

A 131-Year Old Mystery Solved! New Research Identifies The Official First Date of Issue For Type II Postal Notes

by Kent Halland and Charles Surasky

Collectors of U.S. Postal Notes, an early form U.S. Money Orders, know when the notes were first officially issued. And they know the series' final day of issue. What has eluded researchers and collectors are the dates the other designs were first officially released for use.

New research has uncovered and assimilated some key facts that support more than 40 years of research into this increasingly popular series. And we can now identify the mysterious "Official first date of issue" of the Type II design. However, there is *one* reported Postal Note *seemingly* in conflict of the "official" first date, a note that has not surfaced in years and has not been available for study. More on this note later in this article.

The United States officially began issuing Postal Notes on September 3, 1883. The initial design, known as Type I, was printed on yellow banknote paper. The issuing clerk was required to hand write the note's value (from \$0.01 up to the series' \$4.99 statutory maximum), then confirm its value by punching holes through the corresponding numbers representing dollars, dimes and cents.

Like their direct ancestors, Postage and Fractional Currency Notes, Postal Notes were produced by private banknote companies under contracts awarded by the U. S. government. Type I notes, as well as Types II, II-A and III were engraved and printed by the Homer Lee Bank Note Company of New York. Its contract commenced in 1883 and concluded in 1887. Type IV notes were engraved and printed from 1887 to 1891 by the American Bank Note Company, also located in New York. Type V notes were printed by Philadelphia's Dunlap & Clarke from 1891 to 1894 (see Chart One). All Postal Notes were printed on paper supplied by Crane and Company, the Dalton, Massachusetts firm that became the government's prime contractor for security paper in the late 1870s.

Chart One--Production Contract Information

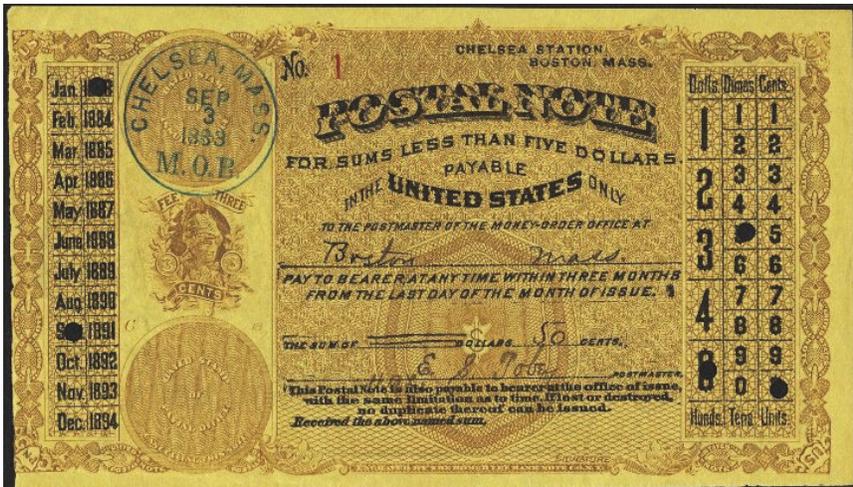
Supply Contract	Private Contractor	Dates of Contract	PN Types Produced
First	Homer Lee Bank Note Co.	September 3, 1883 to September 2, 1887	I, II, II-A, III
Second	American Bank Note Co.	September 3, 1887 to September 2, 1891	IV
Third	Dunlap & Clarke	September 3, 1891 to June 30, 1894	V

Widespread publicity and the increasing popularity of “collecting” led to the public’s acquisition of numerous first day and low serial number notes. As instruments of commerce, Postal Notes were also popular with the public because they were easier to obtain and less expensive than Money Orders, albeit with less security.

During the 12-year series, more than 70,824,000 Postal Notes were issued. The overwhelming majority were issued, delivered and redeemed, then returned to Washington, D.C., where they were accounted for and destroyed. Official government statistics pinpoint 475,891 Postal Notes still outstanding at the close of the 19th Century. However, only an estimated total of 2,000 examples have survived into the 21st century. Many of the survivors have face values of only one or two cents, suggesting they were acquired by collectors, souvenir-hunters and postal employees.

Homer Lee’s Second Design

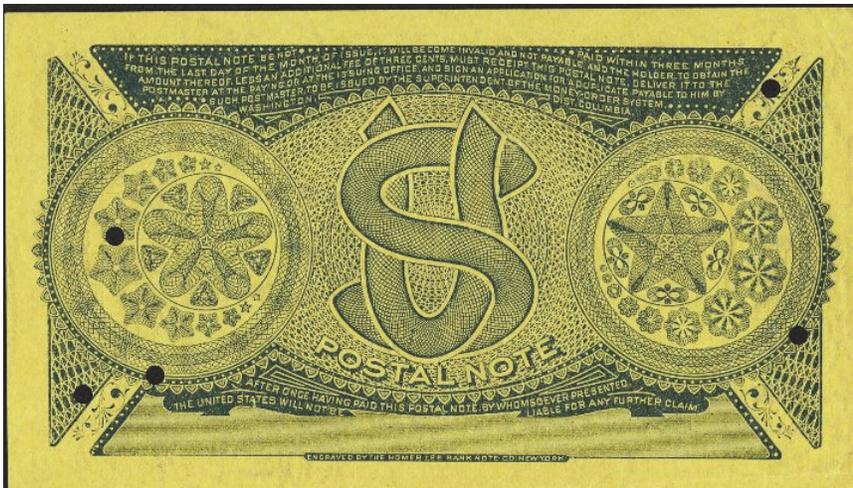
The first design’s shortcomings led the government, with the assistance of Homer Lee’s engraving and printing staff, to sharply alter the layout and to change the issuing process. It reduced the note’s size and switched to a creamy white paper. Like the Type I notes, Type II notes required the “punching” of the number of dimes and cents to indicate the note’s value. But the number of dollars – if any – were indicated by dollar coupons located at the note’s left, and the locations for both the issuing and redeeming (paying) Money Order Office date-stamps were moved to the reverse (see Illustrations 1 and 2 ((below)) for examples of Type I and Type II Postal Notes, respectively).

