

The *Prominent Americana*

Newsletter of the *Prominent Americans – Americana Series* Study Group of the United States Stamp Society (usstamps.org)

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Ideas for the Newsletter

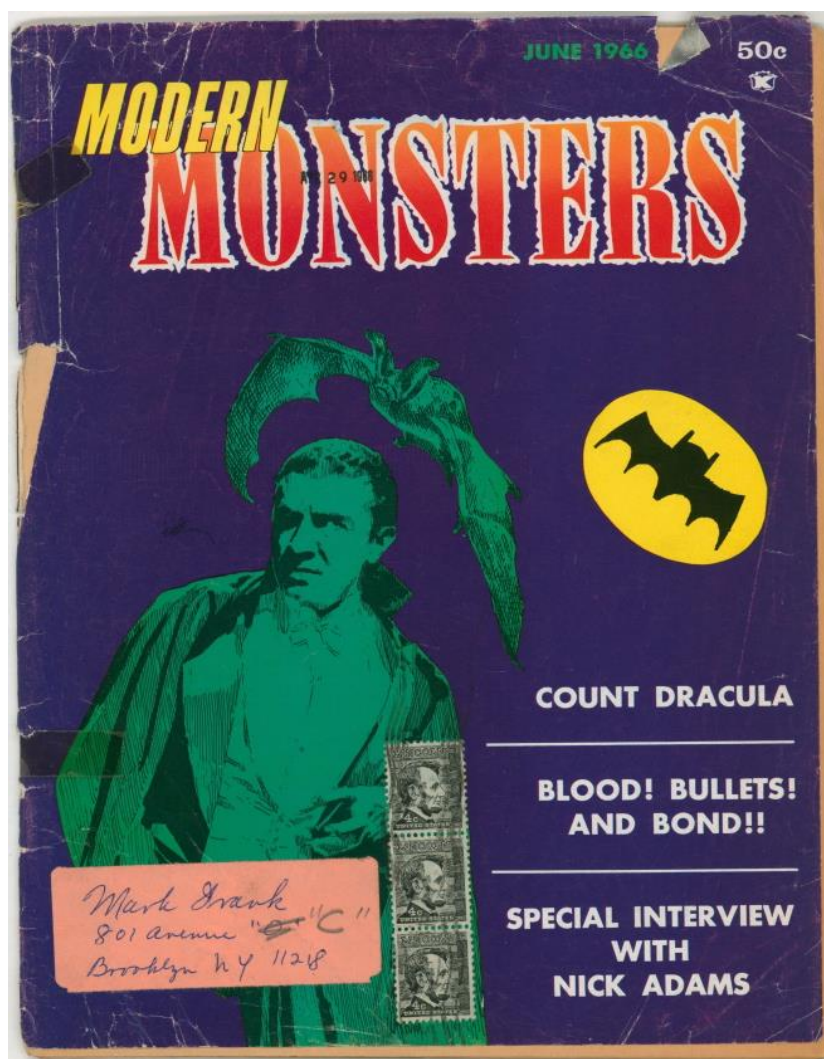
* Some collectors adopt the challenge (and fun) of picking a favorite stamp and then specializing in it. It seems that's a very small minority of the hobby community, however. More often, one hears of a vote taken, "What's your favorite stamp?" as a popularity poll, nothing more. What say you? Do you have a favorite stamp in either of these series? And if so, were you drawn to specialize in it? Curious minds want to know!

* The Americana series was launched in a turbulent period of U.S. postal history – the last months of the 10¢ letter rate when the USPS was fighting for raising rates before the Christmas mailing rush. We want to survey known covers with 1975 postmarks *not hobby-contrived*. Please report in!

Welcome to the second issue

- * PA 4¢ use on magazine mailing... pages 1, 3
- * PA 15¢ Holmes Types inquiry... pg 3
- * PA untagged error on cover... pg 3
- * 9¢ Capitol Precancels, pt 2... pp 4-5
- * 3¢ Parkman nonprofit uses: a chart... pg 6 (bonus sneak peek of future story)

A Second-Class Transient Rate Puzzle?



In early February 2023, a collector emailed me about a magazine then offered in an online auction with three PA4¢ Lincoln sheet stamps, with the inquiry "Is the high price due to transient second-class usage?"

