



Dummy News and Views

the Newsletter of the United States Stamp Society - Dummy Stamps Study Group

Issue Number 44

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Welcome to the Dummy Stamps Study Group's Forty-Fourth Newsletter

This newsletter is produced quarterly by the United States Stamp Society's - Dummy Stamps Study Group for your information and pleasure. We hope that the information included in this newsletter will be informative, useful and encourage your enjoyment of collecting dummy/test stamps. Our goal is to keep you up-to-date with the latest information available to our group. Questions, comments and articles proposed for publication should be directed to Terry R. Scott, Chairman of the Dummy Stamps Study Group at terryrscott@comcast.net

Early Test Stamps Printed by the Bureau of Engraving & Printing

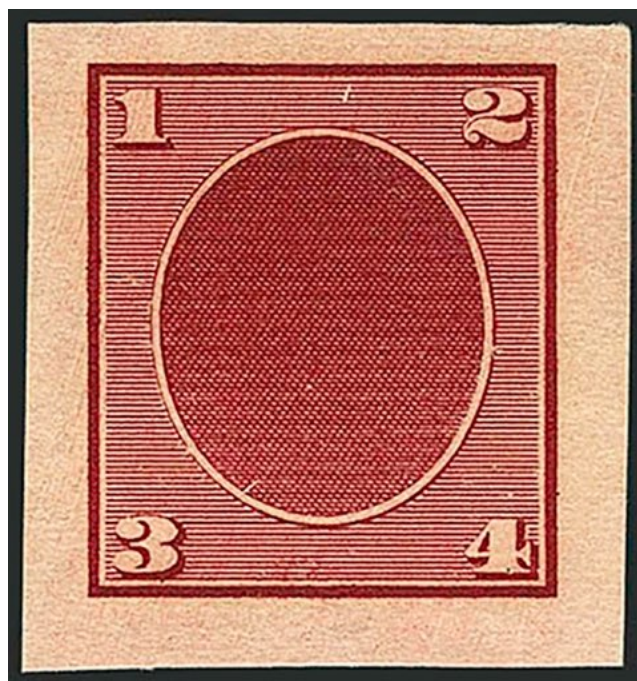
by Michael O. Perry

Many dummy stamp collections are missing the earliest test stamps produced by the BEP over 100 years ago. However, most DSSG members are aware of the so-called "1-2-3-4" test stamps listed in the Scott Specialized as TD18 to TD23. The easiest to identify is TD18, with the solid oval in the center, but many collectors have problems identifying the different "Hamilton Head" printing and perforation varieties. This article should help show the differences.

In 1906, Joseph E. Ralph, the Director of the BEP, authorized Benjamin R. Stickney, the BEP's mechanical expert, to begin exploring the possibility of printing coil stamps on a continuous web. By 1909, Stickney had developed an experimental rotary press and conducted printing trials to evaluate it. On Feb. 15, 1909, die 7224 for an *"Experimental Stamp with #s 1234"* was started; the die was hardened on June 28, 1909 and used to make two transfer rolls. This initial design did not show Alexander Hamilton's head in the center oval; instead, the oval was filled with cross-hatched shading lines.

A cylindrical intaglio plate containing an unknown number (possibly 12?) of these dummy designs was used to print test stamps on Stickney's small experimental printing press. A block of twelve (3 x 4) was saved with a pencil notation on the back saying it was the *"first impression from an experimental press designed by J. E. Ralph & B. R. Stickney from intaglio*

roll." J. E. Ralph's initials are on the block, but no date. This unique item has been broken up into a block of 9, a horizontal pair and a single. At least two more singles are known to exist.



TD18 - printed in summer of 1909

please turn to page 2 ➤

In this issue:

Early Test Stamps Printed by the BEP	1
Recent Auctions of Interest	5
Proposed Future DSSG Projects	8

The BEP soon realized the solid oval test stamp did not allow proper evaluation of the experimental intaglio rotary press, so a new design was needed. Master die 7453 was ordered Nov. 24, 1909; the die was hardened Dec. 8, 1909 and used to make a transfer roll which was used to make three working dies (all three were hardened and certified Jan. 21, 1910).



TD19 - Intaglio - printed from 1910 to 1917

Two TD19 die proofs exist in collector hands, but it is uncertain if examples of Hamilton head test stamps printed from Stickney's original experimental printing press survive. Known examples of TD19 were probably printed on the full-size printing presses that Stickney built between 1911 and 1920. An example of a vertical left margin block of 20 exists with a note written by Joseph E. Ralph dated June 2, 1917. All known examples of the TD19 intaglio Hamilton head test stamps are imperforate.

