

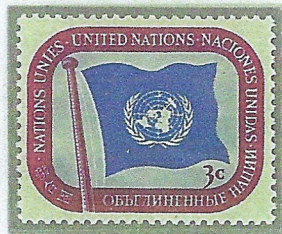
# UNITED NATIONS FIRST ISSUE 1951

## Historical Background

The United Nations charter grew out of discussions among the United States, the Soviet Union, the United Kingdom and China in 1944. An organizing conference was held in San Francisco, California, in 1945. The charter was signed by delegates from 50 countries. The United Nations came into existence on October 24, 1945, when the required number of individual nation ratifications was reached.

The signing of a Postal Agreement between the United States and the United Nations on March 28, 1951 permitted the United Nations Postal Administration to issue, sell and use United Nations postage stamps. The stamps were to be used for the posting of mail only at United Nations Headquarters in New York where the United States Post Office Department would operate the United Nations Post Office Station on behalf of the United Nations.

From over 150 designs submitted, eight designs were chosen by the United Nations Design Committee to be used on the 11 definitive and four airmail stamps of the First Issue. The United Nations postal service was inaugurated on United Nations Day, October 24, 1951, and at that time the first of three groups of stamps went on sale. A second group of stamps was issued on November 16, with the final group on December 14. The last of the 15-stamp issue was taken off sale on March 14, 1967. All First Issue stamps were printed by Johannes Enschedé & Sons, Haarlem, the Netherlands and by Thomas De La Rue & Co. Ltd., London, England.



Normal stamp



"Half-mast Flag" error

The 3¢ stamp was printed by De La Rue using two plates, one for each of the two colors. Shifts occurred if the two runs were not properly registered. The most extreme shifts show the flag covering most or all of the denomination — the "Half-mast Flag" error. About 25 such extreme shifts exist.

## Exhibit Scope

This traditional philatelic exhibit illustrates the 67 printings (15 first printings and 52 reprintings) of the United Nations First Issue of 1951. Examples are used to show the many differentiating features — paper fluorescence, gum, cut-outs, marginal markings, plate flaws, perforations and control numbers. The exhibit contains many varieties and errors, as well as numerous domestic and international postal usages. The 1½¢ precancel is represented in the form of mint and used stamps, as well as several service covers from the eight major mailings and several smaller mailings.

## Among the more important items are:

- An imperforate marginal inscription block of four from a printer's proof sheet of the 6¢ airmail stamp.
- A full "half-mast flag" error on the 3¢ stamp.
- Artwork used in the development of the final design of the 1½¢ stamp by artist Leon Helguera of Mexico.
- Inverted control numbers on the 2¢, 3¢ and 5¢ definitive stamps and the 6¢ airmail stamp.
- A full pane of the 3¢ stamp with a doctor blade flaw from the top to the bottom of the pane.
- A 1½¢ precancel with an 8 mm shift of the overprint.



## Exhibit Plan

The exhibit is divided into three sections:

### I. The five vertical definitive stamps printed by Enschedé

1. Introduction (1½¢, 2¢, 5¢, 50¢, \$1 values)
2. Individual values within each section
  - (a) Overview of all printings with production details
  - (b) Artist's sketch (1½¢ stamp)
  - (c) Printing of each value
    - (i) Example of printing
    - (ii) Cut-outs, cut-out varieties and errors
    - (iii) Printing varieties and errors
    - (iv) Perforation and perforation guide mark varieties and errors
    - (v) Trimming varieties and errors
    - (vi) Control numbers, control number varieties and errors
  - (d) Plate flaws
  - (e) Domestic and international postal usages

A section is included illustrating the 1½¢ precancel in the following forms:

- (a) Mint singles and multiples
- (b) Used singles (several on-piece) and multiples including forged precancels
- (c) Postal usages on several service covers, by Gaines\* types, including a forged precancel on cover.

Significant items are indicated using this symbol.



Normal stamp  
from the fifth printing  
of the 15¢ air mail stamp



Prussian blue color error on cover

During the fifth printing of the 15¢ air mail stamp, some sheets (believed to be fewer than 100) were printed in basic Prussian blue ink alone, without the addition of vermilion ink required to produce the proper azure blue color. This cover, paying the international air mail letter rate to Europe of 15¢ per ½ ounce, in effect when the stamp was issued until April 30, 1967, is postmarked February 3, 1958, a very early usage of the color error on cover.

