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**Article: Plate Numbers and Imprints for the 1910 Perforated 8.5
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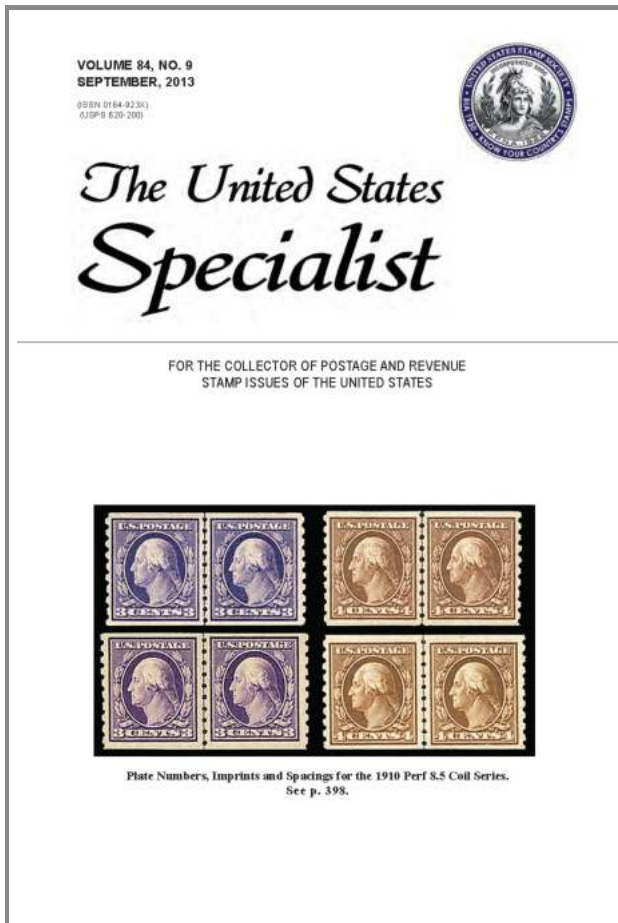


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**Washington-Franklin
Head Committee**

Plate Numbers and Imprints for the 1910 Perf 8.5 Coil Series

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This article intends to bring to light information on the different plates used to print the 1910 coil issue and the imprints found on the tabs of paste-ups. There were three different types of plates with four types of imprints used to print the sheet stamps, which were also used to print and produce the 1910 coil series. The focus of the information will be on the horizontal coil issues because the Bureau experimented with varied spacing only between stamp designs in the horizontal rows. The spacing between stamp designs in the vertical rows never varied and remained the same on all plates used to produce the various coil issues. The 1910 perforated 8.5 coils can also be given credit for attracting collectors' interest to coils as a new variety to collect.

When the first perforated 12 coils were issued, collectors were not very interested because the stamps had straight edges similar to the sheet stamps

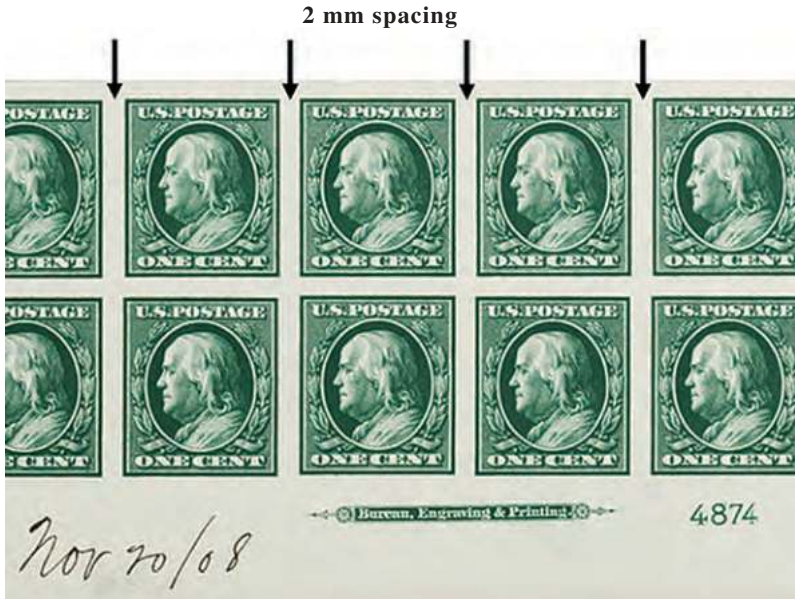


Figure 1. Portion of proof of plate 4874 showing 2 mm spacing between stamps.

produced during that time period. The determining factor that won over their interest in collecting coils was that the 1910 series coils were perforated gauge 8.5 and were not available in any other format such as sheet stamps or booklets. The perforation change from gauge 12 to 8.5 was one of three major changes made in the production of coils by the Bureau with this issue.

A second major change made with the 1910 series was in the spacing between the stamp designs of the horizontal rows. When the first stamps of the Washington-Franklin series were produced in 1908, the plates that were prepared had 2 mm spacing between the stamp designs in the horizontal rows (Figure 1). When the stamps were perforated, the BEP discovered the paper had shrunk, producing uneven spacing between stamps. The paper shrinkage was caused by the paper being moistened during the printing process. The moistened paper enabled the ink to adhere better to the paper and create a sharper image.

