

1938 Presidential Issue

What about those 'Prexies'?



Thirty \$2 Prexies franked the front of this 1944 bank packet which carried negotiable securities. In addition, 45c in other Prexies (5c + 20c x 2 were added on the reverse for a total of \$60.45 in postage. It is estimated that 66c paid for twenty-two ounce.

Your 1st Prexie Set

- * Who wasn't elated when, as a kid, you completed your first Prexie set?
- * Never mind that you didn't even know that the \$2 and \$5 existed. If there wasn't a space in the album, stamp didn't exist!



Prexie Overview

- * 5th series of New Definitive Postage issued in 1938.
- * Features all 29 U.S. presidents who were in office between 1789 and 1928, from Washington to Coolidge, plus three (3) bonus stamps.
- * Replaces 1922 Definitives, that featured only Republicans.
- * FDR felt US postage needed to “...represent a broader, more united view of America by showing all the presidents, regardless of their political affiliation.”



Prexie Numeration

- * The 32 values were the largest Definitive Series yet to be issued by US Post Office.
- * Includes a stamp for every president, with the value of the stamp corresponding to the presidency number from Washington through Cleveland, the 22nd president, plus higher values for later presidents through Coolidge.
- * Cleveland's two non-consecutive terms disrupt the series
 - * No 23 cent issued (no associated postal rate)
 - * Harrison (23rd President) is on 24 cent issue
 - * McKinley restores alignment on the 25 cent issue
- * Higher values depart from presidents numeric sequence and had corresponding Postal rates.



Figure 1: All three dollar value Presidential-series stamps are seen on this cut square. The \$2 has a nice misregistration between the frame and vignette. But it is the \$5, a probable Scott #834a (the red brown error) that makes this a spectacular find.

Prexie Trivia

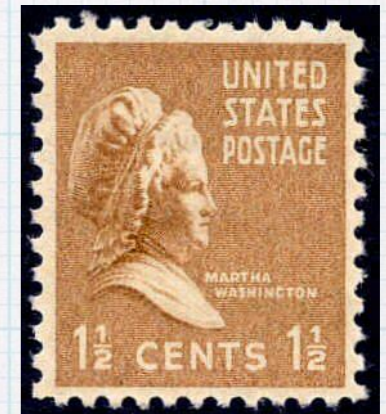
- * Of the 29 Presidents in the series, 12 had never before appeared on US Postage*
- * Four denominations (18, 19, 21 and 22 cents) had never appeared on US Postage,
- * They had no corresponding postal rate and were used only for numeric sequencing.
- * Three (3) additional stamps in fractional denominations honor Ben Franklin, Martha Washington, and the White House.
- * First definitive series since 1870 w/o Washington on the normal letter rate .03 stamp



* John Adams, John Q Adams, Van Buren, Harrison, Tyler, Polk, Fillmore, Pierce, Buchanan, Johnson, Arthur and Coolidge.

Fractional Denominations

- * Three (3) additional stamps in fractional denominations honor Ben Franklin, Martha Washington, and the White House.
- * There were no postal rates less than one cent total during the Prexie period.
- * Franklin began series, informally honoring him as the 'halfth' president.
- * Multiple rates in effect for the 4 1/2 cent stamp - 3rd class, international and add-on insurance.



HALF CENT PREXIE

- * The orange third stamp issued in the 1938 Prexie Series is an anomaly -
- * It pictures Benjamin Franklin who was never a President of the United States, and,
- * No rate ever existed that would have been paid solely with this half cent stamp.



Prexie Origins

- * FDR fostered the idea of a postal design competition with all the presidents, and the US Treasury conducted a contest in 1937.
- * Over 1100 entries were received from veteran stamp collectors.



“Dark Horse”

Elaine Rawlinson Wins!

- * 27 year old Elaine Rawlinson of New York City won the contest and the \$500 prize.
- * Not a collector - never expressed any interest in postage stamps.
- * Design based on the Jean-Antoine Houdon bust of Washington - very streamlined for the time. No fancy ornamentation, just the bust of Washington and the dates of his tenure in office.
- * Her win caused some consternation with collectors when it was learned that her design had been chosen over 1100 submissions produced by veteran stamp designers and collectors.
- * It was speculated that her design may have been influenced by philatelic events from across the Atlantic, where a new King Edward VIII definitive series had just been issued. The romance between Edward and the American divorcee Mrs Simpson was making headlines on both sides of the Atlantic - and the circumstances surrounding the similarities between Rawlinson’s design and KE VIII stamps were no less newsworthy.



