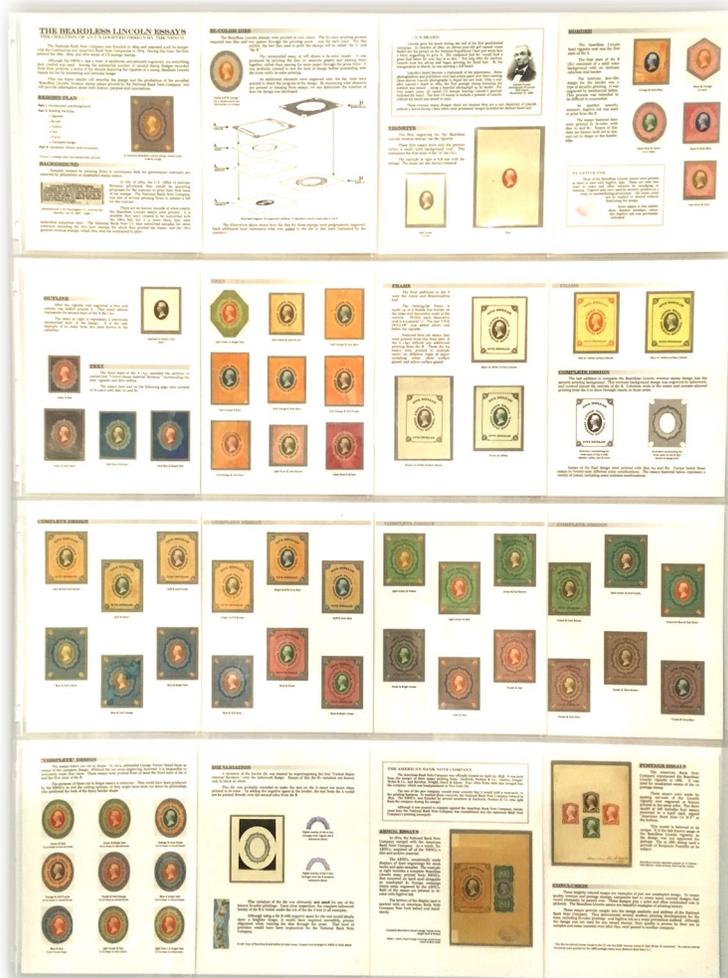


THE BEARDLESS LINCOLN ESSAYS



THE CREATION OF AN UNADOPTED DESIGN BY THE NBNCO

A one-frame philatelic exhibit. IndyPex, 2018.

THE BEARDLESS LINCOLN ESSAYS

THE CREATION OF AN UNADOPTED DESIGN BY THE NBNCO

The National Bank Note Company was founded in 1859 and operated until its merger with the Continental and American Bank Note Companies in 1879. During this time, the firm printed the 1861, 1869, and 1870 series of US postage stamps.

Although the NBNC Co had a team of ambitious and talented engravers, not everything they created was used. Among the substantial number of unused stamp designs recorded from their archives, a series of tax stamps featuring the vignette of a young Abraham Lincoln stands out for its interesting and intricate design.

This exhibit will describe the design and production of the so-called “Beardless Lincoln” revenue stamp essays printed by the National Bank Note Company and provide information about their history, purpose, and innovations.

EXHIBIT PLAN

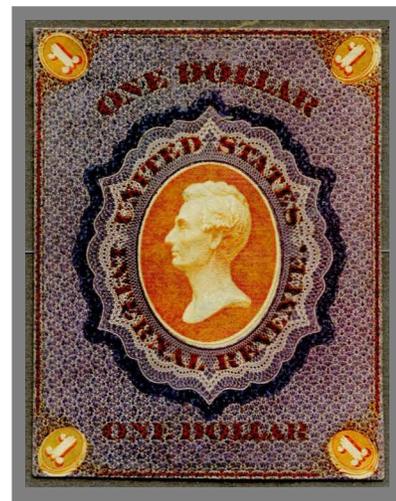
Part 1: Introduction and Background

Part 2: Building the Essay

- Vignette
- Border
- Outline
- Text
- Frame
- Complete Design

Part 3: Variations, History and Conclusion

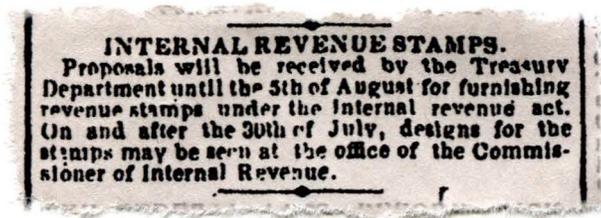
*Essays in unlisted colors are marked with asterisks.



A complete Beardless Lincoln stamp essay
Violet & Orange

BACKGROUND

Samples created by printing firms to accompany bids for government contracts are recorded by philatelists as unadopted stamp essays.



Advertisement in the Washington, D.C. *Evening Star*,

In July of 1862, the U.S. Office of Internal Revenue advertised they would be accepting proposals for the contract to print their first issue of tax stamps. The NBNC Co was one of several printing firms to submit a bid for the contract.

There are no known records of when exactly the Beardless Lincoln essays were printed. It is possible they were created to be submitted with the 1862 bid, but it is more likely they were submitted sometime later. The NBNC Co also submitted samples for other contracts, including the 1871 beer stamps, which they printed the frame for; and the 1875 general revenue stamps, which they won the contract to print.

