



## 1857-60 ISSUE

THREE MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS IN POSTAGE stamps occurred between 1857 and 1861: the introduction of perforations in 1857, the addition of three new high-value denominations in 1860, and the Federal demonetization order in 1861, which brought the era of Toppan, Carpenter postage stamps to a close. Much about the introduction of perforations has been discovered in recent years. W. Wilson Hulme II published two articles under copyright in the *Chronicle* Nos. 174 and 175, which give a well-documented history of Toppan, Carpenter's adoption of the Bemrose perforating machine. We have borrowed heavily from Mr. Hulme's published research in the following synopsis.

The use of postage stamps doubled in the two years following enactment of the 1855 laws mandating compulsory prepayment (effective April 1) and compulsory use of stamps for prepayment (effective January 1, 1856). As early as March 1855, Postmaster General James Campbell anticipated that such high-volume use would render the act of cutting stamps apart with scissors inconvenient to post offices and to the public. In response to seeing examples of British stamps, which had been perforated on an Archer machine since 1854, PMG Campbell asked his Third Asst. PMG to request that Toppan, Carpenter investigate the means used to perforate stamps in Great Britain and report on the efficacy and estimated cost of adopting similar methods in the United States.

Toppan, Carpenter officials solicited advice from friendly competitors, the English firm of Perkins, Bacon, who printed stamps for the British government. Perkins, Bacon was at odds with Henry Archer, who invented the perforating machine and attempted to use his role to take over the British stamp contract. The Toppan, Carpenter firm was referred away from Archer to another machine manufacturer, Bemrose and Sons. By September 1855 the decision to acquire a Bemrose rouletting machine had been made, and, in October both Toppan, Carpenter and Perkins, Bacon placed orders for two machines at once, benefiting from a price reduction for the combined order. In March 1856 Toppan, Carpenter received its Bemrose machine, but was forced to convert it from a rouletting device to a round-hole perforator, which proved to be difficult and time-consuming (Perkins, Bacon never succeeded in converting its own machine). Finally, in February 1857 the first perforated stamps—the 3c Type I (Scott 25)—made their appearance (earliest known use is February 28). Beginning in July 1857 the other values were issued with perforations.

In 1857 there were five current stamps: 1c, 3c, 5c, 10c and 12c denominations. These remained the only stamps in circulation until the summer

months of 1860, when the department under PMG Joseph Holt deemed it necessary to issue large denominations for prepayment of high transoceanic postage rates established under various postal treaties with foreign nations. The increased use of adhesive stamps on foreign-bound letters created the need. Toppan, Carpenter was asked for three new values: 24c, 30c and 90c. Correspondence between Third Asst. PMG A. N. Zevely and Toppan, Carpenter provides details of the production dates and circumstances; transcripts of these letters originally appeared in *The Steinmetz Miscellany* (1912) and have been reproduced and quoted on many subsequent occasions. They state that deliveries would be made as follows: the 24c on June 15, the 30c on July 31, and the 90c on August 13, 1860.

The 24c presented yet another rendition of Gilbert Stuart's portrait of Washington, and the color chosen was grayish lilac. The 24c plate had been made earlier (possibly in 1857) and was brought into use for the new order. Both the 30c and 90c were made from new dies and plates of 200 subjects each. The 30c vignette was copied from the 1c 1852 Carrier stamp (Scott LO1) and appears to be a reverse image of the 1c 1851 vignette, which is based on the Franklin bust by Caffieri. The orange color of the 30c was selected after thousands had been printed in black, but were rejected over concerns that cancellations would not show clearly against the dark background. The need to reprint stamps in a different color delayed release of the 30c. A new engraving was chosen for the 90c, based on John Trumbull's celebrated portrait of Washington in military uniform. The image is quite striking, particularly in the stamp's deep blue shade, but the Post Office Department engaged Toppan, Carpenter in lengthy dialogue out of concern that the youthful Washington would not be recognized by a public accustomed to Gilbert Stuart's portrait. There was very little variance among the subjects on the three plates, and, for this reason, collectors classify the 24c, 30c and 90c stamps simply according to denomination and color.

As Toppan, Carpenter's contract was due to expire in June 1861, the Civil War broke out and postal relations between the North and South were severed. Concerned that supplies of postage stamps in secessionist hands might be sold as contraband, the Federal government demonetized all circulating stamps and issued new stamps printed by the National Bank Note Company. The demonetization process began in August 1861 and continued for several months. By 1862 the stamps printed by Toppan, Carpenter were valueless for postage, but soon to become highly sought-after as collectors' items.