

The 1895 Provisional and Bisect Postage Due Stamps:
A Result of the Transfer of Stamp Production to the BEP?

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Presentation: 2009 Blount Postal History Symposium
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Abstract

This paper focuses on the rash of Provisional and Bisected postage due stamps used in 1895. It examines the start-up of the postage due stamp production at the United States Bureau of Engraving and Printing (BEP) and postulates that the inefficiencies of start-up, the lack of equipment, and the difficulty in stamp distribution caused shortages of some values of postage due stamps leading to the use of Provisional and Bisected stamps by local postmasters. The supply of American Bank Note Company (ABNCo) large numeral postage due stamps on-hand is examined along with the projected demand during the 1894-95 time frame. It will be seen that the demand for postage due stamps varied greatly with denomination causing some values to be in short supply while others were in abundance. In particular, this article will describe the 1-cent and 2-cent Detroit provisionals and illustrate them on cover. A list of all known provisionals in the 1895 period will be presented. The discussion on bisected postage due stamps will center on the Jefferson, Iowa bisects of October 1895. Thirteen examples of these bisects on cover will be identified ranging from the three in the Miller Collection at the Smithsonian to the two in the author's possession. A complete listing of all the known bisects in the 1894-95 period also will be presented.

Introduction

There was a rash of provisional and bisected postage due stamps used on mail beginning in 1895. As is well documented in the case of the Jefferson, Iowa bisects [1], the bisects were

created due to a shortage of 1-cent postage due stamps. In other instances, both the 1-cent and 2-cent stamps seemed to be in short supply. Could these shortages have resulted from the 1893-94 transfer of postage stamp production from the American Bank Note Company (ABNCo) to the Bureau of Engraving and Printing?

In an article by Noll [2], the controversy surrounding the awarding of the stamp production contract to the BEP rather than a Bank Note Company was well described. In his article Noll states, “And instead of accepting the offer of the established bank note printers, the Post Office Department accepted a bid from a printing establishment with almost no experience in postage stamp production and none of the rare but requisite gumming machines: the United States Bureau of Engraving and Printing...” This leads one to the belief that the BEP might have had trouble getting into full production (nominally 3 billion stamps were needed annually at the time), thus leading to stamp shortages. Even if the BEP could have generated sufficient supplies in Washington, DC, it did not mean that they were delivered efficiently and when needed to Postmasters throughout the country.

Prior to awarding of the stamp production contract to the BEP, the ABNCo was responsible for maintaining the requisite inventory necessary to fill the demands for stamps presented by the Stamp Agent of the Post Office Department. This Stamp Agent and his staff took care of filling orders from the various post offices, but keeping stamps available was the responsibility of the ABNCo. Thus, the BEP not only had to learn how to make stamps, but they also had to learn how to build and maintain sufficient inventory to meet the Post Office demand. It should also be mentioned that the United States Postal Stamp Agent (U.S.P.S.A.) (and his staff) originally resided at the ABNCo in New York. When the BEP took over the stamp printing, he was moved to Washington and his staff reduced. Thus, it is reasonable to believe

that the distribution of the newly printed BEP stamps might not have been as efficient as it was at the banknote company, especially in the beginning years.

The following sections trace the early postage due stamp production at the BEP, determine the remaining inventories of ABNCo dues, project the demand for postage due stamps in the 1894-1895 period, and examine the postmasters response to shortages – the use of provisional and bisected postage due stamps.

BEP Produces Postage Due Stamps

The BEP began creating a new design for postage due stamps soon after their contract began on July 1, 1894. The die for the new two cent postage due stamp (Scott No. J32) [3] shown in Figure 1 was engraved first because the 2-cent banknote dues were in short supply as will be shown below. Note a 2-cent banknote due of the 1891 series (bright claret) is shown in Figure 1 for comparison. A large die proof (Scott No. J32P1) for the BEP two-cent small numeral postage due is shown in Figure 2. The BEP assigned the 2-cent die, the number 50. The die was used to lay down Plate No. 34. A plate proof on card (Scott No. J32P4) is shown in Figure 3 illustrating the marginal markings and the plate number [4]. A plate proof in deep claret was approved on July 14, 1894. The BEP sent the 2-cent to press immediately, and it was issued on July 20, 1894.



