

## Prexie Inking Problems: Light and Dark Prints

by Richard Pederson

With well over two hundred billion Prexies printed, it is not hard to imagine that a few problems occurred during production. All Prexies were line engraved and printed using the intaglio printing process. The engraved design is cut into the printing plate leaving recessed areas. During production, ink is applied to the plate and the excess on the surface of the plate is wiped off with a wiper blade leaving ink only in the recessed areas. The plate is then applied under heavy pressure to paper that has been moistened, forcing the ink from the recessed areas onto the paper to create the desired image.

The vast majority of Prexies were clearly printed with colors in an acceptable range from those intended. However, a significant number of stamps completed the production process with images that appear much lighter or darker than intended. Many if not most of those stamps appeared blurry or smeared.

Figure 1 shows examples of Prexies that are often characterized as under-inked but are in fact dry prints caused by paper that was not sufficiently moist prior to printing. The 3-cent value at the far left is an example of a dry print that is so light that it is barely recognizable. The block of 12-cent Prexies at the far right is a less extreme example that shows much of the design detail. According to John Hotchner, infrequently, lightly printed examples were also caused by tightly installed wiper blades that removed some of the ink from the incised lines of the engraved printing plate.



**Figure 1.** Under-inked Prexies.

Figure 2 shows examples of darkly printed Prexies that are often referred to as over-inked. The 15-cent value at the far left is so heavily inked that much of the design detail is lost. The stamps to the right of it are also much darker than normal but show a

greater portion of the design detail. Heavily inked Prexies are usually caused by poor wiping of the ink prior to printing or by paper that has too high a moisture content. Poor wiping results in a failure of the wiper blades to remove all of the ink from the non-recessed areas of the printing plate. Paper with too much moisture (i.e., a wet print) can cause the ink to ooze out onto the non-recessed portion of the plate when it is applied to the paper. Poor wiping results in a stamp that preserves the stamp's intended image but leaves a film of extra ink across the entire stamp. Excess moisture results in a muddy image where the recessed areas bleed into the non-recessed areas.



**Figure 2.** Heavily-inked Prexies.

In addition to the inking anomalies discussed above, John Hotchner indicates there is another way in which inking problems could have occurred. If, when cleaning fluid was applied to clean the printing plates, it was not completely wiped off, the remainder could mix with the ink that was applied. This could result in leaving a print that leaves very little of the intended design.

I welcome any comments, corrections, or additions. I can be reached by E-mail at [rich@pedersonstamps.com](mailto:rich@pedersonstamps.com) or mail at P.O. Box 662, Clemson, SC 29633.

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