

U.S. Bicolor Postage Issues of 1869, 1873 & 1901

Objective

The objective of this exhibit is to illustrate the results of the difficulties encountered in printing early line-engraved bicolor postal issues using the intaglio printing method. The issues of 1869, 1873 and 1901 reflect the first three actual printings of the United States bicolor postage stamps.

Production

Bicolor production necessitated that each color plate be printed separately, and each stamp sheet be passed through the printing press twice: once for the frame and once for the vignette. The printers had difficulties not only in aligning the frames and vignettes, but in the case of the inverted varieties, with keeping the stamp sheets right side up. These postage issues were produced by three different printers: The National Bank Note Company (1869), The Continental Bank Note Company (1873), and The Bureau of Engraving and Printing (1901). Each experienced similar production problems.

Vignette Double Printed, One Inverted



PFC, repaired

One of three recorded examples

Background

The exhibit features examples of all known U.S. Bicolor Postage Issues produced in the first three Bicolor printing periods including numerous frame and vignette misregistrations and misalignments. Many of the examples are quite rare with only a few surviving examples recorded, such as this 1869 Issue 15¢ type II with a double printing of the vignette, one inverted shown above. Other illustrations are of more common varieties and are included to present a complete picture of the bicolor issues.

For each issue, items are presented which fully illustrate the story including essays and original artwork, proofs, specimens, singles, multiples, varieties, cancellations and postal history.

Organization

The exhibit is divided into three main sections, utilizing a chronological format that traces the design, production and usages of the bicolor issues. The exhibit begins with an overview of the 1869 Pictorial Definitive bicolor issues. Next, the 1873 high-value State Department Officials are presented, including plate proofs with inverted vignettes. The remaining frames trace the Pan-American Exposition Issue of 1901.

Exhibit Organization

I. The Pictorial Issue of 1869

A. 15¢ Value

B. 24¢ Value

C. 30¢ Value

D. 90¢ Value

II. The Official Issue of 1873

A. State \$2 Value

B. State \$5 Value

C. State \$10 Value

D. State \$20 Value

III. The Pan-American Issue of 1901

A. 1¢ Value

B. 2¢ Value

C. 4¢ Value

D. 5¢ Value

E. 10¢ Value

I. The Pictorial Issue of 1869

The 1869 Pictorial Issue was to replace the 1861-1867 regular issue stamps. In soliciting proposals for a new issue of definitive postage stamps, the United States Post Office was careful to state, "The stamps must be prepared in such a manner that any attempt to remove them from a letter or packet will so mutilate them as to render them useless." This was to prevent reuse and the grilling process was utilized. The National Bank Note Company won the contract to print the issue. The Post Office deliberated over designs and finally came up with - 11 stamps in ten different denominations with two different varieties of the 15¢ design. This was the first U.S. issue for which more than one color was used to print a stamp. Due to increased costs, only the four high values (15¢, 24¢, 30¢ and 90¢) were printed in two colors. It was also the first U.S. stamp issue to feature something other than the bust or head of a famous American leader. Unfortunately, the public did not accept these stamps because of their relatively small size and the difficulty in affixing them to envelopes due to the nature of the gum on them. The issue was only available from March of 1869 until February 1870, a period of only 11 months, when it was replaced by the Bank Note Issue, again printed by the National Bank Note Company.

Official Post Office Department Announcement

Description of New Postage Stamps

March 1, 1869

SIX CENTS.—HEAD of WASHINGTON, three-quarter face, looking to right; frame square; U. S. in upper left and right corners of frame, respectively; the word POSTAGE in upper bar of frame; SIX CENTS in lower, and the numeral 6 between the words; and UNITED STATES on each side. *Color:* IMPERIAL ULTRAMARINE, (Blue.)

TEN CENTS.—SHIELD, ON WHICH IS RESTING AN EAGLE WITH OUTSPREAD WINGS; eagle looking to left; UNITED STATES POSTAGE in upper section of shield; numeral 10 in lower; the words TEN CENTS in a scroll at bottom. The whole design surmounted by 13 stars arranged in a semi-circle. *Color:* ORANGE.

TWELVE CENTS.—OCEAN STEAMSHIP, surrounded by ornamental scroll work; UNITED STATES POSTAGE at top; TWELVE CENTS at bottom, with numeral 12 between the words. *Color:* MILORI GREEN.

FIFTEEN CENTS.—LANDING OF COLUMBUS, ornamental and scroll work at top and bottom; U. S. POSTAGE at top, FIFTEEN CENTS at bottom, with numeral 15 underneath. *Colors:* picture PRUSSIAN BLUE; scroll and ornamental work PALE INDIA RED.

TWENTY-FOUR CENTS.—DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE; ornamental and scroll work at top and bottom; U. S. surrounded by *ovals* at upper, left, and right corners respectively; the word POSTAGE between the two; TWENTY-FOUR CENTS in scroll at bottom, with numeral 24 underneath. *Colors:* the picture PURPLE LAKE; scroll and ornamental work LIGHT MILORI GREEN.

THIRTY CENTS.—EAGLE, FACING TO LEFT WITH OUTSPREAD WINGS, RESTING ON SHIELD, WITH FLAGS GROUPED ON EITHER SIDE. The words U. S. POSTAGE in upper section of shield; the numeral 30 in lower; the words THIRTY CENTS across the bottom. THIRTEEN STARS, arranged in semi-circle, at top of design. *Colors:* *Eagle and Shield*, CARMINE; *Flags*, BLUE.

NINETY CENTS.—HEAD OF LINCOLN, in an oval, three-quarter face, looking to right, surrounded by ornamental and scroll work; numerals 90 at each of the upper corners; U. S. POSTAGE at top of oval; NINETY and CENTS in scroll at lower left and right corners of oval, respectively; U. S. at lower left and right corners of stamp, respectively. *Colors:* *portrait* in BLACK; surrounding ornamental and scroll work CARMINE

March 1, 1869 Post Office Official Announcement of the 1869 Pictorial Issue with descriptions for each value. On the reverse it is interesting to note paragraph six: "Special requests for the new style of stamps will be disregarded until the stock of the present issue in possession of the Department is exhausted." The stamps were not therefore immediately distributed to all post offices as a new issue.

Plate Proofs on Card with Inverted Centers

The Ultimate “Shifted Vignette”



15-Cent
Type II



24-Cent



30-Cent



90-Cent

One pane of 100 proofs of each denomination was produced

This is the only format for which the 90¢ value is known with the inverted center variety.

After the 15¢ Type II, the 24¢ and the 30¢ invert were discovered, the Post Office Department ordered the American Bank Note Company to produce the inverted center card proofs for all four bicolor stamps in the series. These proofs were never placed on sale to the public but were used instead as gifts to high officials. Only the four high value stamps of the 1869 Pictorial Issue appear in bicolor.

Essays

The 1869 Pictorial Issue was printed by the National Bank Note Company of New York under contract with the United States Post Office Department. This was the first U.S. issue for which more than one color was used to print a stamp. Due to increased costs, only the four high values (15¢, 24¢, 30¢ and 90¢) were printed in two colors.



Die Essay on India paper of vignette only depicting the Landing of Columbus



Large die essay on India paper with American Bank Note Company imprint, vignette and frame printed in one color. Signed by the engraver, James Smillie.

The Only Recorded Example

Separate printing plates were prepared for the frame and vignette. In this instance, the blue vignette was printed first. On the lower example, the ink was allowed to dry, and then the frame was printed in blue to complete the design.

Plate Proofs

Type II



Vignette plate number 23 and National Bank Note Imprint.

Type III



Shifted to Left



Shifted to Right



Shifted to Right in varying degrees

Plate proofs are impression taken from finished plates. They differ from the issued stamps chiefly in their superior impression and the type of printing paper. There are sometimes slight variations of color. Normally, the frame and vignette are perfectly aligned on plate proofs, as in the Type II example. However, this is not so on the Type III, where the vignette is shifted dramatically. No plate proofs were made of the Type I design.

Die Proofs

1915 Panama-Pacific Small Die Proofs

The Panama-Pacific World Exposition was held in San Francisco to recognize the progress made on the western portion of the United States since the middle of the 19th Century. For their pavilion at the exposition, the Post Office Department ordered the Bureau of Engraving and Printing to prepare die proofs of each stamp the United States had issued up to 1915. One set of these proofs was on display at the pavilion.



Type II



Type III

2½mm by 3mm margins, on yellowish wove paper

Only 3-5 sets were produced

Specimen Overprints



PFC

Type II

Type A "Specimen Overprint"
Manuscript "X"
Four Recorded



PFC

Type III

"Specimen Overprint"

The Only Recorded Example

"Specimen" overprints usually appear on samples of new issues that were distributed to foreign postal officials for identification purposes. Few remain from this time period. The overprint was handstamped across the "15" at the bottom of the stamp, then the manuscript "X" was penned over the overprint. There are no "Specimen" overprints recorded on the 15¢ Type I issue.

The Issued Stamps

The 15¢ stamps exist in three slightly different formats, each having the same vignette, and somewhat different frame designs.



PFC

Type I
Vignette Unframed
Horizontal Shading Lines



PFC

Type II
Vignette Framed
Diagonal Shading Lines



PFC

Type III
Vignette Unframed
Without Shading Lines
around vignette



The Type I frame has a single heavy red-brown line surrounding the blue vignette and crossing the top. The type II frame die was re-engraved adding the three red-brown lines that frame the vignette and a small "diamond" shape below the letters "STA" of "POSTAGE." The Type III frame, the 1875 re-issue, contains elements of both earlier types, with the absence of the diamond on type II, as in type I, and without shading lines surrounding the vignette.

Type I Vignette Shifts on Issued Stamps and Varieties



PSE

Vignette shifted up and
to the right



PFC

Vignette shifted to right



PFC

Vignettes shifted to bottom

Without Grill Variety



PFC

Vignette shifted down
and to the right.

