

The United States Imperforate Issues of 1851 - 1856 and Their Importance in an Expanding Postal System

Purpose: A comprehensive study of the five imperforate stamps issued between 1851 and 1856. It also shows a diverse range of uses including how the stamps were treated by the post office, the innovative uses patrons found for the mails and how the post office addressed their needs in a period of profound change in the country.

History

The 1851-1856 period coincides with the dawn of the postal age, in which society's access to long-distance communication through the mails was expanded and made less costly. It was marked by extensive westward migration, with many families becoming separated by long distances. Commerce was growing, and the importance of reliable and fast mail service became essential to business. For individuals, receiving mail became commonplace. Therefore, moving mail efficiently and reliably was critical. The number of post offices almost doubled, with a large number of new offices established in the West, and a growing network of transportation routes served the postal system. During this period, using stamps on letters became the norm, increasing by a factor of more than 50.

The 1851-1856 Imperforate Issues were a significant part of these historical changes. The reduction of rates in 1851 and growing demand for postage necessitated the production of a new set of stamps to replace the first 1847 Issue. Six years after the 1845 postal reform lowered U.S. postage rates, the Act of 3 March 1851 further reduced rates, effective 1 July. The new basic letter rate was 3¢ per half-ounce up to 3,000 miles and 6¢ over 3,000 miles. The city drop-letter rate and postage on printed matter were also reduced. To give the public an incentive to prepay postage and use stamps, unpaid letters were charged 5¢ and 10¢, a 67% premium over the prepaid 3¢ and 6¢ rates. In April 1855 the rate for over 3,000 was increased to 10¢, and prepayment was made compulsory on domestic mail.

Production

Three stamps were issued in 1851: 1¢, 3¢, and 12¢ values. The 10¢ was issued in 1855, and the 5¢ followed in 1856. The stamps were engraved and produced by the firm of Toppan, Carpenter, Casilear & Co. Sheets were printed from steel plates of 200 stamps, consisting of two side-by-side panes of 100. The original issue was imperforate. In 1857 stamps were produced with perforations for separation. The stamps were valid for postage from 1 July 1851 until the outbreak of the Civil War in 1861. During this period, stamp production increased from a few million to over one hundred million per year. The 1¢ and 3¢ stamps were the work horses of the issue, while the 12¢ stamp was used less frequently. The 5¢ and 10¢ stamps were issued imperforate only for a brief period of one or two years before perforation was introduced, thus they are scarcer in imperforate form.

Exhibit Organization

Section One: Archival & Production

Essays and proofs followed by stamps in the order they were issued. Major types, varieties, color variations and typical or intended postal uses.

Section Two: Domestic Rates & Postal Markings

Letter and printed matter rates, uses from territories, fancy cancels, forwarded, registered and illustrated covers.

Section Three: Carriers, Locals & Express Co.

Shows local delivery both by the post office and by local private companies including western expresses.

Section Four: Speeding the mails

Transportation taking advantage of new technology to move mail faster and more efficiently.

Section Five: International Mail

Mail to international locations meeting business and private needs.

Section Six: Prolog

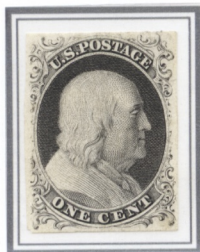
Application of official perforations and, due to the Civil War, the demonetization of the stamps.

Items accompanied by certificates from expert committees are indicated with a lower case 'e' on right side. Items of exceptional importance that may not stand out are framed in red. Single items on a page while meeting this criteria are not framed in red. Blue text is used for population information and to indicate important items.



To allow prepayment as provided by the Act of March 3, 1851, Postmaster General Hall authorized the issuance of three stamps: 1, 3 and 12 cent values. Later 5 cent and 10 cent stamps were added.

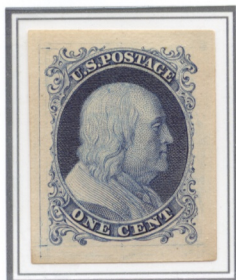
This section shows essays, proofs and major types and varieties of production stamps. The stamps were produced by Toppan, Carpenter, Casilear & Co.



