also show the “T-A”

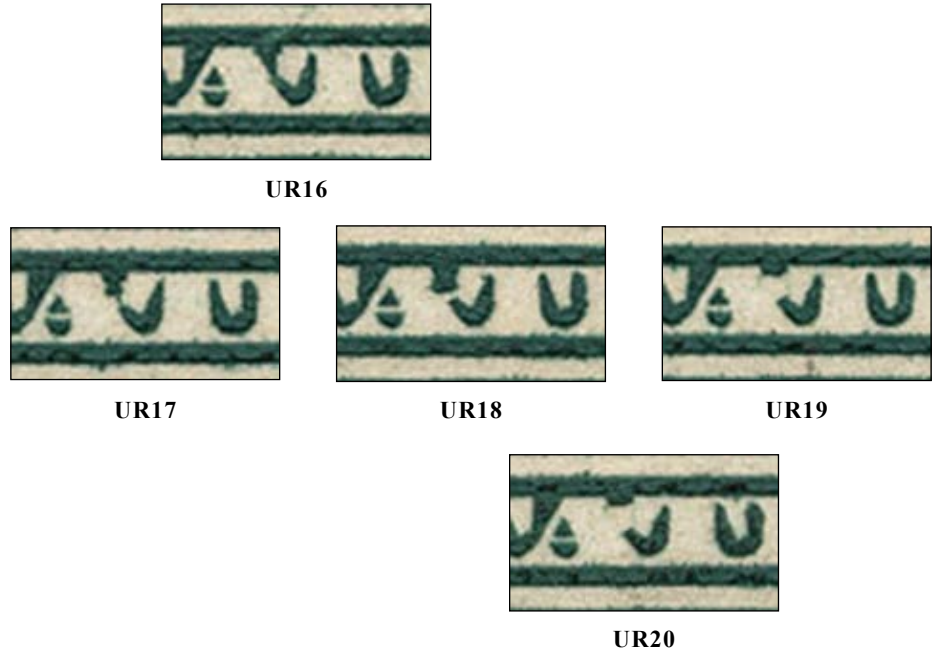


Figure 4. Positions UR16, 17, 18, 19 and 20 with “A-T” enlarged.



Figure 5. Combination FDC with Scott E13: the 25¢ Special Handling stamp is an “A-T” variety.

Table 1. Printing Quantities for the 25¢ Special Handling First Printing

Plate no.	Impressions	Stamps
17095	8,400	1,680,000
17096	8,400	1,680,000
17097	17,850	3,570,000
17098	17,850	3,570,000
17099	17,850	3,570,000
17101	8,400	1,680,000
17102	8,400	1,680,000
17103	17,850	3,570,000
Total	105,000	21,000,000

Table 2. Printing Quantities for Plate No. 17103 by Break Variety

Variety	No. per sheet	Total stamps
Normal	36	642,600
“A-T”	159	2,838,150
“T-A”	5	89,250
Total	200	3,570,000

variety, located at positions LR46-50, the bottom row of the lower right pane. Table 1 summarizes the numbers of stamps printed from the eight plates and Table 2 shows percentages of normal, “A-T” and “T-A” varieties on plate 17103. From these data, one can calculate that “A-T” varieties amount to 14% of total production of the 25¢ Special Handling stamp during 1925, and the “T-A” variety represents only 0.43% of total production, or about one of every 235 stamps produced.

Stamps Used on Cover

Of the five “A-T” varieties known on cover, three are first day covers (April 11, 1925). One is a standard solo usage with a block of four of ½¢ Nathan Hale, Scott #551, paying the 2¢ postage rate; the other two are on FDCs in combination with the 15¢ Special Delivery stamp, Scott E13, which also had its First Day of Issue on April 11, 1925, as in Figure 5. There is an “A-T” known on a contemporary commercial tag and another on an international correspondence cover – an unauthorized use at the time, since Special Handling was not then approved, nor had any meaning, for first class mail.

BEP reports delivering 467 copies of the 25¢ Special Handling stamp to the POD in fiscal year 1925, ending June 30, for servicing first day covers and ceremonial pieces. In addition to the “combo” FDCs with the “A-T” break just mentioned, I know of two plate block combo FDCs, each bearing a top right position plate block of plate no. 17103 and a top right position plate block of E13, so it is possible that a FDC with a double break or “T-A” example exists.

Adding to this census, there are also known at least 15 used plate blocks without gum, postmarked with first date of rate cancels, April 15, 1925, in either Washington, D.C. or New York, N.Y. Not all of these plate blocks are from plate no. 17103, and most are top positions, which would not contain the transfer roll break varieties anyway. I do have in my possession a block of four of plate number 17103 signed by both Postmaster General (PMG)

Harry S. New, and Third Asst. PMG W. Irving Glover, dated April 10, 1925, a day prior to the official First Day of Issue, but again, this is a top position. If full sheets were utilized to prepare these covers and pieces, the PB items alone would have required 18 panes, or 900 stamps, so I have assumed both full panes and separated plate blocks and mint singles were supplied by BEP for these philatelic and ceremonial purposes. This having been said, I know of no analysis which would suggest any FDC or ceremonial piece was prepared with stamps taken from a lower right pane of plate number 17103, and thus there is no *prima facie* evidence that a "T-A" double transfer roll break example exists on a first day cover. However, since "A-T" covers exist, it is possible that a lower right pane, or part thereof, was also supplied by BEP, and a cover is awaiting discovery. Of course, it would be exciting to hear of a "T-A" example on an in-period commercial tag or wrapper!

In summary, the "T-A" transfer roll relief (double) break variety of the first printing of the 25¢ Special Handling stamp is scarce in mint condition and is unknown on cover or piece. Used singles are harder to find than mint singles.

At this juncture, it may be helpful to introduce Table 3, an assembly of promulgations, events and discoveries obtained from a variety of sources and organized chronologically. A number of logical, but previously unrecognized conclusions may be drawn from these data and will be presented in Parts II and III of this series.

to be continued...

