

Fakes & Forgeries of the 1876 Centennial Envelopes

Bill Lehr

published in *Postal Stationery*, v 56, # 2, wn 395, MAR-APR 2014, pgs 43-47

George B. Sloane reported in his column of 1941 that full letter size Centennial envelopes were printed in green and that the commercial size envelopes were printed in vermillion (red). Sloane also reports that the vermillion (red) Philadelphia die printings are a rarity with no more than six examples known.

Mail at the Centennial was processed either at the Centennial Post Office or on one of two railway post office cars at the fair. Post marks from the centennial post office are fairly common. RPO markings from the Centennial are fairly scarce.

There are no reported counterfeits of the 1876 Centennial envelopes. Changelings are expected due to toning of the paper to the point where the paper may be misidentified as manila (or sometimes as oriental buff).

Fakes:

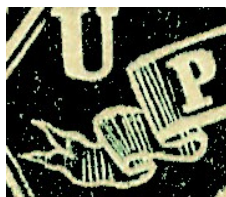
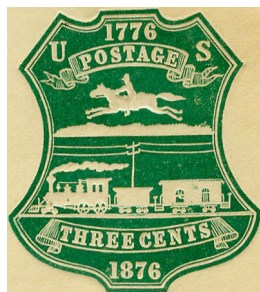
Sloane reported in a 1952 column on the existence of an entire 3¢ green Centennial envelope (die not specified) bearing a fake “Centennial Phila’d a Pa. Jun 20” postmark and an equally fake crossroads killer, both postmark and killer printed in black.

Numerous fake postmarks are known on the various forgeries of the Centennial dies. See the APPENDIX for some examples.

Die 71 Hartford Die

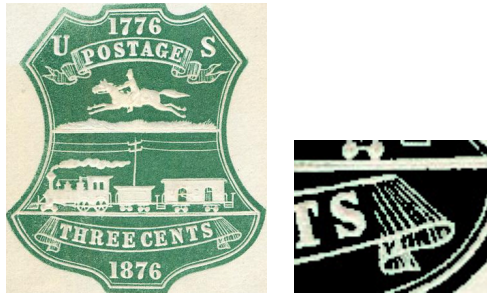
The world’s first commemorative stamped envelopes were made and printed on-site, in Philadelphia, at the Centennial of 1876. Collector demand resulted in additional printings by the Plimpton Manufacturing Company at their plant in Hartford, Connecticut. Five working die types of the Hartford die have been identified. Types 1 and 2 are only known in green. Type 3 is known in both green and in red. Types 4 and 5 are only known in red.

Common characteristics of genuine Die 71 printings: printed on white, laid paper; bridle is distinct; top left corner of the “U” of “US” crosses the inner frame line; genuine Die 71 measures 37 across the lower “points” of the shield X 34 mm. high.



GENUINE 644/U219T1

Type 1: green only; shading lines to the left of the “P” of “POSTAGE” cross through all of the ribbon; there is one short and one medium shade line immediately after the “S” in “CENTS”. U219T1 is by far the most common working die type and is the variety priced in the Scott catalog.



GENUINE 644/U219T2

Type 2: green only; there is one extremely short (almost non-existent) and one short shade line immediately after the “S” in “CENTS”.



GENUINE 643/U218T3

Type 3: green or red; broken top on the “1” of “1876”, left side tip of the ribbon around “THREE CENTS” touches the inner frame line; there is one short shade line after “CENTS”

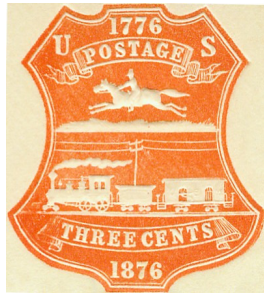


A constant Die 71T3 variety with the top serif of the “1” of “1776” missing has been reported and observed.



GENUINE U218T4

Type 4: red only; telegraph wires on the left side do not cross the frame lines; there is one short shade line after ‘CENTS’. U218T4 is by far the most common working die type and is the variety illustrated and priced in the Scott catalogs.



GENUINE U218T5

Type 5: red only; inner frame line continues to meet the outer frame line below the “6” of “1876”; there are two short shade lines to the right of “CENTS”. A trial color proof of Type 5 in green is known.

643/U218 3¢ red on white diagonally laid paper, Centennial issue, Die 71, Scott type U57

644/U219 3¢ green on white diagonally laid paper, Centennial, Die 71, Scott type U57
644/U219 is also known on white wove un-watermarked paper.