### II. The six horizontal definitive stamps printed by De La Rue

1. Introduction (1¢, 3¢, 10¢, 15¢, 20¢, 25¢ values)
2. Individual values within each section
  - (a) Overview of all printings with production details
  - (b) Printing of each value
    - (i) Example of printing
    - (ii) Printing varieties and errors
    - (iii) Perforation and perforation guide mark varieties and errors
    - (iv) Trimming varieties and errors
    - (v) Control numbers, control number varieties and errors
  - (c) Plate flaws
  - (d) Domestic and international postal usages

### III. The four airmail stamps printed by De La Rue

1. Introduction (6¢, 10¢, 15¢, and 25¢ airmail values)
2. Individual values within each section
  - (a) Overview of all printings with production details
  - (b) Plate proof (6¢ airmail stamp)
  - (c) Printing of each value
    - (i) Example of printing
    - (ii) Printing varieties and errors
    - (iii) Perforation and perforation guide mark varieties and errors
    - (iv) Trimming varieties and errors
    - (v) Control numbers, control number varieties and errors
  - (d) Plate flaws
  - (e) Domestic and international postal usages

\*United Nations Philately, edited by Arleigh Gaines, 1980 (with annual supplements), R. & D. Publications, New York, NY



Stamps issued



Paper and Gum

The vertical definitive stamps were printed by Enschedé using a paper suitable for printing by engraving and having a fibre composition of chemical wood pulp of high purity and strength. The paper was unwatermarked.

The paper was gummed by Enschedé before printing, using two types of gum — Gum Arabic which has a creamy yellow colour and a "cracked" surface and Synthetic Gum, which appears as a thin colourless coating without any cracking.



Gum Arabic

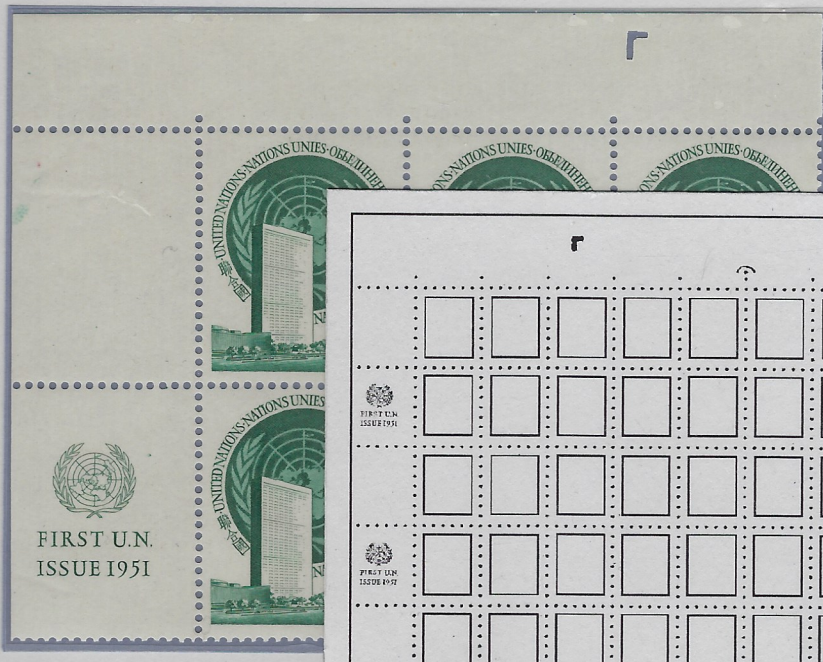


Synthetic Gum  
(used for printings after 1965)



