

# GOVERNMENT REPRINTS OF THE 1857-60 ISSUE

by Michael X. Zelenak

*[Editor's Note: The Expertization last spring of selected material from the Dale-Lichtenstein collection included a complete set of unique imperforate pairs of Scott # 40-47, the 1875 Government Reprints of the 1857 Issue. These items were included in the April 19, 1989 auction of Harmers of New York and are among the great rarities of U.S. philately. The so-called "Centennial Printings" of U.S. stamps have sparked much debate in the philatelic community in the last century, and some confusion still exists among collectors as to the actual significance and status of these items.]*

In the 1870's, as the government prepared to celebrate the nation's centennial, a great International Exposition was planned in Philadelphia. Among the desired exhibits was a display of all the United States postage stamps issued. As the Post Office Department checked their files, they saw that they had no copies of certain issues. The idea was proposed that perhaps the government could somehow "reprint" the stamps. Furthermore, even before the establishment of a Philatelic Bureau or Sales Division, authorities realized that if enough sales of these items were made to the general public, the income generated could pay for the entire cost of the "reprinting." Thus, the genesis of the 1875 reproductions, reprints and reissues, or so the story goes. Because of the scarcity of these items, most U.S. collectors know these stamps simply as those "empty spaces" in their albums.

The apparently simple idea to reprint all previously issued U.S. stamps grew more complex as the Post Office Department discovered that the plates for some of the most important items — for example, the 1847 Issues (Scott # 1-2) — were no longer in existence. Entirely new dies had to be made in order to create the plates. Thus these items (Scott #3-4) are not "reprints" at all, and there are noticeable differences from the originals, especially in the size of the design. Scott calls them "official imitations." They are, in fact, government printed facsimiles.

For the stamps of the 1857-60 issue, the original dies for the 24, 30 and 90 cent values were still in existence at Toppan, Carpenter, Casilear & Co. in Philadelphia. New plates were laid down from the original dies. However, for the 1, 3, 5, 10 and 12 cent values, all new dies had to be made. Furthermore, for all values, the stamps were intentionally spaced further apart than on the original stamps, the majority of which had been cut close by the perforations. The perforations were also made larger (originals, perforated 15; reprints, perforated 12) by a perforating wheel in common use at the time.

The 1857-60 issue (Scott # 18-39) had used the same designs as the 1851 issues (Scott # 5-17). The major difference had been the introduction of the latest postal innovation — perforations. The life of the 1857-60 issues was abruptly cut short by the secession of the Southern states and the outbreak of the Civil War. Thousands of mint sheets of U.S. stamps sat piled in Southern Post Offices. The U.S. government had no choice but to demonetize the 1851 and 1857 issues (the 1847 issue had been demonetized in 1851) and to introduce the 1861 issue. Interestingly, no similar actions have been taken by the United States Post Office since then, and all stamps issued since 1861 are still valid for postage, something of which no other country can boast.

Terms like "reprint," "re-issue" and "special printing" are often bandied about indiscriminately by collectors. Some think the terms are roughly synonymous. These are specific terms with distinct, separate meanings. All three terms refer to printings made from the same plates as the original stamps. A reissue is a printing of current stamps, *i.e.* while they are still in use and valid for postage. A "reprint" is the printing of stamps when the originals are obsolete and no longer valid for postage. A "special printing" is the printing of stamps from the original plates for a "special" non-postal purpose while they are still current and valid for postage. A "Government Reproduction" refers to an official printing made from different dies or impressions than the original stamps.



## SPECIMEN POSTAGE STAMPS.

### Post Office Department,

Office of Third Assistant Postmaster General,  
Division of Postage Stamps, Stamped Envelopes, and Postal Cards,  
WASHINGTON, D. C., MARCH 27, 1875.

