

How Errors and Varieties Arose on Flat Press U.S. Stamps Overprinted CANAL ZONE

OBJECTIVE OF THE EXHIBIT

This exhibit examines errors and varieties that occur on U.S. stamps overprinted by the Bureau of Engraving and Printing for use in the CANAL ZONE. How these errors originated is highlighted. All significant errors and varieties on the flat press stamps issued in 1924-28 are included. For 13 of them, 10 or fewer examples are known to exist, including the 10c, 12c, and 15c "ZONE ZONE," and the 20c Golden Gate with "CANAL" inverted, "ZONE" inverted, and "ZONE CANAL," each with five or fewer known. Several items included are the discovery copies for new varieties found in the past 30 years.

ORGANIZATION OF THE EXHIBIT

The varieties are presented by type according to when and how they were created, either during the preparation of the plates and overprint forms, or during the overprinting of the stamps.

- I. **Plate varieties** such as double transfers on stamps were caused by a full or partial extra image being transferred from the transfer roll to the plate.
Distinguishing characteristic: Plate varieties occur on one specific position on a particular plate.
- II. **Typesetting varieties** were caused by mistakes in creating or placing the CANAL and/or ZONE slugs in the overprint form. They include:
 - a. inverted or interchanged CANAL or ZONE slugs were used in one position;
 - b. two ZONE slugs were used in one position rather than one CANAL and one ZONE slug, creating "ZONE ZONE" overprints;
 - c. slugs with mismatched typefaces were used creating wrong font varieties.*Distinguishing characteristic:* Errors arising from typesetting mistakes occur at specific positions on any pane overprinted by the form with the typesetting mistake. Adjacent stamps are unaffected.
- III. **Printing varieties**, like the "CANAL" only, "ZONE" only, and "ZONE CANAL" errors, and inverted overprints, occurred when the paper was fed incorrectly into the press; work-ups.
Distinguishing characteristic: Each stamp on the impacted pane(s) is affected.



Few of the errors described in this exhibit can be found on cover. The cover above is the unique example of a single error on cover. The copy of the 1c Franklin with inverted overprint is the right-most stamp on the cover. It, and a companion partial cover, are contrived as they are correspondence between the discoverer of the error pane and the person to whom he eventually sold it.

PLATE VARIETIES ON U.S. STAMPS OVERPRINTED CANAL ZONE

The preparation of the original plates for the U.S. stamps that were overprinted is the first point at which varieties arose. Double transfers are plate varieties that occur when parts of two images are transferred to the same position on the plate, usually because the first image is not completely removed from the plate before a new impression is laid down. Remnants of the first impression pick up ink and reproduce their image along with the new impression. Mistakes on the 4th Bureau Issue, particularly mistakes producing major recognizable varieties, were unusual, with only two double transfers listed in the *Scott Specialized Catalogue* on Canal Zone stamps.



5c Roosevelt with all-over double transfer on pos. UL 86 of plate 15571. Enlarged image of bottom third is shown at right.



12c Cleveland with double transfer on top third of stamp; enlarged image is shown at right; the double transfer is found on pos. LL 81 of plate 15350; no other copy of this CZ variety is known ■



30c Bison stamp with plate variety from extraneous transfer causing wedge-shaped mark present on the plate proof for position UR 2 of plate 17446; known on U.S. stamp, discovery copy on Canal Zone stamp



Enlarged image of pos. UR 2 of plate 17446 showing wedge-shaped plate variety in "30" at lower right



30c Bison with double transfer on left third of a stamp with sharp A overprint; three copies of this CZ variety have been reported ■



Enlarged image from plate proof for pos. LR 79 of plate 14438 of the 30c Bison stamp



30c Bison with double transfer on left third of stamp with flat A overprint; one other copy has been reported; discovery copy ■

TYPESETTING MISTAKES

INVERTED ZONE ON STAMPS WITH FLAT A OVERPRINT

Overprinting U.S. stamps was done by inserting 400 separate CANAL and ZONE slugs in a form designed to overprint a full sheet of each value. In some later printings, individual panes of 100 were overprinted. Errors arising from typesetting mistakes arose when the slugs were inserted incorrectly in the overprint form, or an incorrect slug was inserted in one position.

In the example on the right, the ZONE slug was inserted upside down in position 30 of the LL pane, resulting in the overprint with ZONE inverted. An estimated 150 to 200 copies of this variety on the 1c flat A stamp were saved by collectors.

The same form was also used to overprint one other value, the 12c Cleveland. Examples went unnoticed at the time, being first reported in June 1926. Only nine copies are known, most with various defects, as they had been used on packages.



