

Volume 39 #1 (1<sup>st</sup> Quarter: Jan.-Mar. 2021)

## GOLD COUNTRY STAMP CLUB NEWSLETTER

Meetings of the Gold Country Stamp Club are held the 1<sup>st</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> Thursdays of each month  
3:00-5:00 pm (In response to COVID-19, meetings were postponed this quarter)

### 2020 Officers:

*President:* Bob Brennan—478-0130 \* <rbrenan@earthlink.net>  
*Vice President:* Steve Hickok—273-0110 \* <hickok12531@comcast.net>  
*Treasurer:* Carole Ward—477-0108 \* <ancward@yahoo.com>  
*Secretary:* Sally Brackett—272-3870 \* <sally-jens@comcast.net>  
*Directors:* John Schwabecher, Rick Lund  
*Programming:* Steve Hickok—273-0110 \* <hickok12531@comcast.net>  
*Newsletter editor:* Ron Tranquilla <ron2401@att.net>

### The Prez Says

The COVID-19 virus pandemic required that we individually isolate ourselves from the rest of the world, so it's been over a year since our club has met. I hope that you have taken this time as an opportunity to work on your stamp collections. As for myself, the time has been used for sorting and organizing my loose stamps and collections. Nevertheless, a year later there remains much to do.

Note that our meeting place at the Eskaton Recreation Center remains closed. As a result, I am pleased to announce that we will begin meeting at my home on April 15th. Most of us will have our vaccinations by that time and we will try to maintain a safe environment. I'm looking forward to seeing you all again, renewing our friendships and sharing our collecting interests.

—President Bob Brennan



## The Kansas & Nebraska Overprints

—Ron Tranquilla  
GCSC Newsletter Editor

**“Is it possible that the Kansas-Nebraska overprints [Scott 65-66 and 669-679] in your collection have been faked?”** John Hotchner asks in a 2015 on-line issue of *Linn’s Stamp News*. (John Hotchner. “U.S. Stamp Notes: Tips for Expertizing the Kansas-Nebraska overprints of 1929.” *Linn’s Stamp News*, March 6, 2015. <<https://www.linns.com/news/us-stamps-postal-history/2015/march/us-stamp-notes-tips-for-expertizing-the-kansas.html>>) Retrieved January 12, 2021. Hotchner’s response: **“Unfortunately, the answer is yes.”**

Calm down, please... Now that I have your attention and I hope your interest, let’s put fakery aside for a moment and explore some of the background of this U. S. stamp issue.

The general consensus concerning the purpose of this issue is that the overprints were a Post Office Department strategy to prevent further losses incurred by the many post office burglaries that had been troubling various mid-Western rural post offices. (Cf. for example, Hotchner, op. cit; *Scott Specialized Catalogue of United States Stamps and Covers* <<https://www.linns.com/news/us-stamps-postal-history/2020-scott-u.s.-specialized-catalog-offers-two-special-feature-articles>>; Wikipedia.com. “Kansas-Nebraska Overprints.” <[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/US\\_Regular\\_Issues\\_of\\_1922-1931](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/US_Regular_Issues_of_1922-1931)>.) A postal inspector stressed that in 1928 “\$200,000 worth of stolen stamps had been ‘fenced’.” The Post Office Department’s idea was that, “stolen, overprinted state stamps would be difficult to fence in or out of state” and therefore be less desirable to steal. (Rod Juell and Roger Brody. “Kansas & Nebraska Overprint Issues 1929.” Smithsonian National Postal Museum, <<https://postalmuseum.si.edu/exhibition/about-us-stamps-bureau-period-1894-1939-definitive-issues/kansas-nebraska-overprint>>) Retrieved February 9, 2021. The Post Office long had considered marking stamps to help identify stolen stamps. “Printing technology during the early years of the twentieth century, however, made implementation of the idea unfeasible. The development of the rotary press changed that.” (Juell and Brody op. cit.) The intent ultimately was to issue stamps with overprint names of all 48 states, for sale only in the state named by the overprint (although they could be *used* in any state). The Bureau of Engraving and Printing objected to the plan as being impractical, but agreed to a small trial. (Ibid.) The Kansas and Nebraska overprints were merely an experiment to judge the effectiveness of this plan.

Kansas and Nebraska were chosen as the states for the overprint because the experiment was proposed by Louis A. Johnson, postal inspector-in-charge at Kansas City, Mo. (Gary Griffith. *United States Stamps 1927-32*. *Linn’s Stamp News*, 2001.) Why are we not surprised?

