



Book Reports

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AMERICANA SERIES TINTED PAPER VARIETIES

Charles Neyhart

The U.S. Americana stamp series debuted October 31, 1975 with the issuance of the 13-cent Liberty Bell stamp in booklet form. The last stamp, the precanceled 12-cent Freedom of Conscience coil, was issued in 1983. The centerpiece of the series was a unifying design theme within the sheet stamps. This theme, an example of which is illustrated in Figure 1, was to create vignettes arranged in a block of four with a coalescing border inscription surrounding each vignette to exemplify a piece or part the Country's history and culture.

There are a number of distinctive features about the series. It was the first series issued by the United States Postal Service. The series was designed by a private graphics design firm [Kramer, Miller, Lomden and Glassman of Philadelphia] under contract to the USPS. Seven different presses were used to print the stamps of the series [Cottrell, A, B, Andreotti gravure, Miller offset, Giori I-8 currency, and the Miehle flat-bed]. Three printing bases were used – recess [line-engraved intaglio and photogravure], surface [offset lithography], and relief [letterpress]. Dull [DVA] gum came of age in the series. Mechanized booklet assembly was introduced, eliminating the use of interleaving and staples. Decimal-denominated third-class bulk rate stamps, each featuring a musical instrument, were commingled with stamps from other mail classes.¹ Precancel markings for individual cities were eliminated and replaced by [national] plain line overprints with or without service indicators during the series' lifetime.



Figure 1. A unifying vignette – Rights and Freedoms

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¹ These five bulk-rate denominations were issued only in coil format. Each had an inscription related to “music” but was not intended to form a unifying block vignette.

STAMP PAPER

While many of the features listed above have research implications, the distinctive feature examined here is the use of color *tinted* paper to print certain stamps in the series. The intent was to use a single tint for each stamp in a four-stamp vignette, thus further unifying that vignette and its message. Planned paper tinting was: *light green*, 1- to 4-cents; *canary*, 5- to 8-cents; *gray*, 9- to 12-cents; *green*, 17- to 21-cents; *blue*, 22- to 30-cents; and *goldenrod*, 31- to 75-cents.²

Not surprisingly, these plans were not fully realized. Changes in postage rates altered the denominations eventually issued in the series. For sheet stamps, the 5- to 8-cent, the 17- to 21-cent, and the 31- to 75-cent denominations were not used. Instead, 13-, 15-, and 16-cent stamps were issued, but they could not be configured into a unifying block vignette. These stamps were printed on white paper. The high value sheet stamps actually issued [50-cent, \$1, \$2 and \$5] were formed into a common four-stamp vignette entitled “America’s Light.” They were printed on white paper, but in keeping with the desired common color plan, a full background of *tan* ink was offset-printed on each stamp.

In the final analysis, the allocation of color tinted stamp paper was:

Vignette	Paper Color Tint	Denomination
Roots of Democracy	<i>Greenish</i>	1-, 2-, and 3-cents
	<i>Cream</i>	4-cent
Rights and Freedoms	<i>Gray</i>	9-, 10-, and 11-cents
	<i>Beige</i>	12-cent
Places and Signals	<i>Blue, Light blue</i>	24-, 28-, 29-, and 30-cents
Musical Instruments [Coils]	<i>Yellow, Bright yellow</i>	3.1-, 3.5-, 7.7-, 7.9-, and 8.4-cents

You may notice from this Table that two of the vignettes are composed of two different colored papers. I do not know exactly why this occurred. Speculation would include supplier-inventory problems, particularly for the 12-cent stamp since it was printed much later than the others in that vignette. Or, perhaps more likely, the final ink colors selected for printing the 4- and 12-cent stamps may have influenced a different color choice of the respective stamp papers.

PAPER TINT VARIETIES

Paper tint varieties are listed for the Americana issue; yet, the principal listing references are not consistent. One of these varieties carries a substantial catalog value; the other is common. The research issues are: [1] How to identify these varieties, [2] What caused the varieties, and [3] What color tints were actually used.

² Ken Lawrence, “Americana Series 1975-83,” *The American Philatelist* [May 1995] p. 440.

