



1908-15 WASHINGTON-FRANKLIN SERIES

DURING THE THEODORE ROOSEVELT administration, in 1908, the first issue of the Washington-Franklin series was released. Johl states that the series was an attempt by the Post Office to standardize designs, in common with many European countries. The 1c stamp was issued in green with a portrait of Benjamin Franklin. The 2c stamp was issued in carmine with a portrait of Washington. All of the higher denominations through the \$1.00 had the same Washington portrait and were issued in different colors. In 1912 the Franklin portrait was used in place of Washington on the 8c through \$1.00 stamps.

The Washington-Franklin series is a fascinating and challenging area of philately, producing some of the twentieth century's most distinctive and rarest stamps. These include paper, perforation, color, coil and type varieties.

The 1908 Washington-Franklin stamps were issued on watermarked paper currently in use by the Bureau and were perforated 12. During the early stages of production, the Bureau tried to solve problems with paper shrinkage that caused off-center perforations and resulted in a large number of unusable sheets. Armstrong notes that up to twenty percent of printed sheets had to be discarded. The Bureau experimented with the paper content, adding various components to the

mix to produce paper less prone to shrinkage. The first such experiment resulted in the Bluish Paper stamps (Scott 357-366). Rag (cloth) was added to the wood pulp mixture, but this did not have the desired effect, and the experiment was discontinued. The 1c and 2c were issued in large quantities; the other denominations are very rare, and the 4c and 8c were never intended to be released.

The next experiment was to add certain minerals to the wood pulp mixture. There is some debate over what constitutes China Clay paper, but the resulting stamps can be distinguished from regular printings. The spacing problem was finally solved by altering the layout of the plate to allow extra width between stamps.

In 1910 the watermarked paper was changed from double-line to single-line "USPS". The new watermark was intended to strengthen the paper, and to give it a more uniform thickness. The perf 12 gauge was still in use. Coil stamps produced on the new watermarked paper were found to be brittle, and the gauge was altered to 8½.

One of the rarest perf 12 coil stamps issued on the short-lived single-line watermarked paper is the Orangeburg Coil, Scott 389. Prepared specially for mailings by the Bell Pharmaceutical Company, these stamps escaped the notice of collectors at the time.



3c Coil, Scott 389

Containing the only Mint NH example

Realized \$330,000 hammer

in our 2009 auction of the Alan B. Whitman Collection

BLUISH PAPER

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Examples of the rare 4c and 8c on Bluish paper