1908-1922 Washington-Franklin Designs – Easy Identification Guide – By Bill Weiss and Scott Payton

Probably no specialized group of United States postage stamps cause as many problems for collectors to identify as the 1908-1922 Regular Issues commonly referred to as "Washington/Franklins" (hereafter "W/F" in this article). The problems occur because there were different printing processes used (flat plate, rotary plate and offset – all will be further defined later), differing designs, differing perf gauges, coiled stamps and non-coiled stamps, and stamps made from different paper types.

So while confusion is understandable, we believe that this article will help the reader to more easily and accurately identify the stamp in front of them. This information is arranged by a text presentation followed by a matrix and, where warranted, illustrations. It is assumed that the reader either understands basic differences in watermarks, perforation gauges and printing methods or can easily learn them by reading the information available in several books including the Scott catalog, The Expert's Book, Johl's books on 20th Century U.S. Stamps, and others. Note that all numbers in this article are the Scott Catalog numbers.

The authors have used a PROCESS OF ELIMINATION to quickly separate the W/F Issues as follows;

- 1. Which of the major designs is it?
- A. The first W/F sets have the vignette design of Washington and 1c and 2c values expressed in words, the following sets have values expressed in numerals, and the last with vignette design of Franklin. The designs we are concerned with are Scott's A138, A139, A140 and A148.
- 2. Is it a coil stamp or a non-coil (perforated or imperforate) stamp?
- 3. If it is a coil stamp, which of the designs is it?
- 4. If it is a perforated or imperf stamp, which of the designs is it?
- 5. If it is either a coil or perforated stamp, what gauge are the perforations?
- 6. After we determine each of the above, depending on the outcome, we identify the printing method used is it printed by flat plate, rotary or offset printed?
- A. FLAT PLATE-printed stamps were simply printed on a plate laying on a flat bed and can be identified by several characteristics; gum on unused stamps is flat, having no ridges, and often displaying "set-off" on the back side (traces of ink offset from the sheet of stamps stacked above). Flat plate printed stamps also generally have sharper impressions than rotary or offset and display NO excess inking.
- B. ROTARY printing is done on a plate which is curved around a cylinder ad can be identified by; unused stamps usually have gum which has ridges in it, the back side does not have set-off,

the front side often displays excess ink streaks which are usually quite evident, especially in the whiter areas of the stamp, and the design of rotary stamps is usually a bit taller or wider than flat or offset stamps.

- C. OFFSET or offset lithography can be identified because the impressions are not as clear as if printed by flat and unused/OG stamps have flat gum, not ridged as rotary does and may also show set-off on back whereas rotary does not. Only the 1920 Issue (Scott 525-536) are offset printed in the W/F stamps.
- 7. Is it watermarked or not? If so, which of the two watermarks is it (Single or Double Line)?
- 8. What is the perforation gauge?
- A. The Specialist Gauge (invented by R. Kiusalas c.1965) is recommended for accurate perf gauge identification which is critical for success in identifying the W/F issues.
- 9. If it is a 2c stamp design, which TYPE is it? Note that there are seven (7) different types that must be learned. All are illustrated in the books already noted.
- 10. If it is a 3c stamp design, which TYPE is it? There are four. Easy to differentiate.

When we apply this process of elimination, it can quickly identify most W/F stamps that you are ever likely to encounter. It is not likely that you will ever see one of the rare compound perfs, but even if you do, a careful check of the perf gauge can also ID these rarities (caution – they are very commonly faked).

The following is a list separating all of the different W/F design sets or single items using the process of elimination list as described.

- 1. Which design is it?
- A. DESIGN A138 has "ONE CENT" spelled out at bottom and the portrait of Franklin. Possibilities by Scott number are;
- a. 331, 343, 348, 352, 357, 374, 383, 385, 387, 390, 392 and booklet pane singles 331a, 374a.
- B. DESIGN A139 has "TWO CENTS" spelled out at bottom and portrait of Washington. Possibilities by Scott number are;
- a. 332, 344, 349, 353, 358, 375, 384, 386, 388, 391, 393, 519 and 332a and 375a.
- C. DESIGN A140 has "1CENTS1" at bottom for all values and portrait of Washington. There are 29 possible stamps depending on perf gauge, coil, sheet stamp, perf or imperf, etc.
- D. The other denominations from 3c to \$1.00 all have multiple possible ID based on the other factors previously listed. It is only important that you understand that there are many possible IDs, which will be further revealed as we use the process.
- 2. If it is a 2c or 3c stamp of design A140, which type is it? The various types are illustrated in Scott, the Expert's Book, Johl and elsewhere.
- 3. Is it a coil or non-coil? If it is a coil stamp, the possibilities are;
- A. Scott 348-356, 386-396, 410-413, 441-459, 486-497;