Figure 1. Two cent postage due stamps available in 1894. The new bureau due on the left (J32) and an old banknote due on the right (J23). The bureau dues are called small numeral dues (when compared to the ABNCo. issues).



Figure 2. A large die proof (J32P1) of the two-cent small numeral postage due.



Figure 3. A plate proof on card (J32P4) of the two-cent small numeral postage due illustrating the original plate number (no. 34) and the marginal marking.

The 1-cent die was the next postage due design prepared. It was assigned die number 56, and it was used to lay down Plate No. 57. A plate proof from Plate No. 57 was pulled and approved on August 11, 1894. The color of this plate proof sheet was deep carmine.

The 10-cent Bureau due was issued on September 24, 1894. The plate for the 10-cent due was prepared from die number 55. An approved large die proof (Scott No. J35P1) for the 10-cent Bureau due is shown in Figure 4. It was approved on August 30, 1894 by Wesley R.

Davis, the United State Postage Stamp Agent. Although the dies and plates for the 3¢, 5¢, 30¢, and 50¢ values were prepared at about the same time, they were not issued until April 27, 1895.

Die numbers and large die approval dates for the first Bureau dues are given in Table 1.



Figure 4. An approved large die proof (J35P1) of the 10¢ 1894 series postage due stamp. It was approved by Wesley R. Davis, USPSA.

Table 1: Die Numbers and Approval, Hardening, and Issue Dates for the First Postage Dues Produced by the BEP

Scott No.	Value	Die No.	Die Approval	Die Hardening	Plate No.	Plate Certification	Issue Date
J31	1¢	56	^a	8/10/1894	57	8/11/1894	8/14/1894
J32	2¢	50	^a	7/13/1894	34	7/14/1894	7/20/1894
J32	3¢	54	^a	8/18/1894 ^b			
	3¢	64	8/23/1894 ^c	8/28/1894	70	^d	4/27/1895
J34	5¢	57	8/30/1894 ^e	8/29/1894 ^f	71	^d	4/27/1895
J35	10¢	55	8/30/1894 ^e	8/29/1894 ^f	72	^d	9/24/1894
J36	30¢	53	8/23/1894 ^c	8/30/1894	73	^d	4/27/1895
J37	50¢	61	9/1/1894 ^e	9/4/1894	74	10/4/1894	4/27/1895

^a Die Approval Information Unavailable.

^b Die Cracked upon hardening. It was put in a clamp and used to make a transfer roll. The transfer roll had the raised crack line removed and then was used to lay down a new die – die 64. The complete story of the die crack is given by McIntire [5].

^c Approved by 3rd Assistant Postmaster General, Kerr Craige

^d The exact dates are unavailable to this author, but they are likely to be within a few days of die hardening.

^e Approved by Wesley R. Davis (U.S.P.S.A.).

^f Apparently hardened before official approval.

Inventory and Demand Projections.

In an article by Dickey [6], a letter from the Chief of the Bureau of Engraving and Printing, Claude M. Johnson, was quoted in which Johnson provided a forecast by denomination for the number of postage due stamps needed to be supplied by the BEP for fiscal year 1895 (beginning July 1, 1894). This forecast is shown in Column 2 of Table 2. For comparison, the actual shipment of postage due stamps by the ABNCo in fiscal year 1893 (July 1, 1892 to June 30, 1893) is given in Column 3 of Table 2 [7]. This was the last full year's worth of data available to Johnson when he made his prediction in 1893. It can be seen that the forecast by Johnson is essentially the 1893 fiscal year data with two notable exceptions, the estimates for the

30¢ and 50¢ postage dues. These estimates were approximately six times higher for the 30¢ dues and thirteen times higher for the 50¢ dues. This was extremely optimistic since the 30¢ and 50¢ dues had averaged only about 6,800 and 2,100 respectively in the previous six years [8].

