

T. G. Masaryk 1920 Issue

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In a country known for its beautiful stamps, the T. G. Masaryk issue of 1920 is uniquely unattractive to modern eyes. The portrait, with its crowded framing decked out in the various fruits of the earth, seems out of place among the startlingly beautiful stamps that preceded and followed its release. Be that as it may, the issue is refreshingly interesting to collectors devoted to the study of the process of how stamps are manufactured and the impact of various production procedures upon the end product.



The 125 Haléřů Masaryk of 1920.

For the most part, typographic printing produced the early Czechoslovak stamps, the Masaryk issue among them. A simple process was followed to make plates for this printing technique. From a template drawing of the stamp, typically twice the size of a normal stamp, a printing block was cut. This block was used to stamp out 100 inked copies onto suitable paper. The ink prints were arranged in ten rows of ten, a group photograph taken, and a negative produced at half the group's original size. This negative was transferred to the plate chemically, the plate etched, and the printer was in business.

Not so for the Masaryk stamps. First, two printing blocks, not one, were cut from the template. These two printing blocks were used to stamp out 25 prints and five rows of five images created a 25-stamp arrangement instead of the typical 100-stamp arrangement. Once the 25-stamp block had been photographed and the negative reduced to the proper size, the negative was transferred chemically to the metal plate which was then etched.

How is it known that two printing blocks were made and that the 25-stamp negative was transferred four times to each plate? The stamps themselves tell us.

Type I and Type II Masaryk Stamps

Let us first consider the problem of the two printing blocks. The stamps demonstrate its existence because there are two broad types of Masaryk stamps. If one examines all of the stamps on a pane of Masaryk stamps produced by either of its two plates, one always finds every stamp matches the pattern of a Type I or a Type II stamp.

The difference between the types occurs in the center of the long scrollwork that extends along the left side of the stamp between the portrait frame and the edge of the stamp. Directly to the left of the tip of the inverted tulip on the portrait frame, the shading lines at the left edge of the scrollwork differ. For Type I stamps, the outermost line is continuous, but for Type II stamps, there is a long break.



Type I



Type II

There are 76 Type I stamps on each pane of Masaryk stamps and 24 type II stamps. They are always located in the same position on panes printed from either plate. To schematically explain the distribution of Type I and Type II stamps within a pane, the problem of the repeating 25-stamp block of stamps must first be considered.

Flaws in the 25-Stamp Negative

The problem of the repeating 25-stamp block may be resolved by considering what effect it would have on the plate as a whole. Consider for a moment a defect in the negative itself, for instance a dot in the leg of the letter **P** in the word **POŠTA**. If it appears on the negative, and the image of the negative was repeatedly used four times to make the plate, then that dot in the **P** in **POŠTA** would have to appear four times on each pane of stamps and in exactly the same relative positions.

That is exactly what what happens, and not just for this flaw. There are nine other flaws that each occur four times on both plates and always in the same relative positions on each pane. Table I schematically represents the ten repeating flaws, and also shows the locations of Type I and Type II stamps.

		1	2	3			1	2	3
	4		5			4		5	
				6					6
			7	8				7	8
	9	10				9	10		
		1	2	3			1	2	3
	4		5			4		5	
				6					6*
			7	8				7	8
	9	10				9	10		

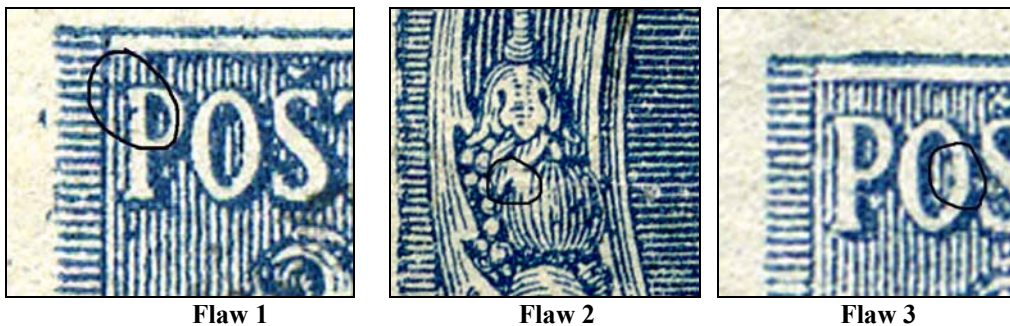
Table I. A Schematic Representation of a 100-Stamp Pane of Masaryk Stamps.

Table I is a schematic of the 100 stamps in a Masaryk issue pane of stamps. Even a quick glance at Table I indicates a recurring pattern within each of the four quarters (they have heavy outlines). Notice in the top row in each of the quarters there is a white square, followed by a dark square, followed by three white squares with the digits 1, 2, and 3 in

them. A different, but still repeated, pattern may be found in each of the remaining four rows of each quarter pane.