Regrettably, technical issues prevented (*please see page 3*)

PA 15¢ Holmes Type II: When Were Uses Possible?

by Rob Loeffler

I came across what looks like an error in the Scott specialized catalog that begs the input of the PA-Am study group. It concerns the starting availability date of the Type II 15¢ Holmes sheet stamp, Scott 1288d.

In a November 7, 2016 *Linn's Stamp News* article by John Hotchner (U.S. Stamp Notes), it states "Type II of the sheet stamp (Scott 1288d) was released without notice to the public, and Scott notes that its earliest documented use (EDU) date is July 16, 1979."

This date is now in a footnote below the listing in the catalog: "Earliest documented use: July 16, 1979 (No. 1288d)."

Therein lies the problem. My notes indicate that Type II sheet stamps were first put to press October 25, 1979 utilizing plates 39023-39024, and they were first made available at the Washington Philatelic Sales Branch on November 29, 1979. I have a copy of the BIA plate number checklist for plates 20000-41303. It corroborates the 10/25/79 date as the initial date to press for the two plate numbers. I checked both forward and back for other 1288d plates. There are no plate numbers earlier than 39023 listed for Type II. This would seem to indicate that the dates in my notes are correct, and the catalog is in error. The Durland Standard Plate Number Catalog, a publication of our U.S. Stamp Society, lists eight plate numbers for this stamp. None were put to press any earlier than 39023-024. It should be noted that two more plates 39105-106 were certified, but either never put to press or all production was destroyed.

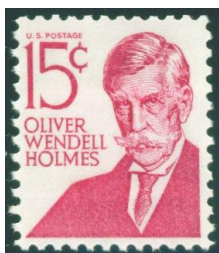
It would be nice to either determine how Scott (and John Hotchner) arrived at the 7/16/79 date, or get the erroneous date changed in the Specialized catalog to correctly coincide with the date(s) of printing.

[Given no official release date for first sales, we could apply the typical "two weeks lead time" of the era between to-press date and shipment to a post office for sales to begin. That would yield November 7, 1979 as a target "earliest possible postmark." Keep in mind, the PSB sales plan was likely instigated belatedly by a philatelic inquiry to the USPS once "by the way" news of the die change for sheets got out.

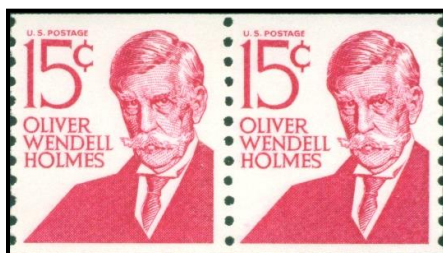
It would be nice for readers to report in with their "earliest" dated covers (or off-cover stamps bearing sufficient postmark), even if after the PSB sale date of 11/29/1979. This would give some starting idea of the distribution of the stamps and their difficulty in being found close to initial sales timeframe.

I'm typing this "blind" (without jumping to any resource material yet) but I seem to recall something submitted by George Brett in the U.S. Specialist about a July EDU. Lastly, as the coil format production also involved both the Type I and Type II master dies, during which I'd presume are the same timeframes, consider this: It is possible that if the coil format is involved with the earlier July period, at some time in the literature or catalog it was conflated with the sheet format. I offer this as a general caution regarding many stamps in both series produced in multiple formats. In closing for now, I will copy the "formats" data from the Field Guide to Postal Uses of the Prominent Americans Series e-book – which might obsolete some of what I just typed. (Update: I read the e-book 15¢ chapter; Brett gave July date only for coil availability.) – Editor]

15¢ Holmes Type II Formats



Pane/100
1979



Coil rolls/ 100/500/3000
July 11, 1979 [Fri.] (earlier possible)

References

Brett, George W. "The 15¢ Holmes Dies and Types, Prominent American Series of 1965 (Part III)," *U.S. Specialist*, August 1980, Vol. 51 (8), p.393.

Hotchner, John "U.S. Stamp Notes," *Linn's Stamp News*, Nov. 7, 2016, p.6.

► Transient rate? (continued from front page)

me from accessing the related website to review the item. Also, personal issues this year prevented me from pursuing the matter (as well as work on this newsletter) in a timely matter.

Eventually the collector was able to send me an image of the front cover (shown on the front page). We do not know for certain the magazine's weight. But between the timeframe ("June 1966" is printed at top) and the 12¢ postage, we might compare with possible rates. Interestingly, a tiny hand-stamp across the "N" in "Monsters" reads April 29, 1966.