The first forgery variety of the Centennial dies was reported in 1877. The second variety of forgery was reported in 1891. The Type 3 forgery was reported in 1967 and in 1978 William Maisel cataloged a total of four varieties of forgeries of the Centennial dies.

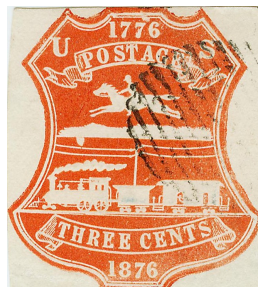
Die 71FGT1

AKA: English/Liverpool/Maisel Type 1

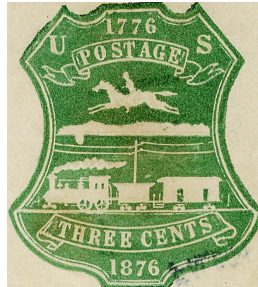
This first reported forgery is attributed to the firm of Stanley, Moore, & Co. of Liverpool, England by the Dresden *Union* newspaper. The Die 71FGT1 has been reported embossed in both red and in green on white wove paper. Known cut square only and sometimes occurs gummed. Cancellations, when present, are fakes. The defining feature of the Type 1 forgery is a large white blob below the ground (under the horse and rider) on the left side of the stamp.



Die 71FGT1 Defining Characteristic



U218FGT1



U219FGT1

Other distinguishing characteristics of the Die 71T1FG include:

Thin lettering and numerals; “U” of “US” touches the outer frame line; “T” of “POSTAGE” has extra serifs, including one straight up from the top of the “T”; “T” of “POSTAGE” touches the bottom frame line of the ribbon; smoke from the locomotive appears to consist of a number of closely connected balls; single shade lines on each side of “POSTAGE”; telegraph pole with

cross arms is rotated clockwise compared to the genuine; neither the ground nor the telegraph lines cross the inner frame line; horse has no obvious ears but instead sports a well defined mane; windows of the locomotive are small and there are many differences in the details on the train; there is a small white dash above the right end of the coal tender; letters of “CENTS” are poorly aligned; both ends of the lower ribbon touch the railroad tracks; bridle on the horse (when visible) hangs lower than on the genuine.

Die 71FGT2

AKA: French/German/Maisel Type 2

Defining features of the Type 2 forgery are the flat bottoms on the “7”s of both “1776” and “1876”; letters embossed on the side of the mail car are “UBM” instead of the proper “USM”. This forgery is known in numerous colors embossed on white or on manila wove paper. Cut squares are known as both singles and as strips of multiples (strip of 5 reported). The red has been reported in a paste-up pair and observed as a paste-up single. This forgery is also known on entire envelopes. Used copies typically have French cancels hence the nickname. The Type 2 forgeries were actually manufactured in Germany.



Flat Bottom 7's



UBM

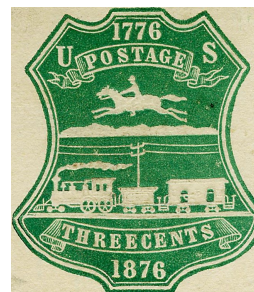
Defining Characteristics of Die 71FGT2



U218FGT2



U218FGT2



U219FGT2



DIE 71FGT2:

BLUE



BROWN



GOLD

Other characteristics of the Die 71FGT2 include:

Thin, tall lettering with irregular spacing in the words; “U” of “US” does not cross the inner frame line; ground does not cross the inner frame line; rail road tracks do not cross the inner frame line; bridle appears to be “J” or “L” shaped instead of straight as on the genuine.

Die 71FGT2 entires easily identified as they were embossed onto already folded envelopes and show the embossing on the back flap. Only blue entires have been observed but may exist in other colors.



Embossing as seen on the back of a Die 71FGT2 entire

Die 71FGT2 has been observed in red, green, blue, brown, and in gold on white wove paper and also observed in red on buff wove paper. Reported but not observed on manila wove paper. Observed printed in blue on a white wove entire envelope.

Trial color proofs of Die 71 exist. Proofs were printed on white, laid paper entire envelopes. Colors used were vermilion, carmine, orange, blue, purple, and green. All of the proofs were size 7, knife 30, watermark 3.

