

Uses of the 1908 U. S. Coils

Purpose: This exhibit will take a traditional look at all stamps of the perforated 12, double-line watermarked Washington & Franklin coils issued 1908 to 1910 used on cover, **in period**, paying the **rates in existence** when the stamps were issued.

Organization: The exhibit is organized by face value within these sections:

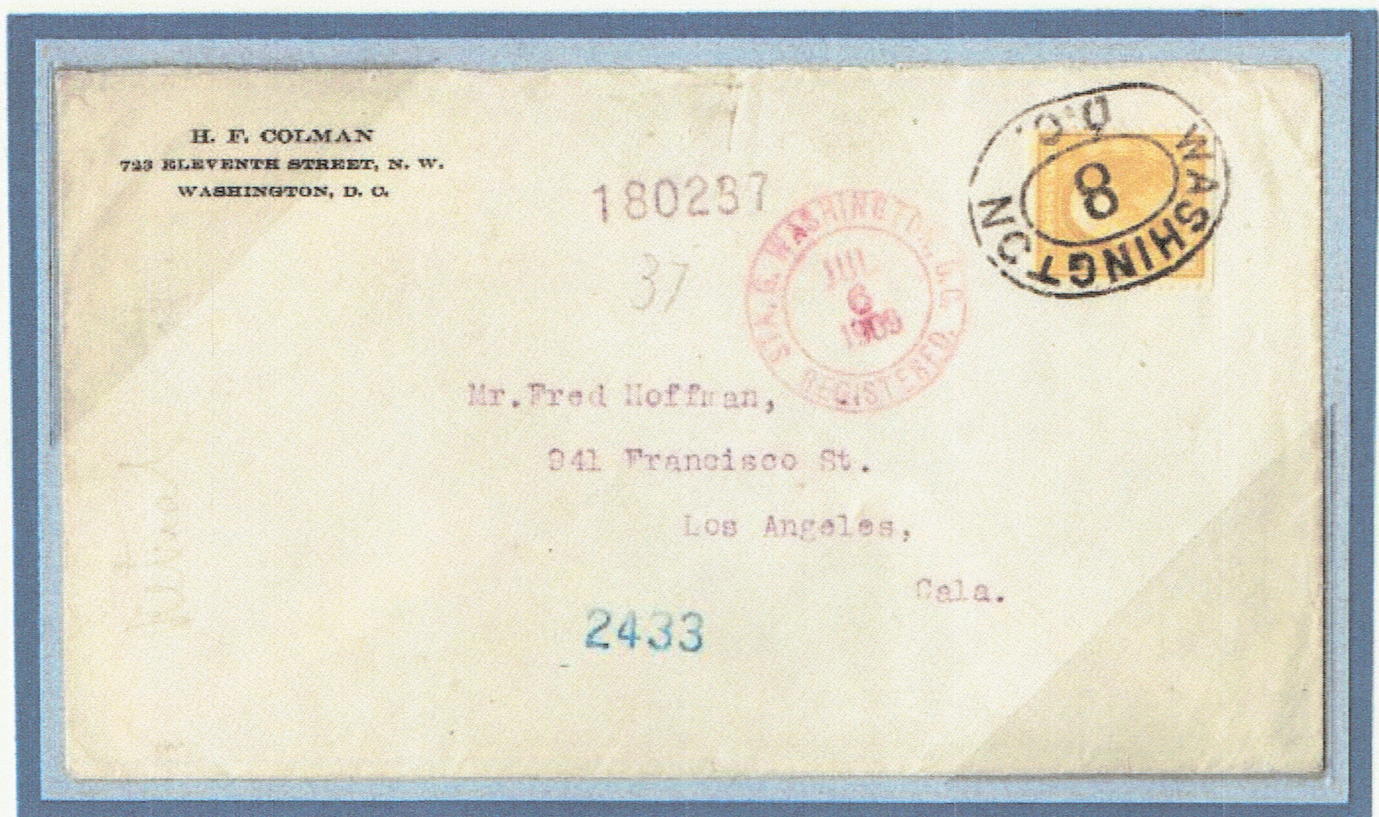
Special Order Coil
Vertical Format Coils
Horizontal Format Coils

