United States Parcel Post System
Postage Due Stamps and Proofs

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Outline

- **Background**
  - Parcel Post and the UPU
  - U.S. Reluctance
  - Rural Free Delivery (R.F.D.)
  - Parcel Post Passage
  - Collect on Delivery (C.O.D.)
- **Parcel Post System**
  - Accountability Issues
  - Stamps (Scott Nos. Q1 to Q12)
  - How they were used
  - Color and Size Issues
- **Parcel Post Postage Due**
  - Lack of Need
  - Stamps (Scott Nos. JQ1 to JQ5)
  - How they were used
  - Essay
  - Proofs (Large Die)
  - Proofs (Small Die)
  - Copy Cat Design
  - Years later
- **Summary**

Parcel Post and the UPU

- Parcel Post is defined as the delivery of packages (parcels) by the mail service.
- The Universal Postal Union (UPU) established International Parcel Post in 1878.
- Great Britain implemented a Parcel Post System in 1882 that included domestic, foreign, and colonial services. Many other nations soon followed suit.
- The United States, while having to recognize and deliver foreign parcels, refused to implement a domestic Parcel Post System! In fact, it held off implementing such a system for over 30 years (January 1, 1913).

U.S. Reluctance-Why?

- Letter carriers were afraid of becoming "pack mules."
- Hundreds/thousands of unimproved roads or no roads and bridges at all.
- Package delivery was the province of the Express Companies.
- Express Companies were subsidized/owned or had special fee arrangements with the railroads.
- Fear of "unfair" Government caused the powerful railroads to "buy" Congressional opposition to Parcel Post.

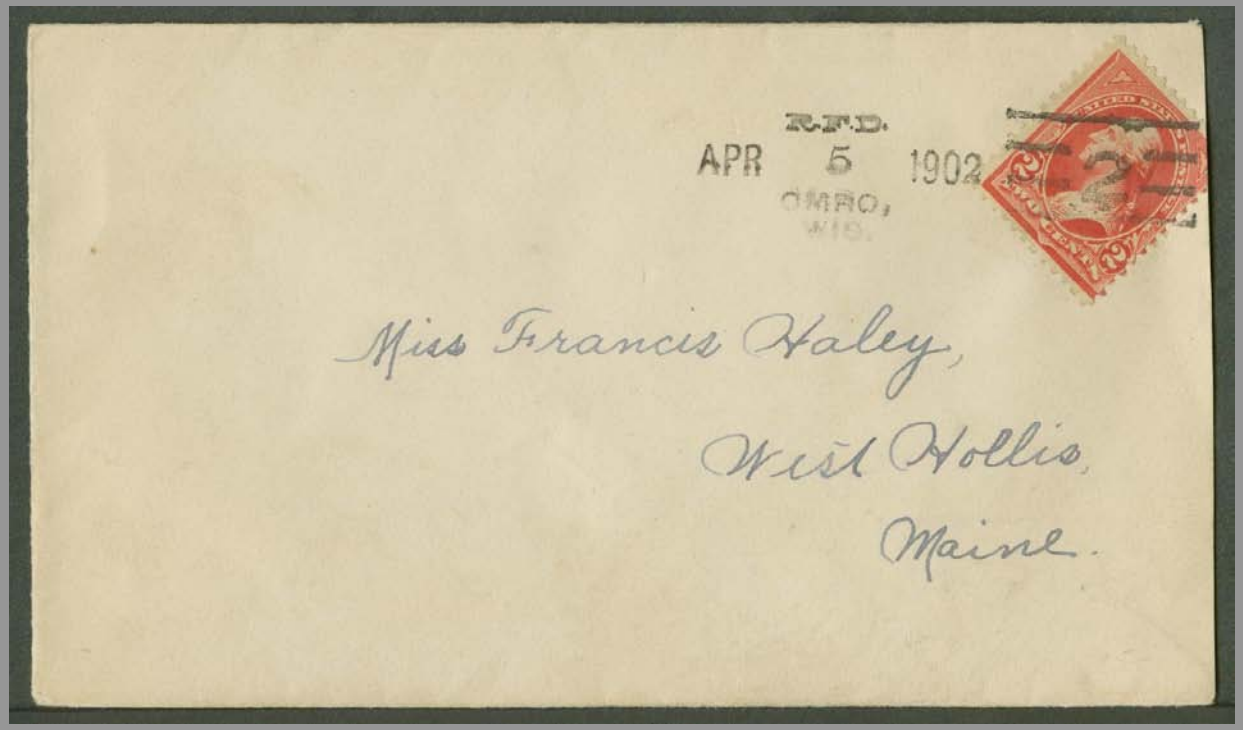
"Uncle Sam, Expressman"
by James Middleton
The World's Work,Volume XLIV
June 1916, pp. 160-174