BI-COLOR DIES

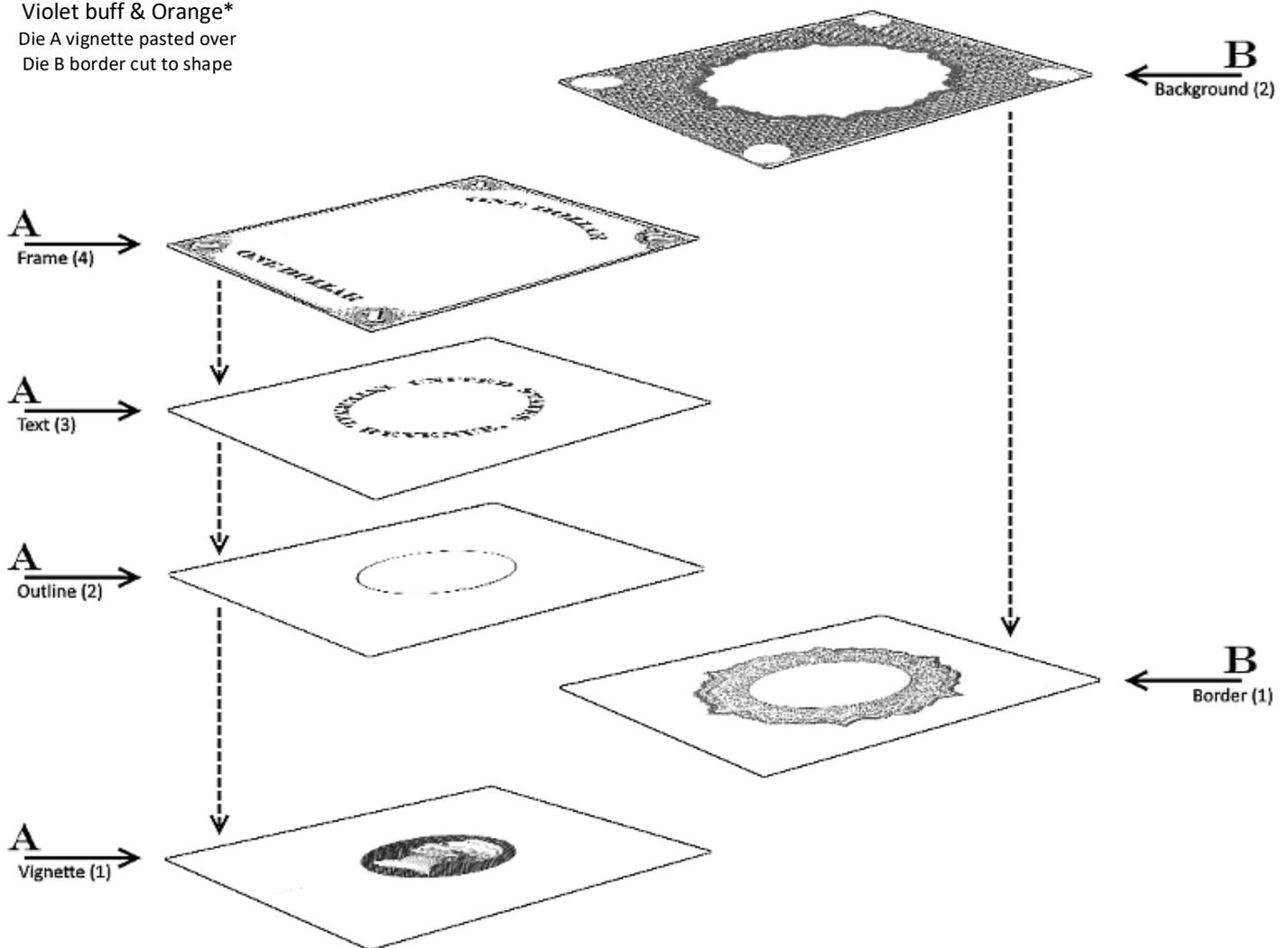
The Beardless Lincoln stamps were printed in two colors. The bi-color printing process required two dies and two passes through the printing press – one for each color. For this exhibit, the two dies used to print the stamps will be called “die A” and “die B”.



Violet buff & Orange*
Die A vignette pasted over
Die B border cut to shape

The unrecorded essay at left shows a bi-color *model* - it was produced by printing the dies on separate papers and pasting them together, rather than passing the same paper through the press twice. It was probably created to test the look of design before proceeding with the more costly bi-color printing.

As additional elements were engraved onto the die, tests were printed to check the progress of the design. By examining what elements are present or missing from essays, we can determine the timeline of the design's development.



Illustrated diagram of progressive additions to Beardless Lincoln stamp dies A and B

The illustration above shows how the dies for these stamps were progressively engraved. Each additional layer represents what was added to the die in that state (indicated by the number).

LINCOLN'S BEARD

Lincoln grew his beard during the end of his first presidential campaign. In October of 1860, an eleven-year-old girl named Grace Bedell saw his picture on the National Republican Chart and wrote him a letter suggesting he grow it. She explained that he “would look a great deal better for your face is so thin.” Not long after the election, Lincoln took her advice and began growing his facial hair. By his inauguration in March, he was sporting a full beard.

Lincoln's beard became a trademark of his appearance. Some photographers and publishers even had artists paint over their existing clean-shaven Lincoln photographs to depict his new look. Only a year after Lincoln's death in 1865, the first postage stamp featuring his portrait was issued – using a bearded photograph as its model. For over ninety years, all issued US stamps bearing Lincoln's portrait included his beard. The first US stamp to include a portrait of Lincoln without his beard was issued in 1959.

These revenue stamp designs stand out because they are a rare depiction of a clean-shaven Lincoln during a time when most prominent images included his distinct facial hair.



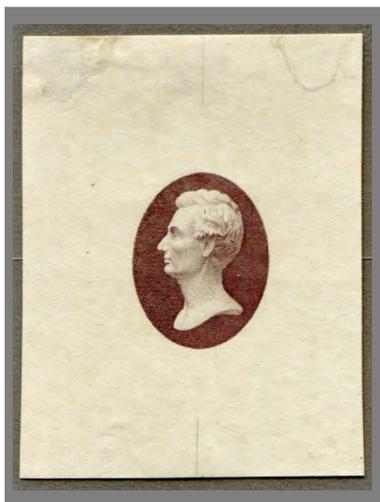
Earliest known
photograph of Lincoln
with beard
November 25, 1860

VIGNETTE

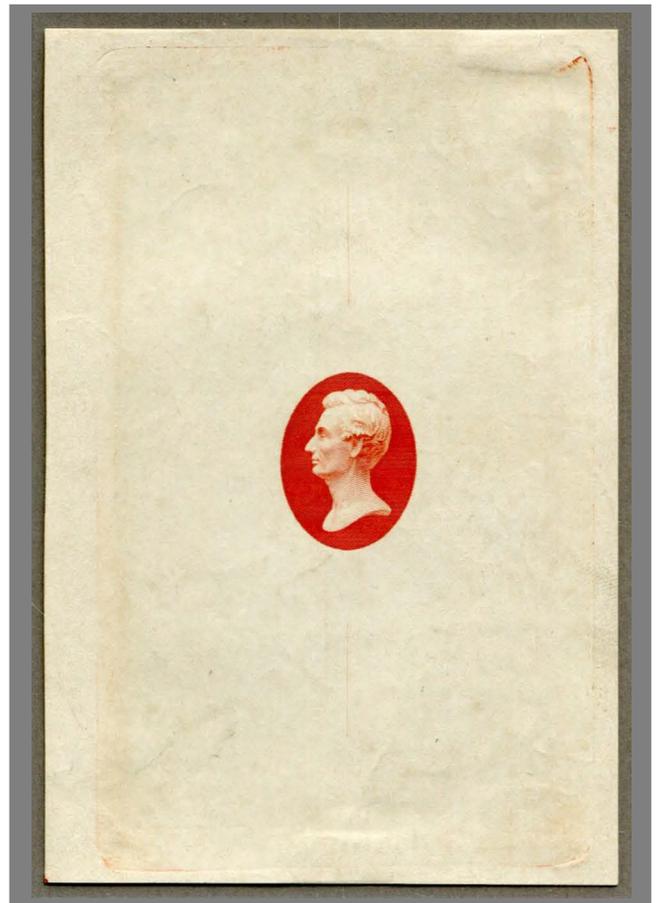
The first engraving for the Beardless Lincoln revenue stamps was the vignette.

These first essays show only the portrait within a small solid background oval. This represents the first state of the “A” die (A1).

The example at right is full size with die sinkage. The essays are also known trimmed.