One of only 22 recorded examples.

Double Grill Variety



PFC

Vignette shifted to Bottom



PFC



PFC

Vignette Centered

The left stamp is the only recorded mint example of the double grill variety

Type I Earliest Documented Usage



PFC

Vignette shifted to bottom
March 31, 1869

Domestic Usage



Vertical Pair with both vignettes shifted to the right and dramatically downward, prepaying five times the 3¢ domestic letter rate plus 15¢ registry fee from Orleans, La. to Opelousas, La.

Approximately 25 domestic Type I covers recorded, this being one of only two bearing a vertical Type I pair.

Type I Foreign Destination Usages

Mail to France



Vignette shifted dramatically to the left and down, on June 19, 1869 cover from New York, NY to Paris, France at the 15¢ treaty rate.



Vignette shifted dramatically to the right and downward, on November 16, 1869 cover from New Orleans, LA to Bordeaux, France at the 15¢ treaty rate.

Fewer than 150 Type I covers have been recorded, about half of which were mailed to France.

Type I Foreign Destination Usages

Short-Paid Mail to France



PFC

Vignette shifted slightly down and to the right, on May 25, 1869 cover from New York, NY to Paris, France franked to pay the single 15¢ treaty rate, cover treated as unpaid due to excess weight and marked due "16" décimes in France.

Short-Paid Mail to Switzerland



PFC

Vignette nearly perfectly centered, on March 29, 1870 cover from New York, NY to Aargau, Switzerland franked to pay the single 15¢ treaty rate, cover treated as unpaid due to excess weight and marked due in Switzerland.

Type II Vignette Shifts on Issued Stamps



Vignette shifted dramatically to the top,
mint and used examples.



Vignette shifted dramatically to the right. Right stamp shows part
of vignette from adjoining stamp at left.



Vignette shifted
to bottom and left



Vertical Pair
Vignettes shifted slightly downwards
Printed in a dark shade of brown

Type II Vignette Shifts on Issued Stamps

Center Inverted

The National Bank Note Company prepared separate printed plates for the frame and the vignette. In this instance, the brown frame was printed first. The ink was allowed to dry, and then the blue vignette was printed to complete the design. In rare instances, the pressman inserted the sheet into the press in the wrong direction. This resulted in the most dramatic error in philately — the invert.



PFC

Used

Only 89 used and three unused examples are recorded of the 15¢ Type II inverted center variety. The example above is one of the few examples with excellent vignette centering, even though it is inverted.

Cancellations



Red Cancel
Vignette shifted to
right



PFC

Green Cancel
Vignette shifted to
right



"Paid"
Vignette shifted
down and right



"Paid 3"
Vignette shifted
down and left



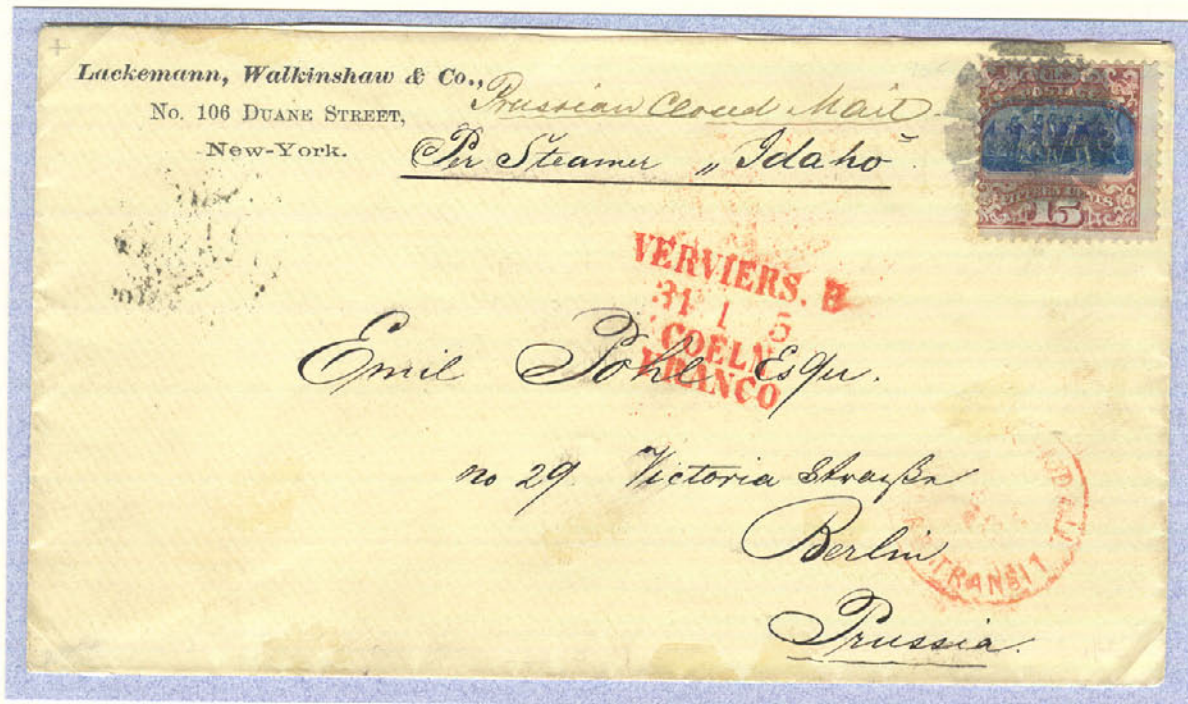
PFC

Target Cancel
Vignette almost
perfectly centered

Cancellations in green ink are the rarest of all color cancellations on the 1869 Issue.

Type II Foreign Destination Usages

Mail to Germany



Vignette shifted upward, on January 1870 cover from New York, NY to Berlin, Germany at the single 15¢ treaty rate.

Mail to Italy



PFC

Horizontal pair with vignettes shifted unevenly to the right (the right stamp shows more shift than the left stamp), which was caused by misalignment transfer of the vignettes on the printing plate. Used on April 1869 cover from New York, NY to Florence, Italy prepaying double the 15¢ treaty rate.

Type II Foreign Destination Usages

Mail to Switzerland



PFC

Vignette perfectly centered, dark brown and blue color variety, on December 27, 1869 cover from Wyoming, Nebraska via Nebraska City to Switzerland at the 15¢ treaty rate. Stamp apparently left uncanceled in Wyoming.

Mail to Turkey



Vignette perfectly centered, on very early 26 April 1869 cover front from Washington, D.C. to Constantinople, Turkey, mixed issue franking with 1868 5¢ paying the 20¢ treaty rate.

PFC

The earliest date of use for the 15¢ Type II is April 5, 1869. The Type II example above, used on April 26, 1869, illustrates that the National Bank Note Company was perhaps more diligent in perfectly aligning the frame and vignette on the stamp early in the printing process.

Type III Vignette Shifts

The National Bank Note Company produced the 1875 Re-Issue of the 1869 series. For the 15¢ value, they made a new frame plate that was the same as Type I with an unframed vignette but without shading lines around vignette. They were without grill on hard white paper with crackly gum.



PFC

Mint

Unusual multidirectional shift of the vignette, left stamp shifted to the right, right stamp shifted to the left. This indicates misaligned transfers of the vignette on the printing plate.



PFC

Used

Vignette shifted to top and left

The only recorded used pair

Imperforate Horizontal Variety



PFC

Mint

Vignette shifted to the right



PFC

Used

Vignette shifted upwards

One of two recorded used examples

Essays

Small Numeral Rejected Design



Plate Essay in black of the completed small numeral design on dull yellowish tinted paper.

Frame and Vignette Only Essays



Perforated

PSE



Imperforate

Unusual small re-mounted essays showing separately executed die proofs of the green frame design and the violet vignette by master engraver James Smillie. Smillie based his vignette design on John Trumbell's painting "*The Signing of the Declaration of Independence*". The vignette design is so detailed that four dozen American historical figures are shown, and seven can be identified by name.

Hybrid Large Die Proof

Hybrid Large Die Proof from a salesman's sample book. Even on this proof, the vignette is shifted slightly to the left. The 24¢ value exists only in hybrid format, which are plate proofs on India paper cut to shape, mounted and pressed onto large card, so as to resemble large die proofs.



Die and Plate Proofs

1915 Panama-Pacific Small Die Proof



2½mm by 3mm margins, on yellowish wove paper

Only 3-5 sets were produced

Plate Proofs

India Paper



Vignette centered perfectly
within the frame
National Bank Note Company Imprint



Vignette shifted to the right

Compare these two plate proof examples: even though the pressmen took extra care when making plate proofs, as they were often used for presentations, it was impossible to perfectly align the vignette within the frame. The comparison of these two plate proof blocks demonstrates the difficulty that was encountered in correctly producing the first U.S. bicolor issue.

The Issued Stamp



Vignette shifted slightly to the right



PFC

Vignette shifted slightly upwards on this bottom right corner single with full selvage
Position 100



Vignette shifted farther to the right
Red Cancel

Multiples



Vignettes perfectly centered on this used strip of three stamps



PFC

Vignettes shifted slightly to the right on this used pair



Vignettes almost perfectly centered on this used pair

Alignment and registration problems occurred throughout the production of bicolor stamps.

Vignette and Frame Shifts on Varieties

Center Inverted



PFC

Vignette shifted downwards

The 24¢ inverted frame variety is the second scarcest of the three inverts found on the 1869 bicolor stamps. Approximately 83 used and four mint copies are recorded. One is known on cover.

Grill Varieties

The without grill variety can sometimes be confused with the 1875 Re-Issue, which was issued without grill. It can only be certified if there is gum present, since the gum differs slightly between the two issues.