**12c Cleveland, first printing, from
pos. 30 LL with ZONE inverted;
Nine copies known ■**



**1c Franklin with flat A overprint with ZONE
inverted in position 30 LL as demonstrated
by the straight edges at top and right**

INVERTED CANAL ON STAMPS WITH SHARP A OVERPRINT

Though no inverted CANAL errors are known on the flat A overprints, they are found on stamps with sharp A overprints.



**5c Roosevelt, second printing of sharp A overprint, with CANAL inverted
from pos. 7 of LR pane**

INVERTED CANAL AND ZONE ON 20c GOLDEN GATE STAMP

Three significant errors occurred on the form used to overprint the 20c Golden Gate stamp. These are three of the rarest CANAL ZONE errors, all from typesetting mistakes on the same overprint form from the same printing of the same stamp. They occur on only the 20c Golden Gate stamp.

These errors arose when the CANAL and/or ZONE slugs were inverted when inserted in the overprint form, or were interchanged in one position in the overprint form, giving rise to a ZONE CANAL variety. Only the stamp in the position on which the typesetting error was made shows a variety. Other nearby stamps are normal.

20c Golden Gate stamp with sharp A overprint - the inverted ZONE error is in pos. 76 LL;
3 copies on record

■ PF cert.



20c Golden Gate stamp - the inverted CANAL error is in pos. 48 UR of the first printing; only two copies are known
 ■ PF cert.

ZONE CANAL ERROR ON 20c GOLDEN GATE STAMP

In one position (91 LL) the placements of the CANAL and ZONE slugs were interchanged, producing a ZONE CANAL error. This is the only typesetting ZONE CANAL error. The majority of ZONE CANAL errors arise during printing when the paper is fed into the press incorrectly.

20c Golden Gate with first printing of sharp A overprint reading
ZONE CANAL in
position 91 LL; others are normal;
3 copies known ■ APS cert.



ZONE ZONE ERRORS

On one position in the overprint form, two ZONE slugs were used by mistake, and stamps from that position have the overprint reading ZONE ZONE. This error occurred on all values overprinted with the sharp A overprint by the Bureau of Engraving and Printing as part of the first shipment on May 19, 1925. The ZONE ZONE error on the first printing occurred in position 18 of the LR panes. Except for the 3c Lincoln, the variety which occurs on position LR 18 and the stamp above it were removed from the remaining unsold sheets and destroyed, with the remaining 98 stamps on LR panes sold in the post offices. However, some were not detected or were shipped as overage with later printings, and a number of these other values did reach the public.



The ZONE ZONE error on the 3c Lincoln with sharp A overprint is the most common of the ZONE ZONE errors with approximately 90 copies known



The ZONE ZONE error on the 5c Roosevelt is relatively common. 1250 were recorded as destroyed, with none sold officially, but approximately 15 copies of this ZONE ZONE error are known

ZONE ZONE errors can also be found on the 1c and 2c Postage due stamps with sharp A overprint. Approximately 15 copies of each are known. Records indicate that 15 copies of the 10c Postage Due were not destroyed, though no copy is known to exist.



ZONE ZONE error on the 1c Postage Due



ZONE ZONE error on the 2c Postage Due



The ZONE ZONE error on the 10c Monroe is scarce, with only 5 copies on record ■ PF cert.



14911

ZONE ZONE error on the 15c Statue of Liberty stamp;
3 examples known ■ PF cert.



The ZONE ZONE error on the 12c Cleveland is among the scarcest Canal Zone errors, with only 4 copies on record ■ PF cert.

WRONG FONT VARIETIES - FIRST PRINTING OF SHARP A OVERPRINT STAMPS

It is believed that the preparers of the overprint form realized that they were missing one ZONE slug a result of having used two ZONE slugs in the position that created the ZONE ZONE error. They ordered one new set of slugs, which arrived in a font, 9 pt. Century Expanded type, very similar but not identical to the font in the original sets, which were in 9 pt. Bodoni type. The two replacement slugs were used in two different positions, leading to one position (51 UL) with wrong font CANAL and one (82 UL) with wrong font ZONE. These wrong font varieties appear on the first printing of several values with sharp A overprints shipped by the BEP on May 19, 1925, the same printings on which the ZONE ZONE errors are found.

CANAL

CANAL



ZONE

ZONE

Wrong font CANAL - top
Normal CANAL - below

10c Monroe with
wrong font
CANAL

10c Monroe with
normal CANAL
and ZONE

30c Bison with
wrong font
ZONE

Wrong font ZONE - top
Normal ZONE - below

Identifying the varieties: On the wrong fonts the letters appear thinner. In the wrong font the C of CANAL is nearly closed, the vertical strokes in the L and E are thinner, the bottoms of the N and the O protrude below the line of the other letters in ZONE, and the vertical and diagonal strokes of the N are of more nearly equal thickness.