Dull Purple
Trimmed



Red

BORDER

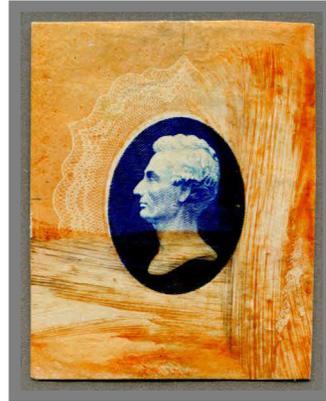
The beardless Lincoln head vignette oval was the first state of die A.

The first state of die B (B1) consisted of a solid color background with an intricate colorless oval border.

The intricate, lace-like design for the border was a type of security printing. It was engraved by mechanical lathes. This process was intended to deter counterfeiting.

As another security measure, fugitive ink was used to print from die B.

The essays featured here were printed in bi-color with dies A1 and B1. Essays of this state are known both cut to size and cut to shape at the border edge.



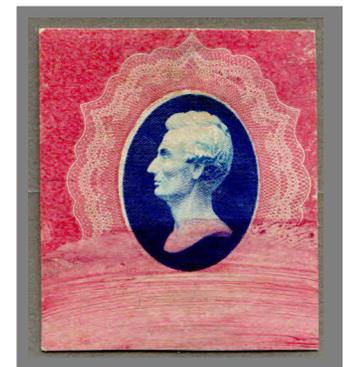
Orange & Dark Blue



Rose & Orange
Cut down



Deep Rose & Green
Cut to shape



Rose & Dark Blue



Pale Rose & Gold

FUGITIVE INK

Most of the Beardless Lincoln essays were printed at least partially with fugitive inks. These are inks that react to water and other solvents by smudging or running. Fugitive inks were used by security printers as a reuse or counterfeiting prevention – the items could not be washed or altered without destroying the design.



Some essays in this exhibit show distinct smudges where this fugitive ink was previously activated.

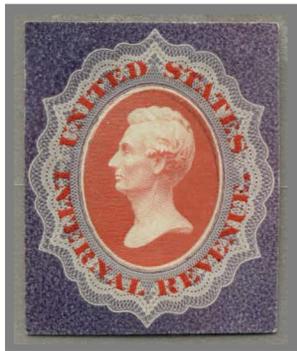
OUTLINE

After the vignette was engraved, a thin oval outline was added around it. This small edition represents the second state of the A die (A2).

The essay to the right represents a previously unrecorded state of the design. It is the only known example of an essay from this state.



Vignette & Outline Only
Black



Violet & Red

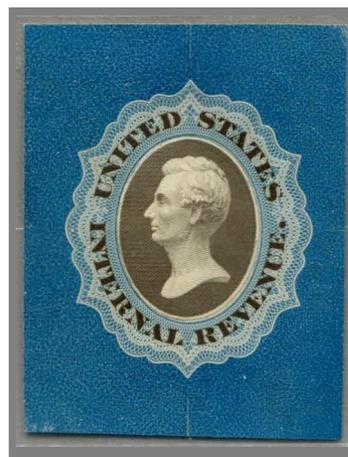
TEXT

The third state of die A (A3) included the addition of "United States Internal Revenue." in curved text surrounding the oval vignette and thin outline.

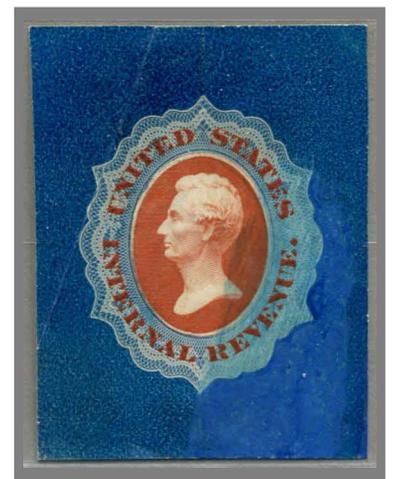
The essays here and on the following page were printed in bi-color with dies A3 and B1.



