Until 1894, all postage stamp production was contracted to private security printers. From the first regularly issued postage stamps, these printers identified themselves on their product through imprints on the stamp or sheet margins. This followed a common tradition among security printers and served predominantly as a form of free advertising.

In 1851, Toppan, Carpenter, Casilear & Co. was awarded the stamp production contract. This contract specified that the dies and plates for this issue would be the property of the United States Government. This was a departure from the previous issue, where the engravers retained ownership of the dies and plates.

Stamps of this issue were printed in sheets of 200 divided into two panes of 100 each. An identifying imprint extending the height of four stamps was placed along the left and right sides of the press sheets, outside of the image area of the stamps. Later, each plate in service received a number on the second line of the imprint. No one has yet found any reference or specifications for this imprint or the requirement to assign plate numbers in any correspondence between the printers and the Government.

Only four percent of the stamps printed by Toppan, Carpenter directly adjoined an imprint. The vast majority of these were cut away or detached prior to use. Therefore, imprint copies on cover are rare remnants of the hand of the engraver and printer carrying through the usage of the stamp.

This exhibit shows usages of the stamps of the issue of 1851 to 1860 with the imprints and/or plate number markings remaining. When possible, unusual rates, routes, or usages were selected to show the imprint examples.

**First State of Toppan Carpenter Casilear Imprint – One Line Without Plate Number**

1851 3¢ Orange Brown, position 41L5E - Newport, RI to Lyme, CT; Forwarded, due 5¢
1¢ Blue, Type IV, Plate I Late - Positions 51-53L1L showing part of plate number ‘1’ added to the imprint with this second version of the plate.

PF Cert 394081

1¢ Blue, Type II, Plate 2 – Imprint Position 51L2 – June 17, 1856, Richmond, VA to Greenfield, VA.

Shortly after the beginning of production, a plate number was added outside of the imprints. This change in identification may have been the result of need to keep better track of plate wear and repairs. Each denomination received plate numbers beginning with number 1.
Pair with imprint and plate no. 3
Positions 41 and 51L3 - Paying 6¢ rate for letters over 3000 miles that was in effect from July 1, 1851 to March 31, 1855. Color indicates a 1853 or 1854 usage.

Position 50R3.
Albany, New York “STEAM / BOAT” marking indicating receipt at the mails from the captain of a non-contract ship. Albany commonly did not add its daterstamp to such items.

Position 60R5L – Second line of imprint added to this plate when plate was reworked in 1855.
D. W. Walker
Gallahasee, Fla

February 24th

Miss Charlotte Sherrod
Bentonville, Indiana

I. S. Pars
Collinsville, Ill
Westbound – Imprint position 41L1 – Pittsfield, IL to Shasta City, CA – Double 10¢ transcontinental rate with 1857 perforated example.

*Only known example combining 10¢ imperforate and perforate issues with an imprint adhesive*

Eastbound – Position 70R1 – Yankee Jim, CA to North Middleboro, MA – 10¢ transcontinental rate

*Fewer than 10 imperforate covers with imprints are known*
June 1, 1861 – San Francisco, CA to France. Likely misinterpretation of the rates with the sender paying the 10 cent transcontinental rate plus the 15 cent rate to France. Usages of 1¢ 1857 issues from West Coast post offices are unusual, as few rates from California required their stocking.

In 1857, new plates with spacing for perforations provided the opportunity to remove the name “Casilear,” who left the firm in 1854. Plate numbers for each denomination continued from imperforate plate numbers for each denomination.
ISSUE OF 1857-60
TOPPAN, CARPENTER & CO.

Position 50R8 - Paying 1¢ local carrier rate. Octagonal “USPO Dispatch Phila.” datestamp showing 2:30 PM scheduled pickup.

Positions 41-61L8 – Orleans, IN to New Albany, MO – Strip of three with most of first line of imprint on single rate letter.
ISSUE OF 1857-60
TOPPAN, CARPENTER & CO.

Imprint Positions 45-50R24 – November 20, (1860) – Stockton, Maine - Addressed to the Captain of the brig Crimea at St. Thomas, West Indies. Postmaster tore off the bottom portion of one stamp and folded the remaining portion before applying the datestamp. Apparent 1¢ underpayment of the 34¢ British open mail rate through Havana.

Position 50R25 – New Washington, PA to Philadelphia, PA – Includes part of plate number and “P.” likely abbreviating the word “Plate.” With only two exceptions, all plate numbers from 9 to 28 were followed by the letter “P.”
May 16, 1858 - La Porte, California - to Nova Scotia, Canada. Apparent 1¢ overpayment of the 15¢ rate from California to Canada. Imprint position 41L shows ‘Chin flaw’ variety and is from one of the two as yet unidentified plates (either plate 13 or 17).

Positions 69-70R15 with 1¢ Type II position 1R4 on 3¢ entire – Princeton, IA to Jackson, CA – Paying 10¢ rate for mail crossing Rocky Mountains.
December 1860. New Orleans, LA, through Boston to France. Red “Boston / 24 DEC / PAID / 6” exchange office datostamp and black January 5, 1860 French transit stamp. Black boxed “P.D.” indicates that the cover was paid to destination.