Table 3. Chronology of Special Handling Issue "Events"

Date	Event	Reference
Feb. 28, 1925	Authorization of Service	<i>PB 13729</i> : Mar. 23, 1925
Mar. 5, 1925	Die no. 736 started; completed & hardened 3/24/25	<i>Stamp History</i> , Engraving Div., BEP, p. 439
Apr. 4, 1925	First run on flat plate press	<i>BIA Plate No. Checklist</i> , 1990
Apr. 7, 1925	"First Day Gummed"	<i>Stamp Log, Stamp Division, POD, 1900-1936</i> , page 196
Apr. 8, 1925	"First Day Perforated"	<i>Stamp Log, ibid.</i> , page 196
Apr. 9, 1925	"First Day Del'd Packing Div."	<i>Stamp Log, ibid.</i> , page 197
Apr. 11, 1925	First Day of Issue – 25¢	
Apr. 15, 1925	Service and rates become effective	
July 1, 1925	Required for baby alligators	<i>PB 13788</i> : Jul. 1, 1925
Jan. 14, 1928	25¢ Reprinted – first date to press	<i>BIA Plate No. Checklist</i> , 1990
Mar. 5, 1928	Special Handling = 1st class; Special Del. = 4th class	<i>PB 14630</i> : Mar. 6, 1928
May. 3, 1928	Yellow tag req'd.; live chicks require 25¢ stamp	<i>PB 14682</i> : May. 5, 1928
May 29, 1928	New lower rates authorized	45 <i>Stat.</i> 944; PL 70-566, Sec. 8 & 10;
June 5, 1928	Die nos. 766-8 started for 20¢, 15¢ & 10¢, respectively	<i>Stamp History</i> , Engraving Div., BEP, pp. 456-8
June 7, 1928	New lower rates ordered	PMG Order 7790
June 13, 1928	International service authorized	<i>PB 14714</i> : Jun. 13, 1928
June 13, 1928	Special Handling Service NOT entitled to Special Del.	<i>PB 14714</i> : Jun. 13, 1928
June 22, 1928	New denominations to press	<i>BIA Plate No. Checklist</i> , 1990
June 23, 1928	"First Day to Gum and Perf."	<i>Stamp Log, ibid.</i> , page 197
June 25, 1928	First Day of Issue – 10¢, 15¢, 20¢	
July 1, 1928	New domestic rates in effect: 10¢, 15¢ 20¢	<i>U.S. Domestic Postal Rates</i>

July 1, 1928	New international rates become effective	<i>1872-1992</i> <i>U.S. International Postal Rates</i> <i>1872-1996</i>
Aug. 1, 1928	Redemption of 25¢ Special Handling stamps	<i>PB 14736: Jul. 10, 1928</i>
Aug. 8, 1928	Redemption of 25¢ precanceled & perfin stamps	<i>PB 14763: Aug. 10, 1928</i>
Mar. 14, 1929	Collector reports "A-T" variety privately to BEP	BEP acknowledgment letter to H.A. Somerfield <i>PB 15139: Nov. 4, 1929</i> <i>PB 15613</i>
Nov. 1, 1929	Special Handling to be publicized and expedited	<i>Mekeel's Weekly</i>
May 28, 1931	"Most Expeditious Handling Possible"	<i>The Bureau Specialist</i> , page 19.
Jan. 25, 1932	"A-T" variety first reported by M.J. Boyer	"SOTN" date cancel on block
March, 1932	"TA" variety first reported by H.M. Southgate	<i>1934 Scott Catalogue</i>
Dec. 14, 1933	EDU for 25¢ yellow-green variety	<i>1938 Scott Catalogue</i>
1934	First catalog mention of "A-T" variety	62 <i>Stat.</i> 1264; PL 80-900, §204(f)
1938	First catalog mention of "TA" variety	<i>U.S. Domestic Postal Rates</i> <i>1872-1992</i>
Jul. 3, 1948	New rates authorized – add 5¢	<i>PB 19187 (Dec. 2, 1948)</i> <i>BIA Plate No. Checklist</i> , 1990
Jan. 1, 1949	New rates in effect: 15¢, 20¢, 25¢	Only "dry printing" on press <i>BIA Plate No. Checklist</i> , 1990
Jan. 1, 1949	New international rates become effective	<i>BIA Plate No. Checklist</i> , 1990
Aug. 26, 1955	Last date for any "wet-printing" production (10¢)	Act Oct. 30, 1951; 65 <i>Stat.</i> 676,7,8.
Sept. 19, 1955	10¢ reprinted on experimental "dry" paper	<i>PB 20033 (Jun 20, 1957)</i> <i>PB 20053 (Oct. 24, 1957)</i> <i>American Philatelist</i> , Apr., 1959, p. 492
Oct. 6, 1955	15¢ and 20¢ dry-prints – first date to press	<i>American Philatelist</i> , Nov., 1959, p. 88
Oct. 12, 1955	Last date of any Special Handling production (10¢)	Date on stamp <i>PB 20624 (Dec. 28, 1967)</i> <i>PB 20634 (Mar. 7, 1968)</i> <i>PB 20637 (Mar. 28, 1968)</i> <i>PB 21075 (Apr. 12, 1976)</i> <i>PB 21087 (July 9, 1976)</i> <i>PB 21146 (May 19, 1978)</i> <i>PB 21290 (March 20, 1981)</i> <i>PB 21493 (Jan. 9, 1985)</i> <i>PB 21666 (March 25, 1988)</i> <i>PB 21781A (Jan. 24, 1991)</i> <i>PB 21883A (Jan. 1, 1995)</i> USPS.com USPS.com USPS.com
July 1, 1957	New rates in effect: 25¢, 35¢ and 50¢	
July 1, 1957	New international rates: 25¢, 35¢ and 50¢	
Oct. 24, 1957	Special Handling stamps discontinued	
Early 1959	20¢ issue removed by Philatelic Sales Agency	
Sept. 11, 1959	10¢ and 15¢ stamps removed from sale	
Feb. 26, 1958	Earliest Documented Use (EDU) – 10¢ Dry Print	
Jan. 7, 1968	Service available for Third Class Mail	
Mar. 7, 1968	Int'l. – service available for "Other Articles"	
Mar. 28, 1968	Int'l. – service covers surface Postal Union AO mail	
Apr. 18, 1976	New rates: 30¢, 45¢, 65¢ (domestic and int'l.)	
July 18, 1976	New rates: 50¢, 70¢, \$1.00 (domestic and int'l.)	
May 29, 1978	New rates: 70¢ ≤ 10 lbs.; \$1.25 > 10 lbs.	
Mar. 22, 1981	Rate increase to \$0.75 ≤ 10 lbs.; \$1.30 > 10 lbs.	
Feb. 17, 1985	Rate increase to \$1.10 ≤ 10 lbs.; \$1.60 > 10 lbs.	
Apr. 3, 1988	Rate increase to \$1.55 ≤ 10 lbs.; \$2.25 > 10 lbs.	
Feb. 3, 1991	Rate increase to \$1.80 ≤ 10 lbs.; \$2.50 > 10 lbs.	
Jan. 1, 1995	Rate increase to \$5.40 ≤ 10 lbs.; \$7.50 > 10 lbs.	
June 30, 2002	Rate increase to \$5.95 ≤ 10 lbs.; \$8.25 > 10 lbs.	
Jan. 7, 2006	Rate increase to \$6.25 ≤ 10 lbs.; \$8.70 > 10 lbs.	
May 14, 2007	Rate increase to \$6.90 ≤ 10 lbs.; \$9.60 > 10 lbs.	

