

The Production of the 1893 Columbian Exposition Issue

The Columbian Issue of postage stamps represent a key point in philatelic history. They are the United States' first commemorative issue, and the last issue of stamps in the Classic Period. The set of sixteen stamps was originally created to celebrate the 400th anniversary of Christopher Columbus's landing in the Americas and to serve as a souvenir of the 1893 World's Fair in Chicago. Today the series is cherished by many collectors for its detail, beauty and value.

The 1893 Columbian issue was engraved and printed by the American Bank Note Company. The president of the ABNCo., James MacDonough, worked with Postmaster General John Wanamaker to select the artwork for the subjects. The men responsible for creating the stamp dies were designer Alfred Sarony Major; frame and lettering engravers Douglas S. Ronaldson and George H. Seymour; and vignette engravers Charles Skinner, Robert Savage and Alfred Jones.

The company's designer and engravers utilized both artistry and technology. By studying the pre-production materials from the issue, philatelists will develop an understanding of the work and detail put into creating these stamps. **The goal of this exhibit is to explain the process of creating the 1893 Columbian Issue and to showcase the work of the American Bank Note Company.**

Exhibit Map

Frame 1	Frame 2	Frame 3	Frame 4	Frame 5	Frame 6
Intro Presentation proofs	4¢ Watercolor essay, progressive die essays, trial color essays,	6¢ Ferrotypes essay, progressive die essays, signed large die proof	30¢ Watercolor essay, ferrotypes essays, progressive die essays, drafting essay	\$2 Progressive die essays, signed large die proof, hybrid proof, trial color plate proof	\$5 Subject engravings & inspirations, progressive die essays, model approval essay,
1¢ Watercolor essays, progressive die essays, approval & signed large die proofs	trial color essays, error of color, signed large die proof	8¢ Progressive die essay, trial color proofs, signed large die proofs	progressive die essays, signed large die proof, platemaker's proof half sheet	\$3 Ferrotypes essays, progressive die essays, signed large die proof, plate proofs	Progressive die essays, signed large die proofs
2¢ Subject engraving, watercolor essay, progressive die essays, signed die proof	5¢ Drafting essays, progressive die essays, trial color essay,	10¢ Ferrotypes essays, progressive die essays, signed large die proof	50¢ Progressive die proofs, trial color proof, signed large die proof	\$4 Subject engraving, ferrotypes essay, progressive die essays,	Conclusion BEP/Roosevelt Proofs
3¢ Ferrotypes essay, progressive die essays, large die & misc. proofs	approval proof, proof variations: Pan-Pacific proof, large die proofs, plate proof	15¢ Watercolor essay, progressive die essays, signed large die proof	\$1 Ferrotypes essays, progressive die essays, signed large die proof, plate proofs	Signed large die proofs, BEP posthumous proof	Pan-Pacific Proofs conclusion, works cited, modern reprints

Essays within this exhibit include wash drawings, pencil drafts, silver print and ferrotypes photographs, engravers' progressive die proofs, and trial color proofs. Because these items are concept designs or unfinished work, they were never mass produced. Most items are unique or are one of only a few known. Items of particular significance are highlighted.



This complete set of plate proofs, printed on card and mounted on special presentation albums for the American Bank Note Company. Card backing is signed by the stamp engravers - signature of the frame engraver above each stamp; the vignette engraver below.



1 ONE CENT

The first essays of the 1¢ Columbian issue stamp designed by the American Banknote Company were made using a silver print photograph of Columbus's head as the vignette. The photographic prints were mounted on small watercolor drawings of potential frame designs created by designer Alfred Sarony Major.

Three essays are known, each with a unique, unadopted frame design in a different color.



The next 1¢ essay is a ferrotype metal plate. The ferrotype (also known as tintype) photograph process created a direct positive image on thin lacquer or enamel covered metal plates. Ferrotypes were used frequently throughout the design and production of the Columbian stamp issue.

This essay features an outline of the adopted vignette, based on a painting *Columbus in Sight of Land* by William Powell.

The vignette in this essay is facing the opposite direction of the final stamp. The unfinished frame surrounding the vignette includes a Native American man at left and woman to the right. While Native Americans were included in finished frame, their positions and design were changed.



The 1¢ stamp's vignette was engraved by Charles Skinner. This essay of the vignette only represents an incomplete, progress engraving of the design as adopted. This is a hybrid essay - the vignette, printed on India paper, was cut to shape and pressed to a larger piece of India paper which was then mounted on card.

The essay at right is a print of the unfinished 1¢ stamp design, produced to check the state of the die as the engraver worked. The engraving is incomplete, with no colored background surrounding the frame and unfinished shading throughout the design. It is printed on stiff yellowish wove paper.



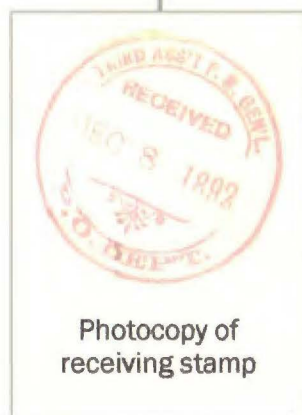
This final progress essay was printed from a mostly completed state of the die. The engraving is not entirely complete, with unfinished shading that is most noticeable on the monk behind Columbus and the Native American chief.



Enlarged photocopies:
Essay at left, proof at right



The 1¢ large die proof below is signed by the designer (Alfred Major) and by the engraver (Charles Skinner). This proof was pulled from a book containing a complete set of signed 1893 Columbian Issue large die proofs, all printed on India paper and die sunk on card.



Photocopy of receiving stamp

This 1¢ stamp proof was presented to the U.S. Post Office Department for color approval. The proof is signed with the text "approved color" in manuscript on the card face. It is marked with a "received" stamp from the Third Assistant Postmaster General's office on the back.

This color approval proof is printed on India paper and die sunk on card. The receiving stamp on reverse reads "THIRD ASS'T P.M. GEN'L / RECIEVED / DEC 8, 1892 / P.O. DEPT."

2 TWO CENTS

This early 2¢ stamp design essay was made by mounting what would eventually be the 5¢ vignette design (*Columbus Soliciting Aid of Isabella*) over a watercolor drawing of a proposed frame design.



While this basic frame design was accepted, the subject was changed to the *Landing of Columbus* for the final design.



1867 15¢
Proof on India

The painting *Landing of Columbus*, by John Vanderlyn, was commissioned by the United States Congress for the Capitol Rotunda in 1836.

This painting had previously been used as the subject of a U.S. postage stamp - the National Bank Note Company used their own engraving of the work for the vignette of the bi-colored 15¢ stamp for the 1869 pictorial issue.

Postmaster General John Wanamaker believed that the most familiar aspects of Columbus's story should be featured on the most commonly used stamps. The 2¢ stamp paid the domestic letter rate and would be the most commonly used value. It is likely that this was the reasoning behind switching the 2¢ subject to his landing in the Americas instead of his asking for funding.



The engraving of *Landing of Columbus* above is from the American Bank Note Company archive. The engraving is printed on India paper and die sunk on card.

The trial color essay below, printed from a nearly complete state of the die, features a thinner numeral 2 and larger ornamentation around the value. This was changed for the final version, where the ornaments were cut back to fit a wider, easier to read numeral 2.

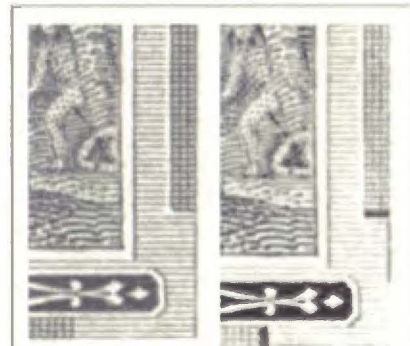


Enlarged photocopies:
Essay at left, proof at right



Essays of this state, printed directly on thin white card, are known in several trial colors.