Sheet layout

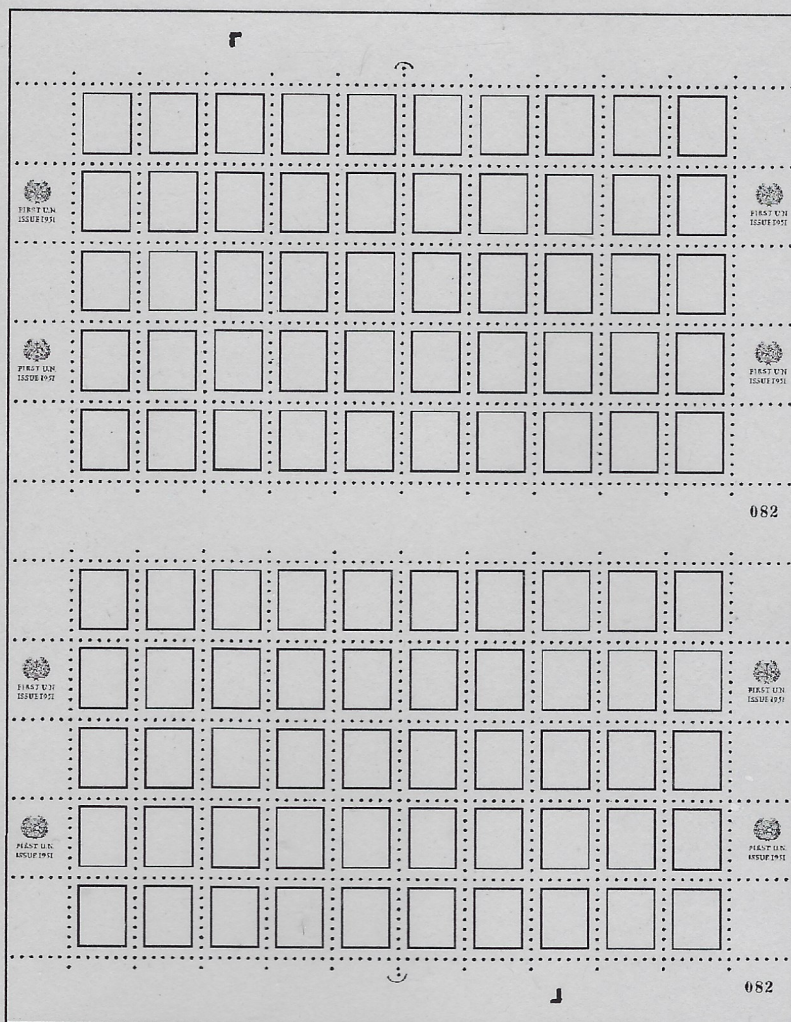
Enschedé printed the vertical definitive stamps in press sheets of 100 stamps, and after being perforated, these sheets were cut into two post office panes of 50 stamps each — an **upper** pane and a **lower** pane.



**Cut-outs** were used as a security control measure, to ensure that only the allotted paper given to the printer by the Dutch postal system was used. A different shaped cut-out was punched in the outer margin of sheets of each printing.

**Marginal Inscriptions** appear twice on the left and twice on the right of each post office pane of 50 stamps.

**Perforations** appear as shown in the diagram for all printings to the end of 1956, after which all margins were perforated (except for the 1½¢ stamp, third printing, which has imperforate top and bottom margins).



**Perforation Guide Marks** were used to align the sheets on the perforators to achieve good centering. Five different types were used on the Enschedé printings.



**Control Numbers** were applied by Enschedé in sequences of 001–100 in the lower right corner of the panes to make inventory checking simpler. Only one typeface was used. After December, 1954, control numbers were no longer used.



**Cut-out Types**

Enschedé used cut-outs as a security measure. Postal inspectors would count and punch blank sheets before they were given to Enschedé for printing. Two cut-out were made, one at each end of every blank press sheet, in the top and bottom margins (except for the 2¢ stamp, third printing which has the cut-out in the side margin). After the printing was completed, the postal inspectors recounted the sheets to ensure that the number of sheets printed agreed with the number of sheets issued, allowing for spoiled sheets. A distinctive cut-out shape was used for each printing — sixteen in all — each of which was given its own “model” or “registration” number.

The first seven cut-out shapes were made using hand-held and operated punches, the so-called “old model” punches, which could punch about five to eight sheets at a time.



'Old Model' No.*	Shape	Printing
1	star	5¢, first printing
4	reversed “L”	1½¢, first printing
18	keypunch	\$1, first printing
6	small triangle	2¢, first printing
		50¢, second printing
5	cross	50¢, first printing
12	arrowhead	\$1, second printing
13	small heart	\$1, third printing

\* Numbers are listed in the order that the shape was first used.





