

1869 PICTORIAL ISSUE INVERTS

The first published report of any 1869 invert error appeared in the December 20, 1870, issue of J. Walter Scott's *American Journal of Philately*. The report states that "after a few hundred sheets of the 15 and 24 cent stamps of the 1869 issue had been delivered, it was discovered that a few of the stamps on each sheet had the picture inverted in the frames." This early report is most definitely inaccurate. All of the known 15¢ errors are Type II stamps, and Type II's were not issued until May 1869. To accept Scott's version of the story, one must make a leap of faith and believe that a 15¢ Type I Invert once existed. However, Scott's article indicates that he was aware of the invert error on both values in December 1870. The 30¢ Invert was discovered later, and by 1876 it was listed in the Scott Catalogue.



J. Walter Scott (1845-1919)

John N. Luff gives another version of the 15¢ Invert discovery. In Luff's account the first sheet of inverts was bought by David H. Anthony, who advertised himself as a buyer of "Revenue stamps—all kinds if perfect," as well as stamped documents, checks and mutilated currency. According to Luff, Anthony sold one of the 15¢ Inverts to a collector named Ramus (or Rasmus), and exchanged the rest for normal stamps at the post office. These events would have occurred while the issue was current, sometime between the May 1869 Second Printing and the discontinuance of the issue in early 1870.

The 15¢ Invert with original gum (Siegel Sale 1052, lot 1) is one of the earliest discoveries. The story told is that the stamp was purchased in 1869 by Paul Lichtenstein, father of the more famous stamp collector, Alfred F. Lichtenstein, and grandfather of Louise Boyd Dale-Lichtenstein. At the time, Paul was a clerk in the banking firm founded by Hermann R. Baltzer and William G. Taaks, located at 50 Exchange Place. The youthful Lichtenstein was sent to the post office to buy 25 15¢ stamps for use on the firm's mail. As a budding philatelist, he observed that the picture vignettes were upside down. When he questioned whether or not the stamps were valid, the post office clerk assured him no one would notice the difference. Using his lunch money, Paul Lichtenstein paid for one of the stamps and kept it for his collection. The rest were used for postage.

Recorded Examples of 1869 Inverts and Applicable Postage Rates

The Siegel firm maintains a photo census of 1869 Inverts on its website (siegelauctions.com). The current census information is summarized below.

Stamp	OG	Unused (No Gum)	Used	Multiples	Covers	Total
15¢ #119b	1	2	97	—	—	100
15¢ #119c (double)	—	—	3	—	—	3
24¢ #120b	—	4*	83	[4] [2]**	1	94
30¢ #121b	1	6	40	—	—	47

* Three available (one is in the Tapling collection at The British Library)
 ** One block of four and one pair of the 24¢ are recorded

The majority of high-denomination 1869 stamps were used on mail addressed to foreign countries. From the time of issue until December 31, 1869, the treaty rate to France was 15¢, so the 15¢ and 30¢ denominations prepaid the single and double rates. Some of the cancellations on 15¢ Inverts do not conform to the New York City foreign mail office, indicating those stamps might have been found on domestic registered covers (the registry fee was 15¢). The 24¢ stamp paid multiples of the 3¢ domestic rate or the 12¢ rate to Great Britain through December 31, 1869, or 6¢ thereafter. Based on the applicable rates, most used inverts were probably found on covers in England and France.



15c 1869 Pictorial Invert



24c 1869 Pictorial Invert



30c 1869 Pictorial Invert