Examples with wrong font CANAL



3c Lincoln



5c Roosevelt



10c Monroe



15c Liberty



30c Bison



2c Postage Due



\$1 Lincoln Memorial with
wrong font CANAL at UL



10c Postage Due

The positions of the wrong font varieties for both vertical and horizontal format stamps are the same (wrong font CANAL in position 51 of UL panes, wrong font ZONE in position 82 of UL panes), with no wrong font varieties on UR, LL, or LR panes. For the \$1 the positions are 51 U and 82 U because panes of 200 were overprinted rather than panes of 400.

Wrong font varieties are generally scarce, though no census of known copies has been made to date. New copies are still found occasionally in existing collections and dealer stocks. They can be found on the first (in some cases, only) printings of the sharp A overprint on the 3c, 5c, 10c, 12c, 15c, 30c, 50c, and \$1 values, as well as the 1c, 2c, and 10c Postage Dues. Used wrong font CANAL stamps are harder to find.



Plate number blocks of six - Wrong font CANAL at LL - on first printing, position UL 51 panes only

Examples with wrong font ZONE



WRONG FONT VARIETIES - SECOND PRINTING

The second printing with 9 mm spacing between CANAL and ZONE for stamps in vertical format was limited to the 5c Roosevelt, and the 2c and 10c Postage Dues. Second printing stamps have worn letters that appear thicker than on the first printing. Prior to 2004, it was believed no wrong font varieties were created on the second printing of these stamps. Beginning in 2004 wrong font varieties on second printing stamps were discovered and reported in *The Canal Zone Philatelist*. Since then, wrong font CANAL examples have been discovered from the LL and LR panes of the 5c Roosevelt, and from UL panes of the 10c Postage due and UR panes of the 2c Postage Due. To date, wrong font ZONE examples have been discovered only on LR panes of the 5c Roosevelt stamp.



AT RIGHT
5c Roosevelt from LR
pane with overprint at
an angle showing
normal font ZONE
overprint on position
LR 82



5c Roosevelt from LR pane with overprint at an angle showing wrong font ZONE in overprint overprint position LR 82 (Discovery copy)



5c Roosevelt plate block of 6
from LL pane of second printing
with wrong font CANAL on
pos. 51; discovery copy



Second printing 5c
Roosevelt from pos.
LR 51 with guideline
at left; discovery copy



Second printing 10c
Postage Due with wrong
font CANAL at LL;
discovery copy

WRONG FONT VARIETIES - FIRST AND SECOND PRINTINGS COMPARED

On the first printing, panes either had neither wrong font variety or had both wrong font CANAL in pos. UL 51 and wrong font ZONE in UL 82.

On the second printing, panes had either wrong font CANAL in pos. 51 or wrong font ZONE in pos. 82, but not both.

AT LEFT

Full UL pane of 3c Lincoln with flat A overprint. The wrong font CANAL and wrong font ZONE can be seen to occur on UL 51 and 82, respectively

wrong font CANAL

wrong font CANAL

AT RIGHT

2c Postage Due UR pane with sharp A overprint from second printing with wrong font CANAL in pos. 51, but no wrong font ZONE in pos. 82

wrong font ZONE

16474



INCORRECT SLUG PLACEMENT - SHIFTS, SPACING VARIETIES

While misfeeding of paper into the press can shift the overprint on the entire pane of stamps to produce split overprints and CANAL only, ZONE only, and ZONE CANAL varieties, a shift of one of the slugs within the overprint form can produce changes in alignment of the CANAL and ZONE impressions. In an extreme case, a shift of one word of the overprint caused it to lie partially off the stamp. This is very unusual, and only one example shown below exists on U.S. stamps overprinted by the BEP. On this stamp the CANAL on position 4 LL is shifted between 7 1/4 and 8 mm to the left.



17c Wilson with CANAL in the CANAL ZONE overprint shifted significantly to the left

Spacing varieties occur between the CANAL and ZONE slugs in the overprint. Unlike most printings of the sharp A stamps which had a 9.2 mm spacing between CANAL and ZONE, on the 2c Washington the normal spacing is 11 mm. There is a prominent spacing variety on an unknown position with a spacing between CANAL and ZONE between 8.5 and 8.75 mm. Additional spacing varieties of 9.5, 10.5, 11.2, and 11.8 mm are known.

2c Washington with 8.7 mm spacing between CANAL and ZONE on the LL stamp; the block also shows an 11.8 mm spacing on the UL stamp



2c Washington with 9.5 mm spacing between CANAL and ZONE on the UL stamp; the other three stamps have the normal 11.0 mm spacing



2c Washington with 11.2 mm spacing between CANAL and ZONE on the UL stamp; the other three stamps exhibit the normal 11.0 mm spacing



2c Washington with 10.5 mm spacing between CANAL and ZONE on the LR stamp; the CANAL to ZONE spacing is the normal 11.0 mm on the other three stamps in the block



MISTAKES DURING PRINTING

CANAL ONLY AND ZONE CANAL ERRORS

Printing errors occur during the process of applying the overprint to the stamps when the sheet is misfed into the press. These are usually described as if the *overprint* is shifted upward or downward, rather than the *paper*. The CANAL only; ZONE only; ZONE CANAL; and pairs, one without overprint, are errors that result when one or more of the words is shifted completely off the stamp.