Rural Free Delivery (R.F.D.)

- In the late 1800s, more than half of the U.S. citizens lived on farms or other rural settings.
- There was no rural mail delivery, thus country dwellers, unlike their city counterparts, had to pickup their mail at the Post Office.
- Trips to the Post Office often took an entire day or more. Thus, mail pickup waited for the weekly or monthly trip to "town" for supplies.
- Farmers' organizations such as the National Grange lobbied Congress relentlessly until in 1896 the Rural Free Delivery (R.F.D.) Act was passed.
- Now farmers and other rural residents had mail delivered to their door.

Rural Free Delivery (R.F.D.)

Scott No. 1323
April 17, 1967

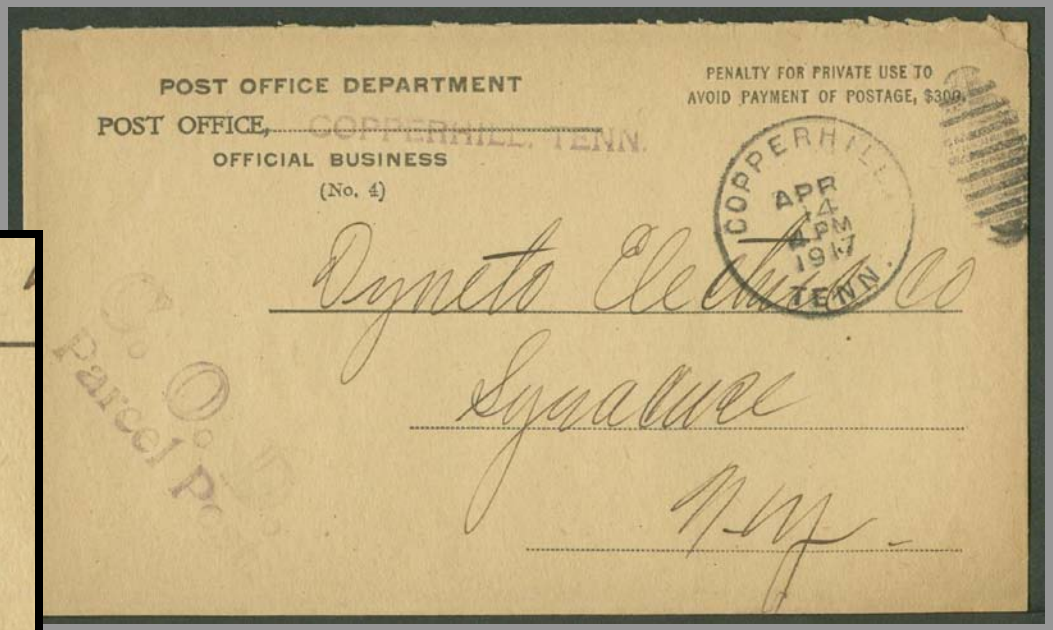


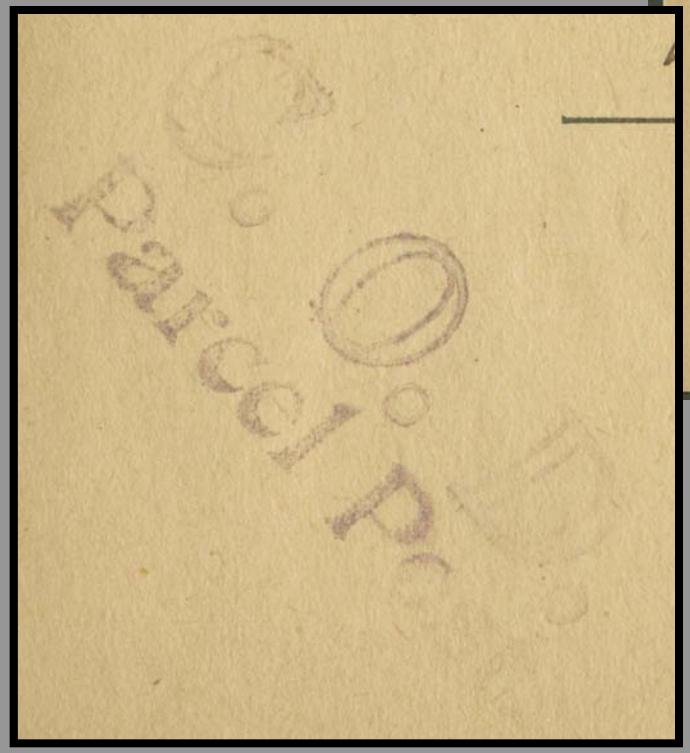
R.F.D. Postmark on Mail
from Omro, Wisconsin
Population: 3,437 (2009)

Parcel Post Implementation

- Soon after the establishment of R.F.D., advertisements and mail order catalogs arrived at the farmer's door.
- These catalogs described goods and products available from around the country (world).
- Such exposure to the "wish books" significantly increased the demand for the delivery of packages (Parcel Post) in addition to letters, newspapers and magazines.
- Despite opposition from the railroads and express companies, Parcel Post legislation passed on August 24, 1912 (to start January 1, 1913).