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U. S. Special Handling Issues – Part II: The 1928 Second Printing and New Rates

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This is the second of a three part series dealing with the lesser known varieties of Special Handling stamps. Part I (October, 2007 *Specialist*) dealt with the 1925 first printing and the occurrence of transfer roll relief breaks. This installment will address the yellow-green color change in the 1928 second printing, the new 10¢, 15¢ and 20¢ stamps (issued to pay the revised, lower Special Handling fees) and an analysis of quantities printed. Part III will cover the dry-printing era, means of identification, comments on nomenclature and challenges for collectors.

1925 Deep Green vs. 1928 Yellow-Green Stamp Color

Copies of records from the Post Office Stamp Division (Figure 1) indicate that the colors of the 1925 and 1928 printings were intended to be the same – all were to be the “... color of 1¢ Ord[inary]...” stamps.

This intention for identical color seems apparent from the “Stamp History” files in BEP records, which show the following:

1. 1925: “The first (25 cent) plate was certified on April 3, 1925, measuring: 19½ x 21 inches; Color of Ink – Green,” – but no ‘No. of Ink’ was recorded on the BEP Engraving Division Stamp History record sheet. I believe it was G-415-P, but have not been able to confirm this yet.

2. 1928: “The first (10 cent) plate was certified on June 22, 1928, measuring: 19½ x 21 inches; Color of Ink – Green, No. of Ink G-415-P...” Empirical evidence shows this was the same ink that had been chosen for the January, 1928 run of the 25¢ yellow-green stamp. I plan chemical testing to test this hypothesis. Methodology advice from our readers is welcomed.

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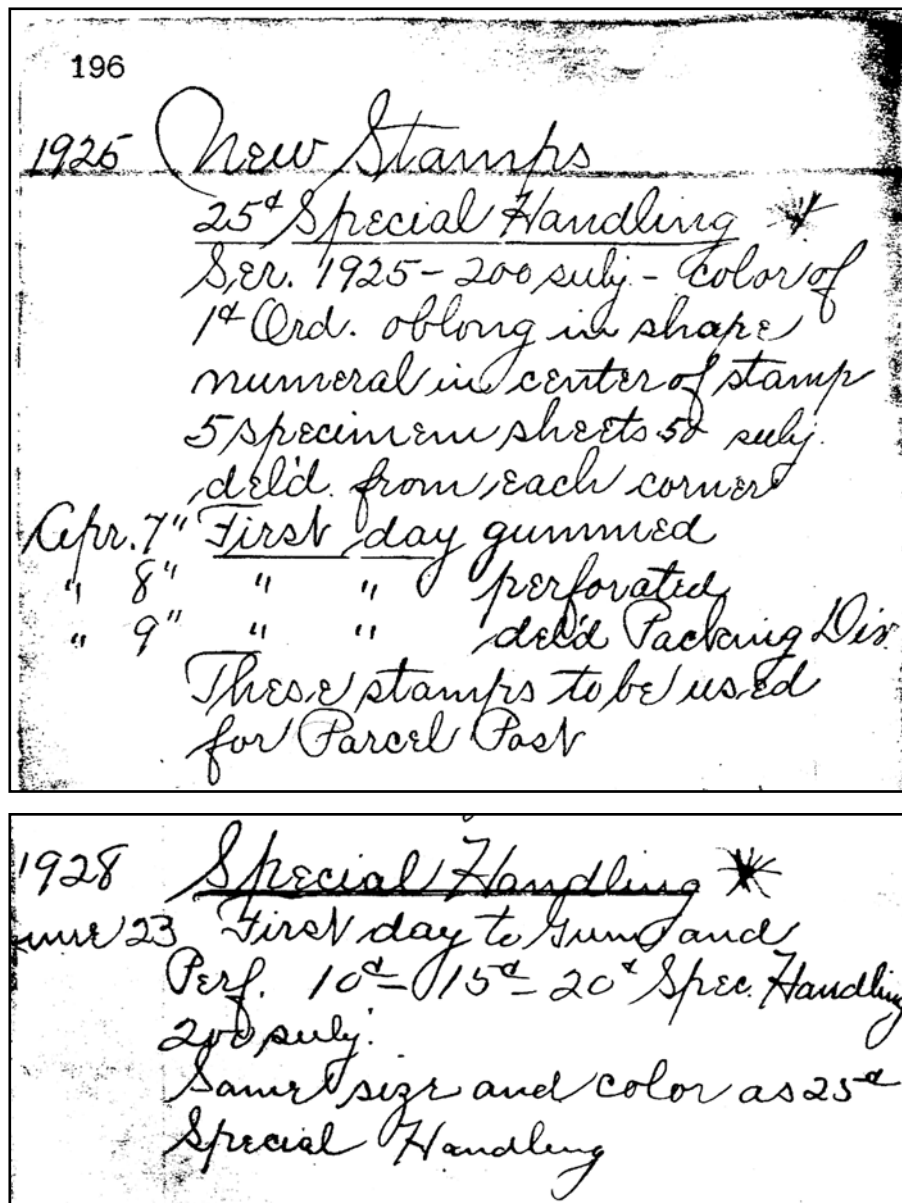


Figure 1. Excerpts from the "Stamp Log - Stamp Division, Post Office" from 1925 and 1928 regarding Special Handling stamps.

