

The Cover Story

Gee Whiz! [Part 2] by Josh Furman



Figure 16

Figure 17

Figure 18

Figure 19

Figure 20

Figure 21

The ABNC coils use the same four colors, but with the "G" in blue **[Figure 16]**. The stamps were perforated 9.8 and coiled at Guilford Gravure. Scott gave the number 2890 to this stamp. This ABNC stamp was printed with a proliferation of cylinder-number combinations -- 29 sets of numbers have been identified. In his column in *Linn's Stamp News* Ken Lawrence warned that this posed "a grave threat to the future of PNC collecting". All together, 3,417,600,000 stamps were ordered and distributed for this issue.

Stamp Venturers produced two versions of their coil stamp. The difference is that one version, Scott number 2891, was perforated **[Figure 17]**; the other, Scott number 2892, was rouletted **[Figure 18]**. The gauge was the same, 9.8. One other feature was unique to Stamp Venturers: there is a sequence of accounting numbers printed on the reverse of the 10,000-stamp and 3000-stamp coils, on every 10th stamp, across the stamp and on top of the gum. By the way, the FDA approved the ink formula for these accounting numbers. Coil specialists will want to learn more about these numbers. Total quantity produced in both versions: 3,207,599,000.

This next "G" stamp created quite a bit of discussion. The restriction underneath the "G" in the design is "First-Class Presort" **[Figure 19]**. It has a nominal value of 20¢ rather than the 32¢ value of the regular first class stamps. Since denomination is no longer critical for a presort, why the issue in the first place? Bulk mailers use so-called generic precancel coils such as the 5¢ Canoe and others, and pay the difference between the stamps' "face value" and the actual discounted (and usually fractional) postal rates. There really is no good use for this stamp, yet we have it anyway. Scott assigned number 2888 to this stamp. It was printed in red, dark blue, gray, black and light blue. Stamps were perfed 9.8 by Stamp Venturers in Richmond on their rotary perforator and finished in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. One cylinder combination was used, resulting in a plate number of S11111. The ordered and distributed: 300,800,000. However, the light blue background created a problem in how to display the plate number for the light blue color without having it disappear into the background. The solution was to drop out the 1 for the light blue color so that it appears white on the stamp. The other colors showed up just fine, so the plate number appears as S1111(1).

While all the rest of the "G" stamps were available for sale on December 13, 1994, this next "G" stamp was not issued until January 12, 1995 (although first day covers were back-dated to December 13th.) It was restricted to use for Nonprofit Presort mail, as was clearly stated on the stamp. The Scott catalog number is 2893 **[Figure 20]**. It was printed by ABNC at the Guilford Gravure Division of George Schmitt and Company on an Andreotti Model 61 gravure press in black, blue, red, gray and green. Perforation gauge is 9.8 vertically. There were two plate combinations used, so plate numbers A11111 and A21111 are available to collectors. Quantity produced: 780,000,000.

Officialdom was not to be left out of the "G" stamp realm. The Scott catalog number for the Official "G" stamp is O152 **[Figure 21]**. It was produced by the BEP using a 6-color Optiforma offset press, and perforated 9.8 vertically. This press, and the paper used, were less expensive than a gravure printing, and the quantity produced was much smaller than that for other "G" issues. The colors are red, blue and black. Quantity ordered and produced: 23,000,000. It is interesting to note that the previous two Official Mail stamps, a 10¢ sheet stamp and a \$1.00 sheet stamp issued in 1993 had included in their designs what was called an "experimental security device" which consisted of a line of microprinting across the stamp. There was no such microprinting on the "G" stamp since it was actually printed before the 1993 stamps that premiered the device.

As had been the case with other rate changes, the USPS prepared well in advance for a "make-up rate" stamp that could be used with existing stamps to make up the difference between 29¢, the current rate, and the new rate, still un-determined when these were printed. When it became known that the new rate, as of January 1, 1995, would be 32¢, the make-up stamp was assigned a value of 3¢, and could, of course, be used as a 3¢ stamp with any combination of older issues as well. Two versions of this stamp were produced.

The first was by ABNC in red, blue and tan on a 4-color Miller sheet-fed offset press and perforated 10.9 using the L perforator. Scott assigned this on number 2877. There were many combinations of plate cylinders used, so plate numbers printed in the corners of the sheets could be found from A111 to A21-27-22. The Bureau Issues Association (BIA) compiled a list of 51 different plate number combinations that could be collected, this time frustrating plate block collectors. Total quantity ordered and distributed: 1,584,000,000.

The other make-up rate stamp was produced by SV. SV used the same three colors, but only one plate number combination was used, S111. Perforation is also 10.9 by L perforator. The Scott catalog number for this one is 2878. Quantity ordered and distributed for this stamp: 600,000,000.

So how do collectors tell these two issues apart? The ABNC version has a bright blue dove and thin type [Figure 22]. The SV version has a dark blue dove and the smaller but thicker, bolder type, and its tan background has a much finer screen [Figure 23]. When one places the stamps side by side, the differences are quite apparent. Here they are, right next to each other.



Figure 22 **Figure 23**

So all together there were billions of "G" stamps produced and distributed. That's billions, with a B! Can one make a complete collection of this issue? Well, that depends.

For starters, the American Philatelic Society, (APS) makes available a 26-page (including a couple of blank pages) album for non-denominated stamps, not including Officials (but I have included the Official stamp on my page). These can be downloaded and printed out without charge, and make for a convenient way to display the single stamps in this category. A scan of my "G" stamp page appears on the **front page of this newsletter**. You see here a complete collection of single stamps. There are twenty shown here, plus one more for official use, making a total of twenty-one. Fairly easy.

But consider the variety and number of plate number combinations to be found. That means collecting many plate number blocks of the sheet stamps and many plate number coils of the coil stamps. There are 29 of the latter, and some undoubtedly will be hard to find. First day covers should be easy to find, assuming again that one is interested in only the single stamp of each variety.

Although we have described the booklet stamps we have not said anything about booklet panes or booklet covers or Postal Stationery cards and envelopes. Those are for another study, but we should think about them in a discussion of a complete collection of mint "G" material.

Now let's move on to used "G" stamps. This is going to be a harder task. Although billions of "G" stamps were produced, they are kind of plain and uninteresting, and they had plenty of competition for use by consumers. Especially hard to find will be properly used examples of the restricted use stamps, those marked for First-Class Presort use and, even more difficult, those marked for Nonprofit Presort use.

According to Joann Lenz¹, "Most non-profit mailers seemed to ignore the newly issued "G" non-profit stamp in favor of using what they had previously used, the Canoe or the more distinctive non-profit Butte stamp issued March 10, 1995. In addition, the USPS did not make the new "G" non-profit stamp easily available to non-profit organizations; rather providing the Canoe or Butte issues when non-profit stamps were ordered for mailings."

So try and find one of these "G" Non-profit Presort covers, or even a used stamp.

A collection of "G" stamps, in all its iterations and usages would be a great deal of fun, take a great deal of effort, and make a fantastic multi-frame exhibit. Please let me know when you have it ready. I'd love to see it.

[Editor's Note: The first part of article appeared in the April issue of the *Philatelic Missive*. The figure numbers have been adjusted to reflect ALL the figures noted in the two part article and provide for continuity.]

¹ http://stampsjoann.net/ph_g.htm