This late stage essay below, printed on India and backed by card, is almost entirely complete. Only the dark bars of shading at the bottoms of the outer frame rectangles is missing.



Enlarged photocopies:
Essay at left, proof at right



The 2¢ large die proof above represents the final state of the die. This proof is signed by the designer (Alfred Major) and by the engraver (Alfred Jones).

This proof was pulled from a book containing a complete set of signed 1893 Columbian Issue large die proofs, all printed on India paper and die sunk on card.

3 THREE CENTS

The first known essay of the 3¢ Columbian issue stamp is an ink and watercolor drawing of the frame design with an unadopted silver print photograph vignette mounted in the center.



This frame design is significantly different from the adopted design. The panel over the vignette reads "Columbus Embarking on Voyage of Discovery" - the subject of the mounted photo.

The photographed image used in this essay is a painting by Ricardo Balaca, depicting Columbus departing for his first voyage from Palos, Spain. This subject was not adopted for any value.

Columbus's flag ship, the Santa Maria, was chosen as the subject of the 3¢ Columbian issue stamp. The exact source of the subject used is unknown.

Philatelist Charles Brazer reported that the source was a wash drawing published in *L'Amerique Francaise* magazine. The Smithsonian National Postal Museum suggests that the image is based on design models of 15th century ships that were held in the Smithsonian Institute collection. A third suggestion offered by several online postal history websites claims that the subject is from a Spanish engraving that was lost after the 1938 Spanish Civil War.



The vignette subject for the 3¢ stamp was photographed onto a ferrotype plate. A thin outline was then engraved into the metal plate, using the photograph as a guide. This outline was filled with red ink. When the plate was pressed into thin white card, the ink produced a reversed image of the outline. This was used as the base for the engraving of the stamp vignette.

The vignette was the first part of the 3¢ die to be engraved. In this early die engraving essay, there are no clouds in the sky and no crosshatching on the sails. It is printed on India paper, die sunk to card.



Additional engraving added the words "United States of America", corner dates, and ornamentation around where the value would be placed.

This second state of the die was printed on thick artists' card. It was modified by the engraver with pencil to indicate the length and location of frame outlines and upper edge gridwork.





Although the trial color proof above shows completed engraving as adopted, it was not printed from the finished, hardened die. It is a progressive proof of the final state of the die, pulled from the still softened die to be checked by the engraver. The American Bank Note Co. imprint and die number would be added below the engraving before the die was hardened.

This blackish-green large die trial color proof is an unlisted variation, printed on India paper and die sunk on card.

The 3¢ large die proof at right represents the final state of the die. This proof is signed by the designer (Alfred Major) and by the vignette engraver (Robert Savage).



The unlisted proof at left appears to be a small die proof, similar to the 1915 Panama-Pacific proofs. Unlike the Panama-Pacific proofs, which were printed on yellowish wove paper, the proof featured here is printed on bond paper. It is unknown when or why this proof was produced.



This proof, pulled from a book containing a complete set of signed 1893 Columbian Issue large die proofs, is printed on India paper and die sunk on card.

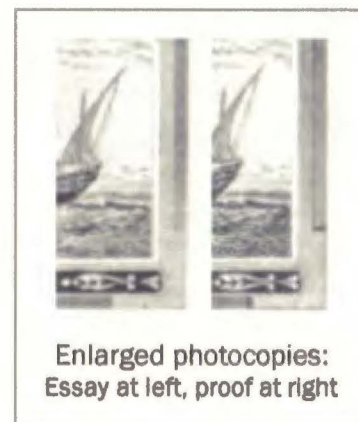
4

FOUR CENTS

The first known essay of the 4¢ Columbian issue stamp, is a watercolor drawing of the frame design on stiff white drawing paper with a photograph of the stamp's vignette subject mounted in the center.

This frame design reads "Columbus on Voyage of Discovery - Ships at Sea." This would be changed to "Fleet of Columbus" in the final design.

The picture used as the vignette in this model is a photograph of the painting *Die Schiffe des Columbus* by German artist Gustav Adolf Closs. This remained the subject of the 4¢ stamp through completion.



Enlarged photocopies:
Essay at left, proof at right



4¢ essays with missing shading on the frame were printed in a wide variety of trial colors. Only a few of these are known printed on India paper - including the previous bright blue essay and the black essay above.

Most of the known 4¢ essays are printed directly on card. A sample of some of these colors is presented here.



The essay at left is printed from an almost complete state of the die. Essays of this state are missing the dark shading at the very ends of the gridded framework (crosset).

This essay, printed on India paper and die sunk, is unlisted in this bright "Chapman Blue" color.



Dim Dusky Blue-Green
39^m/₁ "Invisible Green"
4¢ Essay on Card

The following 4¢ trial color essays are all printed directly on card. The Scott *Specialized* Catalogue lists these essays in thirty-four different colors. Twelve different colors are presented in this exhibit.

The colors are listed first using Brazer's color naming system. They are then listed by their Ridgway color numbers and names.



Dull Dusky Yellow Orange
15 ^m/₁₀, "Blister"



Deep Orange Orange-Red
5 ¹/₁₀, "Brazil Red"

Dim Dusky Blue-Green
33 ^m/₁₀, "Empire Green"



Deep Orange Red-Orange
9 ¹/₁₀, "Mars Orange"



Dusky Red
1 ^m/₁₀, "Victoria Lake"



Dusky Violet-Red Red
3 ^k/_o "Garnet Brown"
*Unlisted Color



Dull Dusky Blue-Violet
55 ^m/₂ "Dark Yvette Violet"



Dull Dusky Blue-Violet Blue
51 ^m/₂ "Diamin-Azo Blue"
*Unlisted Color



Dim Dusky Red-Violet Red
69 ^m/₁ "Dusky Auricula Purple"



Dismal Dark Red-Violet Red
69 ^k/₃ "Anthracene Purple"



Dusky Green-Blue Blue
47^m/_o "Berlin Blue"

The color selected for the issued 4¢ stamps was ultramarine. One of the most notable errors within the Columbian issue is the 4¢ error of color, below.



At least three sheets of 4¢ stamps were printed using blue ink instead of ultramarine. This blue ink contained pigments used in the ink for the 1¢ stamps. Although the 1¢ and 4¢ error of color stamps are very similar, they are *slightly* different.

Only fifteen used error of color stamps are recorded in the Siegel Auction Galleries census. The 4¢ error of color stamp above is certified by the Philatelic Foundation.



The large die proof above is printed in the issued color for the 4¢ stamps. This proof, printed on India paper and die sunk on card, is signed by the designer (Alfred Major) and by the vignette engraver (Charles Skinner).

This proof was pulled from a book containing a complete set of signed 1893 Columbian Issue large die proofs.

5 FIVE CENTS

The 5¢ stamp was used as an experimental model to determine the size of the final stamp design.

