



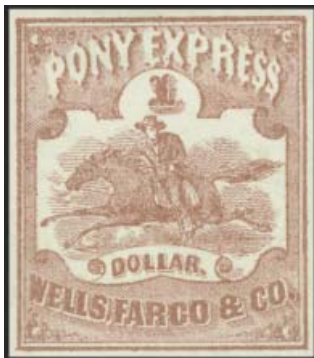
Wells, Fargo & Company  
1861 Pony Express Issues

SCOTT R. TREPEL

Published by  
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# WELLS, FARGO & COMPANY 1861 PONY EXPRESS ISSUES

SCOTT R. TREPEL

This treatise has three objectives. The first is to explain when and why the Wells, Fargo & Company's Pony Express stamps were issued. The second is to explain how the printing plates were prepared. The third is to identify the features that make it possible to assign any given stamp to its original position in the sheet. Other authors have concentrated their attention on the historical aspects of the Pony Express,<sup>1</sup> while the technical aspects of the stamps themselves have been generally ignored. Years ago, Elliott Perry published a plating study of the \$2 and \$4 Pony Express stamps,<sup>2</sup> but its usefulness is undermined by poor photos and the absence of plating details for the \$1 stamp. The Nathan-Boggs book devotes one chapter to plating,<sup>3</sup> but it is fundamentally incorrect and should be ignored. Now, 144 years after the Pony Express stamps were issued, it is time to fill this void with a detailed guide to plating.

## Wells, Fargo & Company's Role in Issuing Stamps

The original owners and operators of the Pony Express were three experienced expressmen, William H. Russell, Alexander Majors and William Waddell, who controlled The Central Overland California & Pikes Peak Express Company (Central Overland). The company needed to win a lucrative government subsidy and launched the Pony Express in April 1860 to promote the efficacy of the Central Route to members of the 36th Congress while they were deliberating the Overland Mail contract.

The advertised Pony Express trip was ten days, although in reality many trips took 12 to 13 days, and sometimes longer during the winter months. By linking with telegraph lines at the terminus stations, the Pony Express could convey a message between coasts in as few as ten days. Compared with normal 21-23 day travel time by other routes, this great leap forward in communication speed had practical benefits, but it was also part of Central Overland's public relations and lobbying strategy for winning the mail contract. Their efforts to convince Congress to move the Overland Mail route to the Central Route in July 1860 were unsuccessful.

The failure to secure a significant mail subsidy in 1860 and the cost of operating the Pony Express pushed Russell, Majors and Waddell to the brink, and in January 1861 they entered bankruptcy. Control of Central Overland went to one of its major creditors, Ben Holladay, who continued operating the company as a separate entity.

In March 1861 the Overland Mail Company was authorized by Congress to run the Overland Mail route over the Central Route (effective July 1). The contract also included the Pony Express. Effective April 1861, a three-way arrangement between the Overland Mail Company, Central Overland and Wells, Fargo & Company evidently established Wells Fargo as managing agents of the Pony Express, with Central Overland maintaining operations between the terminus points.<sup>4</sup> The circumstances in which the Pony Express stamps were issued explain why Wells Fargo's name appears in the designs.

## Pony Express Rates and Stamps

The 19-month period of operation of the Pony Express can be divided into four rate periods, as shown in the table below. The reason for the different Westbound and Eastbound dates during the First, Second and Third Rate Periods is the two-week delay in transmitting news of the rate changes from the home office in St. Joseph, Missouri, to the offices in California. The Fourth Rate Period coincides with the commencement date of the government contract, which was known well in advance of July 1 at both ends of the operation.

Period	Rate	Eastbound	Westbound
First	\$5.00 per half-ounce	April 3 to August 14, 1860	April 3 to July 30, 1860
Second	\$2.50 per <b>quarter-ounce</b>	August 15, 1860, to April 14, 1861	July 31, 1860, to March 31, 1861
Third	\$2.00 per half-ounce	April 15 to June 30, 1861	April 1 to June 30, 1861
Fourth	\$1.00 per half-ounce	July 1 to October 26, 1861	July 1 to October 31, 1861

<sup>1</sup> Notably and most recently, *The Pony Express; A Postal History*, by Walske, Kramer and Frajola.

<sup>2</sup> *The American Philatelist* (October 1963, Vol. 77, No. 1 and October 1965, Vol. 79, No. 1).

<sup>3</sup> Nathan, M.C., and Boggs, W. S., *The Pony Express*, The Collectors Club of New York, 1962, pp. 77-83.

<sup>4</sup> "The authors have inferred the existence of this contract from the published notices and advertisements of the period, in which the respective parties describe their roles." *The Pony Express; A Postal History*, p. 50



Figure 1



Figure 2

**The \$2 Red and \$4 Green Horse and Rider stamps issued by Wells Fargo in April 1861 for the new rates.**

The Pony Express stamps and franked envelopes were created to meet the rate requirements of the Third and Fourth Periods. There were six adhesive stamps in total: the April 1861 (Third Period) and July 1861 (Fourth Period) Horse and Rider issues for use on eastbound mail and the August 1861 (Fourth Period) “Garter” stamp for westbound mail. Two franked Pony Express envelopes were issued for westbound mail: the April 1861 (Third Period) Type I frank and August 1861 (Fourth Period) Type II frank. The Horse and Rider issues will be discussed first, followed by the Eastern “Garter” stamp and franked envelopes.

The April 1861 Horse and Rider issue comprised two stamps, the \$2 Red and \$4 Green, corresponding to the single and double rates—see **Figures 1 and 2**. The earliest documented use of the April 1861 issue is a \$2 cover dated stamped at Placerville on April 28, 1861 (a way usage on April 27 trip—not shown here).

The July 1861 issue added a \$1 denomination for the new rate specified in the government contract. The Post Office Order of March 12, 1861 (effective July 1), to the Overland Mail Company, specifically mandated Pony Express service and the \$1.00 rate:

“...And to be required also during the continuance of their Contract, or until completion of The Overland telegraph, to run a Pony Express semi-weekly at a Schedule time of ten days eight months of the year and twelve days four months of the year, and to convey for the Government free of charge five pounds of Mail Matter; with liberty of charging the public for transportation of letters by said express not exceeding One dollar per half ounce...”<sup>5</sup>

The \$1 was issued in a Red color similar to the \$2 First Issue, while the \$2 was re-issued in Green and the \$4 in Black (see **Figures 3, 4 and 5**). This color scheme indicates that Red was the designated color for a single rate and Green for a double rate in both the Third and Fourth Rate Periods. An example of the \$1 Red used on the first trip under the new contract (July 3, 1861) is shown in **Figure 6**. The stamp paid the \$1.00 Pony Express rate, while the printed frank paid Wells Fargo’s separate 10c express charge for transport to the Placerville Pony terminus, and the U.S. embossed stamp paid the required 10c government postage.

This strict adherence to a color scheme is one of several pieces of circumstantial evidence suggesting that Wells Fargo may have intended to have their agents affix the stamps to envelopes as franks, rather than sell them to the public in sheets. That scenario would fit the pattern established by the sale of their franked postal envelopes. Other



Figure 3



Figure 4



Figure 5

**The \$1 Red, \$2 Green and \$4 Black Horse and Rider stamps issued by Wells Fargo in July 1861 for new rates under the official government contract. The Red single-rate and Green double-rate color scheme continued.**

<sup>5</sup> *The Pony Express; A Postal History*, p. 150

observations in support of this possibility are: i) the complete absence of used multiples (for example, two \$1 stamps for a double rate); ii) the \$2 or \$4 April 1861 issue is not found on or off cover with a post-July 1 date; and iii) the existence of covers with the Wells Fargo blue “Paid” oval covered by the stamp, a sequence of application indicating that the Wells Fargo agent affixed the adhesive stamp.

A similar pattern of usage is found in Wells Fargo’s operation of the Virginia City Pony Express from 1862 to 1865. Based on his study of the 10c and 25c Virginia City Pony Express stamps, James Gamett observed:<sup>6</sup>

“...there is no overlap of use of the three stamps. There is also no cover existing that shows a late use of the 10c stamp in the 25c period. Apparently, the stamps were either redeemed for new stamps at the offices, or the stamps were only purchased at the time of mailing. Otherwise, you would expect to find a cover franked with three stamps overpaying the new rate, or a blue and a red stamp used together on one cover. If the stamps had been accepted for use after the period for which they were intended, you would also expect to find an overlap of the dates of use. However, none were found....”

The final circumstance indicating that the Horse and Rider Pony Express stamps (as opposed to the Eastern “Garter” issue) never circulated outside of Wells Fargo’s West Coast offices is that all known usages are from the West. Nothing in the records or advertisements states that the stamps were valid only on eastbound Pony Express trips. If the stamps were sold in sheets to the public, one would expect to see covers or markings showing that some stamps were sent East and used from there. That is not the case.

Considering all of the evidence, the author is convinced that Pony Express stamps were sold in individual units, for immediate application to a letter or pre-affixed to franked envelopes by Wells Fargo’s agents.



**Figure 6. First trip under the new government contract rate, showing the earliest possible use of the \$1 Red. The blue oval Running Pony datestamp is dated July 3, 1861.**

### The Lithographic Process

The word lithography means “stone writing” (from Greek, *lithos*, a stone, and *graphein*, to write). Lithography is a *planographic* printing method, which uses a combination of mechanical and chemical (or photographic) means to transfer ink from a uniformly flat surface to paper. For a detailed explanation of the different planographic processes and the production of lithographic stones (or plates), the author recommends the Williams Brothers’ *Fundamentals of Philately*.<sup>7</sup>

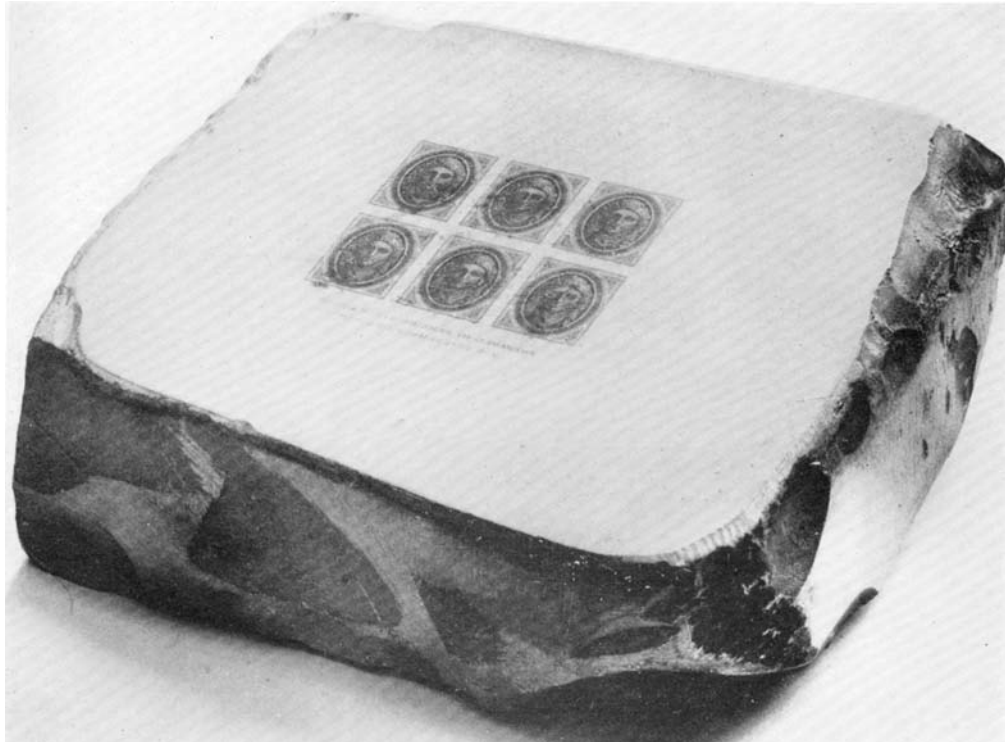
Lithographic platemaking can potentially reduce the number of steps required to transfer the original design to multiple positions on the plate. This is accomplished through the use of intermediate transfers, which are sometimes called *bloc-reports* (or “stone-to-stone” transfers). For example, a printing stone of 100 can be made from two transfers of an intermediate transfer group of 50. The 50-stamp intermediate transfer group can be made from five transfers of a group of ten, which in turn can be made from ten transfers of the original design (or possibly from another intermediate transfer group). In this example, 100 transfer steps are reduced to 17 steps (2 + 5 + 10).

<sup>6</sup> Gamett, James M., *Nevada Express*, Western Cover Society, 2002, p. 32.

<sup>7</sup> Williams, L.N. & M., *Fundamentals of Philately*, American Philatelic Society, 1971, pp. 231-298.

As each transfer (or re-transfer) is made, flaws present on the source are passed along to each new transfer, while new flaws are introduced into each new transfer. This relationship between the primary and secondary transfers, distinguishable through the presence (or absence) of flaws, is a critical factor in determining how a lithographic printing stone was “built up.”

The printing stone itself is a thick slab of limestone or another variety of calcereous stone. Its surface is highly polished to remove irregularities, but the porous nature of the stone is ideally suited for accepting the grease-based image required for lithography. A picture of a lithographic stone is shown in **Figure 7**.<sup>8</sup>



**Figure 7. A lithographic limestone (or another variety of calcereous stone) is three to four inches thick and has a highly-polished surface.**

To achieve a clean transfer of the image from the source to the stone, special transfer paper is used. If we call the source image the Primary Matrix, let us assume it has been applied in grease-based ink to the stone. The stone is then moistened and inked, and the grease-based lines of the image accept the ink, while the water-soaked blank areas of the stone reject the ink (this effect is caused by the natural repelling reaction between grease and water). The transfer paper is laid over the image, and the ink from the stone is transferred to the paper, which in turn is used to transfer the image to another stone.

It must be remembered that the inked image on a printing plate creates a mirror impression on the receiving surface, which is why printing plates are created with mirror images of the intended design. However, in the lithographic transferring process described above, the use of transfer paper introduces an intermediate step, which itself causes a mirror effect. Therefore, the steps of Primary Matrix > Transfer Paper > Secondary Transfer results in a Positive > Mirror > Positive image transfer (or, alternatively, Mirror > Positive > Mirror).