The first actual 2¢ coil postage stamps from the new rotary press were printed in June of 1912; the first 2¢ side coils were not printed until Feb. 1914. It wasn't until 1919, after a wider press was

built, that sheet stamps were printed on a rotary press. The BEP probably used the 1-2-3-4 Hamilton Head test stamp design while working the bugs out of all these new rotary presses.

Apparently the BEP was exploring other methods of printing stamps. On April 27, 1910, a letterpress die with the Hamilton head design was finished. Letterpress, or typographic, printing plates have raised areas to transfer ink to the paper whereas intaglio printing uses recessed areas to transfer the ink. Letterpress die proofs were pulled in April and May of 1910.



**TD20 - Letterpress die proof - printed in 1910
(the test stamps were printed with red ink)**

The letterpress test stamps were not printed on a web-fed press. It is not known how big the printing plate was. Except for die proofs, all known letterpress Hamilton head test stamps are perforated with gauge 12 perforations, indicating they were produced between May and December of 1910 (the BEP switched from 12 gauge to 8-1/2 gauge perforations in December, 1910).

please turn to page 3 ➤

The BEP perforated several sheets of letterpress stamps and cut them up to resemble coil and sheet stamps. One example of TD20 exists with vertical perforations; it was trimmed to look like a side coil. A half dozen examples of TD21 (with horizontal perforations) exist - they look like end coils (some were hand cut with scissors). One example of TD22 exists perforated on three sides with a straightedge at the top.

People get confused when trying to identify the intaglio and letterpress test stamps. There are obvious minor differences between the intaglio and letterpress images when looking at them side-by-side. Footnotes in the Scott Catalog say to compare the facial shading dots and lines. But, unless you have known examples to compare, it is hard to know what to look for. The easiest way to tell them apart is the direction of the lines in Hamilton's lapel, directly under his chin.



**Intaglio lapel (left) has horizontal shading lines.
Letterpress lapel (at right) has vertical lines.**

In 1908, the Harris Automatic Press Company of Niles, Ohio, talked to the BEP about their new automatic sheet fed offset press. The BEP was not interested since they wanted a web-fed press. But, in June of 1910, Harris took their offset press to the BEP to demonstrate its capabilities. Minerva head test stamps (Scott TD28 and TD29) were produced from 192-subject plates.

The BEP did not buy an offset press until September, 1912. The BEP made a new version of the Hamilton head test stamp to run trials on their new offset sheet-fed press. Offset plates are made

with a photographic process, so dies and transfer rolls are not needed. Rather than taking a photograph of an existing intaglio die proof, the BEP created a new design for the offset plate. The result is crude and shouldn't be confused with an intaglio or letterpress stamp. Half of the known TD23 offset stamps are misperforated like shown below.



TD23 - Offset stamp printed in 1914



Offset lapel is different from intaglio design

All offset stamps were perforated 10 horizontally, indicating they were produced sometime after early 1914 when the BEP switched from gauge 8-1/2 to gauge 10 perforations.

please turn to page 4 ➤

Our final Hamilton test stamp will be a TD21 letterpress stamp with several problems... and a mystery. Note the serious tears at the upper left and at the bottom. Also note that the left and right edges of the stamp are not straight or parallel - indicating this stamp was hand cut from a sheet after the perforations were applied. Note too that it *appears* to be misperforated, showing the bottom frame line from the stamp above... but that red line is not part of the adjacent stamp!

You might initially assume this is a TD23 since many TD23 offset coils are misperforated and show the bottom frame line of the stamp above. The red line on this stamp was intentionally put on the plate for some reason, but the purpose is a mystery. Note that the thickness of the red line is less than the stamp's frame-line, the white space above the line is wider than the space between the stamp's frame line and the first shading line, and that there is no trace of vertical lines going up from either end. The mysterious red line appears to be located in the center of what would be the horizontal gutter between stamps.



TD21 with a “mystery” line at top

The vertical pair of TD21 shown below shows the normal width gutter between the two stamps. This proves the “mystery” line is not the bottom frame line from the stamp above it. So, what is it? One possibility is it might have been a perforation or cutting guide placed at the top of one (or each) column on the plate. Any ideas? □



TD21 pair with typical width gutter

please turn to page 5 ➤

Recent Auctions of Interest to Dummy Stamp Collectors

by Terry R. Scott

On July 7, 2016 Sam Houston Philatelics held Sale #3038 that contained the following test stamps. There is a 15% Buyer's Premium for this sale.

