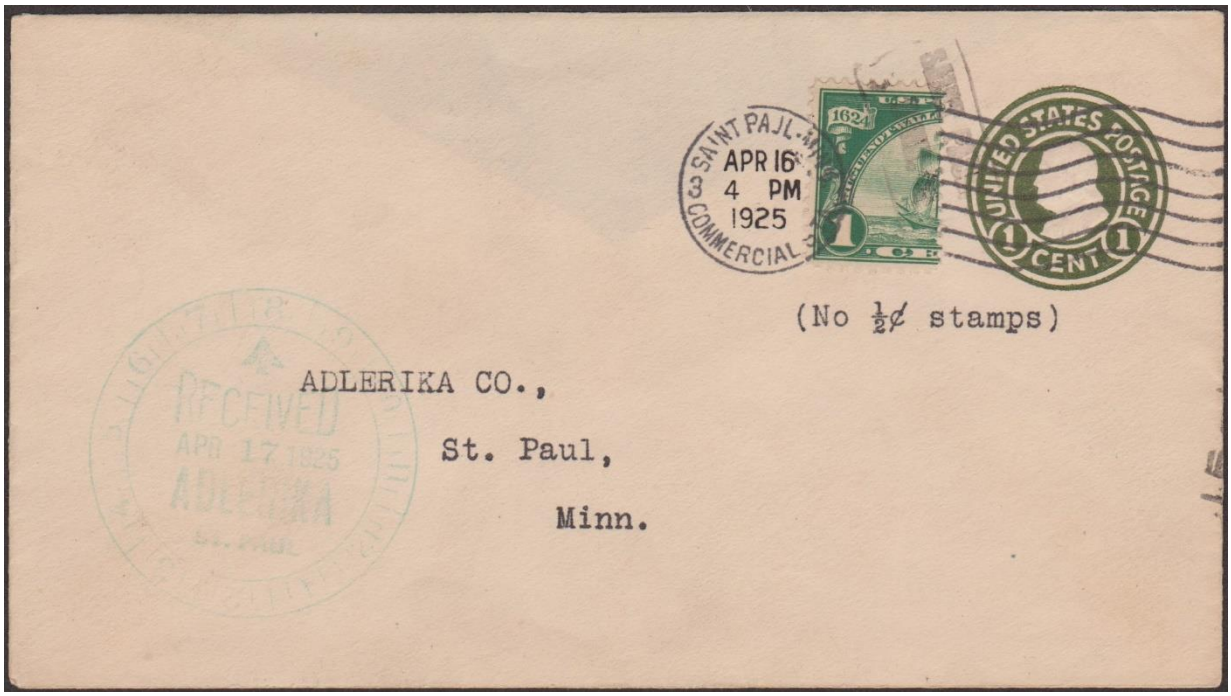
A Common Cover with a Bisected Stamp

By Patrick Crosby

The use of only a portion of a stamp by itself or with other stamps was sometimes necessary because of a lack of a proper postage denomination at a post office. These portions of stamps are "fractional" usages and are usually cut in half and called "bisected" stamps. A bisected 1¢ stamp provides two ½¢ stamps.

Stamps might be scissor or knife cut, privately perforated, or just torn apart. The cut might be vertical, horizontal, or diagonal. Sometimes approved, other times just tolerated, the use of fractional stamps was supposed to be for emergency purposes. The Scott U.S. Specialized catalogue does not list any unofficial bisects on cover after the 1880's. As an example of possible value, the 1873 2¢ brown Sc. 157 has a 2019 catalogue value of $27.50 on cover, but lists "Vertical half used as 1¢ on cover" at $1000.



Not nearly as valuable or scarce is the featured cover mailed from and to St. Paul MN on April 16, 1925. Just the day before the rate for a single printed matter (third class) cover had changed from 1¢ to 1½¢ and many post offices had not yet received a supply of ½¢ or 1½¢ stamps.

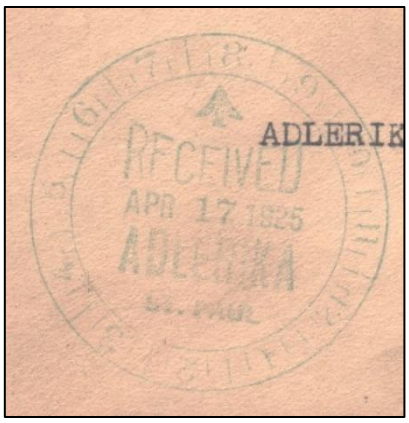
Addressed to the Adlerika Co. the sender types "(No ½¢ stamps)" on the cover, which explanation the USPOD appreciates. Using a common 1¢ postal stationery envelope (Sc.U420) the cover is uprated to the new printed matter rate with a vertically perforated bisect of the 1924 1¢ commemorative stamp Sc.614. Noticing a problem, a few days later in a *Postal Bulletin* the USPOD reminds postmasters that their patrons are not allowed to cut stamps in half – "All matter bearing stamps cut in two should be held for postage."

