

The McCoy Inverted Jenny—Position 76

OFFERED ON BEHALF OF THE AMERICAN PHILATELIC RESEARCH LIBRARY



SALE 1157 — THURSDAY, MAY 11, 2017

Robert A. Siegel
AUCTION GALLERIES, INC.

The McCoy Inverted Jenny—Position 76

OFFERED ON BEHALF OF THE AMERICAN PHILATELIC RESEARCH LIBRARY



SALE 1157 — THURSDAY, MAY 11, 2017, AT 1:30 P.M. (LOT 4000)

Live auction at 60 East 56th Street (Park/Madison), 4th Floor, New York City

All lots sold subject to an **18% buyer's premium** and
applicable sales tax or customs duty

Please carefully read the Conditions of Sale before bidding

Presale Viewing:

Monday-Wednesday, May 8-10, 10am-4pm
and by appointment (please call 212-753-6421)

Robert A. Siegel
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Phone (212) 753-6421 • Fax (212) 753-6429 • E-mail: stamps@siegelauctions.com

Catalogues, internet bidding, resources, archives and the Siegel Encyclopedia at
siegelauctions.com



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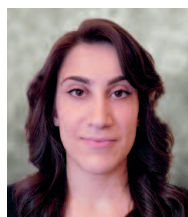
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Information for Bidders

Bidding

The following means are available for placing bids:

- 1) **Attending the Live Auction in Person:** All bidders must register for a paddle, and new bidders must provide references at least three business days in advance of the sale.
- 2) **Live Internet Bidding:** Instructions for participating as a Live Internet Bidder are provided on the page opposite.
- 3) **Phone Bidding:** Bidders can be connected to the sale by phone and bid through a member of staff. Requests for phone bidding are subject to approval (please contact our office at least 24 hours before the sale). A signed Bid Form is required.
- 4) **Absentee Bids.** All bids received in advance of the sale, either by mail, fax, phone, e-mail or internet, are Absentee Bids, which instruct the auctioneer to bid up to a specific amount on one or more lots in the sale. Absentee Bids sent by phone, fax or e-mail should arrive at least one hour prior to the start of the sale session. Bids entered through Live Internet Bidding will be visible to the auctioneer during the sale. Written bids should be entered legibly on the Bid Form in the sale catalogue. E-mail and internet bids should be carefully typed and double-checked. All new bidders must provide references. We recommend calling or e-mailing to confirm that Absentee Bids sent by mail, fax or e-mail have been received and entered.

Pre-Sale Viewing

Subject to availability, certain lots (except group lots) can be sent to known clients for examination. Requests must be made no later than 7 days prior to the sale. Lots must be returned on the day received. Postage/insurance costs will be invoiced.

In addition to regular viewing, clients may view lots by appointment. Our staff will be pleased to answer questions or provide additional information about lots.

Expert Certification

Individual items offered without a PF or PSE certificate dated within the past five years may be purchased subject to independent certification of genuineness and our description. **Please refer to the Conditions of Sale and Grading Terms for policies governing certification.**

Shipping and Delivery

Procedures and charges for shipping lots are printed on the back of the Bid Form. **Bidders are responsible for all prescribed shipping charges and any applicable sales tax or customs duties.**

Price Realized

Prices realized are sent with each invoice. Bidders with e-mail will receive a Bid Results report after the sale. Session results are posted immediately to siegelauctions.com

Live Internet Bidding at Siegel Auctions

BIDDING FROM YOUR COMPUTER LETS YOU BE PART OF THE LIVE AUCTION FROM ANYWHERE IN THE WORLD!

There's **NO SUBSTITUTE** for following the auction in real time.
Live Internet Bidding lets you bid and buy as though you were right there in the saleroom.
And it's easy.

This step-by-step guide will instruct you how to register, set your browser and use the bidding interface.

Start by following the simple steps to become a registered Live Internet Bidder.
Once you've been approved for bidding, you can listen to the auction and place bids with the click of a mouse.

Registering with **STAMP AUCTION NETWORK & SIEGEL AUCTION GALLERIES**

Live Internet Bidding is managed by Stamp Auction Network (SAN).
To bid, you must be registered and approved by *both* SAN and Siegel.
To decide what you need to do, choose the description below that best fits you.



I've already registered with SAN and have been approved by Siegel for internet bidding.

Live Internet Bidding works by allowing registered bidders to observe and place bids.

Live Internet Bidding will work with any browser on both PC and Mac operating systems.

Before bidding by internet for the first time, we recommend finding a sale in progress and listening to the public broadcast or logging in as a registered bidder. This will help you develop a feel for the sale tempo and bidding interface.

I'm a Siegel client, but I'm not registered with SAN.

Go to stampauctionnetwork.com/siegel and click on "Register" at the top. Check the box for Robert A. Siegel Auction Galleries (under "R") and submit the form, indicating you are a Siegel client. Once registered at SAN, you're ready for internet bidding.

Log on to the auction at stampauctionnetwork.com/siegel.

You can also log on at siegelauctions.com

When you're logged on as a Live Internet Bidder, the bidding interface shows a photo and description of the lot, the current bid (and your bidding status), options for placing competitive bids and buttons with bid increments.

- After you click on a bid amount, the auctioneer is immediately notified of your bid.
- Retracting a bid is usually not acceptable, so please bid carefully.
- If you bid and then decide to stop, the "Pass" button will tell the auctioneer you are no longer bidding.
- You can send messages to the auctioneer (for example, a request for extension).
- You can track prior realizations from the bidding screen.

I've bid through SAN before, but this is the first time I've bid in a Siegel sale.

Then you just need to be approved by Siegel. Go to stampauctionnetwork.com/siegel and click on "Update Registration" at the top. Your SAN account information will be sent to us for approval (you might be asked for other trade references). Once approved by Siegel for bidding, you're ready for internet bidding.

I've never bid with Siegel, nor registered with SAN.

Go to stampauctionnetwork.com/siegel and click on "Register" at the top. Check the box for Robert A. Siegel Auction Galleries (under "R") and submit the form **with your trade references** (please, no family members or credit card companies as references). Once registered at SAN and approved by Siegel for bidding, you're ready for internet bidding.



"System Down" or "Lost Connection" events do occasionally happen.

If you have any problems with Live Internet Bidding please call **212-753-6421** for immediate assistance.

Conditions of Sale (please read carefully before bidding)

THE PROPERTY DESCRIBED IN THIS CATALOGUE WILL BE OFFERED AT PUBLIC AUCTION BY ROBERT A. SIEGEL AUCTION GALLERIES, INC. ("GALLERIES") ON BEHALF OF VARIOUS CONSIGNORS AND ITSELF OR AFFILIATED COMPANIES. BY BIDDING ON ANY LOT, WHETHER DIRECTLY OR BY OR THROUGH AN AGENT, IN PERSON, OR BY TELEPHONE, FACSIMILE OR ANY OTHER MEANS, THE BIDDER ACKNOWLEDGES AND AGREES TO ALL OF THE FOLLOWING CONDITIONS OF SALE.

1. The highest bidder acknowledged by the auctioneer shall be the buyer. The term "final bid" means the last bid acknowledged by the auctioneer, which is normally the highest bid offered. **The purchase price payable by the buyer will be the sum of the final bid and a commission of 18% of the final bid ("buyer's premium"), together with any sales tax, use tax or customs duties due on the sale.**
2. The auctioneer has the right to reject any bid, to advance the bidding at his discretion and, in the event of a dispute, to determine the successful bidder, to continue the bidding or to reoffer and resell the lot in dispute. The Galleries' record of the final sale shall be conclusive.
3. All bids are per numbered lot in the catalogue unless otherwise announced by the auctioneer at the time of sale. The right is reserved to group two or more lots, to withdraw any lot or lots from the sale, or to act on behalf of the seller. The Galleries will execute bidding instructions on behalf of clients, but will not be responsible for the failure to execute such bids or for any errors in the execution of such bids.
4. **Lots with numbers followed by the symbol ° are offered subject to a confidential minimum bid ("reserve"), below which the lot will not be sold. The absence of the symbol ° means that the lot is offered without a reserve. If there is no reserve, the auctioneer has sole discretion to establish a minimum opening bid and may refuse an offer of less than half of the published estimate. Any lot that does not reach its reserve or opening bid requested by the auctioneer will be announced as "passed" and excluded from the prices realized lists after the sale. The Galleries may have a direct or indirect ownership interest in any or all lots in the sale resulting from an advance of monies or goods-in-trade or a guarantee of minimum net proceeds made by the Galleries to the seller.**
5. Subject to the exclusions listed in 5(A), the Galleries will accept the return of lots which have been misidentified or which have obvious faults that were present when the lot was in the Galleries' custody, but not so noted in the lot description. **All disputed lots must be received by the Galleries intact with the original packing material within 5 days of delivery to the buyer but no later than 30 days from the sale date.**
(5A) EXCLUSIONS: The following lots may not be returned for any reason, or may not be returned for the reasons stated: i) lots containing 10 or more items; ii) lots from buyers who registered for the pre-sale exhibition or received lots by postal viewing, thereby having had the opportunity to inspect them before the sale; iii) any lot described with "faults," "defects" or a specific fault may not be returned because of any secondary fault; iv) photographed lots may not be returned because of centering, margins, short/nibbed perforations or other factors shown in the illustrations; v) the color of the item does not match the color reproduction in the sale catalogue or website listing; vi) the description contains inaccurate information about the quantity known or reported; or vii) a certification service grades a stamp lower than the grade stated in the description.
6. Successful bidders, unless they have established credit with the Galleries prior to the sale, must make payment in full before the lots will be delivered. Buyers not known to the Galleries must make payment in full within 3 days from the date of sale. **The Galleries retains the right to demand a cash deposit from anyone prior to bidder registration and/or to demand payment at the time the lot is knocked down to the highest bidder, for any reason whatsoever.** In the event that any buyer refuses or fails to make payment in cash for any lot at the time it is knocked down to him, the auctioneer reserves the right to reoffer the lot immediately for sale to the highest bidder. **Credit cards (Visa, Mastercard and Discover only) can be accepted as payment but will be subject to a 3% Convenience Fee, which will be added to the total of the entire invoice (including hammer price, buyer's premium, shipping**

and transit insurance charges and any applicable taxes).

7. If the purchase price has not been paid within the time limit specified above, nor lots taken up within 7 days from the date of sale, the lots will be resold by whatever means deemed appropriate by the Galleries, and any loss incurred from resale will be charged to the defaulting buyer. **Any account more than 30 days in arrears will be subject to a late payment charge of 1½% per month as long as the account remains in arrears. Any expenses incurred in securing payment from delinquent accounts will be charged to the defaulter.** A fee of \$250.00 per check will be charged for each check returned for insufficient funds.
8. All lots are sold as genuine. **Any lot accompanied by a certificate issued by The Philatelic Foundation or by Professional Stamp Experts within 5 years of the sale date is sold "as is" and in accordance with the description on the certificate. Such lots may not be returned for any reason, including but not limited to a contrary certificate of opinion.** Buyers who wish to obtain a certificate for any item that does not have a P.F. or P.S.E. certificate (dated as above) may do so, provided that the following conditions are met: (1) the purchase price must be paid in full, (2) the item must be submitted to an acceptable expertizing committee with a properly executed application form within 21 days of the sale, (3) a copy of the application form must be given to the Galleries, (4) in the event that an adverse opinion is received, the Galleries retain the right to resubmit the item on the buyer's behalf for reconsideration, without time limit or other restrictions, (5) unless written notification to the contrary is received, items submitted for certification will be considered cleared 90 days from the date of sale, and (6) in the event any item is determined to be "not as described", the buyer will be refunded the purchase price and the certification fee up to \$800.00 unless otherwise agreed to in writing.
9. Until paid for in full, all lots remain the property of the Galleries on behalf of the seller.
10. Agents executing bids on behalf of clients will be held responsible for all purchases made on behalf of clients unless otherwise arranged prior to the sale.
11. The buyer assumes all risk for delivery of purchased lots and agrees to pay for prescribed shipping costs. **Buyers who receive lots in the U.S. are obligated to pay whatever sales tax or compensating use tax might be due, and buyers outside the U.S. are responsible for all customs duties.**
12. **The bidder consents that any action or proceeding against it may be commenced and maintained in any court within the State of New York or in the United States District Court for the Southern District of New York, that the courts of the State of New York and United States District Court for the Southern District of New York shall have jurisdiction with respect to the subject matter hereof and the person of the bidder. The bidder agrees not to assert any defense to any action or proceeding initiated by Galleries based upon improper venue or inconvenient forum. The bidder agrees that any action brought by the bidder shall be commenced and maintained only in a Federal Court in the United States District Court for the Southern District of New York or the State Court in the county in which Galleries has its principal place of business in New York. The bidder agrees not to use a public conflict resolution service and not to use any form of social media to publish comments or information about the Galleries and its employees which might harm the Galleries' reputation or business. These Conditions of Sale shall be governed by and construed in accordance with the substantive laws of the State of New York, and shall constitute an agreement that shall be binding on the parties, and their respective heirs, administrators, distributees, successors and assignees.**

SCOTT R. TREPEL, Principal Auctioneer
Auctioneer's License No. 795952
N.Y.C. Department of Consumer Affairs
80 Lafayette Street, New York, N.Y. 10013
Telephone (212) 577-0111

Revised 1/2017

Grades, Abbreviations and Values Used in Descriptions

Grades and Centering

Our descriptions contain detailed information and observations about each item's condition. We have also assigned grades to stamps and covers, which reflect our subjective assessment. For stamps, the margin width, centering and gum are described and graded according to generally-accepted standards (an approximate correlation to numeric grades is provided at right). Although we believe our grades are accurate, they are not always exactly aligned with third-party grading terms or standards for all issues. **A lot may not be returned because a certification service grades a stamp lower than the grade stated in the description. Information from the P.S.E. Stamp Market Quarterly and P.S.E. Population ReportSM is the most current available, but lots may not be returned due to errors or changes in statistics or data.**

Extremely Fine Gem (90-100): The term "Gem" describes condition that is the finest possible for the issue. This term is equivalent to "Superb" used by grading services.







Extremely Fine (80-90): Exceptionally large/wide margins or near perfect centering.

Very Fine (70-85): Normal-size margins for the issue and well-centered with the design a bit closer to one side. "Very Fine and choice" applies to stamps that have desirable traits such as rich color, sharp impression, freshness or clarity of cancel.

Fine (60-70): Smaller than usual margins or noticeably off center. Pre-1890 issues may have the design touched in places.

Very Good (below 60): Attractive appearance, but margins or perforations cut into the design.

Guide to Gum Condition

Gum Categories:	MINT N.H.	ORIGINAL GUM (O.G.)				NO GUM
	 Mint Never Hinged <i>Free from any disturbance</i>	 Lightly Hinged <i>Faint impression of a removed hinge over a small area</i>	 Hinge Mark or Remnant <i>Prominent hinged spot with part or all of the hinge remaining</i>	 Part o.g. <i>Approximately half or more of the gum intact</i>	 Small part o.g. <i>Approximately less than half of the gum intact</i>	 No gum <i>Only if issued with gum</i>
Catalogue Symbol:	★ ★	★	★	★	★	(★)
PRE-1890 ISSUES	<i>Pre-1890 stamps in these categories trade at a premium over Scott value</i>			Scott Value for "O.G."		Scott "No Gum" Values thru No. 218
1890-1935 ISSUES	Scott "Never Hinged" Values for Nos. 219-771	Scott Value for "O.G." (Actual value will be affected by the degree of hinging)		Disturbed Original Gum: Gum showing noticeable effects of humidity, climate or hinging over more than half of the gum. The significance of gum disturbance in valuing a stamp in any of the Original Gum categories depends on the degree of disturbance, the rarity and normal gum condition of the issue and other variables affecting quality. For example, stamps issued in tropical climates are expected to have some		
1935 TO DATE	Scott Value for "Unused"					

Covers

Minor nicks, short edge tears, flap tears and slight reduction at one side are normal conditions for 19th century envelopes. Folded letters should be expected to have at least one file fold. Light cleaning of covers and small mends along the edges are accepted forms of conservation. Unusual covers may have a common stamp with a slight crease or tiny tear. **These flaws exist in virtually all 19th century covers and are not always described. They are not grounds for return.**

Catalogue Values and Estimates

Unless otherwise noted, the currently available *Scott Catalogue* values are quoted in dollars with a decimal point. Other catalogues are often used for foreign countries or specialized areas and are referred to by their common name: *Stanley Gibbons* (SG), *Dietz*, *American Air Mail Catalogue* (AAMC), *Michel*, *Zumstein*, *Facit*, etc. Estimates are indicated with an "E." and reflect our conservative valuation in dollars. Reserves will never exceed the low end of the estimate range; they will sometimes exceed Scott Catalogue value for stamps in Extremely Fine condition.

Because of certain pricing inconsistencies in the *Scott Catalogue*—for example, blocks that have no gum, the absence of premiums for Mint N.H. items, etc.—we cannot guarantee the accuracy of values quoted for multiples, specialized items and collection lots. We generally try to be conservative, but buyers may not return a lot because of a discrepancy in catalogue value due to Scott pricing inconsistencies.

Symbols and Abbreviations (see chart above for gum symbols)

⊞	Block	E	Essay	pmk.	Postmark	No.	Scott Catalogue Number
⊞	Cover	P	Proof	cds	Circular Datestamp	hs	Handstamp
FC	Fancy Cancel	TC	Trial Color Proof	var.	Variety	ms.	Manuscript





AMERICAN PHILATELIC RESEARCH LIBRARY

Scott D. English, Administrator
Tara Murray, Director of
Information Services/Librarian

100 Match Factory Place
Bellefonte, PA 16823
Phone: 814-933-3803, Ext. 246
tmurray@stamps.org

Dear Friends,

On behalf of the American Philatelic Research Library Board of Trustees, I want to invite you to bid on Position 76 of the famed McCoy Block of the Inverted Jenny. Though this stamp went missing in 1955, we made a historic recovery of the stamp in June 2016 at the World Stamp Show—NY 2016, receiving media coverage on six continents.

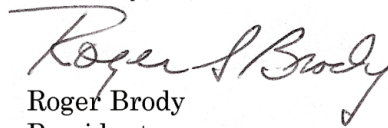
Thanks to the kindness of Ethel McCoy, the rights to her stolen block of stamps was transferred to the APRL in 1979 and we have been able to recover three of the four stamps to date. The proceeds for the sale of this stamp will go to support our newly-constructed library at the American Philatelic Center in Bellefonte, PA.

Our library spans 19,000 square feet and is open to the public five days a week. The library has the world's largest and most accessible collection of philatelic literature, with rarities dating back to the early days of collecting in the 1860s. Our collection of more than 80,000 volumes and special collections devoted to stamp collecting and the study of postage stamps and mail services occupies more than 3 miles of shelf space. It is truly a fitting home to this great wealth of philatelic knowledge.

Our most recent recovery effort started in 2014, when former APRL Board member Rob Haeseler formed the McCoy Recovery Committee and joined forces with Donald Sundman of Mystic Stamp Company to offer a reward for the recovery of the two remaining missing stamps. Rob's vision and hard work brought this stamp home to us last year. Sadly, Rob passed away in January, so he will not be with us to realize the final step in this story, a permanent home for the stamp. This sale, however, will be a fitting tribute to all of Rob's work and we thank you for being a part of it.

Bellefonte is a charming Victorian town in central Pennsylvania and we invite you to come spend time touring our historic headquarters and library. In the meantime, we hope you enjoy learning more about the journey of this truly unique stamp and what this sale will mean to collectors all over the world.

Sincerely,



Roger Brody
President



Join the American Philatelic Society



AMERICA'S STAMP CLUB
STAMPS.ORG

*Collect with us.
Connect with us.*



Benefits of Membership

Whether you are a beginning collector or veteran of philately, the American Philatelic Society will help you grow and enjoy the hobby of stamp collecting. Since 1886, collectors from across the globe have been sharing knowledge, stamps, and a lifetime of friendships with the largest stamp collecting organization in the world. Completing the membership application is the next step in that experience. It could be the best decision you've made since you started collecting stamps!

The American Philatelist monthly magazine

100-page monthly magazine. Each month features a wide assortment of stamp collecting articles on all aspects of the hobby, buying and selling information from dealers, and more.

StampStore.org

Purchase stamps and covers from our online website. More than 300,000 items to choose from. All items are submitted by APS members. APS members can also submit items for sale.