2c Washington block of four with se-tenant CANAL only and ZONE CANAL errors with normal 9 mm spacing between ZONE and CANAL



ZONE CANAL
11 mm spacing
between ZONE
and CANAL;
2 copies possible ■



17c Wilson with UL stamp CANAL only, LL ZONE CANAL, and others with split overprint ■ APS cert.



5c Roosevelt with overprint at angle creating CANAL only error on top left stamp

1c Franklin block at right demonstrates how the downward overprint shift results in CANAL only on the top row and ZONE CANAL errors on the rest of the pane. As a printing error, all stamps in the strip have a variety PSAG cert.



ZONE ONLY AND ZONE CANAL ERRORS

Like the CANAL only and accompanying ZONE CANAL errors, misfed paper led to ZONE only varieties at the bottom of one or more panes of the 5c Roosevelt and 17c Wilson stamps. ZONE CANAL examples were generated on the rest of the pane.



17c Wilson plate block with some overprints reading ZONE CANAL and some stamps with split overprints
PF cert.

Strip with 18 examples of the 17c Wilson with ZONE CANAL overprint error and 2 copies with overprint reading ZONE only on the bottom row because of misfed paper
PSAG cert.



5c Roosevelt with overprint reading ZONE only and ZONE CANAL, both horizontal due to downward paper shift
■ APS cert.



5c Roosevelt with overprint at an angle; LL stamp reads ZONE only, overprint split on others - ZONE split at top of UR stamp is wrong font - possibly unique double variety ■



OTHER PRINTING ERRORS FROM INCORRECTLY FED PAPER

Other printing errors were created by misfeed of the paper into the press, creating a variety of inverted, doubled, and omitted overprints.



10c Postage Due with sharp A overprint in pair, one without overprint; 10 copies known ■



5c Roosevelt, second printing, sharp A overprint inverted, plus inverted overprint in bottom margin



5c Roosevelt, second printing, vertical pair, one without overprint, other with overprint inverted ; 10 copies known ■

Only one error arose from a double strike of the overprint, although this had been a fairly common occurrence on the stamps of Panama overprinted for use in the Canal Zone.



1c Franklin with inverted overprint



10c Postage due with double overprint

Folded over paper when the stamp overprint was applied could cause part of the overprint to be missing from the stamp. These are considered minor varieties rather than major errors.



Overprint reads ANAL ZONE on the left stamp due to foldover



Overprint reads ZO only due to foldover

WORK-UPS ARISING DURING PRINTING

During the overprinting process, additional varieties arose when some of the spacers (furniture) holding the CANAL and ZONE slugs in the overprint form became loose and moved up to the level of the type. They then became inked, producing extraneous inked blocks on the stamps. Such inked regular shapes are called work-ups. They are not common, but can occasionally be found on overprinted U.S. stamps. They usually do not occur on all stamps printed from the position on which they are observed, as they arise during the process of printing the stamps; the problem was sometimes corrected as printing using the overprint form continued.



1/2c Hale stamp with horizontal work-up above CANAL



1/2c Hale stamp with horizontal work-up below CANAL on top stamp



1 1/2c Harding with horizontal work-up above ZONE



17c Wilson with vertical work-up on pos. UL 9 and 19



17c Wilson with horizontal work-up



17c Wilson with similar work-up from top row of LL pane

NOTES

1. Scans of plate proofs, generally at 125% of normal, are courtesy of the National Postal Museum of the Smithsonian Institution. Scans of overprint fonts are at 300% of actual size.
2. Certificates when available are indicated with the organization in the manner of "APS cert."
3. Varieties for which 10 or fewer are known or believed to exist are indicated with a ■.
4. New discoveries exhibited are described more fully in articles in *The Canal Zone Philatelist*. They include 12c and 30c double transfers and the wrong font varieties on 2nd printings of 5c Roosevelt and Postage Dues, certain spacing varieties on the 2c Washington with sharp A overprint, and the inverted overprint on cover shown on page 1.
5. Specialized references include *Canal Zone Stamps* by Gilbert N. Plass, Geoffrey Brewster, and Richard H. Salz, CZSG, 1985, sections 11-13 and *Encyclopedia of Plate Varieties on U.S. Bureau-Printed Postage Stamps*, Loran C. French, BIA, 1979.