The timeframe is within the 5¢ letter rate era, whose duration exceeds all subsequent rate periods (five full years, Jan. 7, 1963 - Jan. 6, 1968). A few rates or fees sometimes do not coincide with the same dates, like parcel post. But in this case, the usual candidate ratings (2nd-class, 3rd-class, airmail) do.

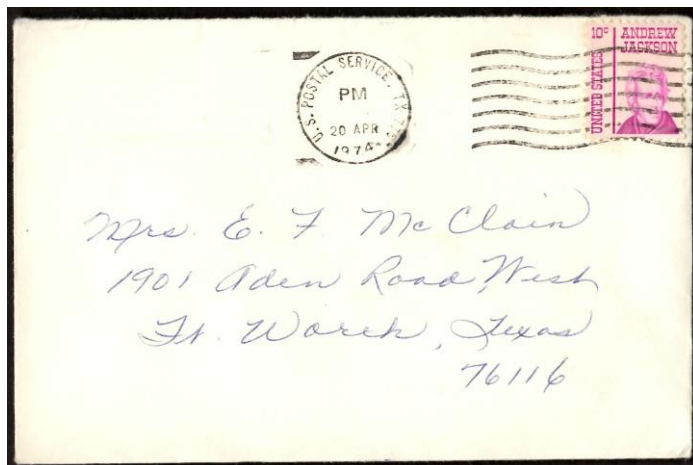
The transient 2nd-class rate was 4¢ for the first two ounces and 1¢ for each ounce over two. 12¢ would thus equate to a 10-ounce issue. That seems a bit heavy for a non-mainstream publication like this.

The single-piece 3rd-class rate is similar, with 4¢ for the first two ounces. But each ounce over two is 2¢. That equates 12¢ to a 6-ounce mailpiece. We deduced that the magazine was mailed as 3rd-class.

I cannot locate confirmation from the present owner of the item's weight. However, I did locate a final note where she/he concluded, "It is 3rd-class."

Used, Mint or On-Cover: All Can Collect Untagged Errors

In this installment, we feature a find of avid postal historian Roland Austin. Untagged errors on-cover are very difficult to find, but Roland managed to uncover the gem illustrated below: A PA10¢ Jackson without phosphor tagging, postmarked 20 Apr 1974.



Here is Roland's image using shortwave UV light, with an ordinary 10¢ Jackson and his cover corner.



Redux: Perforation Varieties of mid-20th-century Definitives

In the previous issue, the question was raised: "True or False: No PA or Americana (Am) issue has perforation varieties listed in the Scott catalog." The column then continued with:

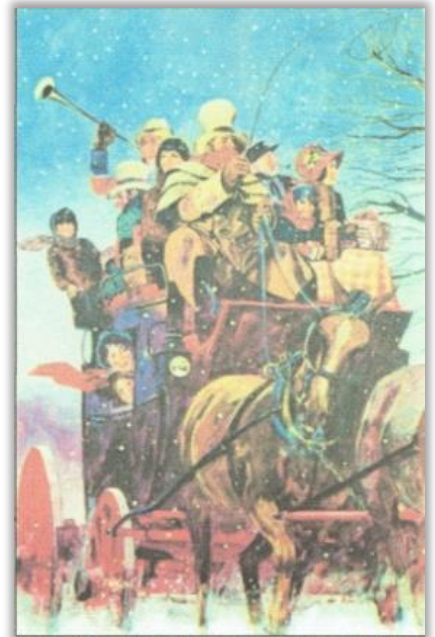
"In one sense, if the question were carefully worded, the answer would seem to be true: No Scott number was added for any PA issue *solely* because its perforation differed from another variety. (Is this true for Am too?)"

Later the story stated: "It seems 'perf 10' for coils and '11 by 10-1/2' for panes was the rule for regular series since the late 1920s. So much so that we sometimes forget exceptions: Flat-plate or multi-color issues." Mention of Am9¢ Capitol booklet stamp, steel-engraved issued in two perforation varieties, ended the piece.

While the article did not explicitly state it, the implication was that the 9¢ Capitol booklet single was the only Americana issue with more than one perforation gauge. At the time I wrote it, I had blinders on for only the steel-engraved issues. It wasn't until Roland Austin replied that I realized he was correct:

I had forgotten the gravure-printed 13¢ Eagle & Shield. It was printed on the BEP's Andreotti press, which had an in-line perforator. This created the "perfect corners" or bullseye perforations, but the perforator occasionally acted as the logjam station on that gravure press. If that occasion was once too often, the BEP bypassed it and took the printed web off-press to a line perforator. Even if the gauge was close to the same (as in the case of the 13¢), the line perforator did not make bullseye perforations, so they can be told apart.