Stamp Shows

APS stages two national exhibitions annually with StampShow in the summer and AmeriStamp Expo in the winter.

American Philatelic Research Library

The APRL is the world's largest publicly accessible collection of philatelic literature. www.stamplibrary.org. The library offers book loans by mail or in person and scanning and photocopy services for a nominal fee. Library staff are available to assist you with your research.

Expertizing stamps/covers

Obtain guaranteed opinions on the genuineness of stamps and covers from the American Philatelic Expertizing Service (APEX). We employ the services of more than 100 specialists and use high-tech equipment. APS members receive a discount on submission fees.

Quick I.D. service

Have a question about the identification of a stamp you own or one you want to purchase off the Internet? Check out the APS online Quick I.D. service. Provide us with an image and we can offer an opinion on the catalogue number and advise you if you need a formal APEX certificate.



MISSING

REWARD: THREE DOWN, ONE TO GO

FOUND 1982

POSITION

65

FOUND 1977

POSITION

75



????????????

POSITION

66

FOUND 2016

POSITION

76

In April 2016, Position 76 of the famed McCoy block of four 1918 24-cent airmail error stamps was discovered 61 years after it was stolen. Help the American Philatelic Research Library find the final missing Inverted Jenny stamp — Position 66, located at upper right.

Don Sundman of Mystic Stamp Company has generously offered a **reward sum of \$50,000** for the successful recovery of the Position 66 Inverted Jenny stamp in undamaged condition, certified as genuine. The reward will be paid to the person(s) who transfer possession of a genuine McCoy Inverted Jenny to the research library.

The APRL is also offering a **\$10,000 reward** for information leading to the successful recovery of the missing McCoy stamps.

Information and inquiries should be made to the APRL by e-mail to library@stamps.org, or by phone at 814-933-3803 (press 3).

AMERICAN PHILATELIC RESEARCH LIBRARY

The world's largest philatelic library, at your fingertips! The APRL holds more than 85,000 volumes on stamp collecting, postal history, and mail services, plus unique archives. Search our holdings, article indexes, and digital collections via the library website.

The APRL offers:

- Expert research assistance
- Photocopy and scanning services (nominal fees apply, discounted for members)
- Book loans by mail (available to members only)
- A 19,000-square-foot library and reading room at the American Philatelic Center, open to the public

stamplibrary.org • library@stamps.org



American Philatelic
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100 Match Factory Place, Bellefonte, PA 16823

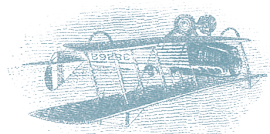
Phone: 814-933-3803 (press 3)

E-mail: library@stamps.org





4000



The McCoy Inverted Jenny—Position 76

OFFERED ON BEHALF OF THE AMERICAN PHILATELIC RESEARCH LIBRARY

TO BE SOLD ON THURSDAY, MAY 11, 2017, AT 1:30 P.M.

LOT 4000

24c Carmine Rose & Blue, Center Inverted (C3a). Position 76, the sixth stamp in the eighth row of the sheet of 100 purchased by William T. Robey on May 14, 1918, part original gum, rich colors, small thin spot, skillfully reperforated at top and left

VERY FINE APPEARANCE. A STORIED AND ATTRACTIVE EXAMPLE OF THE LEGENDARY 1918 24-CENT INVERTED JENNY THAT WAS KEPT OUT OF THE MARKET FOR SIX DECADES FOLLOWING THE THEFT OF THE MCCOY BLOCK IN 1955.

The original sheet of one hundred Inverted Jenny errors was purchased by William T. Robey on May 14, 1918, the first day the stamps went on sale in all three principal airmail route cities: Washington, D.C., New York and Philadelphia. Robey bought the sheet for its \$24 face value at the New York Avenue Post Office window in the District of Columbia. On Sunday, May 19, Robey agreed to give Eugene Klein, a prominent Philadelphia stamp dealer, a one-day option to buy the sheet for \$15,000. Klein exercised his option on Monday, May 20, in a late afternoon phone call, and he confirmed it with a registered letter to Robey sent in the evening mail. The sheet was delivered to Klein's office by Robey and his father-in-law on the following day, Tuesday, May 21, 1918.

No later than Monday, May 20, the day Klein exercised his option, he had arranged to sell the sheet for \$20,000 to Colonel Edward H. R. Green. Half of the \$5,000 profit went to Klein's partners, Percy McGraw Mann and Joseph A. Steinmetz. Klein was then authorized by Colonel Green to divide the sheet into singles and blocks, and to sell all but a few key position blocks.

One of the blocks sold by Klein on behalf of Colonel Green comprised Positions 65-66/75-76 from the center two columns with a vertical guideline between the left and right stamps. This block was acquired by Arthur Hind, the world-renowned collector who bought the unique British Guiana One-Cent Magenta, reputedly outbidding King George V. In 1936, after Hind's death, the block was purchased from New York dealer Spencer Anderson for \$16,000 by Bert A. Stewart as a gift to his wife, Ethel Bergstresser Stewart McCoy (1893-1980). The full history of the McCoy block, including the story of its theft and ongoing recovery, is told by Ken Lawrence beginning on page 33 of this catalogue. This stamp is the lower right position in the McCoy block.

Ex Colonel Edward H. R. Green, Arthur Hind and Ethel Bergstresser Stewart McCoy. In 2016 it was certified by both The Philatelic Foundation and the American Philatelic Expertizing Service.

2016 Philatelic Foundation certificate (535711) states:

IT IS A GENUINE UNUSED SCOTT C3A, INVERTED CENTER, POSITION 76, THE BOTTOM RIGHT STAMP FROM THE ORIGINAL BLOCK OF FOUR BELONGING TO ETHEL B. MCCOY AND STOLEN FROM HER EXHIBIT ON SEPT. 23, 1955

THE INVERT, WITH PART O.G., A TINY THIN SPOT AT RIGHT, REPERFORATED AT TOP, AND ALSO REPERFORATED AT LEFT TO ELIMINATE THE VERTICAL GUIDE LINE APPEARING ON THE STAMP IN ITS ORIGINAL STATE.

2016 APEX certificate (218794) states:

United States, Scott No. C3a center inverted, Pos. 76, unused, original gum, previously hinged, genuine, thin, reperforated at top, also reperforated at left to remove guide line.

2017 Scott U.S. Specialized Catalogue Value \$450,000.00

For the complete history and detailed records of every Inverted Jenny and owners' biographies, go to

[Inverted Jenny.com](http://InvertedJenny.com)



MAY 1918 UNITED STATES AIRMAIL SERVICE THE WORLD'S FIRST GOVERNMENT AIRMAIL SERVICE

The world's first regularly scheduled mail service using airplanes was inaugurated in the United States almost a century ago on Wednesday, 15 May 1918. The flights on this day marked the first attempt to fly civilian mail using winged aircraft on a regular schedule, which distinguishes this service from earlier official airmail carried on balloons or on airplanes used for short-term or restricted flights; for example, aviators carried souvenir letters at special flying events from 1910 to 1916, and the U.S. Army First Aero Squadron carried some mail by airplane between Mexico and New Mexico during the 1916 Punitive Expedition against "Pancho" Villa.

On Monday, 12 August 1918, after three months of experimental airmail service under U.S. Army supervision, the U.S. Post Office Department (USPOD) took control of the planes and pilots, and airmail service became a permanent civilian operation, the first of its kind. The last Army-operated airmail flight was on Saturday, 10 August 1918.

With its regular flight times, specific routes and public utility, the 1918 airmail service is regarded by historians as the starting point of commercial aviation.

Pioneer Flight Mail—1910-1916

The Wright brothers, Orville and Wilbur, achieved success with the first controllable, sustainable heavier-than-air flying machine at Kitty Hawk, N.C., on 17 December 1903. After obtaining a patent on the wing-control mechanism and securing sale contracts with the U.S. and French governments, the Wrights made their first public demonstration flights in 1908. Wilbur flew first in Europe, beginning on 8 August 1908, near Le Mans in France. Orville started his contract acceptance flights for U.S. military officials at Fort Myer, Va., on 3 September 1908. After observing additional acceptance flights in July 1909, the U.S. Army completed its first purchase of an airplane. At the 1909 Hudson-Fulton celebration in New York, Wilbur flew up the Hudson River and back in one of the first flights witnessed by the American public.



Historic photograph of Orville and Wilbur Wright's first flight at Kitty Hawk, N.C., on 17 December 1903

In 1910 the first legislative bill contemplating airmail service was submitted to Congress, but was never reported by the House committee. In response to this legislative measure and with the encouragement of postal officials, pioneer aviators who conducted display flights at carnivals, fairs and other special events began carrying small quantities of mail as souvenirs, known as official Pioneer Flight mail.

The first aviator to carry mail as a USPOD-appointed carrier was Earle L. Ovington. His first official flight took place on 23 September 1911, the opening day of an international aviation meet held on Long Island by the Nassau Aviation Corporation. Ovington carried 640 letters and 1,280 postcards on the 23 September first flight between Garden City and Mineola in a French-manufactured Bleriot "Dragonfly" monoplane. He continued to carry mail during the event, as weather permitted.

Legislative Efforts to Fund Airmail—1910-1918

The USPOD was funded each fiscal year (1 July–30 June) by a Post Office Appropriation Act of Congress. Each appropriation bill was named for the year in which its applicable fiscal period came to an end; for example, the Post Office Appropriation Bill for 1918 covered the fiscal period from 1 July 1917 through 30 June 1918.

Legislation concerning airmail service was first introduced in 1910, but without success. After several more attempts to obtain funding for airmail or to implement service, the Post Office Appropriation Bill for 1918 and a follow-up Act of Congress in 1918 (authorizing the 24¢ airmail rate) resulted in the first regular airmail service.

As the year 1916 came to an end, Postmaster General Albert S. Burleson and his new Second Assistant Postmaster General, Otto Praeger, renewed their request to Congress for an appropriation for 1918, raising it to \$100,000 and including the use of dirigibles in the experiments.

The Post Office Appropriation Bill for 1918 (H.R. 19410), reported by the House Committee on the Post Office and Post Roads on 2 January 1917, had the following authorization for airmail service:

For inland transportation by steamboat or other power-boat or by aeroplanes, \$1,224,000; Provided, That out of this appropriation the Postmaster General is authorized to expend not exceeding \$100,000 for the purchase, operation, and maintenance of aeroplanes for an experimental aeroplane mail service between such points as he may determine.

When H.R. 19410 was discussed in the House, opponents voiced concerns over Postmaster General Burleson's earlier suggestion that dirigibles might be used to carry mail. The objection resulted in the entire airmail appropriation being deleted by the House, but the Senate committee restored the original language and reported the bill to the Senate for debate on 9 February 1917.

H.R. 19410 with the airmail service provision was eventually passed by the House and Senate, and it was signed into law by President Woodrow Wilson on 3 March 1917. One month later the U.S. entered the war against Germany.

In February 1918 Postmaster General Burleson solicited bids for building five airplanes to be used in a "permanent" airmail service, and the route suggested was between Washington, D.C., Philadelphia and New York City. The service was to commence on 15 April 1918.

The 1918 appropriation specifically authorized the USPOD to purchase, operate and maintain equipment for airmail service, rather than enter into contracts with private operators. Congress and postal officials had decided it would be better to own the operation, instead of outsourcing it, perhaps as a result of the poor results of the previous year's efforts to obtain bids from the private sector. As it turned out, the USPOD turned to the U.S. Army for planes, pilots and assistance.

On 1 March 1918 Second Assistant Postmaster General Praeger reached an agreement with the U.S. Army Signal Corps to use Army pilots and planes for the first year. This arrangement was deemed mutually beneficial. The USPOD would have immediate access to experienced pilots and planes, and the daily flights would provide Army pilots with additional training and experience. The commencement date was moved to 15 May 1918.

On 3 May 1918 the Secretary of War, Newton D. Baker, passed along executive orders to organize the airmail service to Henry H. "Hap" Arnold, who was then a colonel and assistant director of the

Division of Military Aeronautics, just as it was separating from the Signal Corps. The responsibility to equip and man the airmail service was given to Maj. Reuben H. Fleet, chief of U.S. Army pilot training, and Col. Edward A. Deeds and Capt. Benjamin B. Lipsner, both assigned to Air Service Production.

With the arrangements and start-up date in place, Postmaster General Burleson realized that he did not have authority to establish a special airmail postage rate, a power reserved for Congress. On 28 March 1918 Senator John Morris Sheppard (D-TX) introduced a bill (S. 4208) authorizing the postmaster general to charge 24¢ per ounce for mail carried by airplane.

When S. 4208 was reported to the full Senate on 6 May 1918 and debated on the floor, a few senators expressed lingering doubts about the feasibility or demand for airmail. One senator predicted that airmail would be a "two-days' wonder, not a seven-days' wonder." Nevertheless, the bill passed and was signed by President Wilson on 10 May 1918, just five days before the first flights were set to take off from Washington, D.C., and New York City.



PMG Albert S. Burleson



Second Asst. PMG Otto Praeger



First U.S. Airmail Route and Schedule—May 1918

The first regular airmail route between Washington and New York was measured at a distance of approximately 225 miles, with an intermediate stop at Philadelphia. The reported distances varied, but the USPOD official reports calculated the Washington-Philadelphia leg at 135 miles and the Philadelphia-New York leg at 90 miles. Four intermediate emergency landing locations were established at Baltimore and Havre de Grace, Md., Wilmington, Del., and New Brunswick, N.J.

Postal officials and Maj. Reuben H. Fleet, the U.S. Army officer in charge of the actual flight logistics, selected airfields near each of the three principal cities.

Washington, D.C.—For the airfield in Washington, D.C., postal officials chose the Potomac Park Polo Field, a grassy area between the Tidal Basin and the Potomac River, near the Lincoln Memorial. The Polo Field's proximity to the main post office suited postal officials. However, the field was small and surrounded by trees, making it problematic for takeoffs and landings. Maj. Fleet objected and recommended using the Army airfield at College Park, Md., but he was overruled by postal officials.

Before the first flight from the Potomac Park Polo Field, Maj. Fleet requested park authorities to cut down an obstructive tree. When he was told it would take weeks or months to obtain approval for tree removal, he ordered his men to cut it down. When protests reached up the chain of command and Maj. Fleet was confronted over his decision, he said he did what he had to and did not care about procedure. Satisfied with that answer, his superior let the matter drop.

New York—At the New York end of the route, Maj. August Belmont Jr. offered the government use of the open field at Belmont Park Race Track on Long Island. Belmont, at the age of 64, had received a commission as quartermaster in the American Expeditionary Force. Since the airmail service was a military operation, not civilian, he felt duty-bound to make his race track a free contribution to the war effort. Belmont Race Track was far from the New York City main post office, but trucks and a special Long Island Railroad train link to Pennsylvania Station would be used to shuttle the mail back and forth.

Concerned about his age and duties abroad, Maj. Belmont also auctioned off a large number of his prized yearlings, including one he had held in high regard—a handsome red thoroughbred his wife had named to reflect the times, the legendary Man o' War.

Philadelphia—Bustleton Field, located near the railroad station in a suburb of Philadelphia, about fifteen miles northeast of Center City, was chosen as the intermediate airfield where the relay flights would operate between Washington and New York. Surrounding telephone and telegraph wires presented dangerous obstacles, but the 130 acres of flat open field were ideal for takeoffs and landings.

Schedule—Flights were scheduled to run six days a week, Monday through Saturday, leaving simultaneously at 11:30 a.m. from Washington and New York. The announced flight time from start to finish, including a few minutes to transfer the mail between planes at Philadelphia, was three hours. The airmail arrival times were coordinated with train departures from the main post offices, so that letters sent by airmail would be hours ahead of the regular mail.

The scheduled flying time was one hour and fifty minutes between Washington and Philadelphia (128-135 miles) and one hour between Philadelphia and New York (85-90 miles). According to the plan, the northbound plane would depart from Washington-Potomac Park at 11:30 a.m. and arrive at Philadelphia-Bustleton at 1:20 p.m. The northbound "through" mail to New York would be transferred to the relay plane, while mail addressed to Philadelphia and other places served by that city's distribution office would be carried by truck to the post office. The plane from Philadelphia was expected to reach New York by 2:30 p.m.

Simultaneously, the southbound plane would depart from New York-Belmont at 11:30 a.m. and arrive at Philadelphia-Bustleton at 12:30 p.m. The southbound "through" mail to Washington would be transferred to the relay plane, and the Philadelphia mail would be trucked to the post office. The plane from Philadelphia was expected to reach Washington by 2:30 p.m.

The flight times reliably reported on the first day were 1hr22m for the northbound Philadelphia-to-New York flight (Lieut. Culver's report) and 1h36m for the southbound Philadelphia-to-Washington flight (Lieut. Edgerton's report).

The speed for the period from 15 May to 31 December 1918 averaged 72 mph (depending on which flight statistics are used), which is about 3h3m flying time plus six to nine minutes (as reported) mailbag transfer time at Philadelphia. Therefore, the actual overall flying performance in 1918 averaged only slightly longer than anticipated.

Curtiss "Jenny" Airplanes Used for Aerial Mail Service—1918

In 1915, the Curtiss Aeroplane and Motor Company began production of a new plane that combined features of the earlier "J" and "N" models used by the Army and Navy. The JN series' initials gave rise to the plane's popular nickname "Jenny."

The JN models began with limited production of the JN-1 and JN-2. After two fatal accidents involving the JN-2, the JN-3 was developed to correct the JN-2's shortcomings and used during the U.S. Army's Punitive Expedition against "Pancho" Villa in Mexico in 1916. The further improved JN-4 model was widely



Curtiss JN-4HM mail planes on the field—38274 (left) and 38262 (right)—number 38262 was used on the 24¢ stamp

Image: Smithsonian National Postal Museum, Benjamin Lipsner Collection

used to train military pilots. The “H” in the JN-4H indicated the plane was equipped with an 8-cylinder, 150-horsepower Hispano-Suiza motor, which was more powerful and reliable than the OX-5 motor used in the standard JN-4. The “Hisso” engine gave a Jenny enough power to fly 93 mph at sea level and climb to nearly 13,000 feet.

The Jenny’s frame was made of spruce and covered with a fabric that was doped with a waterproofing material. At approximately 43 feet, the upper wing of the biplane was wider than the lower, and the length from propeller to tail was approximately 27 feet. The narrow width of the Jenny’s landing wheels had caused planes to tilt and hit the ground during landing. To fix this problem, wing skids were added to maintain balance and prevent breakage. The JN-4HT training model had twin seats and dual controls for the student in front and instructor behind.

On 1 March 1918 the Army placed an order with Curtiss for 12 new airplanes to be used for airmail service. The order was divided equally between the Curtiss JN-4HM and R-4LM models. The “M” in each instance indicates the basic plane was modified to carry mail. The six special-order JN-4HM planes—a modified version of the JN-4HT—were produced exclusively for the airmail service. The JN-4HM planes had the forward pilot’s seat and control mechanism removed and replaced with a covered compartment, in which the mail could be placed. The Army’s request for double fuel and oil capacity was met by simply attaching and linking extra 19-gallon gasoline and 2.5-gallon oil tanks.

Only the JN-4HM planes were used for the first airmail flights. The model that appears on the 24¢ stamp is an unmodified trainer with two seats. The photograph provided by the War Department to the Bureau of Engraving and Printing for use in designing the stamp was made from one of the regular Jennys, not a modified mail plane.

Historic Flights and Failure—15 May 1918

As the commencement date approached, there had been great anticipation of the new airmail service among government officials and the public. Newspapers ran stories. People who received admission tickets to the airfields cleared their schedules. Stamp collectors put money aside to buy the new 24¢ airmail stamp when it went on sale on 14 May, in time to be used on First Trip mail.

By May 1918, only a decade had passed since the Wrights had revealed the capability of their flying machine in public display flights. During those ten years, amateur aviators had flown planes in many places throughout the world. Nations’ armies were using planes to great effect in World War I. Aeronautic societies and the government’s new aviation commission were advocating and analyzing the use of airplanes in all aspects of civilian and military life.

Now, after years spent pleading for money to create an airmail service, postal officials gathered with others on the airmail fields in Washington, Philadelphia and New York. In Washington, among those in attendance were the postmaster general and his subordinates, legislators who supported the concept, dignitaries who wished to witness the spectacle, and even President Woodrow Wilson and the First Lady. All of them, together with curious spectators, eagerly awaited the opening ceremony and hand-waving when the first plane departed north with the country’s first airmail bags.