Sc.614, perforated 11, issued in

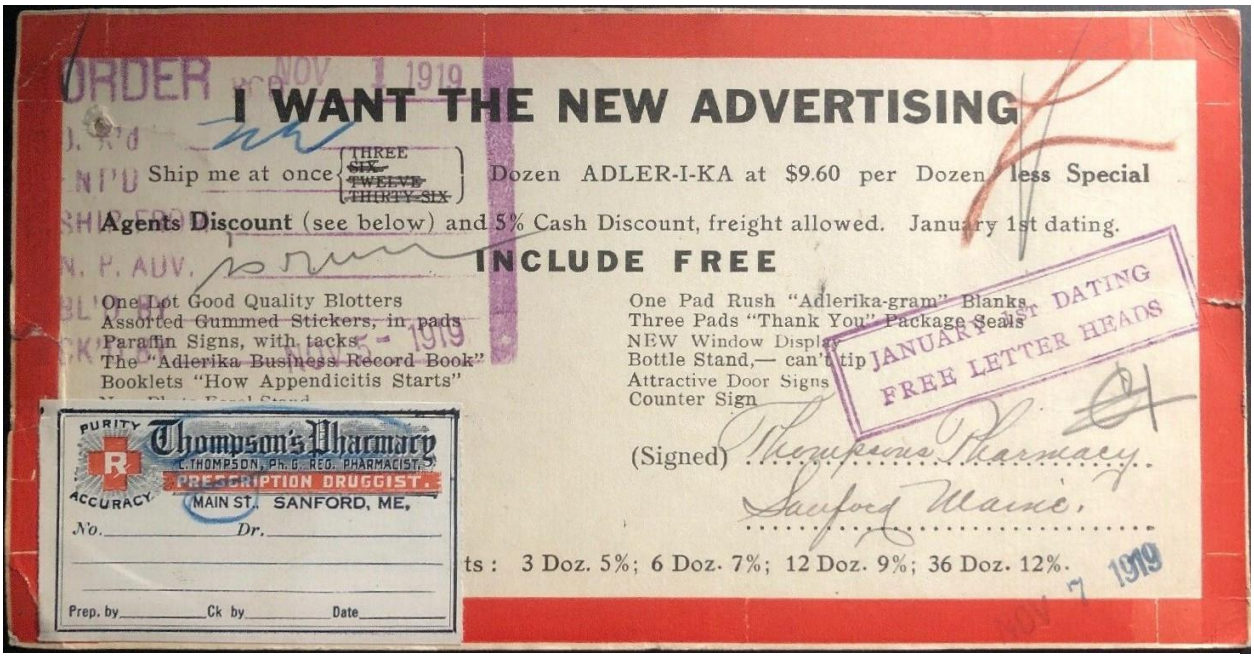
The bisected Sc. 614 is perforated 11, but the right, cut side it is perforated 12, and it seems this was to be done by the local post office.

With fractional usages the stamps must be on cover and tied to the cover by a postal marking. In this case the bisect is tied not only by a machine cancel, but also by a boxed "SAINT PAUL, MINN." handstamp.

There is a light Adlerika docketing handstamp at the bottom left showing the cover Received the morning after mailing. Whoever mailed this cover also mailed many others at the same post office, same date and time of day. Would you like the right half of the commemorative bisect on an Adlerika cover? No problem. Other individuals/"companies" prepared multiple covers posted around the country for no legitimate business purposes. Third class matter is not time sensitive and the postmark is not to have a date, but for favor purposes many post offices dated these items. I paid $11 for my Adlerika bisect cover, but you can find one for up to $200 online that comes with a useless expertizing certificate. On the reverse a previous owner writes in pencil, "This cover was legally used tho not listed by Scott. I paid 1.50 for it in 1928."



Adlerika docketing handstamp enlarged.



Reply from a druggist for ADLER-I-KA and free drug store advertising items.

The Adelerika Co. was founded in 1902 developing a "medicine" called Adler-I-KA. It was Dr. Adler's Cure for Appendicitis, also good for gas, constipation and heartburn. After the Food, Drug, and Insecticide Administration (the FDA's name for three years) was established in 1927 it was found that the potion didn't cure anything. In fact, there was no Dr. Adler. Nonetheless, extensively advertising in newspapers across the country using glowing testimonials, the Adlerika Co. continued on until about 1944. If you decide to add an Adlerika bisect cover to your collection, consider also a nice Adlerika Bowel Cleanser dose glass (readily found online) as an interesting, complimentary item.

References:

- Rodney A. Jewell, Lynn R. Batdorf, Steven J. Rods, eds. Encyclopedia of United States Stamps and Stamp Collecting, 2nd ed. (Katy, Texas: United States Stamp Society, 2016) p. 711.
- *The Postal Bulletin* (Washington, DC, April 29, 1925, Vol. XLVI, No. 13761) for free at http://www.uspostalbulletins.com/

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