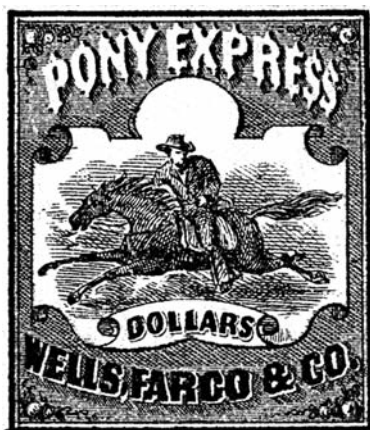
Although the build-up process described has the potential to reduce the number of transfers required, it is not always used advantageously. In the case of the Pony Express stamps, the printers, Britton & Rey of San Francisco, wasted effort by not fully exploiting the transfer process. As the reader will see, the printing stones used for the \$2 and \$4 stamps required many more steps than was necessary; and, although the \$1 stone was built up from intermediate transfers, the failure to change “Dollars” to “Dollar” at the earliest or intermediate stages necessitated the retouching of all 40 positions on the final printing stone.

<sup>8</sup> Séfi, Alexander J., *An Introduction to Advanced Philately*, Rowler & Rowley, 1926, p. 47.

## \$2 and \$4 Printing Stones

The April 1861 issue comprised the \$2 Red and \$4 Green, and the printing stones for these two values were the first created by Britton & Rey. They were used again to print stamps in new colors for the July 1861 issue. There are no surviving sheets of either value (in any color), but the existence of smaller multiples and sheet-margin stamps makes it possible to reconstruct the 20 subjects on each stone in their original positions. Elliott Perry correctly reconstructed the positions (with only one minor error), and his reconstructions were part of the Hall collection.<sup>9</sup> This author has had access to those reconstructions.

Although the \$1 stamp was printed in sheets of 40—comprising right and left panes of 20 (4 across and 5 high) with a gutter between the panes—the \$2 and \$4 were printed in sheets of 20 (5 across and 4 high). Rather than build up the printing stone from intermediate transfer groups or from a Primary Matrix containing the denomination, the printers used a blank matrix (see digital facsimile in **Figure 8**) to enter each subject on the stone for each value. This required a total of 40 transfers (20 for each value). The denomination (shaded numerals “2” and “4”) then had to be transferred to each subject on both stones in a separate operation, thus requiring another 40 separate transfers.



**Figure 8. Primary Matrix (blank value) from which 20 individual transfers were made on the printing stone for each of the \$2 and \$4 values.**

It seems incredible to this author that experienced lithographers such as Britton & Rey did not simplify the process by using intermediate transfers. For example, they could have created two Primary Matrixes, one for each value, and then used those to make the separate transfers, thus eliminating the need for another 40 separate transfers of the denomination. Or, they could have made an intermediate group transfer from the stone with 20 denomination-less frames, thus eliminating the need to make another 20 transfers on the stone for the second value.

Based on the fact that the \$2 and \$4 of the July 1861 issue were printed from the same stones as the April 1861 issue, it is certain that the printers had retained the two original stones. Lithographic stones were usually re-used by erasing the image and repolishing the surface, but in the case of the Pony Express stones, they were evidently preserved for future printings.

When the denomination was transferred to each subject on the stone, there was some variation in the placement of the numeral and in the replication of the shading lines. **Figures 9 and 10** (on the following pages) provide a comparison of the numerals for all 20 subjects on the \$2 and \$4 stones.

### Relative Scarcity of \$2 and \$4 Stamps

Both Elliott Perry and the author worked with a large quantity of Pony Express stamps in their independent studies. Perry observed the relative scarcity of the \$2 Red, \$4 Green, \$2 Green and \$4 Black in unused and used condition,<sup>10</sup> as did this author, and the conclusions are similar. The four stamps are ranked below in *descending* order of scarcity, divided by category (Unused, Used, Unused Multiples, Covers). The numbers in brackets refer to the stamps seen by this author. The Unused and Used columns are probably low counts relative to the total population.

Unused [Total 128]	Used [Total 28]	Unused Multiples	Covers (41 Recorded) <sup>11</sup>
\$2 Red [20]	\$4 Green [3]	\$2 Red [none]	\$4 Green [1]
\$4 Green [26]	\$4 Black [5]	\$4 Green [1 block of 4]	\$4 Black [2]
\$2 Green [37]	\$2 Green [8]	\$4 Black [6-8 blocks of 4-6]	\$2 Green [2]
\$4 Black [45]	\$2 Red [12]	\$2 Green [8-10 blocks of 4-6]	\$2 Red [36]

Looking at the data, it is obvious that the workhorse stamp, the single-rate \$2 Red, is by far the most common of the four \$2/\$4 issues in used condition and on cover, but it is the rarest in unused condition (only 16% of unused singles and not one multiple known). The two \$4 (either Green or Black) and \$2 Green multiple-rate stamps are extremely rare used or on cover. The \$4 Green is also quite scarce unused (20% of unused singles and only one multiple known). The abundance of unused \$2 Green and \$4 Black stamps is due to Wells Fargo’s practice of selling off Pony Express stamp remainders to philatelists through the 1890’s when their supply ran out.

<sup>9</sup> *The Hall Collection: Carriers, Locals and Western Expresses*, Siegel Auction Galleries, Sale 830, Nov. 13-14, 2000

<sup>10</sup> Elliott Perry, personal correspondence to Eugene Costales, July 3, 1963

<sup>11</sup> *The Pony Express; A Postal History*, p. 173 (42 less one cover, E144, which has been certified by the P.F. as fake)



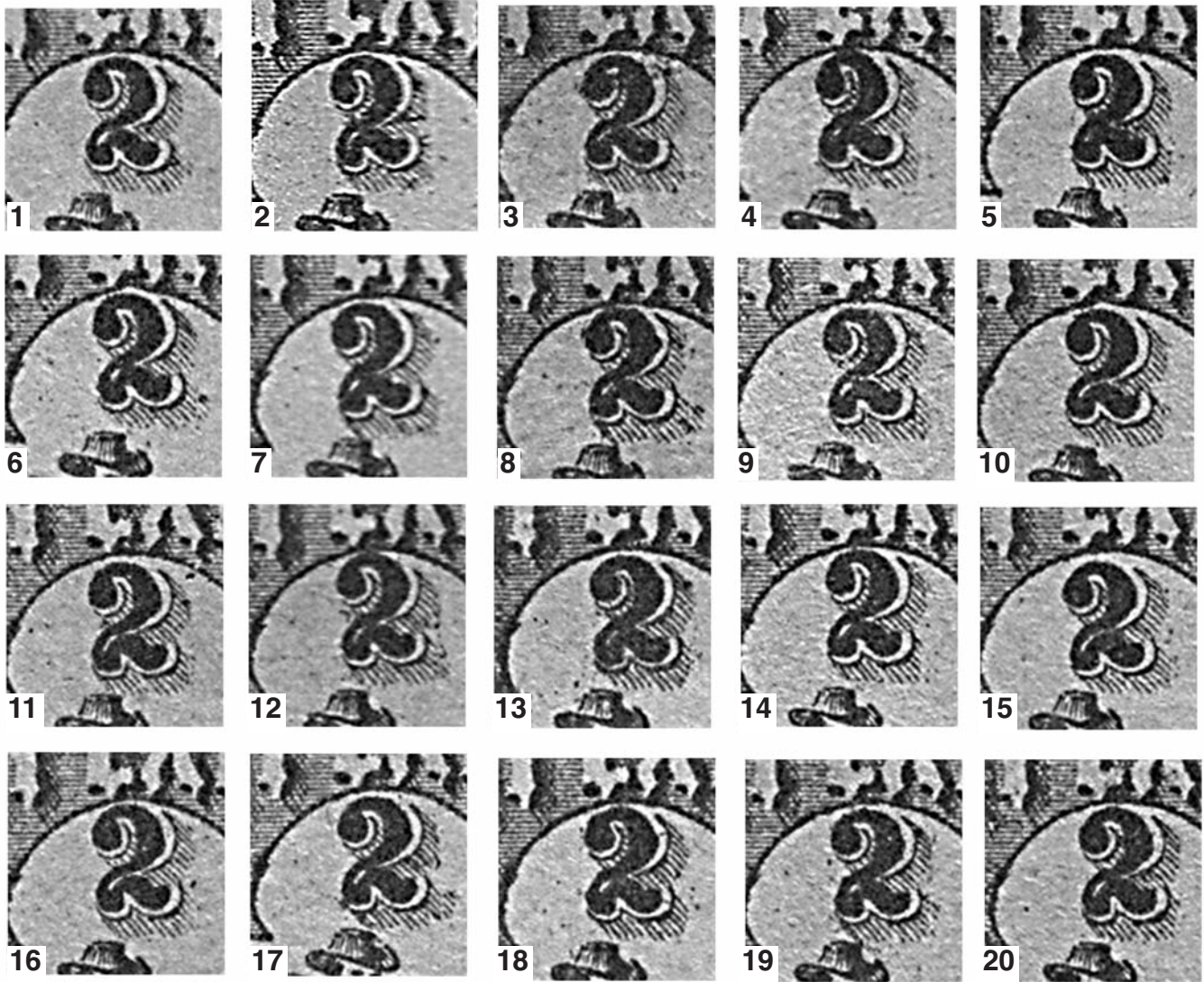


Figure 9 (above) and 10 (opposite). The numerals “2” and “4” were transferred one at a time to each of the subjects on the \$2 and \$4 printing stones, which creates variation in the relative position and in the detail of the shading lines. Numerals of all 20 subjects for each printing stone are shown.

SEE APPENDIX PAGES 22-25 FOR \$2 PLATING DIAGRAMS



Figure 10.

SEE APPENDIX PAGES 26-28 FOR \$4 PLATING DIAGRAM

## \$1 Red Printing Stone

When Britton & Rey received Wells Fargo's order for new stamps needed for the July 1861 rate change, they were apparently instructed to produce a new \$1 value in Red and to print more \$2 and \$4 stamps in different colors. Since the printers still had the stones for the \$2 and \$4, it was a simple matter to make more impressions in Green (\$2) and Black (\$4). Their approach to the \$1 Red, evident in the product itself, is more complicated.

Instead of 20 subjects, there were 40 subjects on the \$1 stone, which suggests that the print order anticipated a much higher volume of usage. In fact, the average number of letters per eastbound trip jumped from 201 in the Third Rate Period (prior to the government contract) to 305 in the Fourth Rate Period (as a government contractor).<sup>12</sup> The total number of eastbound letters, documented at 10,057, indicates that at least an equal number of \$1 stamps were printed, so doubling the size of the stone meant half the number of impressions (250 vs. 500 for a print run of 10,000).



Figure 11. Primary matrix for \$1 Red with “Dollars” error.

The printers also used the “Dollars” matrix previously used for the \$2 and \$4 transfers, which indicates that they retained the Primary Matrix from the original issue. This time, they had the foresight to add the denomination to the Primary Matrix (Figure 11), but they failed to remove the “s” from “Dollars” until the printing stone was completely built up from the intermediate transfers. This was a glaring oversight. Correcting it required someone to erase most of the “s” from each subject so that the remaining portion resembled a period after “Dollar”.

At least four sheets of the \$1 Red have survived, all from the same stone, which facilitates plating and proves the layout. The author has surmised that the \$1 stone was built up in a series of steps as follows (shown on pages 9-12):

*Step 1: Primary Matrix* modified by adding the numeral “1” (with “Dollars” error)

*Steps 2-11:* 10 transfers from Primary Matrix to printing stone, forming the **Transfer Group A** (10 subjects)

*Step 12:* Re-transfer of Group A to printing stone, forming **Transfer Group B** (10 subjects)

*Step 13:* Re-transfer of Groups A-B combined to printing stone, forming **Transfer Group C** (20 subjects)

*Steps 14-53:* 40 individual erasures of “s” from “Dollars” on printing stone

It is obvious that the “Dollars” error added another 40 steps to the process. These erasures were almost certainly made on the printing stone itself after the right and left panes were laid down. The differences in the erasures can be helpful in plating individual stamps, and an enlarged comparison photo of all 40 positions is shown on page 13. The transfer groups identified by letters A, B and C were made on the printing stone in mirror image. All types and position numbers used by the author refer to locations on the printed sheet. The \$1 Transfer Group A diagrams (see Appendix, page 30) identify the flaws in the first ten transfers, which are labelled Type I through X and occur four times on the sheet. For each Transfer Type, the author shows diagrams of the four corresponding positions and identifies the flaws unique to each position (Appendix, pages 31-40).

### \$1 Position R09—The “Broken Leg” Flaw

The most distinctive plate flaw found on any Pony Express stamp is the “Broken Leg” (Figure 12). The horse's front right leg is cut off where the background shading lines end.

The Broken Leg flaw occurs only on Position R09 (Group A Type V). The fact that it does not occur on the other three Type V positions (L09/11 and R11) indicates that it was not present on the Transfer Groups A or B. It may have occurred as the re-transfer of Group A/B was made on the printing stone, possibly due to a flaw in the transfer paper. It also could have resulted from damage to the printing stone, possibly during the erasure process to remove “s” from “Dollars”. The author has seen eight examples of the Broken Leg, including four in sheets, two in blocks, and two singles, all unused without gum. The author has been unable to locate a used example on or off cover. One unresolved question is whether Position R09 exists without the flaw, which would prove that some sheets were printed before the flaw occurred on the printing stone.

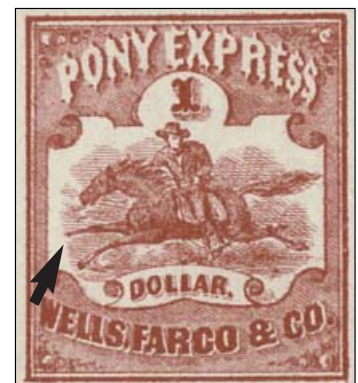


Figure 12. Position R09, the “Broken Leg” flaw.