USPOD truck with airmail service sign

off, President Wilson and postal officials posed for still and motion cameras. The video footage can be viewed at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nhzmNvKY-i4>.

With all eyes on the Jenny, Sgt. E. F. Waters yanked on the propeller blade to start the engine. Nothing. He tried again... nothing. Several more attempts were made without success. The engine would not turn over. They checked the fuel gauge. It read full. A mechanic cleaned the spark plugs, but still there was no ignition.

Eyewitness reports depict President Wilson as irritated. Someone said they overheard him tell the First Lady, "We're losing a lot of valuable time here." Whether or not these accounts are reliable is uncertain, but as the minutes passed beyond the 11:30 a.m. scheduled departure time, postal and military officials responsible for the new airmail service must have been embarrassed in front of President Wilson and the large crowd assembled on the Polo Field.

Capt. Lipsner or Maj. Fleet (or someone else) soon realized that the plane's fuel gauge was designed to provide an in-flight reading when the plane was level. With the plane in a tilted starting position, the gauge inaccurately showed full. The crew was ordered to refill the tank. After siphoning gas from other planes on the field and refilling 38262's tank, Sgt. Waters pulled on the propeller, and the engine came to life.

The pilot was Lieut. George L. Boyle, a novice aviator chosen because he was engaged to the daughter of a powerful government official. After taking off from the Polo Field, Lieut. Boyle turned and flew south instead of north. Minutes later, he landed once in a field to



Lieut. George L. Boyle

get his location, then took off. When he grew concerned that his bearings were still off, Lieut. Boyle tried to land again, but the field he chose was too soft, and his Jenny nosed over upon landing, causing the propeller to snap and damaging the cabane struts on the wings.

Lieut. Boyle, the upside-down Jenny and 140 lbs of mail he was carrying were stranded about 20 to 25 miles south of the Potomac Park Polo Field, near Waldorf, Md. By coincidence, the field Lieut. Boyle crashed in was near the home of Second Assistant Postmaster General Praeger.

Shortly after crashing, Lieut. Boyle called Maj. Fleet by phone to notify him of the problem, and then found someone to drive him back to the airfield. Lieut. Boyle and the mailbags returned to Potomac Park, and mechanics were sent to repair the plane. It was flown back to Washington that night and arrived at 8:05 p.m. Newspapers reported the mishap the next day. Under the headline "FIRST AIR MAIL IN WASHINGTON IN 200 MINUTES", *The New York Times* ran a smaller headline, "Flier Bound from Washington Lands in Maryland."

The southbound flight that left from New York was the first to complete the inaugural 15 May airmail service. The combined New York and Philadelphia southbound mail—136 lbs. in total—was transferred to Jenny 38274, piloted by Lieut. James C. Edgerton. He reached the Polo Field in Washington at 2:50 p.m. and was greeted by a cheering crowd.

After a frantic effort to assemble the Jennys in time for the inaugural flights, one of the planes was flown by Maj. Fleet from Philadelphia to Washington early in the morning of 15 May. The crowd gathered at Potomac Park Polo Field could hear the Jenny approaching in the distant sky. At 10:35 a.m., nearly two hours after taking off from Bustleton, Maj. Fleet landed Jenny 38262.

The northbound flight was scheduled for 11:30 a.m. Mail was accepted for the flight up to 10:30 or 11:00 a.m. and postmarked with a special "First Trip" marking. A special mail truck marked "United States Airmail Service" carried the mailbags to the airfield. While waiting for the plane to take



President Wilson and the First Lady at the inaugural flight ceremony in Washington, D.C., 15 May 1918

Image: Smithsonian National Postal Museum

PRODUCTION OF THE 24¢ 1918 AIR POST ISSUE

With the arrangements and start-up date for the new airmail service in place, Postmaster General Burleson realized that he did not have authority to establish a special airmail postage rate, a power reserved for Congress. On 28 March 1918 Senator Sheppard introduced a bill (S. 4208) authorizing the postmaster general to charge 24¢ per ounce for mail carried by airplane.

The bill passed and was signed by President Wilson on 10 May 1918, just five days before the first flights were set to take off from Washington, D.C., and New York City. Nearly one week earlier, on 4 May 1918, engravers at the Bureau of Engraving and Printing (BEP) had already started working on the new stamp.

The story of the first airmail stamp's design and production is also the story of the Inverted Jenny. While many facts are known, there remain several missing elements and uncertain answers to questions that were asked as soon as the Inverted Jenny was discovered on 14 May 1918.

Design, Dies and Plates—4-10 May 1918

The new 24¢ airmail stamp was valid for regular postage, and regular stamps were valid for the special airmail service. Accordingly, the new airmail stamp was labeled "U.S. Postage" without any reference to its purpose other than the symbolic image of an airplane. It was printed in two colors, red and blue, which together with the white paper background created a patriotic color theme during World War I. As late as 9 May 1918, just a few days before the stamps were to go on sale, postal officials had still not decided whether the frame would be in red and plane in blue, or vice versa.

All of the work on the new airmail stamp was performed by the BEP. In 1894, over the protests of the American Bank Note Co., the BEP had been given the responsibility to manufacture postage stamps for the USPOD. The BEP also had responsibility for producing tax stamps and other forms of government securities, including currency and war bonds.

In 1918 the chief postage stamp designer for the BEP was Clair Aubrey Huston (1858-1938), whose portfolio consisted of numerous iconic designs, beginning with the 1903 2¢ Washington "Shield" stamp and including the long-running 1908-1922 Washington-Franklin (Third Bureau) series. Huston had also been responsible for designing the 20¢ Parcel Post stamp with an airplane vignette; it was created in 1912 and issued on 1 January 1913, at a time when the USPOD was lobbying Congress to allocate funds for the development of airmail service.

The BEP official die production records provide details of the work performed to complete the two separate dies for the 24¢ stamp (numbers 663 and 664): the dates and times of the work performed, a general description of the work, the name of each contributing engraver, and the amount charged to the USPOD for the BEP's work (listed below). Images of the original cards are shown on the following page (provided by Joe R. Kirker).



The normal 24¢ 1918 Air Post Issue

Die 663 "24¢ Aeroplane Stamp Border 1918"

<i>Date</i>	<i>Engraver</i>	<i>Time</i>	<i>Cost</i>
4 May 1918	Hall, Edward M. "(No credit)"	6h15m	\$9.61
4 May	"Cleaning"—Schuyler	0h30m	.42
7 May	Weeks, Edward	16h15m	
8 May	ditto	14h30m	{ 47.29
	Weeks—Frame		
	Weeks—Lettering		
	Steel		.89
9 May	Clair A. Huston, Designer		.50
	Total		\$58.71

**Die 664 "Center for 24¢ Aeroplane Stamp, Vignette—Aeroplane"
"(From photo. taken by the Bureau of Engraving & Printing)"**

<i>Date</i>	<i>Engraver</i>	<i>Time</i>	<i>Cost</i>
8 May 1918	Baldwin, Marcus W.	18h45m	\$45.72
9 May	Weeks, Edward	2h15m	4.46
	Baldwin—Vignette		
	Steel		.89
10 May	Clair A. Huston, Designer		.50
	Total		\$51.57

There is no official record of the date Huston began designing the 24¢ airmail stamp. He might have started before 4 May 1918, when Edward M. Hall (1862-1939) began preparing the frame die (the earliest entry on the card for Die 663). It was definitely before 7 May 1918, when a reduced stamp-size photograph of Huston's design was submitted by James L. Wilmeth, the BEP director, to A. M. Dockery, the Third

663 (A. O. O.) 244 Aeroplane Stamp Border 1918		2 x 5 1/2	
DATE		TIME	COST
May 4	Steel C. M. 4 1/2 (No credit)	6:15	961
May 7	Shingles 1/2	30	42
May 8	Wicks 7 1/4 7	16 15	47 39
" 8	7 8 5	14 38	
	Wicks - Frame		
	Wicks - Lifting and numerals		

664 (10-21) Center for 24s. Aeroplanes Stamp, Vignette-Aerplane		3 x 2 1/2	
DATE	FROM PHOTO, TAKEN BY THE BUREAU OF ENGRAVING & PRINTING	TIME	COST
May 8	Baldwin,		
of 8	" 6 1/2 " 1 1/2 " 7 "	18	45.50
May 8	Wheeler 1 1/2	9	15
	Baldwin-Vignette		
MAY 10 1918	Clair G. Huston design	Styl	99
			50
		Total,	\$ 51.50

BEP die production records for the 24¢ 1918 Air Post Issue (images provided by Joe R. Kirker)

Assistant Postmaster General (the artist's model for approval has never been located). The rapid pace of production required an informal expedited approval process, and the USPOD immediately green-lighted the BEP's design.

Edward Weeks (1866-1960) began engraving the frame and lettering on the day the design was submitted for approval, 7 May 1918. Weeks finished the following day, 8 May 1918, the same day that work on the vignette die was started by Marcus W. Baldwin (1853-1925). Baldwin finished on 9 May 1918, and, as will be shown, Weeks made a small but significant contribution to the vignette after Baldwin engraved the plane.

Baldwin, Hall and Weeks are pictured in the group photograph of BEP engravers shown below. Another photograph of Baldwin at work is shown on the opposite page. Baldwin was one of the BEP's most accomplished engravers. His iconic engraving, the "Western Cattle in Storm" vignette on the 1898 \$1 Trans-Mississippi (shown opposite), is considered to be one of the greatest masterpieces of American stamp art. Baldwin was 65 years old when he engraved the Jenny vignette for the new 24¢ airmail stamp. Hall was 56, and Weeks was 52.



Clair Aubrey Huston, senior designer at BEP



BEP engravers: Edward Hall (left), Marcus Baldwin (center), Edward Weeks (right)

The signatures or initials of Huston, Baldwin and Weeks appear on a cover mailed by W. B. Wells in Washington, D.C., to William H. Maple in New York City (shown opposite). Since Hall was never credited by the BEP for his work on the 24¢ stamp, his signature was not sought.

Chronology—The BEP records state that the War Department furnished a photograph of the plane for use in designing and engraving the stamp. That photograph has never been located or identified.

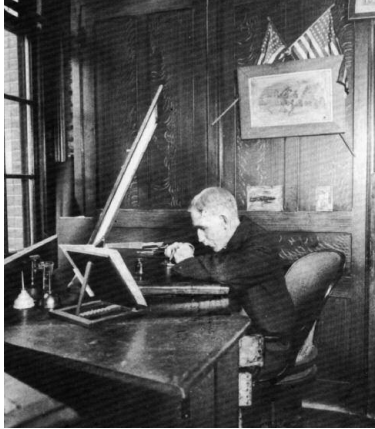
The plane pictured on the stamp is not one of the modified JN-4HM mail planes, which had the forward student pilot's seat replaced by the mail compartment. With magnification, it is obvious that the plane has two seats: the forward cockpit is empty, and the pilot sits in the rear cockpit (see enlarged photo opposite). Therefore, the photograph furnished by the War

Department to the BEP was made from a standard JN-4 trainer, not one of the six planes specially manufactured for the airmail service.

One detail of the plane engraving that has intrigued philatelists is the serial number on the fuselage. Number 38262 is the actual number assigned to one of the six mail planes purchased from the Curtiss company. In fact, it is the number of the first plane flown out of Washington, D.C., on 15 May 1918.

The question raised by this detail is how could the BEP designer and engravers incorporate number 38262 into the Jenny vignette before the planes were delivered to the U.S. Army's airmail service on 13 May

Marcus Baldwin at work—his finest stamp engraving was the vignette on the \$1 Trans-Mississippi Issue



24¢ airmail stamp on cover signed or initialed by Huston, Baldwin and Weeks

1918? How could they know the serial number of any of the six planes, let alone the first one to depart from Washington, D.C.?

Based on the BEP record of die production and the facts known about the manufacture and delivery of the mail planes, a plausible sequence of events can be reconstructed. A quick review of the facts will be helpful before presenting a timeline.

On 30 April 1918 Maj. Reuben H. Fleet reported that the planes ordered from Curtiss had been built and would be shipped to the U.S. Army's Hazelhurst aviation field near Mineola. A memorandum dated 8 May 1918 from Lieut. Col. R. M. Jones of the U.S. Army Equipment Division reported that the planes would be shipped on Sunday, 12 May 1918. The six unassembled Jennys were delivered in crates on Monday, 13 May 1918. The planes were numbered 37944, 38262, 38274, 38275, 38276 and 38278.

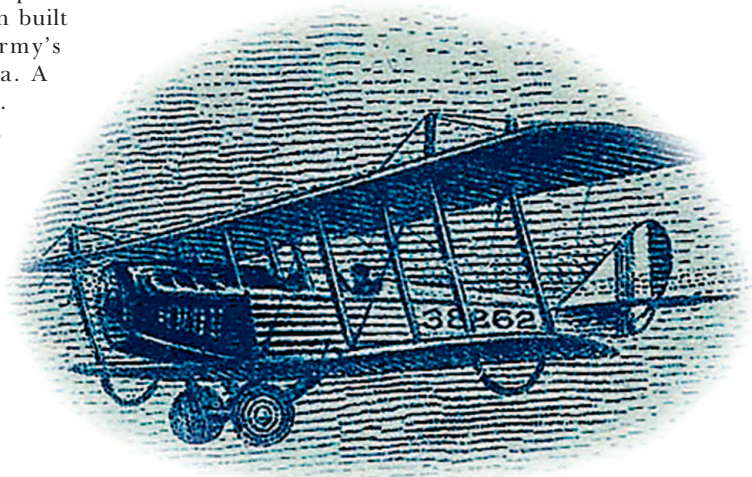
Assuming the stamp design submitted for approval on 7 May 1918 showed an airplane—any airplane—then Huston must have been given the photograph of a plane prior to that date. That is a safe assumption.

The plane in the engraving based on Huston's model was an unmodified U.S. Army JN-4 trainer, not one of the six airmail planes, so the photograph could have been taken at any of the locations where Jenny trainers were used.

The serial number 38262 would not have appeared on the unmodified trainer with two seats. Therefore, the BEP must have been informed of the number before the die was completed. That could have taken place after 30 April 1918, the date Maj. Fleet reported the planes had been built, and before the vignette die was finished. Huston's design model has never been reported or photographed, so we cannot know what number, if any, was on the plane in his original design.

However, it is possible to pinpoint the exact day the number was engraved on the plane, and identify the engraver responsible for doing it. That information might indicate when the BEP was informed that number 38262 was one of the airmail plane serial numbers.

According to the BEP records (the two cards shown previously), work preparing the frame die (Die 663) started on 4 May 1918. A total of 6 hours 45 minutes work was performed that day. The first entry (6h15m) records Edward M. Hall as the engraver, but he has never been given credit for the frame, and the words "No credit" actually appear in the record. The second entry on 4 May 1918 (30m) is for "cleaning" by another employee named Schuyler.



The Jenny has two seats and "38262"



Hall was an accomplished engraver, who started working for the BEP in 1878 at the age of 16. Apparently, his only contribution to the creation of the 24¢ airmail stamp was to prepare the soft-metal die for the work that would be performed by Edward Weeks. Perhaps Hall started the engraving, using a frame design drawn by Huston.

The more important work in engraving the frame details and lettering was performed by Weeks on 7 and 8 May 1918. He worked 16h15m on the first day and 14h30m on the second day, for a total of 30h45m.

Marcus Baldwin started his work on the vignette (Die 664) on 8 May 1918. The BEP record shows just this date and a total of 18h45min. Baldwin's diary states that he worked from 12:00 noon until 10:00 p.m. on 8 May 1918 and "all day" on 9 May 1918. For a 65-year old man hunched over a block of steel, these were extraordinarily long work days.

A significant but heretofore overlooked entry in the BEP record is dated 9 May 1918, the day that Baldwin finished his work on the Jenny vignette. This entry identifies Weeks as the engraver, spending 2h15m on the vignette die.

Baldwin's diary entry for 9 May 1918 states "Mr. Weeks did the lettering." This note has previously been misinterpreted by philatelists. Baldwin was not referring to the frame lettering; he was referring to the plane.

Baldwin has always been given full credit for the vignette engraving, and Weeks for the frame. However, the BEP entry for Weeks' 2h15m work on the vignette and Baldwin's diary notation, "Mr. Weeks did the lettering" are evidence that **the serial number was engraved by Weeks, not Baldwin, on 9 May 1918, after Baldwin finished his engraving of the plane.** This date might be the actual day a serial number from one of the six mail planes was reported to the BEP, immediately following Lieut. Col. Jones' 8 May 1918 memorandum that the planes were ready to be shipped.

Before Weeks engraved the number on the plane, the BEP did something significant to document the progress of the die engraving. When Baldwin finished engraving the vignette on 9 May 1918, three die proof impressions of the frame and vignette together were made. One of these, in blue and black, is shown at right. Significantly, this progressive die proof shows the Jenny without the serial number engraved on the fuselage.

A letter dated 9 May 1918 from BEP director Wilmeth to Third Assistant Postmaster General Dockery enclosed "two proof impressions," one with "blue background and red machine" and the other with "red background and blue machine." The blue-and-black proof shown above was undoubtedly a third proof made at the same time, but not submitted for approval. This letter and the trial color proofs prove that the USPOD had still not chosen the final color scheme for the stamp on 9 May 1918, just days before the stamp's issue date.

On 16 May 1918 the BEP sent two additional die proofs in the issued color combination to the Third Assistant Postmaster General's office. Accompanying these proofs was a letter from Wilmeth to Dockery asking the USPOD to approve the final proof "as of date of May 11" (retroactively) and return it to the BEP. One of the proofs signed by Postmaster General Burleson and dated 11 May 1918 is shown at left. This proof has the serial number on the plane, unlike the blue-and-black proof made on 9 May 1918, before Weeks engraved the number.

The choice of 38262 for the stamp was most likely random and coincidental, since no one—not even the U.S. Army officials in charge of the mail service—ever said that 38262 was intended to be the plane to fly ceremoniously from Washington on the first day.

The two separate dies, once completed, had to be hardened for further use in manufacturing the plates. The frame die was the first to be hardened, on 9 May 1918, and the vignette die followed on 10 May 1918.



Blue and black die proof made on 9 May 1918, showing the plane without the number 38262



Die proof in issued colors approved by PMG Burleson

Image: Smithsonian National Postal Museum

Making the Plates—In intaglio printing, the ink is held in recessed lines in the surface of the plate, and the printed image is transferred when the paper is forced against the plate under great pressure. This method of printing creates the slightly raised or embossed feel of the image or letters.

To produce a right-reading image on paper, a printing plate must have a mirror-image design. Therefore, if one were to examine the original 24¢ Jenny plates (vignette and frame), all of the designs would appear in mirror image. The plate would be flying to the right, and the letters and numbers would be reversed.

To create a plate of uniform subjects, an essential characteristic of high-quality security printing, a transfer roll is used to convey the original die design to each subject on the plate. The transfer roll is a cylindrical piece of steel, upon which a raised right-reading image of the design has been created from the mirror-image engraving on the die. When the transfer roll is rocked onto the plate under enormous pressure, it incises the design into the flat surface of the plate.

In simple terms, a hardened steel die produces the relief image on a softened steel transfer roll. The transfer roll is then hardened and applied to a softened steel plate. Finally, the plate is hardened to make it suitable for printing. The illustration above shows the fundamental relationship between the transfer roll and plate subjects.