The Scott *Specialized* catalog lists as varieties: 1-cent, dull gum, *white* paper [1582c] and 2-cent, dull gum, *cream* paper [1583b]. The Brookman *Price Guide* lists as varieties: 2-cent, dull gum, *white* paper [1582v] and *cream* paper [1582b]. Brookman does not list a 1-cent variety.

I have searched for these two varieties for some time and in many different venues. The 1- and 2-cent sheet stamps are readily available, as singles and plate blocks. The varieties are listed as having dull gum, the first step in isolating them. But properly identifying these varieties is still problematic.

A confounding factor: The 1- and 2-cent stamps were intaglio printed on the single-color Cottrell press, the design elements printed in dark blue and red brown inks, respectively. After ink is fed from the ink transfer roller to the metal plate cylinder, the Cottrell press used an automatic roller or blade to remove ink from the surface of the plate, leaving ink only in the recesses that form the stamp image. However, the 1- and 2-cent stamps [and other Americana series stamps printed on tinted papers] suffer surface tinting from inadequate plate wiping. This creates an illusion of color to the human eye that will not match the actual color of the paper.

ONE-CENT STAMP

The Durland catalog records two plates [38257 and 38258] for the 1-cent sheet stamp printed on *white* paper with dull gum, i.e., the paper tint variety. However, these plates are also recorded for both the dull gum and shiny gum printings on *greenish* paper. Thus, this plate information may only be of partial use in isolating the paper variety. Interestingly, no use or production data is reported for plate 38258, but this plate most certainly was matched with plate 38257, which is reported as having produced 596,405 units [238.6 million stamps].³



Figure 2
The white paper variety.

Lawrence [1995] attributes the printing on *white* paper to a Bureau printing error. This is not an unreasonable conclusion, but it would be more useful to know how the Durland catalog picked up on the *white* paper printing information in the first place. Was it revealed in the Bureau's periodic printing reports? Could this have been an inventory problem, i.e., tinted paper not available for the scheduled press run? The plate numbers are not outliers with respect to the timing and sequencing of their certification and use. I think this is most likely nothing other than an inventory requisition error.

What we do know, at this point, is that a *white* paper variety will be from plates 38257 and 38258. If you do happen to find one of these plate numbers with a dull gum finish, you should compare it to another dull gum 1-cent subject, preferably from the same plate. Shiny gum stamp fronts tend to appear much brighter than their dull gum counterparts.⁴

³ Plate data is from: *Bureau Issues Association Plate Number Checklist*.

⁴ This can be verified from Lawrence [1995] by comparing three blocks from plate 38257, p. 443.

TWO-CENT STAMP



Figure 3
The white paper variety.

The Durland catalog lists a *white* paper variety, but not a *cream* paper variety as listed in Scott and Brookman. What is more interesting here is that Durland does not list *greenish* paper for the 2-cent; rather, the identification of the primary paper color is simply “*tinted*.” I suspect that the unintended background surface tinting from the red brown ink used to print the design may have masked the paper tint. This plate wiping problem may also explain why Scott and Brookman classify the variety as *cream*. Brookman’s listing of a second *white* variety could be due to a number of sources, including the *Durland* reference.

Durland records 11 plates for the 2-cent sheet stamp printed on *white* paper with dull gum. Unlike the 1-cent case, not all of these plates are recorded for the dull gum printing on *tinted* paper. Four plates [39773, 39774, 39817, and 39818] are unique to the *white* paper variety.⁵ A block of four from plate 39774 is shown below.



Figure 4. One of four unique plate numbers used to print on white paper.

The four unique plates were used to fulfill a pressing demand for make-up 2-cent stamps necessitated by an increase in the first-class rate from 18- to 20-cents effective November 1, 1981. Plates 39773 and 39774 went to press September 24 and plates 39817 and 39818 went to press September 25, 1981. In the interim, the USPS issued the previously printed and stockpiled non-denominated [20-cent] “C” stamp October 11, 1981. As it turned out, when this emergency 2-cent printing order was done, there were no remaining stocks of the *tinted* stamp paper on hand at or readily available to the Bureau.

