

2020 EDITION SPECIAL FEATURE

1928 Era "Special" Booklet Paper Variety Stamps Now listed in the Scott catalogue

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THE STAMPS: There are eleven popular U.S. issues, specifically Scott Nos. 563, 564, 566, 567, 568, 569, C11, E13, QE1, QE2 and QE3, with well-documented paper varieties that are relatively unknown to the general collector. These same paper varieties, however, have long been included in most exhibits of the series in which they appear – the Fourth Bureau definitive series, the Beacon Air Mail, and U.S. Special Delivery and Special Handling issues. The newly listed stamps within these pages will carry the following numbers: 563b, 564b, 566a, 567b, 568a, 569a, C11b, E13a, QE1b, QE2b, QE3b.

INTRODUCTION: Eleven varieties of well-known U.S. stamps are added to this year's edition to recognize their production for a limited period in 1928 on "Special" Booklet Paper. This "Special" paper consisted of leftover flat sheets of paper from stocks specified, purchased and intended for booklet pane production by the Bureau of Engraving and Printing (BEP). The newly-listed varieties are readily identifiable, and many collectors have recognized these stamps and added them to their collections since first reported by Hugh M. Southgate in 1940.

After the last print run of booklet panes on the flat plate press (the Lindbergh booklet pane, Scott C10a),

the BEP had significant remaining inventory of "Special" Booklet Paper. These remnant booklet paper stocks were redirected to ordinary sheet stamp production on flat plate presses. All subsequent booklet pane production was on rotary presses. The C10a booklet stamps were last at press on April 10, 1928, and the first sheet stamps to utilize "Special" Booklet Paper, the new Special Handling service stamps, first went to press on June 22, 1928.

BACKGROUND: Why the "Special" Paper? Sheet stamps were printed on paper whose normal grain orientation was vertical, meaning that after stamps were printed on moistened paper, the designs had a tendency to shrink horizontally as the paper dried. Stamp paper shrinks approximately four times more across the grain than with the grain, meaning that sheet stamps shrink more horizontally than vertically. Accordingly, for producing booklet panes, the BEP ordered "Special" Paper with the grain running horizontally, to assure greater stability in the horizontal dimension.

RATIONALE FOR LISTING: Definitive stamps which have been printed AND issued in both sheet stamp and booklet formats have traditionally carried major and minor catalog numbers, respectively. However, sheet



Figure 1. Horizontal dimension comparison of "Special" Booklet Paper (top) vs. regular orientation paper (bottom). These are the three Fourth Bureau "ordinary" stamps in vertical format, 563b, 564b and 566a.



Figure 2. The three horizontal format stamps are turned 90° for consistent comparison with images in Figure 1. In this orientation, the "Special" Booklet Paper varieties (upper blocks) are again wider than the regular paper stamps (lower blocks). In their conventional horizontal orientation, "Special" Booklet Paper varieties of these three horizontal format stamps are very slightly narrower than their corresponding sheet stamps.

stamps printed on "Special" Booklet Paper but NOT issued as booklets have not previously been listed. The newly listed paper varieties are recognizably different from their sheet stamp counterparts, and the identification guidelines which follow will highlight the differences.

HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT: The BEP had gone to great lengths to improve centering of images on booklet pane stamps by specifying paper properties that would control shrinkage of central design images. Their solution was to print booklet stamps on paper with the grain orientation turned 90° to control shrinkage, improve centering, and keep booklets in registration as they were interleaved, covered, bound stapled and trimmed.

The BEP demonstrated its frugality by using remnant paper when flat press sheet supplies were no longer required for booklets as booklet production was transitioned to the rotary press. Somewhat analogous to Coil Waste issues, these eleven sheet stamps were produced from "Booklet Remnant" paper stocks as a cost and resource savings measure. Since the "Special" Booklet Paper varieties were not discovered until about ten years after their production, most of these stamps were used for routine postal purposes. Southgate did not report on the Special Handling issue at all, not realizing the entire run of these new denomination printings in 1928 was on "Special" Booklet Paper, having been completed before the dates he was given.

IDENTIFICATION: With care and a bit of practice,

identification is straightforward. Many collectors use inexpensive templates to overlay a known stamp on the candidate. First, one must be sure to begin with the proper stamp. In all cases these will be flat plate press, perf 11 stamps – no rotary press issues, and nothing with perf. 10½! Plate blocks are typically shown in technical presentations because they make for the simplest introduction. The differences in shrinkage across two or three stamps is usually dramatic.

Three of the eleven stamps, the Fourth Bureau Nos. 563b, 564b and 566a "ordinaries," are identified in the same manner that Washington-Franklin sheet stamps are separated from booklet pane stamps, i.e., the booklet stamps are slightly wider and shorter than the sheet stamps for vertical format issues in this series as shown in Figure 1.

The Fourth Bureau horizontal format stamps, Nos. 567b, 568a and 569a, are identified similarly, but in the perpendicular orientation, i.e., these are slightly narrower and taller than their sheet stamp counterparts. Figure 2.