Only known cover with an imprint multiple of the 5¢ type I stamp

A survey of auction records of dated covers from New Orleans reveals that type I stamp usage exceeds that of type II for six months after the introduction of the type II stamps in other cities. As New Orleans was one of the greatest consumers of 5¢ stamps, this indicates there was likely a large stock of the type I stamps within the city at the time of the type II introduction.
ISSUE OF 1857-60
TOPPAN, CARPENTER & CO.

Positions 31-33L2 – August 22, 1860 – Newport, RI to France. Double the 15¢ rate to France through Boston.

March 1, 1861 - Strip of four (positions 41-44L2) and two singles paying double 30¢ rate from San Francisco, through New York, to Germany.
ISSUE OF 1857-60
TOPPAN, CARPENTER & CO.

Position 51L2 - On mourning cover to Santiago, Cuba. Oval "NA1" signifying North American origin (Nave Americano) and 1 real due.

Positions 61-63L2 – July 25, 1860 – Richmond, VA, through New York and London to Melbourne, Australia. Imprint strip of three with 3¢ paying the 33¢ rate by British mail via Southampton. Red "Melbourne OC 12 60" receiving mark on verso. PF Cert 359416
ISSUE OF 1857-60
TOPPAN, CARPENTER & CO.

Positions 51-52L1 – April 10, 1860 – Cleveland, Ohio Loughborough, England Imprint pair of three with 12¢ paying the 24¢ treaty rate to Great Britain. Red “3” signifying credit to Britain of 3 cents for internal postage, as U.S. retained 3¢ domestic carriage and 16¢ for transatlantic carriage. Red “PAID / AP 25 60 / London” receiving datestamp.

PF Cert 359416

Trace of imprint visible between stamps. Under strong backlight, the rest of the imprint is visible under right adhesive.

Position 60R1 with imprint
Position 26R1 covering

April 4, 1860 – Through Boston, MA to Rome, Italy. 27¢ Rate by French mail.
In October, 1854, Casilear left the firm, the name being changed to “Toppan Carpenter & Co.” It was not until more than two years later that any attempt was made to omit the name “Casilear” from the imprint. Toppan Carpenter transferred the first part of the imprint from the old transfer roll, rotated the roll and transferred the rest of the imprint. Poor execution caused a number of imprint varieties.
1¢ Blue Position 4L7 on local letter from Indiana Asbury University, Greencastle, IN. Corner card listing faculty and teaching areas. School changed its name to DePauw University in 1871 following a $600,000 contribution from the DePauw family.

Baltimore, MD to Martinsburg, VA. Embossed corner card for Fowler & Zeigler Commission Merchants.

May 18, 1860 – Louisville, KY to Lynchburg, VA. Embossed corner card for John Ward, Tobacco Factor.
**Swarts Dispatch** - (1¢) Red – New York, NY to Poland, ME – To the mails private carrier service by Swarts paid by adhesive and cancelled by Swarts grid. 3¢ imprint position 50R3.

**Patriotic Usages**

July, (1861) – East Hampshire, MA, to West Chester PA – Marked “Due 3” as the letter likely exceeded ½ oz. Mailed about three months after the attack on Fort Sumter.

Position 70R15 – August, 1859 – Boscawen, NH to Danvers, NH. Sender writes “Go it Buchanan” in selvage probably expressing support for then President James Buchanan.
Columbia, SC to Aiken, SC – March 4, (1861) 1¢ with “Carpentear” imprint variety. Positions 31-51L10. Plate 10 earliest known use is June, 1860 indicating usage in South Carolina following their joining Confederacy on February 8, 1861 and prior to June 1, 1861, when the use of United States stamps stopped in the Confederacy.

Plate 10 Carpentear imprint variety

October 20, 1862 – Fredrick, MD – Post demonetization usage accepted paying 10¢ transcontinental rate approximately one year after the demonetization of these stamps.

March 1, (1866) – San Francisco, CA – Demonetized 10¢ stamp not accepted as payment of additional 3¢ required postage. Marked “Due 6,” reflecting 3¢ postage and 3¢ penalty due.

PF Cert 346531
Until 1894, all postage stamp production was contracted to private security printers. From the first regularly issued postage stamps, these printers identified themselves on their product through imprints on the stamp or sheet margins. This followed a common tradition among security printers and served predominantly as a form of free advertising.

The requirement to demonetize and replace existing stamps at the beginning of the Civil War, as well as the coming expiration of the contract with Toppan Carpenter, the printers of the currently used issue of 1857, was the impetus for the awarding of a new contract for stamp production during 1861. Postmaster Montgomery Blair awarded the contract to the National Bank Note Company in June 1861 and the first stamps were issued two months later in August of that year.

Stamps of this issue were printed in sheets of 200 divided into two panes of 100 each. The National Bank Note Company placed six engraver imprints on the outside margins of the plate:
- Two copies of a 2-stamp wide horizontal imprint at the top center of each pane
- Two copies of the same imprint, oriented vertically, centered in the left and right sheet margins
- Two copies of a 4-stamp wide, 2-line imprint with plate number at the bottom in the center of each pane

Only eight percent of the stamps printed by the National Bank Note Company directly adjoined an imprint. The vast majority of these were cut away or detached prior to use. Therefore, imprint copies on cover are rare remnants of the hand of the engraver and printer carrying through the usage of the stamp.

