

Why Are the Paste-up Joints on the Scott #356 Horizontal Coil Reversed?

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Nearly all of the Washington/Franklin flat plate-printed horizontal coils have paste-up joints that have the right stamp with its left edge trimmed close to the design pasted onto the left stamp with its right margin trimmed to a about a quarter of an inch (Figure 1). Until recently the only exception was the 10¢ horizontal coil Scott #356, which has the left stamp with its right edge trimmed close to the design pasted onto the right stamp with its left margin trimmed to a about a quarter of an inch (Figure 2).

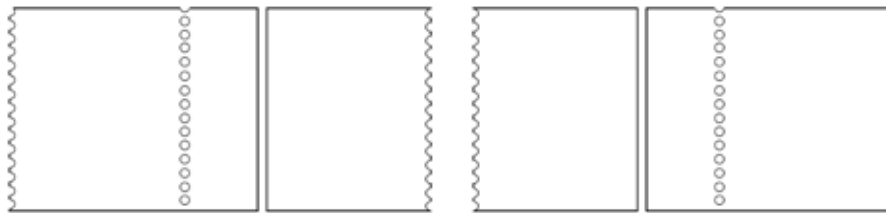


Figure 1. Normal paste-up configuration.



Figure 2. Reversed paste-up configuration.

As part of the research for this article I did a complete census of paste-up joints in the PF and APEX online certificate databases and I have found a #352 pair (PF Cert. #482468) and a #352 single on cover (PF Cert. #278274 described as “Reversed Paste-Up”) that have reverse paste-up joints like the #356. Recently I acquired from eBay a #355 pair with a reverse paste-up joint (PSE Cert. #1161568, PF Cert. # 528947) that is the only known example. What follows is my theory on how the reverse paste-up joints came to be.

Max G. Johl makes no mention that the Scott #356 has reversed paste-up joints¹ and neither does Martin Armstrong.² The only place I have seen it mentioned is in Paul W. Schmid’s *The Expert’s Book, A Practical Guide to the Authentication of United States Stamps*.³ Scott #356 is a scarce issue, with Armstrong stating that 30 rolls of 500 (15,000 total stamps) were produced and distributed to ten cities.⁴ Johl thought this was an even scarcer issue citing only 10,000 (20 rolls of 500) being issued.⁵ Using the numbers cited by Armstrong, 38 sheets would have been used to produce 30 coils of 500

stamps with ten strips of 20 being left over at the end of the production run. If one were to believe Johl, only 25 sheets would have been required to fill the order with no wasted stamps. It is my feeling that Johl is probably correct because I can't see the BEP wasting perfectly good stamps. The closest one can get to 30 rolls without any waste is 28 rolls of 500 stamps (14,000 stamps) or 32 rolls of 500 (16,000 stamps).

Another source for a roll count comes from W. Wallace Cleland in a 1985 *Specialist* article where he cites Philip H. Ward, Jr., saying in a May 1, 1920 *Mekeel's Weekly Stamp News* article (page 226) that "a total of 30 coils of 500 were reeled in two batches, one made in February, and the other in April, 1909." Cleland also cites Ward from the same article stating that the 30 rolls of 500 stamps "were sent to postmasters in Jersey City (10 rolls), Orangeburg, N.Y. (10 rolls), Chicago (3 rolls), St. Louis (3 rolls), and New York and Washington D.C. (one roll each; this does not add up to thirty however!)"⁶ It is plain to see that there is a lot of disagreement as to the total number of #356 stamps that were produced; more research needs to be done in order to determine with certainty the exact number of coils produced and whether one or two batches were produced.

A check of the Philatelic Foundation (PF) certificate database returns seven examples of #356 as certified paste-up pairs and singles—all being genuine (Table 1). An eighth pair was found using the Siegel Power Search and is described as having a 1973 PF certificate but the online PF certificate database does not go back that far.

Table 1. Philatelic Foundation Certified Examples of Scott #356 Paste-ups.