The Department is prepared to furnish, upon application, *at face value*, specimens of adhesive postage stamps issued under its auspices, as follows:

#### ORDINARY STAMPS FOR USE OF THE PUBLIC.

1. *Issue of 1847.*—Denominations, 5 and 10 cents. Value of set, 15 cents.
2. *Issue of 1851.*—Denominations, 1, 3, 5, 10, 12, 24, 30, and 90 cents; also two separate designs of 1-cent carrier stamps. Value of set, \$1.77.
3. *Issue of 1861.*—Denominations, 1, 2, 3, 5, 10, 12, 15, 24, 30, and 90 cents. Value of set, \$1.92.
4. *Issue of 1869.*—Denominations, 1, 2, 3, 6, 10, 12, 15, 24, 30, and 90 cents. Value of set, \$1.93.
5. *Issue of 1870, (current series.)*—Denominations, 1, 2, (brown,) 2, (vermilion,) 3, 5, 6, 7, 10, 12, 15, 24, 30, and 90 cents. Value of set, \$2.07.

#### OFFICIAL STAMPS.

1. *Executive.*—Denominations, 1, 2, 3, 6, and 10 cents. Value of set, 22 cents.
2. *Department of State.*—Denominations, 1, 2, 3, 6, 7, 10, 12, 15, 24, 30, and 90 cents, and \$2, \$5, \$10, and \$20. Value of set, \$39.
3. *Treasury Department.*—Denominations, 1, 2, 3, 6, 7, 10, 12, 15, 24, 30, and 90 cents. Value of set, \$2.
4. *War Department.*—Denominations, 1, 2, 3, 6, 7, 10, 12, 15, 24, 30, and 90 cents. Value of set, \$2.
5. *Navy Department.*—Denominations, 1, 2, 3, 6, 7, 10, 12, 15, 24, 30, and 90 cents. Value of set, \$2.
6. *Post Office Department.*—Denominations, 1, 2, 3, 6, 10, 12, 15, 24, 30, and 90 cents. Value of set, \$1.93.
7. *Department of the Interior.*—Denominations, 1, 2, 3, 6, 10, 12, 15, 24, 30, and 90 cents. Value of set, \$1.93.
8. *Department of Justice.*—Denominations, 1, 2, 3, 6, 10, 12, 15, 24, 30, and 90 cents. Value of set, \$1.93.
9. *Department of Agriculture.*—Denominations, 1, 2, 3, 6, 10, 12, 15, 24, and 30 cents. Value of set, \$1.93.

#### NEWSPAPER AND PERIODICAL STAMPS.

1. *Issue of 1865.*—Denominations, 5, 10, and 25 cents. Value of set, 40 cents.
2. *Issue of 1874.*—Denominations, 2, 3, 4, 6, 8, 9, 10, 12, 24, 36, 48, 60, 72, 84, 96 cents, \$1.92, \$3, \$6, \$9, \$12, \$24, \$36, \$48, and \$60. Value of set, \$204.66.

The 1847 and 1851 stamps are obsolete, and no longer receivable for postage. The subsequent issues of ordinary stamps are still valid. The newspaper and periodical stamps of 1865 are also incur rent; those of the issue of 1874 can be used only by publishers and news agents for matter mailed in bulk, under the Act of June 23, 1874. The official stamps cannot be used except for the official business of the particular Department for which provided.

All the specimens furnished will be *un gummed*; and the official stamps will have printed across the face the word "Specimen," in small type. It will be useless to apply for *gummed* stamps, or for official stamps with the word "Specimen" omitted.

The stamps will be sold by sets, and application must not be made for less than one full set of any issue, except the State Department official stamps and the newspaper and periodical stamps of the issue of 1874. The regular set of the former will embrace all the denominations, from 1 cent to 90 cents, inclusive, valued at \$2; and any or all of the other denominations (\$2, \$5, \$10, and \$20) will be added or sold separately from the regular set, as desired.

The newspaper and periodical stamps of 1874 will be sold in quantities of not less than two dollars' worth in each case, of any denomination or denominations that may be ordered.

Stamps of any one denomination of any issue will be sold in quantities of two dollars' worth and upward.