The remaining five special issue stamps, or "Back-of-the-Book" issues, Nos. C11b, E13a, QE1b, QE2b and QE3b, are all horizontal format stamps normally printed on paper with the grain running vertically, so that they are the easiest to identify – the vertical design shrinkage on "Special" Booklet Paper with a horizontal grain direction is minimal compared to paper in the normal orientation, but the horizontal difference in width is striking. Figure 3.

One elementary "low-tech" observation may help with identification. In a humid environment, stamps will shrink and curl across the grain, allowing confirmation of the



Figure 3. Horizontal dimension comparison of "Special" Booklet Paper (C11b top; E13a bottom) vs. regular sheet stamp paper. These are just two of the five Special Service "Back-of-the-Book" stamps in horizontal format. All the 1928 Special Handling stamps, Nos. QE1b, QE2b and QE3b were printed on "Special" Booklet Paper.



Figure 4. Plain water sprayed with an atomizer on to the reverse side of a used QE2b first day plate block illustrates dramatic shrinkage across the horizontal grain direction.

direction of the paper grain. The horizontal grain direction of Special Handling stamps was one key in determining that all the 1928 stamps were on "Special" Booklet Paper. Figure 4.

CHALLENGE FACTOR: "Special" Booklet Paper stamps are scarcer than their regular paper counterparts. Southgate reported the actual production of stamps on "Special" paper from BEP printing records, and as a percentage of total stamps printed for each issue as



reported by Gary Griffith, these are:

563b (13%), 564b (14%), 566a (3%), 567b (Not Reported),
568a (12%), 569a (15%),
C11b (Not Reported), E13a (5%), QE1b (100%), QE2b
(100%), QE3b (100%).

Plate numbers are helpful, but not definitive. "Special" Booklet Paper printings were limited to certain known plate numbers, but all these plates were also used for normal sheet stamps. Table 1.

While identification is straightforward, care must be exercised in the evaluation of multiples for the Fourth Bureau issues, since margin gaps changed with the introduction of star plates; some issues will have both 2.5 mm. and 3.0 mm. gaps between stamps horizontally within the same sheet.

The Beacon Air Mail, No. C11b, may present the only significant challenge for study, since many plate numbers were used on "Special" Booklet Paper for both the red frame and blue vignette passes. Accordingly, many

Table 1. "Special" Booklet Paper - Plate Numbers at Press from BEP Records

Scott No.	Denom.	Plate Numbers and Notes
563b	11¢	17617, 17618, 17619, 17620 - All narrow gauge margins
564b	12¢	18921, 18922, 18923, 19442 - All wide gauge margins, no stars
566a	15¢	17430, 17431, 17432, 17433 - All wide gauge margin, 5-point star plates
567b	20¢	18672, 18673, 18674, 18675, 18688, 18689 - Wide gauge, star plates
568a	25¢	14062, 14063, 14064, 14065 - All narrow gauge margins
569a	30¢	17446, 17447, 17448, 17449 - All wide gauge margins, no stars
C11b	5¢	Red (Frame) Nos. 19571//19626; Blue (Vignette) Nos. 19545//19619
E13a	15¢	16833, 16834, 16835, 16836
QE1b	10¢	19553, 19554, 19555, 19556
QE2b	15¢	19557, 19558, 19559, 19560
QE3b	20¢	19541, 19542, 19543, 19544

Table 1. Stamps and plate numbers which consumed the remnant inventory of "Special" Booklet Paper.

combinations of numbers are possible, and determining the scarcity or rarity of specific numbers and combination of numbers has not been attempted.

For the Special Handling issues, these listings finally allow collectors to identify and properly catalog the three paper varieties for this longest-running flat plate production issue at the BEP. All printings after 1928 until mid-1955 were on regular sheet stamp paper with vertical grain (Nos. QE1, QE2 & QE3); the 1955 printings were an "experimental" printing on an entirely different, low-moisture content, "dry" paper (Nos. QE1a, QE2a & QE3a).

MARKET CONSIDERATIONS: Since these varieties were not researched nor reported until well after their printing, no large stocks were sought nor are expected to exist. The varieties will be found randomly among these eleven issues in dealers' and collectors' holdings, and in some cases, in specialists' exhibits. As a comment regarding scarcity, the late Robert Markovits, a Special Delivery specialist, reported his exhibit copy of a, now, E13a plate block to be unique. While this Special Feature article was being written, a second No. E13a plate block was reported and authenticated. My mentor on this subject, the late Wallace B. Cleland, shared with me that he had only ever found two plate number singles of the No. E13a. In 15 years of searching, I have yet to locate a top margin plate block of either No. 567b or 569a. The 11¢ Hayes, No. 563b, seems to be the most readily found, perhaps because it is the lowest denomination of the ordinary stamps on "Special" Booklet Paper.

Traditionally, pricing for plate blocks of the Fourth Bureaus and the No. C11b Beacon Air Mail on "Special"

Booklet Paper have been double the base price of the sheet stamp, ranging up to five times for the Special Delivery No. E13a. Supply and demand will bring about changes in these initial valuing estimates as market forces prompt collectors to examine their stamps for these varieties and catalog presence stimulates interest in this fascinating specialty.

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