

The Plimpton Envelope Shapes

by C. H. Mekeel (From *The Philatelic Journal of America*, October 1888)

(During the recent APS show in Hartford, good friend Steve Pattillo—of Stephen Pattillo, Quality Stamps and Quality Stamp Shows—presented me with a copy of the October 1888 issue of what can be described as the forerunner to Mekeel's. As he pointed out, rarely do we see an article that illustrates the distinguishing features of the Plimpton envelopes. The Reay envelopes referred to were printed between 1870 and 1871, and are listed in Scott as U74-U107. The Plimptons were printed from 1874 to 1899 and are Scott U108-U378, although the later issues are not the subject of this article. The Centennial envelopes, issue in 1876, are Scott U218-U221. JFD.)

In 1874 the regular four year contract for manufacturing envelopes for the

government was awarded the Plimpton Manufacturing Co. of Hartford, Conn.

The old contractors were very much disappointed and endeavored to prevent the new firm from supplying work up to the standard required by the P.O. Department.

To accomplish this they refused to sell the dies in their possession to the new contractors, and even employed every competent die sinker in the country. As a result, Dies A of the 1¢, 2¢, 3¢ and 10¢ made their appearance in 1874, and are noticeable for the indistinct lettering and poor workmanship.

The Government accepted this work temporarily, and later the Plimpton Co. were able to obtain better dies.

The design and colors being the same as the Reay issue, the differences

occur only in minor details. The general distinguishing feature is the numerals of the Plimpton issue that have raised vertical lines, which are rarely seen in the Reay envelopes.

A new size occurs in this issue known as No. 4-1/2, "Commercial," 3-3/8x5-7/8 inches. In making our reference list we have observed Homer's miniature sizes and lettered them accordingly, O, T and U are illustrated, also a new shape RR not given by Horner.

The miniature designs do not give a very good idea of the differences as they are so slight.

We reproduce the cut recently published with Mr. Scott's excellent list in the American Journal of Philately. Numbers 24 and 26 correspond with U, and 28 and 29 with T, and 23 with P.

The three watermarks appearing in this series are illustrated, and lettered A, B and C.

The Centennial Commemorative envelopes bore a device on a shield, the shape of which is illustrated. Upper half, post horse and rider galloping to the left, POSTAGE on ribbon above, 1776 and U. S. at top. Lower half, Locomotive with tender and mail car, telegraph pole and wires above; THREE CENTS on ribbon below, at bottom 1876. These were manufactured at the Plimpton Co.'s works at Hartford and during the Exhibition in the building. The die from which the latter were struck off was damaged in the transfer and shows a double line under the word postage. Originally manufactured on the regular paper of the series they were afterwards printed on paper watermarked with the monogram composed of U. S. C. and date.

Some of the regular envelopes also appear on this Centennial watermarked paper, as the contractors used up the supply left on hand in this way. The envelopes printed on "Postal Service" paper were no doubt the result of an error. The 6¢ mentioned in this list is not noted in Scott's list.

Die Characteristics



Die A.



Die B.



Die A.



Die B.



Die C.



Die A.



Die B.



Die A.



Die B.



Die B.



Die A.



Die B.



Die A.



Die A.



Die A.

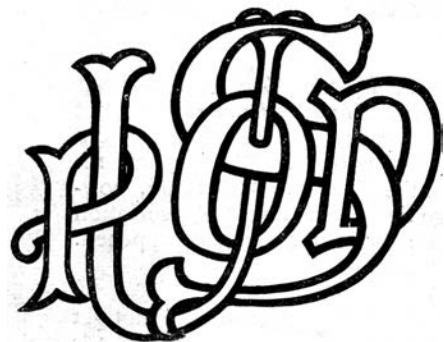
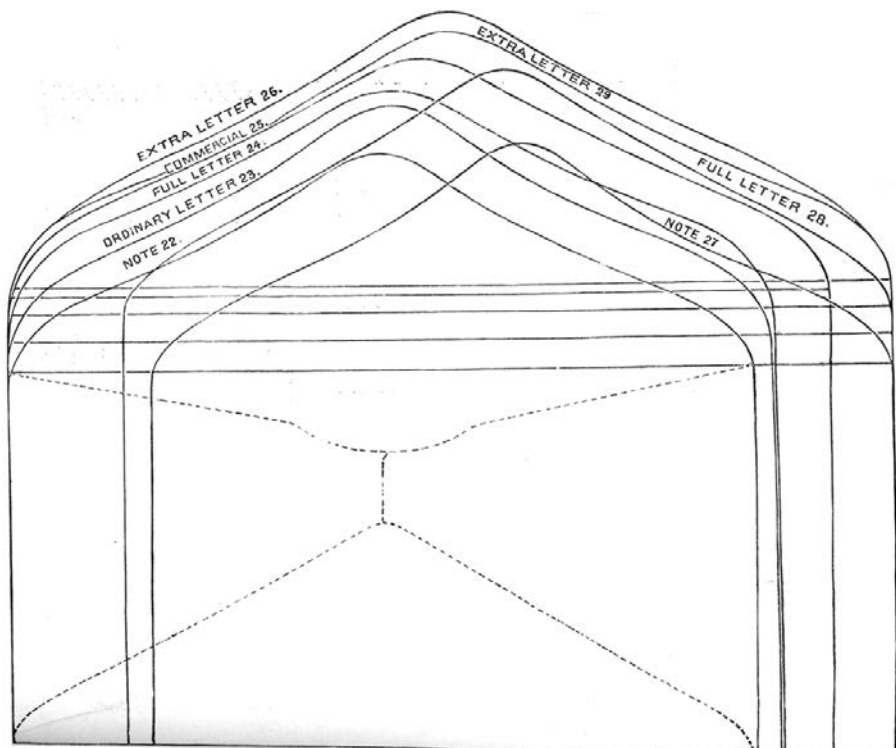