The light squares represent the location of Type I stamps while the dark squares locate the positions of Type II stamps. The numbers each identify a flaw in the negative that is always found on the stamp in the indicated location. Clearly, the repeated location of the flaws and the two types of stamps prove beyond doubt that the 25-stamp block was repeated four times.

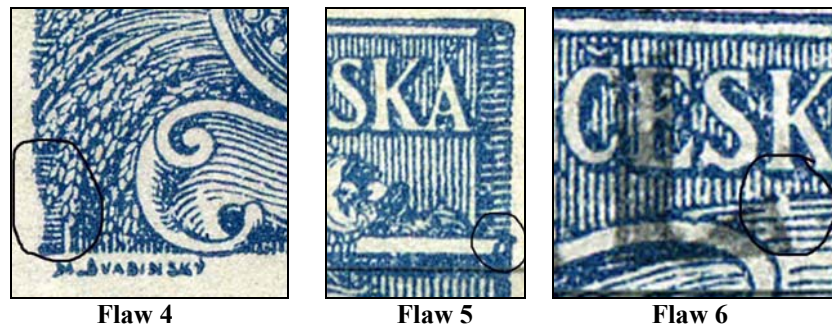
Each of the ten flaws are illustrated and described below. Seven of the flaws occur on Type I stamps; only three (as mentioned in the descriptions below) occur on Type II stamps.



Flaw 1: Dot in the upper part of the leg of the letter P in POŠTA.

Flaw 2: Break in the edge of the apple leaf.

Flaw 3: Dark nick from the inner right side of the letter O in POŠTA.



Flaw 4: Rounded bite from the lower left edge of the stamp.

Flaw 5: Diagonal mark or line across the right end of the shelf below SKÁ.

Flaw 6: (Only on Type II stamps.) White blotch in the horizontal shading lines below the left leg of the letter K of ČESKO.



Flaw 7



Flaw 8



Flaw 9

Flaw 7: (Only on Type II stamps.) Gap in the innermost line of the portrait frame just below the lapel on Masaryk's jacket.

Flaw 8: A mark in the bottom of the left scrollwork of the value tablet just above the letter Y in the designer's signature under the stamp.

Flaw 9: A dot in the apex of the letter A in POŠTA.



Flaw 10

Flaw 10: (Only on Type II stamps.) Gap in the shading lines directly below the tip of the ear of corn above the right end of the value tablet.

A Plate Flaw

All of the Types and flaws from the negative mentioned above are repeated in exactly the same place in all four quarters of the plate, which demonstrates they are from the same source. There is another very conspicuous flaw which is never repeated and, in fact, occurs only on Plate II. At the end of the third row in the fourth quarter of Table I is a square containing "6*". The 6, it is understood, represents flaw 6 from the negative. The "*", on the other hand, appears nowhere else on the schematic and represents a plate flaw. Plate flaws, by definition, occur on the plate as a manufacturing defect or injury incurred during the printing process. As such, they are unique to a single place on a single plate. This plate flaw is identified by a short base on the numeral 2 in 125.



Long Base on 2



Short Base on 2

While the comprehensive *Monografie Československých Známek*, Volume II, reports on page 152 another plate flaw – thick and thin numerals in the value tablet – the modern literature does not support its existence. There are retouches to some of the stamps and each stamp, like all stamps typographically produced, has its own peculiar identifying landmarks. Readers are invited to view a plating guide for the Masaryk 125 haléřů – along with plating guides for the Hradčany and Legionářské – on the author's website: www.knihtisk.org.

The Masaryk 125h has other interesting aspects such as color variations and its use as a surcharged stamp for the Red Cross Issue. However, here we have only focused upon the more interesting aspects of its manufacture as evidenced by the stamps themselves.

Notes

The original work supporting this article was done by several well-known Czech collectors: A. Šnoflák, F. Žampach, J. Chvalovský, and Z. Ryvola. These gentlemen identified the flaws in the negative of the 25-stamp block with uppercase letters and in the sequence in which each set of flaws was found. The numbered flaws used here are equivalent to the flaws they identified as follows: **A-2; B-4; C-10; D-6; E-8; F-7; G-1; H-3; I-9; J-5**. All of the illustrations, save the one of Flaw 2, are from the author's personal collection. The Flaw 2 illustration was taken from the first book in the bibliography below.

Bibliography

- T. G. Masaryk 125 hal. Vady a retuše*. Studijní Filatelistické Příručky, Společnosti Sběratelů Čs. Knihtiskových Známek, Prague, 1991.
- Ryvola, Zdeněk. *Dodatek ke Studii J. Chvalovského T. G. Masaryk 125h, vady a retuše*. Privately printed in Prague.
- Monografie Československých Známek*, Díl II.