Starting in early 1955, the cut-out shapes were made using the “new model” punches, when the method used changed to semi-automatic foot-operated machines, punching about fifteen sheets at a time.



'New Model' No.	Shape	Printing
5	diamond	2¢, second printing
7	keystone	50¢, third printing
		2¢, fourth printing
1	square	2¢, third printing
		1½¢, fourth printing
10	cloverleaf	50¢, fourth printing
9	shield	\$1, fourth printing
		2¢, fifth printing
8	spade	1½¢, second printing
12	anvil	50¢, fifth printing
11	large heart	\$1, fifth printing
		1½¢, third printing
2	large triangle	\$1, sixth printing
		\$1, seventh printing
		1½¢, fifth printing



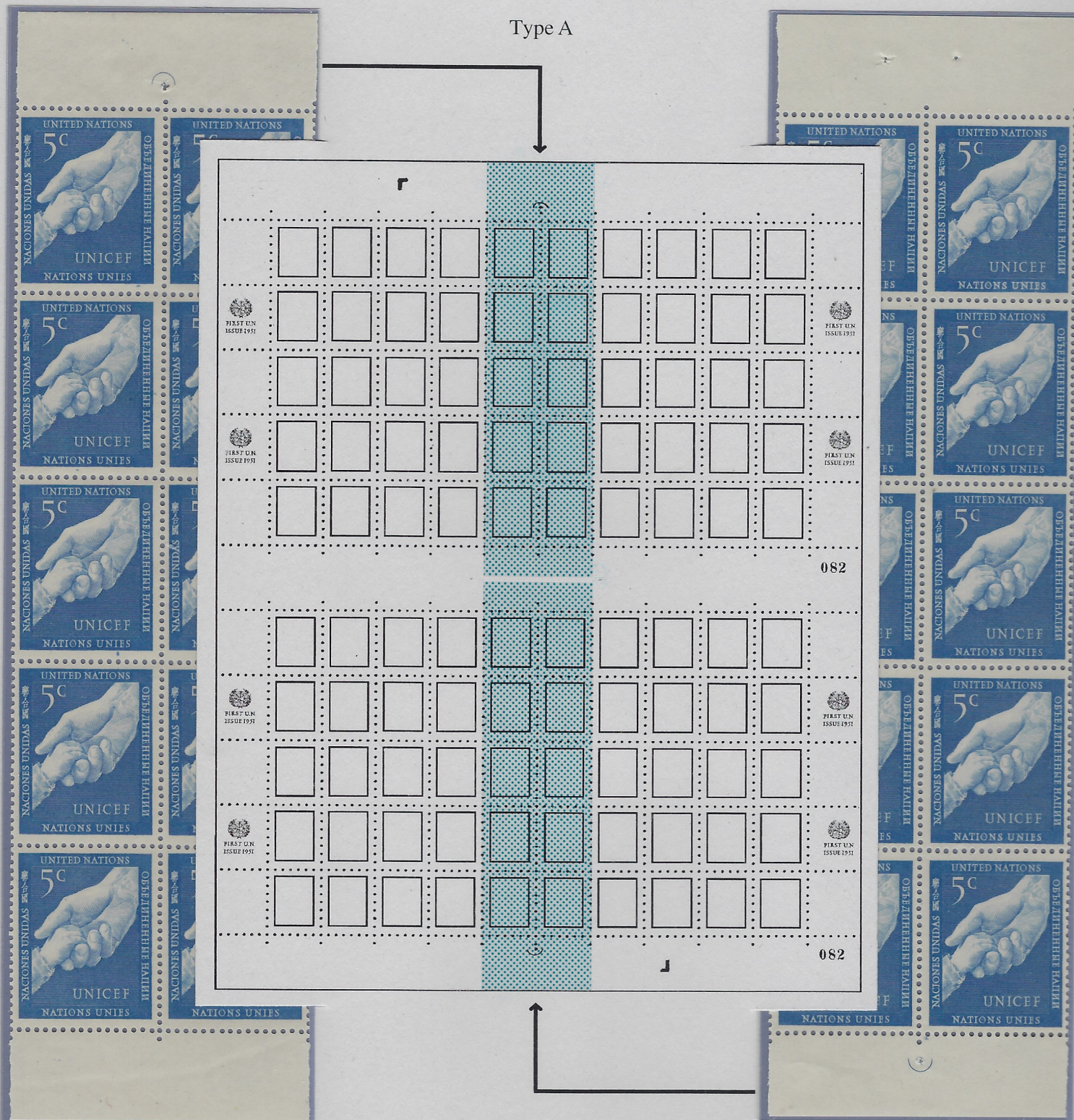


**Perforation Guide Mark Types**

Enschedé used perforation guide marks to obtain good stamp centering. They consist of a printed half circle with a dot in its centre, engraved by hand in the plate, and appear in the upper and/or lower margins of each pane. The dots were punched by hand with an awl so that the sheets could be mounted on the pins of the perforating machines. The guide marks vary with printing plates and stamp values — there are five types.

Printing Value	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1½¢	A	B	B	B	B	—	—
2¢	A or C	C	D	D	D	—	—
5¢	A	—	—	—	—	—	—
50¢	A	A	A	E	E	—	—
\$1	C	C	C	D	D	D	D

Type A





Type B

This type of perforation guide mark is similar to type A, with the guide marks in both the upper and lower margins of press sheets, but with the addition of “hand drawn” semi-circles with central dots in the central margins.



Guide marks from upper pane



Guide marks from lower pane



Type C

