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From the Stamp Specialist: **A Study of the Post Office Seals of the United States, Part 2**

by Prescott Holden Thorp

*From The Stamp Specialist Blue Book, #1,
published in 1939, with images added*

Updates are in brackets; Scott numbers are 2015 numbers.

The Typographed Seals of 1907 to 1917

In 1907 a new seal was issued by the department in design similar to the earlier lithographed seals but in much reduced size. At first these seals were printed in blue on white paper, but in 1916 a seal was printed in black on pink paper [Sc. OX17, see top of next column]. In 1917 the seal was printed in black [Sc. OX18d, see top of next column]. Regarding their printing Mr. Luff has noted in the Hatfield collec-



Above, 1916 black on pink, Sc. OX17, on locally delivered 1916 window envelope "Received in Bad Condition/at St. Louis, Mo." and repaired with three official seals; Right, 1917 gray black on white, in a vertical pair imperf between, Sc. OX18d.

A pane of ten of the 1919 indigo, perf 12 (Sc. OX19). This stamp is not listed with a watermark.

tion: “these seals appear to have been printed in sheets of twenty which were bound in books. Some post offices were supplied with sheets of ten which were probably made by cutting the larger sheets in two.” Sheets of ten are imperf top and bottom and sometimes show signs of perforations on the cut margins.

The blue stamp, (Cat. OX12-OX16) is known printed on paper with a sheet watermark consisting of the Seal of the U.S. covering 12 stamps [Sc. OX13a, OX14a, OX15b, OX16a]. No varieties not listed in the catalog are noted.



Typographed Seals of 1919-1937

In 1919 [Sc. OX19] the design of the seals was again changed by the simple method of removing the network from the background of the seals. As before they were printed in black on white paper in sheets of twenty and bound into books. All varieties known are listed in the catalog.



Sc. OX19

This seal is a complete mystery to the writer. As may be seen from the illustration, it is similar in design to the 1907 seals issued by the Post Office but has an added inscription reading “Mail and Record Section—Officially Sealed—Quartermaster General’s Office.” I am without information as to how this seal was used or for what purpose it was issued but believe it may have made its appearance during the World War and have been necessary for use in the censorship department of the army. The few copies I

have seen are printed in indigo on unwatermarked paper and are perforated 12.

[Scott now states: "Nos. OX19-OX20 were used on mail to and from the Procurement Division of the Quartermaster General's Office. After five weeks of use the seals were withdrawn when the Mail and Records Section became a full branch of the Quartermaster General's Office." JFD.]



A Registered cover from Kansas City, Mo. to Sacramento, Cal., recovered from July 28, 1933 air crash, with three-line "DAMAGED AT KANS CITY / JUL. 28.33



WHEN PLANE / FELL IN THE RIVER" cachet applied at top right where postage has floated off. Three official seals, Sc. OX21, were affixed on the reverse at Denver, Colo., all tied by July 29th "Denver Terminal, R.P.O." datestamps.

The Type-Set Seals of 1888-90

In many respects this is the most interesting group of all the seals. There is practically no information available concerning their origin. The group includes the rarest of the seals, and the catalog listing, because of the government regulations which prohibited illustrations, was practically worthless as a means of identifying them. Even Mr. Luff's listing in 1916 does not by any means follow

his own notes nor does it include all of the varieties in his own collection! To attempt to describe these seals without the aid of illustrations is confusing to the nth degree and is the pitfall which has so far blocked an intelligent listing in the catalog.

To begin with, we do not have knowledge whether any of these seals were issued by the Post Office Department or if individual postmasters were required to provide their own seals. That many postmasters did provide their own seals is a known fact for there are many varieties of type-set seals which bear the names of individual post offices and, sometimes, the name of the postmaster. One school of thought holds to the theory that the postmasters were authorized to provide their own seals from Post Office Supply houses who provided standard forms put up in pads. A second school claims the Department itself issued the seals direct to the postmasters as was previously done with the engraved and typographed seals. If this be true it is difficult to understand why the use of type-set seals was continued concurrently with the better designed typographed seals which were issued in 1892 (Cat. OX8 to OX11). Still another theory is that a shortage of department seals forced postmasters to supply their own and that supply houses, taking advantage of this situation, made up standard seals which were purchased by postmasters until such time as the department seals would be forthcoming. This theory is an attempt to explain the concurrent use of typographed seals and the type-set group.

[In the 2015 Specialized, the Typeset seals are listed separately as LOX1-LOX45 with the note, "These seals were privately printed for sale mostly to Fourth Class Post Offices. Many are extremely rare. Unquestioned varieties are listed. Many others exist." JFD.]

