

## Chapter 34

### The Fifth Bureau Series - The Presidentials

The Presidential series, the 5th Bureau series, ran for 16 years from 1938 through 1954 although some values could be found in post offices years after that. I remember buying plate blocks of the 15c Buchanan around 1960 when I first starting collecting plates. This series was extremely popular with plate number collectors and so many of the scarcer plates were saved that today most of the better plates can be easily found. World War II was the big event in this time period and it was soon followed by the Korean War. Apparently such events slowed technological advances at the BEP since this series seems to be the least complex of any regular issue as far as the plate number collector is concerned. The big technological change was the change to electric eye plates in the late 1930s. At the end of the series, a new variety of the \$1 Wilson was introduced by printing this value with 400 subject flat plates using the dry printing method.

The 1/2c Franklin stamp saw 16 plates to press. The last two, 23445 and 23446, had only 750 impressions each, all precancelled. Apparently all copies were found and saved for collectors and today these plates command only a modest premium.

The 1c Washington sheet plates has some short runs on many of the pre-eye plates and three plates (21834, 21864, and 21868) are quite difficult. There were 14 1c booklet plates and the first two (22007 and 22008) are rare. Two plates were used for the end coil and are common. 54 plates went to press for the side coil with 21979 unreported and some of the others are tough to find.

The 1.5c Martha Washington sheet stamp had 97 plates to press. 21880 and 22154 are tough but not as difficult as the scarce 1c plates. Four end coil plates went to press with two common and two unreported. Twenty-four side coil plates went to press and this is a real tough group with one unreported.

The 2c Adams stamp had 110 plates to press. Six of these were the experimental eye plates with the plate number three up or down in the margin. These 110 plates are not a difficult group to complete. Even the two end coil and the 36 side coil and the eight booklet plates are relatively easy.

The 3c Jefferson was the workhorse of the series. 356 sheet plates including six experimental eye plates went to press. Many of the pre-eye plates had short runs and commanded heavy premiums when collector interest was strong but today enough exist for all that want to complete the long run of plates. The booklet and coil plates are much more difficult. Four of the booklet plates are rare. Two end coils are easy to find and most of the 224 side coils are easy. But three are unreported and completing the rest is very difficult.

Only eight plates were required for the 4c Madison sheet stamp from 1938 until 1954. But then, with the new 4c Lincoln on the horizon, 6 more Madison plates went to press, leading collectors on a merry chase. But our colleagues did a good job and plenty of examples of these short run plates exist. Eight coil plates went to press and of the last four, three are rare and one is unreported.

The last two of the six 4.5c White House stamp plates exist only precancelled and are more difficult than the first four.

All sheet plates on the values 5c through the 18c are easy even though some had short runs. Even the 5c and 6c coils are not too difficult. Two of the four 10c Tyler coils are 22102 (rare) and 22103 (unreported).

Problems exist on the 19c, 20c and 21c stamps. The 19c plate 23045 exists only precancelled and is tough. The 20c plate 22176 is a well known rarity and the rarest sheet plate in the presidentials. The 21c plates 23053 and 23933 exist precancelled only and are hard to find.

The remainder of the high value sheet plates are common. The dollar values give the combination collector some fun. The Durland catalog marks some combinations as scarce to add to the challenge. The prices of Presidential plates reflect the large supply available. Collections from auctions can be an especially good bargain. I was recently looking at auction prices obtained on the \$1 Wilson and \$2 Harding plate blocks and was surprised to note that, when taking into account the value of the dollar at the time these plates were current, these plates cost less today than collectors at that time paid at the post office! An interesting challenge today would be to find all of the plate numbers of the 5<sup>th</sup> Bureau series, or even to attempt a matched set collection of these interesting plates. A high percentage of completion is possible. 1440 plates went to press with 11 unreported. I believe the determined collector can locate 95% or better of these 1440 plates.

The easy life ends for commemorative collectors. See what happened as the 26000 section is examined.

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		5th Bureau Series Totals						
Series	Subject	Plate Type	Assigned	To Press	Available	Unreported	I Have	
	(totals)		1641	1440	1440	11		
1938	0.5c Franklin	400R	20	16	16	0		
1938	1c Washington	400R	148	127	127	0		
1938	1c Washington book	360R	30	14	14	0		
1938	1c Washington coil	150R	8	2	2	0		
1938	1c Washington coil	170R	78	54	54	1		
1938	1.5c M. Washington	400R	102	97	97	0		
1938	1.5c M. Washington coil	150R	4	4	4	2		
1938	1.5c M. Washington coil	170R	25	24	24	1		
1938	2c Adams	400R	114	110	110	0		
1938	2c Adams book	360R	19	8	8	0		
1938	2c Adams coil	150R	4	2	2	0		
1938	2c Adams coil	170R	48	36	36	0		
1938	3c Jefferson	400R	373	356	356	0		
1938	3c Jefferson book	360R	78	63	63	2		
1938	3c Jefferson coil	150R	4	2	2	0		
1938	3c Jefferson coil	170R	237	224	224	3		
1938	4c Madison	400R	24	14	14	0		
1938	4c Madison book	360R	2	0	0			
1938	4c Madison coil	170R	22	8	8	1		
1938	4.5c White House	400R	8	6	6	0		
1938	4.5c White House coil	170R	4	2	2	0		
1938	5c Monroe	400R	16	16	16	0		
1938	5c Monroe coil	170R	6	6	6	0		
1938	6c J. Q. Adams	400R	18	18	18	0		
1938	6c J. Q. Adams coil	170R	6	6	6	0		
1938	7c Jackson	400R	10	8	8	0		
1938	8c van Buren	400R	16	16	16	0		
1938	9c Harrison	400R	12	10	10	0		
1938	10c Tyler	400R	18	18	18	0		
1938	10c Tyler coil	170R	4	4	4	1		
1938	11c Polk	400R	7	5	5	0		
1938	12c Taylor	400R	8	8	8	0		
1938	13c Fillmore	400R	6	6	6	0		
1938	14c Pierce	400R	6	6	6	0		
1938	15c Buchanan	400R	19	19	19	0		
1938	16c Lincoln	400R	6	6	6	0		
1938	17c Johnson	400R	6	6	6	0		
1938	18c Grant	400R	7	6	6	0		
1938	19c Hayes	400R	7	7	7	0		
1938	20c Garfield	400R	13	13	13	0		
1938	21c Arthur	400R	7	6	6	0		
1938	22c Cleveland	400R	9	6	6	0		
1938	24c Harrison	400R	6	4	4	0		
1938	25c McKinley	400R	12	12	12	0		
1938	30c Roosevelt	400R	8	6	6	0		
1938	50c Taft	400R	6	6	6	0		
1938	\$1 Wilson center	100F	9	9	9	0		

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1938	\$1 Wilson frame	100F	9	9	9	0
1938	\$1 Wilson center	400F	6	5	5	0
1938	\$1 Wilson frame	400F	6	5	5	0
1938	\$2 Harding center	100F	5	4	4	0
1938	\$2 Harding frame	100F	5	5	5	0
1938	\$5 Coolidge center	100F	5	5	5	0
1938	\$5 Coolidge frame	100F	5	5	5	0