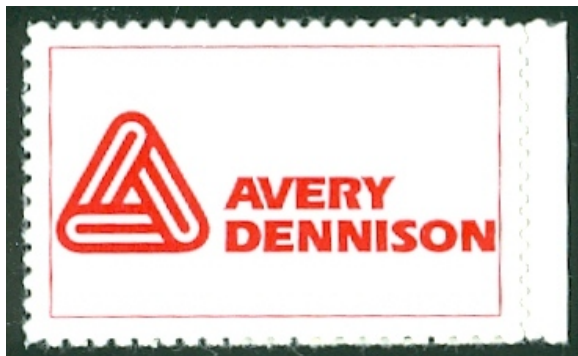


Lot 418 ** Test Stamps, Group of (6) Items, used for "Testing" purposes in machines, FVF NH Photo Cat. \$63.00 Realized \$30.00

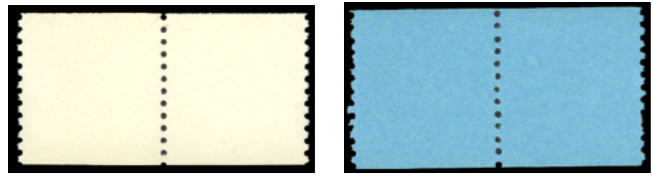


Lot 419 ** ATM, 1991 Test Booklet Pane/18, VF NH Photo Cat. \$12.00 Realized \$18.00

On July 15-16, 2016 Dutch Country Auctions / The Stamp Center held Sale #305 that contained the following test stamp. There is a 15% buyer's premium for this sale.



Lot 396 ** VF TD127C VF NH, Avery Dennison test stamp self adhesive, fresh! Photo Est. \$300.00 - \$600.00 Realized \$145.00



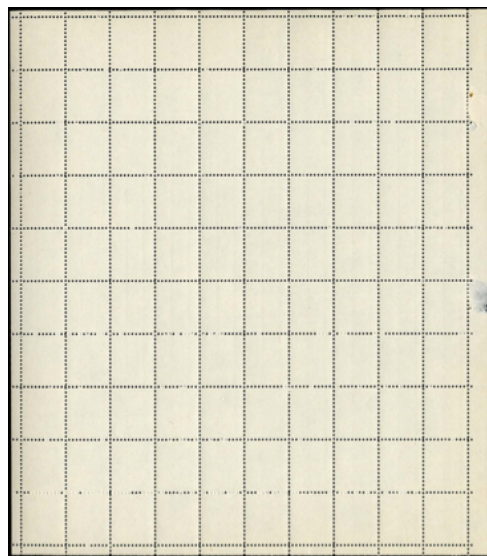
On July 22, 2016 Paradise Valley Stamp Company held Sale #F379 that contained the following test stamps. There is no Buyer's Premium for this sale.

Lot 2131 ** TD79 1930s, ELECTRIC VENDORS (ZEIGLE), INC. BLANK WHITE RESP. BLUE COIL PAIRS NH, #TD79, mint never hinged, very fine, Photo, Cat. \$60.00 Not sold.

On August 26, 2016 Paradise Valley Stamp Company held Sale #F381 that contained the test stamps shown previously and they were not sold. There is no Buyer's Premium for this sale.

On September 9, 2016 Paradise Valley Stamp Company held Sale #F381 that contained the test stamps shown previously and they were not sold. There is no Buyer's Premium for this sale.

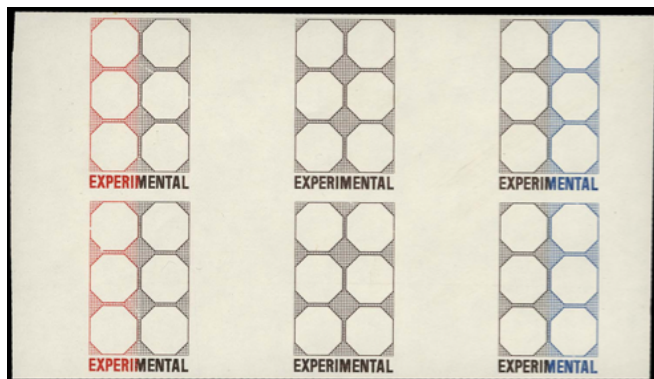
On August 6 - 7, 2016 Regency Superior held APS StampShow Public Auction No. 119 that contained the following test stamps. There is a 20% Buyer's Premium for this sale.