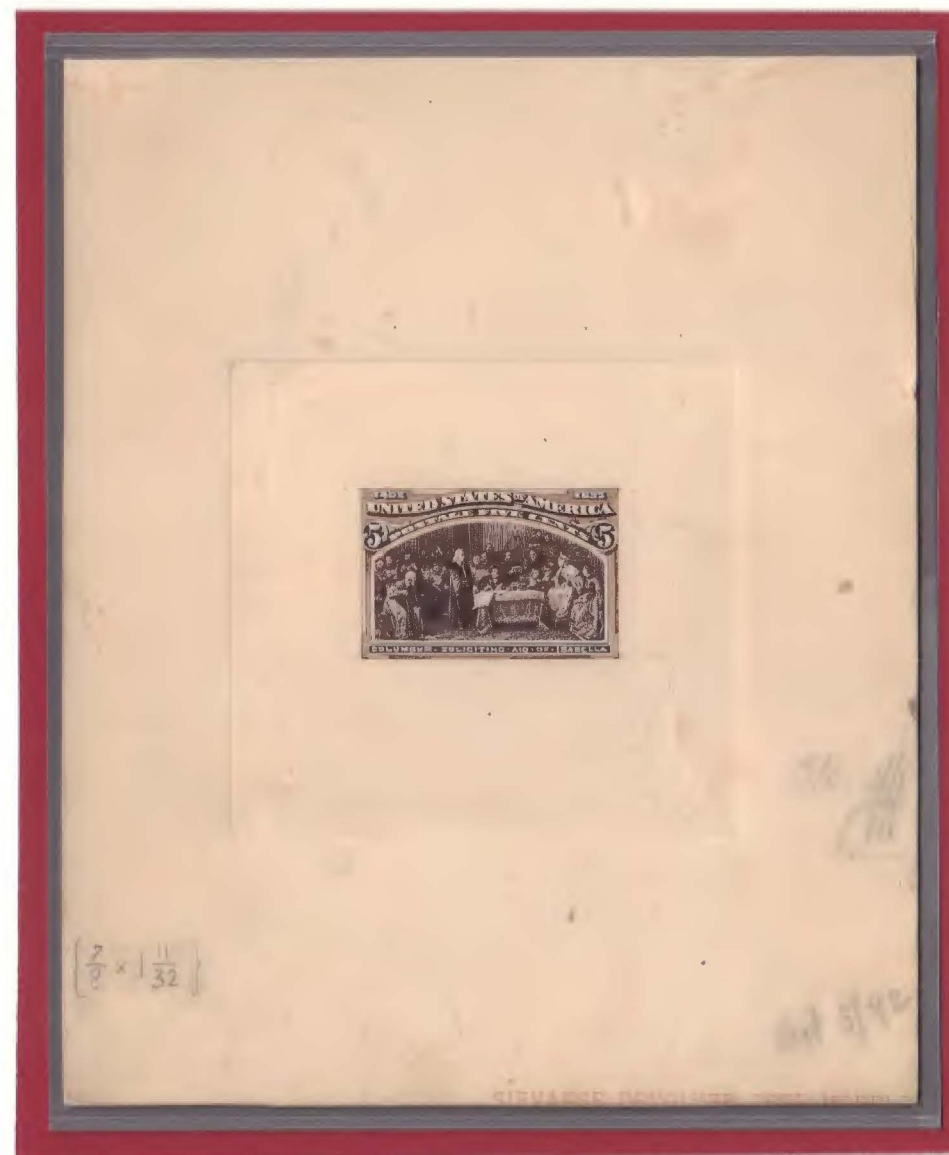
This early watercolor drawing of the 5¢ frame design was painted on heavy artist card. This frame, measuring 38½mm, is longer than the adopted design.



An engraving of the unfinished vignette is affixed over the drawing. This vignette is 31mm long and the crosshatching engraving is missing on the stool used by the man on the left side.

This second, smaller watercolor drawing of the 5¢ frame was drawn to the adopted length.

The approved measurements of the stamp series, $\{7/8 \times 11/32\}$, is written on the bottom left of the card.

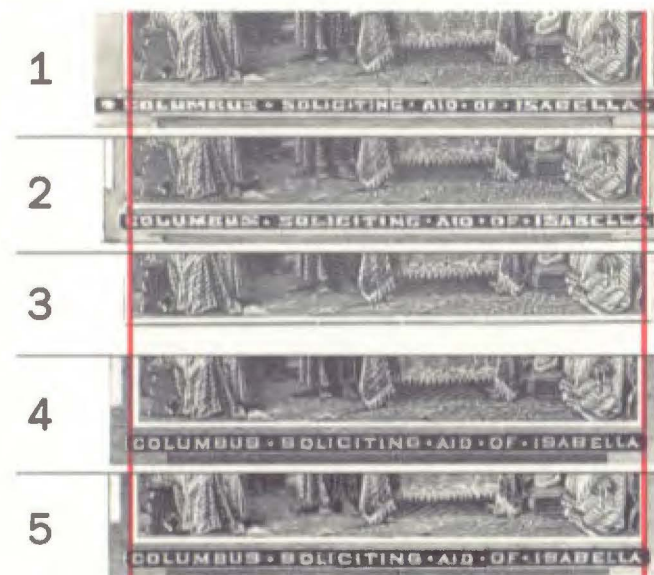


This approval essay is signed with an "OK" and dated by the president of the American Bank Note Company, James MacDonough.



Above is a hybrid essay of the 5¢ vignette. This essay is the same length as the vignettes cut out and mounted on the watercolor essays, but the die has been further engraved to include cross hatching on the stool used by the man on the left side of the image.

Enlarged photocopies to show the differences between some essays and the plate proof. Red line added to highlight size difference between large and regular vignette.



- 1.] 1st watercolor essay - long vignette, no cross hatching on stool
- 2.] 2nd watercolor essay - long vignette, no cross hatching on stool
- 3.] Vignette only essay - long vignette, cross hatching on stool
- 4.] Soft trial color essay - regular vignette, no cross hatching on stool
- 5.] Plate proof on card - regular vignette, crosshatching on stool

After the watercolor essays, an entirely new vignette was engraved. This vignette is the 30mm length that was used for the final design.

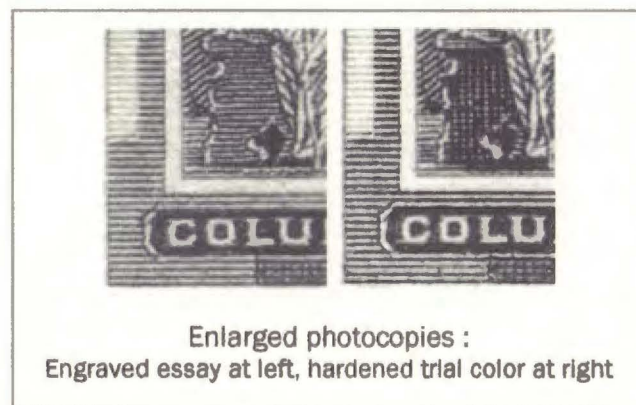
This regular sized vignette is shown along with the frame in the 5¢ essay below. This is an unfinished state of the vignette, with no cross hatching on the stool at the left.



This essay is printed directly on card. The card has been lightly marked with guidelines surrounding the engraving - these marks were used to determine the size of the essay.

The subject of the 5¢ vignette depicts Columbus asking Queen Isabella of Spain to fund his voyage. It is based on a painting titled *Columbus at the Court of Ferdinand and Isabella* by Vacslav Van Brozik.

The blue trial color essay at right is printed on India paper die sunk to card. This essay, like the previous sepia colored essay, has an unfinished vignette with no cross hatching on the stool.



The essay at left represents the complete engraving with cross hatching on the stool. This progressive essay was taken with the soft die.

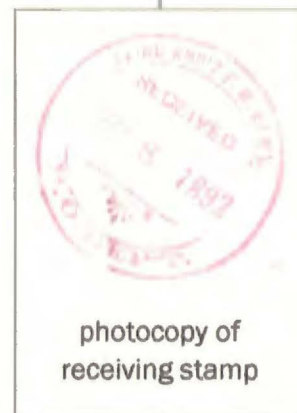
The die number (C-265) and American Bank Note Co. imprint were added below the design around the time the die was hardened.

Trial color essays were printed using a hardened form of the die including the die number and American Bank Note Co. imprint.

