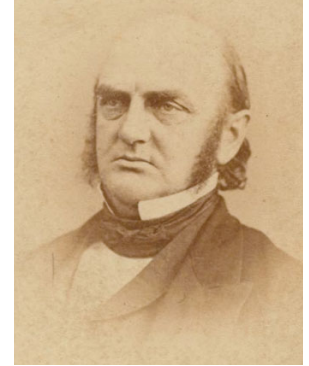


# 1869 PICTORIAL ISSUE

THE 1869 PICTORIAL ISSUE WAS A TRANSFORMATIVE SET OF STAMPS CREATED during a period of historic transition. The Civil War had ended four years earlier. Congress was controlled by the Radical Republicans, who, after their failed attempt to impeach President Andrew Johnson, had helped elect President Ulysses S. Grant, a sympathetic Republican. The 1869 Pictorial stamps, with their novel shapes and imagery, were created by President Johnson's postmaster general, Alexander Randall, and inherited by Grant's new postmaster general, John A. J. Creswell. In the midst of Reconstruction's political controversies, the 1869's were spurned by the public and quickly replaced with the 1870 Issue, bearing traditional portraits of statesmen, war heroes and Founding Fathers.

The four-year 1868 printing contract had also been mired in controversy. Four security printers had submitted bids for the contract: the American Bank Note Company (prior to consolidation), Butler & Carpenter (the successor firm to Toppan, Carpenter & Co. and printers of revenue stamps since 1862), George T. Jones, and the National Bank Note Company (the contract printers since 1861). In July 1868 the Post Office Department awarded the contract to National, despite a lower bid submitted by Butler & Carpenter.

During the bidding process, National argued that they should be awarded the contract based on their ability to grill stamps, using Charles F. Steel's patented grilling machine, and on the fact that Butler & Carpenter did not have fireproof production and storage facilities. In fact, just four years later Butler & Carpenter's Philadelphia plant—the Dr. D. Jayne & Son building, named for the patent medicine manufacturer—burned to the ground.



PMG Alexander Randall  
Johnson Administration  
July 25, 1866 – March 4, 1869



PMG John A. J. Creswell  
Grant Administration  
March 5, 1869 – June 22, 1874

Butler & Carpenter vigorously protested the Post Office Department's decision for months after the 1869's had been issued. Joseph R. Carpenter wrote letters to Postmaster General Creswell, imploring him to nullify the National contract and defending Butler & Carpenter against the "insinuations and charges" made by National during the bidding process. It is also possible that Butler & Carpenter was behind a public smear campaign to discredit the stamps. Contemporary articles criticized the 1869's shapes, designs and especially the unreliability of the adhesive gum.

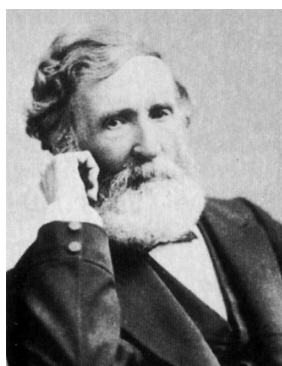
By September 1869 the decision had been made to replace the 1869 Pictorial stamps with a new, more conventional issue. The postmaster general's report (November 15, 1870) explains that the 1869's "failed to give satisfaction to the public, on account of their small size, their unshapely form, the inappropriateness of their designs, the difficulty of cancelling them effectually, and the inferior quality of the gum used in their manufacture." Considering the exalted position the 1869 Pictorial Issue has occupied in philately for nearly 150 years, it seems remarkable that these stamps elicited such negative comments from officials and the public.

## *The 1869 Pictorial Designs*

Unlike their predecessors, the ten 1869 stamps were designed in an almost square format. The 1¢ through 12¢ values were printed in sheets of 300—two panes of 150—instead of the regular 200-stamp sheet format. The 15¢, 24¢, 30¢ and 90¢ values were printed in sheets of 100 in two colors, requiring separate plates and printing for the frame and vignette colors. All of the stamps were to be grilled.

Three of the ten 1869 stamps had traditional portraits: the 1¢ Franklin, 6¢ Washington and 90¢ Lincoln, the highest denomination and one of the four bicolored stamps. The other values represented a radical departure from the portraiture of all previous issues. The theme of improved postal communication was chosen for three values: the 2¢ postal carrier on horseback; the 3¢ locomotive train, possibly to celebrate the imminent completion of the transcontinental railroad; and the 12¢ S.S. *Adriatic*, the Collins line transatlantic steamer, which was used to carry mail to and from England—the rate to England at the time was 12¢, so the image was an appropriate choice for this denomination.