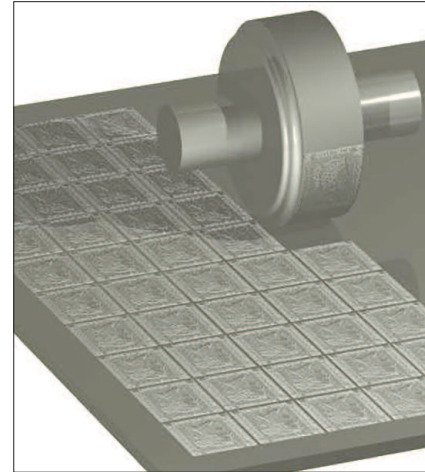
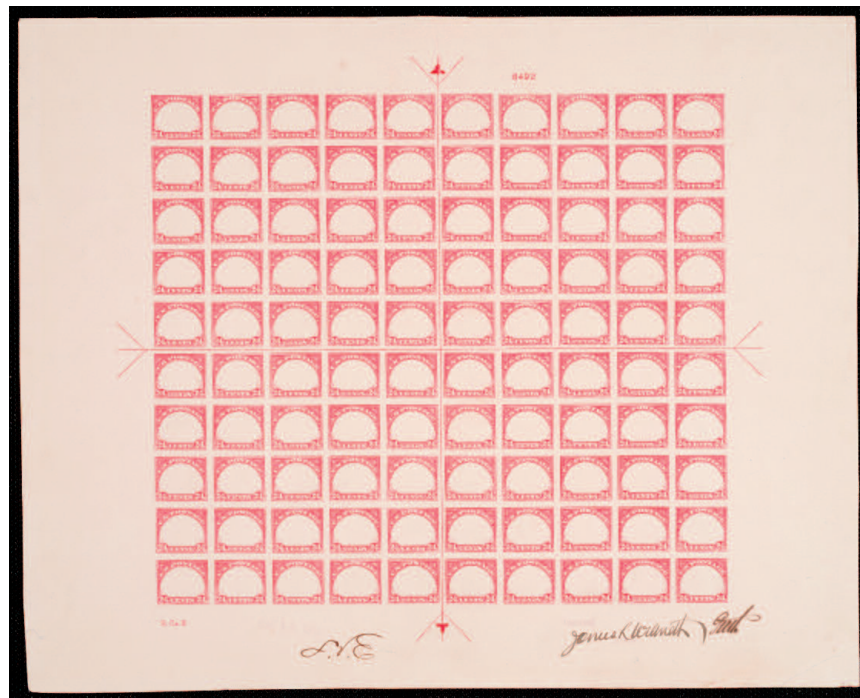


Illustration of transfer roll and plate

Two plates of 100 subjects (10 by 10) were used to print the 24¢ airmail stamp. Each plate number was engraved above one position in the top row. On a normal printed sheet with the top selvage intact, they are Position 4 (blue 8493—vignette) and Position 7 (red 8492—frame). On the Inverted Jenny sheet, the blue vignette plate number 8493 was printed in the margin below Position 97 in the bottom row.

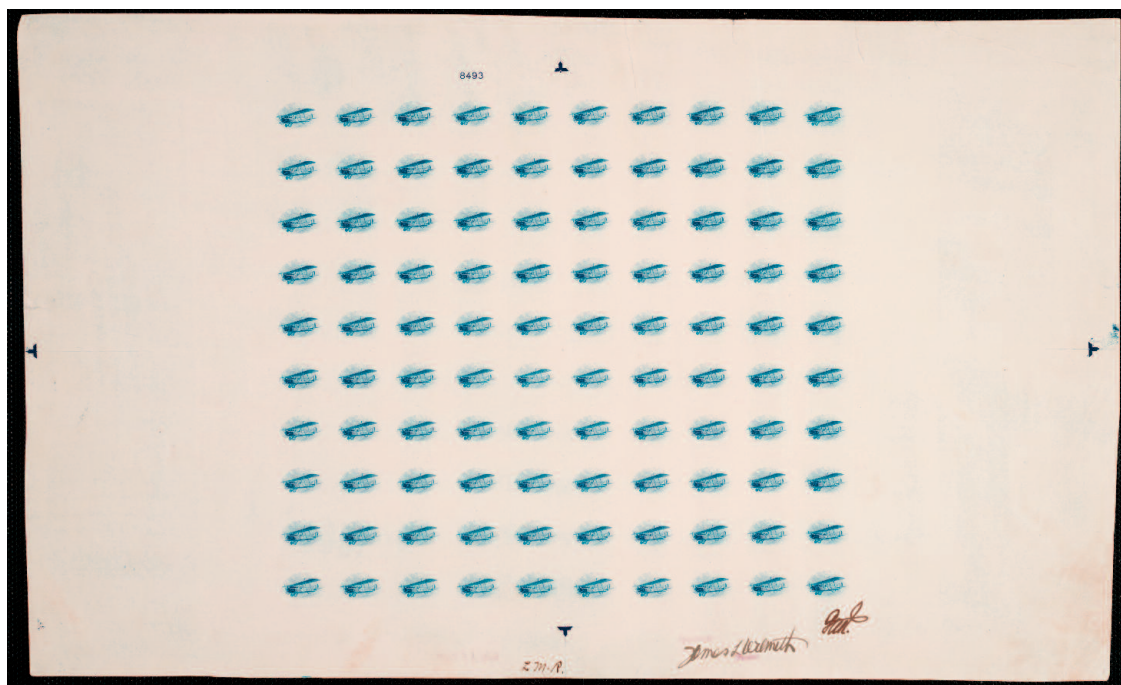
The BEP craftsman responsible for transferring the design from the die to the plate via the transfer roll is known as a siderographer. The siderographer who made the 24¢ plates was Samuel De Binder, whose initials “S De B.” appear in red in the lower left corner of sheets produced before the BEP started trimming off the bottom margin. De Binder did not put his initials on the vignette plate.

Samuel De Binder, born in 1864, was 54 years old when he made the two plates for the first U.S. airmail stamp. He started working for the BEP in 1908 and made a total of 149 plates before retiring in 1929. His son Clyde also worked for the BEP as a plate finisher and siderographer. (Source: “Samuel and Clyde De Binder,”



Proofs made from plates 8492 (red frame—above) and 8493 (blue vignette—on following page)

Image: Smithsonian National Postal Museum



Proofs made from plates 8492 (red frame—previous page) and 8493 (blue vignette—above)

Image: Smithsonian National Postal Museum

Rodney A. Juell and Doug D'Avino, *United States Specialist*, April 2005, digital version available at <http://www.usstamps.org>). According to an article by Clifford C. Cole (*The American Philatelist*, February 1982), De Binder used two separate three-subject transfer rolls—one with the vignette and the other with the frame—to make the two plates. The BEP records state that one transfer roll was made from the frame die and three rolls from the vignette die.

The process of applying pressure with levers and rocking the transfer roll over the plate with a hand wheel required considerable skill to achieve accuracy. The need for precision was even greater in making the two plates for bicolored printing, because the subjects on each plate had to be exactly aligned with each other, or the printed designs would be misaligned. To obtain proper alignment, De Binder made tiny dots on the vignette plate to space his entries at even intervals. The minute dots appear faintly on most of the stamps in a sheet. Another common practice was to use a plate subject as a guide for other relief entries by aligning one of the reliefs on the transfer roll with the recessed entry on the plate, then rocking the other two reliefs in their positions.

Despite De Binder's skill and best efforts, there was still a slight variation that caused a shift in the alignment between the frames and the vignettes. On a perfectly aligned printed sheet, if the planes in the top row are centered within the frames, they begin to drift progressively downward toward the bottom of the sheet. The proof impressions from the frame and die plates, located at the Smithsonian National Postal Museum and shown here, confirm that the spacing was not precisely aligned between the two plates. This observation made from the proofs on card rules out the possibility that the misregistration found on printed sheets was caused by paper shrinkage during the printing process.

De Binder engraved his initials "S. De B." at the lower right corner of the steel frame plate, which produced printed initials in the lower left corner of the sheet. The margin with De Binder's initials was left intact on sheets from the first few days of printing, but after the word "Top" was added to the plate(s) and the sheet-trimming process was modified, his initials no longer appeared on sheets. Since the Inverted Jenny sheet comes from the early production and original trimming format, the "S De B." initials are present on the unique Inverted Jenny corner-margin block of four.

In addition to plate numbers and his initials, De Binder created guide lines on the frame plate. These vertical and horizontal guide lines divide the sheet into quarters and have arrow-shaped ends that appear in the selvage. The frame plate also has small registration markers at the top and bottom. The same markers were put on the vignette plate at top and bottom, and they were used to check the alignment of the impressions (the alignment is correct when they precisely overlap).

On the vignette plate there are additional registration markers at the sides, a few inches from the stamp subjects. These were not meant to be printed, but were used by the printer's assistant to align a sheet of paper with the printed frame impression with the vignette plate for the second impression.

Printing—10-12 May 1918

Despite the Inverted Jenny stamp's fame and the attention paid to it at the time of issue, right from the beginning there has been misinformation, misunderstanding and disagreement about how the error occurred.

The potential for a printing error was anticipated as soon as the USPOD announced that the first airmail stamp would be bicolored. The Inverted Jenny's discoverer, William T. Robey, was familiar with the inverts that occurred during production of the bicolored 1901 Pan-American Issue. Before 14 May 1918, Robey wrote to a fellow collector, expressing hope that he might find inverts at the post office when he bought the new airmail stamp.

To determine the most plausible scenario for how the Inverted Jenny occurred, a quick overview of the printing process will be helpful.

Printing Method—Intaglio printing on a hand-operated press is extremely labor intensive. Printing each sheet involves multiple steps, enumerated below, and these steps must be repeated for bicolored printing, with extra attention required to ensure precise alignment of the two impressions.

Because the BEP was under enormous pressure to print large quantities of wartime tax stamps, bonds and other securities, the bicolored airmail stamps were printed on an old Spider Press, so named because the hand-operated turning wheel has long handles that resemble the legs of a spider. A photograph of a Spider Press is shown here, and additional information about its operation may be found on the Smithsonian National Postal Museum website (<http://postalmuseum.si.edu/collections/object-spotlight/spider-press.html>).

The steps involved in printing one sheet are as follows:

- Remove the plate from the press bed and warm it to allow the ink to spread more evenly
- Apply ink to the plate and wipe the non-printing surface clean
- Return the plate to the press bed
- Dampen the paper and carefully position the sheet on the press (this is done by the printer's assistant, whose hands are kept clean)
- Apply mechanical pressure to create the impression
- After the impression is made, remove the sheet from the press and stack it for drying, inspection, and additional production steps

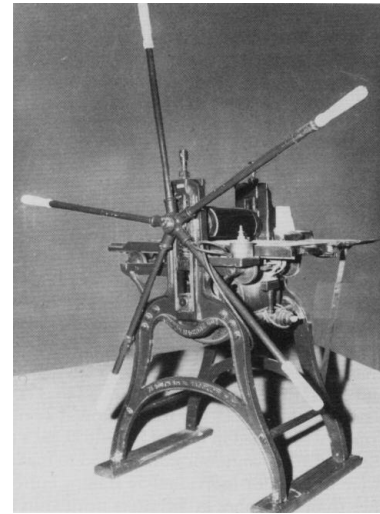
Trimming—At this point it will be helpful to repeat that the printed sheets of the 24¢ airmail stamp were originally trimmed at the top and right, cutting off the plate numbers at the top and the guide arrow at the right (as shown in the photograph on following page). This was done to make the sheets fit into post office drawers. It was accomplished by substituting a cutting knife for one of the perforating wheels on the perforating machine. As the sheet was perforated, the cutting wheel trimmed off the excess margin.



Positions 63 and 64 with blind perforation

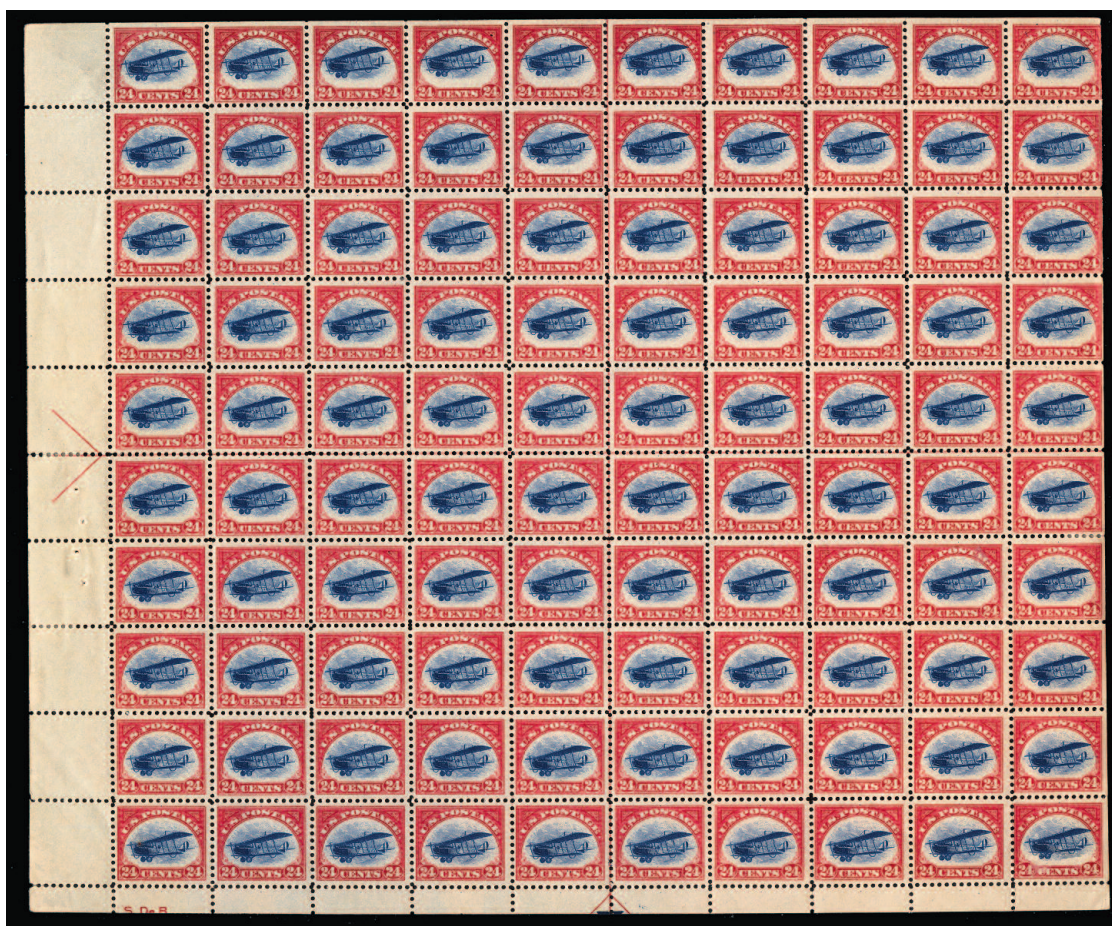
The intact sheet selvage on early-production sheets has the guide arrows at the left and bottom, and the siderographer's initials at the bottom left, but no plate numbers. This trimming characteristic of early-production sheets is a factor in determining how the error might have occurred.

The straight edges at the top and right of early-production sheets are typical of panes of 100 stamps from 400-stamp sheets. For this reason, when the Inverted Jenny error was discovered, it was assumed that the sheet came from a 400-subject plate on one of the BEP's regular presses. Philatelists at the time widely assumed that three other panes of Inverted Jenny errors, cut from the same sheet, were lurking in post offices.



BEP Spider Press

A tiny telltale characteristic of the perforating mechanism used to perforate and trim the 24¢ sheets is a single missing pin in the fourth vertical line of perforations. This defect appears as a "blind" (missing) perforation between the third and fourth columns of stamps (its position from top to bottom varies). It is found on Positions 63 and 64 from the Inverted Jenny sheet (shown at left). On some sheets, it is transposed and appears between the seventh and eighth columns, indicating a 180-degree change in orientation of the printed sheet and perforating wheels. The missing perforation was apparently repaired at a later point, since it is not present on some sheets.



Trimming format of early sheets—straight edge at top and right, selvage at bottom (note blind perforation in 5th row)

Inversion Error—Given the steps and handling necessary to print a sheet of bicolored stamps on the hand-operated Spider Press, is it possible to determine who made the mistake and how it happened? Unfortunately, not with certainty.

The order of printing was frame first, then vignette. Therefore, sheets with freshly-printed frames would be stacked by the printer's assistant, checked for defects, counted and returned to the press for the second run of vignette impressions.

Because the frames were printed first, there has never been any doubt that the Inverted Jenny stamps are "center inverted" errors, not "frame inverted." However, did the inversion occur because the sheet of paper was turned around 180 degrees? Or, after the vignette plate was removed, warmed and inked, did the plate printer put it back in a 180-degree rotated position?

Official reports and philatelists in general have leaned toward the inverted paper theory, but certain aspects of production actually tip the scale in favor of the inverted plate theory.

Since the sheets were checked after the first pass on the frame plate, the stack of sheets with frame impressions should have been in order and consistently oriented. The printer's assistant had to remove each sheet, dampen it for printing, and carefully position it on the plate, using the two wide-set guides for visual alignment. After the printer made the impression, the sheet would be removed and stacked for drying, pressing and gumming.

In the inverted sheet scenario, the printer's assistant—the only one with clean hands who handled the actual paper—would have to rotate the sheet 180 degrees before it was placed on the plate. Then, the same sheet would have to be rotated 180 degrees again before perforating and trimming. Unless the invert sheet was rotated a second time, the straight edges would be at the bottom and left, rather than the top and right (looking at the sheet with the red frame upright).

The missing perforation found between the third and fourth columns (Positions 63 and 64) of the Inverted Jenny sheet is further evidence that the sheet's orientation was consistent with others with the straight edges at top and right.

Therefore, if one accepts the inverted sheet theory, then the Inverted Jenny sheet sold to Robey was rotated 180 degrees *twice*: once before the blue vignette printing, and again before the perforating and trimming process (gum was applied between printing/drying/pressing and perforating/trimming).

On the other hand, the inverted plate theory eliminates the need for a double-rotation of the paper. In this scenario, after the vignette plate had been removed from the press, warmed, inked and wiped, the plate printer put it back on the press rotated 180 degrees from its normal orientation. While this seems an unlikely mistake for a skilled BEP printer to make, there are a few factors that weigh in favor of a plate rotation error.

First, the design of the plane vignette does not have a clearly defined top and bottom in its shape and appearance. In fact, in 1918 very few people had even seen an actual airplane, so its appearance was unfamiliar. Obviously, the printed Inverted Jenny sheet escaped detection during the handling and inspection steps that followed the printing error. Therefore, it is conceivable that a plate printer, looking at a steel printing plate on the press bed, would not instinctively notice the inverted orientation of the planes.

Second, the plate itself did not have any distinguishing marks to indicate top or bottom, other than the small plate number at the top. Due to their symmetry, the registration markers at top and bottom and wide-set markers at the sides would not provide a visual cue. As far as anyone knows or has reported, the plate did not have notches or another structural feature that would prevent placement on the press bed with a 180-degree rotation.

If, in fact, the sheet of paper remained correctly oriented throughout the entire process, then the invert sheet Robey purchased was the result of the plate printer's mistake, and it escaped detection during the inspection process and handling further down the production line.

Printings—Another technical matter that generates some controversy among philatelic specialists is the division of 1918 24¢ airmail stamp production into first, second and third printings. The three-printings concept evolved from the plate alterations, but no records have been found to support the division of production into three separate printings. Some argue that the three-printings concept distorts the events as they actually unfolded. Therefore, rather than dwell on how *many* printings there were, an explanation of what makes the stamps produced *different* is more helpful.

There is no argument over the dates and characteristics of the earliest sheets printed and issued. According to BEP records, the frame plate 8492 was put on the press on Friday, 10 May 1918. At this point, the frame plate had only a plate number at the top (above Position 7 on the printed sheet) and the "S De B." initials at bottom left.

A supply of sheets with red frame impressions—the exact number is not known—was ready for the second run on Saturday, 11 May 1918, at 4:00 p.m., when the vignette plate 8493 was put on the press (source: Amick, *JENNY!*, page 28). The vignette plate had only the plate number (above Position 4).

It is not known if BEP employees worked on Sunday, 12 May 1918, but by Monday, 13 May 1918, a supply of fully gummed and perforated sheets is reported to have reached the main post office in Washington, D.C.

[Even on this point, philatelists disagree. Some claim that no stamps were available on Monday, 13 May 1918, and that the true first day of sale was Tuesday, 14 May 1918, when the stamps went on sale in the three principal airmail route cities: Washington, Philadelphia and New York. That is the day Robey bought the Inverted Jenny sheet at the New York Avenue office in Washington, D.C.]

The discovery of the invert error on 14 May 1918 was immediately reported to postal officials on the same day. The next day, 15 May 1918, as the inaugural flights were taking off, the BEP took its first step toward preventing the same mistake from reoccurring. To facilitate inspection and make it easier to spot a sheet with the vignette printed upside down, the word "Top" was added to the vignette plate 8493 above Position 3. The trimming procedure was also changed to leave the top selvage and plate imprints intact.

Sheets printed from the modified vignette plate in combination with impressions from the unmodified frame plate have just the blue "Top" and are known to collectors as "Blue Top Only" plate imprints. A Blue Top Only imprint is shown below.