You might recall a few commemorative-size issues of the time also came out in a press-perforated variety (perf. 11) as well as an offline-perforated variety (usually 11 in one direction and 10-1/2 in the other). – Editor



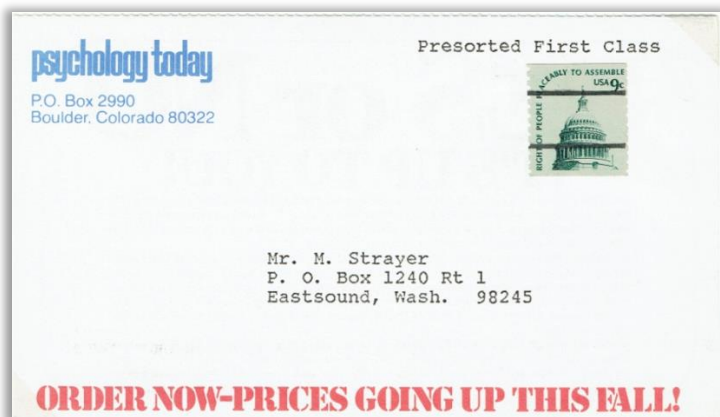
Reader's Digest postcard, 1976 holiday season ("10 in horse-drawn coach") (images courtesy Wout Janse)

A Research Candidate: 9¢ Capitol Precancels (Part 2)

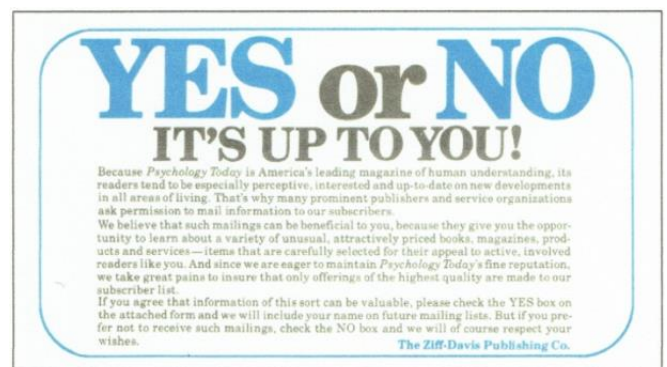
Wout Janse of the Netherlands responded to our census inquiry of last issue, sharing images from his collection. Between precanceled Am9¢ cover images I acquired for a postal-history e-book and several since, one important trait is usually absent: a usage timeframe. This is not unusual for most precanceled mail, since it bypasses postmarking. Interestingly, postcards have an advantage over empty envelopes: unlike envelopes, "contents" (writing) of postcards is still with us and sometimes give clues.

For instance, magazine subscription solicitations often have deadline dates. Some of the examples shown nearby have these dates. In a few other cases, a notation by a recipient or an auxiliary postmark (such as for forwarded mail) might provide a date. Otherwise, we are left with general approximations of when certain precancels were used, based on their traits.

As precancel use generally implies mass (bulk) mailing, sharing a known date with fellow collectors of a mailings series use can help us know more about our undated examples. Case in point are the Reader's Digest holiday gift announcement cards. Were the designs used confined to respective seasons? In studying example images from online auctions and elsewhere, I noticed among 9¢ cards the use of two color print schemes on the address side (dark green+copper, and blue+dull gold). So far as I've seen, blue+gold have "10 in horse-drawn coach" backs, and green+copper have "stars, lighted tree" backs. (continued page 5)



Psychology Today use of lines-only 9¢ (supplied after 1st BEP printing 12/4/1978)



► 9¢ precancel types (continued from page 4)

Here are the totals of all 9¢-franked RD postcards reported to me so far:
 9¢ Pleasantvl NY (wide gap), blue+gold printing (horse-drawn coach) = 6
 9¢ Pleasantvl NY (wide gap), green+copper printing (lighted tree) = 4
 9¢ Pleasantvl NY (narrow), green+copper printing (lighted tree) = 1

I've only observed the narrow Pleasantvl NY precancel on one card, with green+copper print colors on front and "lighted tree" back. This leads me to speculate that the "lighted tree" back is the later card. Then I reviewed the initial printing dates for the precancel types. (Note that while the *Field Guide to Postal Uses of the Americana Series* e-book omitted the narrow Pleasantvl style in Chapter 4's introduction, it is included in the precancel types chart at chapter's end.)