<sup>12</sup> *The Pony Express; A Postal History*, p. 92

# STEPS TO CREATE \$1 PONY EXPRESS PRINTING STONE



Primary Matrix  
No denomination  
"DOLLARS"  
*Mirror*

Step 1 ↓ Numeral "1" added to Primary Matrix



Primary Matrix  
Numeral "1" Added  
"DOLLARS"  
*Mirror*

Steps 2-11 →

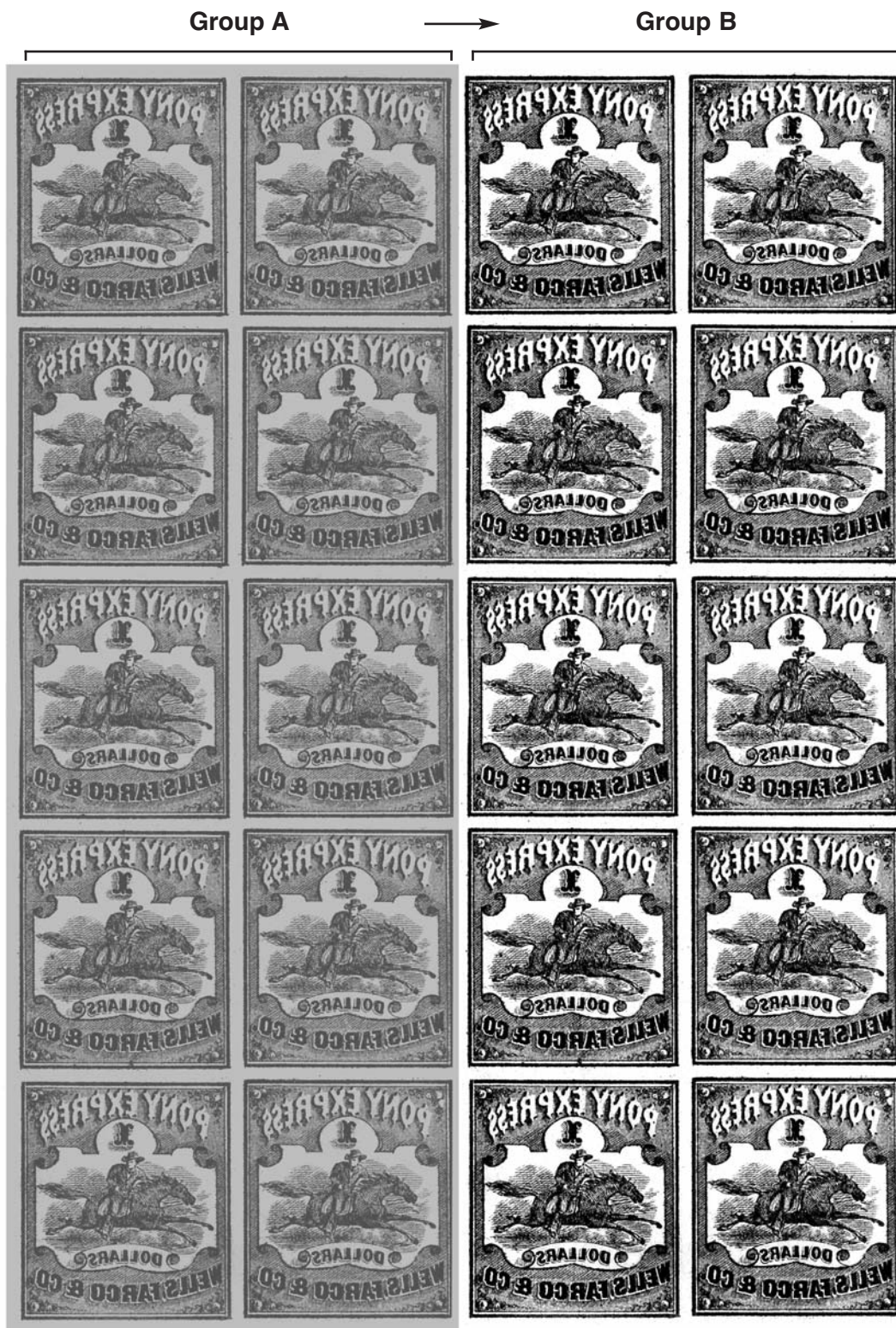
Transfer paper used to make 10 transfers of the Primary Matrix to the printing stone



Transfer Group A  
"DOLLARS"  
10 x Primary Matrix  
*Mirror*

Step 12

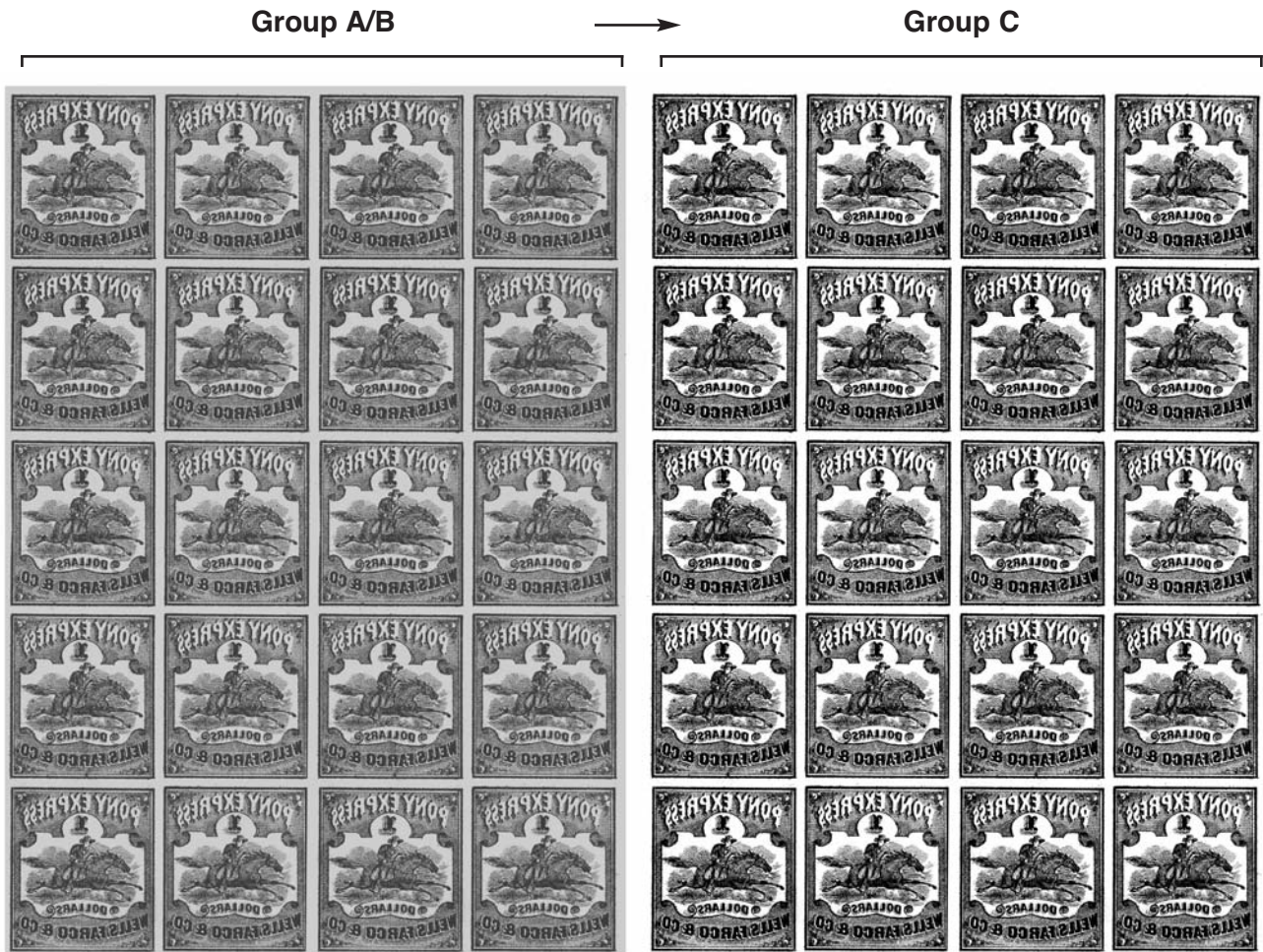
Transfer paper used to make re-transfer of Group A on printing stone. Secondary transfer identified as Group B.



Transfer Group A/B  
"DOLLARS"  
Mirror

**Step 13**

Transfer paper used to make re-transfer of Group A/B on printing stone. Secondary transfer identified as Group C.



**Printing Stone (Unretouched)**  
**“DOLLARS”**  
**Mirror**

Steps 14-53

“S” of “DOLLARS” erased from each position on printing stone.



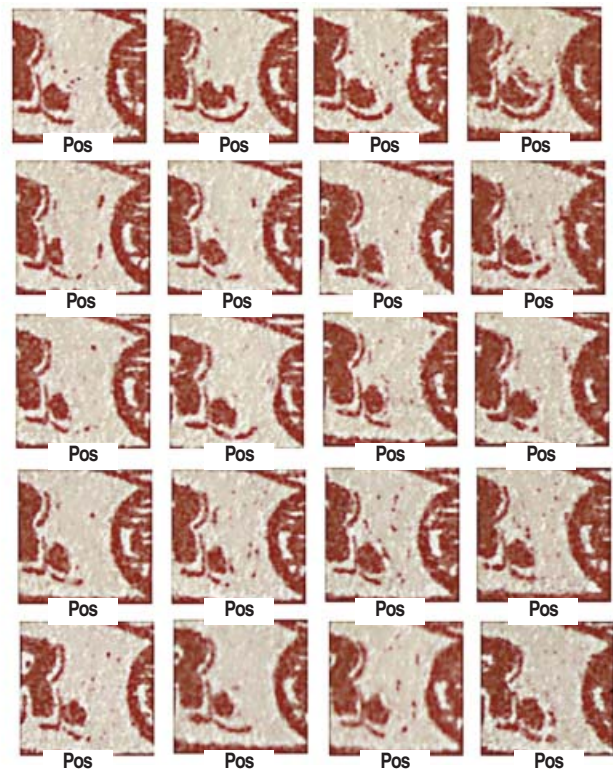
Printing Stone (Retouched)  
“DOLLAR”  
Mirror

Left Pane

Right Pane



Printed Sheet from Retouched Stone — Deleted “S” of “DOLLARS” Shown Below





### Cancellations on Horse and Rider Pony Express Stamps

Wells Fargo's agents on the West Coast always cancelled Pony Express stamps with their office marking. Every recorded eastbound cover has the stamp cancelled by either a datestamp or a dateless office handstamp. The only marking used to cancel stamps at the San Francisco office is the distinctive large Running Pony oval. Sacramento also used a special "Pony Express" oval (and, in one case, their large double circle). Other offices that cancelled Pony Express mail used whatever type of device they regularly applied to express mail.

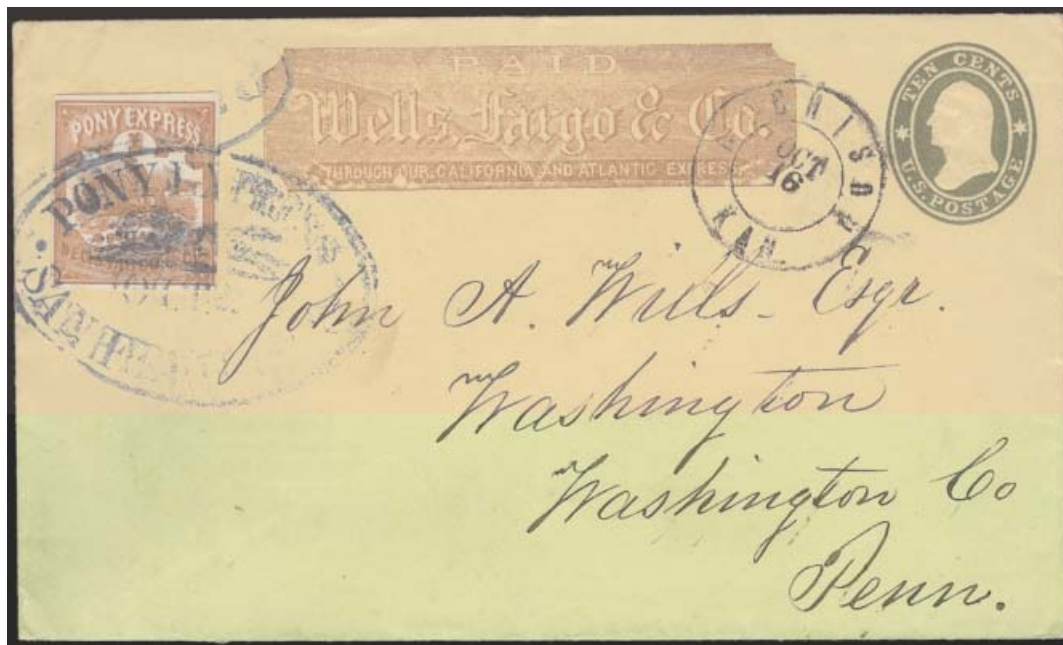


Figure 13. \$1 Red tied by Running Pony datestamp over blue "Paid" in oval.



Figures 14-15. Counterfeit Pony Express stamps with a forged Running Pony oval.

Genuine Pony Express stamps are also found with forged cancels. A few are extremely deceptive and have been certified as genuine by expertizing services. **Figure 16** shows a Wells Fargo San Francisco oval datestamp that has been seen on several genuine Pony Express stamps in blue, black or red. This type of marking was not used by the San Francisco office on Pony Express mail, but it is identical to markings on Wells Fargo express covers from the mid-1860's. It may have been applied to remainders sold to collectors by the Wells Fargo office. Prospective buyers of used Pony Express stamps are advised to obtain reliable expert certification to protect against forgeries or non-contemporary cancels, especially when the cancel is not the usual Running Pony oval.

The Wells Fargo blue "Paid" in oval is found on several Pony Express covers, but it is always struck on the envelope, not on the stamp. On more than one cover, the stamp is positioned over the blue "Paid", proof that the stamp was affixed after the "Paid" was applied by the Wells Fargo office (see **Figure 13**). The author has never seen a stamp on or off cover with the "Paid" oval used as a cancel.

Counterfeit Pony Express stamps exist with forged markings, some of which are crude and easily detected. A deceptive San Francisco Running Pony oval is shown in **Figures 14 and 15**. Both stamps are counterfeit.



Figure 16. This type of Wells Fargo San Francisco oval was not used on Pony Express mail. It is either a forgery or applied by favor.

### Pony Express Horse and Rider Issue Multiples

Multiples of the Pony Express Horse and Rider issues only exist in unused condition. No used pairs are known on or off cover. The total absence of used multiples is one of the pieces of evidence indicating that Wells Fargo probably sold the Pony Express stamps one unit at a time, possibly pre-affixing many of the stamps to franked envelopes (see pages 2-3 for more information about this pattern of usage).

Only one multiple is recorded for the April 1861 issue (\$2 Red and \$4 Green). It is the \$4 Green block of four shown in **Figure 17**. This block comes from Positions 14-15/19-20 at the lower right corner of the sheet of 20. It has a large part of its original gum still intact. Elliott Perry recorded this item as the only known block of the \$4 Green, and this author has not located any other multiple. The July 1861 issue is more abundant in unused multiples, which makes sense considering the abrupt end of the Pony Express in October 1861, which left a remainder supply in Wells Fargo's hands. More than a half-dozen unused blocks each of the \$2 Green and \$4 Black exist. Four complete sheets of the \$1 Red are recorded. All of these unused July 1861 issue multiples are without gum. Some of the single stamps from both issues are found with what appears to be original gum (they are scarce in such condition).