Michael Laurence has suggested that the imagery on the 1869's derives from the Postal Reform movement of the 1840's and 50's, offering as evidence the 1850's Barnabas Bates pictorial envelope, which includes three of the design elements of the 1869's. One could also argue that the whole issue, with its images of America's past and symbols of communication, was intended to help the war-torn nation heal. It is probable that Postal Reform and Reconstruction both played parts in the symbolism.



James Smillie, engraver of vignettes on 15¢, 24¢ and 30¢ Burgoyne essay

### *The Bicolored 1869 Pictorial Designs and Engravers*

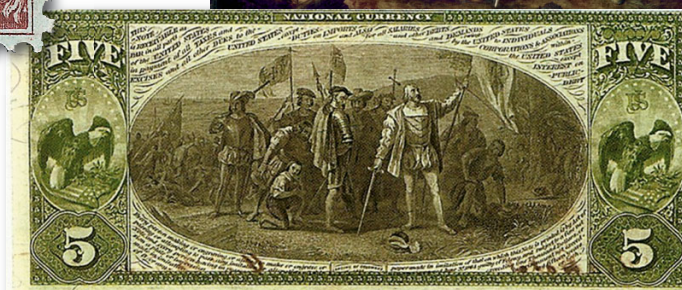
The vignettes on the 15¢, 24¢ and original 30¢ Burgoyne essay are intricately engraved depictions of historical events, based on oil paintings hanging in the Rotunda of the Capitol. Similar engravings were used on First Charter National currency in 1863. The Lincoln vignette on the 90¢ is essentially identical to the vignette on the 1866 15¢ Lincoln stamp issued one year after his assassination.

The overall designs of the 15¢, 24¢, original 30¢ Burgoyne essay and 90¢ (and 1¢ and 6¢ 1869) have been attributed to someone known as “E. Pitcher,” without a full first name. At least one student of security printing has speculated that “E. Pitcher” actually might have been a female artist, the daughter of a family known to the engraver, and that she assisted in the early design phase of the 1869 Pictorial Issue ([www.stampnotes.com/Notes\\_from\\_the\\_Past/pastnote317.htm](http://www.stampnotes.com/Notes_from_the_Past/pastnote317.htm)).

The 15¢, 24¢ and 30¢ Burgoyne vignettes were engraved by one of National's most talented engravers, the Scottish-born James Smillie (1807-1885), who had previously been a partner with Rawdon, Wright and Hatch. Smillie joined National in 1861, and shortly after engraving the 1869's he moved to the American Bank Note Company.



The 15¢ 1869 vignette is based on an oil painting *Landing of Columbus* by Vanderlyn and is also found on the First Charter \$5 note





The 24¢ 1869 vignette is based on an oil painting *Declaration of Independence* by Trumbull and is also found on the First Charter \$100 note

The 15¢ stamp's blue vignette is a miniature engraving by Smillie, based on Balch's engraving from an 1839 oil painting entitled *Landing of Columbus* by John Vanderlyn. A similar engraving by Charles Burt appears on the back of the 1863 First Charter \$5 note, and another version was engraved by Alfred Jones and Charles Skinner for the 1893 2¢ Columbian Issue.

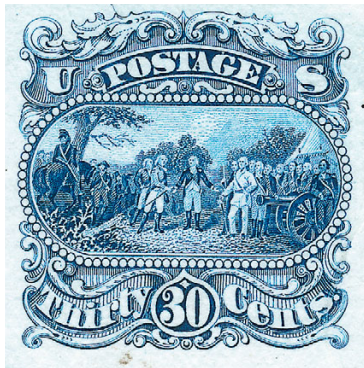
The 24¢ vignette was engraved by Smillie from John Trumbull's oil painting *Declaration of Independence*. There are two versions of this painting; one hangs in the Capitol Rotunda, and the other at Yale University. Contrary to the popular belief that this painting depicts the signing ceremony, Trumbull actually painted a romanticized image of the presentation of the Declaration draft. There are 47 individuals portrayed in the painting, and the tiny engraving captures virtually all of them in minute detail. A similar engraving appears on the back of the 1863 First Charter \$100 note, and the vignette is also found on 10¢ 1869 essays.

The frames of the 15¢, 24¢ and 90¢ were engraved by Douglas S. Ronaldson (1825-1902), who is also credited with designing and engraving the 10¢ Eagle-and-Shield die, and engraving the 30¢ Eagle-and-Shield and Flags-and-Stars dies, but there is some question about this last attribution. The Hessler book states that Ronaldson moved from England to Philadelphia in 1840 and was working as an engraver in 1858. He was employed by National as early as July 1868 and continued with the American Bank Note Company until 1897, from which point he worked for the Bureau of Engraving and Printing until his death in 1902.

The lettering on the 15¢, 24¢ and 90¢ (and 1¢ and 6¢) was engraved by J. C. Kenworthy, about whom Hessler reports, "he was engraving for the National BNCo as early as 1859 and perhaps as late as 1875."