Certificate	Pair/Single	Configuration of paste-up	Notes
513608	Pair, unused	Left over right	Part imprint on tab
484959	Pair, used on piece	Left over right	Replaces #329463
370579	Single, used	Right over left	No doubt from cert image
353671	Pair, unused	Left over right	"Right stamp with paste-up tab removed from the gum side at right" – Right side appears to be reperforated
209479	Single, unused	Left over right	Best guess from looking at the certificate image
179794	Pair, unused	Right over left	"Reperforated at left and with paste up paper adhering on that side" (not positive but the certificate image leads me to believe that the paste-up orientation is right over left)
153915	Single, used	Left over right	—
Unknown (1973)	Pair, Unused	Left over right	From Siegel Auction, Sale #852, Lot #1044, 12/17/2002

The Siegel Power Search also turned up two other paste-up singles that have Professional Stamp Experts (PSE) certificates though the certificate numbers are unknown (Table 2).

Table 2. PSE Certified Examples of Scott #356 Paste-ups.

Date	Pair/Single	Configuration of paste-up	Notes
2010	Single, unused	Left over right	From Siegel Auction, Sale #997, Lot #5910, 12/26/2010, unknown plate number on tab
Unknown	Single, unused	Left over right	From Siegel Auction, Sale #737, Lot #640, 4/20/1991

A search of the American Philatelic Expertizing Service (APEX) certificate database found no genuine paste-up joints but two stamps, deemed to be fakes, appear to be paste-up joints. (Table 3).

Table 3. APEX Certified Examples of Scott #356 Paste-up Fakes.

Certificate	Pair/Single	Configuration of paste-up	Notes
195371	Single, unused	Left over right	Image shows a paste up single, left over right orientation, tab still attached to the stamp with an opinion of "Scott No. 338, altered with perforations trimmed off."
176176	Single, used	Left over right	Image shows what may be a paste up single, left over right orientation, missing tab at right, guide line at bottom with an opinion of "Scott No. 338, altered with perforations trimmed off."

As can be seen from the above tables not all of the paste-up joints are reversed (left stamp over the right) but at least one and possibly a second has been certified as genuine by the Philatelic Foundation to be oriented in the normal way (right stamp over the left). I suspect that something went wrong during the manufacture of the Scott #356 coils that caused the reversing of the paste-up joint orientation.

This is how the vertically perforated sheets would normally be processed to produce coiled stamps:

Full sheets of 400 stamps would first be perforated 12 vertically. The left and right margins of the vertically perforated sheets, with Washington's head oriented correctly, would have been further processed by having the left edge trimmed tight to the stamp design and the right edge trimmed to leave about a about a quarter of an inch margin (Figure 3).

The next step would be to rotate the sheet to the left or right 90° and then run it through the stripping device to create 20 strips of 20 stamps each (Figure 4).

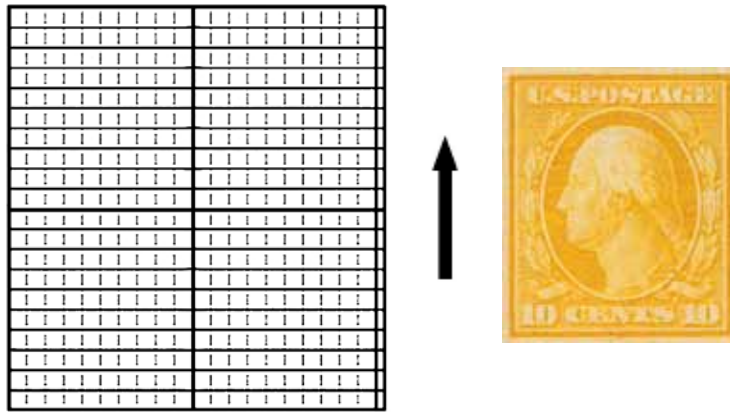


Figure 3. Edges trimmed normally on vertically perforated sheet of 400 stamps.