Table 2: BEP Forecast of Postage Due Stamp Requirements for fiscal year 1895 and Shipment Records of Large Numeral Postage Dues for fiscal years 1893 and 1894.

Value	Johnson's Forecast for Fiscal Year 1895	ABNCo Shipment in Fiscal Year 1893	ABNCo Shipment in Fiscal Year 1894
1¢	9,000,000	8,967,456	8,441,900
2¢	6,600,000	6,598,500	7,131,700
3¢	200,000	198,955	242,900
5¢	800,000	808,510	603,780
10¢	1,520,000	1,525,550	1,608,470
30¢	40,000	6,650	6,290
50¢	40,000	2,350	3,106
Total	18,200,000	18,101,950	18,038,146

Table 2 also contains the ABNCo large numeral postage due shipment data [8] for fiscal year 1894 (July 1, 1893 to June 30, 1894). It can be seen that although Johnson's forecast for total number of postage due stamps is slightly greater than the actual totals in both FY 1893 and FY 1894, his estimate was over one half million under the actual shipment of 2¢ postage dues in FY 1894. The 10-cent value estimate was almost 90,000 below the FY 1894 shipments, while the three-cent was slightly over 40,000 below the actual data for FY 1894.

Near the end of its contract, the ABNCo supplied the remaining stock of large numeral dues to the BEP so that it would have a supply of postage dues to begin the 1895 fiscal year. The quantity supplied [6] was 2,796,543 postage due stamps. This quantity, broken down by denomination, is shown in Column 2 of Table 3. The shipments of large numeral postage due stamps by the BEP to postmasters in fiscal year 1895 is given in Column 3 of Table 3. Column four indicates the difference or the remaining large numeral postage dues in the hands of the

BEP. The BEP indicated that these remainders were scrapped in early calendar year 1895 to avoid “elaborate” daily inventory reports [8].

Table 3: ABNCo Large Numeral Postage Dues Transferred to the BEP and Subsequently Distributed by the BEP during Fiscal Year 1895.

Value	ABNCo Shipment ^a	BEP Distribution ^b	Difference
1¢	1,350,369	1,350,369	0
2¢	50,164	50,164	0
3¢	294,783	190,300	104,483
5¢	670,148	604,320	65,823
10¢	277,794	277,780	14
30¢	96,502	23,430	73,072
50¢	56,783	15,030	41,753
Total	2,796,543	2,511,393	285,150 ^c

^a Post Office Bill Book, June 30, 1879 – March 30, 1895 [6]

^b John Luft, The Postage Stamps of the United States 1902 Edition, Scott Stamp and Coin Company Limited, pp 245 – 352.

^c Excess scrapped. See References 6, 7, and 8.

By comparing the data in Tables 2 and 3, it is quite clear that the ABNCo dues were insufficient to meet the demand. In fact, the 50,164 two-cent postage dues represented only 0.76% of the estimated needed supply. This percentage equates to about 2.8 days. The one-cent supply was about 15% of the estimated needed supply or 55 days worth, and the ten-cent large numeral dues on-hand could satisfy the demand for about 67 days, and even the five-cent supply was only good for 306 days or about 10 months. Only the 30¢ and 50¢ dues were in sufficient numbers to last multiple years (14.5 years and 24.2 years respectively, based on actual usage in Fiscal year 1893 (see Table 2)).

If the distribution of the new one-cent and two-cent Bureau dues were delayed by even a few days there would have certainly been shortages of both values, especially the 2¢ dues. Shortages of the 1¢ and 2¢ values were more likely to have occurred in the Western States and in

the rural areas of the east, but occasionally even large cities were without these values of postage dues. Also, it is believed that both the 5¢ and 10¢ values experienced localized shortages.