These essays have been listed as "proofs," although the stamp design is different from the issued stamps. At least twenty-one different colored trial color essays are known.



Deep Red
1 1/10 "Carminé"



photocopy of
receiving stamp

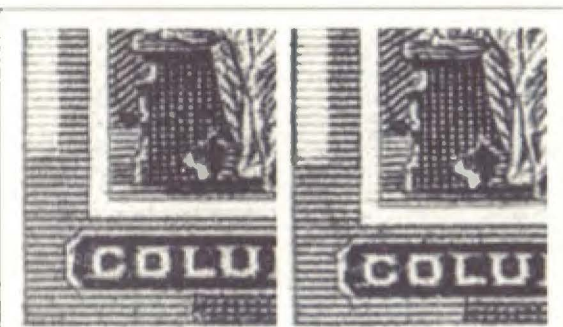
The final color selected for the 5¢ stamps was a chocolate brown. The essay above, printed on India and die sunk to card, was sent to the U.S. Post Office for color approval. It was marked "approved color" on the front and a "received" hand-stamp from the Third Assistant Postmaster General on the back.

The receiving stamp on reverse reads "THIRD ASS'T P.M. GEN'L / RECIEVED / DEC 8, 1892 / P.O. DEPT."

Most of the proofs for the 5¢ stamps are different from the issued stamps. On these prints from the master die, the gridded bar of shading at the bottom of the frame is three "blocks" tall. The final design is cut shorter and is only two blocks tall. This shorter grid is unique to the 5¢ stamp - all other values in the series are three blocks high.

The signed proof below is from a book of signed 1893 Columbian Issue large die proofs. It is signed by the designer (Alfred Major) and by the vignette engraver (Charles Skinner).





Enlarged photocopies:
Trial color essay at left, plate proof at right



At left is one of the few genuine large die proofs of the issued 5¢ Columbian stamp design.

This proof was printed directly on card. There is no die number included in this impression and the American Bank Note Co. imprint is much lower and in a different font than the one used for the large die essays.



"Roosevelt" small die proof

Even the small die proofs from the 1903 Roosevelt and 1914 Panama-Pacific special printings used the three block tall master die and differ from the issued stamp.

Plate proofs, printed on card and on India paper, were printed from a die made with the issued two block tall design.



plate proof on card

6 SIX CENTS

The subject selected for the 6¢ stamp vignette was the return of Columbus to Barcelona. The image used was taken from the seventh panel on the *Columbus Doors* by Randolph Rogers, which were commissioned for the U.S. Capitol Building in 1857.

The first essays of the 6¢ Columbian issue stamp were made using a ferrotype photograph of the panel.



Scan the QR code here to watch a 3 minute video containing more information on the ferrotype essays and a demonstration of how the imprint essays were created.

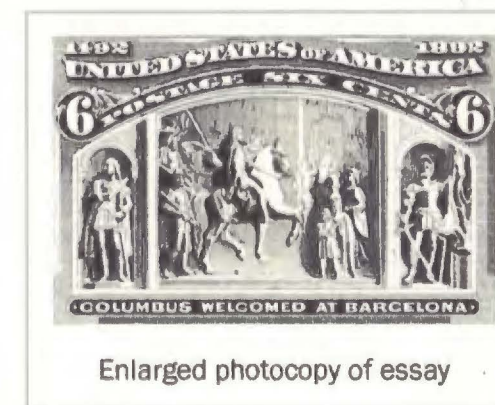
Internet access required. To view the video without scanning, visit the URL [goo.gl/vS7xrm].

The first known state of the 6¢ stamp die is an incomplete engraving of the frame only. In this state, the darkened caps at the end of the outer edge gridwork are missing.

This essay is printed on India paper and mounted to card. Light markings on the outside of the frame were used by the engravers for measurements.



The next known progressive essay of the 6¢ die included both the unfinished frame and vignette. In this state, the vignette is missing shading and detail in several places - most notably on the neck and shoulders of the horse.



Essay printed on India paper, die sunk to card.

The essay below, printed on India paper and die sunk to card, represents an unlisted state of the 6¢ die. It is further engraved from the previous state, with more shading added throughout the design.



This essay includes pencil modeling by the engraver to show where additional engraving would be added to the final state of the die. These marks can be seen at the top of the vignette's arch and arches above the side figures.



Enlarged photocopies:
Essay at left, plate proof at right



The 6¢ large die proof above represents the final state of the die. This proof is signed by the designer (Alfred Major) and by the engraver (Robert Savage).

This proof was pulled from a book containing a complete set of signed 1893 Columbian Issue large die proofs, all printed on India paper and die sunk on card.

8 EIGHT CENTS

The vignette of the 8¢ stamp is based on the painting *The Affectionate Reception of Columbus by Ferdinand and Isabella* by Francisco Jover y Casanova. It depicts Queen Isabella pardoning Columbus for misconduct during his third voyage. Chronologically, this stamp would follow the subject of the \$2 stamp, which depicted Columbus's arrest.

The only known essays of the 8¢ stamp are of this unfinished state of the die including the frame and vignette with incomplete engraving. This essay is printed on India paper and backed by card.



Enlarged photocopies:
Essay at left, trial color proof at right

In this state, the shading on the ends of the gridded framework are missing. Within the vignette the most noticeable difference is located on the woman at the left side - there is a small white patch between the folds of her skirt that would be removed for the final die.

The 8¢ trial color proofs featured in this exhibit are currently unlisted. They are all printed directly on card from the unhardened state of the die.



Dim Dark Orange-Yellow Orange
13 ^k/₁, "Russet"



Dull Dusky Orange
11 ^m/₂ "Vandyke Brown"

Although the design is complete in these trial color proofs, the die number (C-302) and American Bank Note Co. imprint are missing from this state of the die. These would be added when the die was hardened.



The large die proofs here represent the final state of the die, used to produce the plates for the issued stamps.

The 8¢ large die proof above is signed by the designer (Alfred Major) and by the engraver (Charles Skinner).

This proof was pulled from a book containing a complete set of signed 1893 Columbian Issue large die proofs, all printed on India paper and die sunk on card.

The proof below is printed on India paper and sunk to card that was signed by the vignette engraver (Charles Skinner) and the engraver of the frame and lettering (Douglas S. Ronaldson).

This proof is from a set of signed presentation, all printed on India paper and die sunk on card cut between 100-110mm wide and 110-120mm high.



10 TEN CENTS

The first step in work on the 10¢ Columbian stamp was to produce a ferrotype photograph of the vignette subject: a mural by Luigi Gregori located at Notre Dame University. The ferrotype plate was engraved and used as a die to produce a reversed image outline on white card. This was used as the base for the engraving of the stamp vignette.



The second state of the die is further engraved in the vignette, but is still missing the shadows at the ends of the frame's gridwork.



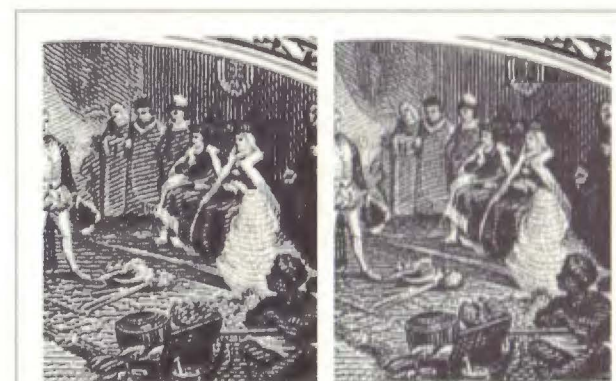
Essays of this state are known in black brown (left) and carmine (below).

Both essays are printed on India paper, die sunk on card.