- Following closely behind the Parcel Post was the Collect on Delivery (C.O.D.) service (July 1, 1913). Allowed people to pay for merchandise when received.

Parcel Post & C.O.D.





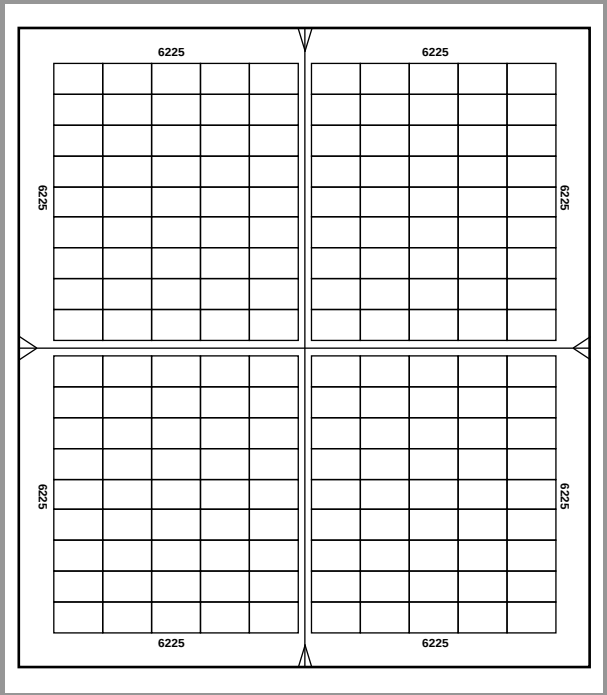
Cover illustrating both Parcel Post and C.O.D. markings

Parcel Post-Accountability

- The Parcel Post System was to begin operations on January 1, 1913.
- Despite assurances by the mail order catalog firms and the farmers' lobbyists, the Post Office Department (especially Postmaster General Hitchcock) was concerned about its profitability.
- To ensure accountability, PMG Hitchcock ordered a series of special stamps to be used exclusively on Parcel Post mail.
- The POD had the Bureau of Engraving and Printing (BEP) create a special series of stamps (Scott Nos. Q1 to Q12) for Parcel Post use.
- Similarly, a series of five Parcel Post Postage Due stamps (Scott Nos. JQ1 to JQ5) were also created.

Parcel Post Stamps (Q1 to Q12)

- The twelve stamps ranged from 1¢ to $1.00 in value.
- All stamps were carmine or carmine rose in color.
- The stamp design was 22.4 mm x 33.4 mm and they were printed in sheets of 180-subjects (for 45 stamp panes) on single line watermarked paper.
- The stamp vignettes illustrated items associated with mail transport, as well as America's industrial and agricultural might.