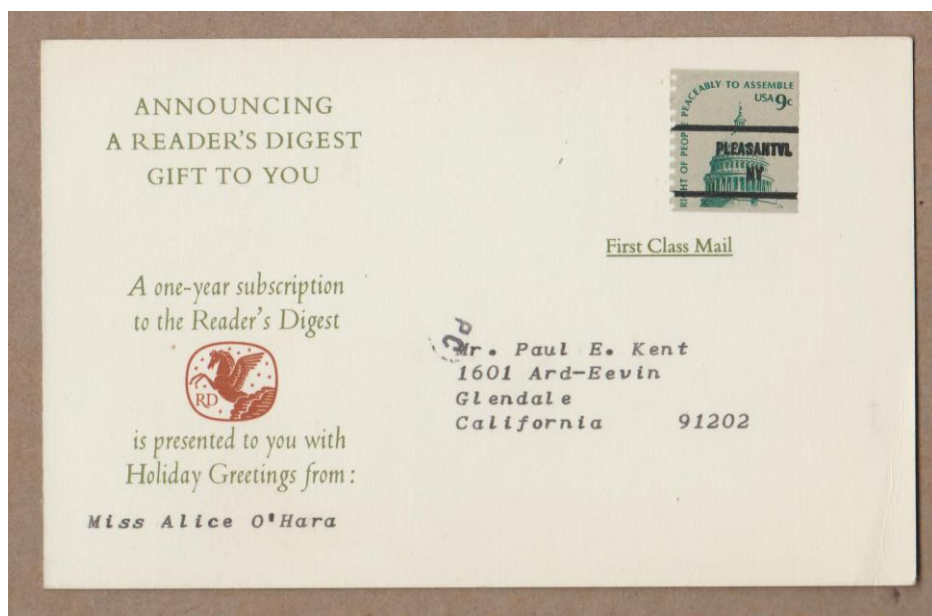
The initial ("wide gap") 9¢ Pleasantvl precancel was first printed in Aug. 1976. But the narrow style was not printed until Nov. 7, 1977. Using the customary two-week lead time, RD would possibly start affixing the new rolls around Nov. 21 (even as wide-gap rolls were being used up)... Assuming they started mailing out announcements that early.

In any event, we can assign mailing windows to the three undated types of 9¢ RD cards: If we assume the first holiday season to see RD use them was Dec. 1976, that indicates only blue+gold printed cards were mailed then. And that leaves the green+copper cards, whether franked with wide-gap or narrow style precancel, to be mailed in the Dec. 1977 timeframe. (Recall the postcard rate rose to 10¢ in May 1978. 9¢ became the new *presort* postcard rate, up from 8¢.)

Note that the above dates assume Reader's Digest stuck to use of the card designs in their respective seasons. I think it safe to assume this is true as long as no dated contrary example is found. Readers are invited to re-review their holdings to confirm or deny. Please let us know! — Editor

More research needs: Only "later" RD gift notice types with precancel coils I've seen: Am13¢ lines (Colonial doorway on back), Am13¢ "First-Class" for "Large Print" RD (1981, 1983). What did RD do in 1978–1980 (10¢ postcard) and 1981–1983 gift-giving seasons? Which season used 13¢ lines? Please inform us!

RD postcard from 1977 holiday season ("lighted tree, strollers")