Black trial color plate proof on stamp paper.

Position 87L1^E

Only recorded plate proof from plate 1^E.



Die proof. Complete design and showing two dots below the 'C' of 'CENT'.

Most likely created from the original die.

One of five recorded.



Blue die proof on card.

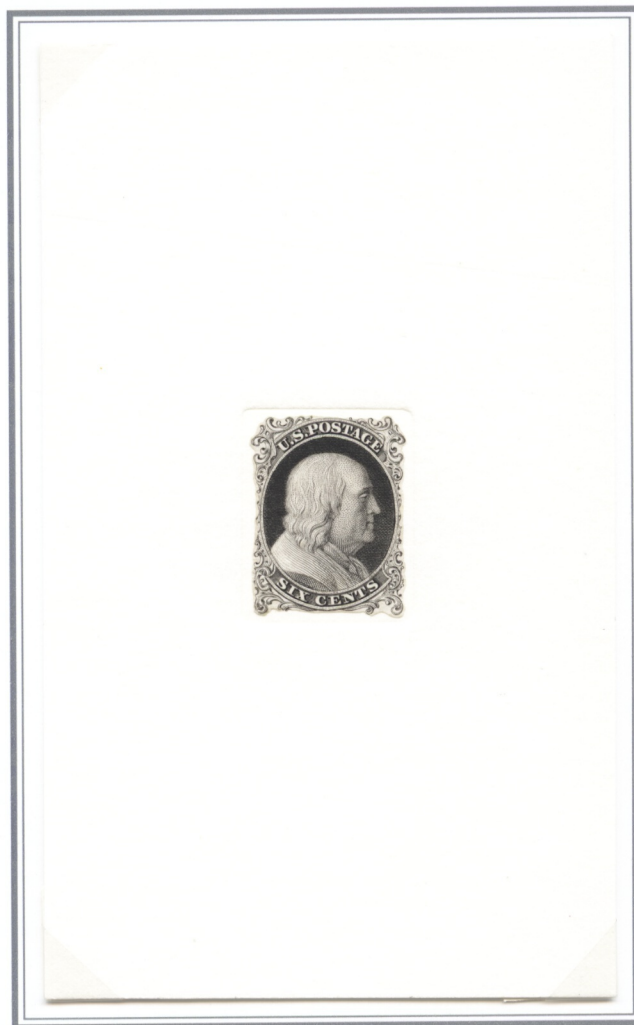
Only recorded in blue.



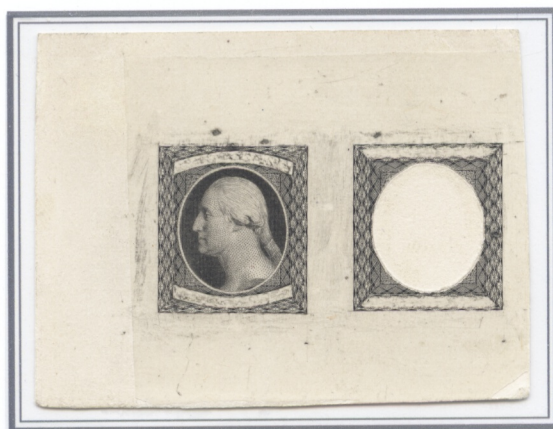
Black die proof on card.

Left side of the colorless oval frame shows small dot most likely added as die returned to the Post Office Department.

One of three recorded in black.

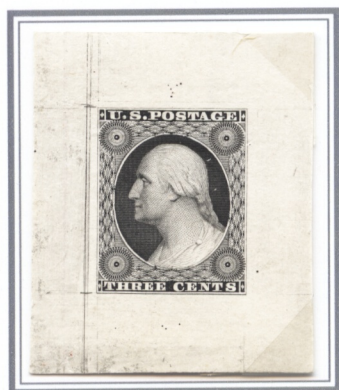


The Franklin design was originally considered for a 6 cent stamp. This value was considered and then changed to the 1 cent value. This essay shows the complete design.



Side by side working essays with nearly complete tessellated work in the frames.

1 of 2 recorded. Second example with vignette in right frame.