PFC, Repaired

Without Grill

Vignette shifted slightly downwards and to the right

One of 23 recorded examples



PFC

Double Grill
Vignette perfectly aligned



PFC

Double Grill, One Split Vertically
Vignette shifted slightly down
and dramatically to the left

The Only Recorded 24¢ Double Grill Varieties

Stamps with double grills come from sheets that went through the grilling apparatus twice. Split grills show two different grills at the edges, and come from sheets embossed once, but were out of alignment.

Postal Usage - Domestic Mail



PFC

Vignette shifted slightly upwards, used on April 1869 courthouse cover from New York, NY to Mobile, AL at eight times the 3¢ domestic letter rate.

Seventy-six 24¢ 1869 covers are recorded, of which only about one in three were mailed domestically. This cover, sent to the Clerk of the Circuit Court in Mobile, Ala. is marked "Opened by order of the Court April 29, '69", making it one of the earliest known usages. The earliest documented use is April 7, 1869.

1875 Re-Issue Stamps

PSE

Mint



Used Vertical Pair

The only recorded used 24¢ Re-Issue pair

It is readily apparent that the above examples represent superior work by the pressmen employed at the National Bank Note Company, which produced the 1875 Re-Issue stamps. The vignettes are perfectly aligned. The gum and paper differs slightly from the 1869 regular issue.

Plate Proofs

Bond Paper



PFC

Vignette shifted slightly left
Darker Colors

The only recorded example
on bond paper

India Paper on Card



Vignette shifted upwards and
to the left. Partial red "National
Bank Note Co." imprint.

India Paper



Vignettes perfectly aligned, ultramarine "National Bank Note Co." imprint at top. Note, position 1 shows a weak or short transfer of the frame design caused by transfer roll not making full contact with the plate.



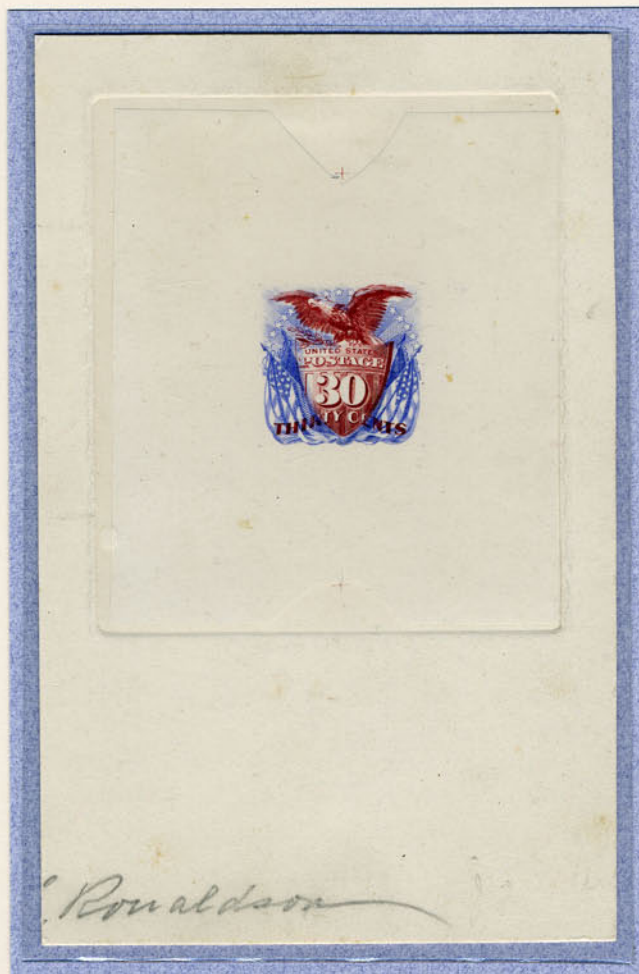
Vignette shifted downwards
to the left.

Die Proofs

Large Die Proof

The design was engraved by Douglas S. Ronaldson, who has signed this proof at the bottom. The vignette is perfectly centered, demonstrating the great care that was taken when this large die proof was struck.

Almost all of the 1869 bi-color large die proofs are hybrids, except for the 30¢ proofs which are true large die proofs printed on India paper, measuring about 40mm by 50mm, and then die sunk on card.



PFC

Die Proof on India paper, die sunk on Card

The only recorded example signed by the engraver D.S. Ronaldson

1915 Panama-Pacific Small Die Proof



2½mm by 3mm margins, on yellowish wove paper

Only 3-5 sets were produced

Plate Proofs

Bond Paper



PFC

Vignette shifted slightly left
Darker Colors

The only recorded example
on bond paper

India Paper on Card



Vignette shifted upwards and
to the left. Partial red "National
Bank Note Co." imprint.

India Paper



Vignettes perfectly aligned, ultramarine "National Bank Note Co." imprint at
top.



Vignette shifted downwards
to the left.

Vignette Shifts on the Issued Stamp

Mint and Used Singles



Mint
Vignette shifted up



PFC

Vignette perfectly
aligned
Shown for Comparison



PFC

Vignette shifted
barely to the left
Red NYFM Cancel



PSE

Vignette shifted dra-
matically to the left

Used Multiple



Block of Four
Vignettes barely shifted upwards
Perforations poorly aligned to design

Positional Pieces



PFC

Mint
Flags shifted slightly to left
Position 100



Mint

Bottom center selvage with partial carmine imprint and both plate numbers in vignette color. "T" printed in both colors for sheet separation and alignment of plates.

Vignettes perfectly aligned
Positions 86, 94-96



PFC

Used
Partial imprint and plate no. in vignette color
Excellent alignment of vignette, poor perforation alignment.

Position 97

The only recorded plate number pieces for the 30¢ 1869 issued stamp with grill.

There are no blue imprint and plate number pieces from the frame plate for the 30¢ 1869 issued stamp with grill. The above two items are the only recorded plate and imprint items from the bottom of the plate recorded.

Varieties

Flags Inverted Variety



PFC

The 30¢ Invert error is the least common 1869 invert with only 36 examples recorded. The cancel is a black circle of wedges commonly used in the New York foreign mail department.

The 30¢ inverted frame varieties are known in mint and used condition. The ultramarine flags that frame the carmine shield and eagle vignette are inverted. The 30¢ pictorial stamp is considered one of the most beautiful and certainly one of the most patriotic-colored of the ten different designs that make up the 1869 issue. The colorful elements of the 30¢ 1869 issue stamps were more difficult to align than the other framed vignettes. Misregistrations were common occurrence.

Without Grill Variety



PFC

Vignette shifted left

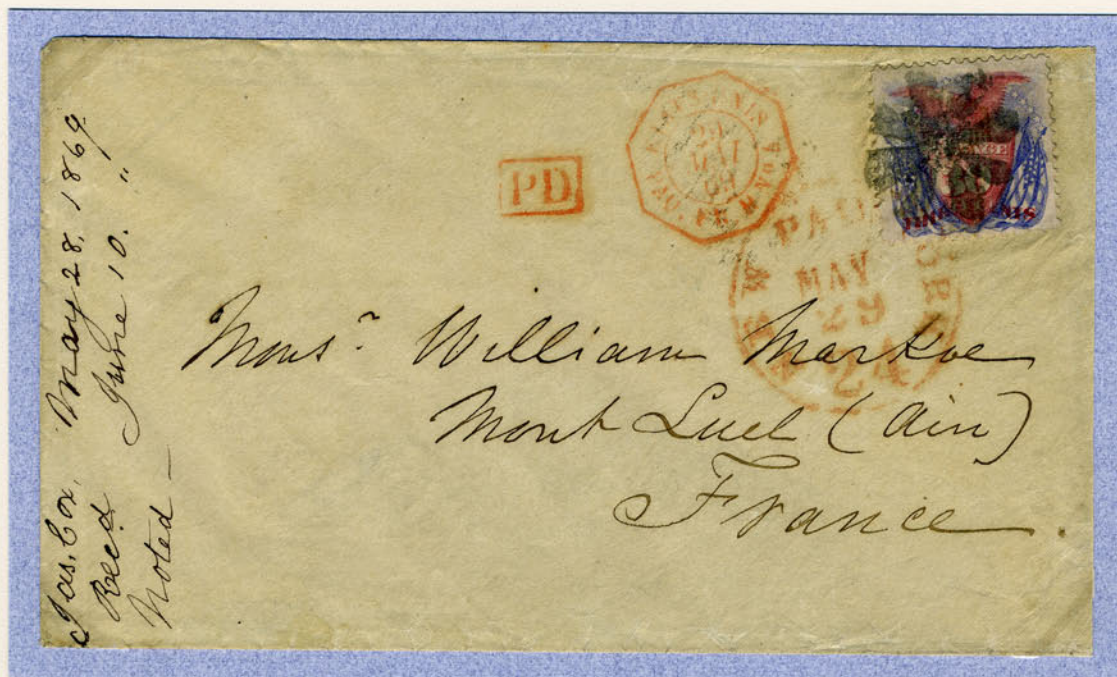


PFC

Vignette perfectly aligned

The without grill variety can sometimes be confused with the 1875 Re-Issue, which was issued without grill. It can only be certified if there is gum present, since the gum differs slightly between the two issues.

Postal Usage: Mail to France



Vignette almost perfectly centered, used on May 29, 1869 cover from New York, NY to France at double the 15¢ treaty rate.

The earliest documented use of a 30¢ 1869 stamp is on a cover to Hong Kong, China dated May 28, 1869, which is only one day prior to the postmark on this cover. Like the 15¢ and 24¢ values, this early use demonstrates that greater care was given to align the frame and vignette on early printings.

Twenty-four of the 58 recorded 30¢ covers were mailed to France.

1875 Re-Issue



PFC

Horizontal used pair

The only recorded used 30¢ 1875 Re-Issue pair

This re-issue pair shows superior registration and alignment work by the pressmen employed at the National Bank Note Company, which produced the 1875 Re-Issues.