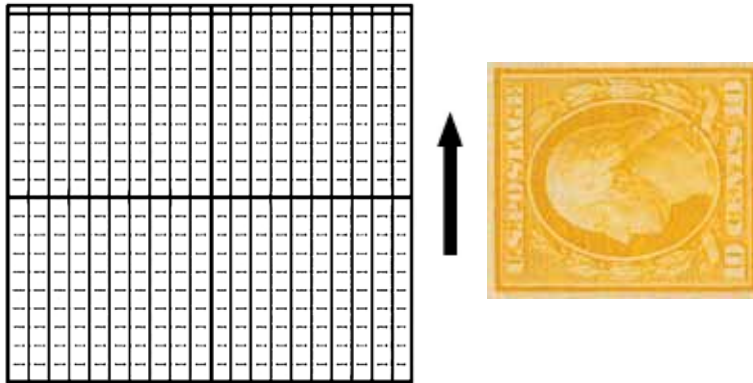


Figure 4. Sheet of 400 stamps cut into strips in either direction.

The resulting strips, when pasted together, would have paste-up joints where the left edge of the first stamp in a strip is pasted to the right tab of the last stamp on a second strip (Figure 5). This would be repeated until a roll of 500 stamps was produced.



Figure 5. Normally trimmed and stripped 400-stamp sheets yielded these stamps.

My feeling is that the vertically perforated sheets that would end up being Scott #356 had their orientation turned around, with Washington's head now being upside down, prior to having the left and right edges trimmed in the usual way (Figure 6).

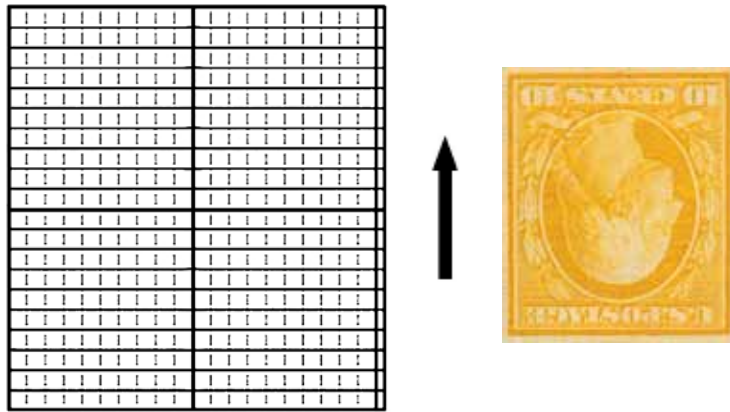


Figure 6. Edges trimmed normally on inverted perforated sheet of 400 stamps.

The sheets would then be rotated 90° to the left or right in the usual way and run through the stripping machine (Figure 7).

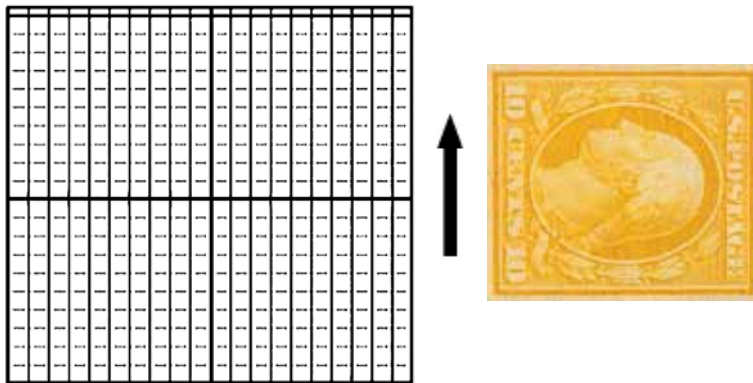


Figure 7. Sheet of 400 stamps inverted when trimmed cut into strips.

The resulting strips of 20 stamps would still have the correct left edge trimmed close to the stamp design and the right edge of the first stamp would have a ¼ inch tab. The strips would then be assembled in the normal manner to produce a roll of 500 stamps but the orientation of Washington's head would have been wrong (Figure 8).



Figure 8. Inverted trimmed and stripped 400-stamp sheets yielded these stamps.

When the coil strip is rotated 180° to put Washington's head in the right orientation the paste-up joint becomes reversed. (Figure 9).



Figure 9. Stamps from sheets inverted when trimmed when viewed normally.