CONCLUSIONS

These paper color varieties make an appealing addition to collecting the Americana series. The series is colorful and the designs are unusual. Regrettably, the Americana series did not achieve traction with the public or with collectors maybe because the series tried to do too much. Stamps are available from dealers at reasonable prices. Even though the series introduced novel designs and used wide-ranging production methods, it is relatively free of varieties. The best known are the color-inverted \$1 “CIA Invert” [Rush Lamp and Candle, 1610c] and the line-perforated 13-cent Eagle and Shield [1596d]. The two paper color varieties should, ideally, be collected with an attached plate number for confirmation, either as a single or a block. [You can find the full range of plate numbers in the Durland catalog from NPL.] Depending on your eyesight alone to diagnose color is problematic with these varieties.

⁵ The plates used to print both tinted and white versions are: 38281, 38287, 38601, 38602, 38603, 38604 and 38606.

THE JOHN BLAKEMORE LITERATURE DONATION

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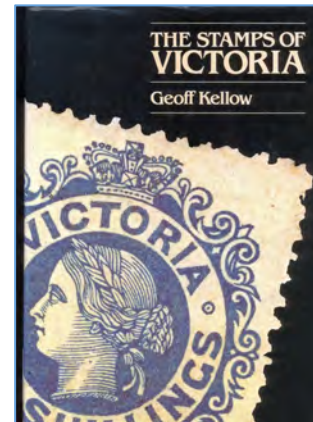
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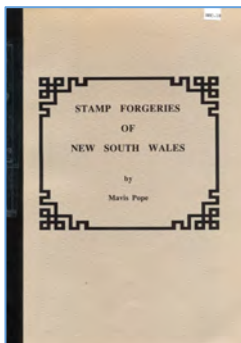
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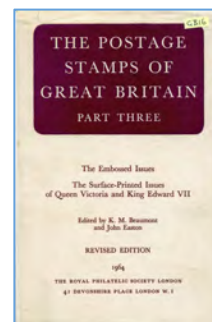
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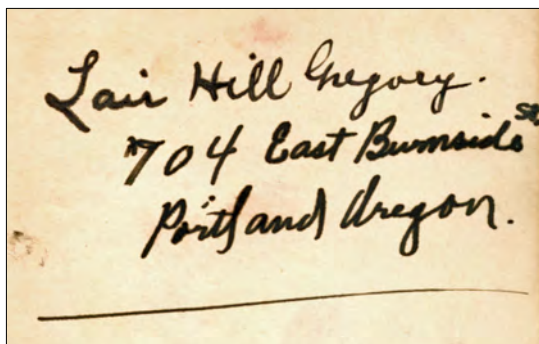
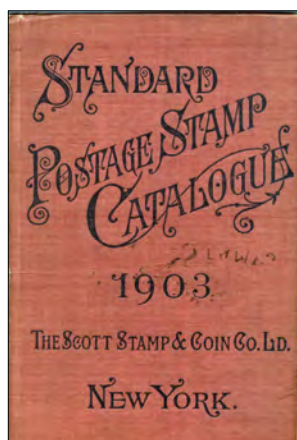
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WRITING ASSIGNMENTS