Postmasters' Solution

With any shortage of a particular denomination stamp the postmaster or postal clerk would simply make up the required value using other denomination stamps e.g. a 2-cent shortage could be made up with two ones, a 5-cent shortage with one two and one three-cent stamp, and so forth. In the 1895 period, however, a shortage of one-cent postage due stamps would be problematic (no half-cent postage dues existed) unless the postmaster could substitute a regular issue 1-cent stamp in its place. Although common practice later on, postmasters of the 1890's were reluctant to just use a regular issue stamp unless it was suitably marked "Postage Due" or "Due 1" or some other variant of "due" to indicate its intended function. Examples of this approach will be described below in the section on provisionals.

Another and perhaps more common approach was to bisect a higher value stamp to achieve the desired value. For example, a 2-cent postage due stamp could be bisected to make two 1-cent stamps. Since these bisected stamps (vertical, horizontal, or diagonals) were still postage dues, most postmasters did not feel the need to add a "due" marking to the bisected stamp. The notable exception to this was the Jefferson, Iowa bisects of October 1895 where each half of a vertically bisected two-cent postage due stamp was overprinted with "Due 1 cent" Clinton, Iowa also used diagonal bisects hand stamped with "Due 1" in early 1896. These and other bisects will be described below in the section on bisects.

It should be noted that both provisional use of regular issue stamps as postage dues and postage due bisects have been used to address more than a shortage of 1-cent stamps.

Provisionals have been used for local 2-cent postage due shortages and 10¢ bisects have addressed a shortage of 5-cent postage due stamps. Much later in the 1920's and 1930's when half-cent postage rates were in effect, both provisional due markings on ½-cent regular issue stamps and bisected 1-cent postage due stamps exist such as the cover shown in Figure 5. A detailed discussion of these usages is beyond the scope of this article. Similarly, some postmasters printed (stamped) “Due __ cents” diagonally on regular issue stamps. The blank was filled in with a manuscript number – thus, any value postage due stamp shortage could be addressed.



Figure 5. Cover from 1932 illustrating a modern postage due bureau bisect (J61) used to address the need for a ½¢ postage due.

As mentioned above, provisionals (or locals) typically resulted when a postmaster had a shortage of a commonly used stamp. In such instances, the postmaster would overprint the required value (and intended function) on another stamp, and use these overprinted stamps until

his replacement stamps (stamps in shortage) arrived. The most famous provisionals of the 1895 era were those created by the postmaster of Detroit. In the early summer of 1895, the Detroit postmaster found himself short of both one-cent and two-cent postage due stamps. Thus, he stamped in black “DUE 1” on Scott No. 246, 1¢ ultramarine regular issue stamps and “DUE 2” on Scott No. 250, 2¢ carmine regular issue stamps, both issued in 1894.

A cover illustrating a pair of “Due 1” overprints used to address a 2¢ deficiency is shown in Figure 6. It has a Detroit circular date stamp (CDS) with the date June 23, 1895. A similar cover with the 2¢ carmine “Due 2” is illustrated in Figure 7. Again, this cover has a Detroit CDS, dated June 23, 1895 at 11:30 am. June 23, 1895 is supposed to be the first day of provisional use according to an accompanying note dated 1947 by Fred R. Schmalzreidt, a noted Detroit philatelic dealer of the time who claimed they were used from June 23 to June 26, 1895.



Figure 6. Detroit Provisional. “Due 1” overprinted on a pair of regular 1¢ ultramarine stamps (Scott No. 246). The pair satisfied the need for a two-cent postage due stamp. Cover is dated June 23, 1895.



Figure 7. Detroit Provisional. “Due 2” overprinted on a regular issue 2¢ carmine stamp (Scott No. 250). The stamp satisfied the need for a two-cent postage due. Cover is dated June 23, 1895.

Brower [9] states that they were used from June 21 to June 27, 1895. Brower’s dates were taken from Luft’s book [7] published in 1902. If the note from Schmalzreidt is correct, then both of these covers were postmarked on the first day of provisional use in Detroit. Both covers have identical envelopes with crossed out return addresses. The cover with the pair of 1¢ dues is addressed to Hubel and Company Electricians, City while the cover with the 2¢ due is addressed to Ernst Stolze, Buhl Block, City. Figure 8 illustrates another Detroit provisional pair used to pay 2¢ postage due. The stamps are Scott No. 264 and were issued in April 1895. They are blue in color. This cover was addressed to Geo. N. Rice, 186 East High Dr., City and was dated on June 26, 1895. Special thanks are given to Dr. Clark Yarbrough for allowing the author to scan and illustrate this cover.



