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## POSTAGE STAMPS

—  
AND HOW THEY ARE MADE.

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*By J. M. T. Partello.*

Did any of the readers of the *TORONTO PHILATELIC JOURNAL* ever see the process of manufacturing the little postage stamps we all take so much pleasure in collecting? Perhaps the greatest manufacturing firm of this kind on this side of the Atlantic, and possibly in the whole world, is located in the fifth storey of the Equitable Life Insurance Building, on the corner of Broadway and Cedar street, in New York City. A great many of the foreign stamps, we find so much trouble in securing for our albums, are born on this very spot in New York City. The American Bank Note Company hold the contract for the making of the United States postage stamps, and they have held it off and on ever since July 1st, 1861. The Continental Bank Note Company had it for awhile; but, I believe, the American Bank Note Co. have it at the present writing. They renew their contract every four years; and having the presses, inks, expert workmen, and everything else necessary to manufacture the stamps, they are able to underbid all competitors for the job, and thus secure a renewal of their contract at the expiration of every four years. It once fell to my lot to pay a visit to the top of the Equitable Building (which, by the way, is perfectly fire-proof), and you may be sure I enjoyed every moment of time in examining everything in this great postage stamp mill which I consider the greatest

of the kind in existence. The first thing to do is to stop on the elevator at the ground floor, when you are shot skyward with such tremendous velocity that you not only have every bit of breath taken out of your body, but you also imagine the machine is going straight up through the roof. This last catastrophe does not take place however, for the elevator box suddenly comes to a standstill, a little door slides back, and you step out in front of an iron-barred door which is constantly locked and guarded by a janitor, who sits within the bars. Our party "had a pass," and so the door was unlocked for our admittance. We met the government agent, who is always present to attend to the interests of the United States, also the superintendent of the Bank Note Company; both of whom were very courteous to us and showed us all the mysteries of stamp manufacturing. The whole upper floor is divided into a number of rooms apportioned out as office rooms, printing rooms, drying rooms, cancelling, cutting, perforating, and every other kind of room. In printing, steel plates are used, on which two hundred stamps are engraved, and that number printed at each impression. The stamps are entirely printed with large rolling-hand presses, each press having one man and a girl to do this work. Near by are two other men kept hard at work, covering the plates with colored inks and passing them to the man and girl who do the printing. I counted ten of these presses in the room, although less than half that number were in operation, as there was no particular rush for stamps at the time I visited the establishment. The paper used, as every one can see by examin-

ing the stamps, is of a peculiar texture, somewhat similar to that used for bank notes. After coming from the printing presses, the sheets of stamps are given a chance to dry, and then are sent into the next room to be gummed. This was the most interesting room of them all to me, as I was particularly anxious to see what manner of paste was used in gumming the sheets. I knew that gum arabic or simple mucilage cracks paper badly (see the last issue of *Austria* which, to my mind, takes the cake for miserable gumming), and so I walked into the next room and up to a large smooth table, where stood a pair of pasters with large calomining brushes in their hands slapping on the gum with rapidity, care, and precision. I examined the brushes, and found them to be of the finest quality of camel's hair, as fine and as soft as silk. Next I examined the paste-pot, and was not long in discovering the odor of potatoes. Ah! there was the secret of such excellent paste, it was all due to the potatoes. One of the workmen informed me that the paste was a composition made of the powder of dried potatoes, starch, and other vegetables, mixed to the right proportion with warm water. The recipe is so simple and the composition so excellent, that I have half a mind writing it out and sending it to the Austrian government with my compliments. After covering with this paste, the sheets are placed on little racks to again dry, this time being fanned by steam power for an hour or more. Taken from the racks they are placed between sheets of pasteboard and pressed in hydraulic presses capable of applying between 225 and 250 tons. The next thing to do is to pass them