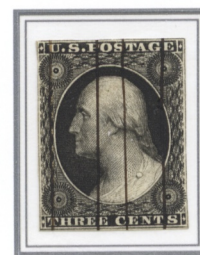


Die essay on India paper showing adopted except lathe work impinges on colorless oval. Shows layout lines.



Plate proof on India.
Position 97R4.

From a sheet prepared to use as a guide for the perforating machine purchased in 1857.



Black trial color plate proof on wove paper.
Position 17R4

One of three recorded with ruled lines.



Black trial color plate proof on wove paper.
One of three recorded.



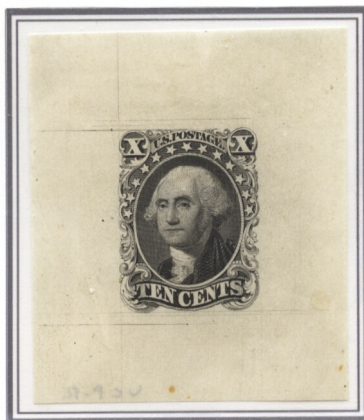
Deep red brown trial color plate proof on wove paper.



Deep orange trial color plate proof on wove paper.



Progressive large die proof
on India paper.
'U S POSTAGE' in pencil.
Only recorded example of
this die proof.



Black die trial color proof on
India paper.



Progressive large die proof
on India paper.



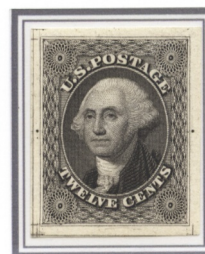
Large die proof on India
paper cut down to stamp size.



Black plate proof on
wove paper with black
ruled lines on card.



Incomplete Essay
Adopted design without
small vertical equilateral
crosses in center rows of
diamond networks, top,
sides and bottom.



Black die proof with
ruled lines on card.



The 1 cent stamp was issued to satisfy the drop and printed matter rates and, secondary, the under 3,000 mile letter rates. It was also required to make up some international rates and it was used for carrier delivery and way fees. Plate one in the early state was used from 1 July 1851 until the middle of 1852.

The imperforate 1 cent stamp was printed from four different plates. Plate one had two states, early and late. Of the 1,000 positions, only one position, 7R1^E, from the top row of the early state of plate one shows the most complete intended design and is identified as a type I stamp. All the other positions have a greater part of the design missing.

The stamp shows a double transfer.



5 July 1851 letter from Richmond VA to New York four days after issue of the 1 cent stamp.

The stamps are positions 7-9R1^E. All three of these stamps show a double transfer.

Earliest recorded use of an 1851 type I stamp.

I	Ib	Ib
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Type Ib is only found in six positions in the top row of the early state of right plate one. This type is not as complete on the bottom as a type I, in particular the plume at the lower right is not complete. All type Ib stamps show a double transfer.

Upper left
corner margin strip
of three, positions
1-3 Rr^E.
Cover from
Newburgh NY to
Detroit MI.

II	II	Ib
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4Rr^E 5Rr^E 6Rr^E
All positions type Ib.

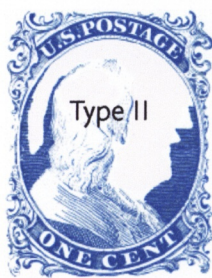


6Rr^E 8Rr^E
Positions 6 and 8 are the best examples of type Ib.



Oregon Territory
to Washington Territory
June 1855 folded letter from Eugene
City OT to Steilacoom WT.
Positions 3,4 Rr^E, 13Rr^E

Ib	Ib
IIIA	



Most stamps on plate one early are type II. The design is complete at the top, incomplete scrolls at the bottom.



Unused OG type II block of 12 plus position 57 reattached.

Positions 58-60, 67-70, 77-80Li^E.

Largest recorded block from plate one early



Most pronounced double transfer on plate 1.
Position 65Ri^E



October 1851 unsealed circular from Lawrence MA to West Concord NH. Position 17Li^E.



Example with top line broken
bottom line not broken

Either, but not both, top or bottom outer lines broken. Top and bottom ornaments incomplete. Thirty-two positions of plate one early are type IIIa.