Printed from frame plate without "Top" and vignette plate with "Top"—this type of imprint is known as Blue Top Only



Printed from vignette and frame plates with "Top"—this is a Double Top imprint and Fast Plane variety

All of the Blue Top Only sheets have the top selvage intact and a straight edge at bottom. The majority of Blue Top Only sheets or multiples have a straight edge at the left and arrow margin at the right, and the blind perforation is between the seventh and eighth columns, which is the opposite of the first trimming format. This indicates a 180-degree change in orientation between the sheet and the perforations.

However, sometime during production of the Blue Top Only sheets, another 180-degree change in orientation must have occurred. On some Blue Top Only sheets and plate blocks, the straight edge at the side is not on the left, but on the right as it was on the first sheets produced. The missing perforation also moves from the seventh/eighth columns to the third/fourth columns (again, as it was on the first sheet produced). The Double Top sheets always have the arrow on the left and straight edge on the right.

The next plate alteration was the addition of the word "Top" to the frame plate 8492 above Position 8. Interestingly, the fonts used for the frame and vignette plates are not the same, which suggests they were done at different times by different BEP employees.

When sheets printed from the modified frame plate were placed on the press with the modified vignette plate, the "Double Top" sheets were produced. The vast majority of 24¢ sheets were the Double Top imprint variety. They are consistently trimmed with the straight edge at right and arrow at left. Some have the blind perforation hole, and some do not.

Returning to the debate about multiple printings, some specialists classify the three types of sheets as first, second and third printings. This classification implies that the supply of sheets without the "Top" came from a printing that had a beginning and end. Then, the vignette plate was modified by adding the word "Top," and a second printing occurred with a start and finish. Finally, the frame plate was modified by adding "Top," and a third printing took place. Three versions, three printings.

Other specialists have challenged this classification and chronology. They say the more likely scenario is that a supply of frame sheets was printed on the first two days of production, 10 May and the morning of 11 May. At 350 sheets per day, the total number of frame sheets without the "Top" imprint would be less than 700. Then, on 11 May at 4:00 p.m., the BEP started printing sheets from the vignette plate. By 12 or 13 May, a small supply of bicolored sheets printed from the unmodified plates—no more than a few hundred—was gummed, perforated and packed for distribution, reaching all three cities for sale on 14 May (and possibly one day earlier at the Washington, D.C., main post office). Included among these early-production sheets was the Inverted Jenny sheet Robey purchased on 14 May 1918.

In this scenario, when the BEP halted production, a stack of sheets with frame impressions only, without the red "Top," was still awaiting the second stage of printing. Once the vignette plate was modified on 15 May 1918 with the addition of the word "Top," the frame sheets without the word "Top" were put on the press.

It seems logical that the BEP, rather than discard valuable and needed product, simply used up the existing supply of frame sheets. Even if they knew the word "Top" would be added to the frame plate before more sheets were printed, they would still use the previously-printed sheets.

Finally, when the supply of frame sheets (without "Top") was exhausted, the modified frame plate with "Top" was put back on the press, and the next group of sheets produced had the Double Top imprint.

The 24¢ Air Post stamp was current for only two months before the airmail rate was lowered to 16¢ and a new stamp was issued in July 1918. In total, 2,198,600 stamps were printed, and 2,134,988 were distributed. A director of the BEP reported to Philip H. Ward, a Philadelphia stamp dealer, that eight other invert error sheets were detected and destroyed. Only one out of approximately 22,000 sheets ever reached the public.

Sale Days—13-14 May 1918

The philosophical thought experiment — *If a tree falls in the forest, and no one is around to hear it, does it make noise?* — has a philatelic corollary.

If the 24¢ airmail stamps went on sale at the main post office in Washington, D.C., on Monday, 13 May 1918, but no one knew about it in advance or bought them, is that day the true first day of sale?

Specialists have engaged in vigorous debates over which day the stamps actually went on sale — 13 or 14 May 1918 — and in the absence of a preponderance of evidence to support one position or the other, it becomes a matter of interpretation and conjecture. The irony of the “first day” debate is that once the 13 May 1918 date was introduced into the historical record, the total absence of 24¢ Air Post covers postmarked on that day was remedied by forgers who produced covers and cards with the coveted 13 May 1918 postal markings. (To simplify the narrative, any general reference to the covers and cards will identify them as “covers.”)

Some of these fake First Day covers were accepted into the collecting community, and a few even received certificates attesting to their genuineness from well-respected expert committees. At least one major collection still contains a 13 May 1918 card, along with the 6¢ and 16¢ first day covers. These items have excellent provenance (ex Philip Silver) and certificates from The Philatelic Foundation, but unfortunately they have been denounced as fakes by the leading researchers in the field (Joe R. Kirker and Ken Lawrence). It seems unlikely they will be authenticated again.

In fact, not one genuine 13 May 1918 cover with the 24¢ Air Post stamp is known. Further, some specialists question whether any of the stamps were actually sold on that day. If any of the stamps were sold on Monday, they could only have been bought at the main post office in Washington, D.C. It was not until Tuesday, 14 May, that the stamps went on sale at other post offices in the District of Columbia and in the two other principal airmail route cities, Philadelphia and New York.

The USPOD put the stamps on sale one day ahead of the scheduled first flights, so that the public could buy them and prepare covers for mailing on 15 May 1918. Most of the covers carried on the 1918 airmail flights only have the special datestamp and bars cancellation, which was struck from a single “duplex” device. This marking was made for use in the three cities by customizing the devices with the names of Washington, D.C., Philadelphia and New York. An example of this special airmail datestamp with the “First Trip” designation is shown below on a cover that was first postmarked at the Philadelphia Station C post office on 14 May 1918. This is a First Day of Sale cover—the first day the stamps went on sale in Philadelphia—and it is probably the earliest date that will ever be found.



24¢ used on the first day of sale in Philadelphia, 14 May 1918, and carried on first flight the next day



DISCOVERY OF THE INVERTED JENNY

Robey's Fate and Fortune—14 May 1918

On 10 May 1918, just days before the new airmail stamps were put on sale, William T. Robey (circa 1889-1949), a stamp collector and employee of the Washington, D.C., brokerage firm W. B. Hibbs and Company, wrote to his friend and fellow collector, Malcolm H. Ganser. Robey had read the USPOD announcement of the new airmail issue and presciently gave Ganser the heads up: "It might interest you to know that there are two parts to the design, one an insert into the other, like the Pan-American issues. I think it would pay to be on the lookout for inverts on account of this."

On 14 May, Ganser bought some of the new airmail stamps in Philadelphia, but they were all correctly printed. He used one on a cover addressed to Robey, which was postmarked early in the morning on 15 May at the Ganser's hometown post office in Norristown, Pa., then carried on the inaugural southbound flight from Philadelphia. (By the time the plane took off in the afternoon of 15 May, Ganser already knew of his friend Robey's great discovery.

While Robey sat in his office on Friday, 10 May, dreaming about the possibility of finding an invert at the post office, the vignette plate was already on the press several blocks south at the Bureau of Engraving & Printing. Over the weekend and on Monday, 13 May, sheets were being printed, gummed, perforated and trimmed. Among those sheets from the first few of days of production was the object of Robey's dreams, the Inverted Jenny.

Robey's employer, the brokerage firm of Hibbs and Company, was located at 725 15th Street N.W. in downtown Washington, D.C. (now called the Folger Building). The New York Avenue branch post office was located just a few minutes away on foot, at 1317 New York Avenue. Early in the morning of Tuesday, 14 May, Robey walked to the post office with \$30 he had withdrawn from his account. There are conflicting accounts from Robey about what happened that day, but the most plausible recollection is that he was dissatisfied with

the centering of the few sheets the clerk had available in the morning, and, after being told a fresh supply was expected, he returned at noon.

As Robey recounted in 1938 in an article he wrote for the *Weekly Philatelic Gossip*, the same clerk was on duty when Robey returned at noon. When asked if new sheets had arrived, the clerk reached down under the counter and offered a full sheet. Robey immediately recognized that the planes were flying upside down. He described his feelings at that moment: "my heart stood still... it was the thrill that comes once in a lifetime."

Robey promptly paid \$24 for the sheet without disclosing the error. He asked if the clerk had any more and was shown three other sheets, all normal. At that point Robey revealed the upside-down airplane errors to the clerk, who urgently left his window to make a telephone call. Concerned that his sheet might be confiscated, Robey left and walked to the Eleventh Street branch office to see if any other errors might be there. He found none and then returned to the Hibbs office to tell his co-workers and notify collector friends and dealers of his discovery.

Robey sent telegrams to a few collectors and dealers in New York and Philadelphia, alerting them that he had discovered an invert error and, for whatever reason, giving them the plate number that was visible on the bottom of the sheet (the top was trimmed).

By 4:00 p.m. on 14 May, sales of the airmail stamps were stopped by postal officials. For the next two hours, clerks inspected the supply for additional error sheets. Sales resumed at 6:00 p.m.



William T. Robey, discoverer of the Inverted Jenny, in a family photograph taken in 1940 at his daughter's wedding



Contemporary photograph of the New York Avenue branch post office in Washington DC, where Robey purchased the Inverted Jenny sheet—from *Ward's Philatelic News*, March 1931, with a note by Philip H. Ward that Robey himself took the photo "at our request."

Although Robey had never disclosed his name or address to any of the postal clerks, a co-worker at Hibbs revealed it that afternoon while searching for more errors at one of the branch post offices. According to Robey, on the day he bought the sheet he was visited at his office by two postal inspectors, who attempted to confiscate it. Their efforts were rebuffed by Robey, who stated that he had purchased the sheet for face value at the post office and had as much right to ownership as anyone who had ever purchased other stamp errors over the counter. Frustrated and indignant at Robey's refusal to comply with their demands, the two inspectors left.

Dealer to Dealer—14-19 May 1918

Robey was in his 20s when he bought the Inverted Jenny sheet. He and his wife of five years, Caroline, had an infant daughter and lived in a modest apartment. Although Hibbs and Company paid him a decent salary for his position as an auditing clerk, the prospect of making thousands of dollars on the resale of his Inverted Jenny sheet had life-changing implications. The day Robey bought the sheet, he began soliciting offers from the dealers he knew.

His first call was to Hamilton F. Colman, a Washington, D.C., dealer of some renown. Colman was not in the office when Robey called, and his assistant, Catherine L. Manning, listened incredulously as Robey described his new find. Manning went on to become the first woman outside the sciences to achieve the position of Assistant Curator at the Smithsonian and helped care for the national stamp collection for nearly 30 years, from 1922 to 1951. After learning about the discovery, Colman stopped by Robey's office later in the day, examined the sheet, and made a token \$500 offer for it, which was briskly rejected. After work, Robey met Colman at his office, where a small group had gathered, including Mrs. Manning. Among those present was Joseph B. Leavy, who had been a stamp dealer in New York City before the turn of the century and was, at the time of the meeting, the first "Government Philatelist" in charge of the national stamp collection. Leavy was intimately familiar with the USPOD and BEP operations, and he published frequent reports about new issues and production methods.

The first airmail issue was produced so quickly that Leavy never had time to learn about the production details in advance. Unaware that the stamps had been printed on the Spider Press from a plate of 100 subjects, Leavy observed the straight edges at the top and right of the Inverted Jenny sheet and assumed they were just like those on the quarter-section panes from sheets of 400. Leavy told the group that three other panes of 100 from a sheet of 400 had to be in circulation. Robey recollected this comment in his 1938 account, and it must have concerned him at the time.

Once Robey notified others about his discovery, dealers and collectors went on the hunt for more invert sheets. The two-hour stoppage of sales from 4:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. on 14 May meant that no one in the three cities where the stamps were available could buy them until postal clerks had time to check for errors. By the time sales resumed, the chances of finding an invert sheet were almost nil. The next day, 15 May, the BEP implemented the "Top" imprint strategy to prevent more errors from evading detection. If Robey had known that the small supply of 24¢ sheets in post offices had been thoroughly examined and that more errors were unlikely after the BEP changed the imprints, he might have been more confident that he possessed the only errors. However, most collectors were familiar with market decline that occurred after the 5c Red error (Scott 467 and 505) was discovered a year earlier. As more sheets containing the 5¢ error were found, the price dropped drastically. Leavy's comment that 300 more Inverted Jenny stamps were waiting to be discovered must have given Robey a greater sense of urgency to sell while the selling was good.

The night of 14 May, Robey nervously walked the streets with his paper fortune in his briefcase. Concerned by the postal inspectors' aggressive posturing, Robey's employer refused to allow him to use the company safe to store the stamps overnight. When he finally returned home late in the evening, he and his wife fretted over keeping the stamps in their apartment.

On Wednesday, 15 May, the day of the first airmail flights, Robey mailed a letter to Elliott Perry, a prominent dealer who represented several major collectors in buying and selling. The letter was sent by regular mail early in the morning, and, in an era when a letter could actually travel from Washington, D.C., to Westfield, N.J., in one day, the mail carrier delivered Robey's letter to Perry at 6:00 p.m. Later in the evening, after attending a dinner party, Perry called Robey and tried to secure the right of first refusal. Whether Robey actually agreed or not is uncertain, but Perry's letter to Robey with a dollar silver certificate to confirm the agreement was promptly returned.

At the same time Robey reached out to Perry, he contacted Percy Mann, the Philadelphia dealer who used the "Special Aero Mail" labels found on early flight covers. Mann responded on Wednesday, 15 May, asking if he could meet with Robey and examine the sheet. After seeing the intact sheet, Mann offered \$10,000, but Robey turned him down, explaining that he still wished to go to New York to obtain offers. Mann asked for the opportunity to bid higher if his offer was equaled or topped, and Robey agreed. On Friday afternoon, after a day's work, Robey boarded the northbound train and arrived in New York around 9:00 p.m. He was greeted at the Hotel McAlpin by Percy Doane and Elliott Perry, who had arranged to meet Robey and examine the sheet. The two dealers asked Robey if he had received any offers, and Robey informed them that he had turned down \$10,000. Robey went to sleep that night with a plan to find a buyer the next day.



On Saturday morning, 18 May, Robey walked down to 111 Broadway to pay a visit on Colonel Edward H. R. Green at the colonel's office. The receptionist informed Robey that the colonel was away for a few days, so Robey left, not realizing that the person he had hoped to see would be the ultimate buyer in two days.

Robey's next stop was the office of Stanley Gibbons Inc., the American company run by Eustace B. Power. After receiving a \$250 offer and a warning from Power that he was negotiating for the purchase of three other sheets, Robey left to visit the office of Scott Stamp & Coin Company. He was told that they did not wish to make an offer, but would sell the sheet for a commission.

Feeling "rather low and disgusted" by his morning of failed efforts, Robey returned to his hotel to find one of the Klemanns of Nassau Stamp Company waiting for him. After examining the sheet, Klemann offered Robey \$2,500. Upon hearing from Robey that someone had already offered four times that amount, Klemann lashed out, saying that Robey was crazy, and anyone offering \$10,000 was also crazy, and off he went.

Robey called Mann on Saturday night to say that he had not received an equivalent or better offer while in New York, but had decided to keep the sheet rather than sell it for \$10,000. Mann asked if Robey would stop in Philadelphia on the Sunday return trip, and Robey agreed to do so. At Philadelphia, Robey was met by Mann, and the two visited the home of Eugene Klein, one of the country's leading dealers. Days earlier, on 14 May, Klein had prepared envelopes with the new 24¢ airmail stamp and addressed them to colleagues in the U.S. and overseas. They were carried on the 15 May inaugural flight from Philadelphia. The typewritten letter Klein inserted into each cover states that sales of the new airmail stamp started in Philadelphia on 14 May at 12:00 noon, but were stopped at 4:00 p.m.

Sold!—19-21 May 1918

The meeting between Eugene Klein and William T. Robey, with Percy Mann as matchmaker, was to have profound effects on the future of philately.

Klein was a seasoned negotiator. No doubt he had been informed by Mann that Robey had turned down a \$10,000 offer, but also that no equivalent or higher offers had been made in New York. Klein asked Robey to set the price, and in response Robey said he would take no less than \$15,000. After consulting with Mann, Klein asked Robey for an option at \$15,000, which would expire at 3:00 p.m. the next day (Monday, 20 May). Robey agreed.

In a curious twist on the story told by Robey and repeated by others, the *Washington Evening Star* published an article on 19 May (shown below), stating that they had received a wire from Robey "yesterday" (Saturday, 18 May), informing them that he had received an offer of \$15,000 for the sheet and was "considering it." Who made that offer, and when? Robey never mentioned another \$15,000 offer, and the timing of the newspaper article and reference to a wire from the previous day make it impossible for that offer to be the one made by Klein on Sunday. Did Robey deliberately feed the newspaper misinformation on Saturday to generate higher offers?

UPSIDEDOWN AIRPLANE STAMPS TO NET PURCHASER THOUSANDS

W. T. Robey, one of the bright young men who assist W. B. Hibbs & Co. in the conduct of their business, is being congratulated by his friends on a bit of good luck that will unquestionably net him several thousand dollars.

Mr. Robey is something of a philatelist, although having little time to devote to this hobby; but he has learned that first sheets off the press frequently contain errors that are not permitted to go any further.

Consequently when the first aeroplane postage stamps were on sale he was at the window of a New York avenue branch post office, seeking, and, strange to say, he found.

He purchased one sheet of 100 stamps and two companions each did the same, paying \$24 each for the sheets. After taking his purchase back to the office of W. B. Hibbs & Co., Robey examined the sheet and found that the aeroplane that forms the center design of the stamps

was upside down. His companions failed to discover anything out of the normal with their sheets.

Collectors heard of the story and bids for the stamps began to come in, for single stamps and for the hundred. The postal authorities heard of it and endeavored to recover the stamps.

Finally the bid price rose to \$10,000 and still Robey refused to dispose of his prize. Understanding that New York is the world's greatest market, he packed his grip Friday and took his find to the metropolis.

Robey wired yesterday that he had been offered \$25,000 for his prize and was considering it. A New York stamp company wired W. B. Hibbs & Co. an offer of \$100 for each stamp, canceled or otherwise.

In the meantime young Mrs. Robey is hoping that her husband's lucky find will bring the top price.

Swift & Company's Sales of Fresh beef in Washington, D. C., for the week ending Saturday, May 11, 1918, averaged 22.68 cents per pound.—Advertisement.

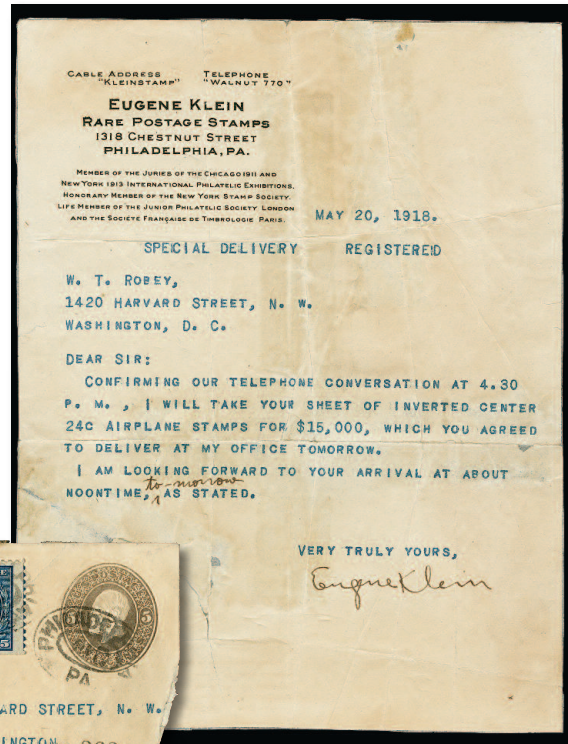
19 May 1918 *Washington Evening Star* article reporting Robey's "Upsidedown Airplane Stamps" and a \$15,000 offer

If so, perhaps it worked. On Monday morning, Robey received a telephone call from H. F. Colman, the dealer who had offered \$500 for the sheet six days earlier. He was now ready to pay \$18,000! Colman was apparently inspired by something or someone to increase his offer by a multiple of 36. Robey could not accept the offer until Klein's option expired later in the day. Whether it expired at 3:00 p.m., as Robey recollected, or 4:30 p.m., as indicated in Klein's confirmation letter to Robey (shown opposite), is unclear and not very important. By the end of 20 May, the sheet was sold to Klein for \$15,000, subject to delivery and payment the following day.