This type is similar to type A, but with an extra semicircle over stamp #5 in the upper margin and under stamp #45 in the lower margin of the press sheet. These marks were added so that a second perforating machine could be used.



Guide marks from upper pane



Guide marks from lower pane



Type D

This type is similar to type B, but the marks appear over stamp #5 and below stamp #45 in the upper, central and lower margins of the press sheets. The “hand drawn” semi-circles have been replaced with machine-cut circles of uniform size and shape.



Guide marks from upper pane



Guide marks from lower pane



Type E

This type is similar to type D, but the semi-circles are larger — 7 mm in diameter.



Guide marks from upper pane



Guide marks from lower pane



**Secondary Perforation Guide Mark Types**

Enschedé added extra or “secondary” perforation guide marks to a number of plates in case a different type of perforating machine was used for future reprints. The marks did not appear on all sheets of a printing; only when some stray ink found its way into the engraved guide marks outside the normally inked area of the plate would the guides or part guides be printed. The secondary perforation guide marks seen so far were usually engraved above or above and to the right of stamp number 10 on upper post office panes or below stamp number 50 on lower post office panes



A small arc appears above and to the right stamp number 10 on an upper post office pane of the second printing of the 1 1/2¢ stamp.



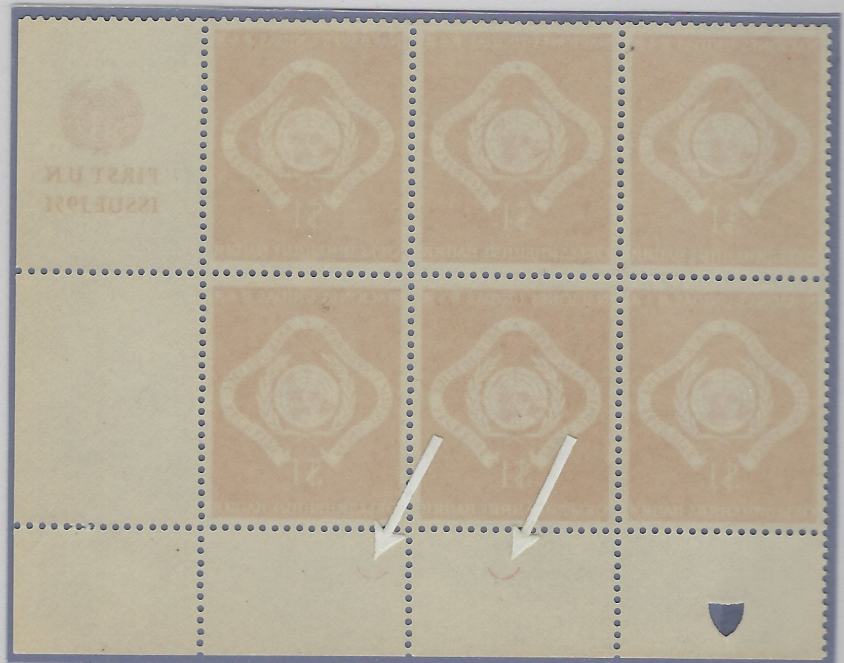
A small arc appears below stamp number 50 on a lower post office pane of the fourth printing of the 2¢ stamp. On some panes, two marks can be seen (three marks have been reported on other panes).