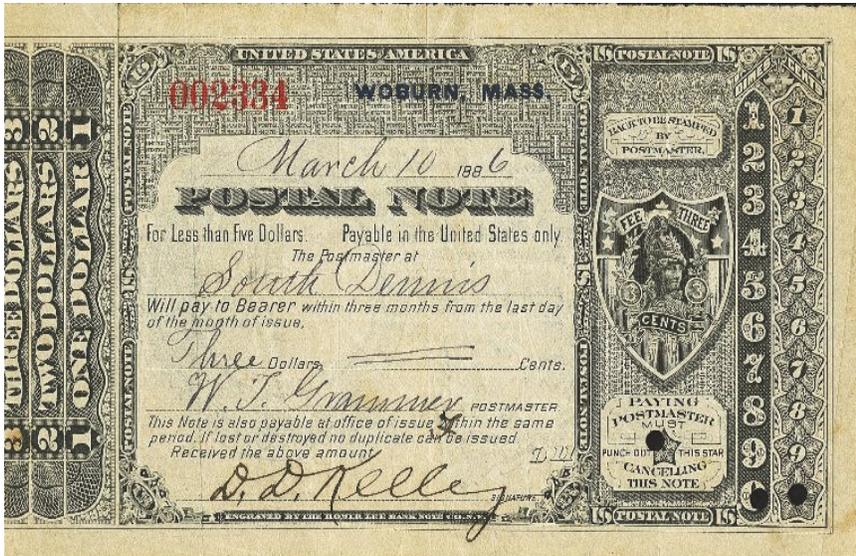


All Type I Postal Notes were printed on 6 3/8 by 3 1/4 inch yellow Crane & Co. banknote paper.

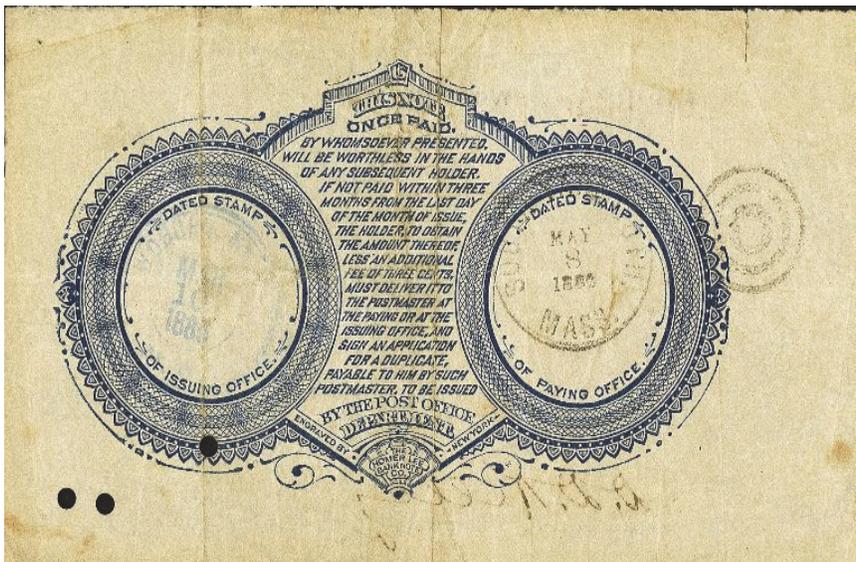
The design required “punching” of the year and month of issue, as well as the dollars, dimes, and cents in the correct columns. The obverse had locations for both issuing (top circle) and paying (bottom circle) office hand-stamps. This serial number 1

note was issued for 50 cents at Chelsea Station in Boston, Massachusetts, and was redeemable only there and in Boston, Massachusetts. This note was never redeemed. (Image courtesy of Heritage Auctions.)





Type II Postal Notes were reduced in size to 5 5/16 by 3 3/8 inches (without the dollar coupons) and printed on a creamy white Crane & Co. banknote paper. Each note's face value was indicated by "punched" holes for the dimes and cents, with coupons at the note's left end cut to indicate the number of dollars. The locations of issuing and paying postmaster's hand-stamps were moved to the reverse. This serial number 2334 note was issued at Woburn, MA in the amount of three dollars, and was payable at South Dennis (MA). However, it was accidentally redeemed in South Yarmouth, Massachusetts. This note survived because it was rejected for reimbursement by the government's auditor. The reason: it was redeemed by D.D. Kelley at the wrong location, and returned to Peleg P. Akin, postmaster at South Yarmouth, who suffered an expensive lesson regarding improper payment of Postal Notes! (Image courtesy of Heritage Auctions.)