The first engraved essay of the 10¢ stamp includes the complete design with unfinished engraving. It is printed on India paper, die sunk on card.



In the frame, the dark shadows at the ends of the gridwork on the outer edges are missing. In the vignette, details are missing in the collar of Queen Isabella's cloak and in the items at Columbus's feet.



Enlarged photocopies:
First state at left, second state at right



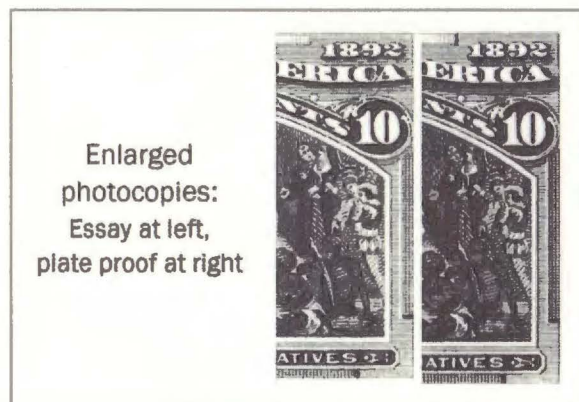


The 10¢ large die proof below represents the final state of the die. This proof is signed by the designer (Alfred Major) and by the engraver (Robert Savage).

This proof was pulled from a book containing a complete set of signed 1893 Columbian Issue large die proofs, all printed on India paper and die sunk on card.

The essay above is an unlisted third state of the die. This state is almost entirely complete, but it is missing the dark shadows on ends of the gridwork at the top of the frame.

This essay is printed on India paper, die sunk on card. It appears to be printed from a finished die, with the die number (C-267) and the American Bank Note Co. imprint underneath the design.



15 FIFTEEN CENTS

The first known essay of the 15¢ Columbian issue stamp is an ink and watercolor drawing of the frame design with a photograph of the \$3 stamp's vignette subject mounted in the center.



This essay was painted in a bright ultramarine color on stiff white drawing paper.

The watercolor frame design reads "Columbus Presenting Relating Incidents of Voyage to Ferdinand and Isabella", referring to the \$3 stamp subject.

The subject finally selected for the 15¢ stamp was "Columbus Announcing His Discovery", based on a painting by Ricardo Baloca y Cancico.

The first known state of the 15¢ die is an engraving of the vignette only. This first vignette is longer than the issued design, measuring 31mm.

The engraving is incomplete in several areas, including on Columbus's inner robes and on Queen Isabella's bust.

This essay is printed on India paper and die sunk on card.



A new, 30mm long vignette was engraved along with the frame design. In this essay, the frame is still incomplete - it is missing the dark ends on the outer edge gridwork.


This new vignette is further engraved than the previous, but still unfinished. Shading is applied to Columbus's inner robes, but not to Isabella's bust.


Essays of this state were printed in black brown and blue green on India paper, die sunk on card.




The complete engraving on the finished die included detail and shading on Isabella's bust and darkened ends of the frame's outer gridwork. The die number (C-268) and American Bank Note Co. imprint were also added to the die below the design.

Enlarged photocopies to show the differences between the essays and proof. Red line added to highlight size difference between large and regular vignette.

1


2


3


1.] Vignette only essay - long vignette, no shading on Isabella's bust
 2.] Essay with frame - regular vignette, no shading on Isabella's bust or frame edge
 3.] Plate proof on card - regular vignette, shading on Isabella's bust and frame edge



The 15¢ large die proof above, printed on India paper and die sunk on large card, represents the final state of the die. It is signed by the designer (Alfred Major) and by the vignette engraver (Charles Skinner).

This proof was pulled from a book containing a complete set of signed 1893 Columbian Issue large die proofs.

30 THIRTY CENTS

The first essay of the 30¢ stamp is an ink and watercolor drawing of the frame design with a photograph of the 15¢ stamp's subject mounted in the center.



This essay is painted on stiff white drawing paper in a dark bluish gray color. This frame design differs from the issued stamps in several significant ways: the value is placed in shields rather than ornamented circles; the gridded edges of the frame are absent; and decorative ornaments are added to the ends of the title plaque that are not present in the final design.

The frame illustration is labeled "Columbus Presenting Natives to Ferdinand [sic] and Isabella", referring to the subject used for this essay.

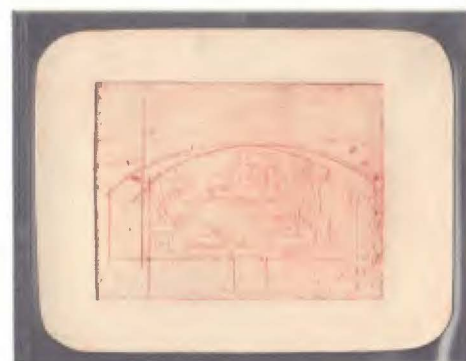
Felipe Maso's painting *Columbus before the Franciscans at La Rabida* was selected as the final subject of the 30¢ stamp.

Columbus before the Franciscans at La Rabida depicts Columbus being encouraged by several monks after having his original proposal for his journey rejected by the Spanish monarchy.

Ferrotypes of this painting were taken as essays for the 30¢ stamp subject. A thin outline was engraved into the metal plate so that it could be used as a printing die.

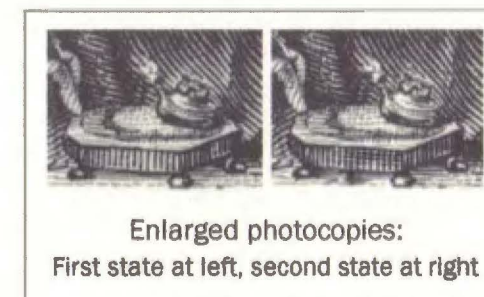


The ferrotypes "die" was used to print an outline of the image onto stiff white card. This outline was used as a base reference for the engravers.



The first known state of the 30¢ stamp die is an engraving of the vignette only, printed on India paper and die sunk on card.

At this point in the production of the die the engraving is incomplete in several places. There is no door at the right side of the image and there are no horizontal lines engraved on the front side of the footstool in the foreground.



Additional engraving was added to create the second state of the die, an essay of which was printed on India paper and sunk on large card.

Notes written on the card backing indicate where several changes would be made as the die progressed. These notes appear to be written in the hand of Alfred Jones, the vignette engraver.



The notes on this card, from top center moving clockwise, read:

- clear up head, + move light on top.
- door
- more color background
- carpet or rug
- move light on upper arm above elbow, to shoulder
- too much color on tablecloth near top -
- background more color
- shadow in cowl sticks head to chair post which is too black

The third state of the die was the first to include the frame.

In addition to this, the vignette was engraved further and now includes the door in the background at right.



Essays from this state of the die were printed on India paper in both black and black-brown ink. The black example above is die sunk on card.

The fourth state of the 30¢ die is very similar to the third state. Additional shading was added in several places.



Additional engraving included diagonal dashes in the floor at the lower left, extra shading on the hair and hands of both sitting monks, and more shadows around the dog. Probably the easiest difference to see is the additional shading on the globe.

Essays of this state are known in orange or black-brown ink, printed on India paper, sunk on card.

This next essay represents a previously unknown essay. It was printed from the fourth state of the die. A wash of white paint was then added over the table cloth on the design, showing where engraving would be lightened in the following state.