The second series of plates produced for the perf 12 coil series was called "star plates" (because the plate numbers and imprint were accompanied by a small star). The star plates had a spacing of 2 mm between stamp designs for the inner eight subjects in each horizontal row and 3 mm between designs for the outer six subjects on the left and right side of each horizontal row of the 400-subject plate (Figure 2). This experiment was an attempt to solve the shrinkage problem with the paper. The thought process that brought about this change was that it appeared that the inner vertical rows (the inner part of the sheet) didn't shrink as much as the outer vertical rows. This observation led the Bureau to use wider spacing between the stamp designs in the outer vertical rows of the plate.

This type of varied spacing found on the star plates, however, presented a problem for use in affixing and vending machines. Because of the variability of spacing between stamp designs, the coils could not be advanced a predetermined distance by the affixing or vending machine without having the design off center or being cut into by the separation blade of the machine most of the time. The experiment did not work well and another type of plate was produced that was used in making the 1910 coil series.

The BEP created the new "A Plate" for the 1910 issue (plate numbers were preceded by the letter "A" and the Bureau imprint), which had a uniform spacing of 2.75 mm between stamp designs in each horizontal row for the entire 400-subject sheet. The uniform spacing is shown on the 1¢ plate proof in Figure 3. The 2¢ plate number strip of four and 2¢ strip of five on cover (Scott #393) in Figure 4 both show the 2.75 mm spacing. This new spacing solved the vending/affixing machine problem and created better quality stamps when perforated.

The third major change made with the 1910 series was how the coil was constructed. Producing the first perf 12 coils required 17 workers to complete the task. If a horizontal coil was being made, the 400-subject panes were first cut into strips of 20 and the left margins were trimmed off. The right margins were left on the strips so the next strip could be pasted over the top of it with the intent of constructing a long strip of 500 or 1,000 coil stamps. The long strips were then rolled into coils of 500 or 1,000. This was a very labor intensive task.

The BEP changed the production process with the 1910 series to be more cost efficient and less labor intensive. Instead of cutting the 400-subject



Figure 2. Bottom left corner of 400-subject sheet used to produce perf 12 Scott #385.



Figure 3. Portion of proof of plate 5657 showing 2.75 mm spacing between stamps.



Figure 4. Strip of Scott #393 with plate number 5657 showing 2.75 mm spacing between stamps (above); on-cover strip of five 2¢ stamps (Scott #393) with 2.75 mm spacing.



Figure 5. Imprint types used for perf 8.5 coil stamps.

panes into strips of 20, they cut the entire sheet of 400 into two panes of 200. If a horizontal coil was being made, the left margin was trimmed off the entire pane of 200. The pane of 200 was then pasted together with the next pane of 200. As the panes were pasted together they were then rolled into a larger roll of either 500 or 1,000 stamps. The larger roll was then placed on a machine that cut, or stripped, the roll into ten individual coils. The strips were then rolled into coils of 500 or 1,000 stamps. The new procedure now only took two workers to complete, saving a great deal of time and money.

As indicated above, the 1910 series was a transitional one because it was actually printed using three different types of plates that had four different types of marginal markings, the key difference among the three plates being the spacing between stamp designs in the horizontal rows. The marginal markings indicated which plate was being used so the workers at the Bureau could set the perforating machines correctly to accommodate the different spacings. The examples in Figure 5 show the four different marginal markings found on the three types of plates. The first two examples, Imprint XII and Imprint X, show the reconstructed imprints found in the margin of the sheet, reconstructed by piecing together three separate parts of the marginal markings found on three different paste-up pairs.

The A plates were used to print the 1¢, 2¢ and 5¢ denominations, but the Bureau also used two other types of plates. The two other plates used to print the 1910 series are the star plates, Imprint X, and the provisional plates. The provisional plates refer to Imprint IX, number only without the prefix or Bureau imprint. The imprints are numbered with Roman numerals according to the order of when they first appeared on the initial plate used by the BEP. These different imprints are found on sheet stamps, booklet panes and coils. For example, Imprint IX first appeared on booklet panes. The *Durland Standard Plate Number Catalog*¹ classifies these imprints as follows:

- Imprint IX shows only the plate number and is the scarcest of all four types for coils from the 1910 series. It appears on the 3¢ and 4¢ denominations.
- Imprint X shows the Bureau imprint, “star” and plate number. This imprint also appears on the 3¢ and 4¢ denominations, but is much more common. This was the only type of plate with varied spacing between stamp designs. The other two types of plates (with Imprints IX, XII and XIII) had consistent 2.75 mm spacing.
- Imprint XII shows the Bureau imprint, prefix “A” and plate number. This imprint is found on the 1¢ and 2¢ denominations in vertical and horizontal coil format.
- Imprint XIII shows the prefix “A” and plate number only. This imprint is only found on the 5¢ denomination.

