

The End ... Not Really

by Francis Ferguson

The presentation that was given at the first meeting of August “Edison – 1929” focused on my collecting of three stamps 654-655-656. This specialized collection allows for the accumulation of all the things I find interesting – FDCs, EFOs, plate blocks and postal history. For the last twelve plus years I have been striving to complete the plate blocks in all numbers and positions. When I started the endeavor, I did not think it would be anything more than a minor challenge to find the material in the philatelic market. I was very wrong in that belief.

It took me about 5 years to find 98.07692307692308% of the plate blocks – but one eluded me. I was able to find 51 of the 52 flat and rotary plates, but #19807 in the lower right position was a ghost – it simply did not seem to exist. The other three positions were available but not the LR.

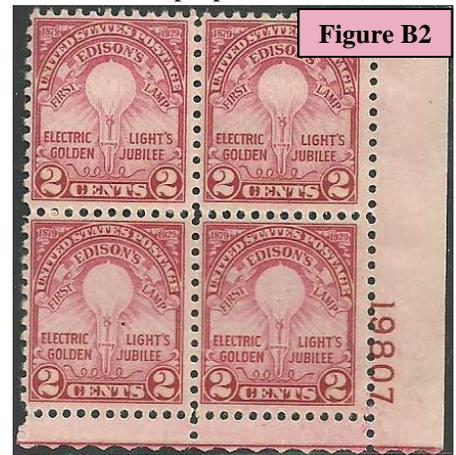
A knowledgeable dealer, Arnold Selengut, postulated that all of the sheets of that number and position (which had a very low printing total) may have been padded into a couple of dozen “decks” of 100 sheets and delivered to a high-volume user of postage, where the margin paper was stripped off and the stamps used for the intended purpose. This sounded



plausible since I had never seen that number and position in the marketplace in any form or fashion.

With almost daily eBay looking, I never found the sought-after item. Periodic poking around other nooks and crannies of the world wide web produced nothing. Searches at shows also produced nothing of note.

It seemed for all practical purposes that #19807 LR did not exist. And then the impossible happened. The Sunday after my presentation, a new member of the CFSC, texted me – that he had seen a large number of 655 plate blocks on HipStamps.com – a



quick look see of the 11 pages – showed a number of listings for the correct number, but not the correct position. I thanked Steven Jones for thinking of me. I revisited the site – on Monday to make sure I had not missed anything; I had not. Wednesday late afternoon I get a text from Stephen L. Strobel saying that he also been looking at HipStamps.com and found a listing with no image [Figure B1] but the correct plate number. After the exchange of a number of text messages and the reply from the seller the listing was updated to reflect an image [Figure B2]. My heart skipped a beat.

There was the plate number 19807 LR. I quickly registered as a user on HipStamps and completed the transaction for \$40 as fast as my fingers could move over the keyboard. I will admit to making a number of typing errors that had to be corrected as my haste was greatly interfering with my normally questionable typing accuracy.

The seller is identified on HipStamps.com as “plateblocketc” --- and is located in Ft. Myers Beach. I was able to speak to Richard Hall and found out that he has attended FLOREX countless times over the last 20 years. Our paths have crossed! He has been 25 years in retirement and enjoys running his plate block store, devoting about 20-25 hours a week to the pursuit. He seems to think that the elusive Edison plate block came from his collection of all plate numbers and positions that he amassed as a collector and has been slowly selling off. He was tickled that he was able to make my day.