Parcel Post Stamps

Scott No.	Value	Vignette	Scott No.	Value	Vignette
Q1	1¢	Post Office Clerk	Q7	15¢	Automobile Service
Q2	2¢	City Carrier	Q8	20¢	Aeroplane Carrying Mail
Q3	3¢	Railway Postal Clerk	Q9	25¢	Manufacturing
Q4	4¢	Rural Carrier	Q10	50¢	Dairying
Q5	5¢	Mail Train	Q11	75¢	Harvesting
Q6	10¢	Steamship & Mail Tender	Q12	$1.00	Fruit Growing

World's first airplane vignette on a postage stamp!

Parcel Post Stamps in Use

- The parcel Post System was a resounding success.
- Over 6 million packages were mailed during the first week.
- During the first year the POD averaged over 40 million packages a month.
- The Parcel Post stamps were to be used only on parcels. They were not to be used before January 1, 1913. Some early postmarks are known.
- Due to the System success, after July 1, 1913, Parcel Post stamps could be used on regular mail and ordinary stamps could be used for Parcel Post.
- The period from January 1, 1913 to June 30, 1913 is known as the "exclusive use period."

Legitimate use of a Parcel Post Stamp on fourth class mail during the exclusive use period. The cover was used to mail samples of rain coat fabric.

Parcel Post Stamps in Use

- After the exclusive use period, Parcel Post stamps could be used on regular mail.

Postcard Rate, 1¢

Letter Rate, 2¢

WWI Wartime Letter Rate, 3¢

Color, Size, and Other Issues

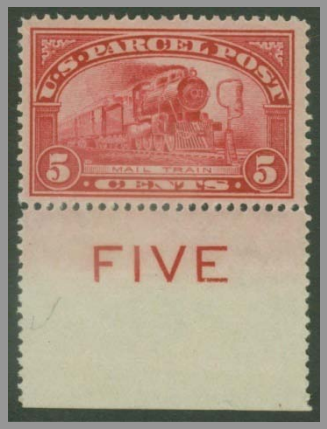
- The fact that all twelve Parcel Post stamps were the same color caused PO clerk mix ups (The Parcel Post stamps all being the same color was at the insistence of PMG Hitchcock, despite staff objections)

  - $1.00 stamps were given out instead of 1¢ stamps, both had the same "1s."

  - Since the 1¢ were carmine (or red) in color, they could pass for the red first class mail stamps as required by the UPU. Many got through the mails in this manner without being caught for Postage Due.

Color, Size, and Other Issues

- The Parcel Post stamps were large compared to the regular issue stamps and thus they did not fit easily in stamp drawers.
- The 45 stamps to the pane (instead of 50 or 100) made counting more difficult.
- To solve the mix up problem, the BEP added the stamp value in words next to the plate number in the sheet margins.



Parcel Post Postage Due Stamps

- A series of five Parcel Post Postage Due stamps (Scott Nos, JQ1 to JQ5) were created along with the Parcel Post stamps.
- The Parcel Post Postage Due stamps are green in color and printed on single line watermarked paper in values of 1¢, 2¢, 5¢, 10¢, and 25¢.
- The Parcel Post Postage Due stamps have a common stamp design (except for the central value circle) which measures 22 mm (H) by 34 mm (W) and they were printed in sheets of 180-subjects (four panes of 45).

Parcel Post Postage Due Stamps

Scott No.	Value	Die No.	Die Started	Die Hardened	Designer	Engraver Frame	Engraver Lettering
-----	Border	569	11/09/1912	11/14/1912	C. A. Huston	E. E. Myers	
JQ1	1¢	570	11/14/1912	11/16/1912	C. A. Huston	E. E. Myers	E. M. Hall J. C. Benzing
JQ2	2¢	571	11/14/1912	11/18/1912	C. A. Huston	E. E. Myers	E. M. Hall E. G. Rose
JQ3	5¢	572	11/14/1912	11/17/1912	C. A. Huston	E. E. Myers	E. M. Hall T. Lamasure
JQ4	10¢	573	11/14/1912	11/18/1912	C. A. Huston	E. E. Myers	E. M. Hall E. E. Myers
JQ5	25¢	574	11/15/1912	11/18/1912	C. A. Huston	E. E. Myers	E. M. Hall J. C. Benzing