Figure 17. \$4 Green block of four.

### 1897 Reprints

All of the Pony Express stamps that reached stamp collectors prior to April 1897 came from supplies on hand at Wells Fargo's offices. The first and only reprints were made in April 1897 by the original printers, Britton & Rey of San Francisco. The Nathan-Boggs book summarizes the contemporary reports,<sup>13</sup> so there is no reason to go into further detail here.

Proof impressions in black were pulled from the composite matrix located by the printer in their archives (**Figure 18**) and from the printing stone used to make the reprints (**Figure 19**). The printing stone was laid down with all of the values, including the 10c and 25c Virginia City Pony Express issues. Prints were made in a variety of colors before and after two major modifications were made to the stone: first, the correction of "Dollars" to "Dollar" in the four \$1 subjects; and, second, the defacement of the \$4 subjects with X's.

The \$1 reprints exist with and without the plural "Dollars" error, which proves that the "S" was erased from the stone after a print run. The \$4 without "X" defacement exists in multiples with the \$1 "Dollars" and corrected "Dollar". However, all known multiples with the \$4 "X" defacement show the \$1 "Dollar" correction (none is known with "Dollars").

Studying the surviving reprints, it can be surmised that the stone with the "Dollars" error was used to print stamps in Blue and Black. The "s" correction was made, then other colors were printed. Finally, the "X" defacements were made and additional prints were pulled.

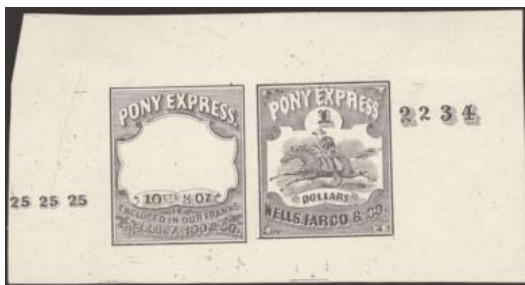


Figure 18. 1897 Reprint composite matrix.



Figure 19. Proof impression of 1897 reprint stone.

<sup>13</sup> Nathan, M.C., and Boggs, W. S., *The Pony Express*, pp. 67-104

### \$1 “Garter” Issue and Franked Envelopes for Westbound Pony Express Mail

The Horse and Rider issues were never used on westbound Pony Express mail. In the Third Rate Period, Wells Fargo introduced a special franked envelope for westbound mail, but its use was extremely limited. On July 1, 1861, the new contract rate went into effect. On August 12, 1861, Wells Fargo announced in the New York papers that “Pony Express Envelopes” were “Now ready and for sale at our office.”<sup>14</sup> Although this announcement refers only to “envelopes”, in fact both the franked entires and \$1 adhesive stamps were put on sale in August 1861.



Figure 20. \$1 Garter with Nebitt imprint.

The small belt-shaped “Garter” stamp looks nothing like the Horse and Rider issues and omits the words “Pony Express”. Although Nesbitt was identified as the maker of the franks and Garter issue in an 1867 article,<sup>15</sup> subsequent writers mistakenly attributed the Garter printing to Britton & Rey. Around the year 2000 a Garter stamp was found with the imprint “G. F. Nesbitt & Co. N.Y.” (see Figure 20).

The *Scott Catalogue* and other sources incorrectly state that the Garter was printed in sheets of 16. The author has surmised that the Garter was printed from a lithographic stone of 20 subjects, arranged 5 across and 4 high, based on the corner margin strip (Figure 21) and three blocks printed on card with the word “Sample” written across them (Figure 22). A digital reconstruction of the sheet layout is shown in Figure 23.



Figure 21. Strip of three from the top left corner of the sheet.

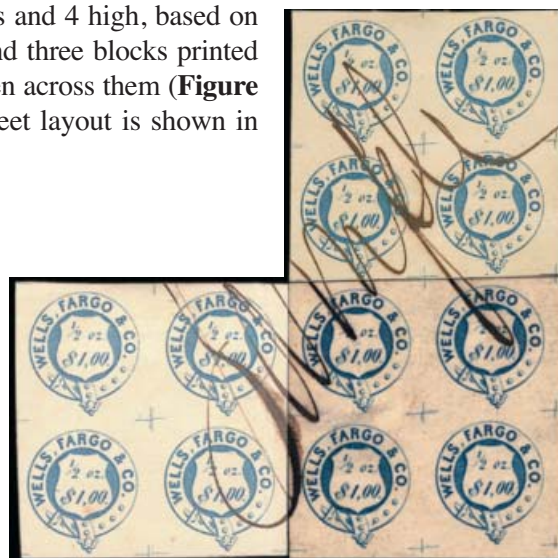


Figure 22. Card proofs with “Sample” overprint.

The Garter stamp is extremely rare in any form. The strip of three shown above is the only recorded multiple of the stamp on regular paper. Only four covers are recorded, including two used from New York City and two from Boston, dated from August 24 to October 26, 1861.<sup>16</sup> One of the covers from Boston is a quadruple-rate usage with a vertical strip of four of the \$1 Garter. The cover generally regarded as the finest of the Garter usages is shown in Figure 24 on the following page.

Garter stamps are often found with a pen line, either vertical or horizontal, in blue or red ink. These are probably marked samples. Several types of Garter counterfeits exist, which usually have a horizontal line bisecting the shield.



Figure 23. Digital reconstruction of \$1 Garter sheet of 20 with Nesbitt imprint below the bottom center stamp.

<sup>14</sup> Perry, Elliott, *Pat Paragraphs*, October 1931, p.73

<sup>15</sup> *The Stamp Collector's Magazine*, May 1, 1867

<sup>16</sup> *The Pony Express; A Postal History*, p. 75



Figure 24. \$1 Garter on double-rate (\$2.00) Pony Express entire from New York. It was carried on the last Pony trip, leaving from St. Joseph on October 24, 1861. The 10c embossed stamp and 10c 1861 pay the double U.S. rate.

The first Pony Express franked entires were issued during the Third Rate Period, when the charge for a single-rate letter was \$2.00. The \$2 Type I frank is printed in red on the 10c Green on White Nesbitt entire and reads “½ OUNCE/PAID/FROM/ST. JOSEPH/TO/PLACERVILLE,/PER/PONY/EXPRESS.” The word “Placerville” is followed by a comma in the Type I frank. Several unused examples are known, but only two used Type I franks are recorded. Both are datestamped with the New York office oval, one on May 7, 1861 (Figure 25) and the other on June 22, 1861. The absence of a specific rate was probably deliberate, because by March 12, 1861, the Overland Mail Company and Wells Fargo knew that the government contract at \$1.00 per letter would commence on July 1. Without a stated value, the envelopes could be sold for \$2.00 until June 30 and \$1.00 thereafter. As it turned out, circumstances required a new envelope printing, so the old 10c Nesbitt Type I franks became obsolete.



Figure 25. Type I printed frank (comma after “Placerville”) at the unstated \$2.00 rate on 10c Green on White Nesbitt entire sent from New York on May 7, 1861, for the May 12 Pony trip out of St. Joseph.



Figure 26. Hand-annotated “essay” entire for the new July 1861 issue submitted for approval to Postmaster General Montgomery Blair by the Overland Mail Company. The pencil additions read “To Agent, Pony Exp, St. Jos, for” and in ink “John Doe, San Francisco, Cal.” The transmittal letter is shown in Figure 27.

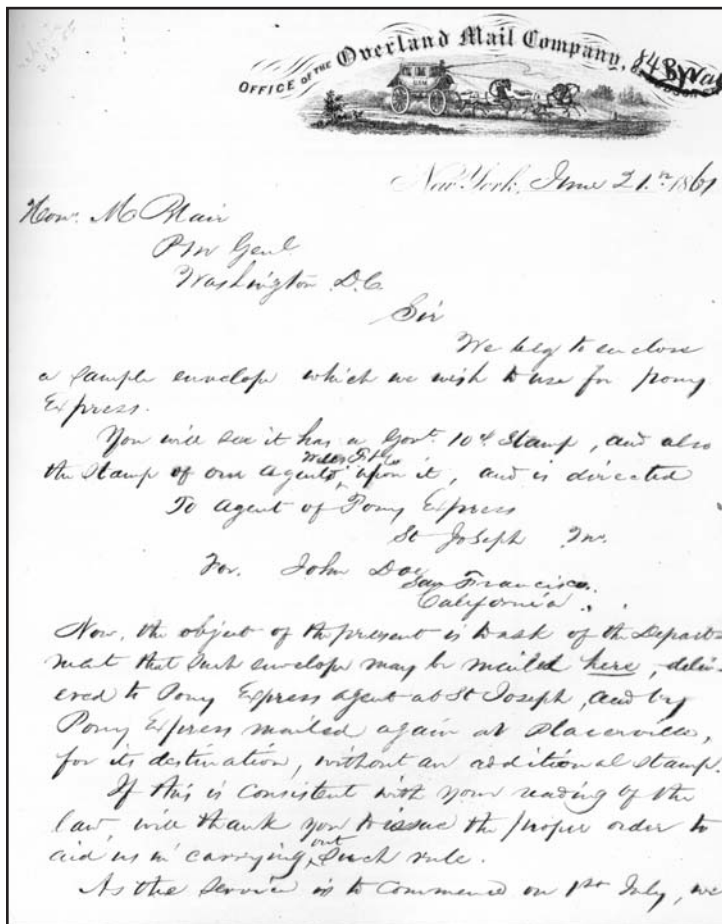


Figure 27. Letter dated June 21, 1861, from Frederick Cook, Treasurer, Overland Mail Company, to Postmaster General Montgomery Blair.

On June 21, 1861, the treasurer of the Overland Mail Company in the New York office wrote to Postmaster General Montgomery Blair to seek approval of the Pony Express frank and to obtain clarification of the postage requirements on mail posted at the Placerville terminus. The sample is a Type I frank with annotations (Figure 26), and the original letter (Figure 27) reads:

“We beg to enclose a sample envelope which we wish to use for Pony Express.

You will see it has a Govt. 10c Stamp, and also the stamp of our agents Wells F & Co. upon it, and is directed

To Agent of Pony Express  
St. Joseph Mo.

For John Doe  
San Francisco  
California.

Now, the object of the present is to ask of the Department that such envelope may be mailed here, delivered to Pony Express Agent at St. Joseph, and by Pony Express mailed again at Placerville, for its destination, without an additional stamp.

If this is consistent with your reading of the law, will thank you to issue the proper order to aid us in carrying out such rule.

As the service is to commence on 1st July, we would beg for an early reply to this.

[Signed Frederick Cook, Treasurer, Overland Mail

The slightly modified Type II frank was printed in red on the new 10c 1861 “Pumpkin” entire. The address portion is printed in black, using a script-style font (see Figure 28).



**Figure 28. Type II frank on 10c 1861 “Pumpkin” entire. This is the only recorded Pony Express usage from Philadelphia. The letter entered the regular U.S. mails there and was delivered to the Pony Express agent at St. Joseph. It was carried on the September 1, 1861, westbound trip.**

The part-printed address on the Type II frank was added (per the June 21, 1861, letter and sample) to facilitate a new mail-handling procedure. Previously, westbound Pony Express mail was forwarded in packages to the St. Joseph post office. On arrival the letters were unbundled and counted before they were given to the Pony Express agent. Beginning in mid-August with the introduction of the new Type II franks, individual letters were mailed at the post office of origin and transmitted through the regular government mails to the Pony Express agent in St. Joseph, who gave them to the next departing Pony Express rider. After the Pony terminus was moved to Atchison in September, the St. Joseph agent bagged the letters he received by mail and placed them on board the train to Atchison, where they were given to the departing Pony rider.<sup>17</sup>

According to a report evidently based on reliable sources, the Nesbitt firm was specifically asked to provide franked envelopes on thinner, tougher paper than that used for the regular stamped envelopes, presumably to reduce weight for the Pony riders.<sup>18</sup> Comparing the Type II franks with other entires, the envelopes do appear to be a thinner, less opaque and slightly more brittle paper.

There are 19 recorded Type II franked entires, including three with the \$1 Garter paying the extra rate. The earliest date is August 14, 1861, from New York City, two days after Wells Fargo’s New York office announced the availability of new “Pony Express Envelopes”. The latest usages were posted from New York on October 26 and datestamped at St. Joseph on October 31.

A convincing case has been made that the covers arriving by mail at St. Joseph after the Pony trip on October 24 may have travelled westward by regular stage rather than by Pony rider.<sup>19</sup> This argument is based on two circumstances. First, contemporary reports of two “Pony Express” mails arriving in San Francisco on November 18 and 20 correlate with typical stagecoach transit time (21 and 22 days). Second, considering that the completion of the telegraph line on October 24 rendered the Pony Express obsolete, it seems unlikely that the company would continue to run its money-losing operation for another week.

However, another plausible scenario is that the last two trips (October 27 and 31) were a mix of stage and Pony riders, depending on which relay stations were still up and running. The arrival of a bag of mail containing letters for which \$1.00 each had been paid for Pony Express service may have been sufficient impetus to keep the horses running another week, at least for part of the route. The actual truth may never be known.

<sup>17</sup> *The Pony Express; A Postal History*, pp. 51-58

<sup>18</sup> *U.S. Envelope World*, May/June/July/August 1958, p. 91

<sup>19</sup> *The Pony Express; A Postal History*, pp. 58-59 and p. 99

### ***Scott Catalogue Treatment of Pony Express Franked Envelopes and Stamps***

The Type I frank is a privately-issued form of prepayment of the \$2.00 Pony Express rate. Its successor, the Type II frank, was a government-authorized form of prepayment of the \$1.00 rate for a sub-contracted United States mail route. Inexplicably, these two franked entires have been omitted from the Scott *U.S. Specialized Catalogue*. At the very least, they belong with the other Wells Fargo issues. Technically, the April 1861 issue (\$2 Red, \$4 Green and Type I envelope) should be classified as “Locals” (private emissions), while the July 1861 issue (\$1 Red, \$2 Green, \$4 Black, \$1 Garter and Type II envelope) should be classified as “Semi-Officials” (government contractor emissions).