Design Details

- * Models for engravings obtained from various paintings, sculptures and bronze statues.
- * All reproduced in a relatively uniform intaglio style on steel dies.
- * All have unique solid background colors.
- * On values up to \$.50 the presidents name appears in capital letters to the right of the bust.
- * On denominations between 10 cents and 19 cents, a single line border is added.
- * On 20 cents to 50 cents, a double line border appears.
- * Separate design for high values: Bi-color, Bust centered between two columns, four stars and names below portraits.



High Values

- * Bicolors used to avoid confusion with the 1c, 2c and 5c stamps. The \$1 stamp, printed in violet and black, was issued to the public on August 29, 1938 in sheet form.
- * The \$2 yellow-green and black stamp (issued in sheet form 9/29/38) saw limited usage in combination with other stamps to pay a variety of parcel post, registry and international air post fees. One of the most difficult Prexies to find as a solo usage.
- * Top plate number blocks can be found both with and w/o top arrow or registration marks.



Coils

- * On 1/20/39, nine values were issued in coil form, consisting of all low values from 1¢ to 6¢, and the 10¢, all perforated 10 vertically.
- * On Jan 27, the four values from 1¢ to 3¢ were also issued in vertical coil form, perforated 10 horizontally.



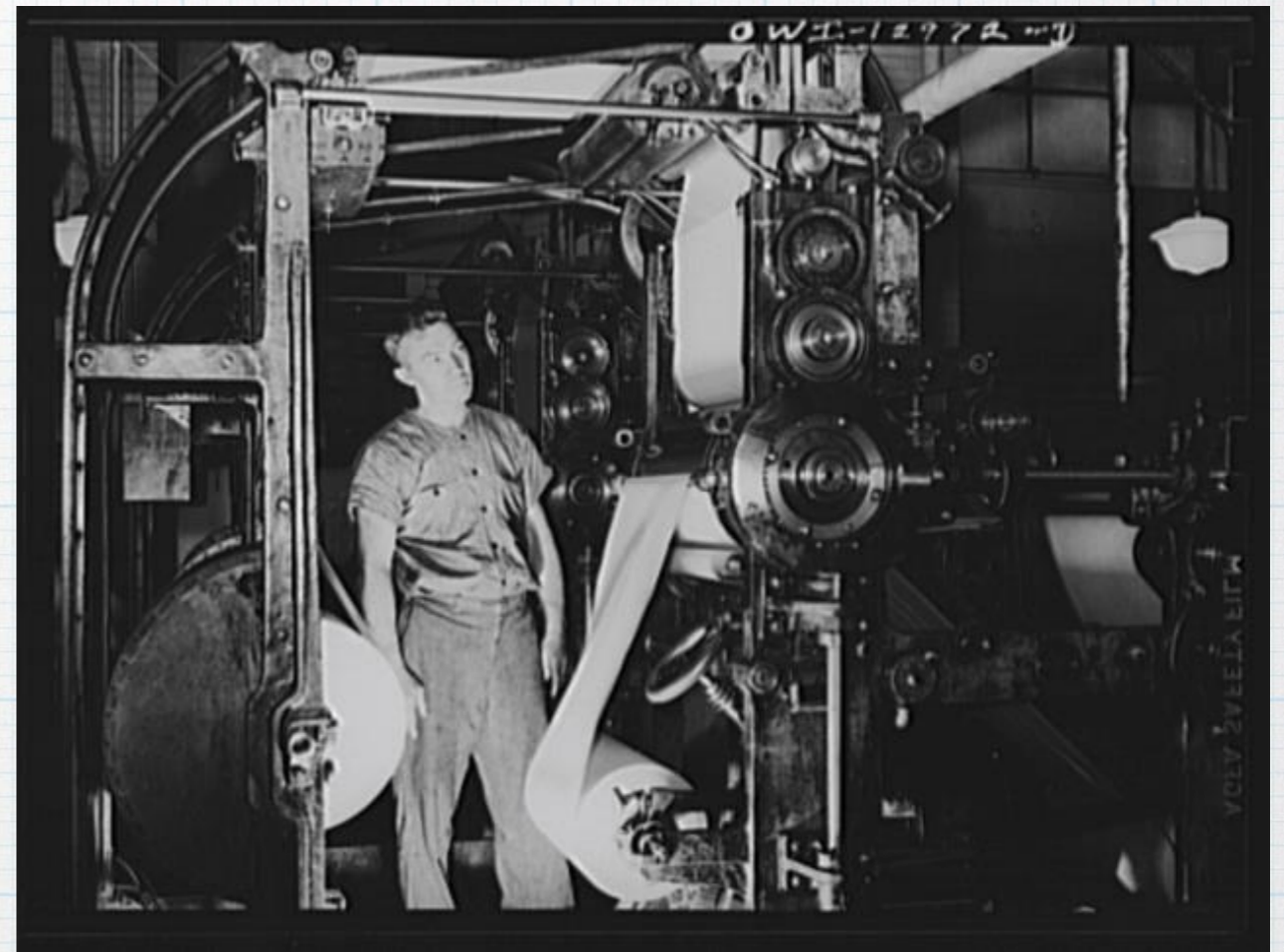
Booklet Panes

- * On 1/27/39, booklets offering the 1¢, 2¢ and 3¢ denominations went on sale, perforated 11 x 10 1/2.

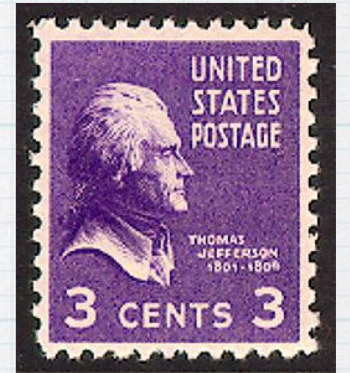
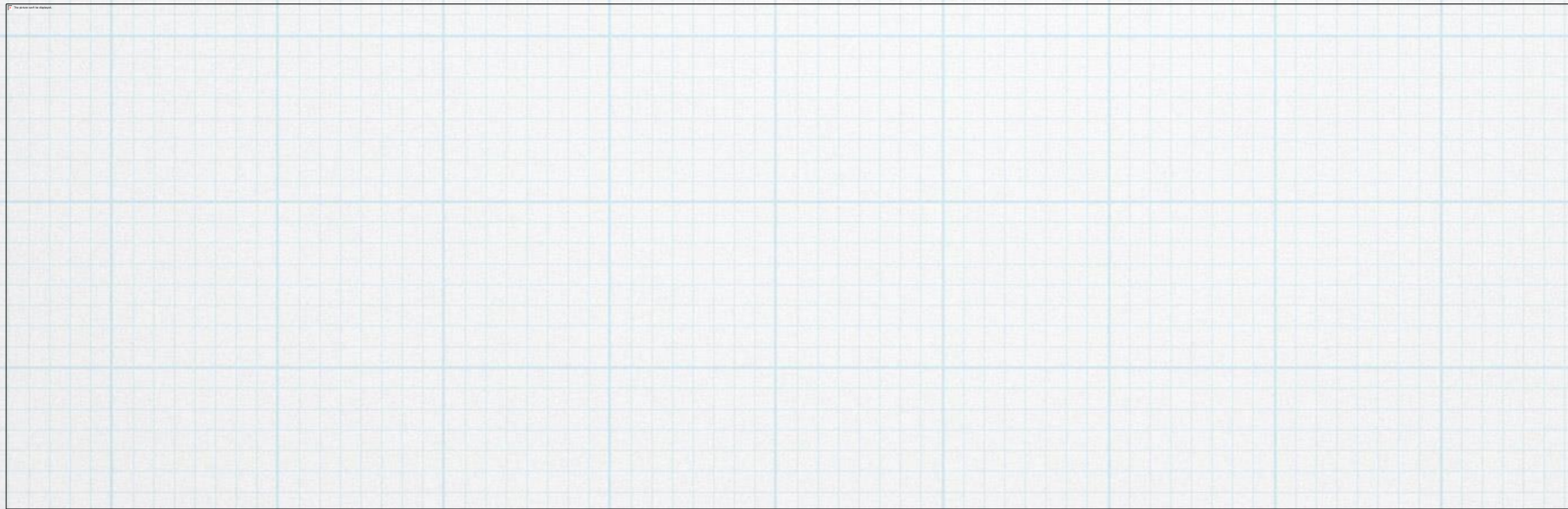


Production

- * Rotary Press Printing for values less than \$1
- * Ordinary and Electric Eye Plates of 400 subjects in four panes of 100.
- * Flat Plate Printing for bi-colored \$1, \$2, and \$5 values on plates of 100 subjects.