Parcel Post Postage Due Stamps

Scott No.	Value	Plate Nos.	First Printing	Last Printing	Issue Date	Number Printed
JQ1	1¢	6225, 6226, 6227, 6228	11/20/1912	11/30/1912	11/27/1912	7,322,400
JQ2	2¢	6241, 6242, 6243, 6244	11/25/1912	01/10/1913	12/09/1912	3,132,000
JQ3	5¢	6229, 6230, 6231, 6232, 6239, 6240	11/21/1912	01/11/1913	11/27/1912	5,840,100
JQ4	10¢	6250, 6251, 6252, 6253	11/27/1912	01/10/1913	12/12/1912	2,124,540
JQ5	25¢	6246, 6247, 6248, 6249	11/30/1912	01/06/1913	12/16/1912	2,117,700

Parcel Post Postage Due-Need?

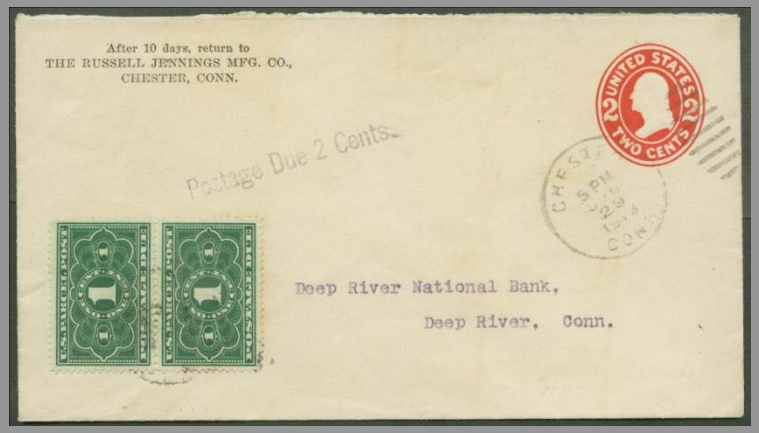
- Since most, if not all, parcels had to be taken to the Post Office to be weighed and the delivery zone determined, there was little need for the Parcel Post Postage Due stamps during the exclusive use period.
- Wrappers or covers with Parcel Post Postage Due stamps affixed during the exclusive use period are exceedingly rare.
- After the exclusive use period, Parcel Post Postage Due stamps could be used in place of regular Postage Due stamps. (Occasionally, they were illegally used as postage)

Use of Parcel Post Postage Due stamps on a wrapper with regular Postage Due stamps Many years after the Exclusive Use Period (May 27, 1922)