Easily more surprising is Roger Brody’s revelation that “actually, economics rather than theft played a big role” in the creation and promotion of the overprint program: “Kansas and Nebraska postmasters were required to requisition overprinted stamp quantities for a year’s supply, not the normal 4 month quarterly requisition. Had the experiment been successful, the Post Office planned to extend the scheme” to all states, “hoping to cut the fulfillment costs by 75%. Though the large inventories would make post offices a greater target for thieves,” the overprinted stamps were considered to be a less desirable product. (Roger Brody. “Second Purpose.” The Fourth Maynard Sundman Lecture. October 15, 2005. Smithsonian National Postal Museum <<https://postalmuseum.si.edu/the-4th-maynard-sundman-lecture.com>>) Retrieved February 9, 2021.

Eleven values were overprinted for Kansas and for Nebraska: “the 1-cent through 10-cent values

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of the Fourth Bureau Issue” were printed on the Stickney rotary press, perforated 11x10.5. (Juell and Brody, op. cit.) The overprints were printed on the stamps before the stamps were gummed on the backs. (Wikipedia.com, op. cit.) All post offices in Kansas and Nebraska received overprinted stamps “except Kansas City, Topeka...Wichita, Omaha, and Lincoln.” These were large cities and only small, unprotected rural post offices had been robbed of stamps, so “security of the larger post offices was considered adequate.” (Brody, op. cit.) The overprinted stamps “were officially placed on sale at the Philatelic Agency in Washington, D.C. on May 1, 1929, but they had been distributed to [Kansas and Nebraska] post offices on April 13...some were placed on sale [by these post offices] almost immediately. Some denominations are known canceled as early as April 15.” (Hotchner, op. cit.)

The Bureau of Engraving and Printing’s objections to the experiment and to the full, national overprint program turned out to be correct, however: As the BEP predicted, the experiment failed. On March 1930, less than a year after it began, it was declared a failure, halted, and quietly dropped, the result of certain flaws in its very design and intent. The Post Office Department had received many complaints about the experiment and even about certain stamps, claims, for example, that “the black overprints were hard to see on dark stamps” such as the 7¢ black. (Ibid.) Mostly, however, it failed because of several important flaws in the program itself, especially confusion about its rules and protocols.

\* First, the stamps could be used validly in any state in the U.S., but “some postmasters thought they could be used only in Kansas or Nebraska depending on the overprint. Others thought...[the overprints] were precancels.” (Juell and Brody, op. cit.) Therefore, many postal clerks “tried to assess postage to replace entirely legal use of Kansas and Nebraska stamps.” (Brody, op. cit.) \* Second, the Post Office’s rules themselves caused problems. Postmasters were told “not to precancel the overprinted stamps, requiring separate inventory for precancel use” to print on non-overprinted stamps. “Of course, some post offices pre-cancelled them anyway.” (Ibid.) \* Third, postage received by mail order houses as payment for customers’ orders often was then precanceled for these companies’ own future mailings. Precanceling was not permitted if the postage was an overprint, however; therefore, the overprinted stamps had to be exchanged for ordinary stamps that had no overprint. This process required extra accounting and book-keeping that proved to be “cumbersome for both the businesses and the Post Office.” (Ibid.) Ironically, Roger Brody points out in his Sundman Lecture, “the Post Office Department lacked the willingness to prohibit the use of non-overprinted stamps in Kansas and Nebraska, making robbery prevention seem a moot point.” (Ibid.)

Now then, back to the issue of fakery: how might you determine whether or not the Kansas-Nebraska overprints in your collection are forgeries? Hotchner (op. cit.) suggests the following:

**First, check with your perforation gauge and, if the stamps are mint, examine the gum:**

The stamps are rotary press-printed, perforated gauge 11 by 10½ with 14 vertical gum ridges, and a single, or at most two, horizontal gum breakers.

This means that stamps perforation gauge 10 by 10 or 11 by 11, and those with straight edges, cannot be genuine overprints. [Ken Lawrence suggests measuring the state *overprints* as well: “Genuine Kansas overprints measure 9.0 to 9.3 mm across; fake measures 9.5 mm across...Genuine Nebraska overprints measure 8.9 to 9.1 mm across; fake measures 9.2 to 9.3 across.” (“New Types of Kansas-Nebraska overprint fakes.” *Linn’s Stamp News*, August 20, 1990, p. 20).] Such small differences are difficult to measure, however, without specialized equipment.