However, the colors of the stamps printed in 1925 and 1928 were dramatically different, first the 25¢ stamp in January, 1928, then the new rate stamps produced in June, 1928. Scott Stamp and Coin Co. sought verification and explanation for these different stamps. I have recently found in the library of the National Postal Museum six items of correspondence beginning January 6, 1933 between Hugh Clark, Treasurer of Scott Stamp and Coin Co., and POD personnel. Two pertinent letters are reproduced in Figures 2 and 3.

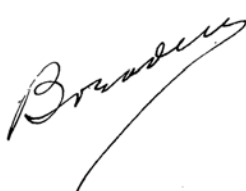
DIVISION OF STAMPS	Post Office Department	IN YOUR REPLY REFER TO
	THIRD ASSISTANT POSTMASTER GENERAL	RB-CVH
	Washington	January 9, 1933
Memorandum for Mr. Eidsness:		
<p>In reply to Mr. Clark's letter of January 6, the following information is given in connection with special handling stamps manufactured at the Bureau of Engraving and Printing:</p>		
<p>The 25¢ deep green was first shipped from the Bureau April 10, 1925. They were all printed by the flatbed process and are perforated 11. The numbers of the plates used in the production of the 25¢ are:-</p>		
17095	17096	17097
17098	17099	17101
	17102	17103
<p>The 10¢, 15¢, and 20¢ special handling stamps were also manufactured by the flatbed process, color deep green, the same as the 25¢ and first shipment was made from the Bureau June 25, 1928. Numbers of the plates from which these stamps were produced are:</p>		
10¢	15¢	20¢
19553	19557	19541
19554	19558	19542
19555	19559	19543
19556	19560	19544
<p>All perforated 11.</p>		
<p>The Bureau number of the ink used is G-415, which is the same ink used for the ordinary 1¢ issue. However, a lemon yellow is incorporated in the formula for the production of this "deep green".</p>		
<p>The specimen sheets which were approved and are on file in the Bureau of Engraving and Printing, taken off at the time of going to press, show no change or deterioration in color whatsoever. If for any reason the stamps quoted by Mr. Clark show a variation, it is evidently due to abuse, exposure, or some chemical reaction.</p>		
<p>The numbers given by Mr. Clark in his letter are catalogue numbers and it is possible that No. 1463 and No. 1467 apply to the stamps issued in 1925; the plate numbers given may assist him in settling the question provided his blocks of 4 give the Bureau numbers.</p>		
		

Figure 3. Memorandum by the Post Office Department Division of Stamps regarding the colors of Special Handling stamps.

The January 9, 1933 memo shown in Figure 3 was prepared by Richard Breaden, an employee in the Stamps Division, and provides the results of the investigation at BEP that formed the basis of a response to Scott dated January 10 from M.L. Eidsness, Supt., Div. of Stamps, that stated specifically, “The Bureau number of the ink used is G-415, which is the same ink used for the ordinary 1¢ issue. However, a lemon yellow is incorporated in the formula for the production of this ‘deep green’.” There is additional correspondence in this rapid-fire interchange, but it does not provide further elucidation. Further analysis of both printing dates and actual stamps supports the use by BEP of the lemon yellow additive in 1928, but not in any subsequent production runs.

The 25¢ Reprinting of 1928 – Much Scarcer Used Than the 1925 Original Issue

Mint stamps of the yellow-green printing of the 25¢ stamp in 1928 are readily available today at reasonable prices, since they were available at philatelic windows and outlets from 1928 to 1945. Catalog pricing correctly reflects that, even though fewer total stamps were printed, they were available for an extended period of time. Further, the overall centering seems much better than in the first printing. However, there is no known contemporary commercial cover bearing this 1928 yellow-green 25¢ stamp.

Shown here for the first time in print (Figure 4) is the earliest documented usage (EDU) of this stamp with a soaked-on-the-nose date cancel of December 4, 1933. It should be pointed out that a block of four of the 25¢



**Figure 4. Earliest documented use of the 1928 reprinting:
ADAMS, NEBR. DEC 4 1933.**

value probably had its genesis on a philatelic piece, since there was no valid rating or service fee for \$1.00 in Special Handling stamps applicable until July 18, 1976 (*Postal Bulletin* #21087, July 9, 1976).

Used examples of this stamp are scarce for the following reasons:

1. This reprinting of the original deep green 1925 issue by the Bureau of Engraving and Printing (BEP) was at press for only six days, from January 14 to 19, 1928 (*BIA Plate No. Checklist, 1990*) to replenish Post Office Department (POD) inventories. Many authorities, catalogs and album makers refer to this as the 1929 yellow-green variety, an error in date whose original source and explanation, albeit longstanding, is unknown. Some have suggested that

the 1929 date would be correct if the POD waited until then to “issue” the stamps, but this seems unlikely (see point #4 below).

2. Only 2,800,000 stamps were produced, which compares with 21,000,000 of the original 1925 issue deep-green color stamps. Four plates were used, Plate Nos. 17095, 17096, 17097 and 17098, resulting in 700,000 stamps from each plate.

3. The 1928 reissue stamps were on sale for less than six months when the new, lower rates for Special Handling service became effective on July 1, 1928. The 25¢ denomination stamps were never again produced and were seldom used after July 1, 1928. The new rates for this service required either a 10¢, 15¢ or 20¢ stamp to cover the Special Handling fee, depending on the weight of the parcel. The fee was not dependent on distance traveled, unlike Parcel Post.

4. All 25¢ denomination Special Handling stamps were ordered withdrawn from sale and held for redemption as of July 9, 1928 and to be returned to the “department as promptly as possible after August 1, 1928” (*Postal Bulletin* #14736, July 10, 1928). Such a stamp “recall” was unprecedented at the time.