### **Acknowledgements**

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# **APPENDIX**

## **PLATING GUIDES:**

### **\$2 Horse & Rider**

Shown in Green; printed in Red and Green (plating marks can be difficult to locate on Red stamps)

### **\$4 Horse and Rider**

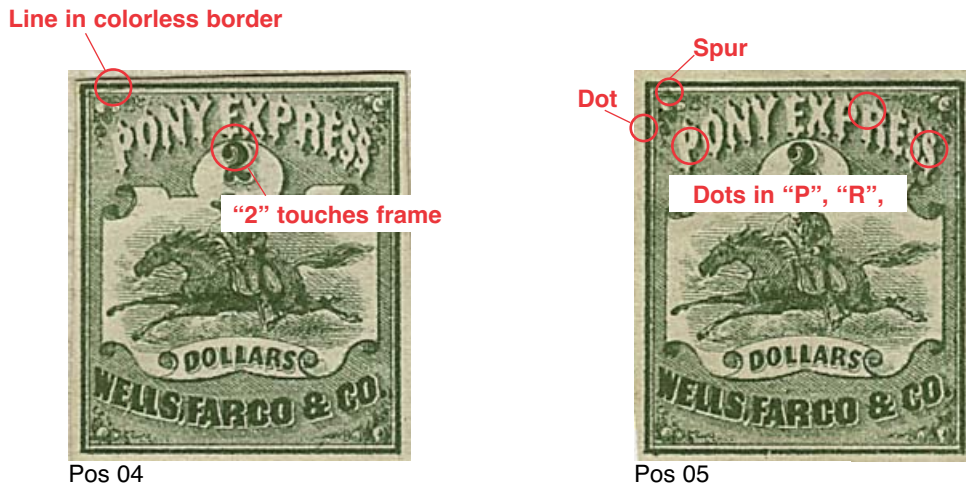
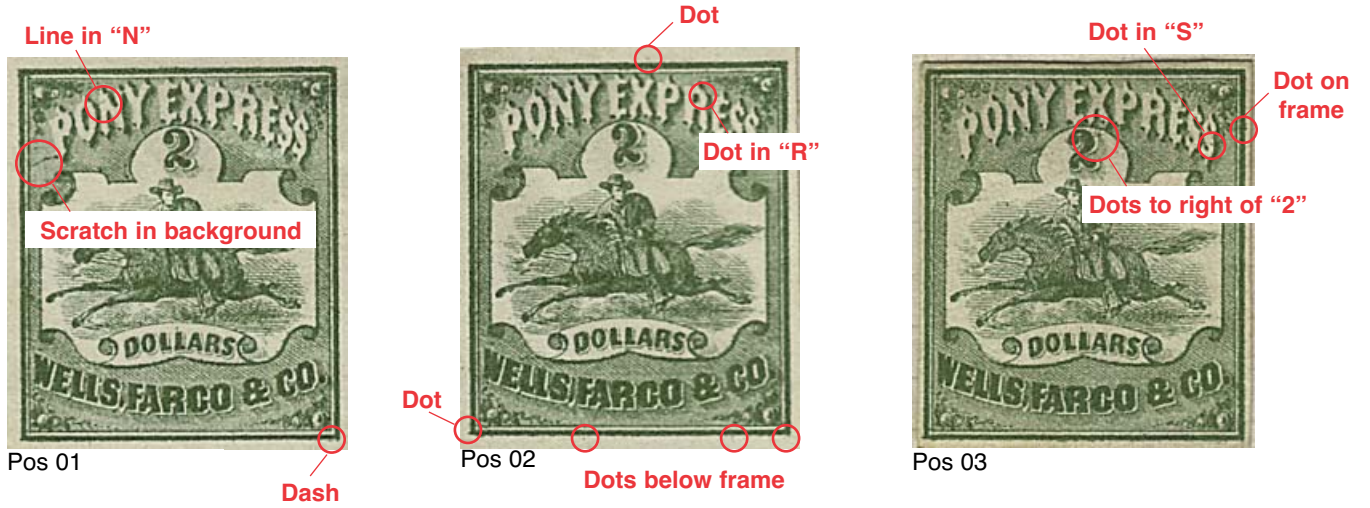
Shown in Black; printed in Green and Black (plating marks are clear in both printings)

### **\$1 Horse & Rider**

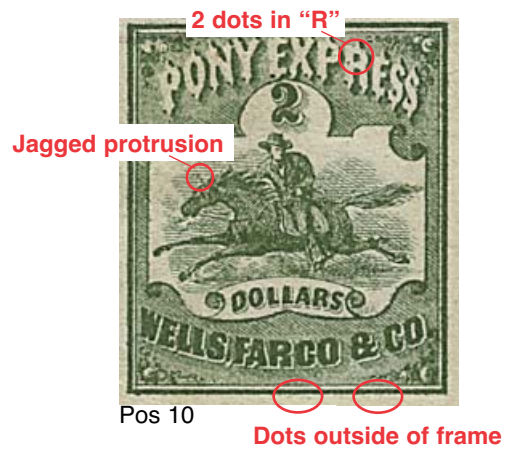
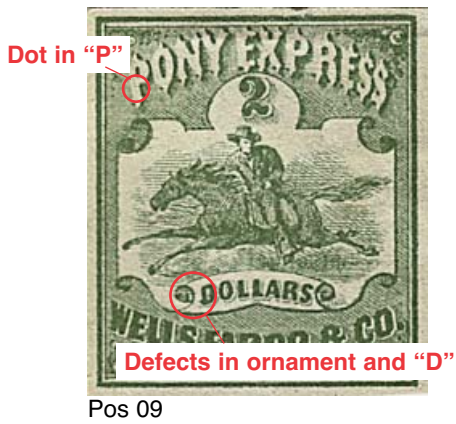
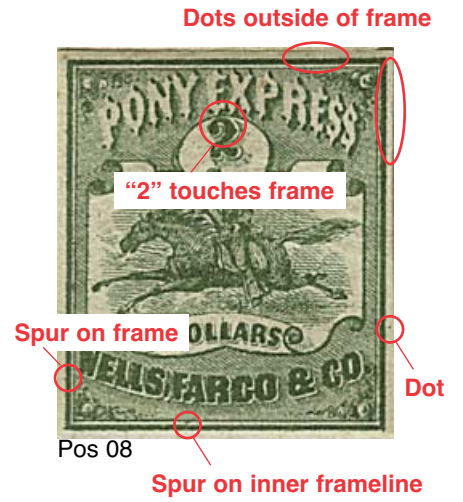
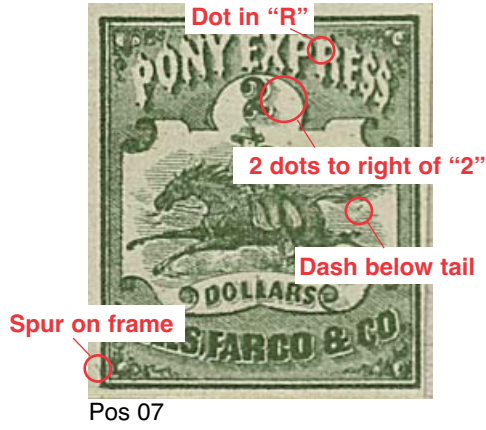
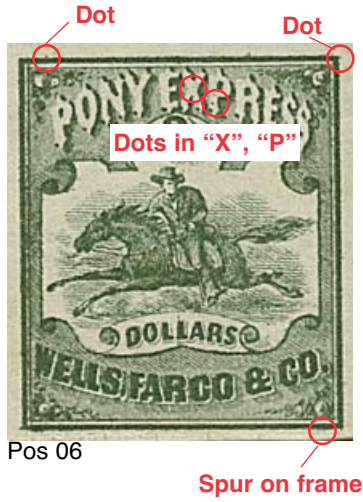
Printed in Red (plating marks are usually clear)



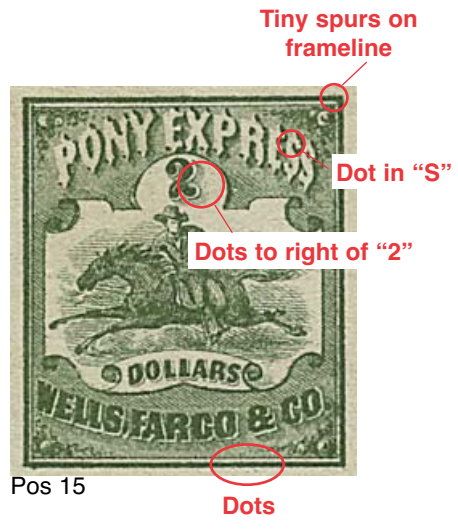
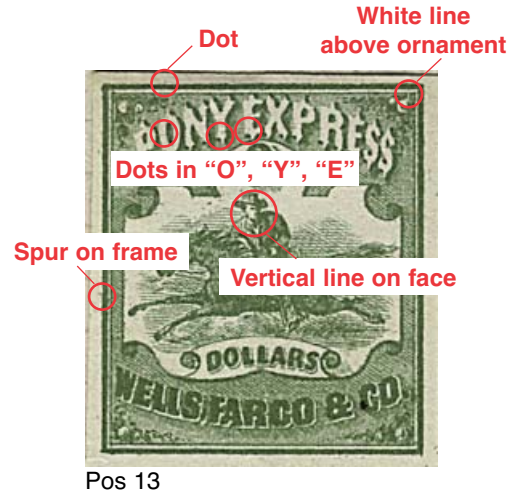
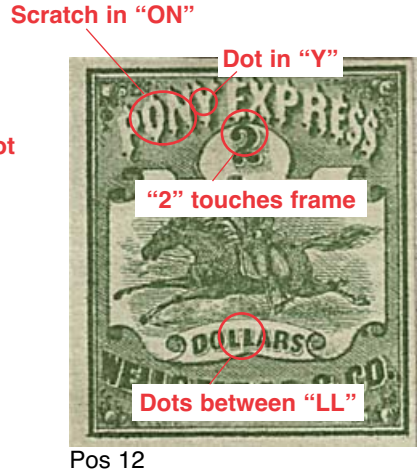
**\$2 PLATING GUIDE**  
**Positions 1-5 (Row 1 of 4)**



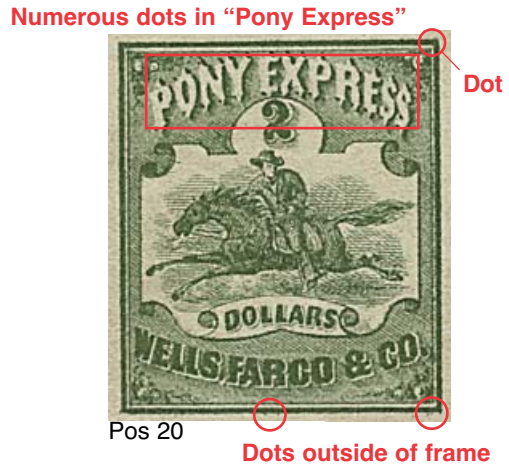
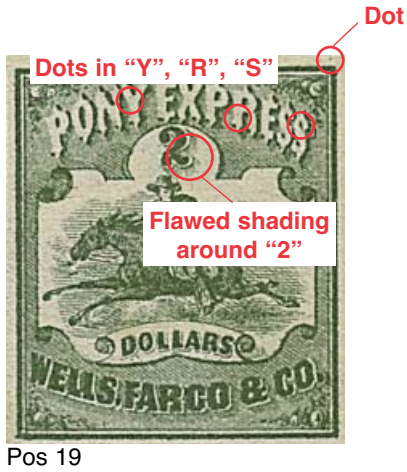
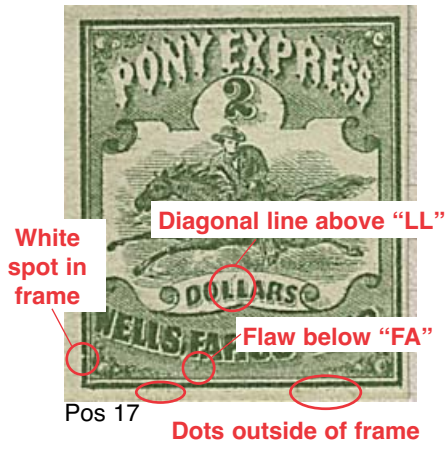
**\$2 PLATING GUIDE**  
**Positions 6-10 (Row 2 of 4)**



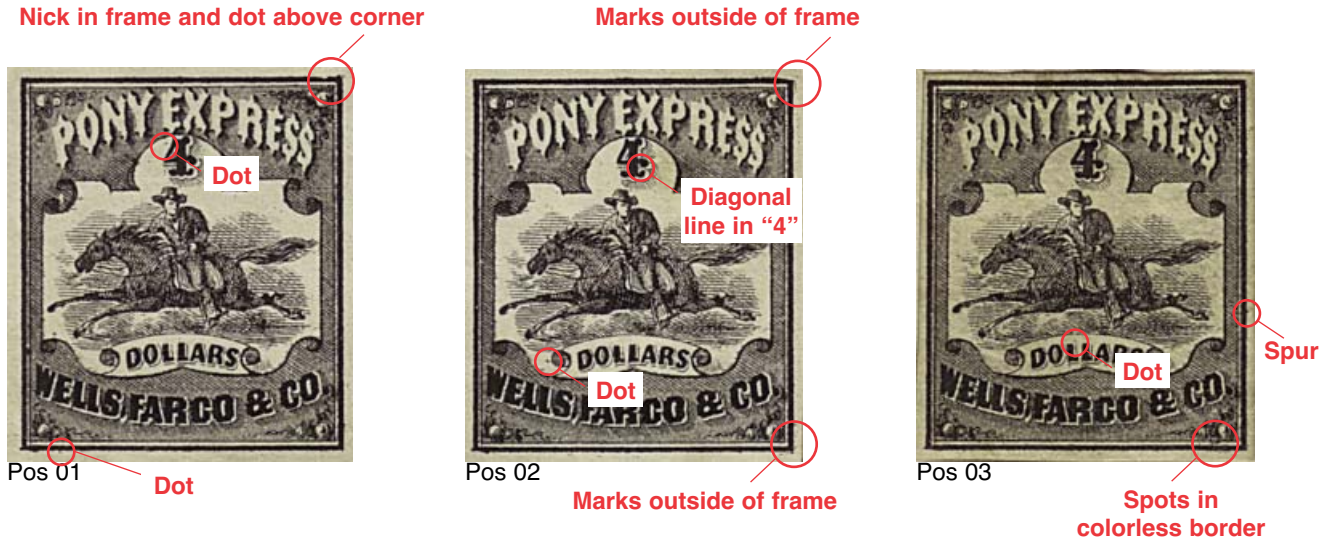
**\$2 PLATING GUIDE**  
**Positions 11-15 (Row 3 of 4)**