please turn to page 6 ➤

Lot 1760 ** USA (TD37) 1910-20 MULTIPOST RED COIL ROLL Fresh MINT never hinged roll with 200 pairs of TD37 (cat \$30 each pair). Fine to very fine. No photo. Cat \$6,000.00 Not sold

Lot 1761 ** USA (TD84A) 1956 BLANK TEST STAMP, FULL PANE Full pane of 100, fully gummed stamp paper, perf 11¼x10½. Thins in margin, fine to very fine. *See photo on previous page.* Cat \$1,250.00 Not sold



Lot 1762 ** USA (TD118A-F) 1978 'STOPLIGHT' GOEBEL TEST BLOCKS Two very fine DUMMY TEST stamp blocks of 6 (two vertical pairs each, 6 different stamps) from 1978 test of new Goebel press from specifications provided by Bureau of Engraving & Printing. Design features engraved "EXPERIMENTAL" Stop Light pattern similar to TD118, but produced in 6 different color combinations (red, black & blue). Existing test stamps of this type have been locked in Goebel archives until bankruptcy decision in 2009 awarded materials to estates of several Goebel employee families. Remainder of archives were subsequently destroyed. Fewer than 150 examples are thought to exist in collector hands, and ONLY 6 sets of blocks. MINT never hinged and RARE. Ex. Photo. Cat \$2,400.00 Not sold

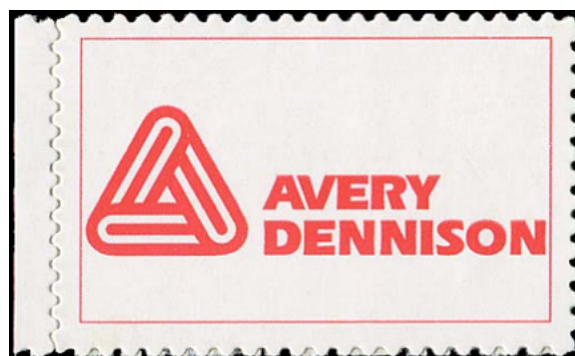


Lot 1763 ** USA (TD118A-F) 1978 'STOPLIGHT' GOEBEL TEST STRIPS Two very fine DUMMY TEST stamp strips of 3 (6 different stamps) from 1978 test of new Goebel press from specifications provided by Bureau of Engraving & Printing. Design features engraved "EXPERIMENTAL" Stop Light pattern similar to TD118, but produced in 6 different color combinations (red, black & blue). Existing test stamps of this type have been locked in Goebel archives until bankruptcy decision in 2009 awarded materials to estates of several Goebel employee families.

Quarterly Newsletter of the United States Stamp Society - Dummy Stamps Study Group

Page 6 of 8

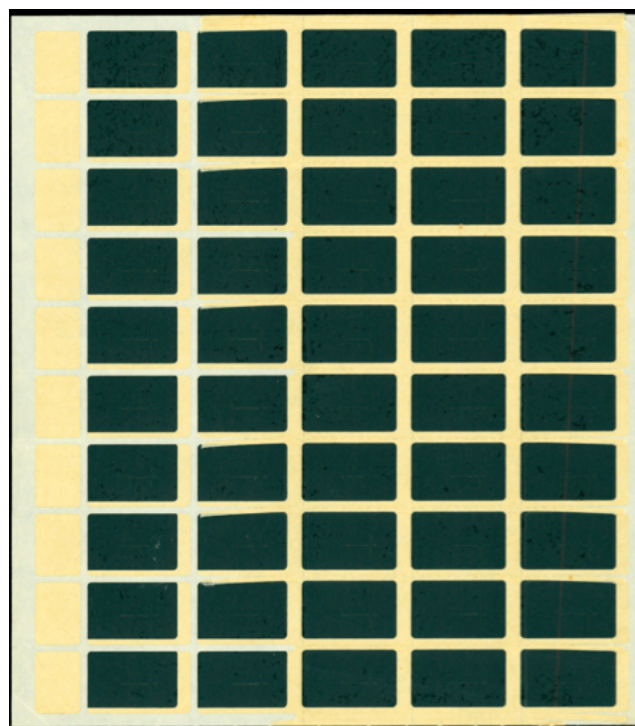
Remainder of archives were subsequently destroyed. Fewer than 150 examples are thought to exist in collector hands. MINT never hinged and RARE. Ex. Photo. Cat \$1200.00 Realized \$750.00