Imprint XII was first to press for the 1910 coil issue with the 2.75 mm horizontal spacing between stamp designs. Imprint IX was the last plate to press in the 1910 coil issue. This imprint, number only, was used by the Bureau because they had discontinued the use of star and A plates. Since these plates were the only ones used in production, it was not necessary to have any other information in the margin of the plate. *It is a little known fact with the 1910 issue that the 3¢ and 4¢ denominations were printed from the old star plates, Imprint X, and the new plates with Imprint IX which showed just the plate number.*

The Bureau selected four of the plates used for sheet stamps to produce the 3¢ coils, plates 6044, 6048, 6050 and 6052. At least one example of each of these plate numbers has been reported (as noted in *Durland*) but examples are very scarce.

The Bureau also selected four plates with Imprint IX for the 4¢ denomination, 6002, 6004, 6010 and 6025 to produce the 4¢ coils. *There has only been one example of the 4¢ coil with plate 6002 and two examples of plate 6004 reported and verified. There have not been any examples reported for plates 6010 and 6025. This underlines the rarity of these particular plate numbers for the 4¢ denomination from plates with Imprint IX.* Wallace Cleland submitted the 6002 example for a certificate, which came back as



Figure 6. Guide line pairs of 3¢ and 4¢ coil stamps from star plates with 2 mm spacing between stamp designs (above) and from Imprint IX plates with the wider 2.75 mm spacing (below).



Figure 7. Overlapped examples of 4¢ coil stamps (Scott #395) with 2.75 mm spacing (above) and 2 mm spacing (below).



Figure 8. Wrapper with 4¢ guide line pair showing 2 mm spacing, indicating it was printed with a star plate.

genuine, and since then there has not been any other example reported or verified. The 6004 example illustrated in Figure 5 is just the second example reported, according to the records Wallace Cleland kept of plate numbers and frequency reported. The Imprint IX type plate numbers for Scott #395 rank right up there in rarity with the 10¢ Scott #356, the 2¢ Scott #388, and the 3¢ Scott #389 Orangeburg coil. There have been just two examples of plate numbers reported for each of those three coils at this time.

There are three ways to identify the 3¢ and 4¢ denominations from the plates with Imprint IX. The plate number itself, from Imprint IX, will be a 6000 series number. This is the easiest method to identify the scarce variety.

A second method is by the spacing between stamp designs on guide line pairs. The more common variety is from the Star plates, Imprint X, and has a 2 mm spacing between stamp designs. The spacing between designs for a guide line pair from an Imprint IX plate will have the wider 2.75 mm spacing (Figure 6). The 4¢ guide line pairs have been overlapped in Figure 7 to highlight the difference in the spacing between the designs. In Figure 8, the wrapper with the 4¢ guide line pair shows the 2 mm spacing, indicating it was printed with a star plate (Imprint X).

The third way to differentiate the two varieties of the 3¢ and 4¢ cent coils, Imprint X and Imprint IX, from each other is in a large multiple. The used off-cover strip of four of the 3¢ denomination in Figure 9 shows a nice progression in the spacing of the stamp designs. It increases from left to right and gets wider, meaning that this strip comes from the right side of the pane of 400 and was printed with a star plate. The 3¢ strip of four on the cover illustrated in Figure 10 shows the wide spacing, 3 mm, between stamp designs. This strip is also from one of the outer rows of a star plate. As of now there have not been any covers verified with examples of 3¢ coils from the Imprint IX plates.

The cover with the 4¢ strip of three in Figure 11 shows the first verified example of coils from the Imprint IX plates. Note the evidence of the guide line on the perf tips at the left in the enlarged picture. The spacing between stamp designs is a consistent 2.75 mm. This cover was first discovered by Mick Hadley a number of years ago. The second example (Figure 12) is a recent discovery found on Ebay. The stamps on the cover were machine affixed and separated when applied. Note the evidence of the guide line on the perforations for the first two stamps on the left. When images of the stamps are pieced together with the aid of an image processing computer program, it is easy to see the spacing is 2.75mm.

This is an ongoing study, and if anyone can add examples or knows of any Imprint IX 3¢ or 4¢ coils please contact me so they can be added to the census.



Figure 9. Used strip of four of the 3¢ denomination (Scott #394) showing the difference in the spacing of the stamp designs – 2 mm at left, 3 mm at center and right.



Figure 10. Strip of four 3¢ stamps from the outer rows of a star plate with 3 mm spacing (Scott #394).



Figure 11. Strip of three 4¢ coil stamps (Scott #395) printed from an Imprint IX plate, with 2.75 mm spacing.



Figure 12. Three single machine affixed coil stamps that were separated when applied. Note the evidence of the guide line on the perforations of the left and center stamps.

The plate proofs shown in Figures 1, 2 and 3 are courtesy of the Smithsonian National Postal Museum.

I would like to dedicate this article to Wallace Cleland, who helped to supply me with important information for my research, and for his devotion to the hobby and collection of plate numbers.

References

1. W. Wallace Cleland, ed., *Durland Standard Plate Number Catalog*, United States Stamp Society, 2012, p. ix.

“Know Your Country’s Stamps”