5. Unlike Parcel Post stamps, the Special Handling stamps were never authorized for use as postage for any service other than Special Handling.

6. Commercial mailers often bought sheets of 25¢ Special Handling stamps precancelled or had “perfins” (“perforated initials”) added as a security mechanism. Such precancelled and perfin stocks were also called for redemption (*Postal Bulletin* #14736, July 10, 1928) to mollify holders of these stamps who complained of being stuck with useless stamps. There are letters with requests to this effect in the files of the Third Asst. Postmaster General at the library of the National Postal Museum from Standard Hatcheries, Decatur, Illinois; the Dept. of Highways of the State of Pennsylvania, Harrisburg; and from the U.S. Post Office at Cincinnati, referring to “quite a good many inquiries on the subject.”

Thus, the 25¢ yellow-green stamps were available at post offices for only six months prior to the introduction of new rates that rendered the 25¢ denomination obsolete. This yellow-green variety had no first day of issue status, association or ceremony but was recognized as a bona fide variety by at least 1932, when it was listed for the first time in both the *Scott Standard* and *Specialized Catalogue* editions. It is likely that dealers and collectors purchased post office stocks of mint stamps prior to their withdrawal, but relatively few of these stamps actually entered the mail stream. By the very nature of the service provided by these stamps – the treatment of Fourth Class matter with First Class service for baby chicks, queen bees and baby alligators – the parcel wrappers were generally discarded by the recipients. Today, I still see “Wholesale Lots” of 40 or 50 copies of mint 25¢ yellow-green stamps offered at substantial discounts from catalog values, but used stamps are uncommon. To my knowledge, and as stated above, these stamps are unknown on cover, wrapper or tag of any size or configuration.

New 10¢, 15¢ and 20¢ Stamps Introduced in June, 1928 – The Same Yellow-Green Color Ink

Thus far, everything has been, so-to-speak, “black and white” or rather, deep-green and yellow-green. The new rate stamps introduced in 1928 were all printed with the same yellow-green ink as the recently-completed run of

the 25¢ stamps, and no additional Special Handling stamps would be produced until July 29, 1940. The dry-printed stamps of this series would not be introduced until 1955 (to be addressed in detail in Part III) and these would employ a specific, unique color ink specified for that single, experimental printing.

Here is where new research enters the picture. When I began studying this issue, conventional wisdom held that differentiating the 1955 dry-prints from wet-prints was a matter of the shade of green, not unlike distinguishing the two varieties of the 25¢ printings. The real story of color variation became clear to me only after I had accumulated enough “socked on the nose” (SOTN) stamps with dated cancels to associate color shade with production date. This was accomplished while amassing hundreds of used stamps in a continuing search for dry-prints. I found four groupings of color shades that are separable and assignable to specific timeframes of Special Handling issue production. The 1925 deep-green and 1928 yellow-green groupings have already been established.

There were no stamps printed between July 24, 1928 and July 29, 1940, and then, subsequent printings exhibit a green color shade that is neither deep-green nor yellow-green, as evident in the SOTN cancels (Figure 5). There are none of these “plain” green stamps with pre-1940 SOTN cancels.

For the 1955 dry-prints, the picture on color is clear; the “Stamp History” files in BEP records show the following:

30 August 1955 – Memo re: Ink Color from Herbert C. Tucker, Supt. of Ink Mfg & Testing Div. to D.R. McLeod, Engraving Div.: Ink Number G-448-P.D. is to replace G-415-P in the printing of Special Handling United States Postage Stamps.

This shade is a distinctive and much lighter green than the 1925 and 1940 shades, and there is no yellowish hue whatsoever as in the 1928 printings (see, for example, “Emerald Green Tint” in the “Wonder Color Gauge” sheet No. 4, distributed by Meghric Coin & Stamp Supplies, Los Angeles).

All the representative color shade groupings are shown in Figure 5. The top stamp in each column is a certifiable mint stamp of the color variety. Column 1 reflects the 1925 deep green first printing, all verified since they are “A-T” varieties. Column 2 illustrates the 1928 yellow-green printings, all from the same ink color, and all but the 25¢ mint stamp have SOTN date cancels, ranging from 1929 to 1939. Column 3 exhibits SOTN date cancel examples from the 1940 through early-1955 wet-printing era, during which there were 18 distinct printing campaigns. Column 4 represents the September-October, 1955 experimental printing on dry paper and contains the only dated example known; the rest of the stamps are the only other examples of used dry-printed stamps known to me.

Quantities Produced – 10¢, 15¢ and 20¢ Stamps, by Color Shade and Wet- vs. Dry-Printings

In the search to discover printing quantities for each of the Special Handling varieties, I first consulted the *BIA Plate No. Checklist, 1990*, to benchmark actual production dates at press for each denomination. I then researched the files and stacks of the APRL, BEP, USPS and National Archives. The total number of impressions for each plate number was located in the BEP “Postage Stamp Plate Card” files and, accordingly, the total number of stamps produced for each denomination is known. However, records found



Figure 5. Color shades from the four distinct printing campaign periods.

Table 1. Comparison of BEP Shipments and Production Data.

Denomination	10¢	15¢	20¢	25¢
Total Shipments from BEP to POD	36,587,300	31,450,650	25,512,300	23,487,900
Total BEP Production	36,302,800	33,099,200	27,710,600	23,800,000

at BEP did not reveal the breakdown of stamps produced by date, nor by production period, so that wet- vs. dry-printing figures could not be determined from these records alone.

A visit to the library at the headquarters of the USPS at L'Enfant Plaza in Washington, DC was fruitful in uncovering a set of the *Annual Report[s] of the Director of the Bureau of Engraving and Printing*, which contain summary data for the delivery of all stamps from the BEP to the POD. These data were also published in *The Bureau Specialist* in the 1940s and 1950s. Just to be clear, BEP did not ship everything to the POD as they produced it, but

Table 2. Shipments of Special Handling Stamps from BEP to POD.