The changes that led to the creation of Type II Postal Notes were not the last in this series. Subsequent design changes are catalogued as Type III, Type IV and Type V. Collectors also recognize a transitional use of Type II notes issued after passage of the Law of 1887. These notes are catalogued as Type II-A.

When Were The "Middle" Designs First Issued?

We know the first and last day of issue for the series because the government's announcements were printed in newspapers throughout the nation well in advance of those events. That publicity stimulated the public's collecting activities, leading to numerous extra "first day" (September 3, 1883) and "last day" (June 30, 1894) notes being saved.

But what about the "first" and "last" dates for the "middle" types, known as Type II, III and IV? Our goal here is to determine the *official* "first date of issue" for the Type II design, so we will leave the other dates for future research. For now, collectors must continue to depend on the data assembled into Chart Two.

Unfortunately for 21st Century collectors and researchers, the government made no *public* announcements regarding the introduction of Type II notes. That led us to: 1) examine the known notes and/or available note data; 2) organize the data by design and dates of issue, and 3) locate documents related to Postal Notes that provide clues. Finally, following our previous three steps, we built and tested a theory about a possible initial introduction date for the design.

During the last 40+ years, organized collectors have cataloged each Postal Note observed, reported, sold at auction, offered on eBay, etc. This coordinated effort, exhaustively maintained for decades by the late J. Noll, had located 1,460 Postal Notes, including 122 examples of the Type II design, by June of 2004. (Noll classified *both* Types II and II-A by the Higgins & Gage number "HGOJ2," but indicated the transitional Type II-A notes by entering "Any M. O. Office" in lieu of a paying post office.) Noll's 2004 compilation, his last, required more than 100,000 keystrokes – a herculean effort by any measure.

Examination of the dates of issue of the notes from Noll's original database, plus about 350 previously unreported notes through an ongoing effort by numerous individuals and contributors, has led to the development of the data in Chart Two.

When studying Chart Two, be mindful that many of the notes were recorded long ago by researchers – often looking at mediocre quality black and white images *faxed* to them over 2.4k baud modems! (There were no affordable digital cameras, nor was there email access, nor was anyone able to attach an image to a text message because the Internet *did not exist* forty years ago!) Much of the data too, was likely collected and recorded on paper in cursive writing -- probably with Noll's easily corrected #2 pencil. The number of observed and reported Postal Notes limited an in-depth study as well. With that in mind as more data surfaces, inconsistencies with the "old data" are to be expected, and when encountered, should be addressed and corrected if possible. We will do exactly that later in this article.

Chart Two--Observed Issuance Period of Postal Notes by Type

<u>Design</u>	<u>Earliest & Latest Reported Notes</u>
Type I	Sept. 3, 1883 to Feb. 26, 1885
Type II	Feb. 16, 1884* to March 10, 1888
Type II-A	Jan 22, 1887** to Sept. 8, 1888
Type III	Sept. 8, 1887 to June 11, 1894
Type IV	Jan. 26, 1888 to May 9, 1894
Type V	Feb 15, 1892 to June 30, 1894

*Earliest Type II date will be *changing soon!*

**Earliest Type II-A *possible* is January 3, 1887, the date the new law was passed.

Note: Chart Two data is based on "*Index of U.S. Postal Notes in Collectors Hands*" Seventh Edition (2004), a census manually compiled by James E. Noll, plus subsequent input of numerous collectors and researchers through November 15, 2015. A new edition of a "census" is currently in preparation. An update of this chart will be published after the new census is completed.

An Unexpected Clue

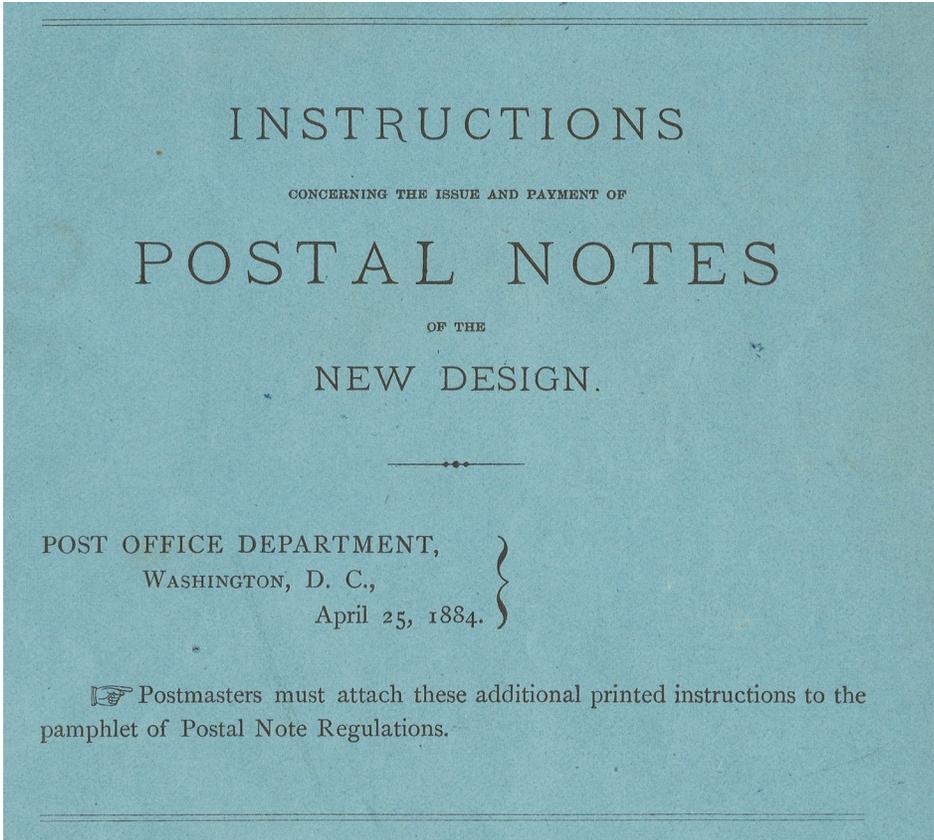
Last November, co-author Kent Halland discovered a relevant piece of Postal Note data in an obscure location. While using the Google Books search engine, he found the following paragraph in “*Appletons’ Annual Cyclopaedia and Register of Important Events of the Year 1887.*” While the entire section on page 687 of that document is interesting to Postal Note collectors, we have highlighted the portion relevant to this article:

“Postal Notes—One of the outgrowths of the money-order system, as well as a substitute for fractional currency produced by the exigencies of the civil war, is the postal note. Its aim is the utmost convenience in the payment of sums of less than \$5 through the agency of the mails. The law by which the postal note was authorized was signed by the President March 3, 1883, and the issue was begun simultaneously at all money-order offices on Sept. 3, 1883. The postal note was not designed to take the place of the money-order. In the money-order the Government is responsible for the payment to the true payee, while in the case of the postal note it assumes no responsibility whatever, but pays the money to the holder, who by his possession of it is *prima facie* owner. A note is issued for any sum from one cent to \$4.99 inclusive, and the uniform fee is three cents. The postmaster who is called upon to issue a postal note enters in the body of the note the name of the office drawn upon, and the amount. In every instance he is required to write out the full number of dollars, but may insert figures for the number of cents; and his signature must be written, not stamped. With a pincer-punch the requisite figures are canceled, and the note is ready for the sender. The postmaster must also enter in the stub of his book the amount in figures, the date of issue, and the name of the money-order office drawn upon. **On April 25, 1884, a circular was sent out by the post-office department, giving notice of a new design known as the coupon order, which was issued to supersede the note of 1883.** The popularity of the postal note is shown by the following statement of its growth up to the end of the fiscal year, June 30, 1886.”

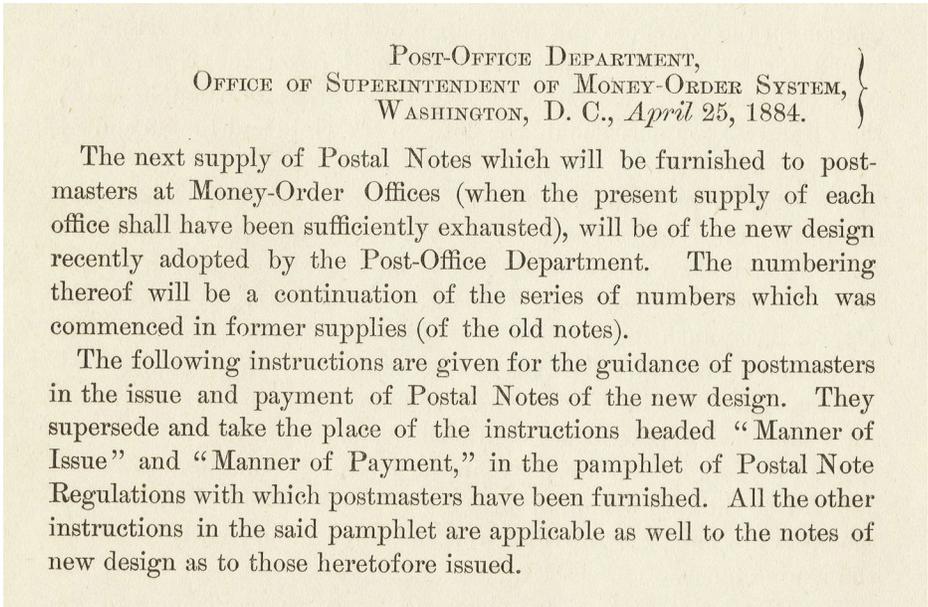
FISCAL YEAR.	Number Issued.	Value.
1884	3,689,237 (10 mos.)	\$ 7,411,992.48
1885	5,058,287	\$ 9,996,274.37
1886	5,999,428	\$11,718,010.05

Additional research found that Nicholas Bruyer had mentioned the same document in his award-winning four-part treatise published in the Society of Paper Money Collectors *Paper Money* magazine from the Fall of 1973 to May, 1974.

As it turns out, a copy of the April 25, 1884 document Bruyer had mentioned was in his personal collection. It sold 37 years after publication of his articles at Heritage Auctions’ 2011 January Tampa FUN Signature Currency Auction #3512 (lot 15827.) Illustrations 3 and 4 are cropped images of the front cover and the pertinent paragraph from that document. Images of the full pages of the document can be viewed at the HA.com website. But be aware: there are two images shown for the auction lot (possibly a rear cover of a September, 1895 *Official Postal Guide*) that might not belong to the 1884 document!



Cropped image of front cover of Superintendent's April 25, 1884 announcement. (Image courtesy of Heritage Auctions.)