- B. If it is an imperf stamp, the possibilities are; Scott 343-347, 383-384, 408-409, 481-485, 531-535.
- 4. If it is a coil, which design and which gauge and watermark is it?
- A. Possibilities are Perf 12 (#348-356 or 385-389), Perf 8.5 (#390-396 or 410-413), Perf 10 (#441-458, 486-497, 536). See also item #8 in this list for order of issue by gauge;
- 5. If it is a sheet stamp which gauge and watermark is it?
- Possibilities are; Perf 12 (#331-342, 357-366, 374-382, 405-407 and 414-423). Perf 10 are (460,462-478, 542-543). Perf 11 are (461, 498-518, 525-528B, 538-541, 544-546a) and Perf Errors (424a-428a). Also booklet singles (#331a,332a,374a,375a,405b,406a, 424d, 425e, 462a, 463a, 498e, 498f, 499e, 499f, 501b, 502b).
- 6. What is the printing method?
- A. If it is Flat Plate printed, possibilities are; (#331-342, 343-347, 348-356, 357-366, 374-382, 385-389, 390-396, 405-407, 410-413, 414-423, 424-440, 424a-428a, 441-447, 461, 462-478, 498-518 and 519 plus booklet singles);
- B. If it is Rotary printed the possibilities are (#448-458, 486-497, 543 plus booklet singles);
- C. If it is Offset printed the possibilities are (#525-536);
- D. The last category is stamps printed from coil or sheet waste and they are (#538-542, 545-546, 546a).
- 7. Is it watermarked or not?
- A. If it IS watermarked DOUBLE-LINE, the possibilities are; (#331-342, 343-347,348-356, 357-366 and 519 plus booklet singles);
- B. If it is watermarked SINGLE-LINE, the possibilities are; (#374-382, 385-396, 405-407, 410-440, 424a-428a, 441-458, 460, 461 plus booklet singles);
- C. If it is NOT watermarked, the possibilities are; 462-485, 498-518, 525-536, 538-546 plus booklet singles.
- 8. What is the perf gauge?
- A. In order of appearance, the possibilities are;
- a. Perf 12 (#331-342, 348-356, 357-366, 374-382, 385-389, 405-407, 414-423 and booklet singles);
- b. Perf 8.5 (#390-396 and 410-413);
- c. Perf 10 (#424-440, 441-460, 462-478, 543 and booklet singles;
- d. Perf 11 (#461,498-518, 519, 525-528B, 544-546 and booklet singles;
- e. Perf 12.5 (#536);
- f. Compound perfs (#424a-428a, 538-542, 546a).

NOTE – SPECIALIST GAUGE READINGS

The following is a listing of the Specialist Gauge readings in the order that the stamps are listed in Scott. The list was originally compiled by (I believe) the APS Expert Committee.

SCOTT No.	SPECIALIST GAUGE	SCOTT No.	SPECIALIST GAUGE
331-342	12-66	460	10-79
348-356	12-66	461	11-72
357-366	12-66	462-478	10-79
374-382	12-66	486-497	10-80
385-389	12-66	498-518	11-72
390-396	8.5-95	519	11-72
405-407	12-66	525-530	11-72
410-413	8.5-95	536	12.5-63
414-423	12-66	538-541	11-72 X 10.80
424-440	10-79	542	10-80 X 11-73
423A	12-66 X 10-79	543	10-80
423B	12-66 X 10-79	544 11-7	2 or 11-73 at top or
423C	12-66 X 10-79	bott	om or both X 11-72
423D	10-79 X 12-66	545-546	11-72
423E	10-79 X 12-66	546a 11-7	2 X 11-72 X 11-72 X 10-80
441-447	10-79		
448-458	10-80		