Die 71FGT3

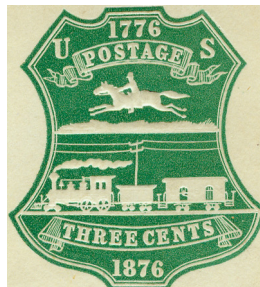
AKA: Maisel T4

Reported and pictured (in color) by Maisel in *United States Commemorative Stamped Envelopes*, this Die 71FGT3 is surface printed in red on an open-end orange manila envelope. "POSTAGE" appears high and the "1" in "1876" appears too small for the other numerals. Smoke from the locomotive appears almost as discrete balls. Is this the only one known?

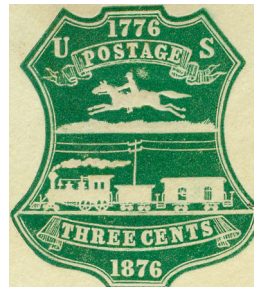
Die 72 Philadelphia Die

Printed on-site at the Centennial, Die 72 differs from Die 71 in that the lower line of the ribbon around "POSTAGE" is obviously doubled. Envelopes were printed both in red and in green on white laid paper. There are two working die types of Die 72.

Trial color proofs of Die 72 exist. Proofs were printed in a variety of colors on white, laid paper entire envelopes. Colors used were red, carmine, rose pink, dark blue, light blue, gray blue, gray, light green, purple, and lilac.



U221T1



U221T2



Die 72T1



Die 72T2

Die 72T1: short white shade line from the top just after the “E” of “POSTAGE”

Die 72T2: top of the “P” and of the “E” of “POSTAGE” show doubling

Die 72FG

AKA: Maisel Type 3

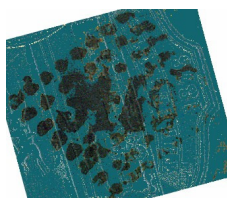
This is the only Centennial forgery that mimics the double line under “POSTAGE” from Die 72. Existence of this forgery type was first reported by Maisel in 1967. Reported as a cut square only, surface printed in green on laid paper. This forgery has been voted the least likely to deceive. Primary visual characteristic of this forgery is that the rider’s leg is completely outlined in color. This forgery is also depicted in Maisel’s *United States Commemorative Stamped Envelopes*. Other than Maisel’s report the only other mention in the literature is in a rehash of known postal stationery forgeries by K.M. Kinabrew in a 1978 issue of *Postal Stationery*. Is this the only one known?

APPENDIX

Some representative samples of fake post marks observed on Die 71T2 forgeries:



Diamond grid with numerals



Apres Le Depart with numerals



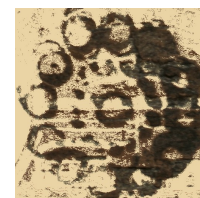
CDS



Letters in box



Letters in oval



Geometric



Yvel & date



Zero



Numeral

Acknowledgements

Mercer Bristow
APEX Reference Collection

Bill Gallagher
U218FGT2 cut square, red on manila, used

Terry Hines
U218FGT1 cut square, red on white, unused

JOBI Philatelic Services
Reference collection

Ken Lawrence
Die 71FGT2 blue on white entire

Bibliography

United States (Centennial envelope)
American Journal of Philately, Series 1, Vol. 10, 1876, p14

Philatelic Jottings {CFF/Centennial envelope}
Philatelic Quarterly, OCT-DEC, 1877

{CFF/Centennial envelope}
Philatelic Quarterly, JUL-SEP, 1878

Centennial Envelopes
Mekeel's, Vol. XLIV: 1930, p 229

Centennial International Exhibition 1876
Cancellations, Vol. 8, No. 4, Whole # 50, addenda p4

Bartels, J.M.
Centennial Envelopes (1876)
Stamps, Vol. 24, 1938, p 44

Bartels, J. Murray
Centennial Envelopes-New Studies and Discoveries
Postal Stationery, Vol. 33, No. 3, Whole # 268, 1991, pgs 108-110

Bomar, William J.
Savadge, David, editor
Fakes of the Plimpton Centennial Envelopes
William J. Bomar's Postal markings and postal history of United States expositions
3rd edition, 2007, pgs 57-58

Cabeen, R. McP.
Centennial Envelopes Made at the Exposition
Weekly Philatelic Gossip, Vol. XXVIII: 1938-39, p 662

Comstock, Samuel W.

Dies for the 1876 Centennial and 1893 Columbian United States Stamped Envelopes
Stamps, Vol. 70, No. 12, Whole # 915, MAR 25, 1950, p 462

Earee, R.B.