Parcel Post Postage Dues in Use

Incoming Foreign Mail

Domestic Mail



Parcel Post Postage Due-Proofs

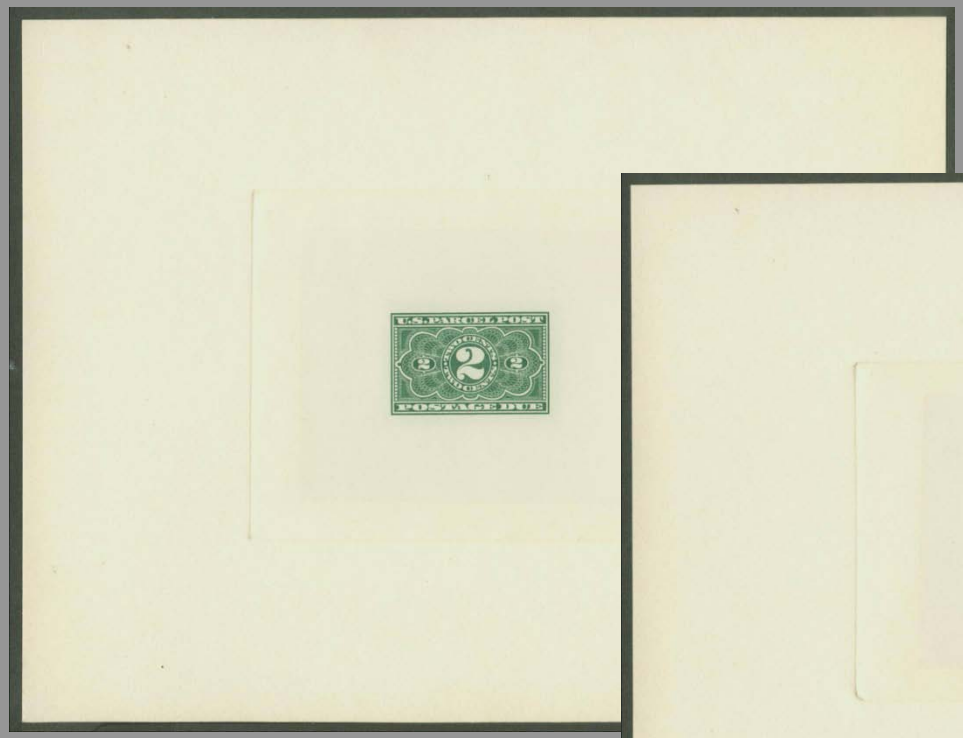
- A unique set of Parcel Post Postage Due large die proofs was given to President Franklin D. Roosevelt circa 1933-34 by the Post Office Department.
- The proofs were sold with his estate in 1946 by H. R. Harmer.
- The proofs were purchased by Caroline Prentice Cromwell, a noted philatelist of her time.
- The proofs were sold with her estate in 1957 by Irwin Heiman.
- The proofs were purchased by Edward P. Babcock who held them in his private collection until his death in the year 2000.
- This author purchased them from the Babcock estate in 2002.