Figure 8. Detroit Provisional. “Due 1” overprinted on a pair of regular 1¢ blue stamps (Scott No., 264). Cover is dated June 26, 1895.

A fourth Detroit provisional usage is also known. It is an oversize envelope containing four 2¢ carmine “Due 2” stamps to pay the 8¢ postage due assessment. Unlike the “2¢ due” above this “DUE 2” was overprinted on Scott No. 267, 2-cent carmine regular issue of 1895. The “Due 8¢” cover in question was also mailed with 2¢ postage paid by a Scott No. 267. Thus, this oversize cover has five Scott No 267 stamps, four with the “DUE 2” overprint and one plain. The plain Scott No. 267 is tied with an 1895 Gainesville, TX duplex cancel, while the “postage dues” are not tied. Due 8¢ is written in blue crayon on the envelope. This cover is illustrated in Figure 9. The image of this cover was kindly provided by the auction house HR Harmer Nutmeg. It appeared in the Nutmeg Mail auction 184 of June 9, 2009 (Lot No. 3172) [10]. Additional details of this and other provisional usages are given in Table 4.



Figure 9. Detroit Provisional. “Due 2” overprinted on four 2¢ carmine regular issue stamps (Scott No. 267). The legal size envelope was also mailed in 1895 with the same 2-cent carmine stamp. The four “Due 2” stamps made up the 8¢ due penalty. The image of this cover was kindly provided by HR Harmer Nutmeg.

Table 4. Postage Due Provisionals of the 1895 Period

Stamp (Value)	Town/City	State	Number Known	Date	Provisional Type
-- (1-cent)	Winside	NE	2	July 20, 1895 August 6, 1895	"Due 1" surcharged on 1¢ regular issue newspaper wrappers
246 (1-cent)	Detroit	MI	1	June 23, 1895	"Due 1" hand stamped on 1¢ ultramarine regular issue stamp. Pair on cover to make up 2¢ deficiency
250 (2-cent)	Detroit	MI	1	June 23, 1895	"Due 2" hand stamped on 2¢ carmine regular issue stamp. Single on cover
267 (2-cent)	Detroit	MI	1	1895	"Due 2" hand stamped on 2¢ carmine regular issue stamp. Four overprints for "Due 8¢"
264 (1-cent)	Detroit	MI	1	June 26, 1895	"Due 1" hand stamped on 1¢ blue regular issue stamp. Pair on cover to make up 2¢ deficiency

J23 Bisects

As described above, bisects or bisected stamps typically resulted when a postmaster had a shortage of a particular stamp value and the value was small enough that he could not make the needed value up from lower value stamps. The classic case is, of course, a shortage in one-cent stamps which comprise the lowest value in the stamp series. A shortage of 1¢ postage due stamps is apparently exactly what happened in Thompson, New York in October of 1895, Jefferson, Iowa in October of 1895, and Clinton, Iowa in early 1896.

The Thompson, New York one-cent postage due shortage led to covers with J23 bisects and the Iowa shortages led to covers with J39 bisects. There are four known J23 bisect covers from Thompson, New York, thirteen covers [11] with the J39 bisect from Jefferson, Iowa, and three covers containing a J39 bisect from Clinton, Iowa.

The four Thompson, New York, J23 bisects are all addressed to Mr. H.W. Tilford, Thompson Mills, Wash. Co., NY and bear the date Oct. 3, 1895. The J23 bisects are right side diagonals on two covers and one vertical (left half) and one horizontal (bottom half) bisect on the other two covers. Figure 10 is a diagram of the bisect possibilities for a J23 (diagonal, vertical, and horizontal). The diagonal bisects are cut from the upper left to the lower right, probably indicating that the postmaster or clerk who did the bisecting were right handed (the left hand was used to hold the stamp and the straight edge while the right hand wielded the knife or razor). The author has not seen a J23 bisect cut from the upper right to the lower left. Since the known J23 bisects include two diagonals (right sides), the lower part of a horizontal bisect, and the left side of a vertical bisect, thus, it is conceivable that at least four more covers exist with J23 bisects from Thompson, NY. Table 5 lists these and other bisect postage due uses during the 1895 period.