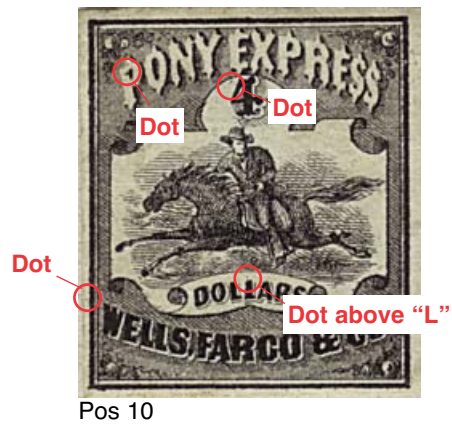
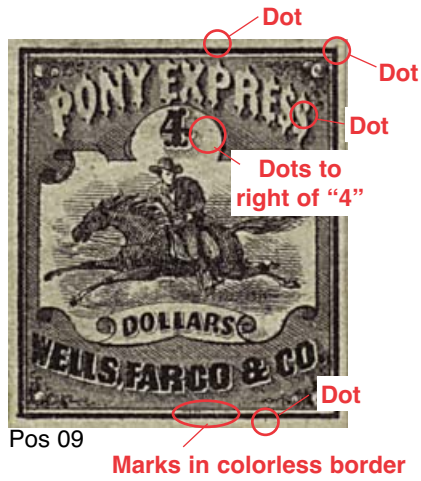
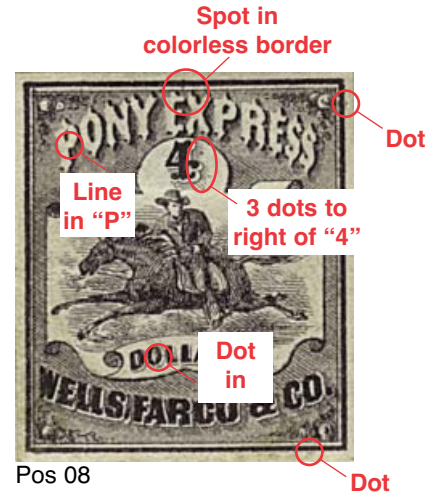
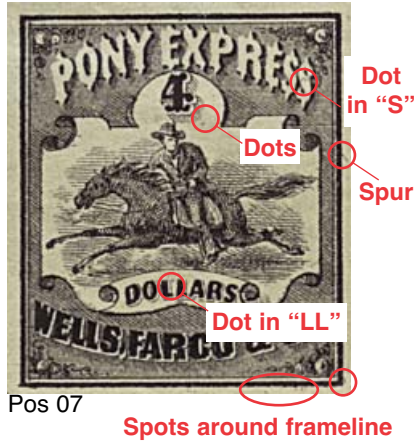
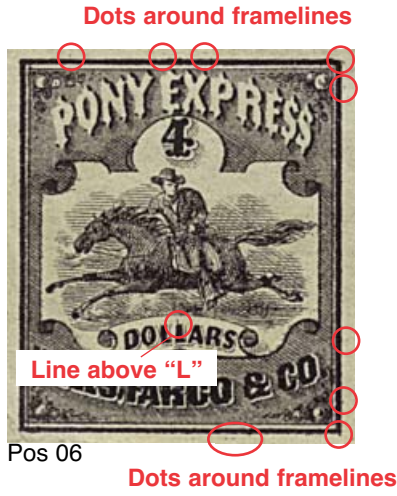
**\$2 PLATING GUIDE**  
**Positions 16-20 (Row 4 of 4)**



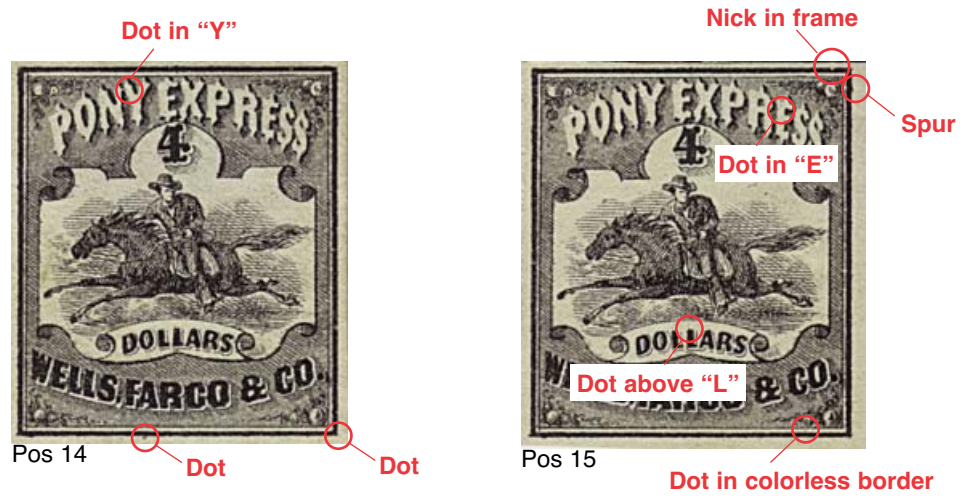
**\$4 PLATING GUIDE**  
**Positions 1-5 (Row 1 of 4)**



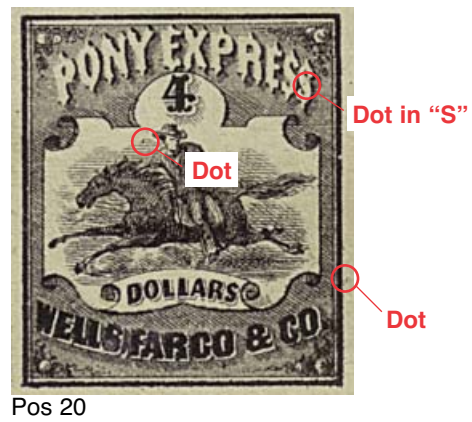
**\$4 PLATING GUIDE**  
**Positions 6-10 (Row 2 of 4)**



**\$4 PLATING GUIDE**  
**Positions 11-15 (Row 3 of 4)**



**\$4 PLATING GUIDE**  
**Positions 16-20 (Row 4 of 4)**





## IDENTIFYING THE TEN TYPES OF TRANSFER GROUP A

Green circles identify repetitive flaws for each Group A Type (except as noted). To match a stamp to a specific position on the printing stone, identify the Type first, then go to corresponding group of four to identify unique plating marks.

**TYPE I**  
Pos L01/03, R01/03  
See page 31

**TYPE II**  
Pos L02/04, R02/04  
See page 32

**TYPE III**  
Pos L05/07, R05/07  
See page 33

**TYPE IV**  
Pos L06/08, R06/08  
See page 34

**TYPE V**  
Pos L09/11, R09/11  
See page 35

**TYPE VI**  
Pos L10/12, R10/12  
See page 36

**TYPE VII**  
Pos L13/15, R13/15  
See page 37

**TYPE VIII**  
Pos L14/16, R14/16  
See page 38

**TYPE IX**  
Pos L17/19, R17/19  
See page 39

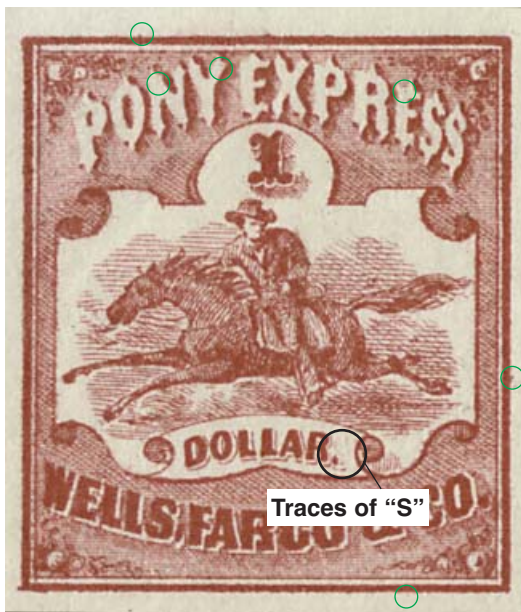
**TYPE X**  
Pos L18/20, R18/20  
See page 40

# TYPE I

## Positions L01/03, R01/03

Green circles identify repetitive flaws for each Group A Type (except as noted).

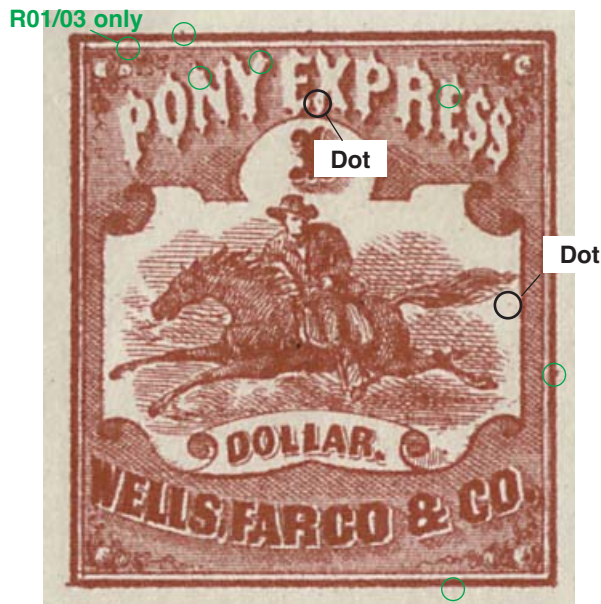
I L01	II L02	I L03	II L04	I R01	II R02	I R03	II R04
III L05	IV L06	III L07	IV L08	III R05	IV R06	III R07	IV R08
V L09	VI L10	V L11	VI L12	V R09	VI R10	V R11	VI R12
VII L13	VIII L14	VII L15	VIII L16	VII R13	VIII R14	VII R15	VIII R16
IX L17	X L18	IX L19	X L20	IX R17	X R18	IX R19	X R20



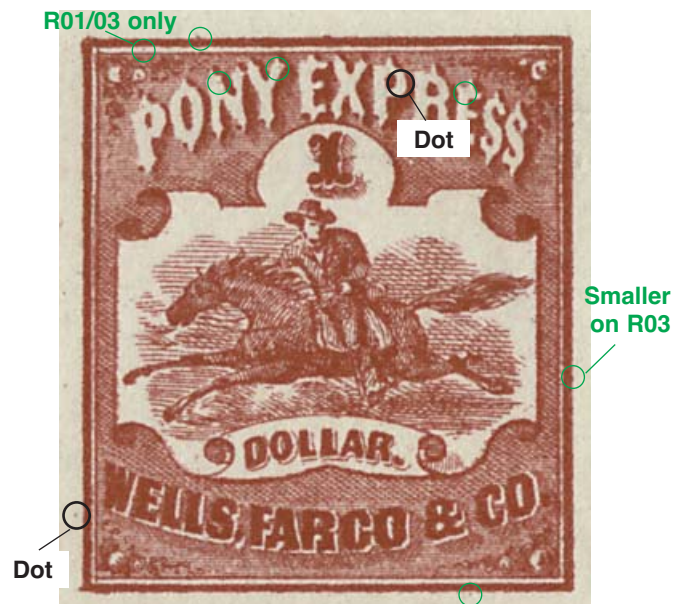
Pos L01



Pos L03



Pos R01



Pos R03

# TYPE II

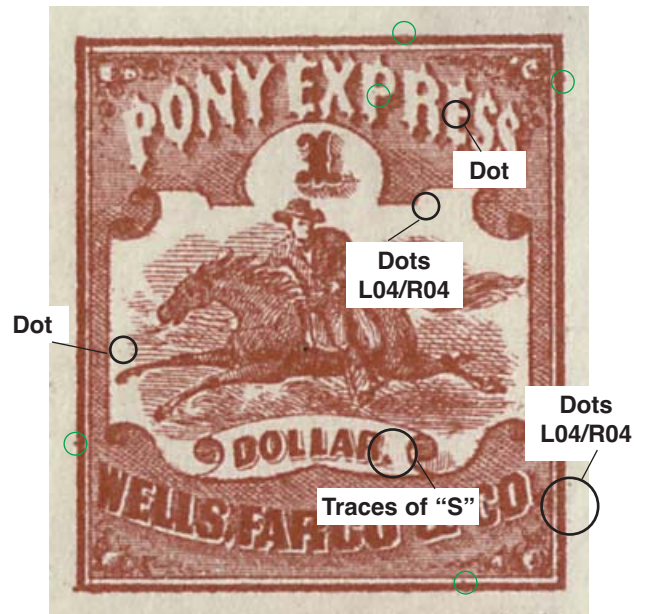
## Positions L02/04, R02/04

Green circles identify repetitive flaws for each Group A Type (except as noted).

