

The Expert's Corner

By J. Randall Shoemaker

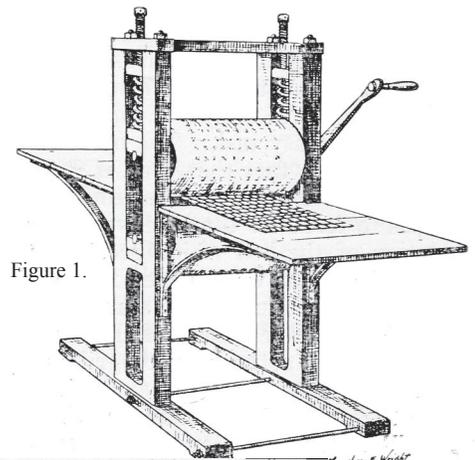
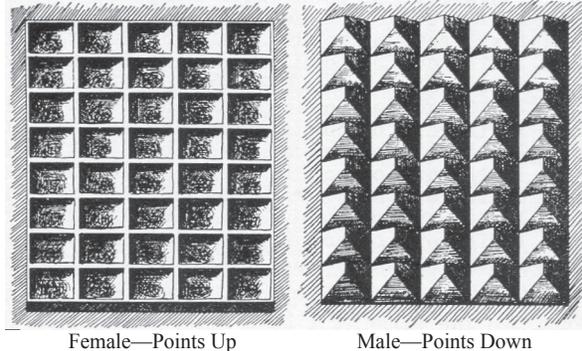


Figure 1.

Figures 2 and 2a.



The Grilled Issues - Part 1

The Civil War had ended and money was tight. The Government was sensitive to this and the volume of mail was expanding rapidly. During this period many smaller post offices were not yet provided with cancelling devices and it was common practice for the Postmasters in these areas to use a pen and ink to cancel the stamps on the mail. For enterprising fraudsters, this made it easy to make the stamps appear unused with the aid of simple ink eradicator solutions.

The perception at the time, whether warranted in fact or not, was that there might be widespread 're-use' of these cleaned stamps and thus the means of preventing this process was sought. Ideas were solicited and several inventors sprang forth with all sorts of techniques and inventions.

One such promising invention was granted a patent by the U.S. Patent Office as Patent No. 70,147 by Charles F. Steele of Brooklyn, N.Y., dated October 22, 1867, titled "Improvement in the Manufacture of Postage Stamps." His patent outlined the use of embossing or partially breaking the stamp paper fibers so as to open the texture of the paper making it more difficult to remove the cancelling ink. This patent was evidently applied for long after this idea had been accepted and actually put into practice since the first Grilled stamps appeared on mail dated August 13, 1867, over two months *before* the patent was granted.

Maybe the government moved faster in those days, but it is still likely that it took upwards of a year to refine the entire process to the point of actual concept, production, distribution, sales and use. While the design of the actual machine (Figure 1) that performed the grilling is up for some debate, the fact is that the process was performed and the stamps were issued.

The grilling process was embossed into the stamp paper using a Female (Biscuit Grill) grill on 'A', 'B' and 'C' grills and a Male grill for all the subsequent grills through the Bank Note grills of 1875 (Figure 2-2a). Prevailing thought would indicate that several sheets were stacked, maybe 5 to 6 at a time, and grilled all at once (Figure 3). This gives rise to varying intensity, clarity and completeness of the grill from one sheet to another, even within the same sheet. I've even seen pairs with one grilled and one not grilled! And for whatever reason, 24c, 30, & 90c Grilled Bank Notes rarely come with anything close to a complete grill impression, many with only a few points visible. These items should al-

ways be purchased with a certificate of authenticity or with the transaction left 'open' until a certificate is obtained.

In order to properly identify each grill, you need to determine whether the grill is points up (A, B, C) or points down, the grill count both horizontally and vertically and the grill point structure. To make counting easier, you can rub some #2 pencil lead on a piece of paper then very gently rub this graphite onto the back of the stamp in the grilled area. Use a very minimal pressure on the grill so as not to lay down too much graphite on the tips. You need just enough to see the points with a 4X loupe (Figure 4). Then simply count the points. Pick a row or two in each direction that seems complete. That way you will get an accurate count. See Figure 3 for the point count, grill area size and grill structures. Note that some grills are incomplete and thus are difficult to measure and point structure becomes more important than the actual count.

See Figure 5 for good examples of each of the grills from 1867 to 1875. An important point to consider in determining genuineness of a grill is the spacing of the actual points in the grill. The distance between the points both horizontally and vertically should be equal and evenly spaced throughout. If the spacing is irregular, even if only in some areas, chances are you are looking at a FAKE GRILL. Note how uniform the points are spaced in Figure 5 on all the various grills A-Z.

For a detailed analysis of the Bank Note Grills ('H' and 'I'), please refer to *Scott U.S. Specialized Catalogue of United States*, 2013 Edition, pages 34-36.

Next month we will get into the finer points of spacing and grill point structure!