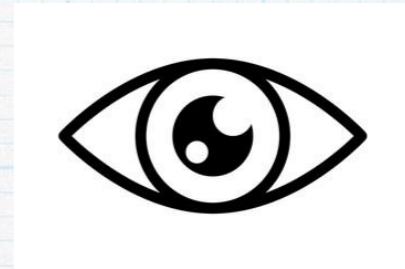


Printing Minutia



- * A total of over 240 Billion Stamps were printed.
- * Values from 1/2 cent through 50 cents were printed on a rotary press and perforated 11 x 10 1/2.
- * Bi-color dollar designs required flat plate printing and were perforated 11 on all sides.
- * Electric Eye guided perforation process introduced in 1939.

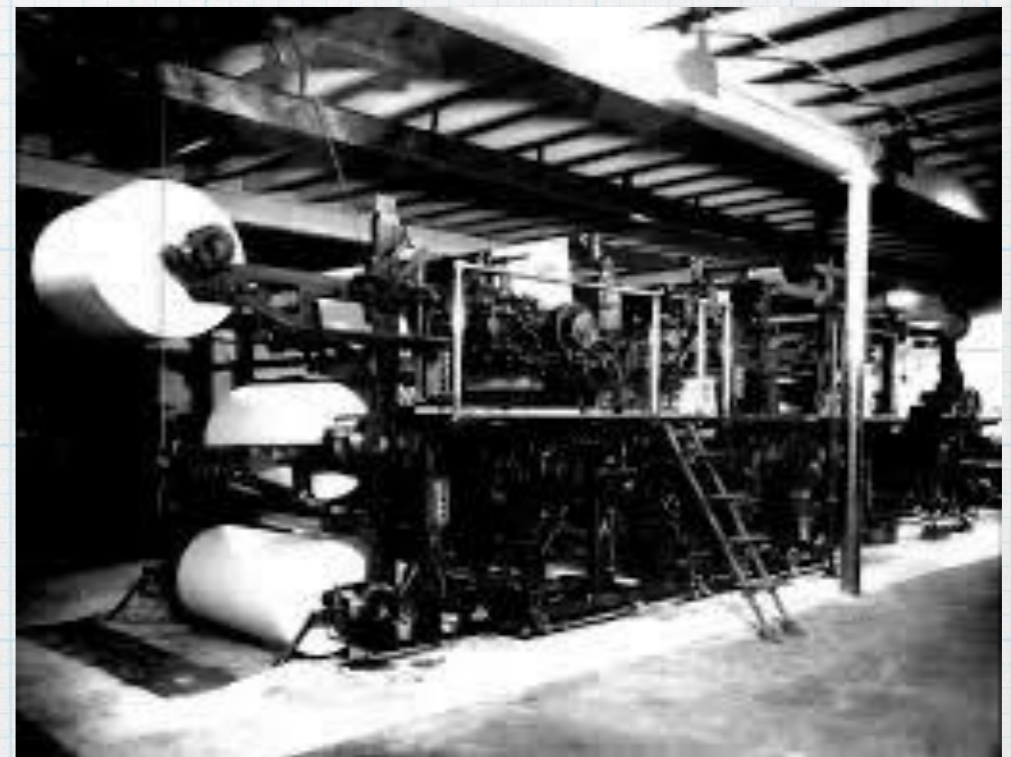
Electric Eye



- * On 2/5/35, US Post Office delivered its first stamps produced using the new electric-eye perforator. This new machine helped ensure better centering of stamps and resulted in a dramatic decrease in waste (currently 35%!).