I L01	II L02	I L03	II L04	I R01	II R02	I R03	II R04
III L05	IV L06	III L07	IV L08	III R05	IV R06	III R07	IV R08
V L09	VI L10	V L11	VI L12	V R09	VI R10	V R11	VI R12
VII L13	VIII L14	VII L15	VIII L16	VII R13	VIII R14	VII R15	VIII R16
IX L17	X L18	IX L19	X L20	IX R17	X R18	IX R19	X R20



Pos L02

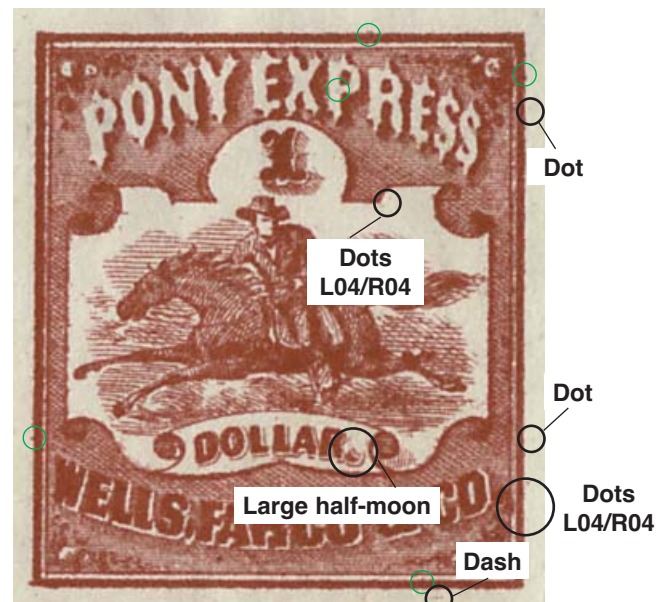


Pos L04



Pos R02

Dot below frame



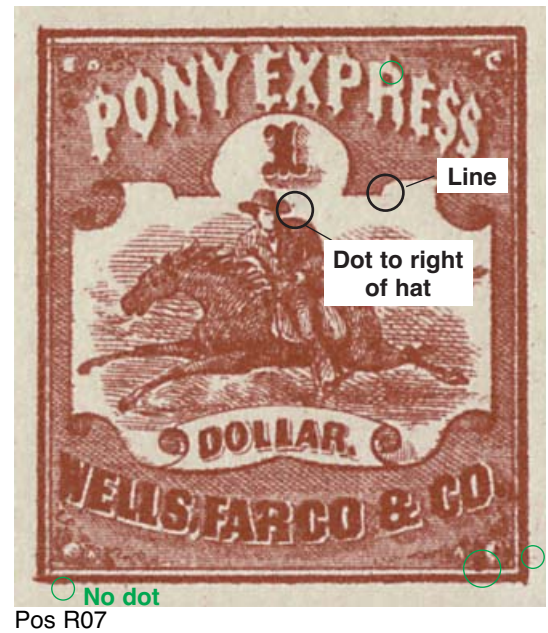
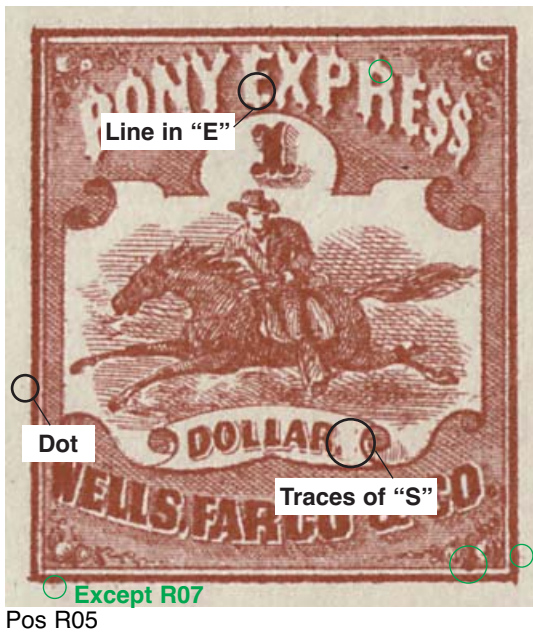
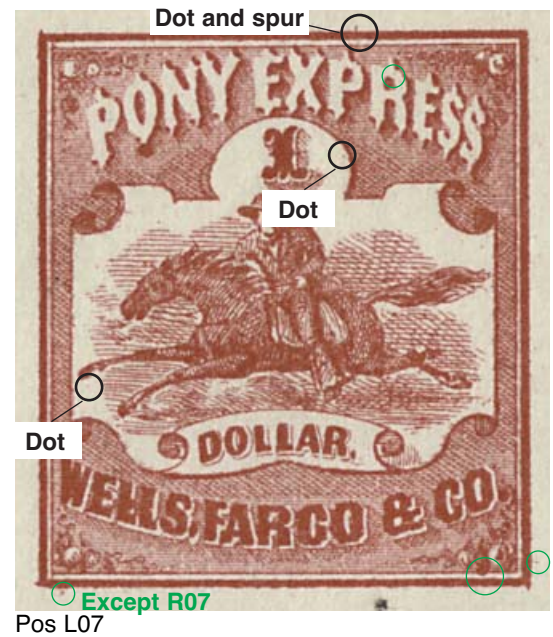
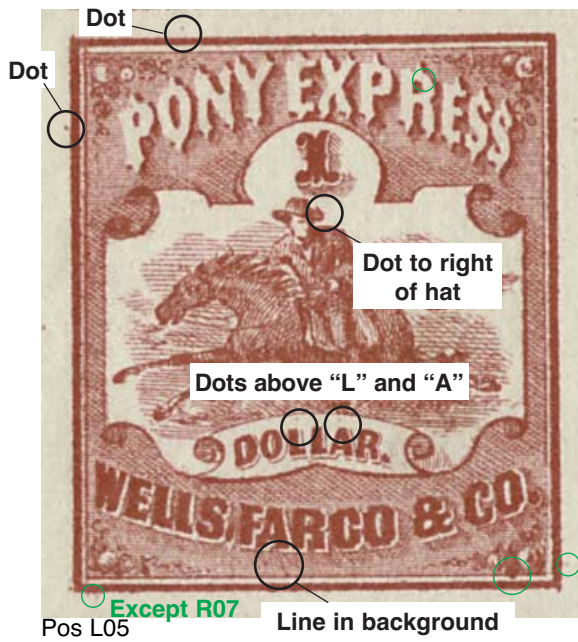
Pos R04

# TYPE III

## Positions L05/07, R05/07

Green circles identify repetitive flaws for each Group A Type (except as noted).

I L01	II L02	I L03	II L04	I R01	II R02	I R03	II R04
III L05	IV L06	III L07	IV L08	III R05	IV R06	III R07	IV R08
V L09	VI L10	V L11	VI L12	V R09	VI R10	V R11	VI R12
VII L13	VIII L14	VII L15	VIII L16	VII R13	VIII R14	VII R15	VIII R16
IX L17	X L18	IX L19	X L20	IX R17	X R18	IX R19	X R20

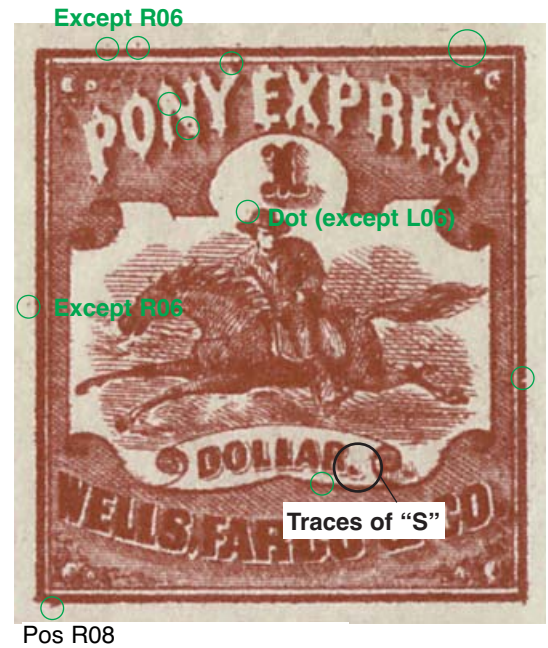
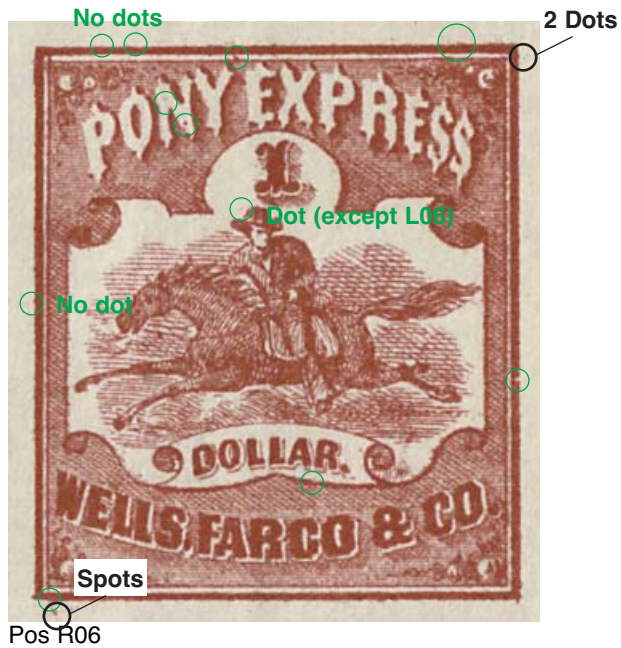
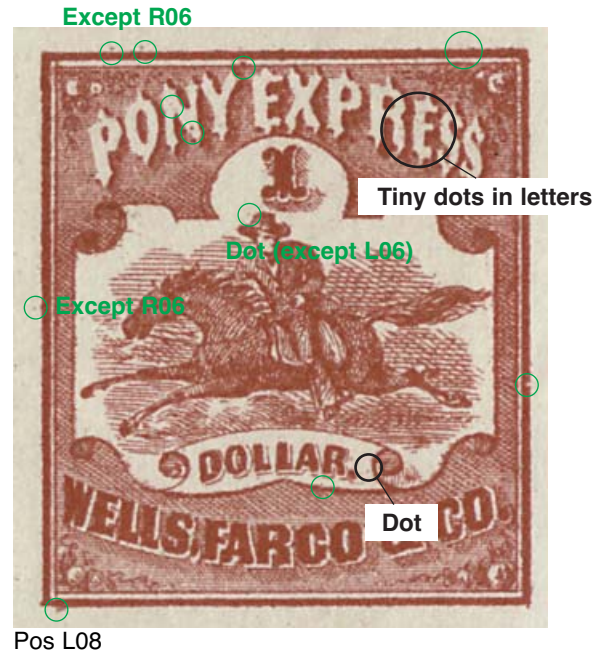
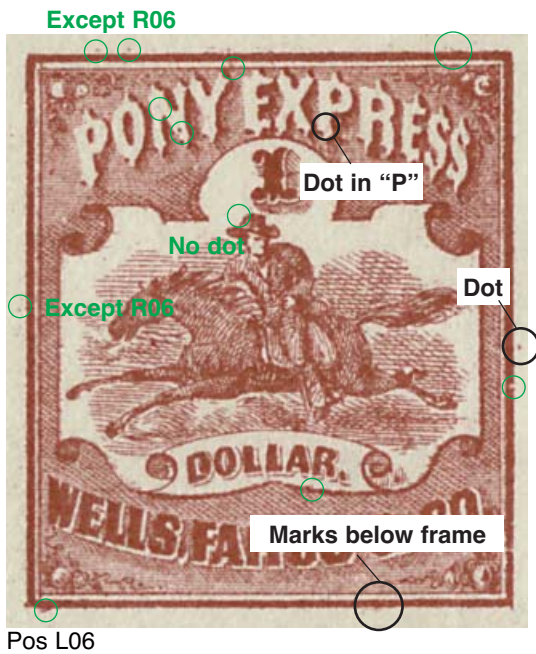


# TYPE IV

## Positions L06/08, R06/08

Green circles identify repetitive flaws for each Group A Type (except as noted).

I L01	II L02	I L03	II L04	I R01	II R02	I R03	II R04
III L05	IV L06	III L07	IV L08	III R05	IV R06	III R07	IV R08
V L09	VI L10	V L11	VI L12	V R09	VI R10	V R11	VI R12
VII L13	VIII L14	VII L15	VIII L16	VII R13	VIII R14	VII R15	VIII R16
IX L17	X L18	IX L19	X L20	IX R17	X R18	IX R19	X R20



# TYPE V

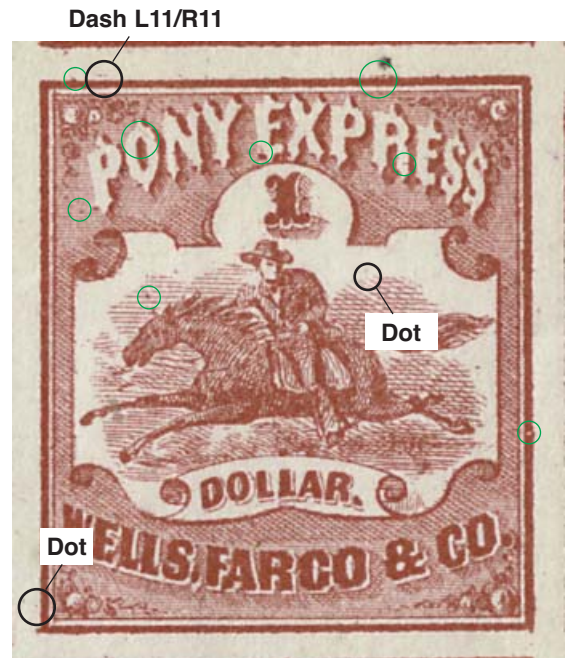
## Positions L09/11, R09/11

Green circles identify repetitive flaws for each Group A Type (except as noted).

I L01	II L02	I L03	II L04	I R01	II R02	I R03	II R04
III L05	IV L06	III L07	IV L08	III R05	IV R06	III R07	IV R08
V L09	VI L10	V L11	VI L12	V R09	VI R10	V R11	VI R12
VII L13	VIII L14	VII L15	VIII L16	VII R13	VIII R14	VII R15	VIII R16
IX L17	X L18	IX L19	X L20	IX R17	X R18	IX R19	X R20



Pos L09



Pos L11



Pos R09



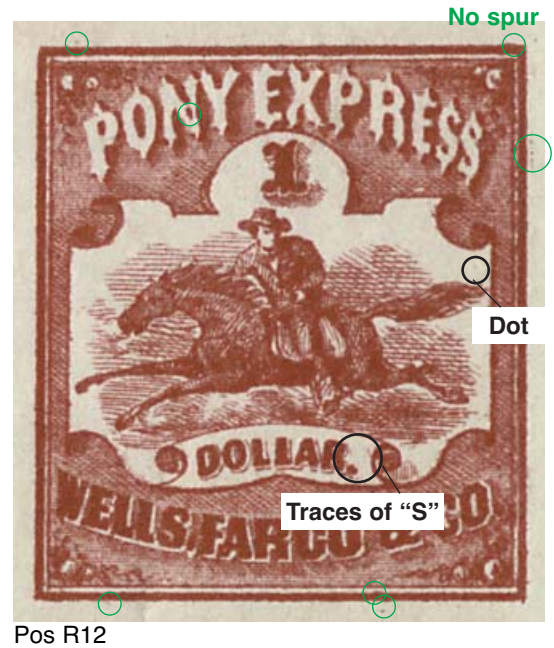
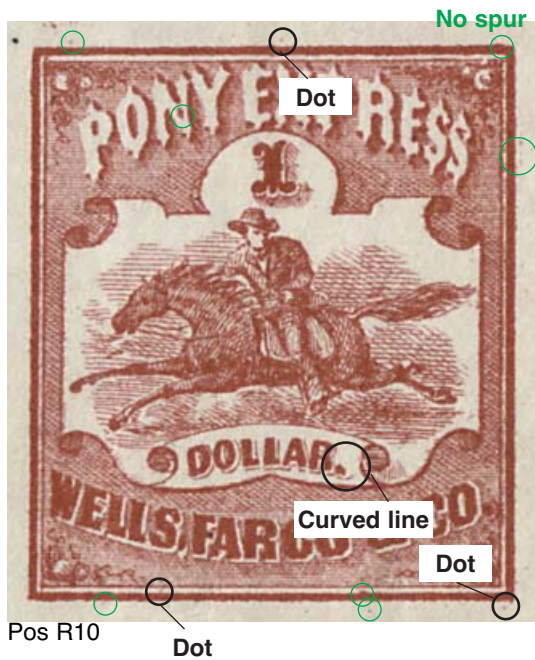
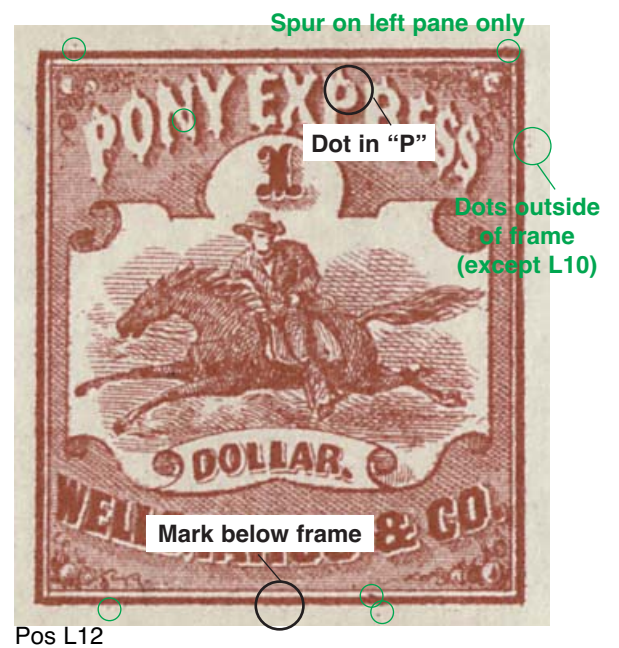
Pos R11

# TYPE VI

## Positions L10/12, R10/12

Green circles identify repetitive flaws for each Group A Type (except as noted).