Importance: The Post Office Department, in conjunction with the vending and affixing machine companies were largely responsible for this trial run of the Washington & Franklin coils. Their intent was to determine if the coil format would lead to a reduction of labor by use of vending machines at the Post Office and the application of stamps by the larger mailers with affixing machines. **This alternative format of the new Washington & Franklin series of 1908 is the forerunner of all U.S. coils.**

Rarity: Statements of rarity or importance are bold type and significant covers are matted in blue background.

Special Order Coil

The Post Office Department allowed for special order of any desired value not otherwise able to be coiled. Only one value was ordered during this period.



First class, letter, 2 cents per ounce plus 8 cents registration fee with indemnity less than or equal to \$25. Fee effective July 1, 1902 to November 1, 1909. **This is the earliest documented cover and the only solo of the five documented covers.** psag cert 560426

This value was only ordered in small quantity by the Bell Pharmaceutical Company in Orangeburg, New York during February of 1909. They did not use the entire order and the remainders were returned to Washington, D. C.

Synopsis: Uses of the 1908 U.S. Coils

Organization: The material is organized as a traditional showing of the stamps on cover. This is not a rate study. The stamps are listed in Scott's as 348 thru 356.

Background: The perforated 12 coils were made from sheets of the First Issue Washington and Franklin series of 1908. Collectors of the time were not impressed with them as a new variety and therefore, not collectable. No one liked straight edges and much less so a stamp with two. Others feared that a good pair of scissors would render the perforated 12 coils easily manufactured. Dealers could not sell them to collectors because the knowledge to determine the real from forged was not available to most collectors. Full rolls purchased and handled (literally) by the dealers before the sale ads were sometimes the only proof they had for examination of the real coil variety and its particular qualities over the sheet variety trimmed.

These perforated 12 coils, especially the high values, languished in the dealers stocks and eventually fell victim of the regular commercial mails of same dealers wishing to recover their investment. When the perforation change to 8.5 was instituted, the collectors were forced to relent and procure the perf 8.5 values for their collection since no sheet stamp had an 8.5 gauge to make coils from. Along with the 8.5 gauge they also realized the previous trial issue was also needed to complete the coil issues.

Demand improved greatly and then the fakes began to appear since the genuine examples were seen for the rarity they deserved. It soon became apparent that expertising the covers and stamps was a necessity. Genuine examples of these coils were made available to the collector because of a few dealers. H. F. Colman, in this exhibitor's research, was an early purchaser of the coils in Washington D. C. He had many early ads for the perforated 12 variety, especially the high values. The lower values are somewhat less difficult because of the vending machines at the designated Post Offices and the companies who agreed to use the coils in one of the various affixing machines on a trial basis.

With the above historical information in mind, there are only 4 of 36 covers in this exhibit that are commercial mail of the stamp trade. One in particular is the earliest documented use. In all cases, items of value that required indemnity were enclosed and the cover was used in the period when the stamps were still current.

Rarity: This exhibitor has found that genuine examples of this series of coils on cover are many times more difficult to find than the stamps. Trimming sheet examples before and after use was common practice among fakers. Some older dealers were notorious for using up collection fakes on their regular mail to recover their investment since they were still valid postage. The bulk of the covers in this exhibit have certificates from the PF, APES, PSAG, or PSE.

Some useful references/articles:

Kelleher's Stamp Quarterly 2nd quarter 2018, Ken Lowther: pp 34-42. (very good recent article)

The Stamp Machines and Coiled Stamps, George Howard: pp 7-14.

United States Postage Stamps 1902-1935, Max G. Johl.

Washington Franklins 1908-21, Martin A. Armstrong: pp 157-171

Micarelli Identification Guide to U.S. Stamps, Charles Micarelli