Douglas S. Ronaldson, engraver of 15¢ and 24¢ frames and 30¢ shield, eagle and lettering



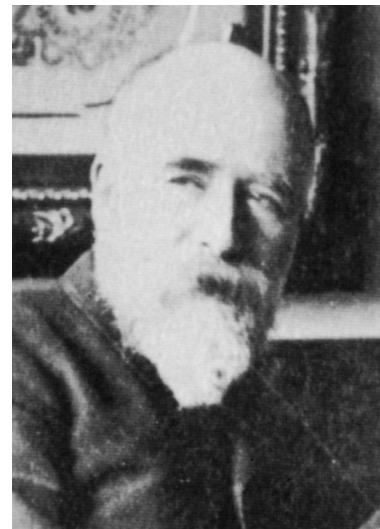
Die proof of 30¢ essay with Smillie's vignette depicting Burgoyne's surrender, which was not used for any of the 1869 Pictorials—the 30¢ was redesigned with Eagle & Shield



The original unadopted 30¢ design was similar to the 15¢ and 24¢. The vignette was a detailed miniature engraving from the oil painting *The Surrender of General Burgoyne* by Trumbull. The Burgoyne vignette was masterfully engraved by James Smillie. A similar engraving was made by Frederick Girsch for the 1863 \$500 First Charter note.

It has been said that U.S. postal officials rejected the Burgoyne design out of sensitivity to Great Britain. Whether or not this is true can never be known with certainty, but it seems odd that postal officials would be concerned about offending the British with this depiction on a 30¢ stamp, while they were apparently unconcerned about the Declaration of Independence scene on the 24¢ stamp, which was much more likely to be used on mail to Great Britain (the basic rate was 12¢ when the 1869 stamps were issued).

Whatever the reason, the 30¢ Burgoyne design was discarded, and James MacDonough is credited with its replacement, the Eagle-and-Shield with Flags-and-Stars design.



James MacDonough, founder of National Bank Note Co. and designer of 30¢ Eagle & Shield



30¢ issued stamp with Eagle and Shield in carmine and Flags and Stars in ultramarine

on a stamp, and the choice of patriotic red and blue colors on white paper was deliberate. The similar Eagle-and-Shield design without flags was used for the 10¢ 1869 stamp.

There is an unresolved debate over the engravers responsible for the 30¢. Some have attributed the engraving of both the central Eagle-and-Shield and the surrounding Flags-and-Stars to Douglas S. Ronaldson. Others credit another engraver, Luigi (Louis) Delnoce, with execution of the Flags-and-Stars die.

There will probably never be a final answer to this conflicting artist attribution, but stylistically, the delicate engraving of the draped flags fits into Delnoce's body of work.

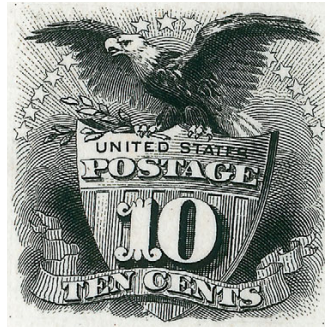


Luigi Delnoce, who probably engraved the 30¢ flags and stars

Luigi “Louis” Delnoce (1822-1890) was an Italian-born master engraver who studied with John W. Casilear in the early 1850’s and produced numerous engravings for use on stamps and bank notes. His son, Louis Jr., also became a security engraver.

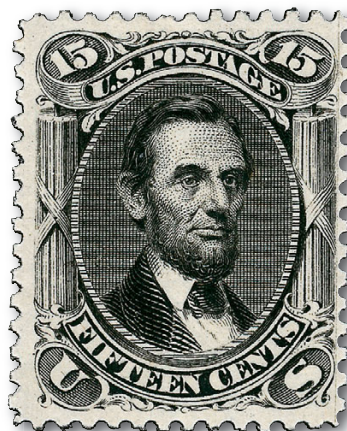
Delnoce is best known for engraving the “Lazy Deuce” \$2 currency note, so named because the large numeral “2” is on its side, rather than upright. The same note bears a beautiful engraving of Stars-and-Stripes, a female allegorical design with a strong stylistic connection to the 30¢ 1869.

The photographs below show a proof of the Stars-and-Stripes vignette on the Lazy Deuce note and a comparison of the draped flags in that engraving with the 30¢ 1869 flags, as well as with the ribbons and stars on the 10¢ stamp. The engraving of the folds in the flags on the 30¢ more closely resembles Delnoce’s flags.