Cropped image from page three of Superintendent's April 25, 1884 announcement. (Image courtesy of Heritage Auctions.)

The April 25, 1884 pamphlet was distributed to postmasters at Money Order Offices to announce both the upcoming release of the "new design recently adopted," and to provide detailed instructions to postmasters for properly remitting and paying the newly designed notes. As done with the announcement of the Type I Postal Notes in newspapers during 1883, the Post Office Department used simplified facsimile images of the new note rather than actual images in the instructional pages of the pamphlet. (We intentionally omitted the facsimile note images.)

There it is: Washington, D.C. officially alerted the nation's postmasters that a new Postal Note design would be delivered "...when the present supply of each office shall have been sufficiently exhausted..." The first possible date of issue for the new design – the Type II notes -- was April 25, 1884.

Although being superseded, the larger, yellow notes, known today as Type I, would continue to be valid for issuance, and the new design (Type II) would be distributed for issuance. So it is evident both Types would be in use simultaneously at different locations until existing supplies of Type I notes were exhausted.

Not clearly stated in the notice: any new requisitions received for blank Postal Notes would be filled using books of *Type I* notes -- if such notes were held in reserve stock by the Postal Note Agency. The Money Order Offices for which there was no reserve stock would require newly printed notes to fulfill their orders. The latter offices then would be the first to receive the newly approved Type II design – the reduced size notes described in the Appletons paragraph as the "coupon order."

Referring again to Chart Two it is obvious the Postal Note Agency and some post offices had a very large quantity of the Type I notes on-hand, or issued Type I notes at a very slow rate. We draw this conclusion because the latest known date of issuance for a Type I Postal Note extends for months AFTER the earliest known Type II survivor!

So the new design, the Type II notes, were first shipped to many, but not all, of the requesting offices throughout the nation sometime around April 25th, 1884. We now have a key "official" clue to the initial introductory date of the new, smaller Postal Notes, but it is only one clue at this point.

Does This Clue Confirm Recent Data?

Does this new information confirm or refute previous research? And what does the current census of known Postal Notes suggest when compared with this new fact? Finally, what key piece of information is needed for all Postal Note enthusiasts to recognize April 25, 1884 as the *Official* first date of issue of the Type II notes?

Does the newly-located information arising from *Appletons' Cyclopaedia* and the *Instructions Concerning Issue and Payment of Postal Notes of the New Design* confirm, or at least generally support, the data taken from the surviving notes? It does, but with **ONE** exception!

Thousands of Type I and Type II Postal Notes were issued on a daily basis starting on the second design's first date of public availability – which should be on or immediately after the April 25th, 1884 announcement date. Of the thousands of notes, only one reported Type II survivor seems to be dated before April 25th. It is the Pipe Stone, Minnesota, serial number 4056, dated February 16, 1884 in Jim Noll's 2004 Index. For brevity, we will refer to this note as "#4056" hereafter.

Before discussing #4056, some other significant early Type II notes need to be mentioned, all of which support our conclusion that April 25th, 1884 was the "official" first date of issue.

The study of Jim Noll's 2004 data, as well as actual notes that have surfaced since -- with particular emphasis on serial number 1 notes and change-over dates or change-over pairs -- yields absolute proof the new Type II notes were being issued by Money Order Offices less than one month after April 25, 1884.

An important factor in our analysis of these notes is determining the average issue rate (per week) for each of the issuing post offices, then comparing them to the issuance data from Pipe Stone. This rate is shown in parenthesis below the information for each of the other early Type II notes.

Working in reverse chronological order, we found seven significant Type II Postal Notes:

1. The ***first and only*** serial #1 is:
La Moure, Dakota Territory—Type II, #1, July 31, 1884.
(Average issue rate cannot be calculated without additional data.)
2. The earliest (reported, but unconfirmed) change-over ***pair*** is:
Akron, OH—Type II #3501, June 20, 1884
Akron, OH—Type I #3500, June 19, 1884
(Average issue rate of 84 per week.)
3. The earliest known in 1974, per the second segment of Bruyer's articles is:
New York, NY —Type II #20368, June 3, 1884
(Average issue rate of 508 per week.)
4. The next earliest New York, NY is:
New York, NY —Type II #20320, June 2, 1884
(Average issue rate of 508 per week.)
5. There are two locations with change-over ***dates***. They are:
North Springfield, MO—TYPE II #501, May 23, 1884
North Springfield, MO—TYPE I #498, May 23, 1884
(Average issue rate of 13 per week.)
6. and
Hartford, CT—Type II #3502, May 22, 1884
Hartford, CT—Type I #3500, May 22, 1884
(Average issue rate of 93 per week.)
7. The earliest note issued *after the Superintendent's announcement*, is:
Baltimore, MD—Type II #9502, May 16, 1884.
(Average issue rate of 259 per week.)

When Postal Notes were requisitioned by an issuing office, the time required for the Postal Note Agency to receive and fulfill the order (for Postal Notes not currently in Homer Lee's reserve stock) is estimated to be as much as three weeks. That closely matches the lapse of time between the April 25, 1884 Superintendent's announcement and the issue date of the Baltimore, Maryland Postal note #9502 issued May 16, 1884. (It may have survived because it was among the first of the Type II notes that Baltimore received. Has anyone seen #9501?)