The 30¢ Re-Issue was created without grill and generally has brighter colors than the issued 30¢ 1869 stamp. The gum and paper differs slightly from the 1869 regular issue. The Re-Issues were printed on hard, white paper with horizontal mesh and had white crackly gum.

Essays and Die Proofs

Rejected Design Essays

90¢ Small Numeral Plate Essays with early portrait of Washington that was considered and rejected.



Dull violet on stamp paper
Vignette shifted slightly to top right



Red brown on stamp paper
Vignette shifted dramatically to bottom right

1915 Panama-Pacific Small Die Proof



2½mm by 3mm margins, on yellowish wove paper
Vignette perfectly aligned on proof of issued stamp design showing Lincoln portrait

Only 3-5 sets were produced

Plate Proofs

India Paper



Vignette shifted upwards
and to the right



Vignette shifted dramatically to
top right

Card Proofs with “Specimen” Overprints



PFC

“Specimen” handstamp
reading down
Perfectly aligned vignette



PFC

Smaller “Specimen”
handstamp reading up
Perfectly aligned vignette

The only recorded examples of each “Specimen” type

The two plate proofs above are of unknown origin, and show how the vignette should be placed within the frames. The overprints above feature two different type fonts and print sizes of the word “Specimen”. These were printed by the American Bank Note Company starting in 1879 by order of the Post Office Department.

Issued Stamps



PFC

Mint
Vignette shifted
downwards and to
the left



PFC

Used
Vignette strongly
shifted downwards
and to the left



PFC

Mint
Vignette almost
perfectly aligned



Used
Vignette dramatically
shifted downward
and to the right



PFC

Used strip of three
Vignette shifted slightly downwards

Without Grill Variety



PFC

Vignette shifted slightly left
Only 22 recorded examples

The without grill variety can sometimes be confused with the 1875 Re-Issue, which was issued without grill. This variety can only be certified as genuine if there is original gum present, since the gum differs slightly between the two issues.

1875 Re-Issue

Records show that 1,356 examples of the 90¢ 1875 Re-Issue stamp were produced. Like other 1875 Re-Issue values, they were available for postal usage.



APS

Mint

Vignette shifted very slightly up



PFC

Vignettes perfectly aligned

One of only two recorded used 90¢ 1875 Re-Issue pairs

It is readily apparent that the above examples represent superior work by the pressmen employed at the National Bank Note Co., which produced the 1875 Re-Issues. The gum and paper differs slightly from the 1869 regular issue.

II. The Official Issue of 1873

Official stamps authorized on March 3, 1873 included 1¢-90¢ values for use of the nine departments of the Executive branch. Dollar values however, were prepared only for the State Department which sent parcels around the world. Such bulky mail required significant amounts of postage prior to adoption of attempted standardized lower General Postal Union rates in 1875. The dollar values, \$2.00, \$5.00, \$10.00 and \$20.00 were printed in two colors, black for the vignette and green for the frame.

Official Post Office Department Announcement

Official Postage Stamps and Stamped Envelopes.

CIRCULAR TO POSTMASTERS.

Post Office Department,

OFFICE OF THE

Third Assistant Postmaster General,

Division of Postage Stamps, Stamped Envelopes, and Postal Cards,

Washington, D. C., May 15, 1873.

The franking privilege having been abolished, to take effect on the first day of July, 1873, the Postmaster General is required by law to provide postage stamps or stamped envelopes of special design for each of the several Executive Departments of the Government, for the pre-payment of postages on official matter passing through the mails.

DESCRIPTION.

In place of the "heads" on the regular stamps, the official stamps adopted for the Post Office Department have conspicuous figures (numerals) to represent the denominations, with the word "official" above and the word "stamp" below.

These, printed in black, and resting on an oval-shaped white back-ground, render the stamps especially distinctive, and leave no good excuse for confounding them with other stamps. To further distinguish them, the name of the Department is printed across the top in lieu of the words "U. S. Postage." There is also a slight difference in the ornamentation of the border.

In design, the official stamps for the other Departments do not differ materially from those issued for sale to the public. The *profile busts* are retained; but each stamp has at the top the name of the particular Department for which it is provided. Other changes, appearing in the border, need not be specified.

The stamps for each Department have their own distinctive color, as follows: For the Executive, *carmine*; State Department, *green*; Treasury Department, *velvet brown*; War Department, *coccineal red*; Navy Department, *blue*; Interior Department, *vermilion*; Department of Justice, *purple*; Department of Agriculture, *straw*; and for the Post Office Department, *black*.

The official stamps will correspond in denomination with the regular stamps, except that for the State Department there will be four additional denominations, viz: two, five, ten, and twenty dollars, respectively. These additional stamps are designed for a profile bust of the late Hon. William H. Seward, and are of *double size* and *printed in two colors*.

OFFICIAL STAMPS FOR POSTMASTERS.

Official announcement concerning the official stamps and stamped envelopes, sent out on May 15, 1873, by the Third Assistant Postmaster General E. W. Barber. Note paragraph six referring to the State Department Dollar values, "These additional stamps are designed for a profile bust of the late Hon. William H. Seward, and are of *double size* and *printed in two colors*."

Essay

The 1873 Officials Issue was printed by the Continental Bank Note Company of New York under contract with the United States Post Office Department. This was only the second U.S. postal issue for which more than color was used to print a stamp. Similar to the 1869 issue, only the four high values of the Department of State were printed in two colors, due to increased costs and production time involved.



Die essay in black on India paper.

One of only two recorded examples in private hands

There are four total examples recorded, two of which are held by institutions, the National Postal Museum and the Bureau of Engraving and Printing.

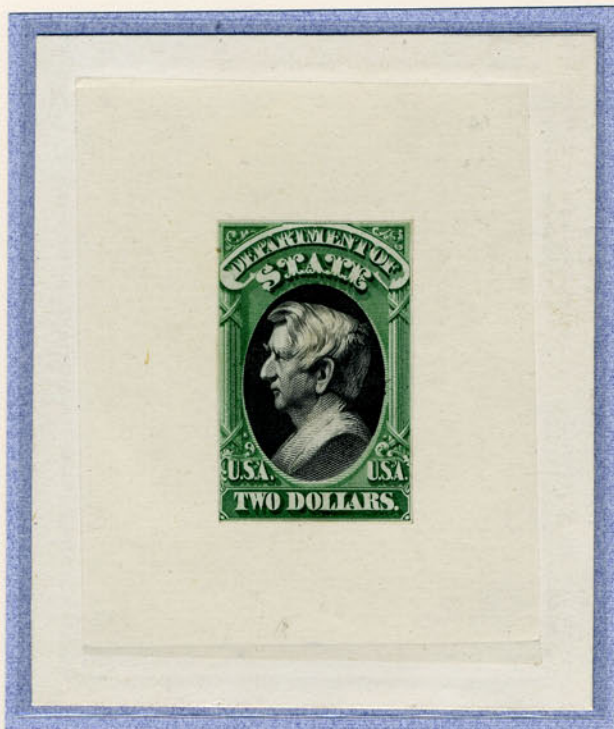
This essay contains the complete frame for the \$2.00 Department of State Official stamp and value labels for the three other dollar-value stamps of \$5.00, \$10.00 and \$20.00.

Because only a limited printing was planned for each of the dollar-value stamps, it was apparently deemed unnecessary to make a complete frame die for each value. After the \$2.00 value label frame had been entered on the plate, the \$2.00 label was burnished out by hand and the appropriate \$-value label was re-entered.

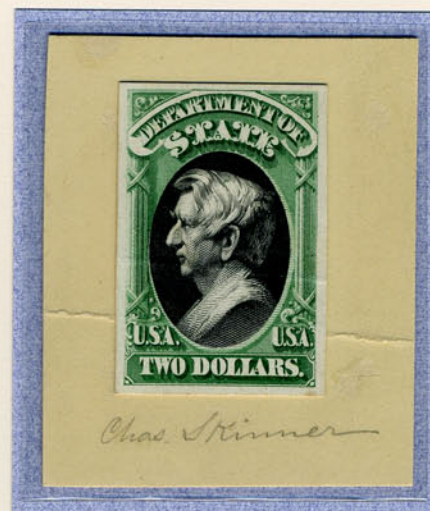
Proofs

“Hybrid” Large Die Proofs

All dollar value Department of State large die proofs are hybrids. Hybrids are plate proofs that are cut to shape, mounted and then pressed (or sunk) on large cards designed to resemble large die proofs.



India paper plate proof die impressed on card



Card plate proof mounted on card
Signed “Chas. Skinner”

The only recorded signed example

Charles Skinner, the engraver of the Seward portrait, created the only newly produced portrait for the \$-value Official stamps. New in his career as an engraver, Seward’s portrait took Skinner two to three weeks to complete at an astonishing cost of over \$500. Skinner later became well known as a stamp engraver and was responsible for engraving the vignettes of the Columbian and Trans-Mississippi issues.

Plate Proofs



Plate Proof on Card



Plate Proof on Card
Handstamped “Specimen”

Plate Proof on India Paper

The frame plate for the \$2.00 value was the only one made with a completed die as shown by the frame essay on page two of this frame.



Complete sheet of 10 on India paper with black vignette imprint and plate "No. 123" at the top and green frame imprint at bottom and plate "No. 121" at top.

The plating of the State \$2.00 value by George Sayers is the most difficult out of the four values because most position do not have reliable plating markers. The \$2.00 is the only value that Continental made a complete die for, which was used to make the plate. The other values used the same \$2.00 die for plate layout, the \$2.00 value tablet was burnish out and the correct value tablet rolled in. As a result, the scrolls at the upper corners of the value tablets and the horizontal lines that form the bottom of the oval vignette frame were not freehand engraved on the \$2.00 value.

One must rely on position or damage dots on the frame and vignette plates to help identify the plate position.