Violet & Dark Red*



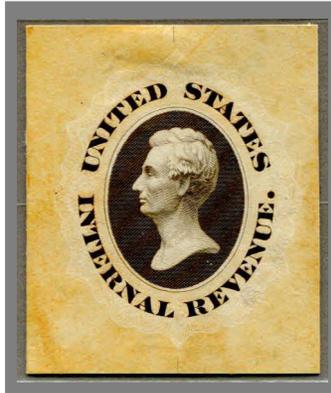
Dark Blue & Brown*



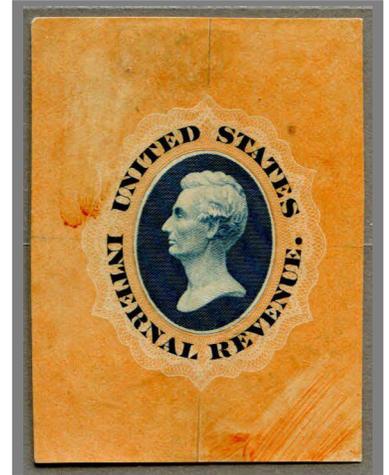
Dark Blue & Bright Red



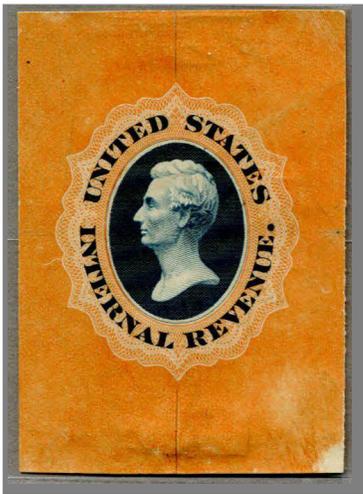
Light Green & Bright Red



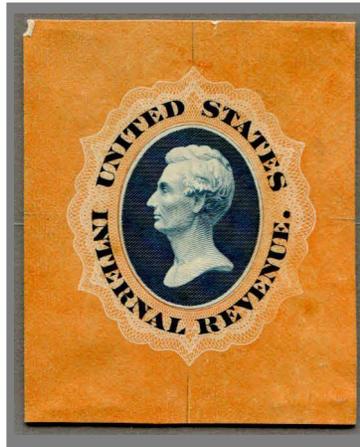
Dull Yellow & Dark Brown



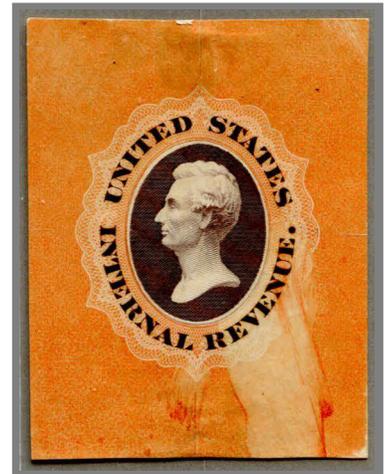
Dull Orange & Gray Blue



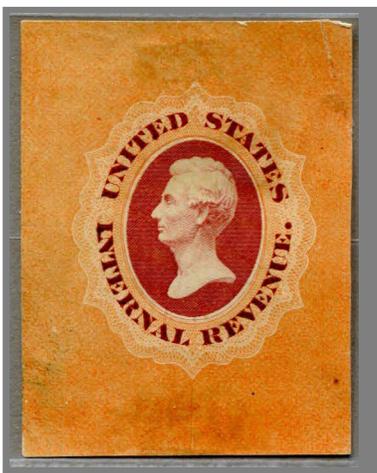
Dull Orange & Blue



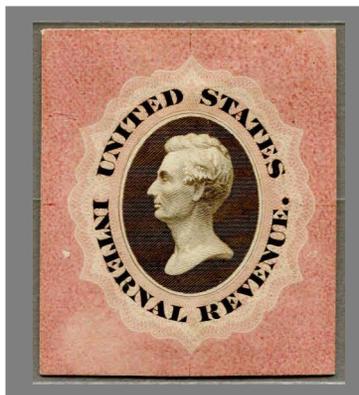
Dull Orange & Dark Blue



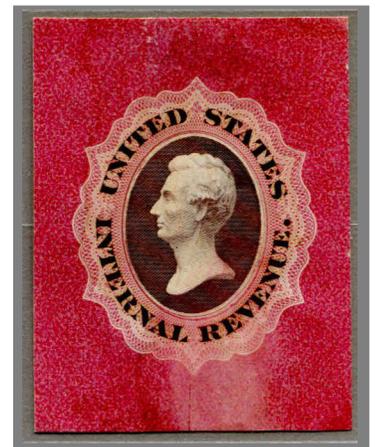
Dull Orange & Dull Purple



Dull Orange & Dark Red



Light Rose & Dark Brown



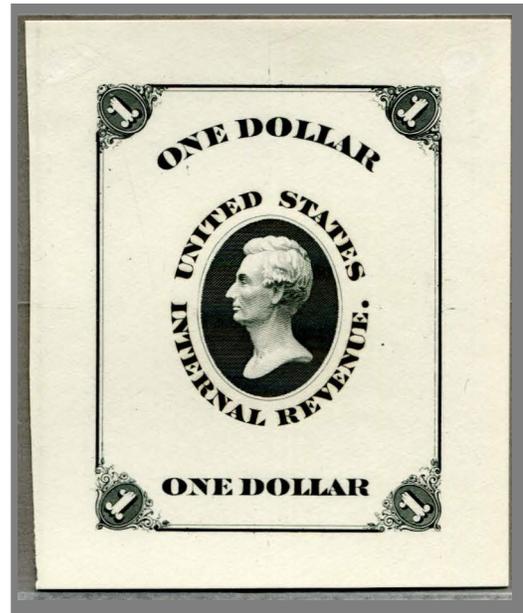
Deep Rose & Brown

FRAME

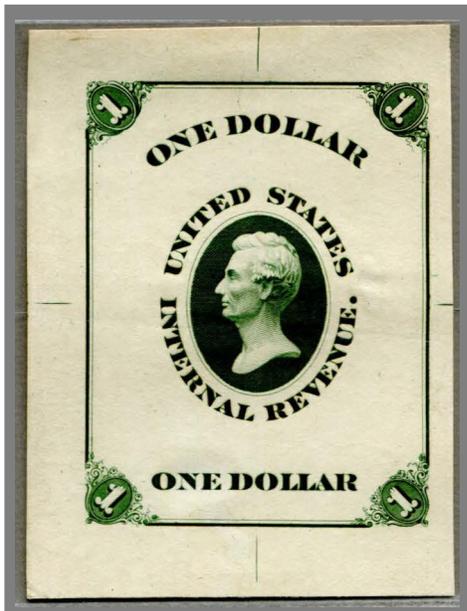
The final additions to die A were the frame and denomination text.

The rectangular frame is made up of a double line border on the sides and decorative ovals at the corners. Within each decorative oval is a numeral “1”. The text “ONE DOLLAR” was added above and below the vignette.

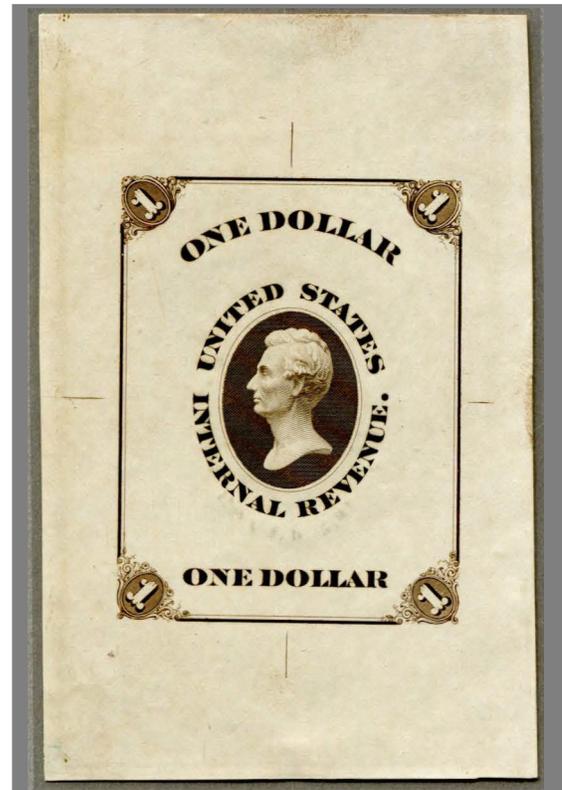
Featured here are essays that were printed from this final state of die A (A4) without any additional printing from die B. These die A4 essays were printed on different types of paper, including white, white surface glazed, and yellow surface glazed; and came in multiple colors.



Black on White Surface Glazed

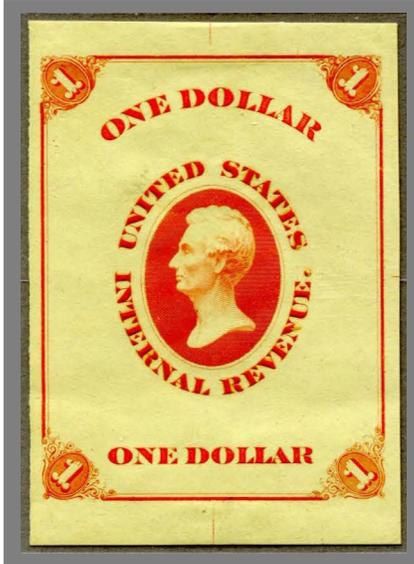


Green on White

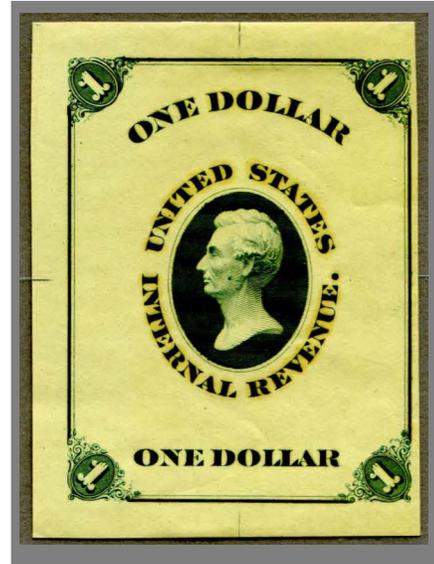


Brown on White Surface Glazed

FRAME



Red on Yellow Surface Glazed



Blue on Yellow Surface Glazed

COMPLETE DESIGN

The last addition to complete the Beardless Lincoln revenue stamp design was the security printing background. This intricate background design was engraved by lathework, covering nearly the entirety of die B. Colorless ovals in the center and corners allowed printing from die A to show through clearly in those areas.