Fiscal Year Ended Jun 30	Denomination				Source*
	10¢	15¢	20¢	25¢	
1925				15,097,167	1925, p. 20
1926				1,583,033	1926, p. 37
1927				2,558,800	1927, p. 41
1928	45,000	45,000	45,000	2,600,700	1928, p. 43
1929	5,581,100	5,213,700	4,877,000	13,500	1929, p. 45
1930	715,600	644,900	580,200	25,000	1930, p. 44
1931	401,700	517,300	547,700	40,000	1931, p. 47
1932	421,400	424,600	383,800	80,000	1933, p. 10
1933	18,847,950	14,006,500	9,279,100	1,489,700	1934, p. 62
1934 through 1940 — No shipments listed in the <i>Annual Reports</i>					
1941	0	0	1,095,000	0	1942, p. 83
1942	293,300	353,450	510,900	0	1943, p. 42
1943	934,200	793,200	998,150	0	1944, p. 108
1944	1,319,250	1,359,600	900,950	0	1945, p. 130
1945	1,226,600	1,275,900	651,300	0	1946, p. 282
1946	910,300	809,100	783,000	0	1948, p. 294
1947	931,700	737,400	730,400	0	1950, p. 182
1948	881,900	589,400	396,800	0	1950, p. 286
1949	706,200	688,600	541,300	0	1951, p. 71
1950	609,900	613,900	491,500	0	1951, p. 221
1951	324,600	442,500	180,700	0	1953, p. 101
1952	392,000	443,000	343,300	0	1953, p. 250
1953	408,900	474,000	384,400	0	1955, p. 56
1954	426,900	511,000	440,900	0	1956, p. 242
1955	513,800	647,600	655,900	0	1956, p. 321
1956	305,000	365,000	240,000	0	1957, p. 317
1957	80,000	115,000	205,000	0	1958, p. 196
1958	310,000	380,000	250,000	0	1959, p. 255
1959	0	0	0	0	1960, p. 296

*Data for 1925-1940 from *Annual Reports of the Director of the Bureau of Engraving and Printing*; 1941-1959 from *The Bureau Specialist*. Data for 1925 includes BEP Inventory Reported as of Jan. 1, 1926.

as the POD called for it. When tabulated, these data allowed me to estimate production quantities of the 10¢, 15¢ and 20¢ denominations, broken down by wet- and dry-printing process, and further, by color shade for the wet-printed stamps. The total, cumulative shipping quantities taken from the annual reports correlate reasonably well with the stamp quantities obtained from total impression data at the BEP as shown in Table 1. Table 2 summarizes Special Handling stamp shipments by denomination and year.

As stated above, the evidence indicates that stamps produced in 1925 were of the original deep green color while stamps printed in 1928 were yellow-green. Stamps produced during 1940-55 were wet-printed in green, and the dry-printings of 1955 were light green. Table 3 summarizes shipments during these time periods (and by color), and Table 4 converts these shipment totals to percentages of total production for each value by color.

Table 3. Correlation of Stamp Colors with Shipments.

Color	Period*	Denomination			
		10¢	15¢	20¢	25¢
Deep green	1925-27				19,239,000
Yellow-green	1928-33	26,012,750	20,852,000	15,712,800	4,248,900
Green	1940-55	9,879,550	9,738,650	9,104,500	0
Light green	1956-58	695,000	860,000	695,000	0

*Fiscal years ended June 30.

Table 4. Percentages of Stamp Colors Calculated From Shipments.

Color	Period*	Denomination			
		10¢	15¢	20¢	25¢
Deep green	1925-27				81.9%
Yellow-green	1928-33	71.1%	66.3%	61.6%	18.1%
Green	1940-55	27.0%	31.0%	35.7%	0.0%
Light green	1956-58	1.9%	2.7%	2.7%	0.0%

*Fiscal years ended June 30.

The wet-printed 10¢, 15¢ and 20¢ stamps were available from June 25, 1928 through the late-1950s, and approximately 35, 30 and 25 million stamps of each of the three denominations were produced, respectively. By comparison, only a small number of dry-printed stamps were shipped, 695,000, 860,000 and 695,000, respectively, for the three values during 1956-58, or about 2-3% of total production for each value (see Table 4). The estimates for dry-printed stamps may be on the high side, as I have used the assumption that all stamps shipped in fiscal 1956, 1957 and 1958 were dry-printed varieties, and this was not necessarily true. Stocks of remaining wet-printed stamps remaining in inventory were likely also shipped to the POD in these final deliveries.

Summary

The yellow-green reprinting of the 25¢ stamp is not known on contemporary cover, and used copies are hard to find. The new rate stamps of 1928 are of the same yellow-green color, but subsequent wet-printings (1940-1955) were a lighter green, not yellow-green. Printing quantity estimates for color shades of the wet-printed stamps are made here for the first time and will be helpful in presenting the story of dry-printed stamps in Part III of this series.

to be continued...

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U. S. Special Handling Issues – Part III: The 1955 Experimental Printing on “Dry” Paper

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This is the last of a three part series dealing with the lesser known varieties of Special Handling stamps. Part I dealt with the 1925 First Printing and the occurrence of transfer roll relief breaks (October, 2007 *Specialist*, pp. 468-75). Part II presented factors accounting for the scarcity of the 1928 reprinting used commercially, and introduced printing quantity estimates for the new rate stamps introduced in 1928, also differentiating color shades of the wet-printings (November, 2007 *Specialist*, pp. 485-94).

This segment will address the experimental dry-printing stamps of 1955, means of their identification, the historic development and current status of catalog numbering, and closing thoughts on challenges for collectors. As a preface, remember that all 25¢ stamps were wet-printed and are excluded from this discussion.



Figure 1. EDU of the 10¢ 1955 dry-print: FEB 26 1958 (APEX Cert. No. 169823).

The “Dry-Print” Varieties of October, 1955 – Scarce, Mint and Used

One of the elements missing in any exhibit of the Special Handling issue is an example of a “contemporary” commercial usage on cover for any of the 1955 dry-print varieties. My continuing search over the past several years has led me to the following observations, conclusions and/or hypotheses:

1. Dry-printed stamps in all forms – mint or used, singles or multiples, full panes, plate blocks, siderographer’s and designer’s initials margin pieces – are much scarcer than their wet-printed counterparts, by about a 50:1 ratio. Actual quantities issued were reported in Part II.
2. The dry-printed stamps are particularly uncommon used, and none of the 10¢, 15¢ or 20¢ denominations is documented on a period cover. Shown here for the first time in print (Figure 1) is the earliest documented usage (EDU) of

one of these varieties, a dry-printed 10¢ stamp with a “socked-on-the-nose” (SOTN) circular date stamp (CDS) cancel, dated February 26, 1958. There have been no EDUs reported for the 15¢ and 20¢ dry-printed stamps.