Lot 1764 ** USA (TD127C) 1996 AVERY DENNISON (-) RED Left margin commemorative size self-adhesive test stamp from Avery Dennison. Listed but not valued by Scott. Very fine. Photo. Similar item hammered at our October 2015 auction for \$575.00 Realized \$260.00



On August 20-21, 2016 Rasdale Stamp Company held Sale #429 that contained the following test stamps. There is a 16% buyer's premium for this sale.



Lot 1086 ** (TD117) Thirty-Five complete Black Dummy sheets of 50, F-VF. Photo Ex. Cat. Value: Catalog \$5,250.00 Realized: \$200.00 (*Ed. note: This is a revised description from that shown in the catalog. The pane illustrated shows the matrix between stamps partially removed.*)

please turn to page 7 ➤

Issue Number 44

Summer 2016

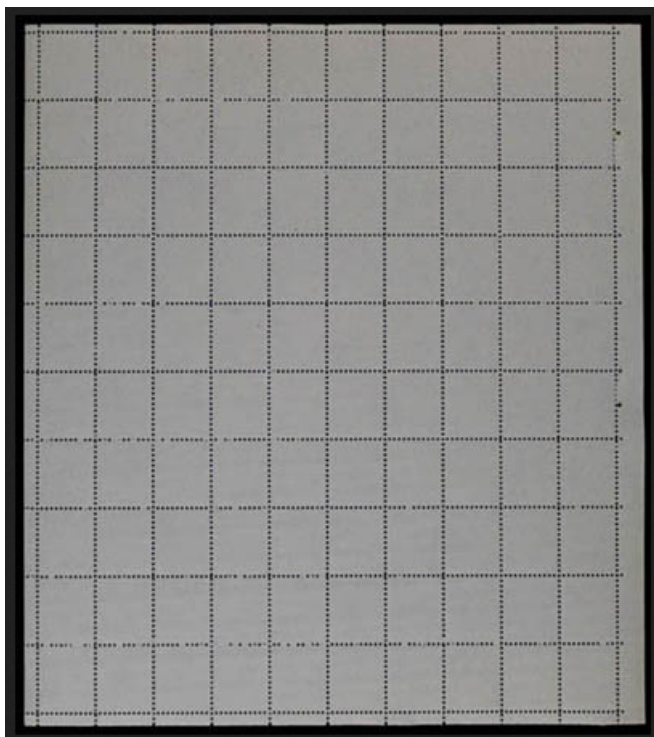


Lot 1087 ** (TDB12a) Fifty 5¢ Dummy booklets, F-VF. Photo Catalog \$800.00 Realized \$70.00

On August 24, 2016 Vance Auctions, Ltd. held Sale #318 that contained the following test stamps. There is no Buyer's Premium for this sale.

Lot 3834 * TD107, Test stamp coils as singles, pairs, strips of 4 and Joint Line strips of 4. Incl. regular issue PLUS VARIETY showing horiz INK SMEARS. VF, NH (22 stamps) No photo. Estimate \$45.00+ Cdn.

On August 30 and September 1, 2016 Daniel F. Kelleher Auctions, LLC held Sale 692 that contained the following test stamps. There is an 18% buyer's premium for this sale.



Lot 2534 ** TD84A Test Stamp, 1920's-50's, B.E.P. blank design, gum breaker ridges 5mm to 6.5mm apart (Scott TD84A), complete sheets of 100, o.g., never hinged, impressive grouping of 10 eye catching 1956 test stamp sheets with completely blank design;

margin thins at upper left; slight adherences at upper left and center left, otherwise Very Fine, with photocopy of 2015 P.F. certificate for sheet of 100. Photo. (poor quality) Scott \$12,500.00 Not sold.