Position 4 shows a tiny plate damage on the upper left corner of the frame.

Position 10 shows the large scratches at the lower right corner that continue as large swirls in the margin.

1881 Atlanta Trial Color Plate Proofs on Thin Card

A complete set of 28 of the high-value \$2-\$20 Department of State Officials were reprinted in seven color combinations for display at the International Cotton Exhibition, held from October 15 through December 31, 1881, in Atlanta, Georgia. The \$2.00 frame plate and value label were produced from a single transfer roll (see frame essay).

Issued Stamps and Varieties



1883 NYFM Oval
Cancellation



PFC

Vignette shifted down and left

The New York Post Office offered a special dispatch of foreign mails after normal closing hours. This special dispatch is termed supplementary mail and required the sender to pay double the normal rates of postage.



Red NYFM Supplementary
Mail Cancellation

**One of only two recorded
examples**

Center Inverted Variety



Plate Proof on Card
Position 3

The Only Recorded Example

Only one broken sheet of ten examples of the \$2.00 Department of State center inverted plate proof errors exists. This example, with the top green frame plate number 121, is unique. The frame plate was printed correctly right side up. Then the vignette was erroneously printed inverted.

Proofs

“Hybrid” Large Die Proof

The Postmaster General authorized the Continental Bank Note Company to produce the Official stamps on hard paper. However, the hybrid proofs were printed on softer India paper.



India paper plate proof die impressed on card

Plate Proofs



Plate Proof on Card



Plate Proof on Card
Handstamped “Specimen”

Plate Proof on India Paper

The frame plates for the \$5.00, \$10.00 and \$20.00 values were all made utilizing the \$2.00 die for plate layout, after which the \$2.00 value tablet was burnish out and the correct value tablet was rolled in.



Complete sheet of 10 on India paper with vignette black imprint and plate "No. 123" at the top and green frame imprint at bottom and plate "No. 120" at top.

The plating of the State \$5.00 value by George Sayers hinges on the fact that the scrolls at the upper corners of the value tablets are freehand engraved. Each position is different. On each you should note the shape of the scroll, the vertical shading lines and the location with respect to the corner curve on the value tablet.

The second distinguishing characteristic of the \$5.00 plate are the horizontal lines that form the bottom of the oval vignette frame. They are also hand engraved with a straight edge guide with each position being different. Position dots on the frame plate and damage dots on the vignette plate also show in various positions to help identify the plate position.

Position 8 also shows distinctive percussion plate damage on the upper left side of the frame.

Issued Stamps and Varieties

The issued \$5.00 stamps, both mint and used, are among the rarest of all Official stamps. Only 363 were issued for the \$5.00, \$10.00 and \$20.00 values, but many of the \$5.00 were actually postally used and lost to philately. The \$10.00 and \$20.00 values had remainders that eventually made it to the philatelic market.



Position 1 with corner selvage and
black vignette imprint
Vignette shifted slightly to top left



PFC

Vignette shifted to top right

Center Inverted Variety



Plate Proof on Card
Position 3

One of only two recorded examples

Twenty center inverted \$5.00 plate proofs exist, comprised of two sheets of ten each, of which one sheet of 10 is still intact. This example contains the green frame plate number 120, and is one of only two such examples extant. Plate proofs and issued stamps were printed by the Continental Bank Note Company of New York until 1879, when the American Bank Note Company took over production of these issues.

The bicolor printing difficulty of placing the vignette within the frame is quite evident in many of the proof and stamp examples shown.

Proofs

“Hybrid” Large Die Proof



India paper plate proof die impressed on card

Plate Proofs



Plate Proof on Card



Plate Proof on Card
Handstamped “Specimen”

Plate proofs are impressions from the finished plates, which differ from the stamps themselves mainly in their excellence of impressions and the stock on which they are printed.

Note that the vignettes are centered significantly better within the frames on most of the normal plate proofs, as compared with the issued stamps and the center inverted plate proofs.

Plate Proof on India Paper



Complete sheet of 10 on India paper with black vignette imprint and plate "No. 123" at the top and green frame imprint at bottom and plate "No. 122" at top.

The plating of the State \$10.00 value by George Sayers, like the \$5.00 value, hinges on the fact that the scrolls at the upper corners of the value tablets and the horizontal lines that form the bottom of the oval vignette frame are freehand engraved. Each position is different. Position dots on the frame plate and damage dots on the vignette plate also show in various positions to help identify the plate position.

On position 7, the value tablet exhibits a double transfer variety.

1881 Atlanta Trial Color Plate Proofs on Thin Card

The Atlanta trial color proofs were printed on a slightly thinner card stock than the regular plate proofs. It is unknown exactly how many sheets of ten were printed, however, George Sayers has proven through plating studies that at least two sheets of ten of each were produced. He has plated duplicate plate positions on some of the proofs.

Issued Stamps



Left margin block of four
Positions 1-2, 6-7
Vignettes shifted varyingly



PFC

Position 10 with corner selvage
Vignette shifted slightly to top right

A \$10.00 Department of State center inverted plate proof has never been found.

The dollar value stamps were prepared only for use by the Department of State, which often mailed heavy packages of papers to both domestic and foreign destinations, thus necessitating high-value stamps. Only 363 copies of each of the \$5.00, \$10.00 and \$20.00, value were printed, with few examples of each remaining.

Proofs

“Hybrid” Large Die Proof



India paper plate proof die impressed on card

Plate Proofs



Plate Proof on Card



Plate Proof on Card
Handstamped “Specimen”

Designs for the Official stamps were adapted from the then-current Bank Note stamps, which the Continental Bank Note Company was printing under contact with the U.S. Post Office Department. Denominations were assigned to each government department based on its anticipated needs.

The dollar value Department of State stamps are the only Officials that do not have the denomination both spelled out and written as numerals. Note the abbreviated word “Dolls.” for dollars appears only on the \$20.00 value, as space was evidently at a premium.

Plate Proof on India Paper

Note below that positions one and two show perfectly centered vignettes, while the remaining vignettes show varying degrees of shifting caused by improper plate layout of the vignette plate.



Complete sheet of 10 on India paper with black vignette imprint and plate "No. 123" at the top and green frame imprint at bottom and plate "No. 121" at top.

The plating of the State \$20.00 value by George Sayers, like the \$5.00 value, hinges on the fact that the scrolls at the upper corners of the value tablets and the horizontal lines that form the bottom of the oval vignette frame are freehand engraved. Each position is different. Position dots on the frame plate and damage dots on the vignette plate also show in various positions to help identify the plate position.

On positions 1 and 2, there is a large scratch on the frame plate that extends on position across the value table into "U.S.A." and then into position 2 through the right "U.S.A."

Position 3 showing track from the edge of the value tablet transfer roll just above the value tablet frame.

Issued Stamps and Varieties



PFC

Left margin block of four with ruled manuscript lines lightened.

Positions 1-2, 6-7

Vignettes shifted varyingly



PFC

Mint
Vignette shifted to top right



Lightly Cancelled
Vignette shifted to top right

Center Inverted Variety

Two sheets of ten of the \$20.00 Department of State center inverted plate proofs on card were produced. The vignettes on all of them are drastically off-center. Note the partial Continental Bank Note Co. imprint, in the vignette color, is also inverted.

Postally used \$20.00 Department of State stamps are so rare that it has been theorized they were never affixed to overseas parcels, but were instead used as receipts by the Post Office Department to account for postal services rendered.

Remainders of \$20.00 stamps were ruled with horizontal manuscript lines to render them invalid.

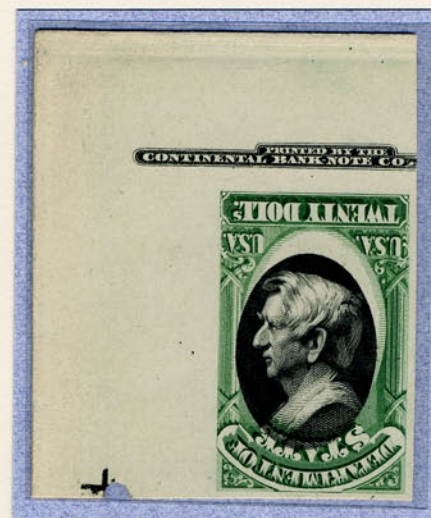


Plate Proof on Card
Vignette with dramatic shift
Position 10

One of only two recorded examples

III. The Pan-American Exposition Issue of 1901

The Pan-American Exposition Issue of 1901 was the third U. S. Commemorative issue produced. Six bicolor stamps were designed by R. Ostrander Smith with values of 1¢, 2¢, 5¢, 8¢ and 10¢. The stamps signify the role that increased speed would play in the delivery of goods driving the burgeoning American economy. The Pan American Exposition and World's Fair in Buffalo, New York highlighted technical achievement and its significance in America's future as the twentieth century began. The stamps were the first bicolor issue produced by the Bureau of Engraving and Printing, and experienced similar misregistration, misalignment and *invert* issues which plagued earlier bicolor stamp production. The stamps were issued for the opening day of the Exposition, on May 1, 1901.

Large Die Proof on Wove Paper

1¢ VALUE

President Franklin Delano Roosevelt asked the Post Office Department prepare special sets of Large Die Proofs for his personal collection. For this request, the Bureau of Engraving and Printing impressed the dies on special wove paper instead of the normal India paper.



Dies in green and black on wove paper, mounted on card. Control numbers "327380" for frame and "327530" for vignette penciled on reverse. The vignette is shifted slightly down and to the left on this example.

One of only two recorded 1¢ Pan-American large die proofs on wove paper

Photo Reproductions of Frame Essays

Photo reproductions on tan photosensitive paper of the sketch stages of the adopted frame design, reduced to stamp size.

Small Lettering and
lacking shading



Larger Lettering and
with additional
shading particularly
on the columns.