Mint stamps with the wrong ridges or without ridges and with the wrong gum breakers cannot be genuine overprints.

The overprints were added directly after the printing of the designs, and *before* the application of the gum. Thus, for mint examples, there can be no impression in the gum of the overprint, as there often is when a fake overprint is added after gumming. Think of the impression left by a typewriter key on the

back of relatively thin paper. (But note the APS Expertizing Service's caution below.)

**Second, evaluate the quality of the overprint:**

The size and placement of the letters should be in line and the states' abbreviated names should be followed by a period (note the missing period on two of the forged examples below). Further, compare the fonts to legitimate overprints' fonts:



*These are legitimate Kans.-Nebr. overprints*



*These are examples of forgeries*



[Lawrence, op. cit., notes, “[Some] fakes have large periods; genuine periods are proportional to letters.”]

**Third, examine each stamp's color.**

Specific colors are associated with the genuine overprints, and later versions of the stamp often are in the wrong shade to be a genuine Kansas-Nebraska overprint. For example, the genuine overprinted 8¢ is olive green. If the stamp is olive bistre, the overprint is a fake.

**If you have Plate Blocks,**

Hotchner suggests checking the plate number against the list of known plates in *The Durland Standard Plate Number Catalog*, as only a small number of plates were used for the overprints. For example, the 2¢ Nebraska is associated with only nine plates. There were more than 250 plates used to print the basic, unoverprinted 2¢ stamp. The *Durland Catalog* may be purchased from the APS (<<https://classic.stamp-s.org/Publications>>) or requested from the APS Research Library <<http://1549.sydneyplus.com/final/Portal.aspx?lang=en-US>>. Search for “Durland Standard Plate Number Catalog.”

**Research:**

The basic work on this issue is the 10-page first section of the American Philatelic Society handbook *Kansas-Nebraska Overprints* (published in 1973, second printing 1977). Compiled by Robert H. Schoen and James T. DeVoss, the first section is entitled “Counterfeit Kansas-Nebraska Overprints on 1922–34 Issue.” Unfortunately this booklet is out of print, but examples can be found through philatelic literature dealers, and can be obtained as photocopies from the [American Philatelic Research Library](#). If you are a member of the APS, the handbook is available as a pdf from the members-only section of the website. The handbook also contains a second, 23-page section titled “First Day Covers of the Kansas-Nebraska Overprints” by Jack V. Harvey.”

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Hotchner recommends a helpful article by Ken Lawrence, “New fake Kansas-Nebraska overprints circulating through stamp marketplace,” published in the Aug. 20, 1990, issue of *Linn’s Stamp News* (cited above). With Lawrence’s permission, Hotchner offered to fill requests for copies of Lawrence’s article. Your GCSC *Newsletter* Editor has requested a copy from Hotchner, who gave permission for distribution to GCSC members who ask for a copy. The article is a photocopy in three brief sections on two pages, in small print with the other side bleeding through the copy—but readable. It is accompanied by a copy of a brief APS Expertizing Service alert in *Linn’s* about a “New forgery of ‘Kans.’ overprint.” (*Linn’s Stamp News*, Dec. 5, 1994, p. 10.)—there are *many* “generations” of K-N fake overprints! The latter forgery is correct in dimensions and typeface, but under high magnification is distinguished by a “faint halo of dots around the black overprint, [and thus is] a xerographic (photocopy) or laser print, not...electrotype [as applied in 1929].” My e-mail and mailing address are listed in the GSCS Membership Roster: I happily will fulfill *gratis* all requests for copies of these two articles.



## U.S. Postal Service 2021 Issues, More (or Less) than First Class



**Jan. 24, Brush Rabbit.** Two (20¢) additional-ounce definitive stamps (single design), pane of 20 (Scott 5544) and coil of 100 (Scott 5545); AP; Sacramento, CA 95813; USPS item No. 121104 (pane), 740304 (coil), 121116 (pane FDC at \$1.19), 740316 (coil FDC at \$1.19). (*Linn’s Stamp News*, Jan. 11, 2021 <<https://www.linns.com/insights/2021-u.s.-stamp-program>>)

The brush rabbit (*Sylvilagus bachmani*) “is a small brownish cottontail rabbit of the U.S. West Coast and Baja California, Mexico. It lives mostly west of the Sierra Nevada range and south of the Columbia River, which defines the coastal Oregon-Washington border.” Art Director Ethel Kessler designed the stamp; the pencil-and-watercolor illustration and pencilled calligraphy are from pre-existing artwork by Dugald Stermer (1936-2011). (<[https://store.usps.com/store/product/buy-stamps/brush-rabbit-S\\_740304](https://store.usps.com/store/product/buy-stamps/brush-rabbit-S_740304)>)