This exhibit shows usages of the stamps of the issue of 1861 to 1868 with the imprints and/or plate number markings remaining. When possible, unusual rates, routes or usages were selected to show the imprint examples.

Imprint strip of three of the 1¢ Blue paying 3¢ letter rate from Bryant, IL to Philadelphia

Only known plate number multiple on cover
Three plates, numbered 9, 10, and 27 were used to produce the 150,000,000 1¢ stamps that were issued.

On all denominations of this issue, plate numbers appeared only at the bottom of each pane under the imprint. This bottom imprint spanned four stamps.
A "Drop Letter," is a letter that is deposited in a local post office by sender for local delivery. Drop letters were charged a fee of 1¢ (commencing July 1, 1851) until it was revised on July 1, 1863 to become a rate of 2¢ per ½ ounce. On May 1, 1865 the fee was once again reduced for local mail in cities without carrier service.
The 2¢ “Black Jack” was put into use in July 1863 as a result of the postal act of March 3, 1863, which abolished carrier fees and established a drop letter rate of 2¢ per ½ ounce. This denomination was printed from seven plates, numbered 28, 29, 30, 31, 50, 51, and 53.
January 18, (1869). Woonsocket Falls, RI to Elinville, RI. 3¢ Letter rate. Manuscript “Death” in upper left. Enclosed letter notifies recipient that “Grandfather Sheldon died last evening at eighty. The funeral will be Wednesday at One o’clock PM.” Left half of top imprint in selvage.

3¢ Letter rate from Charles City to Lyons, WI. First line of lower imprint in selvage.

PFCert 153816
August 29, 1863. New York, NY to Kensico, NY. 3 copies with part of lower imprint paying double 3¢ letter rate on Scientific American advertising cover.

May, 31 (1867). New York, NY to Westchester, NY. Overpayment of 3¢ letter rate, as the fee for carrier service ended in 1865. Stamps show upper half of side imprint. Side imprint was the same as the top imprint, but positioned vertically at rows five and six.

PFCert 220434
July 7, 1865. Freeport, IL to Black River Falls, MO. Printed corner card for C. C. Shuler, Printer of Bounty and Pension Blanks. Likely contained advertising circular addressed to another Claim Agent.

Portland, ME to Kenduskeag, ME. Mailed unscaled. Gum on envelope still fresh.Circulars mailed in envelopes were required to be mailed unsealed to allow inspection by postal authorities. Any handwriting on the circular would disqualify it for reduced rate mailing. Note use of undated Portland, ME cancellation as is typical of circular mail.
September 11 and 15, 1867 - Neighboring stamps from the same sheet sent to the same addressee five days apart. Together, they comprise the complete top imprint.

3¢ Pink – August 22, 1861 – Baltimore, MD to York, PA. Used within the first week of issuance. Earliest recorded instance of the any part of the National Bank Note Company imprint.
No fewer than 26 plates were used to print the approximately 1,750,000,000 3¢ stamps of the 1861 issue.
Norman, Ohio, Apr. 7, 1860

I hereby certify that William S. Henderson, an applicant for admission to practice at the Bar as an attorney and Counselor at Law, is over the age of Twenty-one years, is of good moral Character that he is now and has been for more than one year past a resident of the State of Ohio and Citizen of the United States, that he has regularly and attentively studied the Law during the period of two years past, and that I believe him to be a person of sufficient legal knowledge and abilities to discharge the duties of an attorney and Counselor at Law.

Charles E. Chicle
Att'y at Law.

F.E. Hutchins
Att'y at Law.

April 7, 1869 – Illegal usage of postage stamp, with imprint, to pay 5¢ revenue tax on legal document. Ironically, the document is attesting to the fitness of a William Henderson to practice law.
On denominations above the 3¢, imprint copies on cover are decidedly scarce. The two imprint copies on this page are the only recorded plate number imprint copies of the 10¢ on cover. No on-cover copies of plate number 26, the other plate used to print the 10¢ denomination are known.
January 5, (1868) – New York to Canada with left half of upper imprint.

ISSUE OF 1861-68
USE OF BRITISH IMPRINT SELVAGE
TO SEAL US COVERS

Position of stamps indicates that selvage was applied prior to mailing from the US

Imprint selvage from British 1d red stamps brought to the United States and used to seal and reinforce envelopes mailed back to London. Though both covers were sealed in the same way, they were addressed by different hands. British imprints carried information on price of stamps and instructions for their use, in addition to plate numbers.
PICTORIAL ISSUE OF 1869
ENGRAVED AND PRINTED BY NATIONAL BANK NOTE CO.

Plate 8 - Single rate usage on advertising cover for steam engines and machinery

Plate 8 - Double rate usage on advertising cover for Hartford Fire Insurance Company

Bottom imprint copy (NATIONAL BANK N) OTE CO., NEW YORK on narrow envelope containing family correspondence