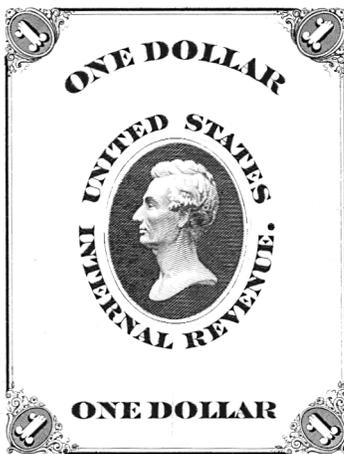


Illustration representing the
Final state of Die A (A4)
Vignette, outline, text & frame

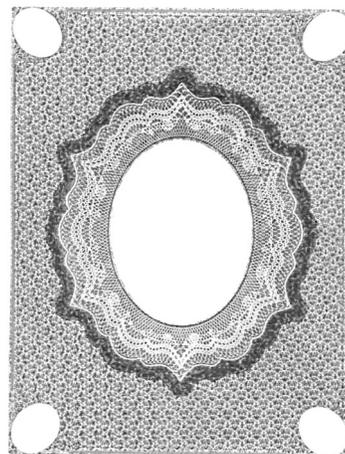
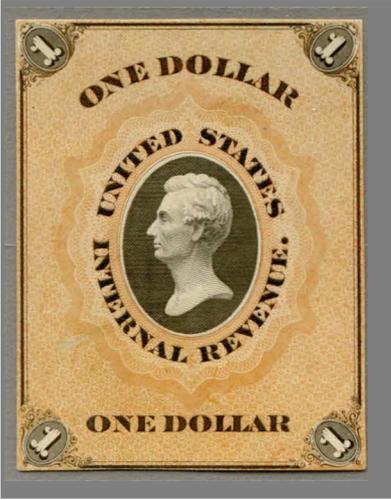


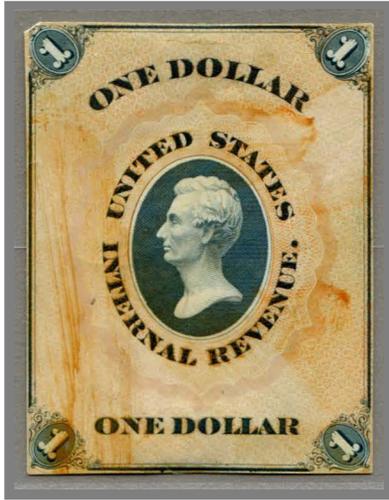
Illustration representing the
Final state of Die B (B2)
Border & background

Essays of the final design were printed with dies A4 and B2. Turner listed these essays in twenty-nine different color combinations. The essays featured below represent a variety of colors, including some unlisted combinations.

