

"OPERATION MANIPULATION"

THE U.S. ONE CENT STAMP OF 1851 - 1861

By Mortimer L. Neinken



Because of the relative scarcity of the various types of the U.S. 1851-61 one cent stamp, catalogue values vary considerably. Prices in the 1983 Scott's U.S. Specialized run from Type V (Sc.24) unused \$120. and Type V used \$20., of which thousands have been available to collectors, to Type I (Sc.5) unused \$100,000. and Type I used \$18,500. Therefore, there is a great temptation on the part of the not-so-honest to take cheap types and by adding or removing lines, change the stamps so that they appear to be the more expensive types. In this article some of these manipulations will be described.

Figure 1 illustrates the complete die design of the U.S. One Cent stamp. During the ten years that this stamp was issued, 12 plates of 200 subjects each were produced and in order to accommodate the size of the plates, the ornaments and frame lines and the top and bottom were altered. On some of the later plates the ornaments on the sides were shortened. This resulted in eight major types (I, Ia, Ib, II, III, IIIa, IV and V) and two minor types, Ic and Va.

Type I imperforate stamps are the rarest. This is the only imperforate stamp which has the full die design (Figure 1). Only one position in the four plates (800 subjects) from which the imperforate stamps were printed is Type I. That is position 7R1E (Figure 2), the seventh stamp, reading from left to right, in the top row of the right pane of Plate I Early. Only three copies unused and sixty-four copies used are known. It is extremely rare.

Numerous attempts have been made to market fake copies. Alterations have been made on "B" Relief, Type II stamps (Figure 3) by painting in the bottom outer plumes and scrolls. See Figures 1 and 2. Also, perforations have been cut away from large margin copies of the Type I stamps from Plate 12. These perforated stamps have a secret mark in the left center part of the white oval around the vignette (Figure 4). Where attempts have been made to remove this dot, they have been unsuccessful. Fakes of singles on and off cover have been marketed. These were made from proofs on stamp paper in the original stamp color of the 1875 reprint (Scott #40). Usually a fake cancellation was applied.

Figure 5 illustrates a bottom row copy of a "B" Relief Plate 2 stamp. Here the faker painted in the full plumes and scrolls and so created a Type I stamp. Surely he was no student. He showed his lack of knowledge because he did not realize that the Type I stamp appears only in the top row of the sheet or pane.

There are really no good fakes of the 7R1E because of the virtual impossibility of accurately reproducing the double transfer in the top lettering and the top right side ornaments.

Type Ia (Figure 6) is also a rare stamp. Note the flaw under the "U" of "U.S.". All Type Ia stamps must have the plate flaw. Eighteen positions in the bottom row of Plate 4 are Type Ia. The sixth row positions Plate 4 all have the plate flaw but none of these are Type Ia. The Type Ia stamps are cut off at the top but they must have the full plumes and scrolls at the bottom. Most fakes are made from Type IIIa "E" Relief stamps, and the full plumes and scrolls are painted in. The "E" Relief stamps do not have the plate flaw.

Type IIIa (Figure 7) shows the outer curved frame line at the top or bottom broken. There are only three positions with the bottom line broken, 81L1E which has an inverted transfer and is impossible to fake; 100R1E, an "A" Relief stamp; and 100R2, a "B" Relief. I have never seen fakes of these positions. The fakers usually take an "A" Relief, Type II stamp and scratch out or erase part of the outer curve frame lines to create a Type IIIa stamp. Close examination can always detect this fake.

(Continued on page 15)