None of these theories are entirely satisfactory and one can raise serious objections to all, but whatever is the correct solution of the problem there is definitely one group of type-set seals which would seem to have been prescribed by the department if not actually issued from

this source. This group is listed in the catalog. All of them have general characteristics of design which distinguishes them from the seals prepared by individual postmasters. With the sole exception of one, (old Cat. OX38), the words "U.S. Post Office Department" and "Opened through mistake by..." are used. The locally issued seals usually have the word "U.S. Postoffice" and "opened by mistake by..." For this reason I am in doubt as to the advisability of the catalog listing of OX38).*

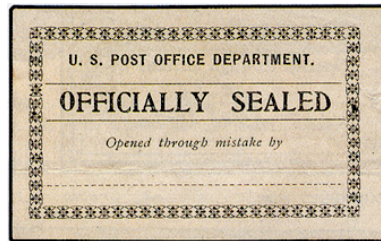
** In the 1940 catalog this seal has been allocated with the others of similar character noted at the end of this article.*

[More than one with the characteristics of the old No. OX38 described above are found, for example LOX16, LOX28, et al. JFD.]

In the interests of clarity we illustrate each seal as they are listed in the catalog and included whatever notes or observations which could be made from studying Mr. Hatfield's collection.

Rouletted

This seal [Sc. LOX1] though not listed in the previous catalogs, nor mentioned by Luff, has now been recognized in the 1940 Specialized Catalogue. I have only seen one copy and other than the fact that it is printed in black on white wove paper I am without any information concerning it.



Another seal listed, for the first time, in the 1940 catalog is Imperf printed in black on white stock [Sc. LOX3]. I have seen one or two individual specimens but am without knowledge concerning the sheet make up or other details.



There would seem to be but one variety of this seal, that printed in black on pink paper and listed in the catalog as (LOX4, page 22). So far as I am aware no pairs are known and the generally accepted theory is that this seal,

and the two which immediately follow, were printed singly. They were probably made up in pads and supplied to postmasters in that form. The seal measures 47 x 29 mm.



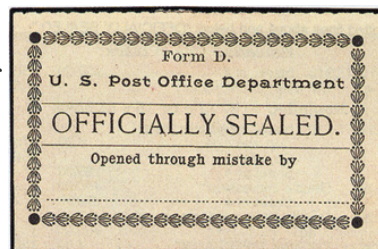
The [next] seal which we illustrate is catalog (LOX5) and is printed in black on white wove paper. It is similar to the preceding seal, but differs as to border and the size is 50 1/2 x 29 mm.



Left, LOX5, black on white wove; right, LOX5A, black on pink

Rouletted 9 1/2 Horizontally

This seal was not listed in the catalog nor mentioned by Luff though several examples are noted in the Hatfield collection. The border is entirely different than any of the other seals and a new line, reading "Form D" has been added [Sc. LOX7]. The letters, however, are of the same type face as appears on the imperforate seal (Cat. LOX2).

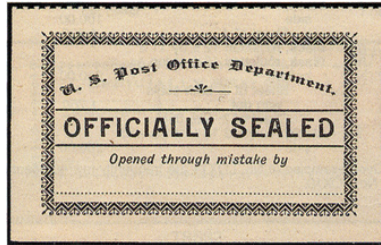


The roulette is not in colored lines and the seals seem to have been printed in strips. The largest piece I have seen, a pair, shows the roulette at the top, between the stamps and at the bottom, indicating that it is only a part of a large strip. Unlike the preceding seals this seal was not printed tete beche.*

** This observation is made from very little material which was available for study. Perhaps future research will unearth considerable more information regarding these type-set seals.*

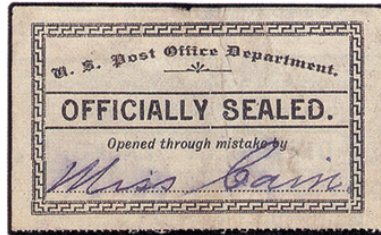
Rouletted at Top or Bottom and One Side

This seal was not listed in the catalog. [It is now listed as LOX8, “rouletted at top & side”.] It is printed in black on white wove paper in blocks of four, in tete beche pairs, similar to the preceding seals, and would seem to be a modified design of same. The border is changed and the lines inclosing the words “Officially Sealed” are now solid. The period [after Officially Sealed] is missing entirely from the few copies I have seen. Mr. Luff ascribes this seal as issued in 1889-90. There is a block in the Hatfield collection and the seal is fairly common. I am without knowledge as to why it was not listed in the catalog or mentioned in Luff’s article published in 1915. No varieties.



Rouletted 13 at Top or Bottom

This seal, of which I have only seen one copy, that in Mr. Hatfield’s collection, was not listed in the catalog. [It is now LOX9, “Rouletted 12-1/2 or 16-1/2 in black between”.] It is a sort of “missing link” which connects the preceding seals with those that follow. It is printed in black on white wove paper and the border is a modification of the “Greek” pattern of seal (LOX5) and the same as used on the seals which follow, from which it differs only in that the lines inclosing the words “Officially Sealed” are solid. Apparently this seal was printed in vertical pairs with a colored roulette separating them. The roulette is actually printers rule “set high” so it will pierce the paper as it prints. The seal measures 50 x 29 mm.