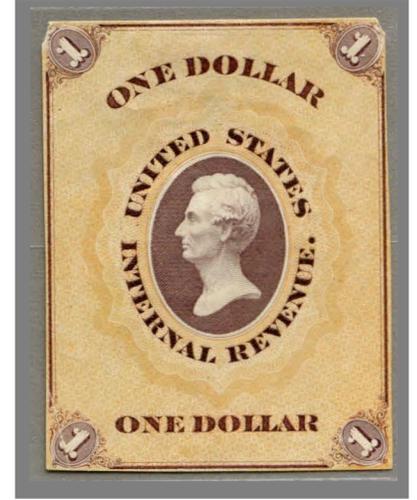
COMPLETE DESIGN



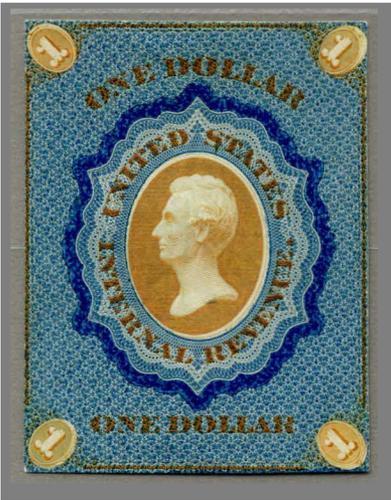
Dark Buff & Dark Brown



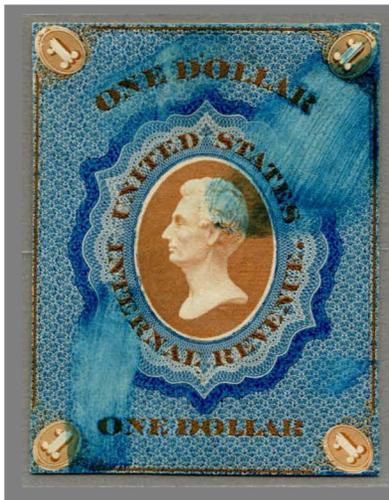
Buff & Black*



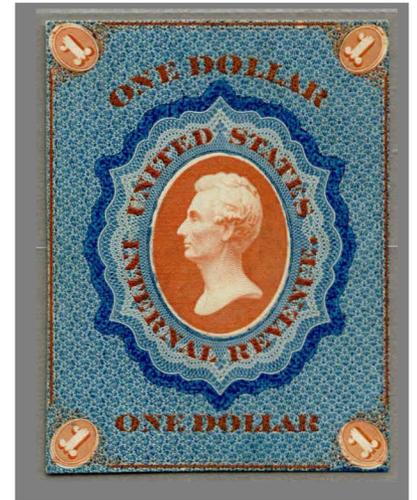
Buff & Dull Purple



Blue & Dull Yellow

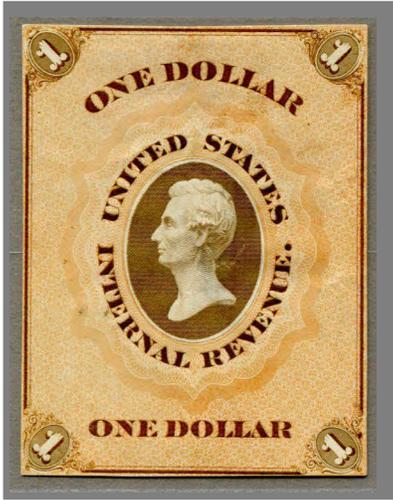


Blue & Dull Orange

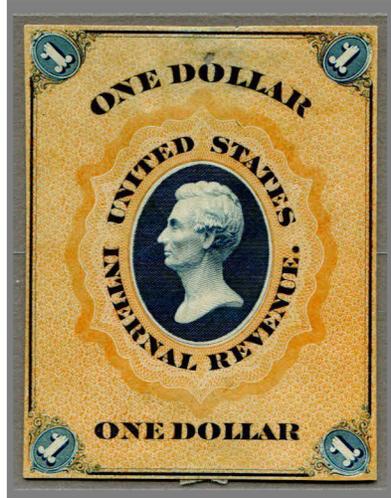


Blue & Bright Red

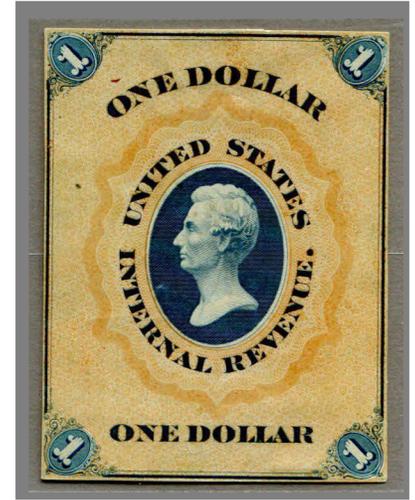
COMPLETE DESIGN



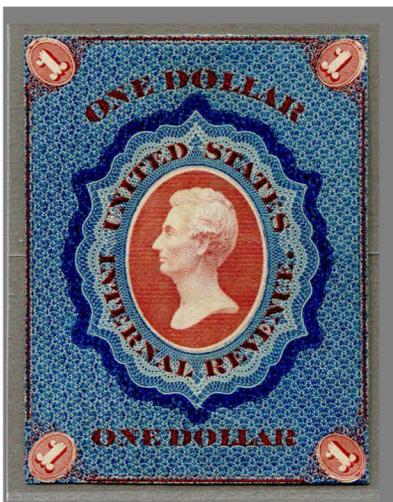
Bright Buff & Brown



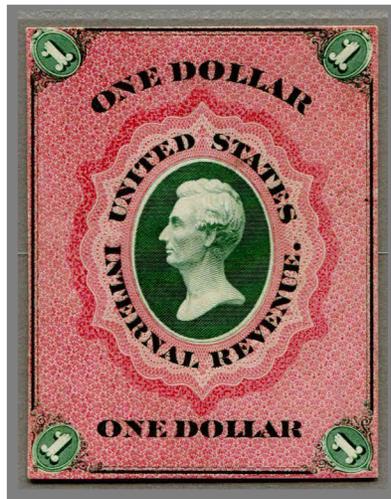
Bright Buff & Gray Blue



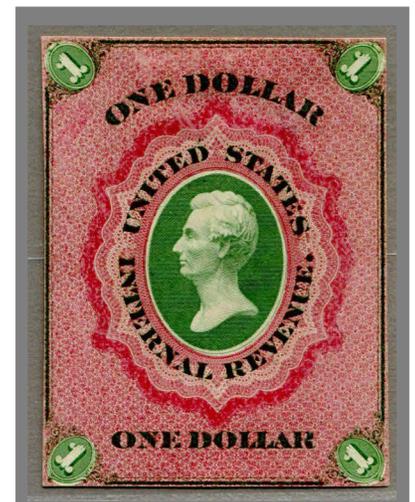
Buff & Gray Blue



Blue & Dull Rose

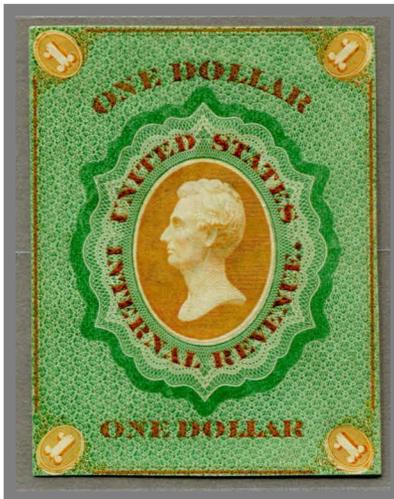


Rose & Green

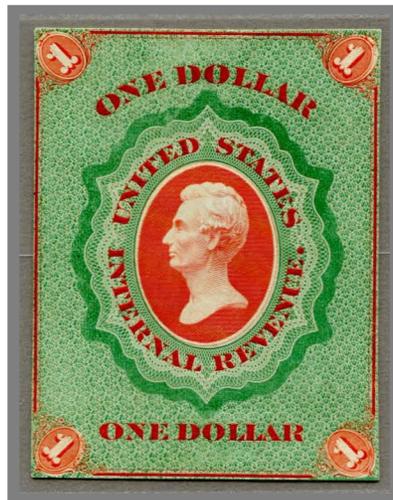


Rose & Bright Green

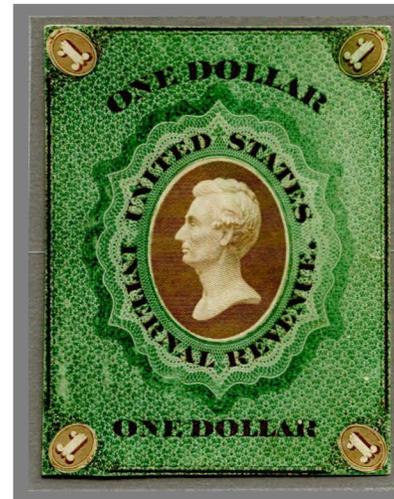
COMPLETE DESIGN



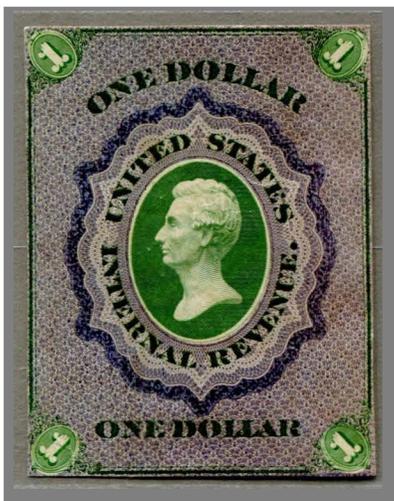
Light Green & Yellow



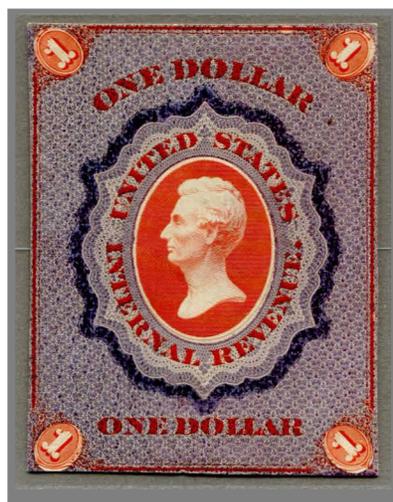
Light Green & Red



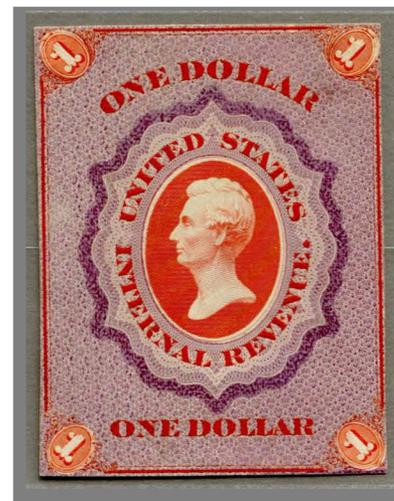
Green & Dull Brown



Violet & Bright Green

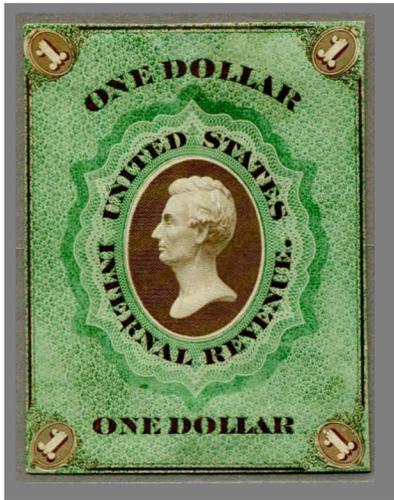


Violet & Red

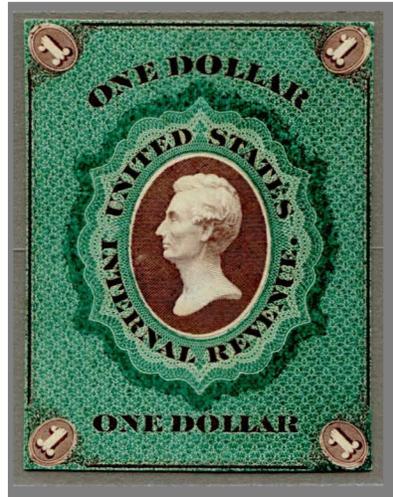


Purple & Red

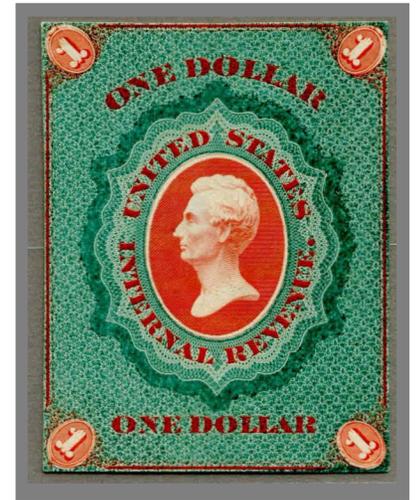
COMPLETE DESIGN



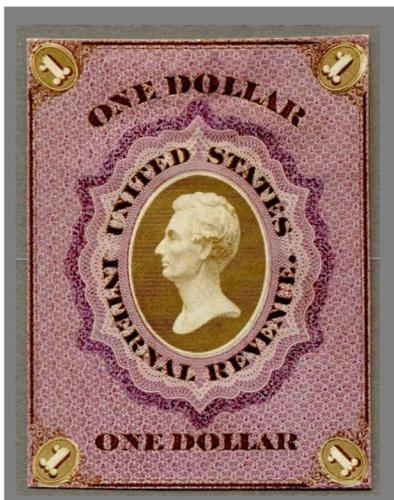
Green & Dark Brown



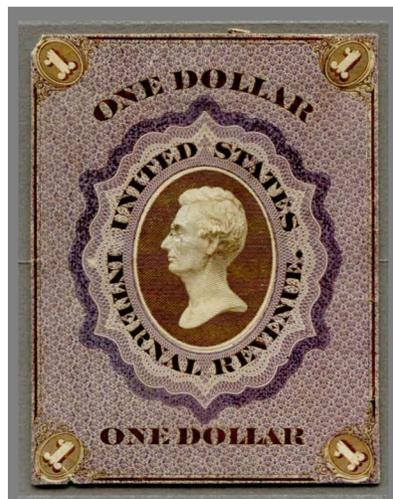
Dark Green & Dull Purple



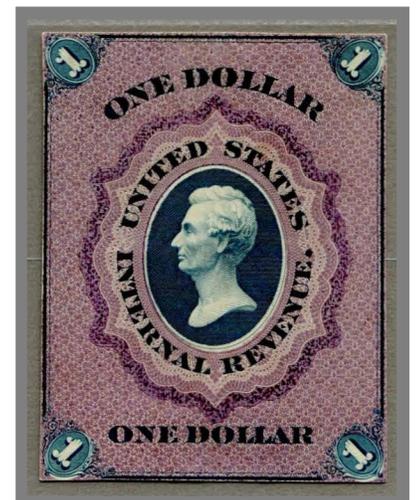