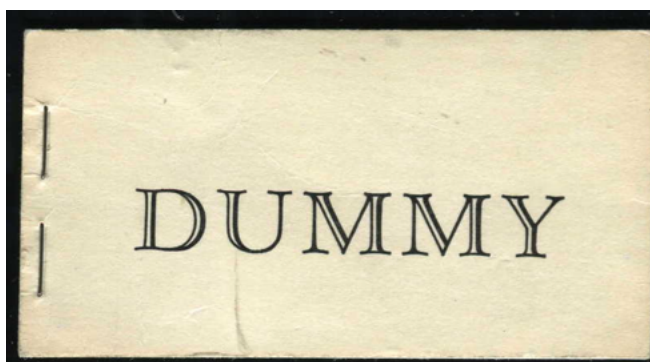


Lot 2535 ** TD88 Test Stamp, 1944-49, Multipost Commercial Controls coil, blue (Scott TD88), pair, o.g., never hinged, gorgeous test coil pair issued during the 1940's; with outstanding centering and gleaming rich color, Extremely Fine to Superb, with 2015 P.S.E. certificate graded XF-SUP 95. Photo. Scott \$45.00 Realized \$70.00

On August 31, 2016 Downeast Stamps held Sale #302 that contained the following test stamps. There is a 10% buyer's premium for this sale.



Lot 726 ** TD100, test stamp, imperf block of four, 1954 Experimental Territorial Centennial of Nebraska, XF, NH Photo Est. \$120.00 Not sold.

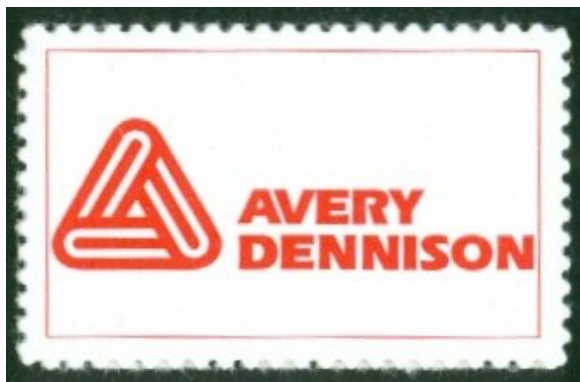


please turn to page 8 ➤

Lot 755 ** TDB9, black, 'DUMMY', rust line on front cover o/w OG, NH Photo Est. \$90.00 Realized \$30.00



On September 156-127, 2016 Dutch Country Auctions / The Stamp Center held Sale #306 that contained the following test stamps. There is a 15% Buyer's Premium.



Lot 429 ** TD127C VF NH, Avery Dennison test stamp, self adhesive, fresh! Photo. Est. \$300.00 - \$600.00 Realized \$190.00

Lot 670 Accum unused (100s) w/ dup 1950-90s, singles, pairs, line pairs, plate # strips, 1c to \$1 incl. unopened coil (100) 33c berries #3404-7, fractional, precancel & many test coils, gen F-VF NH No photo. Est. \$150.00 - \$200.00 Realized \$180.00



Proposed Future DSSG Projects

Updating Research Paper Number 3 - Dummy Stamp Booklets

Work is progressing, very much still at a snail's pace, on updating Research Paper Number 3 - Dummy Stamp Booklets. The last update by Earl McAfee, Dummy Booklets Study Group Chairman, was in 1998. Since then there have been many new discoveries. Many of them have been written up in articles in *The United States Specialist*. Now the time has come to document and illustrate them in a new updated version of Research Paper Number 3. I am in charge of this update project and knowing that it will

take quite a bit of time to complete, have no estimated completion date in mind. I will be asking all of you to join me in this project as I am not able to do it all, nor would you want me to do it all. It is a DSSG project and all members should have a chance to provide their input. Several illustrations are needed and a listing of these will be sent to you when I compile it. Scans at 300 dpi are necessary for clarity. It is anticipated that this publication will be in color. It has not yet been determined if it will be available on CD. □

Requests for Articles for *The United States Specialist*

Leonard Piskiewicz, Editor of *The United States Specialist*, is always looking for articles of interest for inclusion in our society's monthly publication. The type of articles Len needs most are the shorter ones, one or two-page articles. If you are considering writing an article for *The United States Specialist*, please contact him for instructions. If the article is regarding dummy stamps, I would appreciate knowing

about it also. Many members of the DSSG have written articles on dummy stamps and other stamps for this publication. It is rewarding and other USSS members benefit greatly from the information that is published in *The United States Specialist*.

Leonard can be reached by e-mail at: lenp@pacbell.net □

This issue and all past issues of the Dummy Stamps Study Group Newsletter - Dummy News and Views may be found at:

<http://www.usstamps.org/dssg.html>