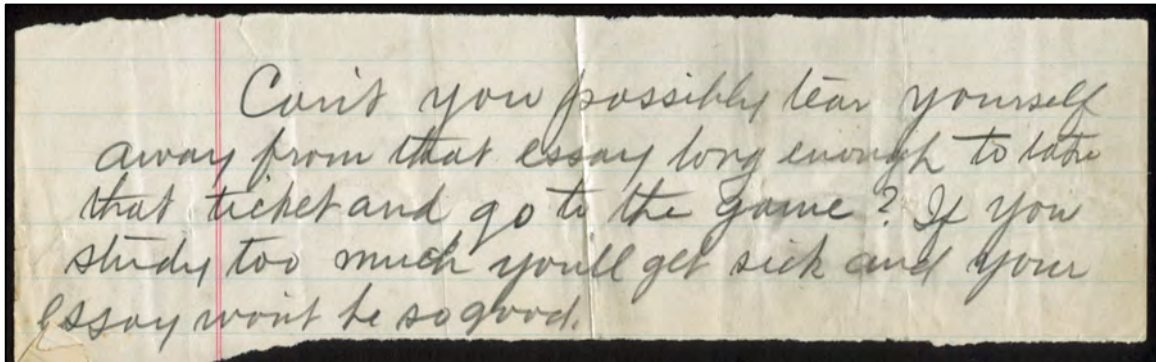
Charles Neyhart

This is something that unexpectedly piqued my curiosity. When the Library's sales manager, Larry Spray, was moving older Scott catalogs to his inventory, we noticed something lodged between the pages of a 1903 catalog. In fact, there were several items: a photograph, a calling card, and several handwritten messages. The catalog appeared to be in good shape but well used. After laying out the items, we began to try to decipher what they were and to maybe figure out why they were lodged in a stamp catalog over 100 years old. Central to this, of course, was an implied importance to this material for it to be cached in the catalog.

Our first clue was the handwritten inscription on the inside front cover of the catalog: Lair Hill Gregory, 704 East Burnside St., Portland Oregon. The second clue is the photograph and calling card in the name "Miss Sarah Mitchell Rogers," which likely go together.



There are exchanges of notes between two people, presumably Lair Hill Gregory and Sarah Mitchell Rogers, written on strips of plain lined tablet paper. These exchanges appear to take place over a short time, perhaps within a day or two. One would write an entry, pass it to the other, who would then respond. Regrettably, there is no way to know the date of this exchange. No location is given, but it was very likely Portland. A sample of the four strips is shown here.



The full text of the strips is given below.

LHG - "Can't you possibly tear yourself away from that essay long enough to take that ticket and go to the game? If you study too much you'll get sick and your essay won't be so good."

SMR - "There is no danger of my ever getting sick but I have so much work to do tomorrow and I want to make a new dress for class day so I think I had better stay home this time. It is awfully kind of you to offer it to me and I want to thank you just the same."

LHG - "If you are going to be so busy probably you would rather I didn't come tonight."

SMR - "Well, I really would rather you would come next Friday because I have to read up so much and I haven't started to write it yet. I didn't get to see Baptist either and if you come next Friday I can surely tell him to come. You must be sure to come next Friday though and then our essays will all be done."

A review of the *Polk City Directories* reveals that Sarah was a teacher at Irvington School between 1905 and 1910, boarding on SW Montgomery Street. She was not listed in the *Directory* thereafter. Lair Hill Gregory, born 1886, was listed as a student in 1905 residing on Burnside Street; then as a reporter for the *Telegram* between 1906 and 1908, residing on Hancock Street. He was not listed in 1909 or 1910, but listed again in 1911 with no profession given. He was listed as a copy editor for *The Oregonian* in 1912 and as a reporter for the *Journal* in 1913, the last year examined.

Lair Hill Gregory, as further research revealed, was the great-nephew of William Lair Hill, a pioneer, editor of *The Oregonian* [1872-77], attorney, and author of the early authoritative Oregon and Washington law codes. The Lair Hill area of Portland is named for William and is part of historic South Portland, a district of Italian, Irish and Jewish immigrants, much of which was demolished by the 1958 South Auditorium urban "renewal" project. Although Hill did not live in the area, he did own a 3½ acre parcel along Second Avenue S which later

housed a county hospital. The land was sold to the City of Portland for \$1 in 1927 and subsequently converted to Lair Hill Park. Lair Hill Gregory's father was a prominent Portland attorney.

Lair Hill Gregory became the sports editor for *The Oregonian* in 1921. He was known as "L.H." in his byline and wrote a daily column called "Greg's Gossip," which covered sports at any and all levels. He was a nationally renowned sports writer; yet, he gave particular due to the Portland Beavers baseball team and favored Portland boxing, which included the future property developer Tommy [the "Sellwood Socker"] Moyer. Gregory created the name "Johnny Pesky" for local baseball player John Paveskovich, who later had a long and successful career with the Boston Red Sox, because his given name wouldn't fit into a headline. His columns were selectively compiled and published in book form. He was inducted into both the Oregon Sports Hall of Fame and the Oregon Newspaper Hall of Fame. He was married to Kate. He retired in 1973 and died in 1975. His obituary appeared in the *New York Times*.

