

Year Date Varieties on the 2002 Snowmen Convertible Booklet

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Figure 1. Four Snowmen from convertible booklet.

In 2002, the U.S. contemporary Winter Holidays stamps featured a group of four different Snowman designs (Figure 1). One of the formats they were produced in was a two-sided convertible booklet (Scott #3687b), and a total of four different plate number combinations were used to print them: S1111, S1113, S2222 and S4444. The S indicates they were supplied by Sennett Security Products.

A comparison of stamps produced from the four different plate number combinations shows that the black 2002 year date at the lower left of the stamps is faint on the stamps from plate number combination S1111 and much bolder on stamps from the other three plate number combinations (Figure 2).

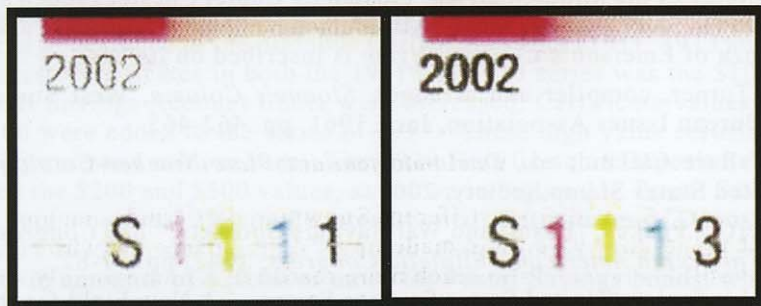


Figure 2. Faint (left) and bold (right) 2002 year dates.

It should be pointed out that the black plate is represented by the last digit of the plate number combination, so the S1111 set and the S1113 set did not use the same black plate.

This is not the first U.S. issue to have a change in the year date. The first one was on the 32¢ Flag over Porch convertible booklet of 20 from 1995 where the year date was changed from a small version (Scott #2920c) to a large version (Scott #2920a). Other issues to have year date size differences include the Santas two-sided convertible booklet from 2001 (Scott #3540d and #3540g), which was also from Sennett, and a number of issues that were produced by the Bureau of Engraving and Printing. In each case, the year date size was increased to make it more readable. Why the less readable dates were not caught in pre-production review and had to be changed mid-production so many times is puzzling.



Figure 3. Close-up of faint year date shows it is made of individual dots.



Figure 4. Close-up of bold year date shows it is solid.

A closer look at the two different Snowman dates under magnification reveals that the faint version is made up of dots (Figure 3), while the bold version is solid (Figure 4) and much more readable, which strongly suggests that the change in appearance was intentional. As such, the bold date version should be a candidate for a minor letter catalog listing in Scott.