



1893 COLUMBIAN ISSUE

THE WORLD'S COLUMBIAN EXPOSITION held in Chicago in 1893 provided the Post Office Department with its first opportunity to capitalize on the growing hobby of stamp collecting with a new issue. In late 1892 and early 1893 the Postmaster General in the Harrison administration was John Wanamaker, who was no stranger to commercial promotion. In words that sound like a true marketing executive, his Third Asst. Postmaster General reported:

“The collecting of stamps is deserving of encouragement, for it tends to the cultivation of artistic tastes and the study of history and geography... The new stamps [Columbian Issue] will be purchased in large quantities simply for the use of collections, without ever being presented in payment of postage; and the stamps sold in this way will, of course, prove a clear gain to the Department.”

(Brookman Vol. III, pp. 50-51)

The sixteen Columbian stamps were issued in denominations ranging from 1c to \$5.00, for a total face value of \$16.34, a sizable sum in 1893. Fifteen of the stamps were ready for sale on January 2, 1893. The 8c was issued in March to meet the reduced registry fee. Although the lower values sold well and the high values were bought by speculators, high-value sales to the general public were a disappointment to the post office.

Aesthetically, the stamps commemorating the 400th anniversary (1492-1892) of Christopher Columbus's voyage to America were a significant departure from previous issues. Information on the issue, including the design sources, issued quantities and American Bank Note Co. engravers, is provided in the table below.

The Columbian Issue was the last produced by a private security printer before stamp production was turned over to the Bureau of Engraving and Printing in 1894. Today, it is regarded as the last issue of the classic period of American philately.

	SOURCE OF DESIGN	VIGNETTE ENGRAVER	FRAME ENGRAVER	QUANTITY ISSUED
1c	<i>Columbus in Sight of Land</i> , painting by W.H. Powell	A. Jones	D. S. Roraldson	449,195,250
2c	<i>Landing of Columbus</i> , painting by Vanderlyn in Rotunda of Capitol Building in Washington D.C.	A. Jones	D. S. Roraldson	1,464,588,250
3c	Unconfirmed, possibly from a Spanish engraving	R. Sauge	G. H. Seymour	11,501,250
4c	Original ABN artwork	C. Skinner	G. H. Seymour	19,181,550
5c	<i>Columbus at the Court of Ferdinand and Isabella</i> , painting by Victor Van Broek, deaccessioned from Metropolitan Museum, at Hotel Manoir Richelieu in Murray Bay, Canada	C. Skinner	D. S. Roraldson	35,248,250
6c	<i>Columbus' Triumphant Entry into Barcelona</i> by Randolph Rogers, on bronze doors in Rotunda at the Capitol	R. Sauge	G. H. Seymour	4,707,550
8c	<i>Columbus Restored to Power</i> , painting by Francisco	C. Skinner	D. S. Roraldson	10,685,550
10c	<i>Return of Columbus and Reception at Court</i> , painting by Luigi Gregori, at University of Notre Dame	R. Sauge	D. S. Roraldson	16,516,950
15c	Painting by R. Baloca, possibly lost during Spanish Civil War	C. Skinner	D. S. Roraldson	1575,950
30c	<i>Columbus at La Rabida</i> , after a painting by R. Maso	A. Jones	G. H. Seymour	617,250
50c	<i>Recall of Columbus</i> , painting by A.G. Heaton in the Capitol in Washington D.C.	C. Skinner	D. S. Roraldson	243,250
#1	<i>Isabella Holding Her Jewels</i> , painting by Munoz Degrain	R. Sauge	G. H. Seymour	25,050
#2	<i>Columbus in Chains, 1491</i> painting by Leutra, in private coll.	C. Skinner	D. S. Roraldson	45,250
#3	<i>Columbus Describing His Third Voyage</i> , by Francisco Jover	R. Sauge	D. S. Roraldson	27,650
#4	Portrait of Isabella from unknown source, possibly a painting in Madrid. Portrait of Columbus from a painting by Lotte	A. Jones	G. H. Seymour	26,250
#5	Portrait taken from medal, possibly Spanish. Also used for commemorative half-dollar issued for the Exposition	A. Jones	D. S. Roraldson	27,250