Large Die Proof on India Paper



Dies in green and black on India paper, die sunk on card, Control number "17701" hand-stamped on reverse
The vignette and frame are perfectly aligned on this example

Roosevelt Small Die Proofs



Produced in 1903, these Roosevelt Small Die Proofs are mounted on the original gray card backing from the presentation book page. Theodore Roosevelt directed that 85 albums be prepared for private distribution to dignitaries and political friends. Note the nearly perfect centering of the black vignettes.

“I.R.” Overprints



A limited supply of stamps from the Pan-American issue were overprinted with “I. R.”, which stands for “Internal Revenue”, to be used due to a shortage of revenue stamps. All of the vignettes are perfectly centered, with the exception of the 1¢ value, which is shifted sharply to the left. This variety is called a “fast ship”.

“Specimen” Overprints

How the Vignettes Should be Placed



PFC

Unlisted “SPECIMEN” Handstamp in Black applied diagonally



Type E “Specimen” Handstamp in Purple applied horizontally

The above are two elusive and different font-type sets of the “Specimen” overprints, which were prepared for use of the U.S. Post Office Department by the Bureau of Engraving and Printing. The “Specimen” overprints were produced for distribution to foreign postal administrations of the member nations of the Universal Postal Union. Theoretically, the vignettes and frames should be perfectly aligned; however, slight variations occur.

“Ultramar” Overprints



The only recorded Pan-American Exposition set affixed to original Portuguese Ministry ledger page

According to James Bendon's *U.P.U. Specimen Stamps*, the Portuguese Ministry for the Colonies was originally supposed to be supplied with 35 Specimen stamps for distribution; however, in 1900 this number was reduced to 25 stamps. Between 1900 and 1910, the "ULTRAMAR" (meaning "overseas") overprint, was applied to these specimens, and they were distributed to the various Portuguese Colonies, including Goa, India.

In 1911, most of the "ULTRAMAR" overprints were replaced with new ones that said "COLONIAS". This set is affixed to a *unique* original Portuguese Ministry ledger page on which it is hand-written "America (quarenta e quatro selos)", which translates from Portuguese to English as "44 Stamps"; however only these six bicolor values remain.

Note that the vignettes on all of these specimens are perfectly centered.

Inverted Corner Markings



To insure that the correct vignette and frame plates were used together, the Siderographer entered the denomination on the upper right and lower left corners of each frame and vignette plate, for the benefit of the pressmen.

On the printed stamps, these markings appear in the mirror image and become visible in the upper left and lower right corners of the sheets. The lower right markings, shown in this set, are also inverted, so that the pressmen would always see the markings right side up, even if he was holding the plate upside down.

On some of the earlier plates, small “sequence” numbers were added as vignette or frame plates were produced. These small numbers can be observed on the 1¢ and 2¢ values here.

Most of the vignettes in this set show small shifts, in varying directions.

Vignette Variations



"Sinking" Ships
Vignettes shifted downwards



"Floating" Ships - Varying degrees of vignettes shifted upwards

Postal Usage: First Day Post Card to Austria

Fourteen First Day usages are recorded for the 1¢ Pan-American stamp, only two are used to foreign destinations. This one was mailed to Austria, the other was used to France.

The only recorded first day post card to a foreign destination with a foreign postage due stamp



Frame and vignette almost perfectly aligned on this souvenir post card used on the First Day of the Pan-American exposition to Austria. The post card was short-paid 1¢ and circular handstamped due 5 centimes in New York. Upon arrival in Austria, 10kr postage due stamp affixed for postage to be paid by the addressee.

Vignette Shifts on Plate Blocks

The vignette and frame misalignment is dramatically visible on these two plate blocks.

“Slow Rising” Boat



Lower left corner margin block of eight stamps with green frame-colored “Bureau, Engraving & Printing” imprint and the “1116” green frame plate number.

“Fast Rising” Boat



Lower margin block of ten stamps with green frame-colored “Bureau, Engraving & Printing” imprint, the “1116” green frame plate number, and the “1156” black vignette plate number. Additionally, it has registration marks in both printed colors, which were used to align the printing. These marks should be printed in the same plate, over one another, the space between them is the distance that the vignette is misaligned.

Center Inverted Variety

Significantly, the center inverted Pan-American stamps were printed by the Bureau of Engraving and Printing, while the previous U.S. bicolor inverted stamps were produced by the National Bank Note Company, a private government contractor. Because the error was government-made, once it was discovered, the Post Office Department made a concerted but unsuccessful effort to retrieve the invert stamps.



Mint



Used

PFC

Invert Multiple



APS

Used
Vertical Pair

The only recorded 1¢ Pan-American Invert used multiple

One thousand center inverted examples (ten panes of 100 stamps each) of the 1¢ Pan-American stamps were printed out of a total of 91 million. The June 6, 1901 issue of *Mekeel's Weekly Stamp News* mentioned the discovery of the center inverted stamps, noting that a pane of 100 stamps was discovered in East Hampton, Connecticut, where it had been purchased by the Summit Thread Company. A Summit Thread Company employee noticed the "bad sheet" and gave it to Summit's owner, W.E.C. Smith, so that he could return it to the post office. Smith decided to retain 50 copies, and sold them to New York stamp dealer J.W. Scott for \$150. Within week they were selling on the open market for \$20 each.

Postal Usage: Center Inverted Variety

One of only three recorded 1¢ Pan-American Inverts used on cover or piece.



PFC

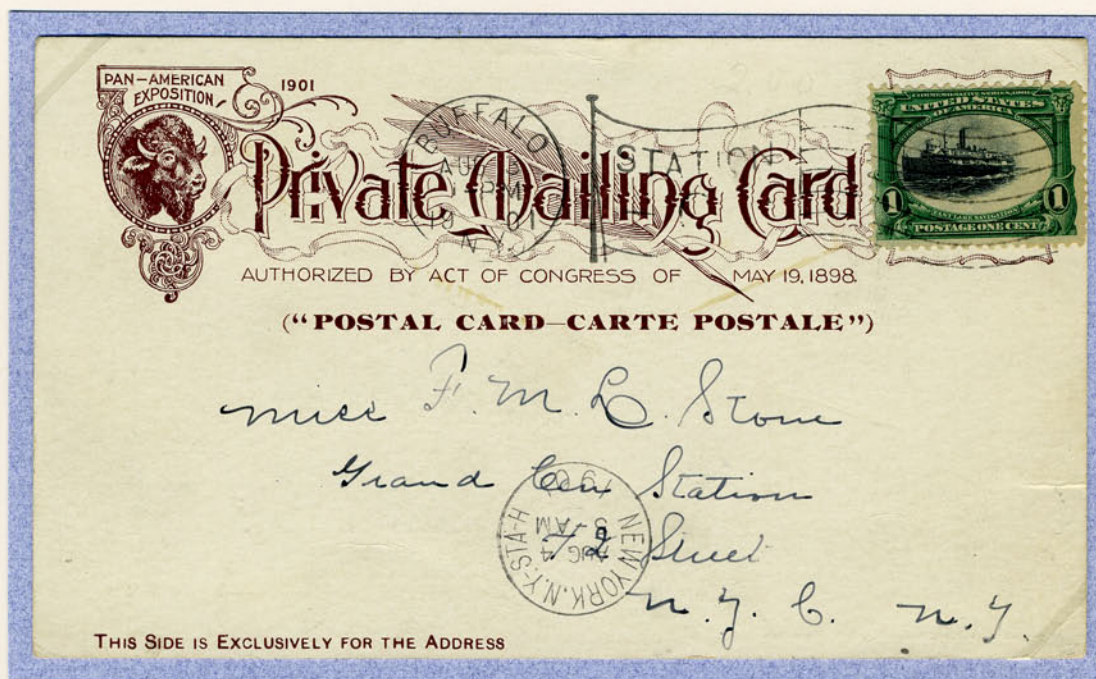
Inverted Center tied by "Birmingham, Ala. Aug 6 '01" duplex cancellation on part envelope. Additional 1¢ postage due added and cancelled by manuscript. The cover was apparently short paying the 2¢ first class rate.

In addition to East Hampton, Connecticut., the 1¢ Pan-American Inverts were also found to have been sold in three or four other post offices around the country. Many of the used copies originated in Bessemer, Alabama, where an unknown quantity were used by the Carrel Jewelry Company on advertising circulars. The Carrel employees noticed the error stamps part way through the mailing and removed some from the circulars.

The earliest known use of the 1¢ Pan-American invert is from Bessemer, Alabama on Aug. 2, 1901. The use on piece above is dated only four days later on Aug. 6 from Birmingham, Alabama. It is not known whether this example originated from the original find at Bessemer, but Birmingham is less than 20 miles away and it is quite possible this in fact was part of that find.

Postal Usage: Shifted Vignettes

"Fast" Boat



Used on post card from the Pan-American Exposition Station to New York City at the 1¢ post card rate.

"Slow" Boat



Used with a 1¢ Trans-Mississippi on cover from New Milford, Connecticut to Danbury, Connecticut at the 2¢ letter rate.

Large Die Essay of Rejected Preliminary Design

This preliminary design for the frame of the 2¢ Pan-American issue shows that the vignette area was originally intended to be round. This design was rejected, but certain of its elements, such as the two figures at top, were incorporated into the final adopted design.