I L01	II L02	I L03	II L04	I R01	II R02	I R03	II R04
III L05	IV L06	III L07	IV L08	III R05	IV R06	III R07	IV R08
V L09	VI L10	V L11	VI L12	V R09	VI R10	V R11	VI R12
VII L13	VIII L14	VII L15	VIII L16	VII R13	VIII R14	VII R15	VIII R16
IX L17	X L18	IX L19	X L20	IX R17	X R18	IX R19	X R20



# TYPE VII

## Positions L13/15, R13/15

Green circles identify repetitive flaws for each Group A Type (except as noted).

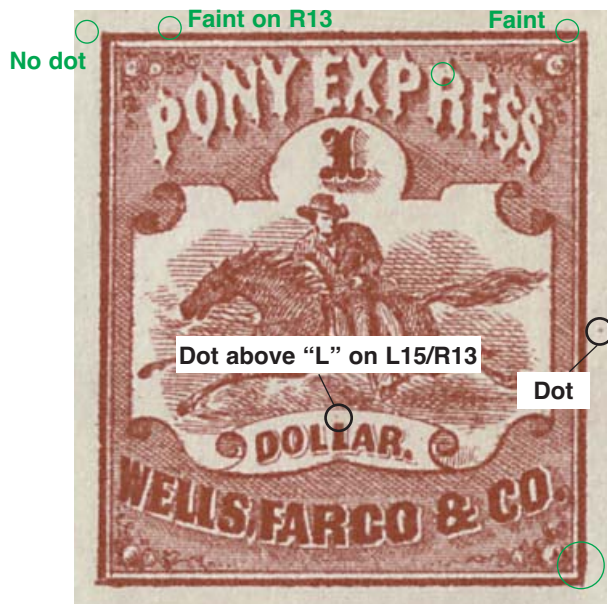
I L01	II L02	I L03	II L04	I R01	II R02	I R03	II R04
III L05	IV L06	III L07	IV L08	III R05	IV R06	III R07	IV R08
V L09	VI L10	V L11	VI L12	V R09	VI R10	V R11	VI R12
VII L13	VIII L14	VII L15	VIII L16	VII R13	VIII R14	VII R15	VIII R16
IX L17	X L18	IX L19	X L20	IX R17	X R18	IX R19	X R20



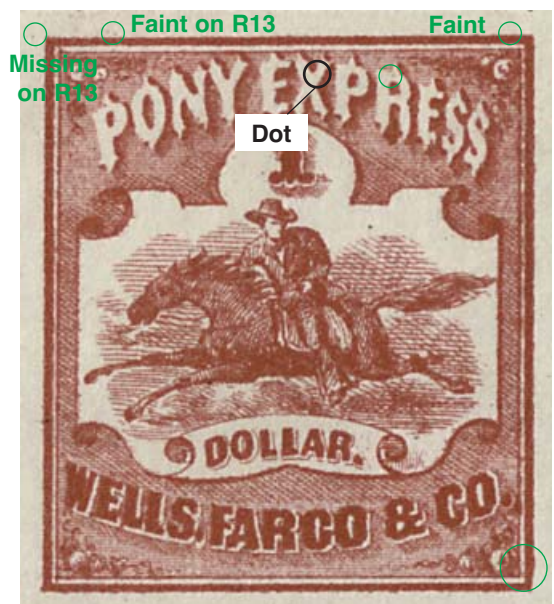
Pos L13



Pos L15



Pos R13



Pos R15

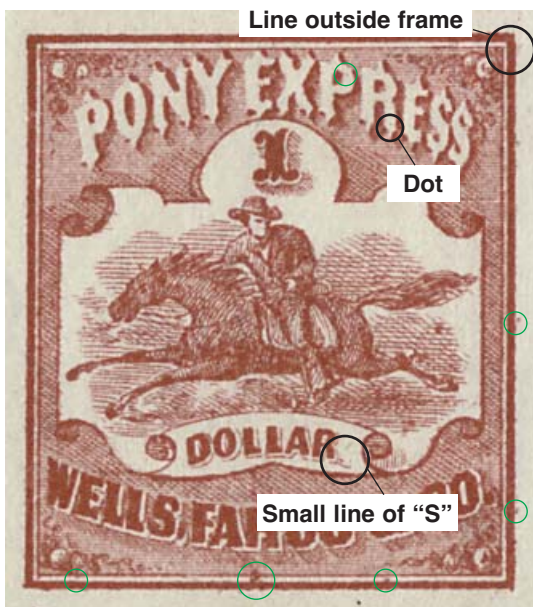


# TYPE VIII

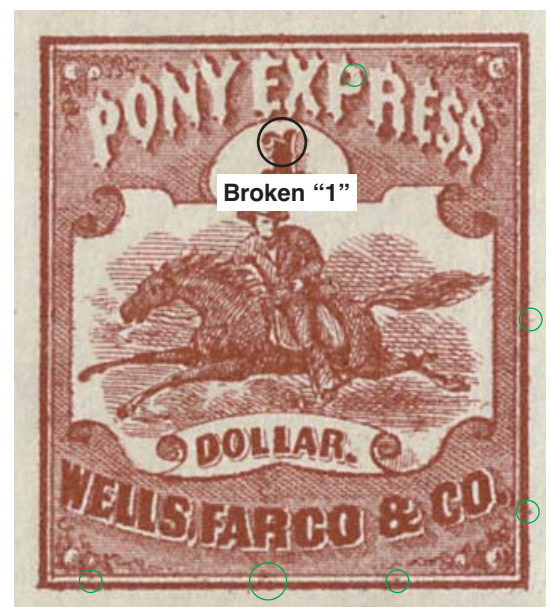
## Positions L14/16, R14/16

Green circles identify repetitive flaws for each Group A Type (except as noted).

I L01	II L02	I L03	II L04	I R01	II R02	I R03	II R04
III L05	IV L06	III L07	IV L08	III R05	IV R06	III R07	IV R08
V L09	VI L10	V L11	VI L12	V R09	VI R10	V R11	VI R12
VII L13	VIII L14	VII L15	VIII L16	VII R13	VIII R14	VII R15	VIII R16
IX L17	X L18	IX L19	X L20	IX R17	X R18	IX R19	X R20



Pos L14 Fainter on L16, R14, R16



Pos L16 Fainter on L16, R14, R16



Pos R14 Fainter on L16, R14, R16



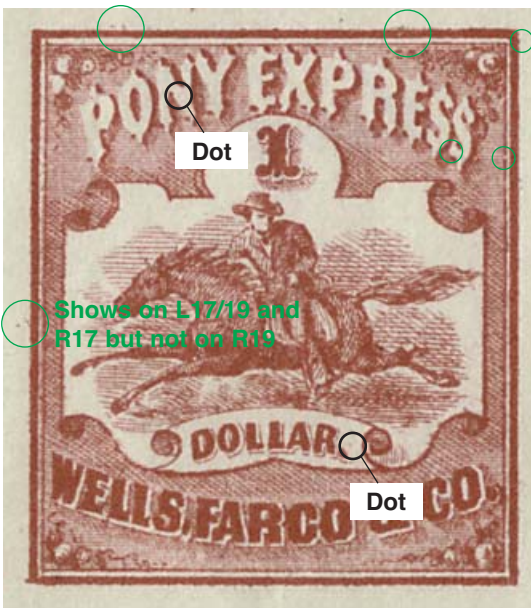
Pos R16 Fainter on L16, R14, R16

# TYPE IX

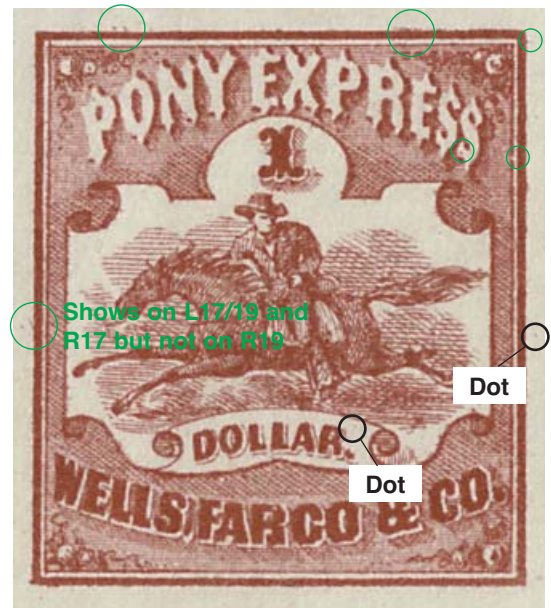
## Positions L17/19, R17/19

Green circles identify repetitive flaws for each Group A Type (except as noted).

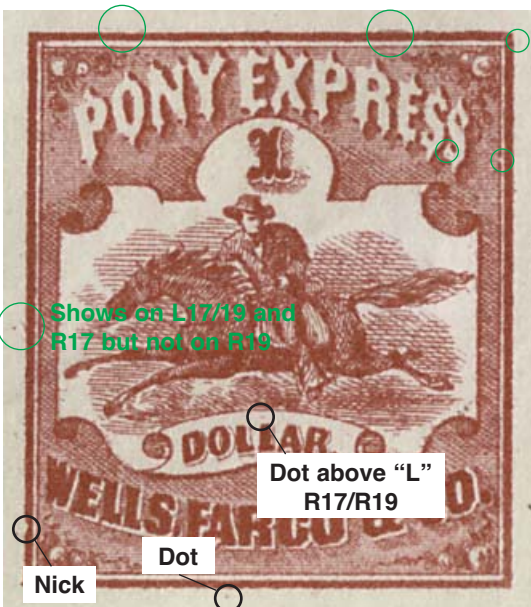
I L01	II L02	I L03	II L04	I R01	II R02	I R03	II R04
III L05	IV L06	III L07	IV L08	III R05	IV R06	III R07	IV R08
V L09	VI L10	V L11	VI L12	V R09	VI R10	V R11	VI R12
VII L13	VIII L14	VII L15	VIII L16	VII R13	VIII R14	VII R15	VIII R16
IX L17	X L18	IX L19	X L20	IX R17	X R18	IX R19	X R20



Pos L17



Pos L19



Pos R17



Pos R19

# TYPE X

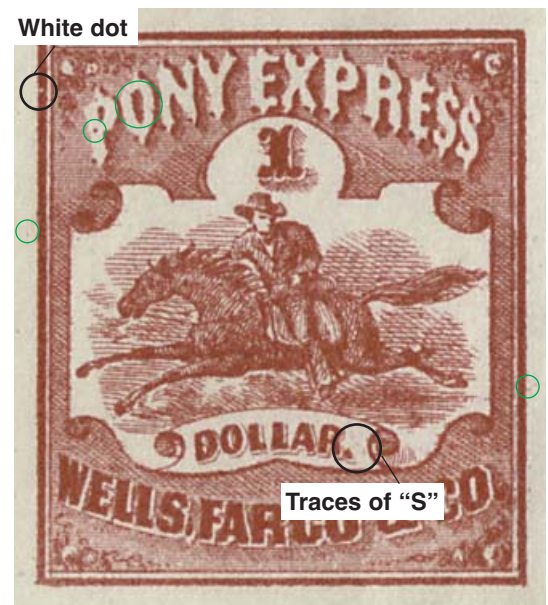
## Positions L18/20, R18/20

Green circles identify repetitive flaws for each Group A Type (except as noted).

I L01	II L02	I L03	II L04	I R01	II R02	I R03	II R04
III L05	IV L06	III L07	IV L08	III R05	IV R06	III R07	IV R08
V L09	VI L10	V L11	VI L12	V R09	VI R10	V R11	VI R12
VII L13	VIII L14	VII L15	VIII L16	VII R13	VIII R14	VII R15	VIII R16
IX L17	X L18	IX L19	X L20	IX R17	X R18	IX R19	X R20



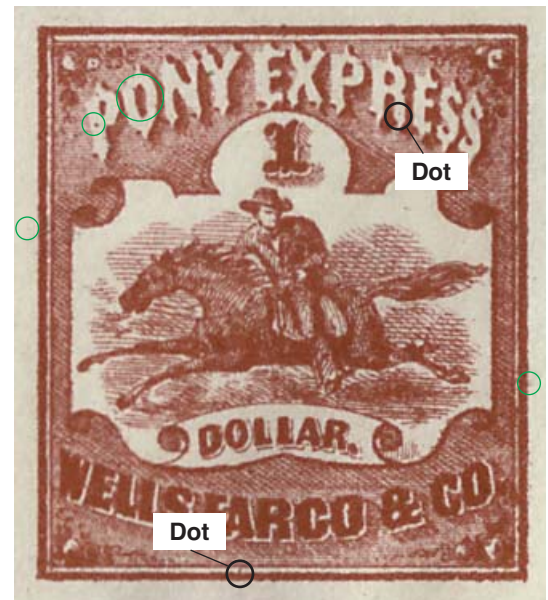
Pos L18



Pos L20



Pos R18



Pos R20