Die A.



Die A.

PLIMPTON SHAPES



Watermark A

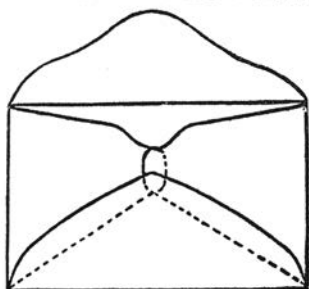


Watermark B

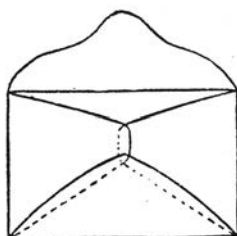


Watermark C

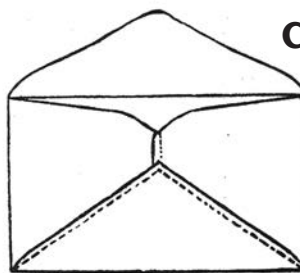
COPY OF REAY SHAPES.



U



O

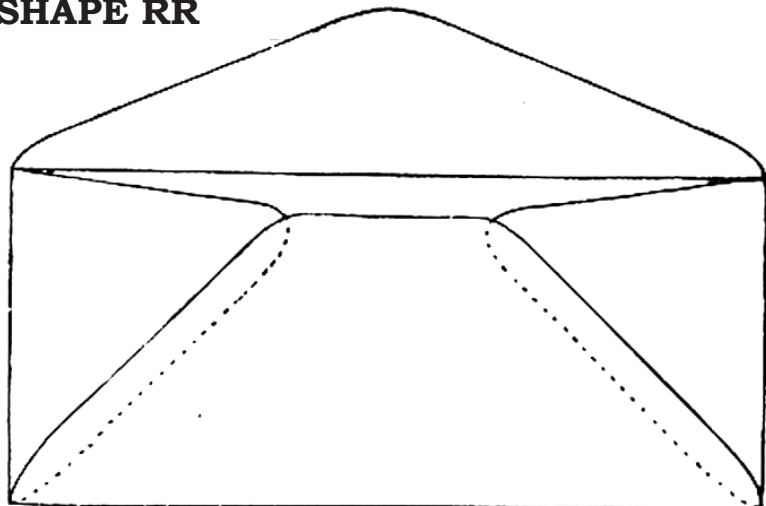


T

Centennial Envelope



SHAPE RR



Above, the illustration as published when reproductions were illegal; and an image showing the design features as discussed.

U.S. STAMPED ENVELOPES

SIXTH ISSUE, 1874-76

Issue Date	Value	Color	Dies	Sizes	Color Paper	Issue Date	Value	Color	Dies	Sizes	Color Paper
1874-75	1¢	Blue	2	4	4	1875	12¢	Purple	1	2	3
1874-75	2¢	Brown	3	4	5	1875	15¢	Orange	1	2	3
1875	2¢	Red	2	3	5	1875	24¢	Lilac	1	2	3
1874-75	3¢	Green	2	6	5	1875	30¢	Black	1	2	3
1875	5¢	Blue	2	3	4	1875	90¢	Carmine	1	2	3
1875	6¢	Red	1	5	3	1876 Cent.	3¢	Green	2	2	1
1875	7¢	Vermilion	1	1	1	1876 Cent.	5¢	Red	1	2	1
1874-75	10¢	Brown	2	3	2						