Diagonal Bisects

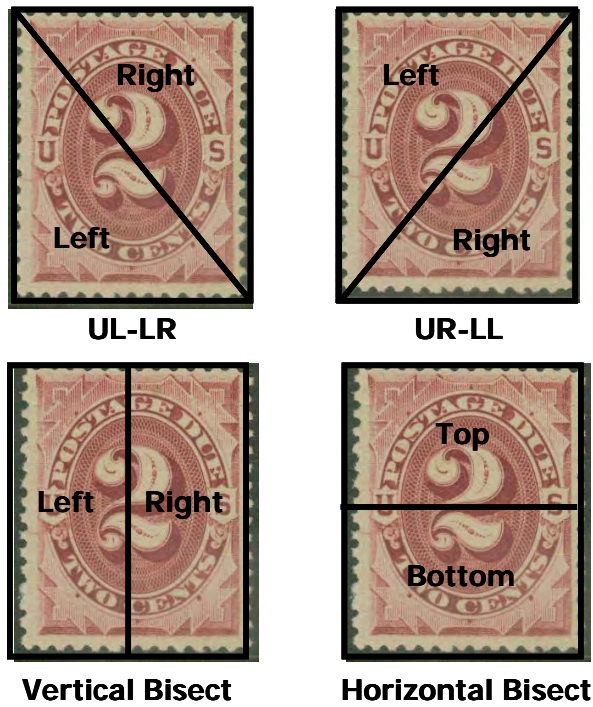


Figure 10. Diagram of possible bisect positions for various bisected postage dues.

Table 5. Postage Due Bisects of the 1895 Period

Stamp (Value)	Town/City	State	Number Known	Date	Bisect Type
J23 (2-cent)	Thompson	NY	4	Oct. 2, 1898	Diagonal, (2) vertical and (2) Horizontal
J39 (2-cent)	Jefferson	IA	13	Oct. 11-13, 1895	Vertical, "Due I cent" overprint
J39 (2-cent)	Clinton	IA	3	Feb. 14, 1896	Diagonal, "Due 1" Hand stamp
J39 (2-cent)	Riverside	MA	1	unknown*	Unknown
-- (2¢ & 10¢)	Brooklyn	NY	1	Dec 1895	2¢ and 10¢ each bisected to make 6¢ Postage Due
-- (2-cent)	North Branch	NJ	1	June 1895	Diagonal
-- (2-cent)	Warwick	RI	2	August 7, 1897 Sept 11, 1897	Vertical

*Assumed to be during the 1895 Period

J39 Bisect

The bisect covers of Jefferson, Iowa (Scott No. J39) are a legend and a source of philatelic controversy. J39 bisected postage due stamps were created by Postmaster Fred R. McCarthy of Jefferson, Iowa. He told the story of the bisects in an affidavit dated February 12, 1898. McCarty's two page affidavit is currently mounted on two large album pages in the Miller Collection (owned by the New York Public Library) with a Scott No. W301 wrapper (Pauley No. 1 See below) mounted on the bottom of the second page. A full color copy of the McCarthy affidavit is shown in Trepel's excellent publication documenting the Miller Collection [1].

There are several key points in the McCarthy affidavit:

1. His supply of 1-cent postage dues was exhausted and his previously requisitioned 1-cent postage dues were in transit.
2. He had a local printer print "Due 1 cent" in black on a few vertically bisected two-cent postage due stamps.
3. He had 30 of these vertically bisected 2-cent postage due stamps overprinted, and he used, according to his recollection, somewhere between 18 and 20.
4. Once the replacement one-cent stamps arrived from Washington, no additional bisects were used.

