



Philatelic Foundation Analysis Leaflet

The Philatelic Foundation, 270 Madison Avenue, New York, NY 10016

The Ninety Cent Stamp of the 1857 Series



Counterfeit cover showing 90c tied by counterfeit NEW YORK cancel. Stampless cover, top, shows genuine cancel. Both covers from The Philatelic Foundation Reference Collection.

The Ninety Cent Stamp of the 1857 Series was not issued until late summer of 1860. The earliest recorded date of use is September 11, 1860.

It is believed that less than 25,000 of these stamps were issued. The stamps were in use until approximately October, 1861, just over one year. As a result, the 90 cent issue is scarce in mint condition and even rarer genuinely used.

The 1860 stamp, as with all stamps in the 1857 series, was issued perf 15. As with other stamps in the series, imperforate copies are known and carry a mint catalogue value more than twice the perf 15 value. Scott numbers are #39 for the perf 15 and #39a for the imperforate variety.

The 90 cent also comes perf 12 as part of the 1875 Reprints of the 1857-60 issue that was produced for the Centennial Exposition of 1876. Although the stamps were not intended for use and were issued without gum, genuine used copies have been recorded.

Outright fakes of the issue are known, but are very crude. They do not pose a problem for careful collectors, particularly when compared with known genuine examples or even sharp photographs such as those in a well-produced auction catalogue. Examples of fakes that have been submitted to The Philatelic Foundation follow.



Examples of crude fakes with bogus cancels

Identifying genuine used copies is much more difficult, particularly since many of the used examples show grid cancels that are difficult to authenticate. The collector can apply the following tests that suggest the presence of a counterfeit cancel:

1. Ink appears too fresh for the stamp and possibly of recent vintage.
2. The stamp appears to have been "prepared" for cancellation by washing, alterations, etc.
3. The cancel differs from known genuine cancels of similar appearance.
4. The cancel appears to lie on top of the stamp, rather than having impregnated the paper over the passage of more than 100 years.

None of these tests are foolproof and all but the most expert philatelists are advised to submit this stamp for expertizing. (1)

Stamps with manuscript cancels pose the same authenticating problems as grid-canceled stamps. Since manuscript cancels are worth considerably less than hand stamped cancels, one would not expect a faker to apply a pen cancel, but this is not a firm rule. Shanghai magenta pen cancels do have added value.

Used copies on cover facilitate the identification of genuine copies. Such covers are quite rare, however. Not only does this put them beyond the reach of many collectors, but it also attracts the skilled faker. Thus, submission for expertizing is still advised.

The imperforate variety of the 1860 issue, with its considerable premium over the perf 15 stamp, also offers an inducement to the faker. For this reason, narrow margin imperf singles must be regarded as highly suspect. Wide margin singles or stamps with normal margins can be examined under magnification for traces of perf holes or for paper breaks or ridges created in the process of trimming a perforated stamp. Again, because of the value differentials and the knowledge required, submission of imperf varieties for expertizing is advised.

Identification of the 1875 Reprint of this issue poses less of a problem, since the paper of the Reprint is whiter than the 1860 issue and was issued perf 12 instead of perf 15.

Analysis of all 90 cent 1860 issues submitted to The Philatelic Foundation shows the following results through June, 1985:

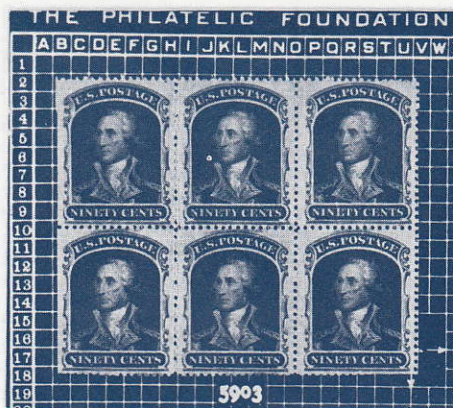
Scott Number	Number Submitted	Genuine Unused	Not Genuine Stamp	Genuine Used	Genuine Stamp Not Gen. Used
#39	759	432	15	148	164
#39a	35	15	18	0	2
#47	170	161	7	0	2

Many of the genuine used copies have been repaired since they were used on packages sent abroad and damaged in transit. In recent years a slight increase in the number of counterfeit cancels submitted for expertizing has occurred. Whereas 52% of all used copies submitted through May, 1980, were determined to have counterfeit cancellations, between May, 1980, and June, 1985, the percentage is 57%.

Four covers submitted to the Foundation are believed to be genuine. These are Boston to Cape of Good Hope; 90 cent single usage to Shanghai, China; 90 cent single domestic usage from Cincinnati, Ohio to Peoria, Illinois; and Boston to Shanghai with \$1.68 postage. One other cover from New York to Barcelona, Spain, although not submitted to the Foundation, is believed to be genuine, making a total of five known genuine 90 cent covers.

Singles and a block of six are known with a red pen cancellation, consisting of a vertical and horizontal line crossing in the center of the stamp. These have been identified as "presentation copies" that have (or had) full gum and were presented to certain officials from remainder stocks.

Only one plate was used for the printing of this stamp and the varieties that exist include a double transfer at top, a double transfer at bottom, and short transfers at bottom right (position 13LL) and bottom left (position 68RL). Imperforate and part perforated examples are known, but it is thought that they were not regularly issued and could be from trial printings.



Largest known multiple of the 90c is a mint block of nine. A reconstructed block of five with Shanghai cancel is the largest known used multiple.

REFERENCES:

The United States Postage Stamps of the 19th Century, by Lester G. Brookman.

(1) For further information on the authentication of used copies, see "At Times the Rules are Reversed," by Thomas J. Alexander, OPINIONS II, 1985, by The Philatelic Foundation, pp. 52-55.