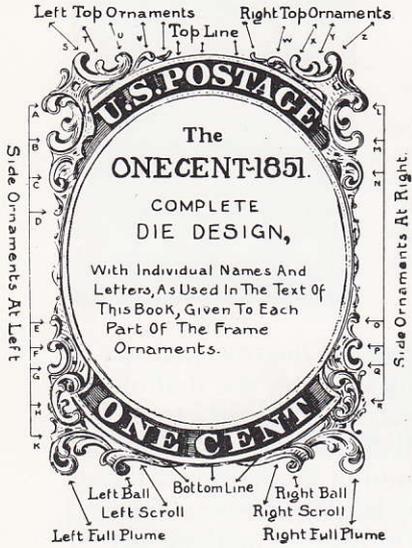


Figure 1

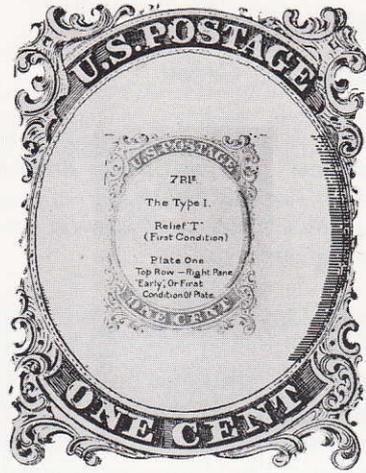


Figure 2

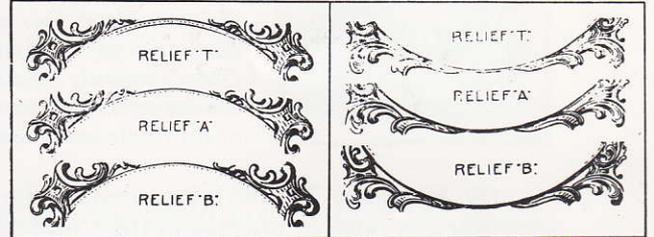


Figure 3. A comparison of the tops and bottoms of the three reliefs.

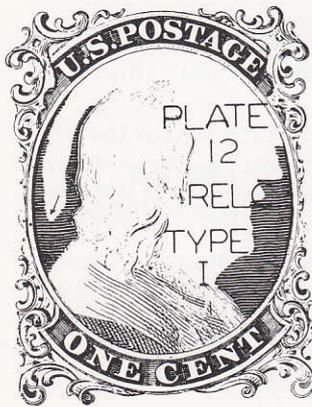


Figure 4



Figure 5



Figure 6



Figure 7



Figure 8

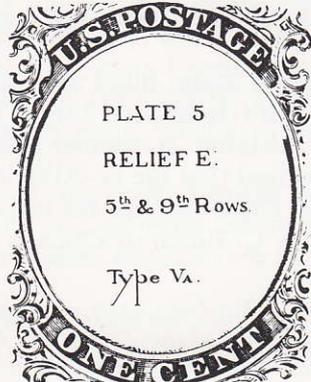


Figure 9

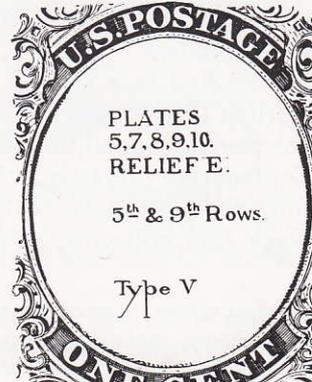


Figure 10



Figure 11

Operation Manipulation (Continued from page 3)

In Type III stamps, both the top and bottom outer curved frame lines are broken (Figure 8). The easiest way to fake a Type III stamp is to take a Type IIIa with the top frame line broken and scratch out or erase part of the bottom frame line. Other fakes are made from Type Va (Figure 9) perforated stamps, particularly center line copies, because usually these stamps were not perforated on the center line. Thus a straight edge exists at left or right and the faker trims off the perforations at the top, bottom and the other side. If a student has studied the reliefs of the Type V or Va stamp, he can readily detect this fake.

It should be remembered that on all of the above, the side ornaments are practically complete except the left side ornaments of Type Va. So, sometimes the faker will try to paint in completed ornaments on both sides of a large marginal Type V stamp and then trim the perforations on all sides (Figure 10).

Figure 11 illustrates a Type V stamp on which the right side ornaments have been painted in to make them complete and the left side ornaments have also been touched up. It is a crude fake of a perforated Type III stamp.

Finally, the recut stamp, Type IV. Scott catalogues the imperforate (#9) at \$300. unused and \$75. used and the perforated (#23) at \$1,400. unused and \$225. used. So the temptation is great to perforate the cheaper imperforate. Beware of a narrow Scott #23, although such genuinely exist. The perforations should be carefully checked.

The history of the One Cent Blue is a prime example of the potential hazards that can be avoided. To feel safe and to be safe, it is best to submit any stamps of value to The Philatelic Foundation for expertization.