Both Trepel and the Scott Catalogue (in a footnote following the J39 listing) agree that a total of twenty bisects were used. There is some controversy of the sequence of printing and bisecting between Trepel and Scott and the McCarthy affidavit. Both Trepel and the Scott Catalogue say the stamps were overprinted first and then bisected (which seems more logical for ease of handling and printing) while McCarthy's statement implies that they were bisected first and then overprinted ("...had a local printer print 'Postage Due 1 cent' on a few half two-cent postage due

stamps....”). A more detailed discussion of this and other factors surrounding the J39 bisect has been given by Charles and Swed [11].

A typical example of the J39 bisect is shown in Figure 11. This cover is one of the twelve examples known to and reported by Pauley in his excellent series of articles on the J39 bisect. See References in Charles and Swed [11]. Pauley’s articles spanned almost a decade and a half from January 1973 to November 1987 during which time he tried to discover and report details of all the known J39 bisects on cover.



Figure 11. J39 bisect cover by the postmaster of Jefferson. The top is a view of the cover front. The bottom is an image of the back. This cover is Pauley No. 5 [11].

In fact, the cover shown in Figure 11, addressed to George Herring is No. 5 in Pauley's arbitrary numbering scheme. This cover is franked with a copy of Scott No. 265, 1-cent blue Franklin, which was machine cancelled (Oct 11, 1895 at 2 PM in Chicago). At the left side of the cover the words "POSTAGE DUE" were stamped in purple ink followed by a manuscript "1¢" in red ink. The word "FORWARDED" was stamped in purple ink followed by a manuscript "to Jefferson" in red ink. Also, a line in red ink is drawn through Waucoma. The left half bisect (see Figures 11, 12, and 13) is tied by a Jefferson, Iowa circular date stamp (CDS) dated Oct 13, 1895 at 11 AM.

The cover is back stamped with a partially legible Waucoma, Iowa CDS dated OCT 12, 1895 in purple ink as shown in Figure 11. A purple star in a circle appears next to the Waucoma CDS. Also, the cover is back stamped with a small portion of the Jefferson, Iowa CDS and a circular bars cork cancel in black ink. Further details of this cover and the other eleven covers reported by Pauley are given in reference [11], as well as in the articles by Pauley.

There is a thirteenth cover which was unknown to Pauley, at least through November 1987, the date of his last article. This cover is shown in Figure 12. As can be seen from Figure 12, the cover is very similar to the one in Figure 11 except it is addressed to J. M. Alexander, rather than George Herring. Only Pauley covers Nos. 1 and 2 were distinctly different. Cover No. 1 is on a wrapper in the Miller Collection, and cover No. 2 is addressed to a different town and resides in the Pauley Collection. It is believed that all the Jefferson, IA bisect covers after Pauley's No. 1 and No. 2 were prepared by E. B. Stillman and sent to himself, his family, and co-workers, employees, or friends. It is believed that Stillman recognized the importance of the locally prepared bisect and prepared covers which would require McCarthy to use one of his newly created "rarities." In fact, it is likely that the newspaper print shop run by Stillman's sons

did the printing. The back cover of “No. 13” (maintaining Pauley’s numbering scheme) is shown in Figure 12. When compared to Figure 11, the back stamping is almost identical.



Figure 12. J39 bisect cover by the postmaster of Jefferson. The top is a view of the cover front. The bottom is an image of the back. This cover is now cover No. 13 in Pauley’s arbitrary numbering scheme.

As shown previously [11], there are five Stillmans, four Herrings, and, now, two Alexanders amongst the Jefferson, Iowa covers. . There are also eight left side bisects and only five right. A close up computer generated composite of the bisects on the covers shown in Figures 11 and 12 is illustrated in Figure 13. As can be easily seen in Figure 13, the commonly referred to “Due 1 cent” was actually “Due I cent” apparently due to the type setter’s error in selecting an upper case “I” instead of a “1” in the type face used [12]. The black surcharge is approximately 2.5 mm high by 17 mm long.



Figure 13. A composite made using the left hand bisect of the cover shown in Figure 11 and the right-hand bisect shown in Figure 12.

