



Lot 104



Detail



Detail of back

LOT 104°

This cover bears a genuine example of one of the rarest stamps in the world, the 1908 2¢ Vertical Coil, Scott 321, of which four pairs are in private hands and one other single is recorded, but has not been seen in the last 47 years—from the perspective of provenance, this is the most fascinating of all

ESTIMATE \$150,000-200,000

DESCRIPTION

2¢ Carmine, Type I, Vertical Coil (321), deep rich color, well-centered, tied across both sides by “Indianapolis, Ind. Oct. 2 3:30PM 1908” postmark and wavy-line machine cancel on light blue cover addressed to “*Mr. Randolph Prelate, Baker Vawter Co., Chicago, Ill.*”, backflap with engraved McKinley Club seal of a “GOP” elephant, monogram “MC” and “INDIANAPOLIS” city location, sender’s signature “*R. C. Griffith*” below the printed design, with original letter enclosure on matching McKinley Club engraved stationery—mentions looking for employment, selling a house for “mother” and running into an old girlfriend

PROVENANCE

Edwin P. Seebohm, San Francisco, June 1939, Sale 68, lot 16, to Milton

Maxwell C. Milton (collection bought and sold privately through Weills; the cover sold privately to Zoellner, 1993)

Robert Zoellner, Siegel Auction Galleries, 10/8-10/1998, Sale 804, lot 531, to William H. Gross

CENSUS, LITERATURE AND EXHIBITION REFERENCES

Siegel census no. 321-COV-01
<https://siegelauctions.com/census/us/scott/321>

World Stamp Show 2016 Court of Honor (Gross)

CERTIFICATION

The Philatelic Foundation (1994)

Accompanied by notarized affidavit from Randolph Prelat, the addressee, dated June 21, 1939, attesting that:

...the certain United States Postage Stamp described on Page 4 of catalogue of Edwin P. Seebohm (68th Public Auction) as Lot No. 16 has not been tampered with and has been in my possession since it was originally mailed from Indianapolis, Indiana, in 1908

CONDITION NOTES

Extremely Fine stamp and cover

HISTORY AND COMMENTARY

An Unemployed Gentleman Uses a Rare 2¢ Stamp in 1908

The first government coil stamps were experimental, and philatelists at the time were generally unaware they existed. Sheets of 400 were printed and perforated in one direction. They were then cut into strips of 20 and hand-assembled into rolls for sale in vending machines. Only small numbers of these experimental coils were produced before the Washington-Franklin series superseded them.

One of the rarest stamps in the world is Scott 321, the 2¢ Shield Vertical Coil. In February 1908, four rolls of 1,000 were produced, and the vertical format was never repeated. A supply was sent to the Parkhurst Vending Machine Co. in Indianapolis, the only city where Scott 321 is known to have been used. Our census of Scott 321 records only five unused pairs, one of which is in the Miller collection, owned by The New York Public Library.

In addition to the unused examples, there are two single used Scott 321 stamps that are considered genuine, but one has become a phantom. It was used on a legal-size cover from Indianapolis, dated December 20, 1908, which had a pair of the 5¢ Lincoln Imperforate (Scott 315) that paid the special delivery fee. The cover was sent from an attorney to Arthur M. Travers in the Third Assistant Postmaster General’s office, who noted the rarity of the 5¢ pair, but did not comment on the 2¢. The cover was photographed in its original state, but when it was offered in the Siegel sale of Grunin’s 20th century (Sale 404, lot 81), the 5¢ pair had been removed. We have searched in vain for that cover. The 5¢ pair was last sold in our Sale 930 and awaits a reunion.

The other genuine used Scott 321 is on the cover offered here, which was mailed from Indianapolis on October 2, 1908, the earlier of the two recorded dates. The sender, R. C. Griffith (signed “Dick”) used McKinley Club stationery to write a letter to Prelat, telling him he still has not found a job, but is hoping to work for a coal company. The McKinley Club in Indianapolis was a Republican organization.

The cover was sold through Edwin P. Seebohm, a San Francisco dealer and auctioneer, in his 68th sale in 1939. It is accompanied by an affidavit from the addressee, Randolph Prelat (the spelling on the document), dated June 21, 1939, who presumably was asked by Seebohm to attest to that fact that he possessed the cover since 1908 and never altered the stamp. It sold to Maxwell C. Milton (1881-1947), a prominent collector in the San Francisco area. Milton’s collection was purchased in 1993 by the Weills, and parts of it were resold privately and at auction. The cover was sold to Robert Zoellner, and in the 1998 Siegel sale of his collection, it was purchased by Mr. Gross. ■