The question is—where did the error occur that could have caused the reversed orientation of the vertically perforated sheets? Note: what follows is pure speculation on my part:

- Were the sheets turned around when transferred from the perforating machine to the edge trimming machine?
 - The operator of the coil edge trimmer did not notice the incorrect orientation of the sheets before running them through the machine.
- Did the operator of the trimming machine inadvertently turn the sheets around to the wrong orientation prior to edge trimming?
 - If the operators were working at a fast pace to get the day's work done, it would be easy to turn the sheets around and not be noticed because of the yellow color of the issue.
- Were the sheets received in the trimming area in the correct orientation but inadvertently turned around prior to edge trimming because the operator was left-handed?
 - I can't think of any way a left-handed operator would pull a properly oriented sheet from a pile, turn it 180° and then insert it into the edge trimming machine without adding extra steps.

It is plausible that any of the above three scenarios could be the reason the #356 paste-up joints are reversed, but I'm leaning towards the sheets being delivered to the edge trimming area in the incorrect orientation as the most likely reason.

All it would take is a lapse of judgment in a couple of steps to produce coils with paste-up joints in reversed order. Even if the error was detected in any of the production steps after the edges were trimmed and brought up to a supervisor it would have resulted in wasted time, effort and product. I feel very strongly that the operators were more concerned with getting product out the door than the way Washington's head was oriented.

There is still the question of accounting for the one—and possibly two—certified single with the paste-up joint in the correct orientation. It's easy to explain if Ward's assertion that two batches of coils were made in February and April of 1909. One of the two batches was trimmed backwards—resulting in reversed paste-up joints—and the second batch was trimmed properly

resulting in normal paste-up joints. It would also explain why there are more reversed paste-up joints than normal joints—the batch trimmed incorrectly was a large batch compared to the smaller batch of correctly trimmed sheets.

If Ward's two batch theory is proved wrong and only one batch of coils were produced, an equally plausible explanation for the two normal paste-up joints is that then during the edge trimming process the incorrect orientation of Washington's head was discovered and the last sheet or two were reoriented correctly before being passed through the edge trimming machine.

The above scenario does present an interesting possibility (pure speculation on my part), that if a sheet or two were trimmed properly, then an improperly trimmed strip could be joined to a properly trimmed strip resulting in a tête-bêche pair (Figure 10). I feel that this is not even a remote possibility believing that Ward's theory that two batches of coils were produced will ultimately be proved correct.



Figure 10. Joining an improperly trimmed strip to a properly trimmed strip would result in a tête-bêche pair.

What follows are a few questions for further research, mainly to verify statements made by Armstrong, Johl, Cleland and Ward:

- Were there really two separate batches of Scott #356 made as Ward says?
- Are there daily accounting sheets from the BEP that detail what stamps and coils were produced and in what numbers?
- Are there written procedures detailing how the coiling department personnel were to produce coil stamps?
- Could a left-handed person handle a sheet of paper differently than a right-handed person that could account for the incorrect orientation of Washington's head?

The fact that there are at least three other reverse paste-up joints from two closely related issues tells me that the #356 reverse paste-up joints are not the result of human error due to the yellow color, because the #352 is printed in green and the #355 is printed in blue, which makes determining the orientation of Washington's head a much easier matter. I still think that the sheets were turned around before the edge trimming operation was done on the #352 and #355 issues.

The new reverse paste-up joint discoveries lead to an entirely new question: Are there coils out in the wild with reversed paste-up joints still to be found? I have not seen any as of late, but the hunt goes on for more examples of the #352 and #355 issues as well as the possibility of finding

#353 and #354 with reversed paste-up joints. Please let us know if you have any reverse paste-up joints in your collections or if you have any information that may help shed light on some of the questions raised in this article.

References

1. Max G. Johl, *United States Postage Stamps 1902-1935*, Lawrence, Massachusetts: Quarterman Publications, 1976, p. 234.
2. Martin A. Armstrong, *United States Coil Issues 1906-38*, Lawrenceville, NJ: Martin A. Armstrong, 1977, pp. 38-39.
3. Paul W. Schmid, *The Expert's Book – A Practical Guide to the Authentication of United States Stamps*, Huntington, NY: Palm Press, 1990, p. 34.
4. Ref. 2.
5. Ref. 1.
6. W. Wallace Cleland, "Was Scott #356 Pasted Up Backwards?" *The United States Specialist*, Vol. 56, No. 7 (July, 1985), 1985, pp. 303-305.