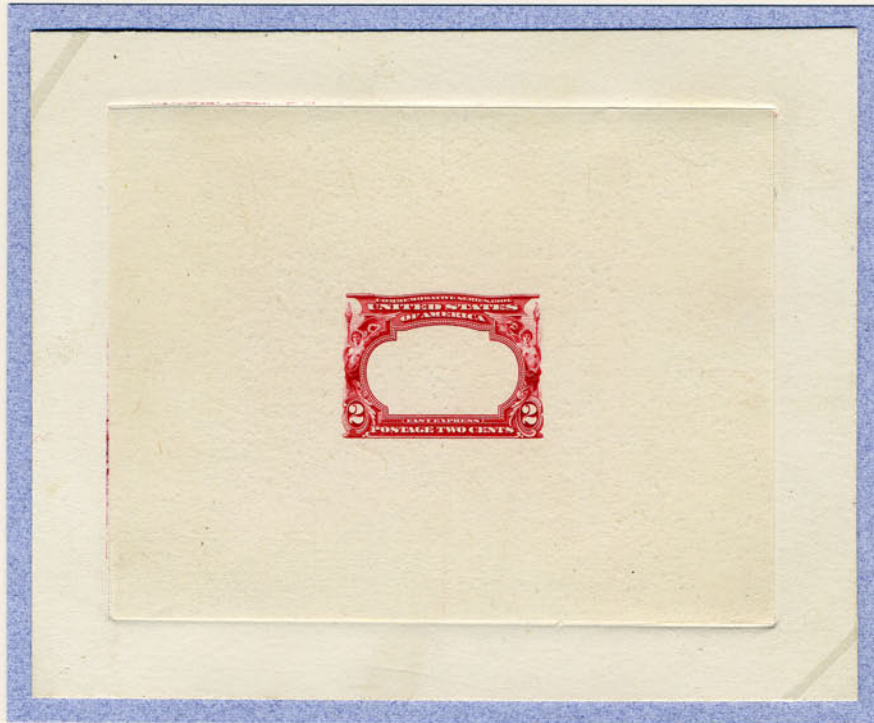


Die in black on India paper, die sunk on card

The only recorded example of this rejected preliminary design

Large Die Frame Essay

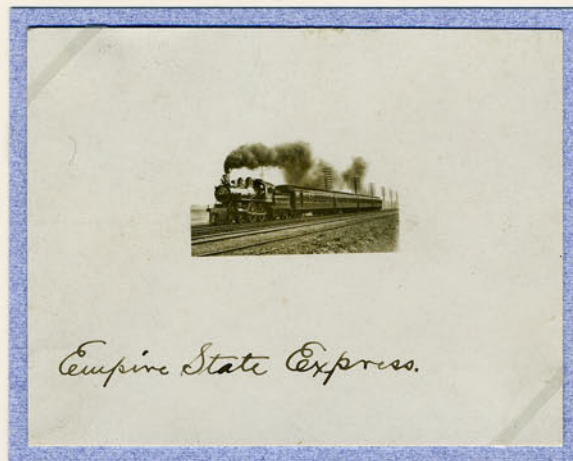
This essay of the completed frame design as adopted for the issued stamp incorporates elements of the essay on the previous page. The carmine color used here was selected for the issued stamp. The label at the bottom, "Fast Express" shows that the vignette design had already been decided.



Die in carmine on India paper, die sunk on card

The only recorded example

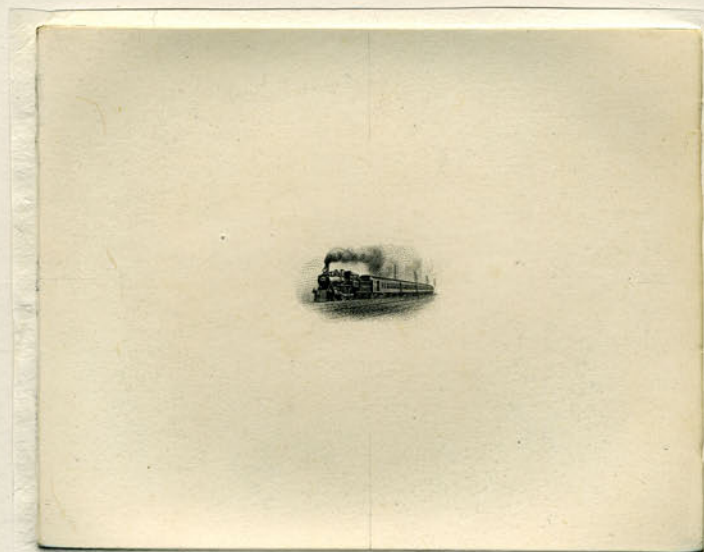
Original Photograph of the Vignette Source



The vignette is based on the New York Central's "Empire State Express". This photograph was used as a basis for the engraving; however, in the final design the foreground was truncated.

Large Die Vignette Essay

This essay is an incomplete version of the final vignette design that was eventually adopted with minor changes.



Tint 4750
Bluen 5569

Nov. 22 /00

Die in black on India paper, die sunk on card
Control number "5569" handstamped on reverse

The only recorded example

Pencil instructions at bottom specify the color of black to be used. The date of "Nov. 22 /00" was more than five months before the stamps were issued on May 1, 1901.

Large Die Proof on India Paper



Dies in carmine and black on India paper, die sunk on card

Control number "17946" handstamped on reverse

The vignette and frame are perfectly aligned on this example

Large Die Proof on Wove Paper

From the set especially prepared for President Franklin Delano Roosevelt.

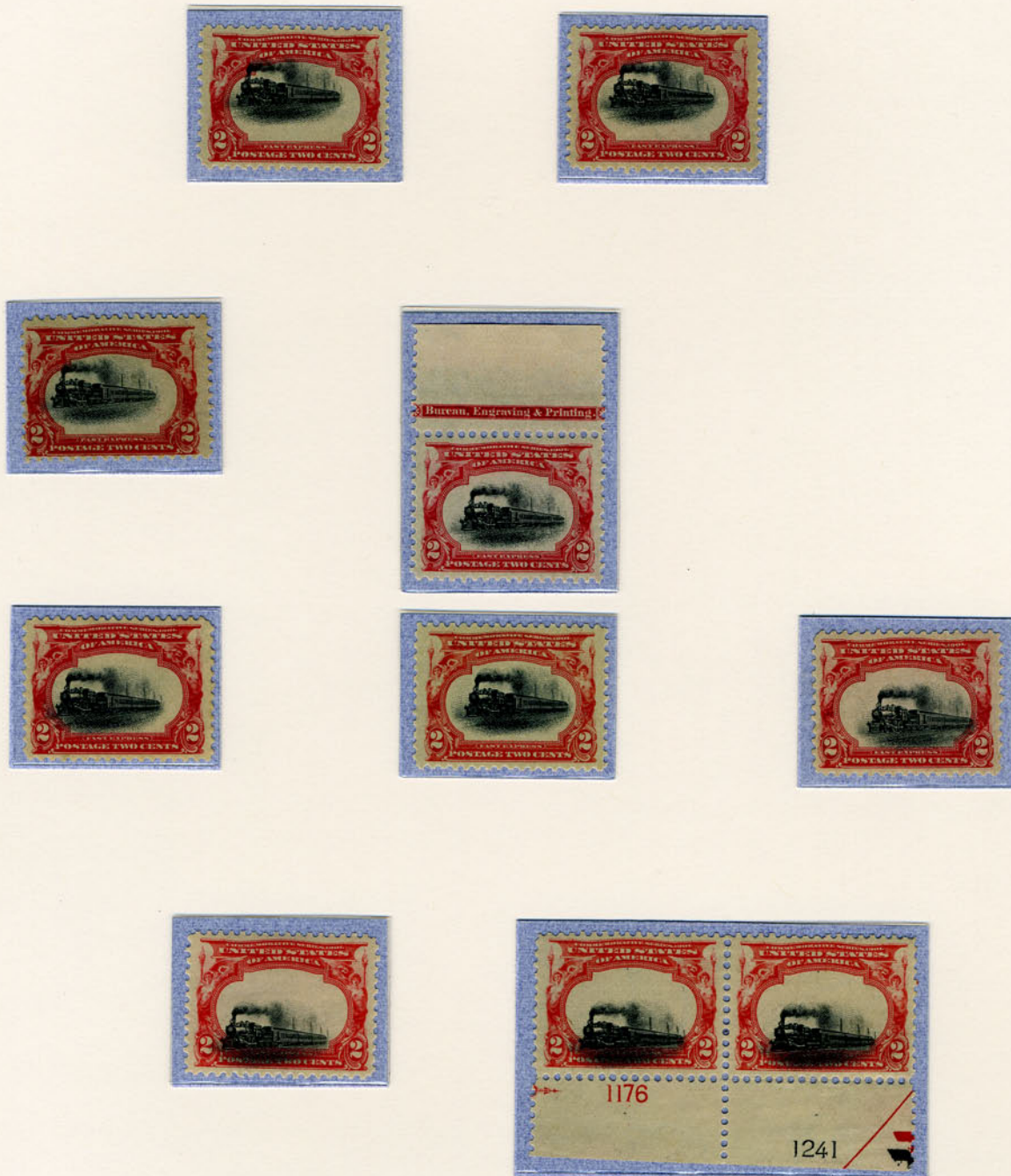


Dies in carmine and black on wove paper, mounted on card
Control numbers "327427" for frame and "327487" for vignette penciled on reverse

The vignette and frame are perfectly aligned on this example

One of only two recorded 2¢ Pan-American large die proofs on wove paper

“Round-the-Clock” Vignette Shifts



The 2¢ Pan-American stamp comes with a wide range of shifted vignettes. Production of this value must have been rushed, as perfectly centered vignettes are rare.

Center Inverted Variety



PFC

Mint

The 2¢ Pan-American with center inverted was first discovered on May 4, 1901 by Frederick W. Davis, an employee of the Mergenthaler Linotype Company. Davis, who had originally purchased 2- of the stamps, noticed that the locomotive vignette was printed upside down. He sold five stamps to an office associate, and gave two to his letter carrier. He took the remaining thirteen copies to Nassau Street where he tried to sell them to New York stamp dealers.

Examples were later discovered in Buffalo and Brooklyn, NY.

Vignette Shifts on the Issued Stamp

Margin Singles with Full Selvage



Lower right corner margin singles showing the Siderographer entered denominations that are for the benefit of the pressman to align the frame and vignette plates. In the case of the two stamps above, correct alignment failed despite the Siderographer's additions.