3. As shown in Part II of this series, the green color of the 1940-1955 wet-prints is actually closer to the color of the dry-prints than the 1928 yellow-green wet-prints and is commonly mistaken as the dry-printed variety.

4. While album makers have traditionally provided spaces for the yellow-green color variety of the 25¢ denomination, they typically provide one space for each of the three low value denominations, not differentiating nor acknowledging the different type of paper and printing method used in 1955. Dry-prints were not recognized in the *Scott Specialized Catalogue* until 1989, and were then elevated to full variety listing in the 1992 edition. Most dealers and collectors I have questioned do not seek to differentiate the wet- and dry-printings. I have discussed the subtleties of these identification properties with the three major expertizing organizations and have received their encouragement to publish this research.

5. The last of the Special Handling stamps available to the public, the 10¢ and 15¢ values, were withdrawn from the Philatelic Sales Agency on September 11, 1959.¹ The 10¢, 15¢ and 20¢ stamps had actually been completely withdrawn from sale on at least one other occasion, in April, 1947, when several new commemoratives were issued.²

Wet-Print or Dry-Print? How to Identify

Since many of the 1940-1955 wet-print campaigns produced stamps that were a light enough shade of green to resemble the color of “dry-prints,” this confusion and lack of understanding causes near universal misidentification of some of these wet-prints as dry-prints. Consequently, it is important to use other, definitive methods of identification.



Figure 2. Extremes of printing quality – wet-printing on left and center; dry-printing on right.

Many collectors believe they can differentiate dry-print from wet-print stamps by sharpness of design detail and a light green color on the face side of dry-prints. Figure 2 illustrates that this is not true and, in fact, is quite misleading. The two stamps at left and center are both wet-prints and represent the extremes of design detail sharpness for wet-prints. The stamp on the right is a dry-print, and face side characteristics are very similar to the center wet-print stamp. In reality, many more wet-printed stamps have the good quality and sharp appearance of later dry-printed stamps than is generally appreciated. For example, the 15¢ stamp shown Figure 2, center, would be called a “dry-print” by many collectors and dealers. You may recall from Part II that these three stamps also represent the three latter color shades for this issue.



Figure 3. Left: dry-print 10¢ pair with plate number 19554, trimmed horizontally at bottom for use as a template, superimposed on wet-printed 15¢ stamp. Right: same dry-print pair, gum side, soaked off lower $\frac{3}{4}$ of lower stamp of pair to show the white paper and to measure caliper; wet-print stamp superimposed, showing light-yellow gum.



Figure 4. High contrast scan of 10¢ dry-print showing embossed appearance.

For more reliable identification of dry-printed stamps, observe the gum side of mint stamps. The light-colored, almost white “matte-finish” gum used on dry-print stamps is distinctive compared to the yellowish, glassy surface appearance on the gum side of wet-print stamps (Figure 3). Furthermore, printing on the dry, 5–15% moisture content paper, required such greater pressure that the gum side has an embossed, almost textured appearance in the image of the face design (Figure 4).

Gum color and texture on mint stamps is usually diagnostic, but the printing method should be verified with dimensional confirmation.

Design Dimension and Paper Caliper Measurements – Definitive Tests for Identification

As shown above, identifying wet-printed or dry-printed mint stamps is fairly easy. However, used stamps present a more difficult challenge, since

cancel, soaking and storage conditions all contribute to modifying the look and feel of the stamps. Since dry-printed stamps in used condition are scarce, collectors, dealers and expertizers need a reliable test method to find these hidden gems. Here is the two-step solution:

Step 1: Measure the design frame horizontal width first to determine candidate stamps for further testing in Step 2. Design widths of wet-prints vary from 35.4 mm to 36.2 mm, with measurements clustering around 35.7 mm and 36.0 mm, which may relate to the orientation of the paper in the press: vertical grain for the narrower design width and horizontal grain for the wider wet-print stamps.³ Any Special Handing stamp with a design frame measurement of 36.4 mm or greater is an excellent candidate for testing as a dry-print. Since all the dry-prints were run in only a single five-day period,⁴ they are a very consistent 36.4 mm wide. I have “sacrificed” a few mint stamps to test the effect of soaking “used” stamps off an envelope, but size change (increase) of design width after “licking, sticking, soaking and drying” was minimal, perhaps 0.1 mm.



Figure 5. Stamp width measurements – frame line to frame line: 36.4 mm dry-print of Figure 3 (upper) superimposed on a 36.2 mm wet-print stamp (lower).

The best way to measure stamp design width is with known stamps. Take a known mint dry-print stamp, trim off the top or bottom edge and use it as a template to compare the design width of new candidates. Any stamp less than the template width stamp is a wet-print; an equal frame indicates a dry-print candidate. The wet-print stamp chosen for design width comparison in Figure 5 is nominally 36.2 mm., as wide a design width as occurs in wet-printed stamps. The dry-print design width is still greater, by about 0.2 mm. Go to Step 2.

Step 2: Measure the paper thickness, or caliper of the stamp, with a micrometer accurate to 1/10,000 of an inch (0.0001”). The literature reports wet-prints in the range of 0.0030 to 0.0034 inch and dry-prints from 0.0039 to 0.0042 inch. My personal testing yields averages of 0.0037 inch for wet-prints and 0.0044 inch for dry-prints, about 0.0003 or 0.0004 inch higher than the few published reports I have seen. (Variations in instrumentation or measuring technique can result in readings consistently higher or lower than reported values. The best way to be sure is to measure groups of both wet and dry-printed stamps to see where your values fall.) In Figure 2 above, ¾ of the gum of the lower stamp in the pair of dry-printed 10¢ stamps was soaked off to compare the caliper difference of mint vs. used stamps. Caliper measurements were 0.0047 and 0.0045 in., respectively, so the gum accounts for about 0.0002 in.

