



1923 ROTARY PRESS PERF 11 RARITIES

FROM 1919 THROUGH 1923 THE BUREAU of Engraving and Printing salvaged *waste* stamps printed on high-capacity rotary presses and prepared them for public use. Rotary-press waste that was turned into issued postage gives us some of our rarest United States stamps: Scott 544, 594, 596 and 613.

Rotary-press waste should not be thought of as scraps of paper swept up from the floor. Rotary waste was well-printed, but it was removed from the manufacturing line, because it did not conform to the regular production standards.

The rotary press, first used for printing coil stamps in 1915, was a new printing method designed for rapid production. Rather than print stamps on a flat plate one sheet at a time, the rotary press was fitted with a cylindrical plate that continuously applied impressions to long rolls of paper.

Rotary-press stamps have slightly different dimensions than their flat-plate counterparts, due to the curvature of the cylinder. If the plate is wrapped around the cylinder from top to bottom (endwise), then the design is slightly longer. If the plate is wrapped around the cylinder from side to side (sidewise), then the design is slightly wider. Coil stamps fed endwise through the rotary press are imperforate at the sides and perforated at top and bottom between the stamps—they are cut and rolled endwise. Coils in sidewise format are imperforate at top and bottom and perforated between stamps at the sides. Of course, sheet stamps are perforated in both directions.

At the beginning or end of a coil-stamp print run from the 170-subject plates, some leading or trailing paper was produced that was too short for rolling into 500-stamp rolls. Sheet stamps printed

from 400-subject plates also produced some waste that was set aside. In 1919 the Bureau devised a plan to salvage this waste by perforating and cutting the sheets into panes. They were put through the 11-gauge flat-plate perforator in use at the time, giving the sheets full perforations on all sides. Depending on whether they were perforated during an earlier stage of production, the sheets were put through the flat-plate perforator in either one or two directions.

The first stamps issued under the program were coil-waste sheets already perforated 10 in one direction and are listed as Scott 538-541. In 1923 coil waste from the new 1c and 2c rotary production was turned into Scott 578-579 and 594-595. These were the last of the coil-waste issues.

The first Rotary Perf 11 stamp made from sheet waste is Scott 544. Some believe that waste from the rotary printing of this stamp was perforated 11 on two separate occasions, one of which coincided with the 1923 production of Scott 596 and 613.

The 1c Green, Scott 594, is waste from a horizontal rotary printing used to make coils. The rarer Scott 596 is waste from a vertical rotary printing used to make sheet stamps—a fact proven by the existence of precancelled copies. Our census of Scott 596 records only thirteen used examples. There are no unused copies of Scott 596 recorded.

Scott 613, the 2c Harding Rotary Perf 11 stamp, was probably made from an extremely small quantity of rotary sheet waste, possibly from the end of a roll of paper. It would have been produced at the same time as Scott 544 and 596 (both sheet-waste stamps).