Why Large Money Order Offices May Not Have Received the "New" Type II Notes before Smaller Offices

At the time of Bruyer's articles, many Postal Note experts believed the first date of issue for the Type II design was on or about June 3, 1884. Most likely this theory was based on the date of issue of the earliest known Type II note: New York, NY, serial # 20368. Why? A long-standing assumption has been the large city post offices consumed more Postal Notes and placed requisitions more often than smaller offices. Therefore these larger offices would likely receive any new types of notes *before* the smaller offices.

We now believe that assumption was incorrect. The large post offices were actually less likely to obtain any new style notes earlier than the smaller post offices! Here's the reason why:

On March 18, 1887, F. M. Cockrell, Chairman of the Select Committee of the Senate requested a report from Postmaster General William F. Vilas. The report, dated June 15, 1887, provides operations information for all departments and agencies within the Post Office Department -- including the Postal Note Agency.

Although this document was produced three years after our 1884 focus time, it explains the operation of the Postal Note Agency in detail. From it we learn that at least 4,000 books of Postal Notes were kept in reserve stock to fulfill orders from the largest post offices. A table in the 1887 report shows for 1884, there were 4,865 Postal Note books ordered for reserve stock, used in part to fulfill 3,712 requisitions for 13,755 Postal Note books supplied to postmasters.

We know that Postal Note books were being produced with 500 notes per book during the entire period of time prior to the 1887 report, and the data for **change-over** Type II notes from North Springfield, MO and Hartford, CT does indeed confirm this. (Smaller books containing 300, 200, and 100 Postal Notes were not available until the American Bank Note Company's contract commenced on September 3, 1887.)

The following information is excerpted from the June 15, 1887 report, but with paragraph sequence changed or paragraphs and text omitted to facilitate reading. Bold text is the authors' emphasis:

THE POSTAL-NOTE AGENCY AT NEW YORK.

“This agency was established in 1883 by authority of the act of March 3 of that year, and it serves as the representative of the Department, at the place where postal notes are manufactured, for the distribution thereof to postmasters. The agent is under bond for the faithful performance of his duties; is furnished, at the expense of the contractors, the Homer Lee Bank Note Company of New York, with office and desk room; and is required to see that all the stipulations of the contract are faithfully performed. To him is sent the daily order for postal notes from this office. He requires the contractors to print the necessary books, and when they are finished receives and examines them to see that they are correctly numbered and printed. He then prepares invoices and blank receipts to accompany them, and, under his direction, the books, invoices, and receipts are packed and sealed, and taken by the contractors to the post-office in New York City for transmission by registered mail.

The postal-note agency acts as an intermediary between the Post-Office Department and the contractors for inspection and furnishing supplies of blank postal notes; has custody of the stock of distinctive postal-note paper; receives from the contractors' books of postal notes, and transmits the same to postmasters; and, in general, serves as the representative of the Postmaster-General at the place of business of the contractors.

POSTAL NOTES.

One clerk . . . is assigned to the duty of receiving requisitions from postmasters for postal notes and of making out the orders therefore upon the contractors, the Homer Lee Bank Note Company, of New York. All requisitions received each day from postmasters are arranged in alphabetical order by State, and then according to the names of the post-offices in each State, and the correctness of the consecutive numbers asked for by the postmasters is verified.

The contractors are required by the terms of their contract to keep in stock, as a reserve, not less than 4,000 books of postal notes (which it has been customary to have printed for the larger offices—those that need the supplies most), and a further division of the requisition is therefore made for convenience into two parts, one containing those from offices books for which are not in reserve and must therefore

be printed, and the other those from offices having books in the reserve stock. The books which it is proposed to supply are charged to the respective postmasters by . . . in a set of registers containing an account with every money-order office and entries of all the consecutively-numbered postal notes ever supplied to them. **The requisitions are then entered upon an "order" directing the postal-note agent at New York City to cause the books called for to be printed and mailed to the respective postmasters, and the said order furthermore contains entries of books of advance numbers to be printed and placed in the reserve stock to replace all the books ordered out of that stock.** This order upon the postal-note agent is transmitted from this office daily after it is recorded by the book-keeper.”

To further support our belief that the large city post offices did not receive the new notes the soonest -- because the notes came from books with pre-assigned serial numbers in Homer Lee's "reserve stock", we can look to Chicago, Illinois. Quite by accident, the Chicago office issued a *Type I* note on the date of the Superintendent's announcement, and another *Type I* almost a month later. By some quirk of fate, both notes survived:

Chicago, IL -- Type I #14322, April 25, 1884.

Chicago, IL -- Type I #15943, May 22, 1884.

In fact, the earliest reported Chicago, IL *Type II* note known is #20979, dated August 16, 1884! (Chicago had an average issue rate of 420 notes per week.)

Take another look at the serial numbers of the earliest known New York (#20320) and Chicago (#20979) *Type II* notes. They were issued from books with serial numbers beginning at "20001" and "20501" respectively. The New York note was issued from its 41st book (of 500 notes), while the Chicago note is from the 42nd book produced in New York by Homer Lee's eponymous bank note company and delivered to it by the Postal Note Agency.