Right stamp 'misplaced' relief 'A'.
Position 95-96R1^E

II	IIIa
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Bare trace of right inter-pane line. Three strikes of red 'PAID/3' in circle. Right stamp shows break in outer line at top. This is a very late printing; in most printings this is a type II with complete outer line.

Positions 98-100L1^E

II	II	IIIa
----	----	------



Area above the middle stamp shows key elements of type I position 7R1^E. The short transfer at the top of the middle stamp retained the nearly complete design above it.

Positions 16-18R1^E

IIIa	IIIa	II
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Positions 32, 42R1^E

IIIa

II



Cover from San Francisco CA to Bloomville II. Strip of six stamps with inter-pane line on left pays the over 3,000 mile single rate. Three type IIIa and three type II stamps. Most likely mailed in March 1852. Positions 31-36 R1^E, position 35 shows natural pre-printing paper fold.

II	IIIa	IIIa	II	IIIa	II
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November 1851 unsealed circular from Troy to Cooperstown NY.
Double inverted transfer with break in bottom line
Pre-printing paper fold.
Stamp is dark blue.
Position 81Lr^E. This is the best example of a type IIIa on plate one early.



Red grid and Prussian closed mail marking.
Position 11Lr^E



One of two positions of type IIIa's from this plate with break on bottom.
Position 100Rr^E



Inter-pane line.
Position 51Rr^E

October 1851 drop rate folded address sheet bearing Boston town postmark with 1 cent integral rate marking and small 'PAID' in grid.

This integral rate postmark was used briefly at end of 1851.
Position 51Lr^E



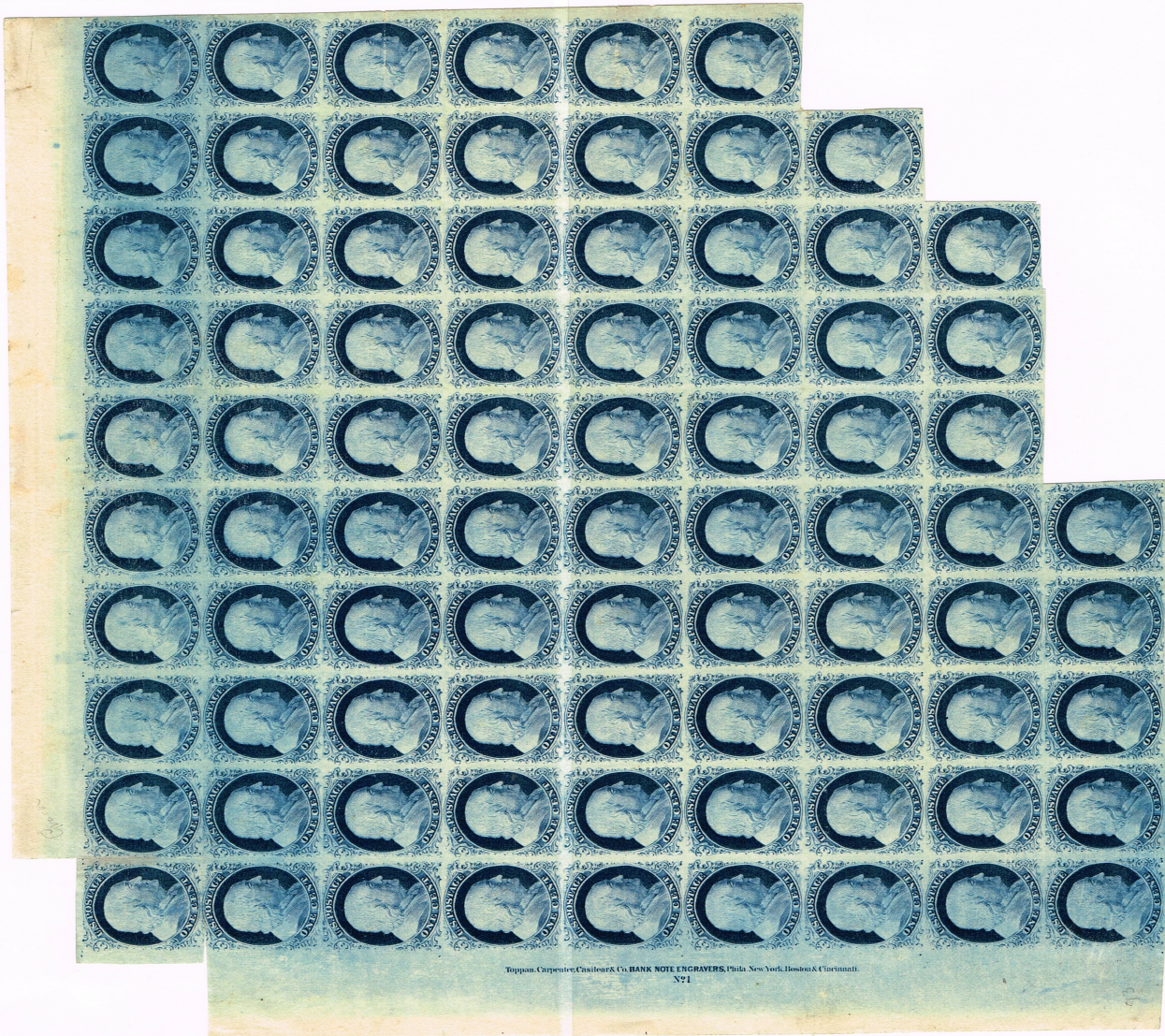
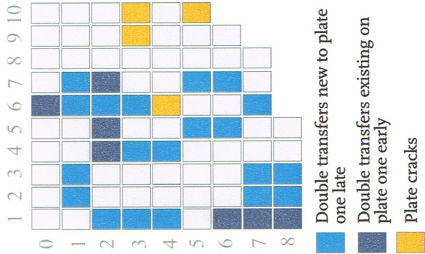
Partial unused block of 82 without gum from left pane of plate one after reworking, plate one late. The rework resulted in type IV stamps.