Proof of Stars-and-Stripes vignette engraved by Luigi Delnoce for use on the “Lazy Deuce” \$2 note, and a comparison of the draped flag on the 30¢ 1869 stamp (at right). The 10¢ 1869 (above), engraved by Douglas S. Ronaldson, lacks the delicate shading of Delnoce’s work

The 90¢ 1869 was originally designed with a vignette of George Washington, but the decision was made to use Lincoln on the top value instead of the 10¢. The Lincoln vignette, adapted from photographic portraits taken by C. S. German in 1861 and Matthew Brady in 1862, was engraved by Joseph Prosper Ourdan (1828-1881) and first used on the 15¢ 1866 Issue. Ourdan was a highly-skilled engraver who later became chief of the Engraving Division of the Bureau of Engraving and Printing.



The original 90¢ 1869 design pictured George Washington, using the vignette engraved by Joseph Ives Pease, which appeared on earlier 90¢ stamps; instead, Joseph Ourdan’s engraving of Abraham Lincoln was moved from the 10¢ 1869 stamp to the 90¢ top value

### 1869 Bicolored Stamp Production

Sheets of each 1869 bicolored stamp were printed from two separate frame and vignette plates (or Eagle-and-Shield and Flags-and-Stars plates for the 30¢). The plates were numbered in order as follows:

Stamp	Frame Plate # (Color)	Vignette Plate # (Color)	Printing
15¢ Ty. I	19 (Brown) Type I	19 (Blue)	First (March 1869)
24¢	20 (Green)	20 (Violet)	First (March 1869)
30¢	21 (Flags–Ultramarine)	21 (Eagle & Shield–Carmine)	First (March 1869) and Second (May 1869)
90¢	22 (Carmine)	22 (Black)	First (March 1869) and Second (May 1869)
15¢ Ty. II	23 (Brown) Type II	23 (Blue)	Second (May 1869)
24¢	20 (Green)*	24 (Violet)	Second (May 1869)
15¢ Proof	31 (Brown) Type II**	23 (Blue)	1875 proof impressions only
15¢ Ty. III	32 (Brown) Type III	23 (Blue)	1875 Re-issue only (Scott 129)

\* There is no evidence that a 24¢ frame plate #24 was made for the Second Printing; it is assumed frame plate #20 was used  
 \*\* There is no evidence that a 15¢ vignette plate #31 was made to go with the frame plate #31

Dr. Irvin Heimburger (*Chronicle* 233) and Charles Neyhart (*Chronicle* 238) have presented evidence and analysis that the 15¢ frame plates used for bicolored printing (Type I–Scott 118, Type II–Scott 119 and Type III–Scott 129) were produced from two dies, not three. It should be noted that the first two 15¢ dies—the Small Numerals and Large Numerals—were what Neyhart describes as “unified,” meaning that the vignette and frame were incorporated into a single die, because the original intention was to create a plate for monochrome printing.

Once it was decided to issue bicolored stamps, separate dies were created for the 15¢ vignette and frame. There were only two 15¢ frame dies. The first did not have any shading lines or diamond-shaped ornament in the “picture frame” where the vignette was to be printed. This die was used to make the first frame plate, which produced Type I stamps (Scott 118). This plate was modified by adding shading lines to each of the 100 subjects. Careful comparison of the different positions shows variation in the lines that would not be possible if they originated on the die. Neyhart also points out that the vignette die did not have the thin border surrounding the image; those framelines were engraved on each of the 100 subjects on the separate vignette printing plate.

A second frame die was then made with the diamond ornament and shading lines in the picture area. Every position on the Type II plate (made from the second die) exactly reproduces these lines. Stamps printed from this plate are Type II (Scott 119).

In 1875 the U.S. Post Office Department ordered a new printing for the Re-Issue and Special Printing program. The printers had the original frame die on hand and used it to create a new frame plate. Again, the frames had no ornament or shading lines. This time, however, the printers did not bother to add them to each position; therefore, the 15¢ Re-Issue (Scott 129) is Type III, but the same die used to create the Type I plate (Scott 118) was used for the Re-Issue plate.

The 1869 Pictorial stamps were first placed on sale at the New York post office on March 23. According to the *Commercial Advertiser* of that date, “the new postage stamps are being delivered at the General Office this morning.” The earliest documented date of use is March 27 (3¢). Stamps from the second 1869 printing were in circulation by May 1869. Based on Post Office Department records of issued stamps and remainders of the 1869’s still on hand on July 1, 1870, the quantities for each of the bicolored high-value 1869 stamps are: 15¢–1,438,840 (an estimated 110,000 to 140,000 were Type I); 24¢–235,250; 30¢–254,010; and 90¢–47,360.

On September 6, 1869, the *New York Tribune* and *New York Herald* reported for the first time that a new set of stamps would be issued to replace the 1869 Pictorial Issue, based on an announcement by Third Assistant Postmaster General Terrell. In December 1869 newspapers reported that the designs for the new issue had been made. In March-April 1870, only one year after the 1869’s made their appearance, they were replaced by the new 1870 Portrait series.