Attributes: *The United States Postage Stamps of the 19th Century*, Vol. II, by Lester G. Brookman. ✉

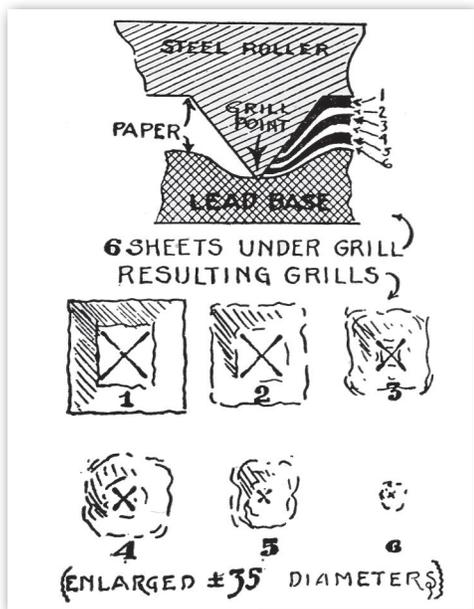


Figure 3.



Figure 4. After applying graphite lightly to grill points on an 'E' Grill.

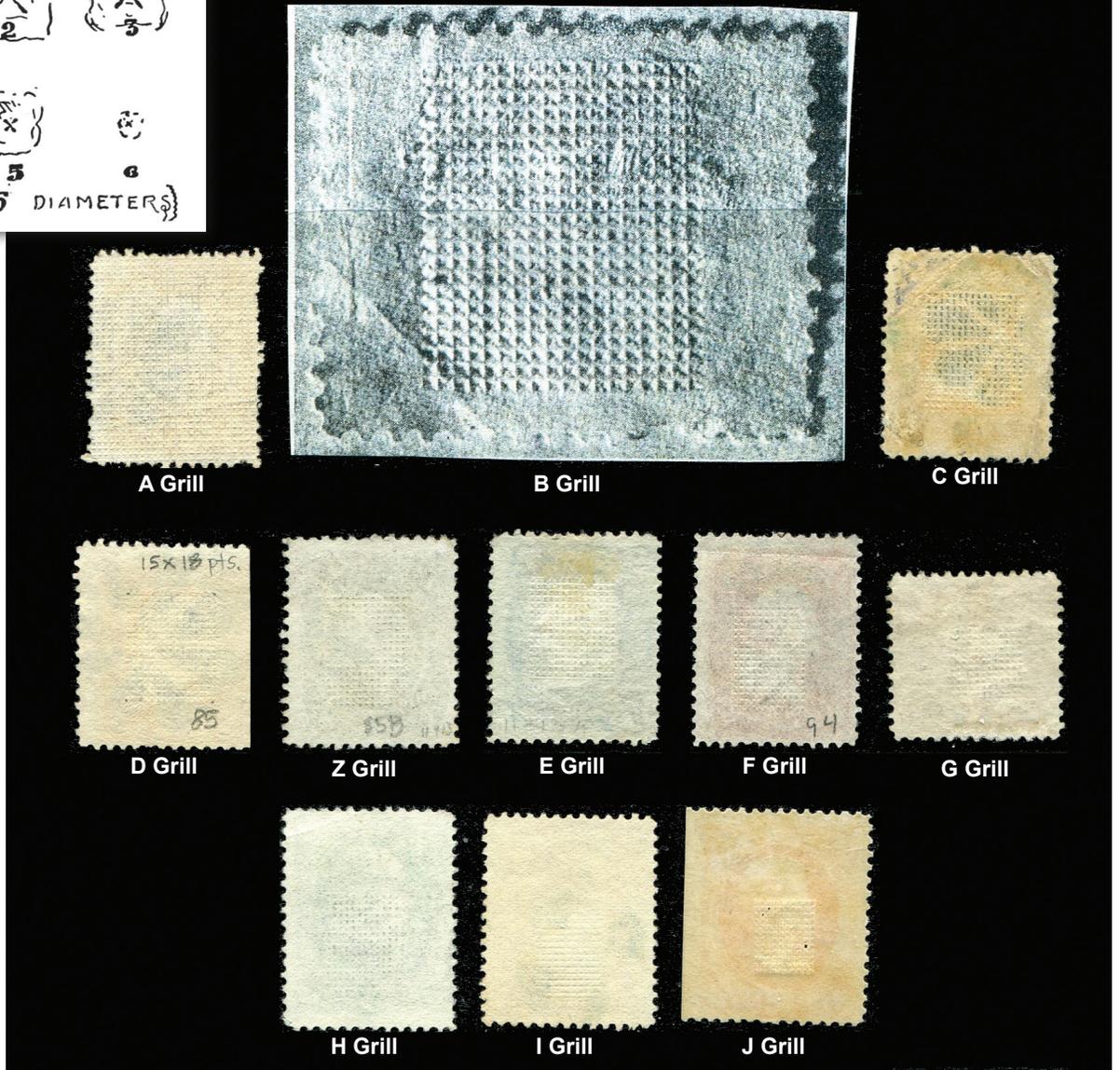


Figure 5.

GRILL	POINTS UP/ DOWN	SIZE (mm)	POINTS
A	UP	ALL OVER	ALL OVER
B	UP	18 x 15mm	22 X 18 points
C	UP	13 x 16mm	16-17 X 18-21 points
D	DOWN	12 x 14mm	15 X 17-18 points
Z	DOWN	11 x 14mm	13-14 X 17-18 points
E	DOWN	11 x 13mm	14 X 15-17 points
F	DOWN	9 x 13mm	11-12 X 15-17 points
G	DOWN	9 ½ X 9 ½ mm	11-12 X 11-12 points
H	DOWN	10 X 12mm	11-13 X 14-16 points
I	DOWN	8 ½ X 10mm	10-11 X 10-13 points
J	DOWN	7 X 9 ½ mm	10 X 12 points