In an effort to improve the condition of plate 1 the plate was extensively cleaned and reworked in early 1852 including recutting all but one position on the plate and re-entering many positions. This resulted in seven different recut varieties, all shown here, as well as a number of double transfers.

Some double transfers existed on the original plate and others resulted from the rework.

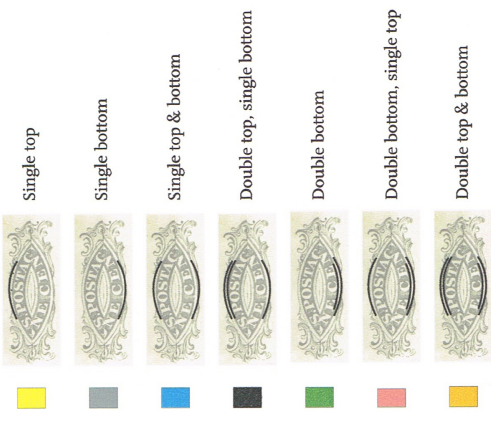
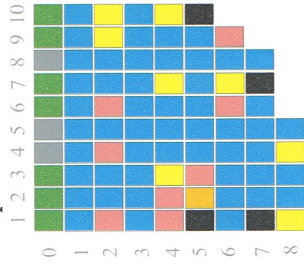
In addition, the imprint and plate number were added. This block contains a full plate block.

Pronounced double transfers and surface cracks.



Toppan, Carpenter, Casilear & Co. BANK NOTE ENGRAVERS, Phila. New York, Boston & Cincinnati.
Nº 1

Recut positions that are represented in the block.



With line engraved stamps it was common to go back and re-enforce or recut lines that appeared weak on the plate.



Printed on both sides.
Reverse shown
Only recorded example
of any type



o.8x
Original side.
Boston 'PAID'
in grid cancel.



Partial imprint plate 1.
Position 50Rr¹



Boscawen NH. Positions 71-73, 81-83, 91-93Lr¹.
Positions 71, 81, 91 Lr¹ each triple transfer one inverted.



Position 89Rr¹ early printing on left. Late printing on
right shows break in bottom line, thus type IIIa.