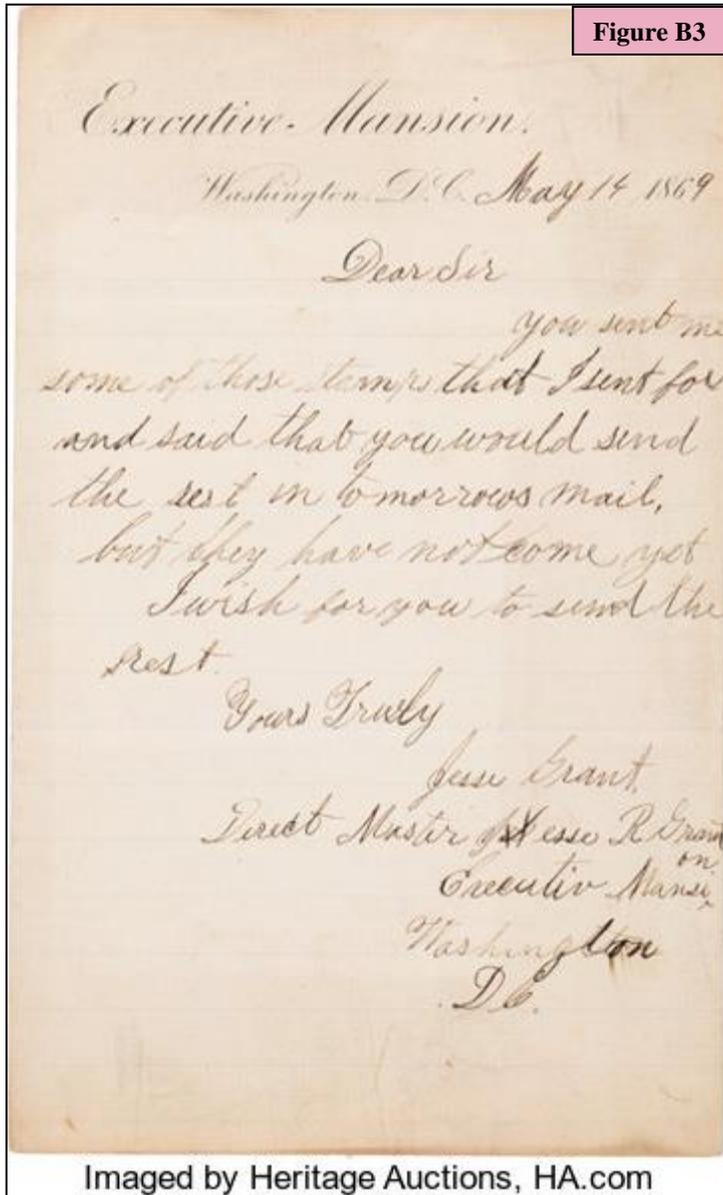
While this completes the plate blocks for this specialized collection, the great variety of FDCs and postal history available for the three stamps will allow me to continue to add to this collection for many years.

The lesson to be learned – is never give up. Generational effects on material holdings come at unexpected times and in surprising ways. Keep your eyes open – and most importantly make sure people know that you are looking for something in particular. You never know! (... and Strobel & Jones get a free dinner from me.)

Who was the first stamp collector in the White House?

by A. Steve Patrick

The featured letter is from Jesse R. Grant, youngest son of the president, to a Boston stamp dealer requesting the balance of an order of postage stamps of the world that he had promised. I recently learned of the incident by reading Grant by Ron Chernow, the historian who rose to fame because Lin Manuel used his book Hamilton as source material for his hit Broadway play.



According to Chernow: “he (Grant) was outraged when he sent \$5 to a Boston Company for foreign stamps that never arrived. Grant prevailed on a local police officer named Kelly, assigned to the executive mansion, to see justice done. ‘I am a Capitol Policeman. I can arrest anybody, anywhere, at any time for anything,’ Kelly wrote on White House stationery with mock menace to the company. ‘I want you to send those stamps to Jesse Grant right at once.’ Jesse shortly got a bumper crop of stamps.”

While researching for this article, I discovered that the original Jesse R. Grant letter was handled by Heritage Auctions [Figure B3]. Jesse was the youngest of six children and considered his father’s favorite. He also set up a telescope on the White House roof where father and son could study the stars.

One can only imagine that pile of stamps in 1869 and the value they would have today. Many stamp collectors have thought FDR was the first presidential stamp collector, but Jesse was probably the first stamp collector in the White House.



Ulysses S. Grant [POTUS 18, B 1822 – D 1885] with his son Jesse Root Grant [B 1858 – D 1934] and possibly wife/mother Julia Grant standing in the right background.