Photograph under UV light
Unlisted essay at left, following state essay at right

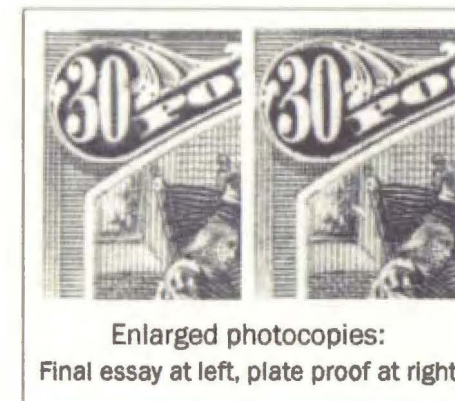
The photograph above was taken under a UV light. In this condition, the additional wash is clearly visible.

This essay is printed on India paper and backed by card.



The final 30¢ essay is almost entirely complete. Some shading is missing from the faces of the men which would be added to the die before hardening. The frame of the window in this essay is missing dark coloring.

The essay below is printed on India paper and die sunk on card. Essays from this state are also known in hybrid form.



Enlarged photocopies:
Final essay at left, plate proof at right



Chas Skinner

*Alfred A. Major
Engraver*

The 30¢ large die proof above is signed by the designer (Alfred Major) and by one of the engravers. Although Alfred Jones was the primary vignette engraver for this value, this proof was signed by Charles Skinner.

At right is a left margin half-sheet of the 30¢ Columbian issue plate proofs printed on card. These "trial color" proofs in black are platemaker's check proofs. The black color was used to better check the quality of the plate printing.



50 FIFTY CENTS

The subject for the 50¢ stamp was the *Recall of Columbus*, a painting by Augustus G. Heaton. The scene pictured shows Columbus receiving the message to return to Spain to receive funding for his voyage.



This essay represents the first known state of the engraver's die for the 50¢ stamp. It was printed in the issued slate blue color on India paper, sunk on card.

This first engraving is incomplete. There is not much detail on Columbus's donkey and shading is missing on the cloak of the man riding beside him.



Progressive essays were printed to test the appearance of the die as engraving was added.

The essay at left, printed on India paper and die sunk, represents the second state of the die. In this state the body of the donkey is shaded, but its flank is not.

The next state of the die includes additional shading on the rear of the donkey and in the face of the man riding next to Columbus. It is still unfinished in some places, such as a mountains in the distance and the face of the messenger.





The trial color essay above was printed with the unfinished 50¢ die. Although the design is complete, this trial color essay is significantly lighter in several places than the finished proofs. The die was most likely acid etched before it was finished, resulting in deeper, bolder lines.



Enlarged photocopies:
 Trial at left, large die proof at right
 Note darker engraving in bowing man's hat; mountains;
 riding man's cloak, and message in Columbus's hand.

The 50¢ large die proof below is signed by the designer (Alfred Major) and by the vignette engraver (Charles Skinner).

This proof was pulled from a book containing a complete set of signed 1893 Columbian Issue large die proofs, all printed on India paper and die sunk on card.



\$1 ONE DOLLAR

The first essays of the \$1 Columbian issue stamp were made using a ferrotype photograph of a painting by Antonio Munoz-Degrain. The subject depicts the story of the Spanish Queen Isabella offering her jewelry as collateral to fund Columbus's voyage.



A thin outline was engraved into the metal ferrotype plate. The engraved plate was used as a die to print the outline into thin white cards. These cards were used by the engravers as a reference base for the stamp vignette.

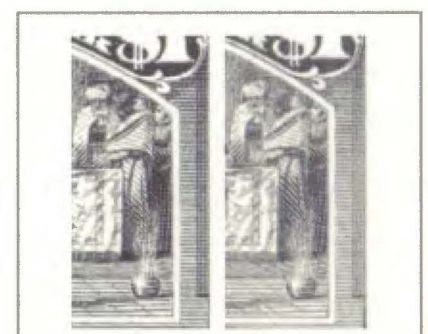
At least two cards are known printed from the \$1 ferrotype essay.



The first part of the \$1 die to be engraved was an unfinished vignette only.

As engraving progressed, the frame was added around the vignette. The essay here, printed on India paper and backed by card, represents this second state of the die.

The essay at right, on India paper die sunk to card, represents the last known unfinished state of the die. While the overall design is complete, shading is missing in the background. Engraving is also missing on the robes of the man at the right side of the frame.



Enlarged photocopies:
Essay at left, plate proof at right

The \$1 large die proof below is signed by the designer (Alfred Major) and by the vignette engraver (Robert Savage).

This proof was pulled from a book containing a complete set of signed 1893 Columbian Issue large die proofs, all printed on India paper and die sunk on card.



Above is a top margin plate block of eight plate proofs of the \$1 stamp, printed on India paper.

Plates for printing the issued Columbian stamps were produced by using transfer rolls to copy the design from the finished die. \$1 stamp plates produced sheets of one hundred stamps, divided into two panes of fifty.

This top margin block includes the plate number and American Bank Note Company imprint. Only one plate was used to print the \$1 value.

Columbian issue plate proofs were printed on card and on India paper. The examples on India paper are scarce.

\$2 TWO DOLLARS

The subject for the \$2 stamp, "Columbus in Chains", depicts Columbus being arrested on the accusation of administrative misconduct. The vignette image is based on the painting *The Third Return of Columbus* by Emanuel Gottlieb Leutze.

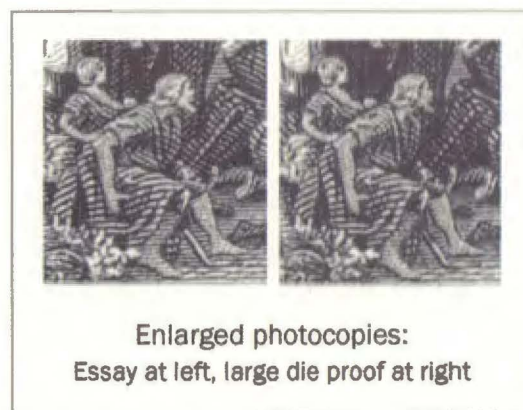
Progressive essays of the engraved \$2 die are only known printed from this one state, which includes the complete design with unfinished engraving. The essays were printed on India paper and die sunk on card.

The missing engraving is most noticeable in the beard of the man sitting at the left of the vignette.



The trial color proof at left represents a progressive proof printed to test the finished die.

In this state, the die number (C-272) and American Bank Note Co. imprint have not yet been added below the design.



Enlarged photocopies:
Essay at left, large die proof at right

The trial color proof at right was printed after the finished die was hardened. It includes the die number and imprint under the design.

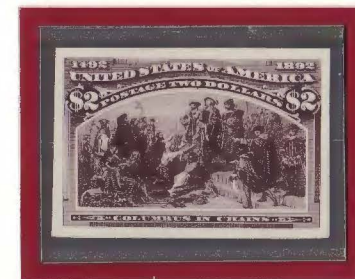




Most Columbian issue trial color proofs were printed from large dies - only three values are known printed in trial colors from plates.

Plate proofs on India paper were printed in significantly darker trial colors for the 3¢ and \$2 values. A \$2 blackish-brown trial color plate proof is featured at right.

The 30¢ stamps were printed as black trial color plate proofs on card - these were platemaker's test proofs.



The \$2 large die proof above is signed by the designer (Alfred Major) and by the vignette engraver (Charles Skinner).

This proof was pulled from a book containing a complete set of signed 1893 Columbian Issue large die proofs, all printed on India paper and die sunk on card.

At right is a \$2 hybrid proof produced by pressing a plate proof on India paper over another piece of India paper die sunk to card, intended to give the appearance of a large die proof. Hybrid proofs were created for all stamps issued before 1894.

THREE DOLLARS

"Columbus Describing Third Voyage" was selected as the subject for the \$3 stamp. It is based on the painting *Columbus Before the Catholic Kings* by Francisco Jover y Casanova.

This ferrotype photograph of the painting is the first \$3 essay. Thin lines were engraved into the metal plate, outlining the image.