Robey and his father-in-law traveled to Philadelphia on Tuesday, 21 May, and delivered the sheet to Klein at noon. Robey was handed a certified check for \$15,000, which gave him a \$14,976 profit on his \$24 post office purchase. One wonders what Robey and Caroline's father discussed on the return trip home, with Klein's \$15,000 check in hand.



Eugene Klein (1878-1944)



Klein's registered letter to Robey confirming the purchase of the Inverted Jenny sheet for \$15,000

The Colonel's Inverts—1918

The accounts of the sale from Robey to Klein and then to Colonel Green have conflicting details (the Amick book goes into depth on the differing accounts). One aspect of the transactions is definite: Colonel Green bought the sheet no later than Monday, 20 May, the day Klein exercised his option to buy it from Robey. On 21 May 1918, the *New York Times* morning newspaper ran a story announcing that Colonel Green purchased the sheet for \$20,000 (shown at right). The newspaper must have been informed of the purchase on 20 May by someone other than Robey, who could not have known about the resale. It is remarkable that a news story about the \$20,000 resale to Colonel Green was published Tuesday morning, *before* Robey reached Philadelphia to deliver the sheet and collect payment from Klein.

The price represented a \$5,000 profit for Klein, who kept half and shared the rest with Percy Mann and Joseph A. Steinmetz, who had formed a "combine" with Klein for the negotiations.

Edward Howland Robinson Green (1868-1936) was the son of Hetty Green (1834-1916), one of the wealthiest and most astute investors in American history. Hetty's extreme frugality was exploited by her adversaries and made for good copy in the press, but in reality she was a woman in a man's world, during the era of robber barons and deals done in dark oak rooms with thick blue cigar smoke. Her reputation as the "Witch of Wall Street" was undeserved, and in fact she despised many of the titans of industry and finance for their predatory ways and profligate spending. She sympathized with the average hardworking citizen who had to pay more for basics, because of trusts and monopolies that fixed the costs of goods and services.

\$20,000 BY COL. GREEN FOR AIR MAIL STAMPS

**Sheet with Plane Inverted
Sold Over Post Office
Counter for \$24.**

OTHERS WERE CANCELED

**Buyer Will Keep Some of His Purchase for His Collection and
Give Rest to Friends.**

New York Times 21 May 1918 headline announcing the sale of the Inverted Jenny sheet to Col. Green

Image: © The New York Times



Hetty's son "Ned" was obese and had a prosthetic leg, the result of a childhood injury that was improperly treated with homeopathic medicine. Nonetheless, he was a skilled manager of the family's business affairs and earned Hetty's trust, as opposed to her husband and Ned's father, Edward Green, whose bad investments and excessive borrowing forced Hetty to bail him out when the bank foreclosed.

When Hetty died in 1916, she left an estate variously estimated to be worth \$100 million to \$200 million, the equivalent of \$2 billion to \$4 billion in 2017. Her two children, Ned and his sister Sylvia, shared the estate equally. One year later Ned was free to marry his long-time girlfriend, Mabel E. Harlow, whom Hetty had accepted as her son's companion as long as he did not risk the family fortune by marrying her. Mabel, a voluptuous, red-headed stage performer from Texas, went along with the informal arrangement while Hetty was alive.

With his newly-inherited wealth and freedom from his mother's disapproving view of conspicuous consumption, the 300-pound six-foot-four Colonel Green embarked on a buying spree of unbridled extravagance. By some estimates he spent more than \$3 million on everything from stamps and coins to jewelry and erotic literature. At one point he owned all five 1913 Liberty Head nickels. Of course, on 20 May 1918 he became the new owner of the Inverted Jenny sheet through the deal arranged by Eugene Klein.

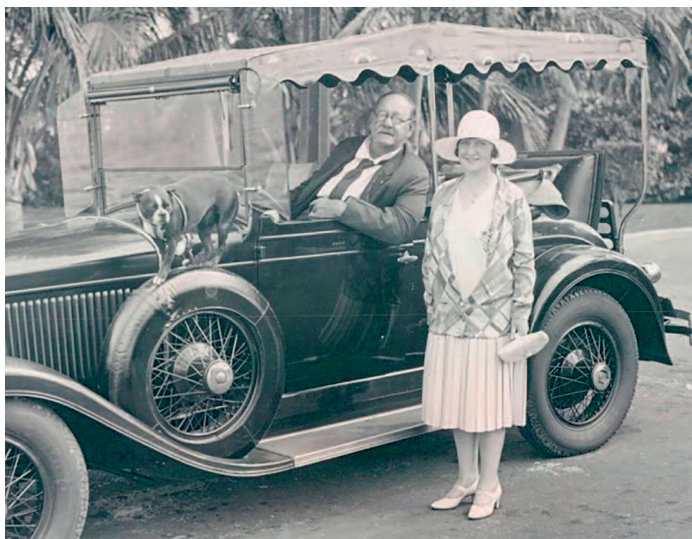
Colonel Green authorized Klein to divide the sheet into singles and blocks, and to sell what the colonel did not retain for his own collection. Before doing so, Klein lightly penciled the position number on the gum side of each stamp, enabling future philatelists to cite every stamp by its exact location in the sheet. Klein initially advertised fully perforated singles from the sheet for \$250 and straight-edge positions (top or right) for \$175. He then withdrew the offering, giving the disingenuous explanation that he had placed the sheet privately, and asked prospective buyers to apply for a price. As the facts show, the sheet had been sold to Green before Klein even took possession of it. Klein and Green discussed pricing and changed the prices over the next three months. As Klein reported, by the end of July most of the singles without straight edges had been sold for prices ranging from \$250 to \$325.

In the series of 28 auctions held from 1942 to 1946 to disperse Colonel Green's stamp collection after his death in 1936, 38 different Inverted Jenny stamps were offered. Included in this total were the block of eight from the bottom with the plate number selva, three blocks of four, five fully perforated stamps and 13 of the original straight-edge stamps. The 18 extra singles were presumably unsold and returned by Klein to the colonel. Eight of the straight-edge copies were found after the colonel's death, stuck together in an envelope. They were soaked apart and lost their gum before being offered in the Green sales.

Colonel Green was regarded as a somewhat careless custodian of his vast stamp collection. Some accounts report that he had his young female "wards" dismantle collections that had been meticulously written up by leading philatelic scholars. Another story about some Inverted Jenny stamps going down with his yacht is apocryphal. However, the colonel did, in fact, have a locket made for his wife Mabel, which contained Position 9 and, on the flip side, a normal 24¢ stamp. The famous "Locket Copy" was left by Mabel to a female friend in 1950, and after the friend's death it appeared for the first time in a Siegel auction in 2002.

While Klein was pulling apart the Inverted Jenny sheet, and Robey and his wife were making plans for what to do with their windfall, poor H. F. Colman—the dealer who raised his offer from \$500 to \$18,000—was trying to find more of the errors. Through an intermediary, Captain A. C. Townsend, he convinced Thomas G. Patten, the New York City postmaster who mailed a first flight cover and letter to President Wilson, to let Joseph Leavy search the supply of sheets contained in the post office vault. Packages of full sheets were opened and inspected, but all of the planes were flying rightside up. One wonders what would have happened if Colman, Townsend and Leavy had actually found another sheet. Letting a few individuals profit from the special privilege of accessing the post office vault hardly seems like proper civil servant policy.

As for Robey, although he continued to enjoy stamp collecting for another 31 years, he never owned another Inverted Jenny after selling the sheet to Klein. He continued to report other philatelic "discoveries," but none were even remotely comparable to the Inverted Jenny. After witnessing the complete dispersal of Colonel Green's holding of Inverted Jenny stamps, Robey passed away in February 1949.



Colonel Edward H. R. Green with his wife, Mabel (Harlow), and their Boston terrier on the front wheel well

ETHEL B. McCOY—The Lady and Her Stamps

by Ken Lawrence

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Ethel Bergstresser Stewart McCoy (1893-1980)

Ethel Bergstresser was born to wealth and privilege, which she represented with grace and generosity as a benefactor of ballet, opera, and orchestral music, and as a promoter of poetry. The twice-widowed stamp collector's legacy is among the most storied in American philately. The American Philatelic Research Library is an appropriate beneficiary of her confidence that our hobby will survive and prosper as an intellectual and cultural project, not merely as a monument to acquisitive pride.



This photograph from the *Airpost Journal* report on the 1937 convention of the American Air Mail Society helped bring Ethel B. Stewart (later McCoy) to philatelic prominence

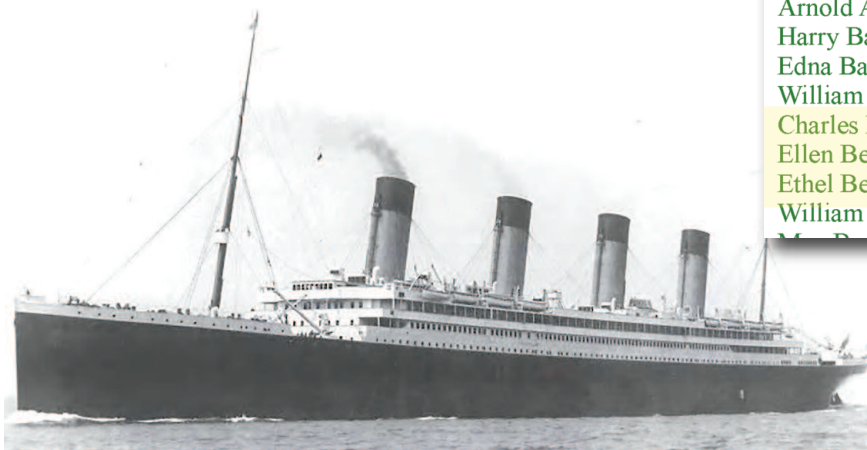
Ethel's father, Charles Milford Bergstresser, was a co-founder with Charles Dow and Edward Jones of Dow Jones & Company. He was the partner whose initial investment financed their firm when it began in 1882. Bergstresser named their newspaper *The Wall Street Journal*. After Dow died, the surviving partners sold the firm to Clarence W. Barron in 1903.

Bergstresser's wealth was estimated to be about \$2 million at the time, equivalent to about \$74 million today. He was 45 years old then, and Ethel was nine. To his comment on his decision to retire, "I expect to take it a little easy from now on, but The Street will always interest me," a reporter remarked that he had made his fortune there. Bergstresser replied, "That was easy. Did I not have several panics to help me?" He died in 1923 at age 65.

A June 1912 passenger list from the luxury liner RMS *Olympic* offers a glimpse of Bergstresser family life after Dow Jones. It lists 18-year-old Ethel and her parents of North Branford (misspelled in the ship's roster), Connecticut, as first-class travelers with forward berths who had boarded the ship at Southampton, England, for the voyage to New York. *Olympic's* sister ship, the RMS *Titanic*, pride of the White Star Line, had sunk off Newfoundland just two months earlier.

In July 1917 the elder Bergstressers announced the engagement of their daughter to Bert A. Stewart of New York and Newton, New Jersey. In common with his fiancée, Stewart too was born to wealth as scion of the R. A. Stewart & Company's founders. The firm manufactured stamping and dating devices for businesses. Though not a stamp collector himself, he encouraged and indulged Ethel's passion for her hobby.

The passenger list for RMS *Olympic's* westbound return trip from Europe included the young socialite Ethel Bergstresser and her parents—today we remember her as Ethel B. McCoy, her name at the time of her death in 1980



American Passengers – Forward

Name

Residence

Charles Adams, 50

Clara Adams, 42

Arnold Augier, 40

Harry Barley, 33

Edna Barley, 24

William Barstow, 34

Charles Bergstresser, 54

Ellen Bergstresser, 47

Ethel Bergstresser, 18

William Bruff, 57

M. D. 55 30



Ethel B. Stewart joined the American Philatelic Society in October 1934 as member No. 12788, later becoming life member No. 514. She joined the American Air Mail Society in August 1935 as member No. 1657. Her arrival coincided with the dawn of a golden age for women of means in philately.

Catherine L. Manning was curator of the National Philatelic Collection at the Smithsonian Institution from 1922 to 1951; she became the first woman to hold elective office in the APS, serving as vice president from 1935 to 1937. Travel writer and opera star Sybil FitzGerald built a magnificent airmail collection that is now the pride of the British Library. Pennsylvania widow Clara Adams was famous among airmail collectors as “the world’s champion first-flightier.” In 1935 Connecticut heiress Katharine Matthies began to gather what became the finest collection of Civil War patriotic covers ever known. Louise S. Davis (later Hoffman) of New York made a name for herself as an airmail specialist. A youthful Barbara R. Mueller of Wisconsin was making sure that these women’s achievements did not go unrecorded.

Ethel became well known for her collection of Columbian, Trans-Mississippi, and Pan-American Exposition stamps (which included 1¢, 2¢, and 4¢ invert errors). She exhibited her airmail collection at Saint Petersburg, Florida, her second home. For fun she collected precancels and palm trees on stamps. The Siegel firm purchased and sold these collections.

At the May 9-17, 1936, Third International Philatelic Exhibition (TIPEX) in New York she earned a silver medal for her exhibit of United States 20th century postal history and a bronze medal for U.S. commemorative stamps. Another leading woman collector, Caroline P. Cromwell of New York, won the silver-gold medal—today called vermeil—the top award in the commemorative category.

Also in 1936, Bert Stewart bought the famous Inverted Jenny error block of four previously owned by Arthur Hind from New York dealer Spencer Anderson for \$16,000, and presented it to his wife as a surprise gift shortly before he died of a heart ailment in September at age 47.

At the time of his death, besides being president of his family’s eponymous New York firm, Bert was also president of Hill-Independent Manufacturing Company of Philadelphia; president of the Fulton Specialty Company of Elizabeth, New Jersey; a director of Superior Type Manufacturing Company of Chicago; and a director of several other rubber stamp concerns. According to his *New York Times* obituary he also headed the Newton Theater Company in his home town.

After her first husband’s death, Ethel served as treasurer of the Stewart firm. She worked at her office three days a week until her retirement, when she became its board chairman. Meanwhile her philatelic achievements and fame flourished. In July 1937 she became the first life member of the American Air Mail Society and the first woman elected to the AAMS board of directors.

The block of four Inverted Jenny errors became Ethel’s favorite stamps. William T. Robey, the original purchaser in May 1918, recalled:

From the time I sold the sheet until this past summer [1937], I had never seen one of these stamps. Then, Mrs. Ethel B. Stewart, a widely known collector from Newton, New Jersey, who owns a block of four, was in Washington and I had the pleasure of meeting her. Mrs. Stewart had her stamps with her, and once again I had in my hands part of the original sheet that I had purchased for \$24.00.

The Collectors Club, of which I am a member, was having a meeting that evening and I invited Mrs. Stewart to accompany me to the meeting. She accepted my invitation and took her stamps with her. Mrs. Stewart very graciously exhibited these stamps and there were many present that evening who had never seen any of the stamps before.

Another leading lady of the hobby, Florence E. Kleinert of Allentown, Pennsylvania, took Ethel’s exhibit, now enhanced by the addition of the Inverted Jenny block, to the 1938 dedication of the Franklin Institute at Philadelphia during National Air Mail Week, to the 1939 New York World’s Fair, to the 1940 Postage Stamp Centennial exhibition in Washington, and to the 1940 APS convention in Buffalo.

From 1939 to 1941 Ethel served as AAMS vice president, the first female elected to that office. Her philatelic prominence persisted for the rest of her days, including two decades of service as a director of the Essay-Proof Society. Her other affiliations included the Collectors Club of New York, Society of Philatelic Americans, Bureau Issues Association, American Philatelic Congress, Precancel Stamp Society, American Topical Association, and the Saint Petersburg Stamp Club. She was a Fellow of the Royal Philatelic Society London.



The block of four 24¢ Inverted Jenny stamps from Positions 65, 66, 75, and 76 in the original sheet of 100, with a vertical guide line at the center, which Bert Stewart gave to his wife, Ethel, in 1936—he purchased the block for \$16,000 from Spencer Anderson, a New York dealer, following the death of its previous owner, Arthur Hind



Walter R. McCoy (1880-1952)

In 1941 Ethel married collector Walter R. McCoy, a specialist in United States Bureau Issues. Friends teased them that he had married her for the airmail error block and she had married him for his rare Orangeburg coil (the 3¢ George Washington coil stamp of 1911 with gauge 12 perforations, Scott 389).

At the Centenary International Philatelic Exhibition (CIPEX) at New York in 1947, Ethel exhibited "The Trans-Mississippi Issue of 1898 Specialized" and Walter exhibited "A Collection of Bureau Issue Plate Numbers from Number 1 to Date." Both won first (highest) awards in their respective classes.

Walter edited the *Collectors Club Philatelist* from 1939 to 1942, and the *American Philatelic Congress Book* from 1945 to 1950. He served terms as president of the Collectors Club and the APC. After Walter died in 1952, Ethel endowed an annual award in his name for the best *Congress Book* article of the year. Both McCoy's are profiled in the APS Hall of Fame.

At the Fifth International Philatelic Exhibition (FIPEX), Ethel entered "U.S. Pan-American Issue of 1901," which won a gold medal and the Arthur E. Summerfield Trophy for the best 20th century United States collection. At the Sixth International Philatelic Exhibition (SIPEX) she again exhibited "The Trans-Mississippi Issue" and again earned a gold medal.

When she died in August 1980, friends recalled that Ethel B. McCoy had frequently brought joy to fellow hobbyists by presenting them with handsome needlepoint handbags that she crafted as gifts and door prizes. But her greatest gift to all of us was the ownership title to the four stolen Inverted Jenny stamps that she transferred to APRL in 1979. This sale of the Position 76 stamp will support APRL's mission as she would have wished.

The Stolen McCoy Block

The year 2018 will mark the centenary of the first air post stamp issued by the United States Post Office Department, the red and blue 24¢ Curtiss JN-4H "Jenny" biplane air post stamp of 1918, Scott C3, and the unintended variety with the center vignette inverted, Scott C3a, colloquially known as the Inverted Jenny, the world's most famous error stamp.

Almost 62 years have passed since the worst philatelic felony involving that stamp, which has never been solved. On September 23, 1955, at the annual convention of the American Philatelic Society in Norfolk, a thief or thieves stole the Inverted Jenny block of four that collector Ethel B. McCoy had loaned to the APS for the enjoyment and appreciation of show-goers.

Three of the four stamps have been recovered, one by one, as time has passed, but the criminals responsible for their absence have not been identified. Although whoever perpetrated the heist probably died years ago, the whereabouts of one stamp from the block has not been reported since the theft.

Title to the missing stamp belongs to the American Philatelic Research Library. If it can be recovered, the APRL will benefit from the monetary value that a sale might realize, and the entire hobby will benefit when we celebrate the reunion with our lost treasure. Happily, one previously missing stamp from the block was recovered last year and is featured in this sale.

The Original Block of Four

As George Amick told the story in his 1986 book *Jenny! The exciting story of the world's best-known error stamp*, Ethel Stewart McCoy's first husband, Bert Stewart, acquired the block of four from New York City stamp dealer Spencer Anderson in 1936 for \$16,000, a very large sum during the Great Depression for an item that might be worth millions today if it were still intact.

The McCoy block comprised Positions 65, 66, 75, and 76 from the sheet of 100 stamps discovered by William T. Robey in 1918. Amick correctly believed the block had previously been owned by Arthur Hind, an industrialist whose collection was best known for the fabled British Guiana One-Cent Magenta stamp of 1856, sometimes called "the world's rarest stamp," which was recently in the news when Stuart Weitzman, the shoe designer, bought the stamp for \$9.5 million in a Sotheby's auction. In that respect McCoy's Inverted Jenny block came with an aristocratic pedigree.

Ethel McCoy exhibited her block "proudly and often" until it was stolen. Despite the presence of armed guards at the exhibition, there were no witnesses to the theft, no suspect, and few clues to pursue. Her insurance company paid \$15,000 for the loss, with the stipulation that in the event of recovery, she could regain ownership by reimbursing the insurer.



Arthur Hind, who owned the block later sold to Bert A. Stewart as a gift for his wife Ethel



The Emergence and Recovery of Position 75

Whoever made off with the block separated it into individual stamps, so the first glimpse of a missing McCoy following the theft occurred in July 1958 when Chicago stamp dealer Louis John Castelli Jr. sent a single Inverted Jenny on approval to Raymond and Roger Weill, the well-known brothers whose New Orleans stamp shop catered to a wealthy clientele.