The close proximity of the serial numbers made us wonder: Did these massive cities receive 20 books (10,000 notes) of *Type I* notes before the September 3, 1883 inaugural date? And did the Postal Note Agency dutifully place another 20 books of *Type I* notes for each into its reserve? Based on a brief article in the August 24, 1883 Daily Los Angeles Herald, we believe that's exactly what happened. (The author cited an incorrect amount for a note's maximum value and neglected to say the purchaser had to select the Money Order Office.) That article proves that nearly 20,000 *Type I* Postal Notes had to be issued by the New York office (and, by extension, the nation's other major cities) before it could receive its first delivery of the new *Type II* design! (Authors Note: The quantity of Postal Notes held in reserve by the Postal Note Agency was proportional to the "size" of each Money Order office, so the reserve could range anywhere from 10,000 notes to as few as 500.)

The New Postal Notes

New York, Aug. 23. – The *Evening Post* says: The Postoffice (sic) here has received the new postal notes in books of 500 each, to the number of 10,000, and will be ready to issue them at the date fixed by the Department, September 3, 1883. None can be issued before this date. The largest sum for which any single certificate or note can be issued is four dollars and ninety cents, and are good on presentation to any money order office in the United States. They will be paid to bearer thereof without identification or questions asked, at any time within three months after the date of the issue. They will also be redeemed by the same office that issued them, thus making them negotiable as currency in same city where made.

The Key to Solving the Mystery: Pipe Stone, Minnesota #4056

Based on the evidence presented so far, and while expressing our deep respect for, and appreciation of Jim Noll's efforts, the authors believe either some information he received was illegible or incorrect, or he erred when entering the Pipe Stone #4056 data into his database. (Other, *similar* errors in his database have previously been located and corrected based on study of notes that have re-surfaced, or our study of notes with adjacent serial numbers.)

In support of this belief, we offer the following arguments:

- 1) If #4056 is indeed a Type II note and is indeed dated Feb 16, 1884, why or how was it issued before the April 25, 1884 Superintendent's announcement?

Would Postmaster-General Gresham or Superintendent MacDonald allow delivery of the all-new Type II Postal Notes to a Money Order Office in rural Southwestern Minnesota (or anyplace else) more than *two months* before distributing instructions for their issue and payment? Doing so would invite confusion and mistakes in Pipe Stone and among the 6,000+ Money Order Offices in operation at the time!

Clearly, the intention of the April 25th announcement was to make all postmasters aware of the upcoming design change to avoid as many mistakes as possible when issuing or paying the new notes. We believe it is highly unlikely any Type II Postal Notes were shipped by the Postal Note Agency in advance of the announcement.

- 2) Perhaps the #4056 serial number was typed incorrectly and it was really #405, #406 or #456? In each of those cases, the note's serial number would be under 500, and therefore must be a Type I because the Post Office Department was only delivering Postal Notes in books containing 500 notes! (Pipe Stone was a Money Order office in operation on September 3, 1883, and therefore, would have received its book of 500 Type I Postal Notes before that date.)

- 3) The most plausible explanation is the date of issue for #4056 in Noll's Index is in error because the serial number and date listed for this note result in a nearly impossible statistical aberration when calculating Pipe Stone's "Average Weekly Issue Rate."

An analysis of #4056 data as it exists in Noll's Index, yields an issue rate of an astounding 170 Postal Notes per week between September 3, 1883 and February 16, 1884! This is more than that of either Hartford, CT or Akron, OH – much larger cities!

To put this data in perspective, we compare the town of Pipe Stone with a nearby town also issuing Postal Notes during the same period—namely, Sioux Falls, Dakota Territory, a town *EIGHT TIMES* the size of Pipe Stone, and less than fifty miles distant. Sioux Falls was also a Money Order office on September 3, 1883, so both towns began issuing Postal Notes on the inaugural date of the series.

The U.S. Census records indicate Pipe Stone, Minnesota had a population of 222 in 1880 and 1,232 in 1890. By comparison, Sioux Falls, Dakota Territory's population was 2,162 in 1880 and 10,177 in 1890 when known as Sioux Falls, South Dakota. (The Dakota Territory became North and South Dakota when entering the Union in 1889.) Both towns grew at roughly the same *rate* (five-fold) during the 1880's.

A reported and recently confirmed Type II Postal Note #7834 was issued on February 23, 1887 at Sioux Falls, Dakota. This serial number and date combination provide an average issue rate of only 43 Postal Notes per week between September, 1883 and February, 1887.

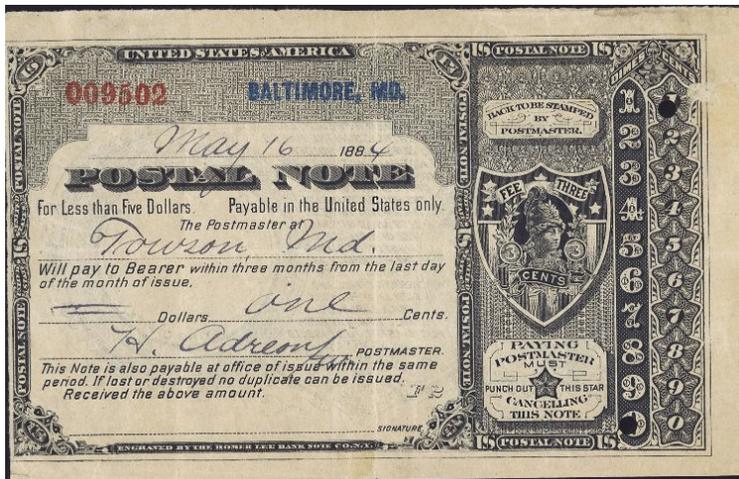
The *highest* serial number Postal Note known and verified from Pipe Stone, MN is #11378, issued December 30, 1893. Doing the math for this note yields a more realistic average issue rate of 21 Postal Notes per week between September 3, 1883 and December 30, 1893.