Greenish Blue & Dull Rose*



Purple & Dull Olive



Purple & Olive Brown

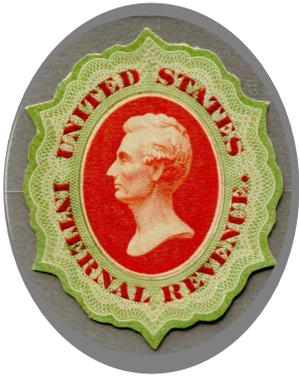


Purple & Gray Blue

“COMPLETE” DESIGN

The essays below are cut to shape. In 1974, philatelist George Turner listed these as essays of the complete design. Without the cut-away engraving, however, it is impossible to accurately make that claim. These essays were printed from *at least* the third state of die A and the first state of die B.

The purpose of these cut to shape essays is unknown. They may have been produced by the NBNC Co to test die cutting options.



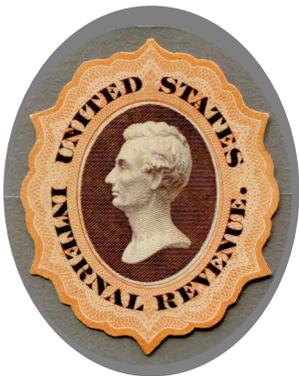
Green & Red
Cut to shape at colored border



Green & Bright Red
Cut to shape at colored border



Orange & Gray Green
Cut to shape at colored border



Orange & Dull Purple
Cut to shape at colored border



Purple & Red Orange
Cut to shape at colored border



Blue & Bright Red
Cut to shape at colored border



Blue & Red
Cut to circular shape



Light Green & Red
Cut to shape at white border

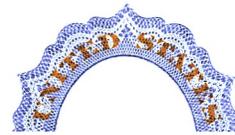
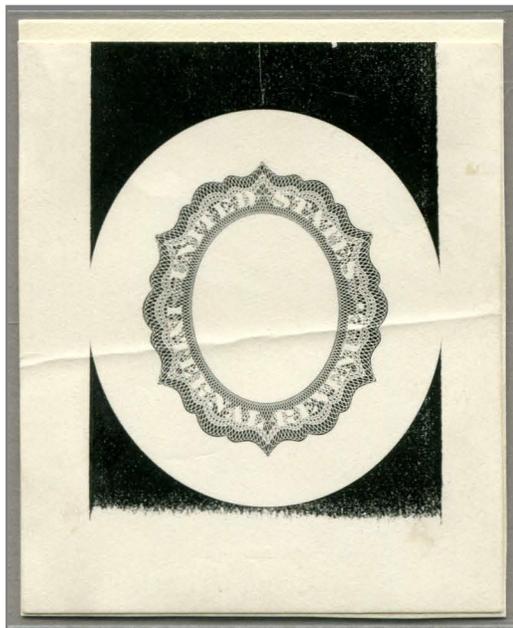


Light Green & Bright Red
Cut to shape at white border

DIE VARIATION

A variation of the border die was created by superimposing the text “United States Internal Revenue.” over the lathework design. Essays of this die B1 variation are known only in black on white.