Rouletted 11 1/2 or 16 1/2 at Top or Bottom

Not listed in the catalog. [It is now listed as LOX10-LOX11.] The design is a modification of the preceding seal with the lines inclosing the words “Officially Sealed” consisting of a row of dots. A round period between the words instead of following “Sealed” [LOX10a, LOX11c]. Black on

white wove paper. Printed in vertical pairs separated with printers rule. Varieties: tete beche “Y” of “Officially” with broken leg at right.

Sc. LOX11f, tete-beche pane of four, rouletted at top and side of stamps, one stamp (upper left in this image) with dot between “Officially and Sealed”.



Same Design

These seals are similar in every respect to the preceding issue excepting that they are printed in blocks of four in tete beche pairs, the colored roulette separating the four seals in two straight lines which cross at center. Thus all seals are imperforate at top or bottom and one side with the opposite edges showing the roulette.

The catalog lists two varieties as follows:

Black on pink paper (LOX10)

Black on white paper (LOX11)

I have only seen one of the so-called pink paper, that in the Hatfield collection, and the color of the paper is more cinnamon color than pink. (It is Ridgway's "Light Pinkish Cinnamon." 15 Y.O.D. Plate XXIX.) The paper is colored through. Of this seal there is no period after or between the words "Officially Sealed."

Of the black seal the following varieties are noted:

No period

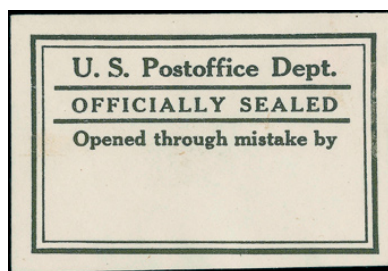
Tete beche pair

Period between words

Tete beche pair in combination with seal without period

The seal with the period shows the broken leg of the letter “Y” and occurs only once in the block of four.

[See the 2015 Specialized for currently listed varieties.]



Sc. LOX12



Sc. LOX13

The two seals illustrated [LOX12 and LOX13] have never come to my attention. They were not in the Hatfield collection and I have never seen any description of them until they were illustrated in the new 1940 United States Stamp Catalogue of which Hugh M. Clark was kind enough to furnish me proof sheets.

Grouped under the description "United States Post Office" which distinguishes the following seals from those previously described, the new 1940 Catalogue illustrates and lists several seals which I have not been so fortunate as to examine. One of them, (old No. OX38), was previously listed as (1759), I have already mentioned this seal and questioned its eligibility for catalog recognition. Perhaps Hugh M. Clark is right in grouping this and other seals of similar type heretofore unknown to me, in the new catalog.

Imperf.

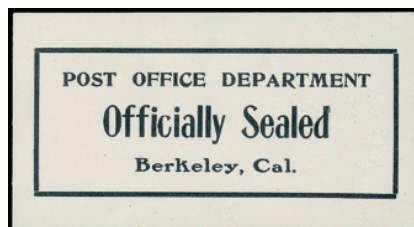
Catalog (old No. OX38), differs considerably from all other type-set seals both in design and paper. It is printed in blue on a hard thin paper and the wording differs from any of the others [Sc. LOX16]. I have already commented on the advisability of the catalog listing of this seal.



Local Seals

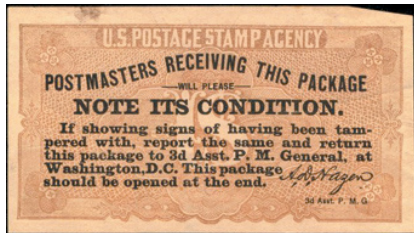
[There also are] seals which were obviously issued locally by authority of individual postmasters. There are probably many

Scott now lists Local Seals LOX19A-LOX40, including LOX21A, shown

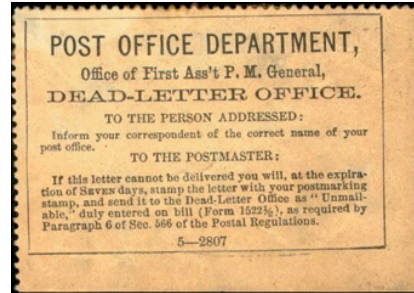


other seals of this type though the [only ones I have seen] are U.S. Postoffice, Petaluma, Cal., Black on blue paper [Sc. LOX22]. Officially Sealed by Birmingham, Ala., Post Office. Black on light green [Sc. LOX20, LOX21]. U.S. Post Office, Northfield, Mass., black on white [Sc. LOX25].

* * * * *



Sc. OXF5



Sc. OXA4

[Note: Scott now also lists as OXF4-OXF17 Postage Stamp Agency Seals “Used to seal registered pouches containing stamps for distribution to Post Offices.” and OXA1-OXA9 and OXB1-OXB5 Dead Letter Office Seals “Nos. OXA1-OXA9 were used only on mail that could be forwarded to the intended recipient, after examination in the Dead Letter Office. Nos. OXB1-OXB5 were used only on mail returned to the originating post office.”]