- * Plates used to print the stamps had thick dashes which the Bureau referred to as “register marks.”
- * The machine’s “electric eye” scanned these dashes, and the machine used a series of gears and motors to move the paper forward, backward, left, or right, to ensure near perfect centering (<3% waste).



Eye 'Sightings'

Examples of Electric Eye Markings



Frame Bar



Gutter Bar



Margin Line

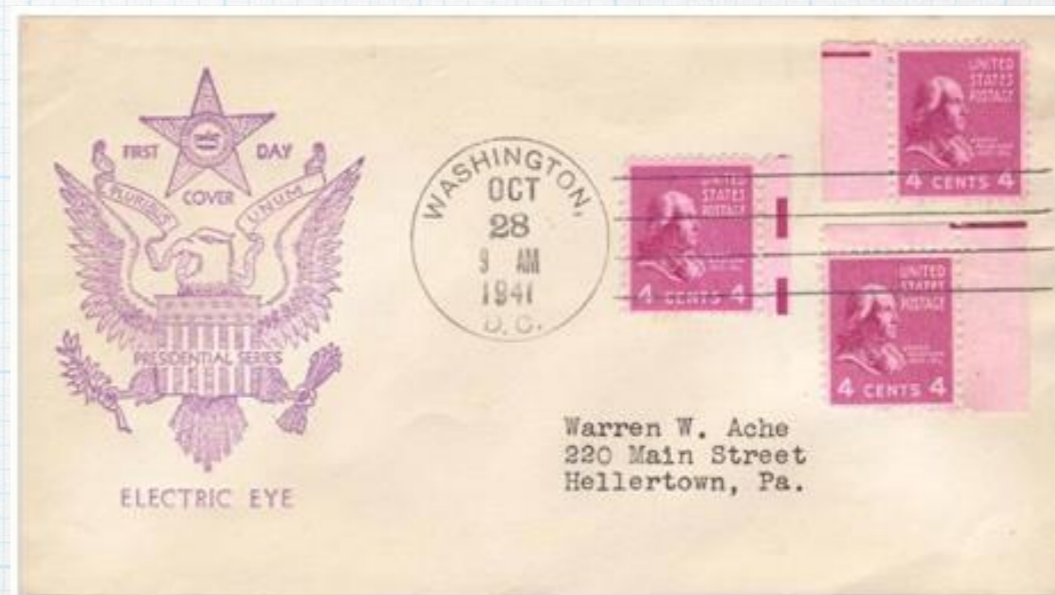


Dash

- Three “Eye” Rotary Press prototypes were made ('33-'37)
- Model #3 became ‘Pilot Model’
- Controlled all vertical perfs using ‘Dash’ marks & more precision on horizontal using ‘Frame Bars’.
- “Eye” could perforate 50-60k sheets/day at 3% waste
- Method used until late 1950s

Electric Eye Collecting

- * Margin Singles w/ 'Dash' and 'Frame Bar'.
- * Corners w/ Gutter bar and Margin Lines
- * Plate Blocks
- * Cachet EE First Day Covers



Rare Prexie

- * The \$1 Woodrow Wilson error stamp (Scott 832b) is on paper watermarked for use by the U.S. Internal Revenue Service.
- * The SCV for \$1 error stamp watermarked "USIR" is \$200 MNH and \$65 in used condition.



U S I R

Collecting Prexies

- * Readily available issue >240 billion printed.
- * Unique US Presidential educational opportunity
- * Many different configurations and printing methods employed.
- * Enormous number of cachet covers
- * Complete Sets MNH (Ave price)
 - * Singles = \$150
 - * Plate # Blocks = \$650



Prexie Resources

- Wikipedia https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Presidential_Issue
- The Prexies by Roland Rustad, edited by Leonard Piszkiwicz, available from the United States Stamp Society.
- Richard Helbock's Prexie Postal History, a collection of essays of different aspects of collecting Prexie covers.
- Tony Wawrukiewicz's books on U.S. postal rates are essential for the Prexie postal history collector.
- Prexie Era Study Group provides an on-going variety of stimulation for all types of Prexie collectors.
- Scott and Linns

Show and Tell

- * Singles - MNH
- * Plate Blocks - MNH
- * FDCs - Coils and Booklet panes
- * Electric Eye Singles, PBs and FDCs



Thank You

