

## Department of Agriculture

The Department of Agriculture, established in 1862, was not made an executive department until 1889, and its commissioner was not of cabinet rank. A set of nine stamps, excluding the 7¢ and 90¢ values, was provided. The bulk of this department's mail pertained to seed orders, crop reports, and weather reports. An 1875 change in postal regulations, allowing seeds and seedlings to be transported free, rendered the high values obsolete, and after 1875 additional supplies of only the 3¢ and 6¢ values were ordered. Because clerks in Washington, D. C. skinned the stamps off reply envelopes coming in from farmers across the country, a good variety of cancellations can be found off-cover. But intact covers from this department are by far the hardest to find. Penalty envelopes were not extensively used during the transitional period. All values except the 3¢ and 6¢ are scarcer used than unused.



*Shown are one of three recorded plate number strips of the 2¢, one of five recorded strips of the 3¢, and the only recorded imprint multiple of the 15¢.*