REFERENCE LIST

Horner Size												Full Letter		Wmk	
No.	Note	Shape	Die	Color	Value	Paper	W'mk	No.	Note	Shape	Die	Color	Value	Paper	Wmk
255	2-3/4x5-1/4	O	A	Green	3¢	White	A	291	3-1/4x5-1/2	U	B	Green	3¢	Blue	A
256	"	O	A	"	3¢	Amber 2nd	A	*	"	U	B	"	3¢	"	C
257	"	O	B	"	3¢	White	A	292	"	U	A	Blue	5¢	White	A
258	"	O	B	"	3¢	White	B	293	"	U	A	"	5¢	Amber	A
259	"	O	B	"	3¢	Amber 2nd	A	294	"	U	A	"	5¢	Blue	A
Ordinary Ltr															
260	3-1/8x5-1/2	P	A	Blue	1¢	White	A	295	"	T		Red	6¢	White	A
261	"	P	A	"	1¢	Amber	A	296	"	T		"	6¢	Amber	A
262	"	P	B	"	1¢	White	A	403	"	T		"	6¢	Amber 3d	A
263	"	P	B	"	1¢	Amber	A	297	"	T		"	6¢	Cream	A
264	"	P	A	Brown	2¢	White	A	298	"	U		"	6¢	White	A
265	"	P	A	"	2¢	Amber	A	299	"	U		"	6¢	Amber	A
266	"	P	B	"	2¢	White	A	300	"	U		"	6¢	Cream	A
267	"	P	B	"	2¢	Amber	A	301	"	T		Vermilion	7¢	Amber	A
268	"	P	C	"	2¢	White	A	302	"	T		"	7¢	Amber 3d	A
269	"	P	C	"	2¢	Amber	A	303	"	U		"	7¢	Amber 3d	A
270	"	P	C	"	2¢	White	A	304	"	T	A	Chocolate	10¢	White	A
271	"	P	C	"	2¢	Amber	A	305	"	T	A	"	10¢	Amber	A
272	"	P	A	Green	3¢	White	A	306	"	U	A	"	10¢	White	A
273	"	P	A	"	3¢	Amber	A	307	"	U	A	"	10¢	Amber	A
399	"	P	A	"	3¢	Amber 3d	A	308	"	U	B	"	10¢	White	A
274	"	P	A	"	3¢	Cream	A	309	"	U	B	"	10¢	Amber	A
Full Letter															
275	"	P	B	"	3¢	White	A	Commercial							
276	"	P	B	"	3¢	White	B	317	3-3/8x5-7/8	Q	A	Brown	2¢	Cream	A
277	"	P	B	"	3¢	Amber	A	318	"	Q	A	Red	2¢	Fawn	A
400	"	P	B	"	3¢	Amber 3d	A	319	"	Q	C	"	2¢	Cream	A
278	"	P	B	"	3¢	Cream	A	320	"	Q	B	Green	3¢	White	A
279	"	P	B	"	3¢	Blue	A	321	"	Q	B	"	3¢	White	B
310	3-1/4x5-1/2	T	ungm	A Blue	1¢	Orange	A	322	"	Q	B	"	3¢	Amber	A
311	"	T	ungm	B Dk Blue	1¢	"	A	323	"	Q	B	"	3¢	Cream	A
312	"	U	ungm	B "	1¢	"	A	324	"	Q	B	"	3¢	Fawn	A
313	"	U	ungm	B Light Bl	1¢	"	A	325	"	Q	B	"	3¢	Blue	A
314	"	U	ungm	A "	1¢	"	A	*	"	Q	A	Blue	5¢	White	A
315	"	T	ungm	A Brown	2¢	"	A	*	"	Q	A	"	5¢	Amber	A
404	"	T	ungm	C "	2¢	"	A	328	"	Q	A	"	5¢	Blue	A
405	"	T	ungm	B Red	2¢	"	A	326	"	Q	B	"	5¢	White	A
316	"	U	ungm	B Brown	2¢	"	A	327	"	Q	B	"	5¢	Amber	A
280	"	T		A Green	3¢	White	A	329	"	Q		Red	6¢	White	A
281	"	T		A "	3¢	Amber	A	330	"	Q		"	6¢	Amber	A
401	"	T		A "	3¢	Amber 3d	A	331	"	Q		"	6¢	Cream	A
282	"	T		A "	3¢	Cream	A	332	"	Q	B	Chocolate	10¢	White	A
283	"	T		B "	3¢	White	A	333	"	Q	B	"	10¢	Amber	A
284	"	T		B "	3¢	Amber	A	Extra Ltr							
285	"	T		B "	3¢	Cream	A	348	3-1/2x6-3/8	T	A	Blue	1¢	Orange	A
286	"	U		B "	3¢	White	A	349	"	T	B	Dark Blue	1¢	"	A
287	"	U		B "	3¢	"	A	350	"	U	B	"	1¢	"	A
288	"	U		B "	3¢	Amber	B	351	"	U	B	Light Blue	1¢	"	A
402	"	T		B "	3¢	Amber 3d	A	409	"	U	A	Brown	2¢	"	A
289	"	U		B "	3¢	Amber	A	352	"	U	B	"	2¢	"	A
290	"	U		B "	3¢	Cream	A	410	"	U	C	"	2¢	"	A
							A	411	"	U	C	Red	2¢	"	A
							A	334	"	T	A	Green	3¢	White	A