*Under no circumstances will stamps be sold for less than their face value.*

Payment must invariably be made in advance in current funds of the United States. Mutilated currency, internal revenue and postage stamps, bank checks and drafts, will not be accepted, but will in all cases be returned to the sender.

To insure greater certainty of transmission, it is strongly urged that remittances be made either by money order or registered letter. Applicants will also include a sufficient amount for return postage and register fee, it being desirable to send the stamps by registered letter. Losses in the mails or by any mode of transmission must be at the risk of the purchaser.

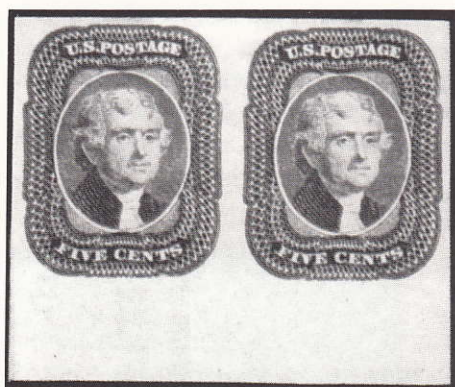
Applications should be addressed to "THE THIRD ASSISTANT POSTMASTER GENERAL, WASHINGTON, D. C."

No other stamps will be sold than are included in the above list; and specimens of stamped envelopes, (either official or ordinary,) or of envelope stamps, postal cards, or *used* stamps, will not be furnished in any case.

*E. M. Barber*

Third Assistant Postmaster General





**PFC# 208,951-208,958**, Lot# 84 from Harmers April 19th Sale (#13 of the Dale-Lichtenstein Collection), complete set of eight values of 1875 Reprints of 1857 issue, unique imperforate margin pairs (Scott# 40-47 variety).

*Photos of Items from the Dale-Lichtenstein Collection Courtesy of Harmers of New York, 14 East 33rd Street*



The Centennial Reprints, Reproductions and Re-Issues, were the first philatelic sales made by the United States Post Office Department. Since there was not even the pretense of postal necessity for the stamps, they were issued without gum. Stamps originally printed with grills were re-issued without grills.

Deliveries of the Centennial Printings started in late 1874, and the first stamps were sold on February 23, 1875. Government efforts to sell the stamps were confused and haphazard. Original plans called for the printing of 10,000 of each different stamp. For most, only a few hundred were sold. Below are the sales figures for Scott #40-47:

#### Government Reprints of 1875: Issue of 1857-60

| Scott # | Description            | Number Sold |
|---------|------------------------|-------------|
| 40      | 1c bright blue, type I | 3,846       |
| 41      | 3c scarlet             | 479         |
| 42      | 5c orange brown        | 878         |
| 43      | 10c blue green         | 516         |
| 44      | 12c greenish black     | 489         |
| 45      | 24c black violet       | 479         |
| 46      | 30c yellow orange      | 480         |
| 47      | 90c deep blue          | 454         |

Curiously, the so-called "Centennial Exposition stamps" were not on sale at the Exposition Post Office, and could only be obtained by special order from the Office of the Third Assistant Postmaster General in Washington. Why were none of these stamps available at the prominent Centennial Exposition Post Office if the reason for their printing was the Centennial Exposition? Was this poor marketing, typical bureaucratic foul-up, or did these printings actually have nothing to do with the Centennial Exposition? Former Philatelic Foundation Chairman Elliott Coulter flatly rejected the traditional wisdom about the purpose of these issues: "I never believed this concept and I still do not believe this concept because I find no connection between the printing of the stamp and the 1876 date." Even though John Luff passed on the received wisdom about the "Centennial connection," he was forced to admit: "I have not been able to find any official statement of the reasons for making the reprints and re-issues of 1875."

No one knows the genesis or source of the several imperforate examples of Scott #40-47. The imperforate pairs expertized by The Philatelic Foundation are the only known multiples. It is assumed that no more than one imperforate sheet of each was ever printed. They are not proofs since they are printed on the same paper as the stamps. To the Expert eye, they are distinctive because of marked differences in shade from the original 1857 issue.

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#### Bibliography

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