

The 1926 International Philatelic Exhibition Souvenir Sheet: Identification and Usages

This exhibit recognizes the various identification markers on the 1926 U.S. Souvenir Sheet and traces its usage on mail during the philatelic exhibition.

Due to political pressure by congressmen and prominent political figures in upstate New York state, a commemorative stamp was issued to honor the Battle of White Plains, New York that took place in 1776 during the Revolutionary War. The stamp was scheduled to be issued in October 1926. Due to a decrease in the stamp producing budget for the Bureau of Engraving and Printing, a stamp was produced that was the same size and the current regularly issued stamps as opposed as the current commemorative size. Twice the number of stamps could be produced on the same sheet (100 vs 50).

Scheduled for 1926 was the International Philatelic Exhibition in New York. An International Exhibit is held in the United States and other countries every 10 years. The exhibit in 1926 was the first for the United States.

The show's executive committee planned to create a miniature sheet of common 2c stamps to sell at the show. The Post Office realized the potential of profit in this idea and were convinced to use the Battle of White Plains design to create the first United States souvenir sheet.

This exhibit will show the following aspects of the issuance of the souvenir sheet:

- 1) Cancellations on the first day of usage.
- 2) Cancellations used at the exposition.
- 3) Discerning souvenir sheet stamps from regularly issued stamps.
- 4) Printing varieties known on the souvenir sheet.

Bibliography

United States Stamps 1922-26 Gary Griffith 1997
2012 Scott Specialized Catalogue of United States Stamps & Covers, Scott Publishing Company
Durland Standard Plate Number Catalog, United States Stamp Society 1994
Encyclopedia of Plate Varieties on US Bureau-Printed Postage Stamps, Loren French 1979

First Day Cancels

The International Philatelic Exhibition was scheduled to start on October 16 and run for 10 days. The date of the first day of issue for the Battle of White Plains stamp was moved up to the Monday of the Exhibition in order to draw patrons back to the show who may have already attended on Saturday.



First Day Cancells

Due to the size of the White Plains souvenir sheets, many were broken and individual stamps were placed on envelopes to receive first day cancels. Singles and blocks were used showing the tell-tale signs that the stamps did originate from souvenir sheets.



Shown are two covers mailed from the exhibition on October 18, the first day of issue. The message portion of the cancel reads "International Philatelic Exhibition Station".



First Day Cancellations

Some collectors wanting an unusual souvenir purchased souvenir sheets at the exhibition and took them to White Plains, N.Y., applied them to envelopes and received a first day cancel from there. Others took their souvenir sheets to the Sesquicentennial Exhibition in Philadelphia and other destinations to receive October 18 cancellations.

This piece was cancelled at the Sesquicentennial Exhibition in Philadelphia with a Model Post Office cancel.



This envelope is canceled on the reverse with a "White Plains, N.Y. REGISTERED OCT 18 1926" cancel.

Exposition Cancels

Two types of cancels were used for regular mail at the Exhibition. A machine cancel with a New York, N.Y. circle date cancel and message killer that read "International Philatelic Exhibition Station" and a large hand cancel that read "New York (Intl Philatelic Exhibition Sta.) N. Y. with date and time. I have seen the hand cancel in purple and black.



The cover and piece shown have both types of cancels applied. The hand stamp was applied as a 'favor' to the cover to make a nice souvenir as opposed to canceling the additional stamps in the block above.



Exposition Cancels

A third cancel was used for registered items that were mailed from the Exhibition. This hand stamp cancel was similar to the regular handstamp except the word "REGISTERED" is added.



In this example, a portion of a souvenir sheet has been added to a stamped envelope that had been issued to commemorate the concurrently running Sesquicentennial Exhibition in Philadelphia. The added 20c of stamps paid the registered fee.

Differences

The primary difference between the Battle of White Plains stamps issued nationwide and the stamps issued in souvenir sheet format is the additional wording in the margins. "INTERNATIONAL PHILATELIC EXHIBITION OCT 16th to 23rd 1926" is across the top and "NEW YORK N.Y. U.S.A." is printed across the bottom. Another difference is the plate numbers used to produce the stamps. The plates used are as follows:

nationwide issue 18765 18766 18767 18768 18769
souvenir sheet issue 18770 18771 18772 18773 18774

Sheets produced from plate number 18772 were only produced at the Exhibition in demonstrations. These sheets were to be sold to collectors as 'special printings' but protests from dealers and collectors stopped this. The 700 sheets produced along with the printing plate were destroyed.



Shown above are the bottom margins of souvenir sheets produced using the four printing plates used in production of the souvenir sheets. They have matching October 18 1926 first day cancels from Washington, D.C.

Differences

Collectors of plate blocks usually place a complete souvenir sheet in their collection to have an example of the issue. However, at the time of issuance, souvenir sheets were did not sell at high premiums above other issues. Souvenir sheets were broken and standard plate blocks of six were collected. Today many dealers and collectors misidentify plate blocks broken from souvenir sheets as plate blocks from the standard sheets.

Plate numbers printed on souvenir sheets can be identified from their size as well as their numbers (as shown on the previous page). Plate numbers from souvenir sheets measure approximately $9\frac{1}{2}$ mm versus 13 mm for plate numbers printed on standard sheets.



The plate block on the left was taken from the standard sheet and has a larger plate number than the plate block taken from a souvenir sheet, shown on the right.

Sheet Varieties

There are three stamps on the souvenir sheets that have plate flaws that distinguish them from stamps produced in the regular sheets. A dot can be easily seen over the first "S" in "States" on the stamp in the ninth position on the lower left sheet produced by plate 18774 and on the eleventh position of the lower left sheets produced by plate 18773. Not as easily seen is a scratch through the "C" in "Cents" on the stamp in the third position on the lower left sheet produced by plate 18774. A small premium is added to the value of sheets with these varieties.



The souvenir sheet above has the 'dot over the S in States' variety on the ninth stamp.