This die was probably intended to make the text on die A stand out more when printed in bi-color – by adding the negative space in the border, the text from die A would not be printed directly over the second color from die B.



Digital overlay of die A text (orange) over regular die B lathework (blue)



Digital overlay of die A text (orange) over die B variation lathework (blue)



This variation of the die was ultimately **not used** for any of the known bi-color printings. Upon close inspection, the complete lathework border of die B is visible under the ink of the die A text in all examples.

Although using a die B with negative space for the text would ideally show a brighter image, it would have required *incredibly precise* alignment when running the dies through the press. That level of precision would have been impractical for the NBNC_o.

At left: Scan of final blue & dull yellow bi-color essay, cropped and enlarged by 400% to show detail.

THE AMERICAN BANK NOTE COMPANY

The American Bank Note Company (ABNCo) was officially formed on April 29, 1858. It was built from the merger of three major printing firms: Danforth, Perkins & Co.; Jocelyn, Draper, Welsh & Co.; and Rawdon, Wright, Hatch & Edson. Four other firms were also merged into the company, which was headquartered in New York City.

The size of the new company caused some concern that it would hold a monopoly on the printing business. To combat those concerns, the National Bank Note Company formed in 1859. The NBNCo was founded by several members of Danforth, Perkins & Co. who split from the company during the merger.

Although it was created to compete against the ABNCo, twenty years later the NBNCo was consolidated into the American Bank Note Company's printing monopoly.

ABNCo ESSAYS

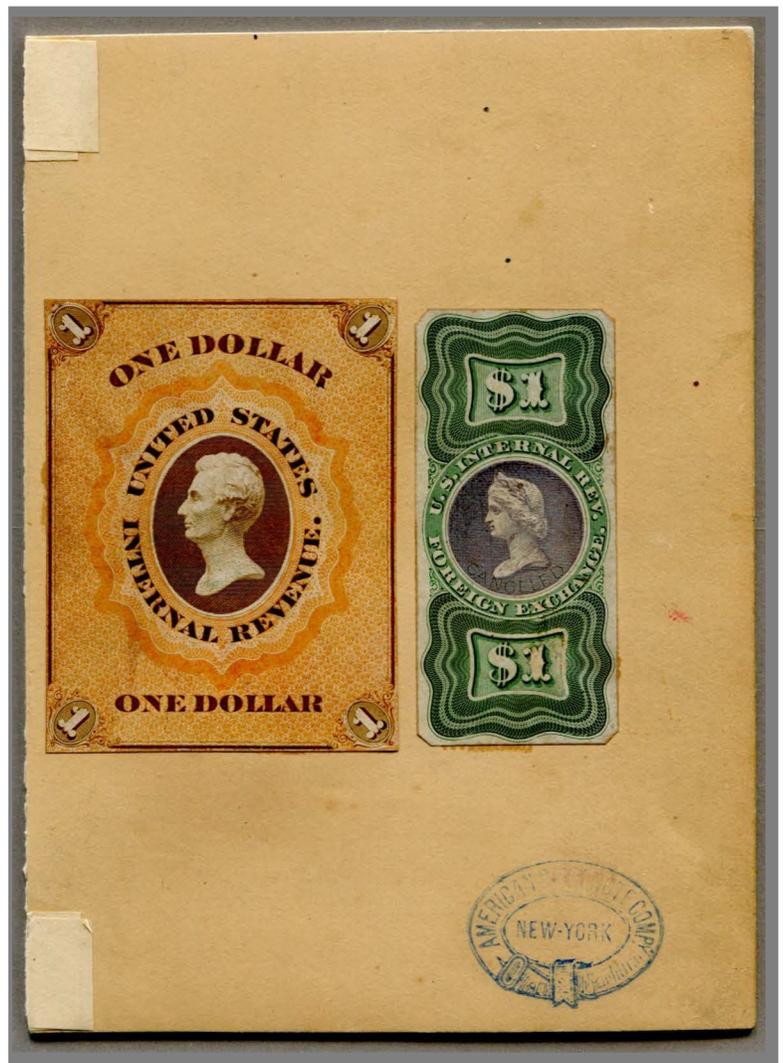
In 1879, the National Bank Note Company merged with the American Bank Note Company. As a result, the ABNCo acquired all of the NBNCo's dies and archive material.

The ABNCo occasionally made displays of their engravings for stock books and sales samples. The example at right includes a complete Beardless Lincoln essay printed from NBNCo dies mounted on hard card alongside an unadopted \$1 foreign exchange stamp essay engraved by the ABNCo. Both essays are printed in bi-color with fugitive ink.

The bottom of the display card is marked with an American Bank Note Company New York belted oval hand-stamp.

Complete Beardless Lincoln design stamp essay
Bright Buff & Brown

ABNCo Liberty Head Foreign Exchange stamp essay
Green & Blue Violet



POSTAGE ESSAYS

The ABNCo repurposed the Beardless Lincoln vignette in 1881. It was used for unadopted essays of the 1¢ postage stamp.

These essays were made by pasting cut-outs of the Lincoln vignette over engraved 1¢ frames printed in the same color. The show model at left includes four essays mounted to a hard card, signed “*American Bank Note Co N.Y.*” at the bottom.

This model is believed to be unique. It is the last known usage of the Beardless Lincoln vignette, as the design was not approved for postage. The 1¢ 1881 stamp used a portrait of Benjamin Franklin as its subject.

Beardless Lincoln vignettes pasted on 1¢ frames
Dark Brown, Dull Carmine, Dull Scarlet, Green



CONCLUSION

These brightly colored essays are examples of just one unadopted design. To create quality revenue and postage stamps, companies had to create many concept designs that would ultimately be passed over. These designs play a quiet and often overlooked role in philately. The Beardless Lincoln essays are beautiful examples of printing history.

These essays provide insight into the design aesthetic and abilities of the National Bank Note Company. They demonstrate several modern printing developments for the time, including bi-color printing[†] and fugitive ink as a reuse prevention method. Although the design was not used for any issued stamps, their quality is evident from their use as samples and essay material even after being passed to another company.

[†] The first bi-colored stamp issued by the US was the \$200 revenue stamp of 1862 (Butler & Carpenter). The next bi-colored US stamps were printed for the 1869 postage stamp issue (NBNC)