Philadelphia 'r' in octagon.
Position 92Lr¹



Cracked plate on collar.
Position 41Rr¹



Pre-printing paper fold.
Double transfer. Position 7Rr¹



Position 88Rr¹



Straddle show stamps from left pane and partial stamp
from right pane. Positions 88-90Lr¹ and 81Rr¹



New York City Carrier Delivery Cover. Position 12Rr¹

Only one position of plate one late, 4R1^L, was not recut and remains a type II.

II
IV



Positions 4 and 14R1^L



San Francisco CA town postmark cancels stamps.

Positions 4-9R1^L. Positions 5, 6, 7 and 9 have single recut at bottom. Only eight positions on the plate have a single recut at bottom. Early printing where plate bruising is not as prominent.

II	IV	IV	IV	IV	IV
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Late printing showing plate bruising positions 4, 6 and 7. Position 7 shows 'horns'.



Lafayette Whithed Exp
Enfield
Conn

Printed matter wrapper from unknown town to Enfield CT. This wrapper, which is refolded, contained either eight newspapers or a periodical or book weighing between nine and ten ounces. Stamps positions 3-10R1^L

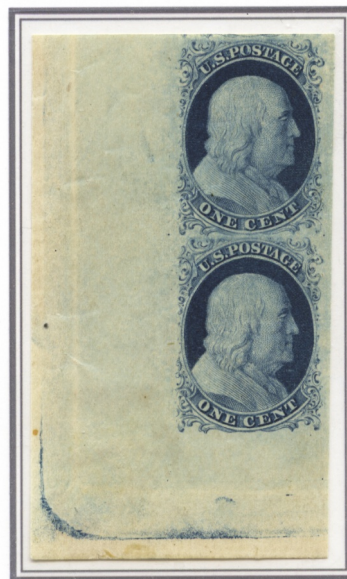
IV	II	IV	IV	IV	IV	IV	IV
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By early 1855 the 1 cent stamp plate was showing significant wear creating a need for a second production plate. This plate bore a large, disfiguring flaw at the upper left yet it still went into production. All stamps on this plate are type II except for position 99R, a type III, and 100R which evolved into a type IIIA. Plate two was used less than two years before perforations were adopted.

Left and right plate numbers and imprints



Positions 40, 50, 60R2



Shows rounded corner of plate.
Unused OG. Positions 81, 91L2



Unused OG.
Position 97R2



Reconstructed.
Positions 31, 41, 51, 61L2



Red paint from Mobile.
Double transfer.
Position 41R2



Milan receiving mark.
Position 92L2



Unused OG.
Top row show double transfers.
Positions 61-62, 71-72R2



December 1856 folded address sheet from New York City to Philadelphia PA. Position 89R2 'the big shift'



Unused OG left corner margin block of 12 with a late example of the flaw. The flaw opened wider with use which led to the plate being retired a little after a year of service. This block shows surface cracks in the sheet margin above the left side and to the left of position 1L2 and the partial misplaced transfer above 1L2. Positions 1-4, 11-14, 21-24L2

Earlier printings showing the sections of the flaw before it reached the state shown above

Position 2L2



Stitch watermark
Position 12L2



Shows bottom
end of crack
Position 33L2



Cover from Nantucket to Boston MA. Three individual stamps. Positions 23-25L2

Types III and IIIa



Type III stamps are open at the top and the bottom; type IIIa are open at only the top or bottom. Plate two has one type III, position 99R2, and one type IIIa position 100R2.

Position 99R2 was originally entered too low relative to the bottom row and it was erased and reentered causing the double transfer. The new entry was short transferred at both the top and bottom resulting in the wide break characteristic of type III. Position 99R2 shows double transfer.

Position 100R2 is only a type IIIa in later printings; in early printings position 100R2 is a type II.



New York City carrier delivered letter. 'Paid/U.S. Mail/City Delivery' carrier postmark canceling stamp. Position 99R2 type III

II	II
II	II
III	II



Unused original gum.
Early impression, position 100R2 type II showing a very faint bottom line. Position 99R2 type III.
Position 89R2 type II with pronounced double transfer.



Positions 97-99R2

II	II	III
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100R2 type II

Most likely 1855 based on impression. This would be the earliest known use of a plate 2 stamp.



100R2 type IIIa