

Later Printing of 34¢ Statue of Liberty Coil with Water-Activated Gum on British Paper

by Richard Nazar

The (denominated) 34¢ Statue of Liberty coil stamp with water-activated gum exists on two distinct papers. Initial printings of this stamp were produced on paper supplied by Spinnaker Coating of Troy, Ohio (www.spinnakercoating.com). A later printing, however, was produced on paper supplied by Tullis Russell Coaters Limited (www.tullis-russell.co.uk/coaters) of the United Kingdom. Don Smeraldi of the USPS explained that the reason for the change in paper suppliers was the “lack of availability.” He elaborated that “both sources are qualified as USPS Qualified Product Suppliers.”

Although the papers supplied by the two suppliers are considered the same by USPS criteria (LP839), stamp collectors can differentiate the two papers by common philatelic characteristics.

When comparing stamps from the two papers side by side, the printed image on the Spinnaker Coating (USA) paper appears purplish-blue and the image printed on the Tullis Russell Coaters (English) paper appears bright blue. The color of the Spinnaker Coating paper is browner (less white) on the front and back than the Tullis Russell Coaters paper. Additionally, when the two papers are exposed to long-wave ultraviolet light, the Spinnaker Coating paper exhibits brighteners while the Tullis Russell Coaters paper is almost non-reactive (or “dead”).

All 34¢ Statue of Liberty coil stamps with water-activated gum were printed by the Bureau of Engraving and Printing (BEP) using a single set of four gravure printing cylinders (one for each color used in the printing

process—yellow, magenta, cyan, and black). The 432-subject cylinders (18 rows high by 24 stamps around) created the cylinder combination (plate number) 1111, which appears at the base of the stamp design at 24-stamp intervals on the coils. The stamps were processed into three coil sizes: 100-stamp coils (USPS Item No. 779000); 3,000-stamp coils (USPS Item No. 773700); and 10,000-stamp coils (USPS Item No. 773800).

BEP production reports acquired through a Freedom of Information Act request show that four separate press runs printed these stamps.

The first press run started on January 2, 2001, and continued through January 9, 2001. It produced 890,500 cylinder impressions on paper exclusively supplied by Spinnaker Coating. The stamps printed from this run were processed into large rolls (3,000- and 10,000-stamp coils).

The BEP printed a second run of this stamp that began February 5, 2001, and finished on February 7, 2001. The second run produced 514,800 cylinder impressions. Like the first press run, this run only used paper supplied by Spinnaker Coating and was also processed into large rolls.

The third press run used the same printing cylinders, but the printed web was processed into coils of 100 stamps. (The BEP typically uses 480-subject cylinders—20 rows high by 24 stamps around—to print stamps that will be processed into coils of 100 stamps.) This short press run produced 348,000 cylinder impressions and only lasted for less than two days—from the day shift of February 15, 2001, through the day



The 34¢ Statue of Liberty coil stamp with water-activated gum (Scott 3476) was issued on Feb. 7, 2001.

shift of February 16, 2001. (The BEP was running day, evening, and midnight shifts at this time, which is typical for the production schedule of their 601 Andreotti press.) As in the previous two press runs, this printing only used paper supplied by Spinnaker Coating.

The final press run began on July 27, 2001, and ended on August 9, 2001, yielding a total of 1,127,100 cylinder impressions. Unlike the previous three press runs, paper supplied by Spinnaker Coating was only used for a portion of this run. After printing 135,000 impressions of this run on paper from Spinnaker Coating, paper supplied by Tullis Russell Coaters was used for the remainder of the run—an additional 992,100 cylinder impressions.

The production totals indicate that the two papers were used in similar quantities on the large rolls (1,540,300 cylinder impressions on Spinnaker Coating paper and 992,100 impressions on Tullis Russell Coaters paper). Therefore, it is likely—if adequate supplies of each variety are located—that stamps from either paper will have similar values to collectors. □