A Clinton, Iowa bisect is shown in Figure 14, again through the courtesy of Dr. Clarke Yarbrough. The diagonal bisect is hand stamped “Due 1” in black ink.



Figure 14. J39 Clinton, Iowa diagonal postage due bisect. “Due 1” is hand stamped in black ink. This is one of the three known examples.

Summary

United States stamp production was unexpectedly transferred from the American Bank Note Company to the Bureau of Engraving and Printing in 1894. The BEP had little experience with stamp production and lacked critical machinery necessary to produce postage stamps. Up to 1894, they were strictly focused on producing currency. Although the BEP mounted Herculean efforts, there were many start-up problems including maintaining inventory, lack of distribution infrastructure and general issues associated with the learning curve of a new

business. Such problems led to spot stamp shortages especially in small towns and rural areas. In certain instances, Postmasters responded to these shortages by creating bisects and provisionals. The postage due bisects and provisionals of the 1895 period were created in direct response to the lack of certain postage due values. Being few in number [13], these postage due varieties represent some of the scarcest and least-known United States stamp usages and are worthy of further study.

References

- [1] R. Trepel with K. Lawrence, Rarity Revealed: The Benjamin K. Miller Collection. Co published by the Smithsonian and the New York Public Library, 2006, p.162.
- [2] Frank Noll, "Postage and Progressivism: Political Ideology and the Start of Postage Stamp Production at the Bureau of Engraving in Printing 1893-1894" Winton M. Blount Symposium on Postal History, November 3-4, 2006, pp 1-26.
[Http://www.postal.museum.si.edu/symposium2006/paper/noll](http://www.postal.museum.si.edu/symposium2006/paper/noll), PDF.
- [3] Scott Numbers can be found in the Scott Specialized Catalogue by the Scott Publishing Company, PO Box 828, Sidney, Ohio 45365-0828.
- [4] Plate No. 34 was only used to make Scott No. J29 stamps according to Durland. J29 is the vermilion shade; however the plate proof shown is deep claret like the 2-cent J32. Much controversy still remains over the colors of the first issue Bureau dues, but the current thinking is that the early Bureau dues came in both the deep claret and vermilion shades.
- [5] Walter A. McIntire, "United States Postage Due Stamps The Broken 3¢ Die – Series of 1894," The Bureau Specialist, Volume XXXVI, No. 4 April 1965, pp 124-126.

- [6] Budd Dickey, "The Beginning of Postage Stamp Production by the Bureau of Engraving and Printing," The United States Specialist, Vol. 55, No. 11, November 1984, pp 487-93.
- [7] John Luft, The Postage Stamps of the United States, Scott Stamp and Coin Company, New York, New York, 1902.
- [8] Warren R. Bower, "Puzzles in (the) 1894 ABN Transfer of its Postage Dues to (the) BEP" The United States Specialist, Vol. 56 No. 4, April 1985, pp 153-156.
- [9] Warren R. Bower, "The 1895 Bisected J23 Dues of Thomson, New York," The United State Specialist, Vol. 54, No. 2, February 1983, pp 88-89.
- [10] Nutmeg Stamp Sales, "Comprehensive Mail Auction 184, United States, British Commonwealth and Worldwide Selected Stamps, Postal History and Premium Graded Stamps", Tuesday, June 9, 2009 Bethel, Connecticut, Lot No. 3172 page 34.
- [11] Harry K. Charles, Jr. and Robert C. Swed "Thirteen and Counting: Reflections on the Scott J39 Bisect Covers of 1895," The United States Specialist, Volume 80, No. 9, September 2009, pp 410-419.
- [12] A recent private communication with William Sihler (September 14, 2009) suggests that the "I" in the "Due I cent" overprint was indeed a "1" from a non-lining set of numerals in the Oldstyle No. 7 (Monotype) or a closely related typeface which was in use during the 1890's.
- [13] It is estimated that less than 50 covers containing the bisects and provisionals described in this study exist. This study lists a total of 31 usages with the bisect stamped covers totaling 25.