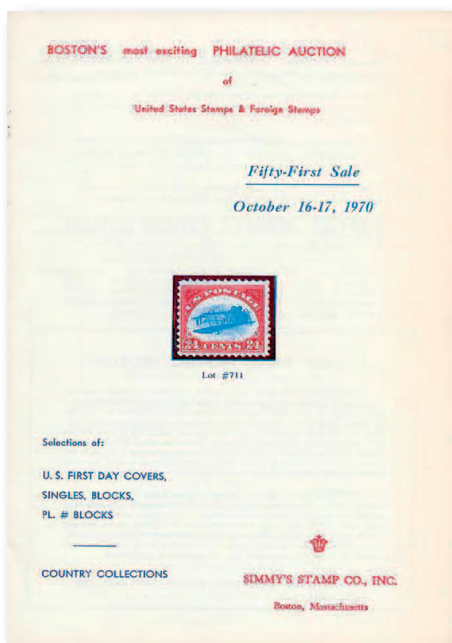
The Weills had bought and sold more Inverted Jennys than anyone since Eugene Klein bought the full sheet from Robey and sold it to Colonel Edward H. R. Green in 1918. They recognized Castelli's stamp as Position 75 from the stolen McCoy block, even though it had been altered. Along the right edge someone had blunted the perforations and scraped or abraded the tips to remove evidence of a vertical red guide line.

The Weills immediately notified the Federal Bureau of Investigation about their deduction. The FBI agreed that the stamp was a stolen McCoy, but was powerless to act because the stamp was then worth less than the \$5,000 federal minimum for jurisdiction under laws concerning interstate movement of stolen property.

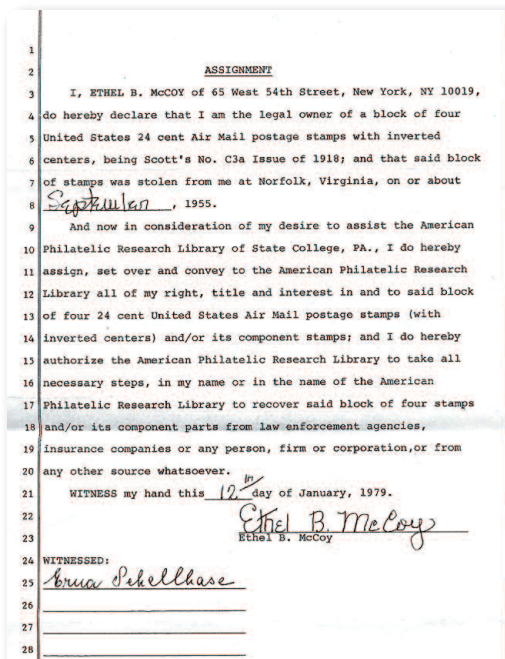
At the FBI's direction, the Weills returned the stamp to Castelli with a curt cover letter that said, "We are sorry that we cannot use the U.S. 24¢ Airmail with inverted center which you sent us for offer. The stamp is, therefore, being returned herewith and we are refunding your postage costs."

Twelve years passed before the same stamp appeared again. Amick reported the sighting as follows:

These matters rested until 1970, when the stamp appeared in an October 16-17 auction offering by Simmy's Stamp Company of Boston, its picture gracing the cover of the catalog. Simmy's reported afterward, in its published list of prices realized, that the stamp was sold for \$19,000. Who had consigned it, and who bought it, the company says it is unable to say. Somehow, however, it found its way back to Louis Castelli.



The Position 75 stamp (lower left in the block) appeared on the cover of Simmy's Stamp Co.'s October 16-17, 1970, auction catalogue



The McCoy block was stolen in 1955—in 1979, Ethel McCoy assigned the title and all rights to the stamps to the American Philatelic Research Library

Despite the wisdom of proverbs, the third time was not a charm for Castelli. In September 1977 he offered the stamp to Las Vegas motel owner Robert L. Faiman for \$16,000, which Faiman agreed to pay subject to a Philatelic Foundation certificate of authenticity. The PF experts identified it as a stolen McCoy, and once again the FBI was notified. By that time the value had increased enough to establish federal jurisdiction. The FBI took custody of the stamp and renewed its investigation.

Castelli told the FBI that he had obtained the stamp from another stamp dealer, Ben Enlow (the FBI's phonetic spelling), in the 1950s, in exchange for a block of four rare \$5 Columbian commemorative stamps of 1893, Scott 245. Castelli had no paperwork for the transaction, and Enlow was deceased, so the FBI was unable to verify Castelli's story or to gather new evidence about the theft.

On January 12, 1979, at the urging of APS Executive Secretary James T. DeVoss, Ethel McCoy assigned all of her rights, title, and interest in the stolen block of four stamps and/or its component stamps to the American Philatelic Research Library. She was 85 years old and in declining health, with no desire to participate in a legal custody battle, but eager to support the hobby and the library. She died on August 17, 1980.

In January 1980 the Justice Department filed an interpleader complaint in the United States District Court for the Southern District of New York, to establish ownership of the stamp and to relieve the government of further responsibility for it by settling the conflicting claims (if asserted) of defendants APRL, Faiman, Castelli, one Victor Spilotro, The Philatelic Foundation, Ethel McCoy, Roe Insurance Company, and John Doe.



After the FBI recovered the Position 75 stamp from Chicago stamp dealer Louis J. Castelli Jr., John W. Kaufmann featured it on the front cover of his September 21, 1981, auction catalogue—it sold for \$115,000, for the benefit of APRL

annual convention in Atlanta. The stamp's notoriety may have contributed to the \$115,000 realization, which was earmarked to support library operations.

Robert Faiman died in 1998 at age 68. His *Las Vegas Sun* obituary began, "Many stamp collectors spend their lives dreaming of obtaining a treasure like the 'inverted Jenny' — the rarest of all U.S. issues. During his life, which included 60 years as a philatelic hobbyist and dealer, Bob Faiman owned two of those 1918 24-cent airmail stamps that the U.S. Postal Service erroneously printed with the Curtiss Jenny airplane upside down."

The article did not say whether Faiman counted the McCoy invert as one of his two. (Readers need not remind me that Scott C3a is not our country's rarest stamp, nor that the Bureau of Engraving and Printing produced it for the U.S. Post Office Department.) Louis Castelli died in 2004 at age 82, the last of the characters who played important roles in that stamp's drama.

The Emergence and Recovery of Position 65

"Meanwhile," George Amick wrote, "a second McCoy invert had turned up." He reported:

It was not immediately identified as such. The stamp was in the collection of Marcel Lutwak, a Chicago businessman and a connoisseur of philatelic material. Lutwak had suggested to a well-known philatelic official in the spring of 1981 that he might be willing to donate parts of his collection to the APRL as a tax write-off, beginning with a Jenny invert, and this information was duly relayed to James DeVoss. It was not until 18 months later, however, that DeVoss succeeded in contacting Lutwak personally in order to discuss the proposed gift.

Lo and behold, when they met at the Plaza Hotel in New York City on November 19, 1982, Lutwak presented his stamp to DeVoss, who immediately recognized it as Position 65 from the stolen McCoy block even though perforations along the right edge had been altered to remove traces of the vertical red guide line. What an amazing coincidence! Immediately after APRL had recovered one stolen McCoy stamp, a philatelic philanthropist arranged to donate another one that the library already owned.

DeVoss was pleased as punch at this turn of events, but when he informed James H. Beal, chairman of the APS Stamp Theft Committee, of the library's stroke of luck, Beal informed him that the stamp was still stolen property and needed to be turned over to law enforcement authorities for proper investigation and legal transfer. After consulting APS attorney and APRL trustee George M. Martin, DeVoss reluctantly relinquished the stamp to the FBI.

Here is Amick's account of the investigation that ensued:

In Chicago, agents questioned Marcel Lutwak. He asserted that he had bought the stamp before 1974 from a seller whom he knew only by his first name. The FBI had no reason to charge him with anything, and in fact, no one connected with the case has suggested that Lutwak's role was other than an innocent one. Of the Chicago collector — who has since died — [FBI agent and APS member] Earl Sumner said, "We believed him

The complaint described Victor Spilotro as a man who had represented himself as the stamp's owner on May 30, 1971, but he was otherwise unidentified. A Chicago man by that name, Victor P. Spilotro, who died in 1997, was frequently in the news as a Chicago mobster, one of four brothers active in the criminal underworld, two of whom were murdered in 1986 gangland killings.

If the persons were one and the same, who would have guessed that a high-ranking Chicago hoodlum had declared himself to be a philatelist with a claim to the stolen McCoy invert? Both Spilotro and Castelli were residents of Northbrook, a Chicago suburb, but Castelli told the FBI he knew no one named Spilotro.

"Roe" stood for the insurance firm whose name Ethel McCoy had forgotten, served by a published legal notice, and John Doe "being a name representing any and all other potential claimants as yet unknown." The PF had never asserted a claim on the stamp, and McCoy had already transferred her interest to APRL. Castelli claimed he owned the stamp, and Faiman wished to buy it from him. Relying on the evidence of sworn affidavits and "the time-honored rule that title cannot pass through a thief even to a bona fide purchaser," the court ruled on January 30, 1981, "that the Stamp rightfully belongs to Library."

Upon taking possession of the recovered Inverted Jenny, the APRL consigned it to John W. Kaufmann, who sold it at his September 25, 1981, public auction during the APS



to be an innocent purchaser of stolen goods.” Said James DeVoss: “From my very first telephone conversations and our personal meeting in New York on November 19, I had the distinct feeling that he was honest and sincere in his dealing with me... My feeling was that any person who knowingly purchased stolen property would never have offered to donate it to the APRL who already had title to the item. Such a person would probably have destroyed the item and disposed of the evidence, thus the APRL would be the big loser.”

All the players in this skit are dead — Lutwak, DeVoss, Martin, Beal, and Sumner — so I cannot question them about their story, but it does not pass the smell test. Which of my readers has forgotten the name of a dealer who sold him or her a five- or six-figure rarity, and kept no documentation of the purchase, yet plans to claim a tax deduction after donating it to a nonprofit organization?

Lutwak’s absent-minded attitude regarding the provenance of his Inverted Jenny contrasts sharply with the U.S. Revenues reference stamp collection he had donated to The Philatelic Foundation in 1981 when he needed a tax deduction to offset the gain he had realized from the sale of a Chicago hotel. A 1990 article by Peter A. Robertson on the PF website reported, “The collection was formed over a number of years and Mr. Lutwak indicated prices paid for many of his better stamps, and when and where he acquired them.”

(A few years after these events Lutwak or his heirs sold the rest of his collection to Andrew Levitt, who placed key items with favored clients and consigned the balance to the Daniel F. Kelleher auction firm for a January 20-21, 1988, name sale.)

If those questions are insufficient to raise doubts, consider other aspects of Lutwak’s career. His name is best known to posterity as the lead petitioner in a U.S. Supreme Court case styled *Lutwak et al. v. United States* decided in 1953. He and two others had been convicted of conspiring to arrange sham marriages and thus to obtain “the illegal entry into this country of three aliens as spouses of honorably discharged veterans.”

The evidence showed that Lutwak, a World War II veteran, never lived with the woman he had pretended to marry in Paris in November 1947. They separated as soon as they returned to the United States and went through the motions of a legal divorce to establish a record of her citizenship not long afterward. Lutwak also recruited two women veterans to perform the equivalent service for two European men. In upholding their convictions, the court held “this record fairly shrieks the guilt of the parties.”

Perhaps that was merely Lutwak’s youthful indiscretion when he was a struggling 27-year-old research chemist, but it might suggest he had a propensity to circumvent or violate rules that others were expected to obey, and expected not to be penalized for his infractions.

Another stranger-than-fiction event occurred in Chicago not long after the FBI had taken possession of the stolen McCoy invert that Louis Castelli had offered to Robert Faiman in Las Vegas. On February 16, 1978, a doorman at the front entrance to Lutwak’s residence on Lake Shore Drive let in two robbers posing as workmen. When Lutwak’s maid Sophie Blass, who spoke only Polish, answered their knock at the door to his 14th floor luxury flat, the men grabbed her, threw her down on the bed in the master bedroom, and bound her hands and feet with tape. From an open safe in the living room, they absconded with an album of stamps valued at \$250,000 to \$300,000 and jewelry worth between \$50,000 and \$100,000. After the men departed with their loot, Blass freed herself and called the police.

On March 6 police in Hollywood, Florida, arrested John Matarazzo and Carol Stinelli and charged them with theft of Lutwak’s collection. United Press International reported, “A spokesman for the Hollywood Police Department said the two were linked to another couple, Daniel and Judith Ward, arrested last month.” Finally, on March 14 the Associated Press followed up with this report datelined Chicago:

Two upstate New York men were being sought today on warrants accusing them of stealing a \$200,000 stamp collection from a North Side apartment.

Named in the warrants Monday were George Greenidge, 28, of Kingston, N.Y., and William Tyrell, 29, of Schenectady, N.Y.

FBI agents arrested two other men in Miami as they tried to sell a stamp book stolen Feb. 16 from a high-rise apartment.

I found no further reports on any of the six accused, but I think it is fair to infer that the FBI eventually returned the collection to Lutwak.

Several details of that heist require willful suspension of disbelief. Either that, or an A-list cast of actors to lend plausibility by performing the caper as a comedy. How did thieves know that they could enter and leave Lutwak’s residence so easily? that his maid would not understand their conversation? that a valuable stamp collection and jewelry were kept in his apartment? that his safe would be open?

Could this crime have been staged as a scam to collect insurance, which failed because an inept team of thieves and collaborators not only lacked the ability to pull it off, but did catch the attention of wire service reporters who distributed their stories to newspapers and broadcasters from coast to coast? On the other hand, it is hard to imagine a multimillionaire real estate tycoon being involved in such a scheme.

Be that as it may, by the time Marcel Lutwak handed the McCoy invert to Jim DeVoss when they met at a New York hotel in November 1982, the stamp had been stolen twice, but that aspect of the stamp’s odyssey had not been reported until my report appeared in the September 2014 *American Philatelist*, adding a fresh page to the McCoy legend.

DeVoss's analysis that identified the stamp as Position 65 was persuasive. On December 6, 1982, less than three weeks after the New York meeting, the FBI announced the recovery of a second Inverted Jenny from the stolen McCoy block, and returned the stamp to the APRL two days later. The APS has exhibited it every year since then at its annual convention exhibition, and in many other venues as well. It has probably been viewed by more people than any of the 99 other Inverted Jennys, maybe by more than have viewed all the others combined.

The Re-emergence of Position 76

The other two missing stamps from the McCoy block had not been seen since the 1955 theft. In November and December 1988, the APRL trustees offered a \$10,000 reward for the return of each stamp, but no one came forward to claim it. Finally in the fall of 2014 Donald J. Sundman, president of Mystic Stamp Company, offered a \$50,000 reward for the recovery of a stolen McCoy Invert. In tandem with Sundman's pledge, APRL President Roger Brody announced that the library would pay \$10,000 for information that led to the successful recovery of one of the stamps. News media publicized the reward offers throughout the United States and in some foreign countries.

On the afternoon of Monday, April 4, 2015, I received an e-mail message from Lewis Kaufman of The Philatelic Foundation in New York City, accompanied by an embedded high-resolution scan of a 1918 red and blue 24-cent Curtiss Jenny airmail error stamp with inverted center, Scott C3a. He wrote, "Could be pos. 76, Reperfed at left to remove guide line. What do you think?" Position 76 is the lower right stamp of the McCoy block of four.

Kaufman's e-mail posed a challenge: If I could confirm The Philatelic Foundation's initial judgment that the recently submitted stamp really is position 76, it would help secure a welcome homecoming to the APRL, and probably activate an occasion to disburse up to \$60,000 to one or more individuals who helped recover the stolen stamp.

Identifying the Position 76 Stamp

My method of identification is traditional. By studying traits that are as unique and distinctive as features of human fingerprints; by identifying many points of similarity that are not found on other stamps; and by plausibly accounting for any dissimilar points between the subject stamp and a previously obtained reference, an expert can state with virtual certainty that the stamp does or does not match the reference photograph and therefore is properly identified.

In this instance, the shape of each perforation tooth on two sides of the stamp and its location in relation to the printed design confirmed Kaufman's analysis, as did the placement of the blue airplane vignette in relation to the red frame that surrounds it. No other stamp position matches these features. The perforations at the top and left do not match those on the old photo because they had been altered, as Kaufman had written, to remove the vertical guide line printed in red ink at the center of the sheet.

My answer was "Yes!" Another outside expert whose identity was not disclosed to me was more technologically inclined than I. Using Photoshop software he overlaid the new color image on the old black-and-white image, which proved to be perfectly congruent. (The outside expert was later revealed to be Scott Trepel, president of the Siegel firm). After due consideration, the PF issued a certificate that authenticated the newly discovered stamp as Position 76.



The APRL has kept the Position 65 stolen McCoy stamp ever since Chicago businessman Marcel Lutwak presented it to Col. James DeVoss for the APRL in 1982, and has exhibited the stamp at every annual APS convention since then



Position 76—the stamp offered in this auction—was skillfully reperforated at top and left to disguise its identity as one of the stamps in the stolen McCoy block



The Spink Announcement

On April 15 the stamp auction firm Spink USA distributed a news release that began:

Spink USA is proud to announce that on 1 April a recovery was made of a long-lost 1918 24c Jenny airmail with center inverted when a prospective consignor, who had inherited the stamp, delivered it to their auction galleries for sale. After careful expert examination the rarity was determined to be position 76 in the pane of 100 subjects. This position is the bottom right stamp from the famous McCoy block of four, which was stolen out of its exhibition frame in 1955 during the American Philatelic Society convention in Norfolk, Virginia... Position 76 recovered by Spink had been reperforated at right and most of the gum had been removed, so the pencil position numbers written on the gummed side had been lost, making identification a challenge.

Actually, the left edge has been reperforated, not the right, to remove the vertical guide line, but the image that accompanied the Spink notice was digitally outlined in a way that seemed to make all four edges appear to have been altered. The top perforations also have been altered to disguise its origin.

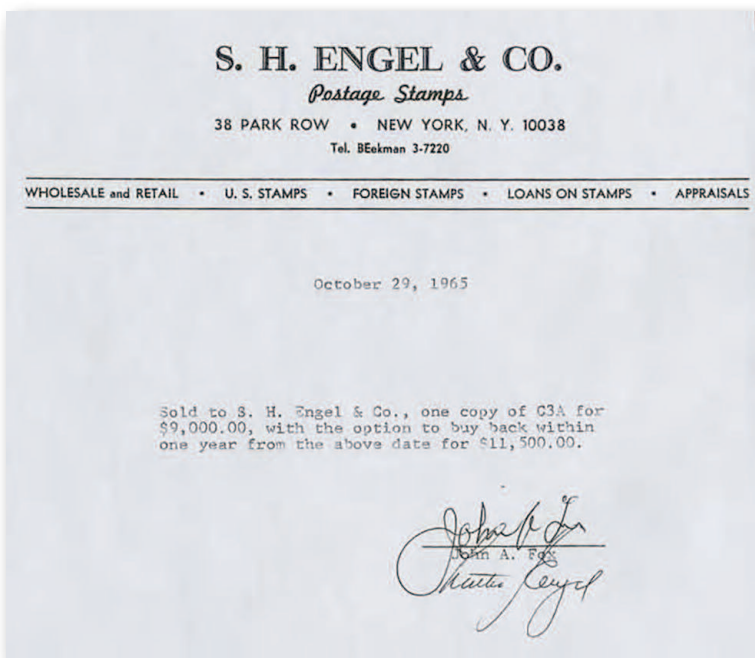
The release continued:

George Eveleth, Head of the Philatelic Department said: 'This is one of the most exciting events in my 38 year career in the stamp auction business.' Once legal matters are settled Spink USA will be returning the stamp to its rightful owner, the APRL."

Eveleth did not return my calls for additional information, but an Associated Press article by Jennifer Peltz added, "The would-be consignor, a man in his 20s who lives in the United Kingdom, said he'd inherited the stamp from his grandfather and knew little about it, said George Eveleth, head of Spink USA's philatelic department. He said authorities had told the auctioneers not to release the name of the consignor, who is in his 20s."

That report seemed to suggest that the missing stamp might have been lying in an affluent collector's album overseas for the past two or three generations, but there was reason to believe that it might have been lurking closer to home for most of those years.

