THE SAPITAL JOURNAL.

AMERICAN POSTAGE STAMPS.

A Brief History of these Useful Little Articles.

The proposition to change the size and colors of the prevailing postage stamps makes a short history of these useful little articles very time-

It is now half a century since the first postage stamp was issued in this country. In 1840 England began using stamps, in 1845 the issue of postage slamps was authorized by Congress, and in 1847 the first stamps were issued.

Before that time the postage was paid in cash, sometimes by the sender and sometimes by the receiver of the letter, and the schedule of rates varied with the distances.

The charge for transmitting a letter thirty miles was 6 cents, and the tariff increased in gradual ratio until a maximum charge of 25 cents for 300 miles or more was reached. This method was in vogue for two years Favorite Livery and Feed Barns after the issue of stamps was authorized by Congresss.

The first stamps issued were of the denominations of 5 cents and 10 cents. The 5 cents stamp had a picture of Ben Franklin and the 10 cents the head of Washington as the principal figure in the design.

Those heads have continued to adorn the postage stamps of our country from that day to this. The stamps first issued were a little larger than those now in use.

In 1851 the carrier system was introduced in all large cities, and a stamp of a peculiar design, costing 1 cent each and known as carriers' stamps, were issued for the purpose of providing prepaid delivery.

In that year the letter postage was reduced to 3 cents, and the old brickdust red 3-cent stamp came in. At the same time the issue was enlarged to eight stamps, the largest denomination being 90 cents.

The portrait of Jefferson was introducedeon the 5-cent stamp, but the other seven bore the heads of Washington and Franklin in different designs.

These stamps were the most popular ever issued by the department. They remained in use for ten years.

The new 3-cent stamp issued in 1861 was of a light red, and it remained in use until 1869, when there was a decided innovation in the designs of the entire issue. The new stamps were square instead of oblong, and many of them were printed in two colors, the central design being in one tone and the border in auother.

The principal figure in each design was in almost every instance a repre- WILLAMETTE sentation of some mode of carrying the mails instead of the head of some departed statesman.

The 3-cent siamp was printed in blue, and the principal figure in the design was a locomotive. That issue of stamps lasted about ten months. the old designs, which were printed, however, in different colors.

The 3-cent stamp was then made green, with the head of Washington in the center of the design. That stamp is of such recent date that its design is familiar to every one.

The green 3-cent stamp which was adopted in 1870 continued in use longer than any of its predecessors. It was used until October 1, 1883, and it might have continued in vogue much longer had not Congress reduced the rate of letter postage to 2 cents. Under the new law a brown 2-cent stamp was issued. It continued in use until 1887, when its color was changed to the green now in use, to which the public seem to have taken a strong dislike.

Among the rarest American stamps are some which are not issued by the Government, When Congress, in 1845, authorized the use of stamps it neglected to make such = provision as warrented the postal authorities in their estimation in the issue of stamps.

During the period of two years preceding the issue of Governmen stamps the principal cities of th United States issued what were known as postmasters' stamps. The were intended for the convenience of business men who desired to ma letters after the closing of the post office, for the postoffice did not re main in operation all night in th primitive days of the postal service

These stamps were issued by pos masters at New York, Philadelphi Washington, Baltimore, St. Loui Providence, Alexandria and a great many other places.

Some of the stamps were mere slips of paper bearing the signature of the postmasters. Collectors value the Baltimore stamp at \$200. stamp which was is ned by the Postmaster of New Hacen is worth on an original-used envelope \$800 and more. A postage stamp issued by the Milbury Postmaster, which was of claborate design for those days, and bore the head of Washington, brings easily \$300 to \$500.—Golden

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brae and ancient coins.

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