**Jan. 24, Barns.** Eight (36¢) postcard-rate definitive stamps (four designs), pane of 20 and coil of 100; round barn in fall (Scott 5546 pane, 5553 coil), gambrel-roofed barn in summer (5547, 5550), forebay barn in spring (5548, 5552), Western barn in winter (5549, 5551); BCA; Barnesville, GA 30204; USPS item No. 120904 (pane), 740204 (coil), 120916 (pane FDC set of four at \$4.64), 740216 (coil FDC set of four at \$4.64). (*Linn’s*, op. cit.)

The U.S. Postal Service “celebrate[s] the beauty and history of American Barns...[with] digital paintings of four types of iconic barns found in the rural American Landscape.” Ashley Walton designed the stamps with original artwork by Kim Johnson. Greg Breeding was the art director. The word “POSTCARD” on the stamps indicates their Forever™ usage. (<[https://store.usps.com/store/product/buy-stamps/barns-postcard-stamp-S\\_740204](https://store.usps.com/store/product/buy-stamps/barns-postcard-stamp-S_740204)>)



**Jan. 24, Castillo de San Marcos.** One \$7.95 Priority Mail definitive stamp, pane of four; American Landmarks series; AP; St. Augustine, FL 32084; USPS item No. 121304 (pane), 121316 (FDC at \$8.39), 121321 (color postmark FDC at \$9.10); Scott 5554.

**Jan. 24, Castillo de San Marcos.** One \$7.95 Priority Mail stamped envelope; American Landmarks series; St. Augustine, FL 32084; USPS item No. 233205 (pack of five at \$39.75), 233216 (FDC at \$8.39); Scott U701. (*Linn's*, op. cit.) “The oldest masonry fort in the continental



United States; it is located on the western shore of Matanzas Bay in the city of St. Augustine, Florida. The *Castillo* was designed by the Spanish engineer Ignacio Daza, with construction beginning in 1672, 107 years after the city's founding,...after a raid by the English privateer Robert Searles in 1668 that destroyed

much of St. Augustine and damaged the existing wooden fort;...the core of the current fortress was completed in 1695.” (Wikipedia.com <[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Castillo\\_de\\_San\\_Marcos](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Castillo_de_San_Marcos)>) The stamp art features a digital illustration of Castillo based on a contemporary photograph....Art Director Greg Breeding designed the stamp with art created by Dan Cosgrove.” (<[https://store.usps.com/store/product/buy-stamps/castillo-de-san-marcos-S\\_121304](https://store.usps.com/store/product/buy-stamps/castillo-de-san-marcos-S_121304)>)



**March 9, Colorado Hairstreak Butterfly.** One (75¢) nonmachineable-surcharge rate definitive stamp, pane of 20; BCA; Estes Park, CO 80517; USPS item No. 121204 (pane), 121216 (FDC at \$1.19) (*Linn's*, op. cit.) “The Butterfly graces the eighth non-machinable butterfly stamp” in use for square, vertical, or oddly shaped envelopes, rigid, or “lumpy” envelopes, or those with clasps, ribbons, or buttons,” all of which require hand-cancel. “The stamp was digitally created using images of preserved butterflies as a starting point,” resulting in “a stylized rather than exact replica. The Hairstreak butterfly is Colorado’s official state insect.” “Nationally known artist Tom Engeman created the stamp art. Art director Derry Noyes designed the stamp.” (<[https://store.usps.com/store/product/buy-stamps/colorado-hairstreak-75-cents-S\\_121204](https://store.usps.com/store/product/buy-stamps/colorado-hairstreak-75-cents-S_121204)>)



**June?, Lesser Scaup Drake.** \$25 federal migratory waterfowl hunting and conservation stamp issued by the U.S. Department of the Interior. (*Linn's*, op. cit., March 8)

**?, Mystery Message.** One (55¢) forever commemorative stamp.” (ibid.) First class use, but aren’t you intrigued?



**Meeting Note:** Bob has rescheduled our next meeting for April 15th at 2pm at his home : 13629 Pasquale Road, Nevada City. Take Boulder to Red Dog (2miles) to Pasquale on the left—mailbox is 2 miles from Red Dog, on right.