This 1965 receipt accompanied the Position 76 Inverted Jenny stamp when a young man from Northern Ireland delivered it to Spink USA as a prospective consignment



A Possible Link to John A. Fox

Spink shared with reporters an intriguing document that accompanied the stamp, but cautioned that the two are not necessarily related. It is an October 29, 1965, typed receipt on a sheet of New York stamp dealer's letterhead stationery that reads, "Sold to S. H. Engel & Co., one copy of C3A for \$9,000, with the option to buy back within one year from the above date for \$11,500.00," and is signed by John A. Fox and Nathan Engel. The Scott Catalogue value for Scott C3a at that time was \$16,000.

The firm that bought the stamp was founded by brothers Solomon, Henry, and Nathan Engel in 1955 with Nathan as its president, and dissolved as a business in 1998, according to New York Department of State records. In this transaction, Engel effectively acted as a pawnbroker by lending money to Fox with the stamp as collateral. Nathan Engel died in 2009 at age 89.



John A. Fox, the New York stamp dealer who obtained a loan from S. H. Engel & Co., evidently using the stolen Position 76 Inverted Jenny as collateral

John A. Fox is a notorious rogue of American stamp hobby lore, but in 1965 he was admired throughout the hobby and the stamp trade. There would probably have been no reason for Engel to suspect that anything was amiss in this transaction, or to guess that the stamp might have been stolen. In retrospect the Engel firm performed a valuable service by documenting the stamp's whereabouts a half century ago.

From the late 1930s to the early 1960s Fox was one of the best known, most widely admired, prosperous and flamboyant New York philatelic auctioneers, but in 1966 he had been censured by the American Stamp Dealers Association, and the APS had expelled him from membership for "unethical conduct and conduct unbecoming a member."

Stamp trade insiders had become aware that Fox had sold fake classic United States and Confederate covers to wealthy collectors for hundreds of thousands of dollars. Robert A. Siegel had held an invitation-only gathering of elite clients at the Collectors Club clubhouse to inform them of Fox's activities and to show them how to spot his deceptive products. But the broader philatelic community was not properly informed until almost a decade later.

This was the cascade of events that brought Fox down:

First, as "a legendary ladies' man" in the words of fakes and forgeries expert and Purdue University professor Varro E. Tyler, Fox had been named as correspondent in a divorce action.

Next, the Internal Revenue Service had brought suit against him to recover unpaid taxes. Finally, in a 1968 lawsuit, a Denver businessman had won a \$1.43 million judgment against his former wife and Fox after he discovered that his stamp and coin collection, valued at \$1.1 million, had gone missing from his safe, and that Fox had paid the ex-wife \$100,000 for it in 1965.

The consequence was a sheriff's sale of Fox's philatelic stock on January 3, 1974, in New York City for the benefit of nine creditors. Missouri collector Creighton C. Hart attended the sale and reported on it in the journal of the United States Philatelic Classics Society. The auctioneer advised prospective bidders to ignore the lot descriptions when bidding, and cautioned them that there would be no warranty as to the genuineness of any item. With experienced collectors and dealers in attendance, stamps and covers sold for small fractions of the prices they would have realized had they been genuine.

Even after Hart's report, some of his loyal customers refused to believe that Fox had intentionally created and sold fraudulently altered and forged stamps and covers. But after Fox died in 1988, a box of photo-engraved zinc counterfeit postmark devices was discovered in the basement of his Floral Park, New York, home office. They are now in The Philatelic Foundation's reference collection; the Classics Society reproduced and published proof strikes of each device in 2008.

Considering the subsequent disclosures and the timeline of Fox's fall from grace, I think the 1965 Engel-Fox document probably does refer to the Position 76 Inverted Jenny. Keeping in mind the immense scope of Fox's forgery operation, it is not hard to imagine that Fox might also have trafficked in stolen property if given the opportunity.

Irving Adams's Story

Irving Adams is a Pennsylvania stamp collector and dealer who frequently visits the APRL and volunteers at the APS. In 2013 he had been the subject of news reports that portrayed him as the victim of a philatelic crime. New York police had arrested his wife, Elena S. Adams, on charges of conspiracy and criminal solicitation. An undercover officer from the Brooklyn district attorney's office posing as an assassin for hire said she had offered a stamp collection and jewelry valued at \$60,000 to kill him. The Adamses had met at a meeting of the Collectors Club, and had been married for two decades.

According the Kings County District Attorney's office, Elena Adams pleaded guilty to the conspiracy charge on August 15, 2014, and Judge Danny Chun sentenced her to serve 1½ to 4½ years in state prison. Meanwhile, after moving from New York to Pennsylvania, Irving Adams was my informant about the time his wife was entering the penitentiary. Shortly after my *American Philatelist* article about the McCoy heist and recovery of two stamps from the block appeared in September 2014, he told me a story that he thought might shed new light on one of the missing McCoy Inverted Jenny stamps.

In the late 1970s Adams had been working on Wall Street in New York City, and was personally acquainted with some of the stamp dealers on Nassau Street, the historic home of the North American stamp trade. Lee Gilbert, one of the old time insiders, told him that "John Fox fenced a C3a," implying that Fox or his supplier had acquired the stamp illicitly.



Later, during the 1980s, Adams spent time at the S. H. Engel & Company stamp firm, and became friendly with the owners, Henry and Nat Engel. Adams said Henry Engel told him that their firm had bought an Inverted Jenny and had kept it in the Engel family. The document released by Spink confirms that they did acquire one stamp that fits the description.

As scarce as the famous inverts are, Adams speculated that both stories might have involved the same stamp. By then, Fox's reputation as a shady character had become widely known, so Adams suggested to me that if the Engel brothers had innocently acquired their stamp from Fox, it might nevertheless have been a stolen McCoy. The document lends credence to Adams's deduction.

Adding up the evidence, these are my provisional thoughts: After having been ostracized by ASDA and APS, Fox's burden of debt and declining reputation probably precluded his ability to buy the stamp back from Engel before the late October 1966 deadline. But did he really intend to buy it back, or was pawning it simply his way of exchanging it for cash in a veiled transaction?

An excerpt from a December 12, 1988, letter that Ohio philatelic scholar Richard B. Graham wrote to Varro Tyler adds possibly pertinent grist. Graham was the postal history columnist for *Linn's Stamp News*; Tyler was gathering information for his book *Philatelic Forgers: Their Lives and Work*, published by Linn's. Graham wrote:

I recall asking someone once, who, up to a short time before, had total faith in Fox's complete honesty, but had his eyes opened the hard way, why Fox, up to a year or so previously, one of the most highly respected dealers in the business, was peddling fake covers and not paying his bills. The reply was that Fox was an inveterate (and heavily losing) gambler and he had generated huge debts that way to some people with underworld connections. He was told to pay up or risk ending up in the East River in a cement overcoat!

If that story was true, one can imagine stamp dealer Fox being offered a deal he could not refuse: convert a hot stamp into cash.

The Recovery of Position 76

Providence could not have timed the return of the Position 76 stamp to its rightful owner more appropriately than the way it actually occurred. The international exhibition World Stamp Show-NY 2016 had long been anticipated as an event that would showcase and celebrate the Inverted Jenny.

During the show Robert A. Siegel Auction Galleries sold the finest known copy of the stamp, Position 58, for a record price of \$1,351,250, and sponsored the appearance and flight of an original Curtiss JN-4H biplane. Schuyler Rumsey sold another Inverted Jenny at auction, and boothholder Harry (Sonny) Hagendorf of Columbian Stamp Company displayed two of them at his stand.

The most sensational announcement was that Keelin O'Neill of Northern Ireland, the young man who had brought the Position 76 stamp to Spink, was present in person at the show, his identity revealed to the public for the first time. He told reporters, "My grandfather gave me a box of stuff two months before he passed away. I wasn't aware I actually had a stamp in there. He never really pointed out to me what it was."

The box contained old records, an antique clock, and the single stamp. O'Neill did not know when or how his grandfather had obtained the stamp. He speculated that it might have turned up at a "boot sale," explaining, "cars pull up in a field and sell all their stuff out of the back of their car. So I used to go with him when I was a kid."

The stamp was on a stock card inside an envelope along with the Fox-Engel transaction receipt, which must have suggested to him that it might have been worth a significant amount of money. He "did a little bit of research" about it and then contacted Spink in London. The London office of Spink referred him to the firm's New York branch. O'Neill had already planned a vacation visit to the United States, so he took the stamp along and presented it there.

Spink USA submitted the stamp to The Philatelic Foundation for an opinion. After verifying that the stamp was Position 76 from the stolen McCoy block, the PF notified the FBI. "Once I was told that it was stolen, I wanted to give it back to the rightful owner," O'Neill said.

At a public ceremony at the show on June 2, held in front of the iconic Curtiss Jenny biplane, APRL administrator Scott English, who is also the executive director of the APS, presided and accepted the return



Group photo at World Stamp Show-NY 2016. Standing in front of the Curtiss JN-4H biplane are (left to right): Larry Lyons of The Philatelic Foundation; Keelin O'Neill of Ireland, who inherited the stamp from his grandfather; Donald Sundman of Mystic Stamp Company; Scott English, administrator of the APRL; Preet Bharara, U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of New York; Diego Rodriguez, assistant director in charge, New York Field Office Federal Bureau of Investigation; and Roger Brody, president of the APRL. *USPS photo by Daniel Afzal*

of the stamp. Besides English, speakers included Roger Brody, president of the APRL; Preet Bharara, United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York; Diego Rodriguez, assistant director in charge of the New York FBI field office; and Larry Lyons, executive director of The Philatelic Foundation.

Donald Sundman presented O'Neill with an oversize check for \$50,000, the reward for the return of the stamp. Later, the APRL's \$10,000 reward for information that led to the stamp's return was awarded to Spink USA, which paid for its legal expenses out of the amount and donated the balance back to APRL.

After considering eight sale proposals, on March 21 of this year the APRL announced that the library had reached an agreement with Robert A. Siegel Auction Galleries to sell the stamp.

A Personal Note

During my 20-plus years as a civil-rights activist in Mississippi I devoted much of my time to investigating murders of my 1960s predecessors whose killers had gone unpunished. Previously secret documents I unearthed and made public contributed to awakening public interest, which in turn prompted successful prosecutions of the white-supremacist who had shot and killed NAACP leader Medgar Evers in Jackson in 1963, and of Ku Klux Klan members who had murdered Freedom Summer volunteers James Earl Chaney, Michael Schwerner, and Andrew Goodman in Neshoba County in 1964.

By the time I was elected to the APS board of directors in 1991 and moved to Pennsylvania in 1993, my penchant for studying unsolved crimes that most people had forgotten directed my attention to the McCoy theft. For the next two decades I checked every Inverted Jenny that made an appearance at auction or in other public views to see if any of them might be an unrecognized missing McCoy stamp.

Finally, in 2012 I submitted a formal proposal to the APRL trustees, which recommended that a substantial reward be offered to a person or persons who provide information to APRL that leads to the recovery of one or both of the missing stamps. After the trustees approved the proposal in principle, APRL president Roger Brody appointed APRL trustee Rob Haeseler, my friend for more than 20 years who died earlier this year, to chair a committee that crafted the specifics and published the reward offers.

These actions and the attendant publicity have generated widespread interest in stamps and stamp collecting among members of the public who have had scant previous contact with or awareness of our hobby. We all are beneficiaries of that. I am especially grateful to Don Sundman and Mystic Stamp Company for their generosity in offering the \$50,000 reward that made it work.

We may never solve the mystery of who stole the McCoy block, or where the stamps have been hidden since 1955, but one more task remains to be done. We must continue the search until the Position 66 Inverted Jenny returns to its rightful owner, the American Philatelic Research Library.

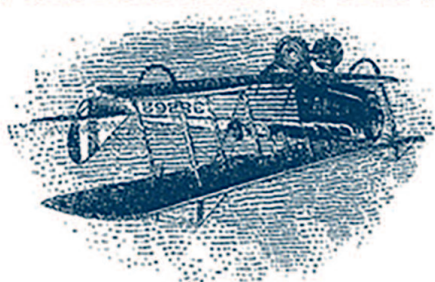
Parts of this narrative and the author's biographical sketch of Ethel McCoy previously appeared in the September 2014 and June 2016 issues of *The American Philatelist*, monthly journal of the American Philatelic Society.



Ethel Bergstresser Stewart McCoy

To learn all there is to know about the famous Inverted Jenny, go to
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Certificate #

Owner

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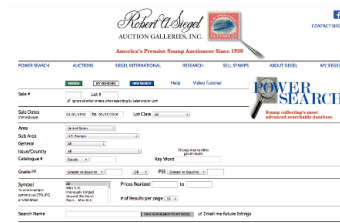


Siegel to Auction Recovered McCoy Jenny Invert, Position 76

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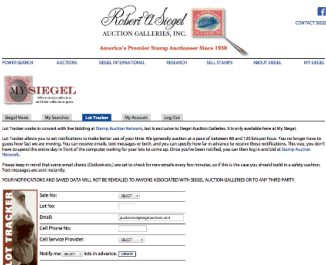


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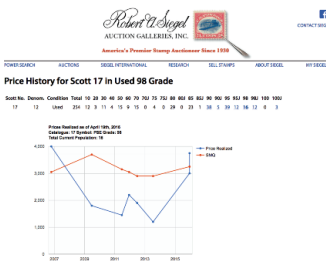


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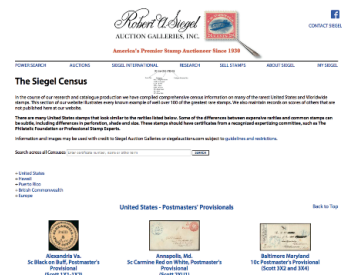
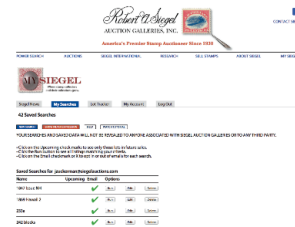
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This step-by-step guide will instruct you how to register, set your browser and use the bidding interface.

Start by following the simple steps to become a registered Live Internet Bidder.
Once you've been approved for bidding, you can listen to the auction and place bids with the click of a mouse.

Registering with **STAMP AUCTION NETWORK & SIEGEL AUCTION GALLERIES**

Live Internet Bidding is managed by Stamp Auction Network (SAN).
To bid, you must be registered and approved by *both* SAN and Siegel.
To decide what you need to do, choose the description below that best fits you.



I've already registered with SAN and have been approved by Siegel for internet bidding.

I'm a Siegel client, but I'm not registered with SAN.

Go to stampauctionnetwork.com/siegel and click on "Register" at the top. Check the box for Robert A. Siegel Auction Galleries (under "R") and submit the form, indicating you are a Siegel client. Once registered at SAN, you're ready for internet bidding.

I've bid through SAN before, but this is the first time I've bid in a Siegel sale.

Then you just need to be approved by Siegel. Go to stampauctionnetwork.com/siegel and click on "Update Registration" at the top. Your SAN account information will be sent to us for approval (you might be asked for other trade references). Once approved by Siegel for bidding, you're ready for internet bidding.

I've never bid with Siegel, nor registered with SAN.

Go to stampauctionnetwork.com/siegel and click on "Register" at the top. Check the box for Robert A. Siegel Auction Galleries (under "R") and submit the form **with your trade references** (please, no family members or credit card companies as references). Once registered at SAN and approved by Siegel for bidding, you're ready for internet bidding.

Live Internet Bidding works by allowing registered bidders to observe and place bids.

Live Internet Bidding will work with any browser on both PC and Mac operating systems.

Before bidding by internet for the first time, we recommend finding a sale in progress and listening to the public broadcast or logging in as a registered bidder. This will help you develop a feel for the sale tempo and bidding interface.

Log on to the auction at stampauctionnetwork.com/siegel.

You can also log on at siegelauctions.com

When you're logged on as a Live Internet Bidder, the bidding interface shows a photo and description of the lot, the current bid (and your bidding status), options for placing competitive bids and buttons with bid increments.

- After you click on a bid amount, the auctioneer is immediately notified of your bid.
- Retracting a bid is usually not acceptable, so please bid carefully.
- If you bid and then decide to stop, the "Pass" button will tell the auctioneer you are no longer bidding.
- You can send messages to the auctioneer (for example, a request for extension).
- You can track prior realizations from the bidding screen.



"System Down" or "Lost Connection" events do occasionally happen.

If you have any problems with Live Internet Bidding please call **212-753-6421** for immediate assistance.



BID

Use this form to submit an absentee bid on
lot 4000 or to confirm telephone bidding

Sale 1157

Lot 4000
May 11, 2017

PADDLE #

1

Please provide the following information:

NAME

ADDRESS

CITY/STATE/ZIP

PHONE MOBILE

EMAIL

2

Have you purchased from us in the past 5 years? ☐ Yes (please go to Section 3)
☐ No (references required below)

STAMP FIRM PHONE

STAMP FIRM PHONE

Please submit references at least **2 business days** before the sale. Bids from new clients will not be executed if satisfactory references are not received in time to be contacted.

3

- Enter your maximum bid on lot 4000 in the space below
- Use a whole dollar amount and bid according to the increments (see back of form)
- Bid does not include the **18% Buyer's Premium**, taxes, duty or shipping charges
- The absentee bid will advance at one increment over the next highest competing bid
- A “Plus”, “Break Tie” or “Buy” instruction will not be executed

Lot #	Bid \$
4000	

4

By signing this form, you agree to all of the Conditions of Sale printed in the sale catalogue (printed and digital), including but not limited to a) payment in the manner demanded by the Siegel firm, and b) payment of the 18% Buyer's Premium, any sales tax or customs duty, shipping costs, late charges and

other prescribed charges. You agree that your bids will be executed as a courtesy by Siegel, but you waive the right to make any claim against Siegel or its employees arising from these bids or your participation in the sale. You agree to honor all bids as submitted, regardless of any errors or omissions.

SIGNED DATE

Mail the signed form to Siegel Bid Department, 60 East 56th St., New York, NY 10022
or email to stamps@siegelauctions.com
or fax to 212-753-6429



Shipping & Insurance

We will be pleased to arrange for shipping and transit insurance for purchases in this sale, except for lots marked or announced as "floor sale only." To expedite billing and delivery to hundreds of buyers in each sale, we use standard charges for postage and insurance under our policy. These charges are based on the package weight and mailing requirements, according to the schedule shown here. Our standard charges do not include a fee for our services, and they may be slightly more or less than the actual postage or FedEx fee. We ask all buyers to remit the invoiced amount for shipping and insurance.

Transit insurance is provided in all cases, except when the buyer has furnished us with documentation that insurance is effective under the buyer's own policy.

There will be no added insurance charge for shipments of less than \$75,000 value. Shipments valued in excess of \$75,000 may require supplemental insurance and/or special courier service, the estimated cost of which will be furnished to the buyer prior to shipment. If the buyer refuses to pay the estimated charges or furnish proof of self-insured coverage, the buyer will be responsible for picking up the lots at our office and any resulting sales tax.

Bidding Increments

The auctioneer may regulate the bidding at his discretion. However, to assist absentee bidders in establishing their maximum bids, the increments shown here will be used in most cases. We recommend that written bids conform to these increments—bids that do not will be reduced accordingly.

Standard Shipping Charges

Weight Class	Shipping Method	Charge
Up to 2 lbs.	Fedex Envelope	\$20
Over 2 lbs.	Fedex Box	\$35 - \$50*
Outside US	Fedex	\$50 - \$100**
Bulky Lots	Fedex Ground or Express	By weight

* Up to \$75,000 value and up to 5 lbs; additional charge may apply to packages exceeding limits

** Buyers outside United States are liable for any applicable customs duty and clearance charges. An accurate declaration of contents and value will be made on all packages and import/export documents. **Siegel may refuse to ship lots to certain countries with a high risk factor.**

2/2015

Bid	Increment	Bid	Increment
Up to \$200	\$10	\$7,000-20,000	\$500
\$200-500	\$25	\$20,000-30,000	\$1,000
\$500-1,000	\$50	\$30,000-70,000	\$2,500
\$1,000-3,000	\$100	\$70,000-140,000	\$5,000
\$3,000-7,000	\$250	\$140,000-300,000	\$10,000

Robert A. Siegel Auction Galleries, Inc.
Prices Realized for
Sale 1157 5/11/2017 The McCoy Inverted Jenny - Position 76

Lot#	Realized
4000	250,000