If we do the math “backwards” (using simple algebraic manipulation) for #4056 but substitute the average issue rate derived from Pipe Stone #11378, we can approximate the week number that #4056 was likely issued (using September 3, 1883 as week 1). The calculation predicts #4056 was issued sometime around the 192nd week, or May, 1887, more than a three year difference from the date in Noll’s Index! Allowing for a small amount of variation from the predicted date (perhaps three of four months in either direction), it is plausible the note could have been issued on February 16, 1887.

This analysis supports the authors’ premise that #4056 was issued in 1887 rather than 1884, and Mr. Noll simply typed a “4” instead of a “7” when entering the date into his database -- a common ten-key data entry error all of us have made at one time or another!

- 4) Finally (after this article had been through several drafts), we located records of postmasters for Pipe Stone, Minnesota. Postmaster D. E. Sweet served from November, 1877 until November 15, 1886, and postmaster John Stuart served from November 15, 1886 to January 23, 1890. The name of the postmaster who signed #4056 is listed as John Stuart in Noll’s Index, so this is irrefutable evidence that the date recorded for #4056, February 16, 1884 in Noll’s Index must be incorrect!

The typographical error in Noll’s 2004 Index for the Pipe Stone #4056 date means the earliest Type II Postal Note for inclusion in Chart Two will become the note #9502, issued in Baltimore on May 16, 1884. This note is shown below.



This Baltimore Type II note #9502, issued for one cent and payable at Towson, MD, is very likely the 2nd note from a new book based on its serial number. Perhaps the postmaster saved this note and its predecessor as souvenirs from the first booklet containing the “new type” of Postal Note issued in Baltimore. Has anyone seen Baltimore #9501? (Image courtesy of Heritage Auctions.)

If you happen to have a copy of Jim Noll’s Index, you should place a notation adjacent to Pipe Stone, MN #4056 indicating the date is incorrect.

Conclusion

After 40 years of research, we believe the mystery of the “Official first date of issue” of the Type II Postal Note design has been solved! The date will be hereinafter be recognized as **April 25, 1884**, based on the documents in existence, the Postal Notes we have verified by inspection, and the evidence that shows the date for #4056 in Jim Noll’s Index is incorrect. Moreover, the Type II Postal Note #9502 from Baltimore, MD issued May 16, 1884 will replace Pipe Stone #4056 as the earliest known Type II note until it is replaced by a Type II Postal Note dated earlier.

Unless Pipe Stone, Minnesota #4056 surfaces, we cannot be 100% certain of its date. We invite readers, collectors, researchers, and sleuths to help us locate the missing Postal Note so we can enter the correct date in the updated “census” currently in preparation.

If you know the whereabouts of Pipe Stone #4056, please contact us.

About the Authors

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Additional Reading

"Index of U.S. Postal Notes in Collectors Hands" Seventh Edition (2004) compiled by James E. Noll

"A Forgotten Chapter: The United States Postal Note", by Nicholas Bruyer

Paper Money, Vol. 12, No. 4, whole no. 48, pages 171-178;

Paper Money, Vol. 13, No.1, whole no. 49, pages 20-29;

Paper Money, Vol. 13, No. 2, whole no. 50, pages 70-76;

Paper Money, Vol. 13, No. 3, whole no. 51, pages 109-111;

Coin World Almanac, Eighth Edition. Pages 239-240.

"The First and Last Postal Notes 1883-1894", by Charles Surasky

Paper Money, Vol. 23, No. 5, whole no. 167, pages 154-157

"Redeemed Postal Notes: Great Rarities" by Charles Surasky

Paper Money, Vol. 47, No. 6, whole no. 258, pages 440-451

"The U.S. Postal Notes of 1883-1894: The Three Key Pieces of Federal Legislation", Charles Surasky, 2011

"The Comprehensive Catalog of U.S. Paper Money," fifth edition. Gene Hessler. Pages 387-389.

Postal Notes - The First Issues 1883-94, by Peter Martin, pp 306-332 of book entitled Pacific 97 Handbook, World Philatelic Exhibition, The Congress Book 1997, Sixty-Third American Philatelic Congress, June 7, 1997.

"Priced Catalogue of Postal Stationery of the World" (popularly called the "Higgins & Gage Catalog.") Section 18, pages 44-45.

Google Books:

"Appletons' Annual Cyclopaedia and Register of Important Events of the Year 1887.", NEW SERIES, VOL. XII, WHOLE SERIES, VOL. XXVII., published by D. Appleton and Company, 1, 8, and 5 Bond Street, New York, 1888.

Senate Report 507, Part 3, 50th Congress, 1st Session, March, 1888 entitled *REPORT OF THE SELECT COMMITTEE OF THE UNITED STATES SENATE*. Published by the Government Printing Office, Washington D.C., 1888

"An illustrated history of the counties of Rock and Pipestone, MN", Arthur P. Rose, NORTHERN HISTORY PUBLISHING COMPANY, LUVERNE, MINNESOTA, PUBLISHERS, 1911 (page 320)