The ferrotype was inked and pressed into stiff white card to produce a reversed outline of the design. This was used by the engravers as a guide for the stamp die.



The first known state of the \$3 die includes the entire design with incomplete engraving. In this state, the ends of the gridwork on the outer edges of the frame are unshaded and the space between the subject title and the vignette is too lightly engraved.

The essay includes pencil modeling, added by the engravers to correct the areas with missing engraving and to indicate where the die should be worked before the next state.



The dark red trial color essay at left was produced with the unfinished \$3 die. It is printed on India paper and die sunk on card.

Although the design is complete, it is lighter in several places than the finished proofs. The die was acid etched before hardening, producing deeper lines for a darker design.

Plates proofs for the 1893 Columbian issue were printed on India paper and on card. These proofs were printed from the final plate die used to print the issued stamps.



The \$3 large die proof above is signed by the designer (Alfred Major) and by the vignette engraver (Robert Savage).

This proof was pulled from a book containing a complete set of signed 1893 Columbian Issue large die proofs, all printed on India paper and die sunk on card.



Above is a top margin block of eight \$3 plate proofs on card. This block includes the plate number and American Bank Note Co. imprint.



At right is a block of four \$3 plate proofs on India paper, mounted on card.

\$4 **FOUR DOLLARS**



Portraits of Queen Isabella and Christopher Columbus were selected as the subject for the \$4 stamp.

The \$4 Columbian issue stamp is the first U.S. stamp to include a portrait of a recognizable woman. The exact source of the image used to design the portrait of Isabella is unknown. It is believed to be inspired by an original painting by Spanish painter Bartolomé Bermejo. By the time it was selected for this stamp, the image had already been redesigned and adapted by numerous artists.

At left is an engraving of Isabella in the same design as the portrait used for the \$4 stamp.

Early essays of the \$4 stamp were made using a ferrotype photograph of one of these Isabella portraits. An outline of the design was engraved into the metal plate and used to print the design onto stiff white card. These cards were used as guides for the engravers.



The portrait used for Columbus is based on a painting by Italian artist Lorenzo Lotto. This portrait was also copied and reproduced by artists and engravers.



In 1905, Chile also used an engraving of this portrait on their postage stamps. These Chilean stamps were also printed by the American Bank Note Co.



The first known state of the \$4 die is engraved with the portrait of Isabella in a circular border. This essay also includes the circular border where the portrait of Columbus is added in the next state. Light drafting marks indicate where the frame will be engraved.

This essay was printed on India paper, and is backed by card.

In the next state of the die, diagonal lines were added to the background behind Isabella. The die was then further engraved to add the portrait of Columbus in the circle at right.



Lettering was added above and below the portraits by G.H. Seymore, letterer and frame engraver for the \$4 value.

This essay is printed on India paper and die sunk on card. Essays of this state are known in black and dark red.

As the engraving on the die progressed, the frame background was filled in and decorative flourishes were added around the portraits in the vignette.



The essay above, printed on India paper and mounted on thick, bright white card, represents a late state of the die. Although the entire design is present, there is missing engraving in several areas, including shading on Columbus's face. Parts of the frame are also unfinished, such as the circular border around Isabella's shoulder and the ornaments under the "\$4" value numeral.



Enlarged photocopies:
Essay at left, large die proof at right

The \$4 large die proof below is signed by the designer (Alfred Major) and by one of the engravers. Although Alfred Jones was the primary vignette engraver for this value, this proof was signed by Charles Skinner.



This proof was pulled from a book containing a complete set of signed 1893 Columbian Issue large die proofs, all printed on India paper and die sunk on card.



The large die proof above is signed by the primary vignette engraver (Alfred Jones) and also by the frame engraver (G.H. Seymore).

This proof is from a set of signed presentation proofs, all printed on India paper and die sunk on card cut between 100-110mm wide and 110-120mm high.

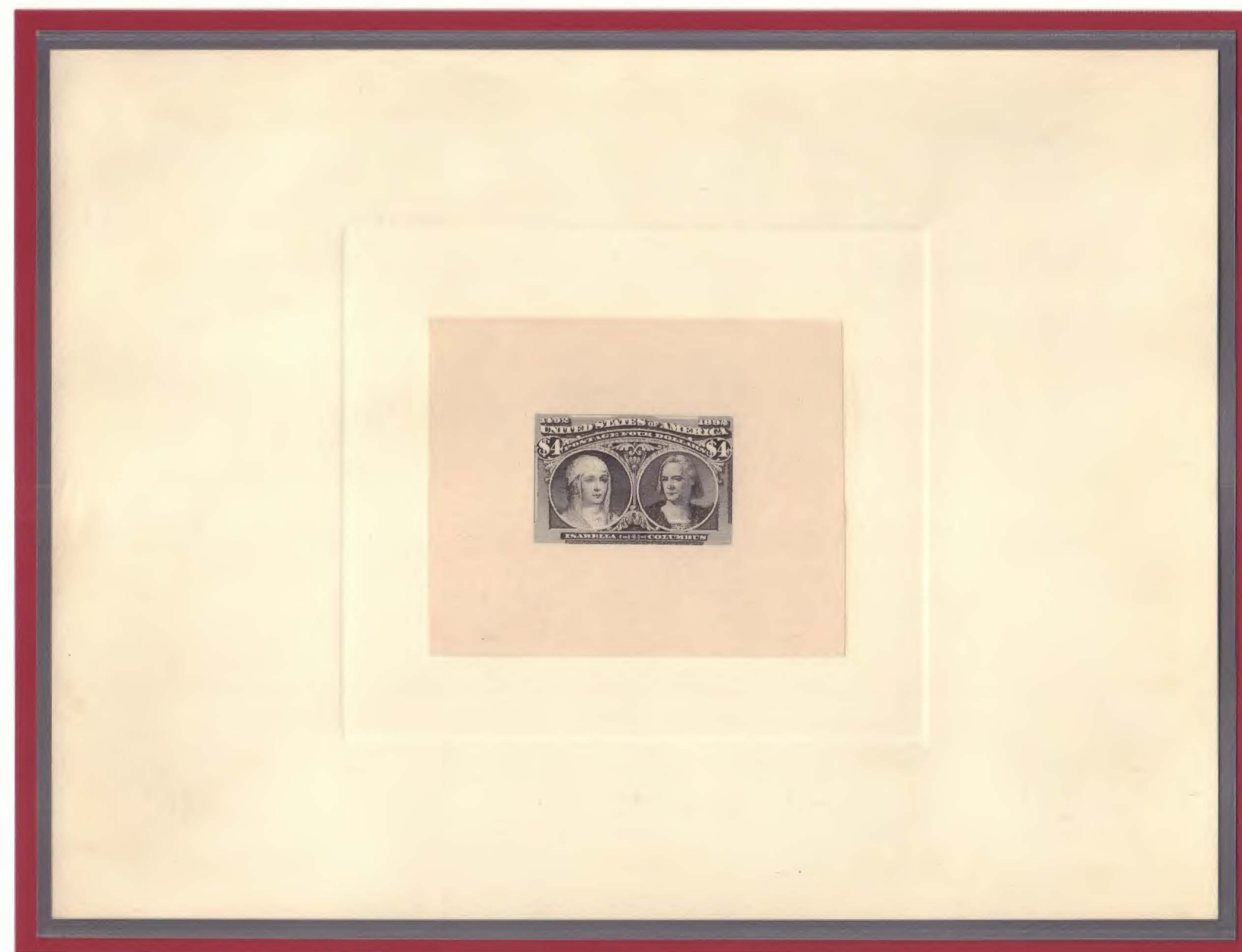
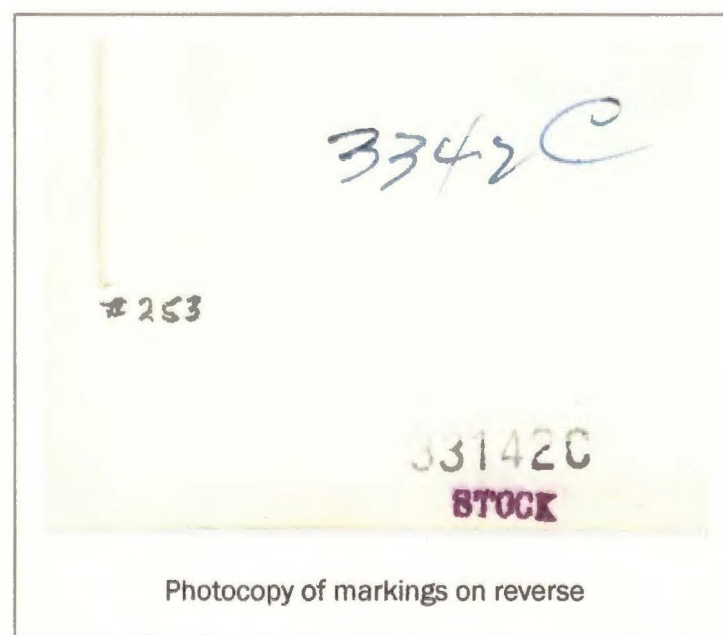
In 1894 the American Bank Note Company lost its contract for printing U.S. postage stamps to the Bureau of Engraving and Printing.