Issue of 1876, Centennial Envelopes, 3 Cents, vermillion, green
Album Weeds 2nd edition, Stanley Gibbons, Ltd., London, 1892, p679

Ellis, F. and Maisel, William H.

Forgeries of the Centennial Envelope

United States Commemorative Stamped Envelopes, 1876-1965, Wm. H. Maisel, Lutherville, MD, 1974,
pgs 19-20

Graham, Richard B.

Philadelphia centennial exposition produced world's first commemorative postal issues

Linn's Stamp News, Vol. 58, Whole # 2936, FEB 11, 1985, p 14

Hubbell, Raynor

Centennial Envelope

Weekly Philatelic Gossip, APR 26, 1952

Jewett, W.W., ed

Here and There with Pencil and Shears (Counterfeits of the Centennial Envelopes)

Philatelic Era, Vol. 5, No.1, SEP, 1891, p 17

Lawrence, Ken

Commemorating the 1876 United States Centennial

Scott Stamp Monthly, Vol. 23, No. 3, 2005, pgs 22-24, 26, 28, 30-32

Maisel, William H.

U.S. Envelopes: Centennial of 1876

Postal Stationery, Vol. 10, No. 1, Whole # 123, 1967, pgs 20-21

Maisel, William H

U.S. Envelopes: Three Types of Forgery of the 1876 Centennial

Postal Stationery, Vol. 10, No. 5, Whole # 126, 1967, pgs 12-13

Mann, P. McGraw

Notes on the Centennial Series of US Envelopes

Collectors Club Philatelist, Vol. 4, No. 2, APR, 1925, pgs 60-62

Markovitz, Robert

Those Red and Green 1876 Centennial Envelopes

Postal Stationery, Vol. 17, No. 5, Whole # 174, 1975, p 209

Morris, T.F.

A 'Might Have Been Essay'

Essay-Proof Journal, Vol. 19, No. 2, Whole # 74, SPRING, 1962, pgs 73-74

Mueller, Barbara R.

US Centennial Envelope "Essays" Currently on the Market

Essay-Proof Journal, Vol. 36, No. 1, Whole No. 141, 1979, pgs 8-11

Perry, Thomas D.
Centennial Stamped Envelopes
Essay-Proof Journal, Vol. 12, No.1, 1955, pgs 17-23

Perry, Thomas D.
Centennial Stamped Envelopes: Supplementary Comments on Typewriters
Essay-Proof Journal, Vol. 12, No. 4, Whole # 48, OCT, 1955, pgs 191-202

Schreyer, Charles
Those Red and Green 1876 Centennial Envelopes
Postal Stationery, Vol. 18, No. 1, Whole # 176, 1976, p 22

Sloane, George B.
That Red Centennial Envelope
Stamps, Vol. 34, No. 11, Whole # 444, MAR 15, 1941, p 372

Sloane, George B.
Forged U.S. Envelope Issues
Stamps, Vol. 68, No. 1, Whole # 877, JUL 2, 1949, p 13

Sloane, George B.
Fakes in U.S. Envelopes
Stamps, Vol. 79, No. 1, Whole # 1021, APR 5, 1952

Sloane, George B.
U.S. 1876 Centennial Envelopes
Stamps, Vol. 87, No. 12, Whole # 1136, JUN 19, 1954, p 425

Thorp, Prescott H., ed.
1876 Centennial Mystery
Envelope World, Vol. 1, No. 9, DEC, 1949, pgs 33-34

Thorp, Prescott H., ed.
Centennial Envelopes Three Cents Red, Philadelphia Die
Envelope World, Vol. 2, No. 7, JAN, 1951, pgs 25-27

Thorp, Prescott H., ed.
1876 Centennial Envelopes are Scarce
Envelope World, Vol. 3, No. 5, 6, MAY-JUN, JUL-AUG, 1958, p 69

Thorp, Prescott H., ed.
Centennial Envelopes
Envelope World, Vol. 5, No. 3, APR, 1961, pgs 43-46

Tyler, Varro, E.
Focus on Forgeries: US 1876 3c Centennial envelope cut square (Die 1), U218 and U219
Linn's Stamp News, Vol. 73, No. 3720, FEB 14, 2000, Focus on Forgeries #320, p 6

Undersander, Dan
1876 Plimpton Manufacturing Co.
Catalog of United States Stamped Envelopes Essays and Proofs, 2003, pgs 147-148

Ward, P.H., Jr.

Centennial Envelopes Unwatermarked

Mekeel's, Vol. 52, No. 15, Whole # 2466, APR 11, 1938, p 170