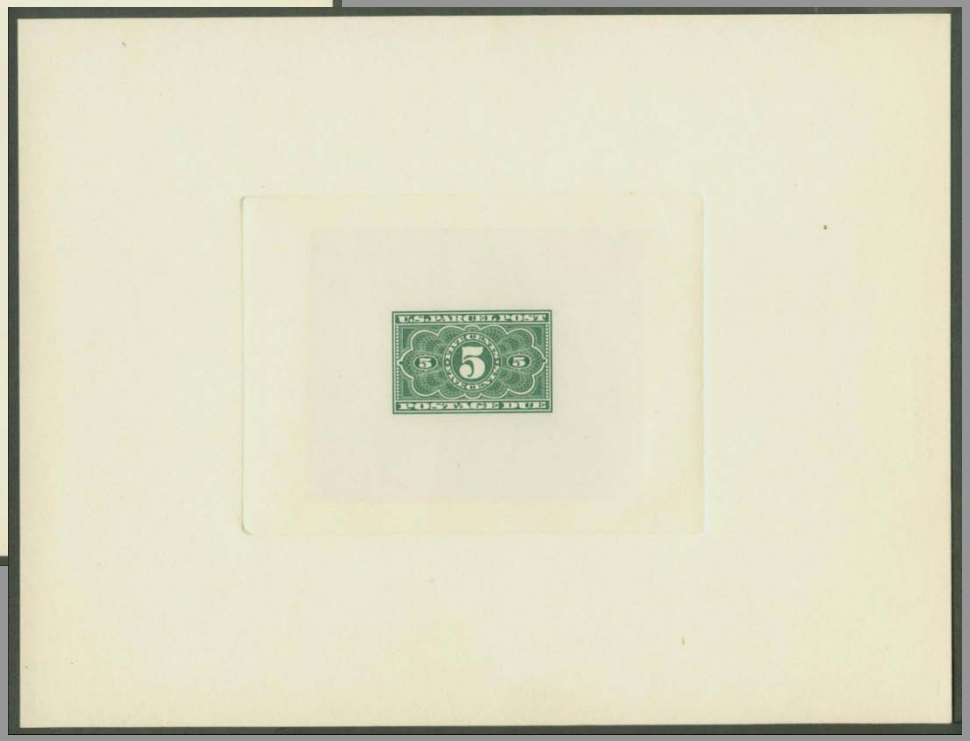
Parcel Post Postage Due-Proofs

Value	Scott No.	Die No.	Die Sinkage mm (H) x mm (W)	Card Size mm (H) x mm (W)	BEP Control No.
1¢	JQ1	570	74.9 x 99.6	152.4 x 201.9	330721
2¢	JQ2	571	76.2 x 95.3	152.4 x 201.9	330740
5¢	JQ3	572	73.4 x 99.6	152.4 x 202.7	330732
10¢	JQ4	573	75.4 x 97.8	152.4 x 203.2	330728
25¢	JQ5	574	76.2 x 96.5	152.4 x 201.9	330745

Parcel Post Postage Due-Proofs

- Roosevelt Collection 2¢ and 5¢ Large Die Proofs-Unique





Parcel Post Postage Due-Proofs

- Roosevelt Collection 10¢ and 25¢ Large Die Proofs-Unique

Parcel Post Postage Due-Proofs

- Other numbered proofs (large or small die?) exist in the hands of the Post Office Department (POD) and the Bureau of Engraving and Printing (BEP).

Value	Scott No.	POD Retained Proof No.	BEP Retained Proof Nos.
1¢	JQ1	559333	559330 559331
2¢	JQ2	559486	559488 559490
5¢	JQ3	559350	559346 559348
10¢	JQ4	559371	559357 559358
25¢	JQ5	559471	559468 559470

Parcel Post Postage Due-Proofs

- Small die proofs (JQ1P2 to JQ5P2) are listed in Scott.
- These are not from a Roosevelt Album (circa 1903) since the Parcel Post Postage Due stamps were issued in the late 1912 to early 1913 period.
- They could have been from the sets of proofs that PMG Hitchcock ordered made-right before he left office in March 1913.
- The author has not seen these proofs in over 40 years of collecting and questions their existence.
- Since the Parcel Post Postage Dues were in existence at the time of the Panama Pacific Exhibition (1915), they were included in the Post Office Exhibit.

Parcel Post Postage Due-Proofs

- According to the BEP proving room log books only six sets of Panama Pacific Parcel Post Postage Due small die proofs JQ1P2a to JQ5P2a) are possible.

Proof Value	Proof Die No.	Printing Dates	
		January 13, 1915	January 14, 1915
1¢	570	6	
2¢	571	6	
5¢	572	7[a]	
10¢	573	7[a]	
25¢	574	--------	6
Frame[b]	569	6	

a) One proof destroyed on January 31, 1916
b) Reasons for printing this die for the Panama-Pacific series is unclear

Parcel Post Postage Due-Proofs

- Panama Pacific Parcel Post Postage Due small die proofs (JQ1P2a to JQ5P2a)

Parcel Post Postage Due-BEP Card

- BEP Souvenir Card (September 1993)

Parcel Post Postage Due- Copy Cat

- Senegal Postage Dues (J22):

Parcel Post Postage Due- Copy Cat

- Senegal Postage Dues (J22 to J31), Master Proof printed in rose lilac.

Parcel Post System-Summary

- The Parcel Post System was a rousing success-so successful that there was no need for separate accounting or the special stamps (Parcel Post (Q1 to Q12) and Parcel Post Postage Dues (JQ1 to JQ5)) introduced for that purpose.
- The Parcel Post Postage Due stamps were almost useless during the period of fiscal concern-the exclusive use period (January 1, 1913 to June 30, 1913).
- After the exclusive use period, the Parcel Post Postage Due stamps were quite useful-even filling a void in the regular Postage Due value series.
- There is one essay for the Parcel Post Postage Due stamps (according to Scott-not mentioned by Gobie or Brazer) and to my knowledge it has not been pictured in the philatelic literature.
- Proofs are also extremely limited: one set of large die proofs (Franklin D. Roosevelt presentation set); three to four sets of Panama Pacific small die proofs; and possibly a set of other small die referred to by Scott as P2s.
- The classic design of the Parcel Post Postage Dues was used by Senegal as a model for a series of its own Postage Dues.
- Parcel Post (coupled with R.F.D. and C.O.D.) opened rural America to the world.