Extra Ltr (Cont.)				Official (Cont.)									
335	"	T	A	"	3¢ Amber	A	375	"	R	Carmine	90¢ White	A	
346	"	U	A	"	3¢ Amber 3d	A	376	"	R	"	90¢ Amber	A	
336	"	U	A	"	3¢ Cream	A	377	"	R	"	90¢ Cream	A	
337	"	U	B	"	3¢ White	A	Extra Off.						
338	"	U	B	"	3¢ White	B	378	4-3/8x10-1/4	R	Red	6¢ White	A	
339	"	U	B	"	3¢ Amber	A	379	"	R	"	6¢ "		
407	"	U	B	"	3¢ Amber 3d	A	**	"	R	"	6¢ "		
340	"	U	B	"	3¢ Cream	A	380	"	R	"	6¢ Amber		
341	"	U	B	"	3¢ Blue	A	*	"	R	"	6¢ "		
342	"	T		Red	6¢ White	A	412	"	R	"	6¢ Cream	***	
343	"	T		"	6¢ Amber	A	381	"	R	Purple	12¢ White		
344	"	T		"	6¢ Cream	A	382	"	R	"	12¢ Amber		
345	"	U		"	6¢ White	A	383	"	R	"	12¢ Cream		
346	"	U		"	6¢ Amber	A	413	"	R	Orange	15¢ White		
408	"	U		"	6¢ Amber 3d	A	384	"	R	"	15¢ Amber		
347	"	U		"	6¢ Cream	A	414	"	R	"	15¢ Cream		
Official							385	"	R	Lilac	24¢ White		
353	3-7/8x8-7/8	R	A	Green	3¢ Cream	A	386	"	R	"	24¢ Amber		
354	"	R	B	"	3¢ "	A	415	"	R	"	24¢ Cream		
355	"	R	B	"	3¢ Fawn	A	387	"	R	Black	30¢ White		
356	"	R	A	Blue	5¢ Cream	A	388	"	R	"	30¢ Amber		
357	"	R		Red	6¢ White	A	416	"	R	"	30¢ Cream		
358	"	R		"	6¢ "	B	389	"	R	Carmine	90¢ White		
359	"	R		"	6¢ Amber	A	390	"	R	"	90¢ Amber		
360	"	R		"	6¢ Cream	A	417	"	R	"	90¢ Cream		
*	"	RR		"	6¢ White	A	News Wrapper						
*	"	RR		"	6¢ Amber	A	391	160x240mm	A	Blue	1¢ Manila	A	
*	"	RR		"	6¢ Cream	A	392	"	B	Dark Blue	1¢ Manila	A	
361	"	R	B	Chocolate	10¢ White	A	393	"	B	Light Blue	1¢ Manila	A	
362	"	R	B	"	10¢ Amber	A	394	158x241mm	A	Brown	2¢ Manila	A	
363	"	R		Purple	12¢ White	A	395	160x240mm	A	Red	2¢ Manila	A	
364	"	R		"	12¢ Amber	A	396	"	B	Brown	2¢ Manila	A	
365	"	R		"	12¢ Cream	A	397	"	C	"	2¢ Manila	A	
366	"	R		Orange	15¢ White	A	398	"	C	Red	2¢ Manila	A	
367	"	R		"	15¢ Amber	A	CENTENNIAL COMMEMORATIVE ISSUE						
368	"	R		"	15¢ Cream	A	Size		Shape	Transfer	Color	Paper	Wmk
369	"	R		Lilac	24¢ White	A	542	Full Ltr	U	Hartford	Green	White	B
370	"	R		"	24¢ Amber	A	543	"	U	Phila	"	"	A
371	"	R		"	24¢ Cream	A	544	"	U	"	"	"	B
372	"	R		Black	30¢ White	A	545	Comrcial *	U	Hartford	Red	"	A
373	"	R		"	30¢ Amber	A	646	"	U	Hartford	Red	"	B
374	"	R		"	30¢ Cream	A							

* Not in Horner's Catalog (Horner, W.E.V. *History and Catalogue of the Stamped Envelopes of the United States*, 1879)

** Not in Scott or Horner *** No watermark