Vignette Perfectly Centered
Vignette lightly printed



Vignettes show increased shifting to the left
signifying bad vignette plate layout.
Bottom frame plate number "1078" and "Bureau,
Engraving & Printing" imprint strip of three

Postal Usage with Shifted Vignettes

First Day Cover



PFC

Vignette shifted strongly upwards, used on May 1, 1901 **First Day Cover** on exposition stationery with official Pan-American labels from the event post office to Hoboken, New Jersey at the 2¢ letter rate.



Vignette shifted to bottom and left, used on exposition stationery from the event post office to Ontario, Canada at the 2¢ treaty rate.

Postal Usage with Shifted Vignette

"Fast Train"

This early date souvenir post card depicts the Pan-American Exposition fairgrounds.



Vignette shifted forward on this stamp from the top row of sheet. It is used on a large-size post card from Buffalo, New York to New York City. It must have been mailed off of the Exposition grounds because it was not cancelled by any of the Exposition cancels used at the "Special Event" Post Office.

Photo Reproduction of Frame Essay

Photo reproduction of the sketch of the adopted frame design on tan photo sensitive paper, reduced to stamp size.



Large Die Proof on Wove Paper

From the set especially prepared for President Franklin Delano Roosevelt.



Dies in deep red brown and black on wove paper, mounted on card. Control numbers "327339" for frame and "327609" for vignette penciled on reverse. The vignette and frame are perfectly centered on this example

One of only two recorded 4¢ Pan-American large die proofs on wove paper

Large Die Proof on India Paper



Dies in deep red brown and black on India paper, die sunk on card
Control number "17910" handstamped on reverse

The proof above shows proper placement of the vignette, which depicts "The Electric Automobile in Washington" with the U.S. Capitol in the background.

Vignette Shifts on the Issued Stamp



Vignettes shifted dramatically up
and to the left



Vignette shifted
slightly up



Vignette strongly
shifted upwards and
to the right

Plate Multiple



Vignette dramatically shifted downward and to the right
Bottom margin strip of three with frame plate number
1145 and "Bureau, Engraving & Printing" imprint

Center Inverted Variety

The 4¢ Pan-American center inverted was a special printing and not regularly issued. The entire production was supposed to have been overprinted "Specimen". However, only a small portion actually were. Of the original 400 stamps printed, 114 were destroyed and 100 were retained by the Post Office Department, leaving a balance of 186 stamps. Most of these were given away as gifts to friends of the Third Assistant Postmaster General, and through this distribution method, the stamps eventually came into general philatelic circulation.



Mint

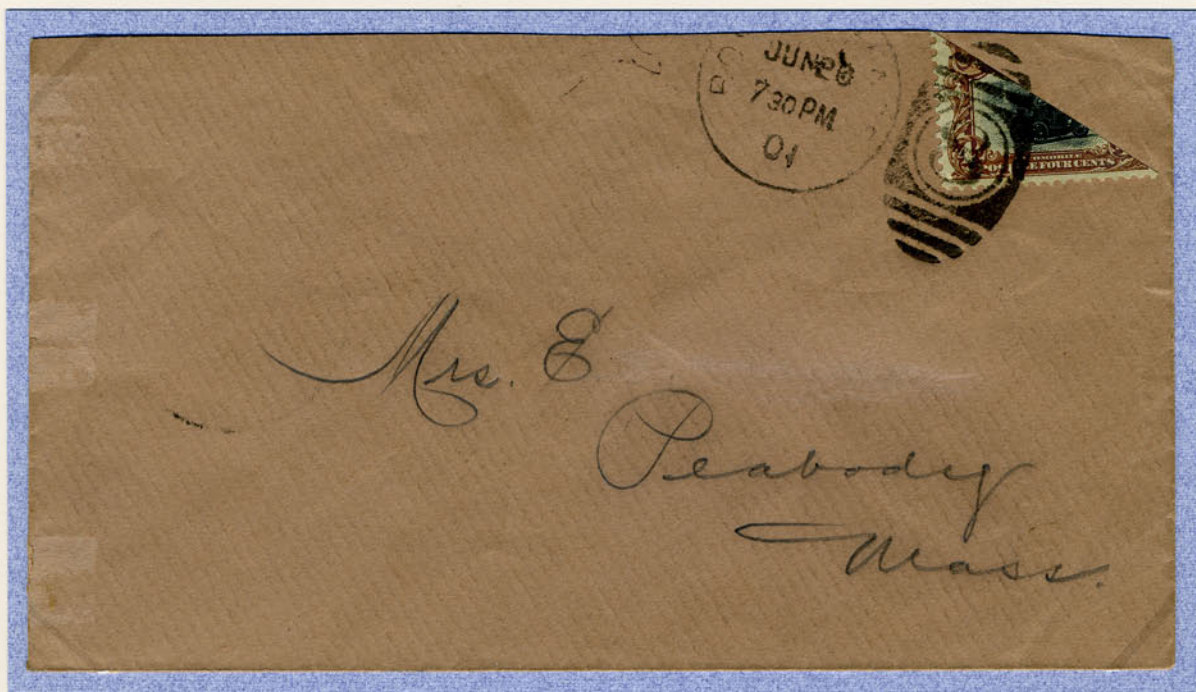


"Specimen"

The actual number of "Specimen" overprint 4¢ Pan-American Inverts is unknown.

Postal Usage

Although bisect usages were considered illegal by the Post Office Department due to the possibility for removal of the cancellation, they were generally tolerated by postal clerks.



PFC

The diagonally bisected 4¢ Pan-American prepayes the 2¢ letter rate from Boston, Massachusetts to Peabody, Massachusetts.

Large Die Proof on India Paper



Dies in ultramarine and black on India paper, die sunk on card
Control number "18020" handstamped on reverse

The perfect alignment of the frame and vignette, as well as the deep, clear coloring, are characteristics of this large die proof. The vignette depicts "The Bridge at Niagara Falls".

Large Die Proof on Wove Paper

From the set especially prepared for President Franklin Delano Roosevelt.



Dies in ultramarine and black on wove paper, mounted on card
Control numbers "327405" for frame and "327647" for vignette penciled on reverse
The vignette is shifted very slightly upwards and toward the right side on this example

One of only two recorded 5¢ Pan-American large die proofs on wove paper

Vignette Shifts on the Issued Stamp



Vignette slightly shifted up and to the left



Vignette shifted dramatically up and to the left



Vignette shifted up and slightly to the right



Vignette shifted strongly downward

Plate Multiple



Bottom margin strip of three with frame plate number "1140" and "Bureau, Engraving & Printing" imprint in ultramarine. The vignettes are dramatically shifted upwards and slightly to the left

Postal Usage: First Day Cover



AFDCS

Vignette is shifted slightly up and to the left, on May 1, 1901 **First Day Cover** from Worcester, Massachusetts to Munchen, Germany at the 5¢ UPU rate.

One of only two recorded 5¢ solo frankings on a First Day Cover

Hand-Drawn Frame Essay on White Card



This India ink hand-drawn essay of the frame, on white card, made using India ink in shades of black, contains the design of the adopted frame, except that the "T" of the word "AT" was omitted in the bottom label.

An example of the issued stamp is mounted in the center, where the vignette would normally be located.

The only recorded example of this essay

Authentication statement on reverse by Clarence Brazer, "Original finished drawings of designs accepted and used for the frames of the 1901 8 cents and 10 cents by Raymond Ostrander Smith, Designer for the B. E. & P."

Large Die Proof on India Paper



Dies in brown violet and black on India paper, die sunk on card
Control number "18096" handstamped on reverse

A perfectly aligned vignette showing the Shipping Canal Locks at Sault Saint Marie, Ontario, Canada adorns this proof example.

Large Die Proof on Wove Paper

From the set especially prepared for President Franklin Delano Roosevelt.



Dies in brown violet and black on wove paper, mounted on card
Control numbers "327513" for frame and "327721" for vignette penciled on reverse

The vignette is shifted very slightly down and toward the left on this example

One of only two recorded 8¢ Pan-American large die proofs on wove paper

Vignette Shifts on the Issued Stamp



The vignettes on the three examples above are strongly shifted upwards and to the right, centered and to the left respectively.



These three examples show the opposite directional shift: dramatically down to the bottom of the frame. The first two vignettes are centered, while the third is shifted strongly to the right.

Postal Usage



This complete set of Pan-American bicolor stamps with vignettes generally centered (except 2¢), on a colorful exposition cover depicting the "Manufactures and Liberal Arts Building" at the exposition. The "Pan. Am. Sta." postmark is dated September 11, 1901: five days after President William McKinley was shot by an assassin during a visit to the Exposition.

Large Die Proof on India Paper



Dies in yellow brown and black on India paper, die sunk on card
Control number "18187" handstamped on reverse

The vignette, featuring the "Fast Ocean Navigation" theme, depicting steamship 'St. Paul', and frame are perfectly aligned on this proof example.

Large Die Proof on Wove Paper

From the set especially prepared for President Franklin Delano Roosevelt.



Dies in yellow brown and black on wove paper, mounted on card
Control numbers "327547" for frame and "327689" for vignette penciled on reverse
The vignette is shifted very slightly down and toward the left on this proof example

One of only two recorded 10¢ Pan-American large die proofs on wove paper

Vignette Shifts on Issued Stamps



Vignette dramatically shifted up,
right stamp also shifted towards the right



Vignette shifted downward
Right stamp also shifted slightly towards the right

Postal Usage



PFC

This complete set of Pan-American bicolor issue, with every stamp having perfectly centered vignettes, was initially mailed on May 6, 1901, registered, during the first week of issue. It went from Yonkers, New York to Germany, where it was forwarded within Germany, and eventually returned to the United States.