9¢ Capitol Precancels Checklist

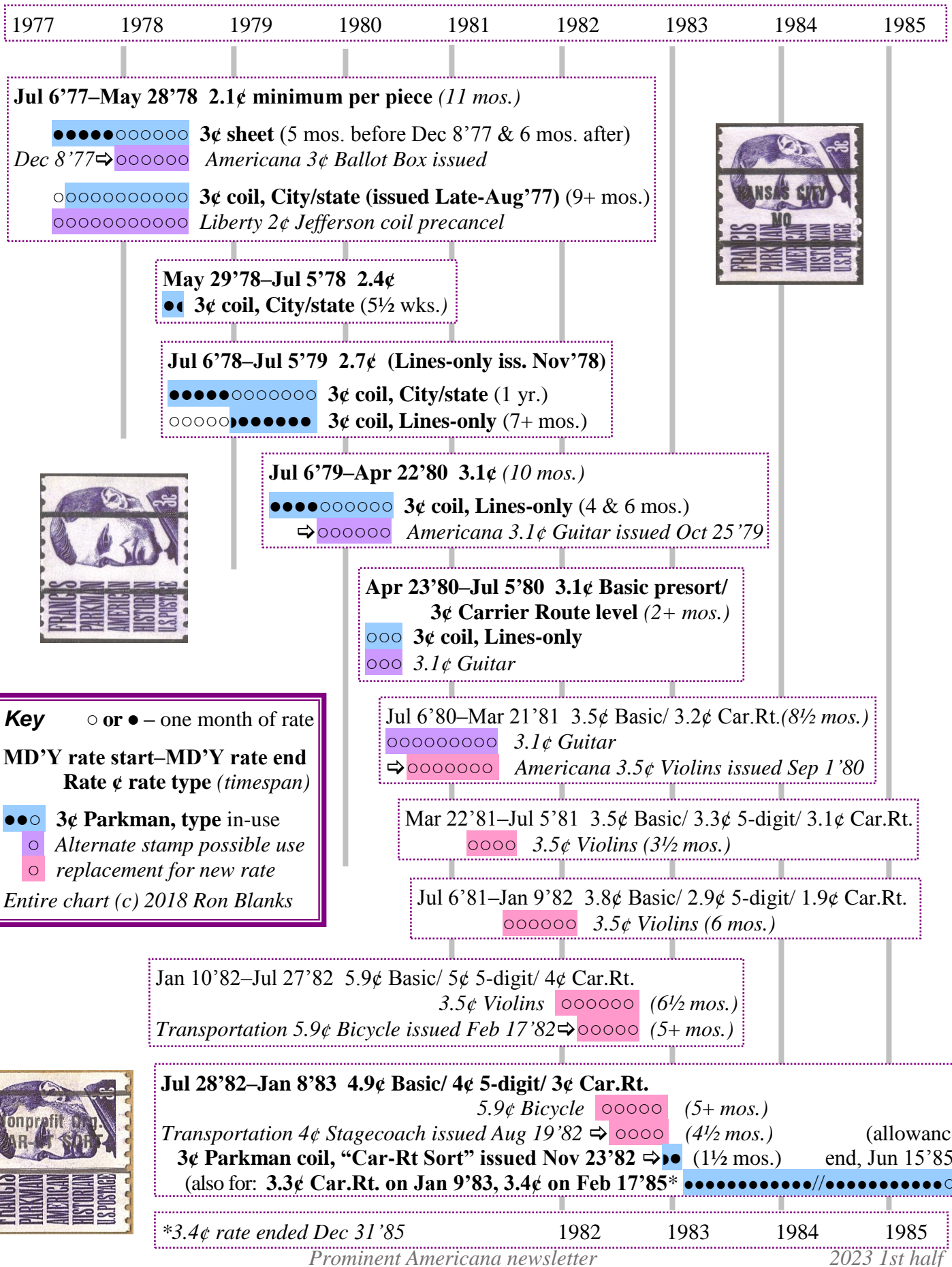
(“avail. 2 weeks after 1st printing” dates added)

- [] Chicago IL, **sheet** (Tue. May 11, 1976)
- [] Dallas TX, **sheet** (Mon. Aug 28, 1978)
- [] Richmond VA, **sheet** (Mon. Aug 28, 1978)
- [] lines only, **sheet** (Fri. Apr 27, 1979)

coils

- [] Chicago IL (Mon. Aug 9, 1976)
- [] Mount Vernon NY (Fri. Aug 6, 1976)
- [] Pleasantvl NY (**wide**) (Mon. Aug 9, 1976)
- [] Pleasantvl NY (**narrow**) (Mon. Nov 21, 1977)
- [] **lines only** (Mon. Dec 4, 1978)
- [] First-Class (**wide gap**) (Tue. Mar 4, 1980)
- [] First-Class (**narrow**) (Thur. Aug 7, 1980)

Nonprofit Letter Rates Eligible for 3¢ Precancel Uses, 1977 – 1985



Key ○ or ● – one month of rate
MD'Y rate start–MD'Y rate end
Rate ¢ rate type (timespan)

●●○ 3¢ Parkman, type in-use
 ○ Alternate stamp possible use
 ○ replacement for new rate

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