So, what do we know? Lair Hill Gregory acquired a 1903 Scott catalog when he was 17 or older, most likely as a stamp collector. Parts of the messages may provide additional hints. The reference in the first message "... take that ticket and go to the game?" suggests that L.H. was the writer and that he had a ticket to a sporting event to give away – perhaps a complementary one. [Professional baseball in Portland began regular play in 1903; the Portland Beavers started playing games in 1906.] The last message implies that both were involved in completing writing assignments, either separately or as a team, suggesting an academic setting. The messages hint that they could be college students completing their course work. That kind of independence could be inferred from the tone of their meeting plans. Were they simply classmates at that time?

This strikes me as a story that reflects the norms and, perhaps, the expectations of the time. Both individuals entered their chosen professions early and continued the education necessary for lasting success. The sense of their personal independence and purpose at that age is unmistakable. The notes suggest a friendship, born of location, age, and incentive.

I'm guessing that L.H. Gregory placed the notes and photograph in the Scott catalog one day and simply forgot about them as time moved on. I could find no evidence to confirm that he continued with stamp collecting. [He was not listed as a member of the Oregon Stamp Society, at least during the period that membership lists are available.] I'm thinking that the 1903 Scott catalog was part of his estate, along with that collection he had formed many years earlier. The catalog was subsequently donated to NPL, probably from the Parker Estate donation [Bill and his father Lee were long time Portland collectors], with the cached material simply waiting to be discovered and worked out.

LIBRARY NOTES

The first of January saw a new president leading the Northwest Philatelic Library. Orlie Trier took over from Charles Neyhart who moved to San Diego to be near family. Charles served on the Board for many years and was instrumental in bringing the library to the present level. Many resources were added during his leadership.

I accepted this position with the commitment to continue the high quality of service provided through the years. This provides a new challenge for me, and I have appreciation for the phrase “you can teach an old dog new tricks.” All services that were previously provided will continue. At the same time we are looking at our vision for the future and how we can better serve all of your needs.

Wayne Weatherl has been appointed to fill the Board vacancy. He brings with him a background in worldwide collecting. Don Overstreet was elected to assume the position of secretary for the Board. We welcome them to their positions on the Board as they each bring their own area of interest and expertise.

We are always looking for article to include in the *Book Reports*. If you have ever researched something here is a great opportunity to share this with our readers. Often times when I read an article it provides me with a new thought or idea and leads me to research a new area.

In Appreciation

To those generous individuals listed below who have made recent donations of literature and other consideration to NPL.

David B. Potts

Bill and Margaret Bitar

In addition, the following individuals contributed to NPL's end-of-year giving program. This financial support will help maintain a robust annual subscriptions program to important philatelic journals, to acquire books of interest, many of which are out of print, and to expand the suite of worldwide catalogs that collectors find useful and necessary.

Richard Averill
Richard Osborne
John Zenz

David Domkin
James Stulz

We THANK YOU all for your support!

RESEARCH STUMPER

Every now and then, we are faced with an interesting inquiry. We would like our readers to weigh in on a solution. This is our 14th “Stumper.”

The item in question is shown below. It is triangular in shape with a polar bear standing on an ice floe in the central vignette. Inscriptions along the edges are “ALASKA” in the center, “ARCTIC AIR” on the left and “MERCY FLIGHT” on the right. A 10 is placed in both the left and right corners. These items are known in a variety of contrasting colors for both the frames and vignettes. The items, however, are not routinely available from dealers or at auction, and particularly not in unused form.



The “stumper” is to identify the item, to explain its source and describe its production.

If you have a plausible solution, please submit it to NPL (nwpl@qwestoffice.net). We will write it up in a future issue of *Book Reports* and give you full attribution. Document your solution to the extent practicable. The “best” solution will be determined by NPL. Send your solution via email or letter mail at the appropriate address in the table at the end of this issue. [Gloria Neyhart provided the item for this “Stumper.”]

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