A secondary guide mark, consisting of a central dot and small arcs to the left and right, can be found above stamp number 50 on some upper panes of the fourth printing.

A large arc can be found under stamp number 50 on some lower panes of the fourth printing. Examples have also been found of lower panes having a central dot and small arcs to the left and right under stamp number 50.



An arc can be found on some lower panes of the fourth printing of the \$1 stamp. Examples have been found showing the arc with or without a central dot.

Two arcs are found on the gummed side of this example, which are probably offsets from the previously printed sheet. The multiple marks are likely due to movement of the sheets during stacking.



Overview of printings



First printing

Second printing

Third printing



Fourth printing

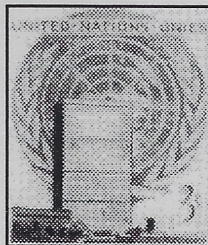
Fifth printing

Production details

Leon Helguera, Mexico, was the designer and K. Seisinger was the engraver. The stamp was line engraved (green) and was perforated 12½ horizontally by 13 vertically.

Artist's sketch

The design of the 1½¢ stamp (and 50¢ stamp) went through several stages, of which the main ones are as illustrated below.



Rough design as first developed by Leon Helguera



Same sketch after major revision of building



Approved design with legend in five languages



Finished design as accepted (change in language order)

At the right is a tracing sketch made by Leon Helguera “prior to shifting emblem within the circle so that no part of it may interfere with lettering, in preparing second design suggestion.” Note his initials in the lower right corner. →



3



Tracing sketch made prior to shifting emblem within circle  
so that no part of it may interfere with lettering in preparing  
second design suggestion.



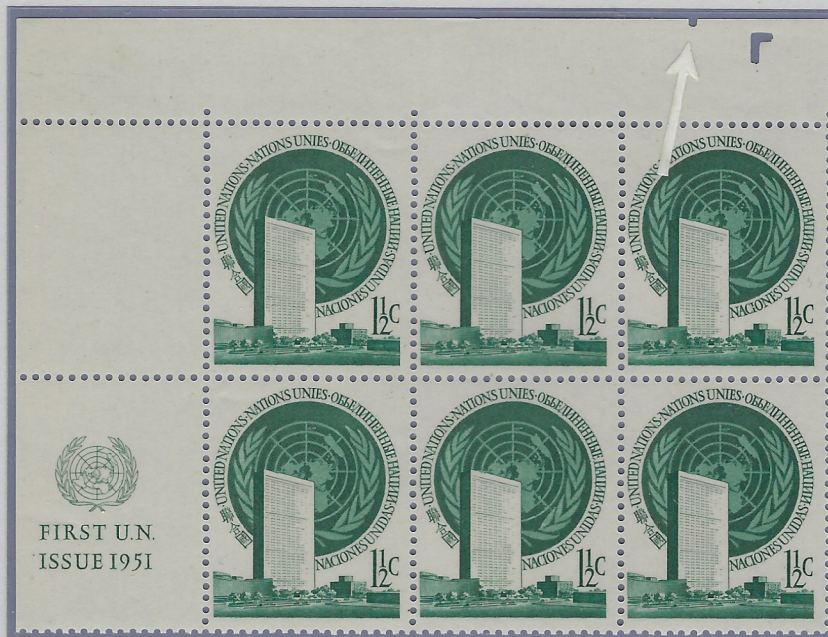
Printings



reversed 'L'  
cut-out

**First printing:** Issued October 24, 1951; 4,000,000 issued, of which 500,000 were precancelled (see frame 3). The paper used is of average fluorescence (Group V). The cut-out — a reversed “L” — can be found in the upper left or upper right margin of upper panes or in the lower left or lower right margins of lower panes; 70,000 cut-out blocks exist. The top and bottom margins are imperforate (with one perforation extending into the selvage); the left and right margins are perforated. Control numbers (001–100) are printed in the lower right margins of panes.

Cut-out error



Rarely, a sheet was punched twice. This block shows a normal cut-out and a small part of a second cut-out in the top margin of an upper pane.