Catalog Numbers – Chronological Development and Current Status

Table 3 in Part I of this series summarized the historic timeline for which Special Handling denominations and varieties evolved. Logically, the *Scott Specialized Catalogue of United States Stamps & Covers*, which many collectors of U.S. stamps use as their standard reference, mirrors this chronological development, and these listings and changes are given below in Table 1, with a reference added from the “*Standard*” catalog where pertinent.

Table 1. *Scott Specialized Catalogue* Listings and Changes for Special Handling Stamps from 1926 to the Present.

Year	Cat. No.	First Appearance of...
1926	1463	First listing – 25¢ deep green stamp – single and block of four – “1925”
1929	1464, 1465, 1466	10¢, 15¢, 20¢ Yellow green reduced rate stamps listed – “1928”
1930	Same four nos.	First days of issue data added for the above.
1932 (<i>Std.</i>)	1467 added	25¢ Yellow green stamp listed; heading dates changed to “1928-29.”
1932 (<i>Spec.</i>)	1467 added	25¢ Yellow green stamp listed; heading date remains “1928;” “block of four” pricing line added for all five stamps.
1934	Same five nos.	Added “VARIETIES.”: “A” and “T” of “STATES” joined, associated with no. 1467
1935	Same 1925, 1928 nos.	Design identifier letters introduced – “PP#”; word “VARIETIES” dropped.
1936	Same five nos.	Paragraph added to heading – description of Special Handling service.
1937	Same five nos.	“Margin block of 6, P # only” pricing line added for all five stamps.
1938	1463 omitted and changed to 1467a	Added: “A” and “T” of “STATES” joined, and “T” and “A” of “POSTAGE” joined. Heading dates all combined under single “1925-28” dateline.
1939	1464	Full stamp design shown – identifier changed to PP13. “A-T” and “T-A” under 1467a.
1940	QE1, QE2, QE3, QE4+a	All Scott numbers changed to QE format; dates still listed as 1925-28
1941	QE4	1929 Associated with QE4; first days still listed for other four issues.
1954	QE4a varieties	Prices added for “A-T” and “T-A” varieties – \$1.25 mint or used, both types.
1962	QE1, QE2, QE3 and QE4a	First day cover listings added for four denominations (no FDC for QE4).
1963	QE1, QE2, QE3	Footnote added to indicate QE1, QE2, and QE3 known in both wet- and dry-prints.
1988	Same five nos.	No substantial changes in listings for 25 years, except for significant pricing advances.
1989	QE1a, QE2a, QE3a	Dry printings added (no dates); wet printing numbers reassigned lower case “a.”
1992	QE1, QE2, QE3	1955 year date added for the 10¢, 15¢ and 25¢ dry printing issues, respectively.
2006	8 nos., 2 varieties	Color reproduction of PP13 added; other elements unchanged; QE4 still “1929.”
2008	All nos. reversed	Major numbers QE1, 2, 3 and 4 for first printings; “AT” & “TA” illustrated.

I have shared all of these findings with the editors at Scott Publishing Co., and encouraged them to change the numbering structure to be consistent with major and minor listing styles of other U.S. stamps. As this article approaches “deadline,” the 2008 edition of the *Specialized* has just been issued, and the recommended logical nomenclature changes have been implemented (page 324). Scott Nos. QE1, QE2, QE3 and QE4, the major listings, now apply to the most common first printings in denomination order – 10¢, 15¢, 20¢ and 25¢, respectively. The issue date of the 25¢ second printing, yellow green stamp, now QE4a, is properly reflected as 1928 (formerly 1929), and the two major transfer roll relief break varieties are illustrated for the first time. The 1955 dry-print varieties become the minor listings, QE1a, QE2a and QE3a.

The rationale for these latest holistic changes in catalog numbering become much more apparent when viewed in the context of all the individual additions and minor changes which accumulated over the years. See Table 1. Most stamps in collections and dealer inventories can now be correctly identified with the proper major listing style, and the less common varieties, particularly the dry-prints, QE1a, QE2a, and QE3a, have been set apart and revalued in light of their scarcity. As an example, used dry-prints are much scarcer than their mint counterparts, but since they may be contrived by canceling mint stamps (although not authorized to pay postage), they are valued the same as mint stamps. Parenthetically, in searching over a thousand used stamps, I have found only three dry prints, all of which appeared in Figure 5 of Part II in this series, two 10¢ and one 15¢ stamp. In the spirit of full disclosure, the two 20¢ dry prints in the same column – with red cancels – were sent to me on contrived covers and the stamps were soaked off for display.

Closing Summary and Challenges

For stamps printed as late as October, 1955, it seems logical to expect that covers, or at least stamps with SOTN dates, should exist. Except for the example in Figure 1 above, I do not know of any. Perhaps all these stamps were soaked off otherwise “undesirable” wrappers. Further, I have only found three used dry-printed stamps in over a thousand used stamps examined. Thus, my first challenge is for someone to find and report any dry-print Special Handling stamp on a contemporary cover. I would pose a similar challenge for the 1928 yellow green stamp (25¢ value) — find one on cover! Also, find a transfer roll double relief break on cover. I posit that these items constitute modern rarities until someone finds more than one! Until these discoveries are made, and in consideration of the latest Scott numbering for these issues, it can be said that QE1a, QE2a, QE3a and QE4a are not known on contemporary cover. Readers who have any of these rarities — dry prints, 25¢ yellow-green or “AT” – “TA” double relief break on cover — are asked and encouraged to contact the author. New discoveries will be published in a future issue of *The Specialist*.

References

1. *American Philatelist*, Vol. 73, No. 2, (November, 1959), p. 88.
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3. Wallace Cleland, “Wet and Dry Printings of Special Handling Stamps Revisited,” *The United States Specialist*, Vol. 75, No. 6 (June, 2004), pp. 283-84.
4. George Brett, “New Stamp Varieties Due to Manufacturing Changes,” *The United States Specialist*, Vol. 27, No. 2 (February, 1956), pp. 27-29.