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## THE FIRST U.S. ENVELOPES.

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The original form of letter postage was the envelope adopted by Great Britain in 1840. Prepaid envelopes became very popular, and were largely used, but not in the form first introduced. Although the postal authorities of the United States moved very slowly in the matter of adopting adhesive stamps, they moved still more slowly in the matter of envelopes. In August, 1853, two years after the first regular issue of stamps were made, the first Government envelopes appeared. Two values were at first employed—the envelope of three cents, and one of six cents. The design, embossed on a plain, colored disk, consists of a profile bust of Washington, after the famous statue by Houdon, turned to the left, with an upright, oval frame, enclosing at the top and bottom, labels of the value, (three or six above, cents below.) At either side of the frame, connecting the labels, is a simple, engine-turned pattern, composed of interlacing lines, three and three, forming a series of loops, these loops varying in number, and are the chief means of detecting the several kinds of stamps. The color of the three cent stamp was red, that of the six cent stamp being green. In October of the same year, a large, official envelope was issued bearing the six cents with the color changed to red, and in April, 1855, an additional stamp was issued, a ten cent issue printed in green. These different values, 3, 6 and 10 cent, remained in use from 1853 to 1860, and during these years were subject to many changes, both of the stamp, and also the size and shape of the envelope. It is believed that two dies of the THREE CENTS were prepared. It is a well-known fact that the second die became badly worn, in consequence of the immense amount of work it had to perform. As a result, the ends of the labels, (the parts most likely to wear), were trimmed. These slight alterations have produced four distinct varieties as follows:

**DIE ONE.**—The ends of the labels are straight, and but seven loops are formed in each label by the intersecting lines. The

words, "three" and "cents" occupy much more space than any of the other values. The ends of the labels are much further from the first and last letters of the value.

**SECOND DIE.—Type 1.** The ends of the labels are curved, the first and last letters of the value nearly touch them, and the intersecting lines form ten loops on one side, and nine on the other.

**SECOND DIE.—Type 2.** The ends of the labels are straight, with their angles intersected by portions of the interlaced lines, the loops counting eight and a half by nine.

**SECOND DIE.—Type 3.** The ends of the labels are straight, ending in a distinct line.

**SECOND DIE.—Type 4.** The ends of the labels are slightly curved without any lines at the four ends, as in type 3.

**SECOND DIE.—Type 5.** The ends of the labels are curved. This is the most common variety.

The die for the six cent stamp is precisely similar to the type 3, described above. The ten cent has two distinct dies, one similar to the six cent impression, the other like the first of the three cent envelopes. There were three sizes of envelopes used for this series—note, letter and official. The six cent was both letter and official size, the ten cent only letter size, while the three cent was used in note and letter size. There are many other details connected with this first issue of United States Envelope Stamps which the philatelist might well study with learning and profit. They are among the rare stamps of the United States, and some of the varieties I have named, command high and even fabulous prices.

Frederick N. Palmer, the Boston physician, who jumped from a Portland steamer last week and was drowned with his four-year-old grandchild, was postmaster at Brattleboro, Vt., during Polk's Administration. He was the originator of the first American postage stamp, which was engraved for the postmaster's personal use. These stamps were in use long before the Government decided to use stamps for the prepayment of postage. The Palmer stamps bring a fabulous price, one having recently sold for \$145, while a few years ago one sold for \$300 at auction.