As part of their contract, the dies produced by the American Bank Note Company became property of the United States Post Office Department after printing. This collection of dies was stored at the Bureau of Engraving and Printing, where they could be used later to print tests, gifts, or display proofs.

When die proofs are printed after the issue of the stamp, they are known as posthumous proofs. The Bureau kept records of all proofs pulled in their offices, identified by control numbers.

According to Bureau records, a complete set of the Columbian issue proofs (plus an additional 2¢ proof) was pulled on February 29th, 1960. These proofs were marked with control numbers from 33129C to 33145C. The records stated that they were printed for stock.

The \$4 black trial color proof at right is from this set. The back of the card is marked with the control number "3342C" written in blue manuscript and handstamped in black. The card is also marked with a magenta "STOCK" handstamp.





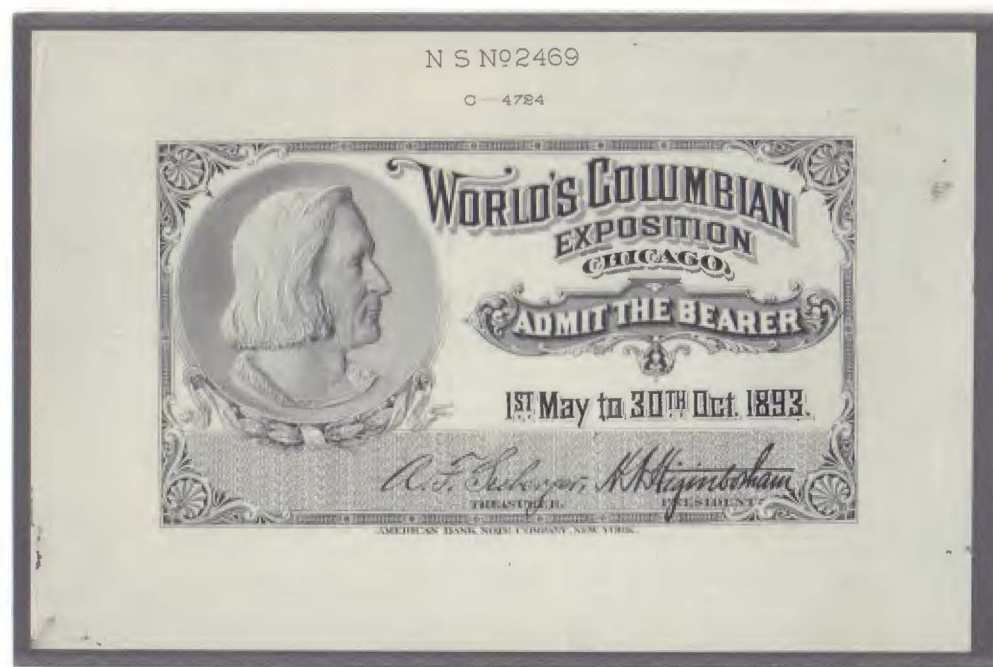
FIVE DOLLARS

The U.S. Treasury struck a commemorative coin for the Columbian Exposition. This coin served as the model for the central portrait of the \$5 postage stamp.

The coin itself was modeled after a medal designed by *Olin L. Warner* in Madrid to commemorate the 400th anniversary of Columbus's voyage.



The American Bank Note Company also used this design (although engraved significantly larger) for one of the six souvenir admission tickets they printed for the World's Fair. These tickets were intricately engraved to prevent counterfeiting.



Above is a proof of the Columbian portrait ticket, printed on glazed wove paper with the American Bank Note Company control numbers printed above the design.

This progressive die essay represents one of the first known states of the \$5 stamp die. In this state the vignette side panels are completely blank.



In this early state, the engraving on the central portrait of Columbus is incomplete. Blue ink markings on Columbus's face and a black ink wash on the background were added by the engraver to indicate where shading will be added in later essays. Light drafting lines extend from the design.

This essay is printed on India paper, die sunk to card.

The following essay represents the next state of the die, printed on India paper and backed by card. The side panels are still blank.

This essay shows further engraving on Columbus's neck, mouth and eyes. Still unfinished, the design is marked with pencil to show where more engraving will be added on Columbus's cheek and in the background.



The figures chosen for the side panels of the \$5 stamp were "America" and "Liberty". America was personified as a Native American woman and Liberty was represented as a woman in classical Roman design with a Phrygian cap.



The design for Liberty was taken from an image that had been used and redesigned several times since its origin. At left is a detailed proof of this design by an unknown engraver. While the woman herself is copied faithfully in miniature for the stamp, her accessories are changed. On the \$5 stamp her shield is given an eagle motif and her fasces is replaced with a spear.

One of the earliest uses of this design is on a bank note from the Hungarian Revolution in 1852. This note uses Liberty (with a shield of Hungarian design) as the central figure. It was engraved by Toppan, Carpenter, Casilear & Co. - one of the firms that would eventually merge into the American Bank Note Co.



Using a progressive essay of the unfinished die on thick white card as the base, photographs were mounted to the blank side panels to demonstrate the look of the completed design, which was then sent for approval.

In this essay the photograph of Liberty has been modified with ink and white wash. Crude drawings of the new shield design and spear are applied over the photograph.

The entire essay is mounted on thick card and signed by the Third Assistant Postmaster General, Abraham Depue Hazen.

"Design approved subject to inspection of engraved proof, color to be black."



After the design was approved, the side panel engraving was added to the die. In this essay, the entire design is present, although unfinished. Shading is missing in several areas and there is no engraving inside the circular border surrounding Columbus's portrait.

This essay is printed on India paper, backed by card.

Another essay was produced by using a copy of the progressive die state above, and modifying the engraving design with pencil and whitewash.

White wash was added to the ornaments at the top of the vignette frame, indicating that they should be lightened for the final design.

Pencil marks darken where the engraving will be added later: in the laps of the side figures, around the medallion frame and below "Postage Five Dollars".

The essay is printed in black on India paper, die sunk on card.



In the next progressive state of the die, several of the areas previously marked in pencil were further engraved. This includes the addition of shading on the bottom of the circular portrait border.

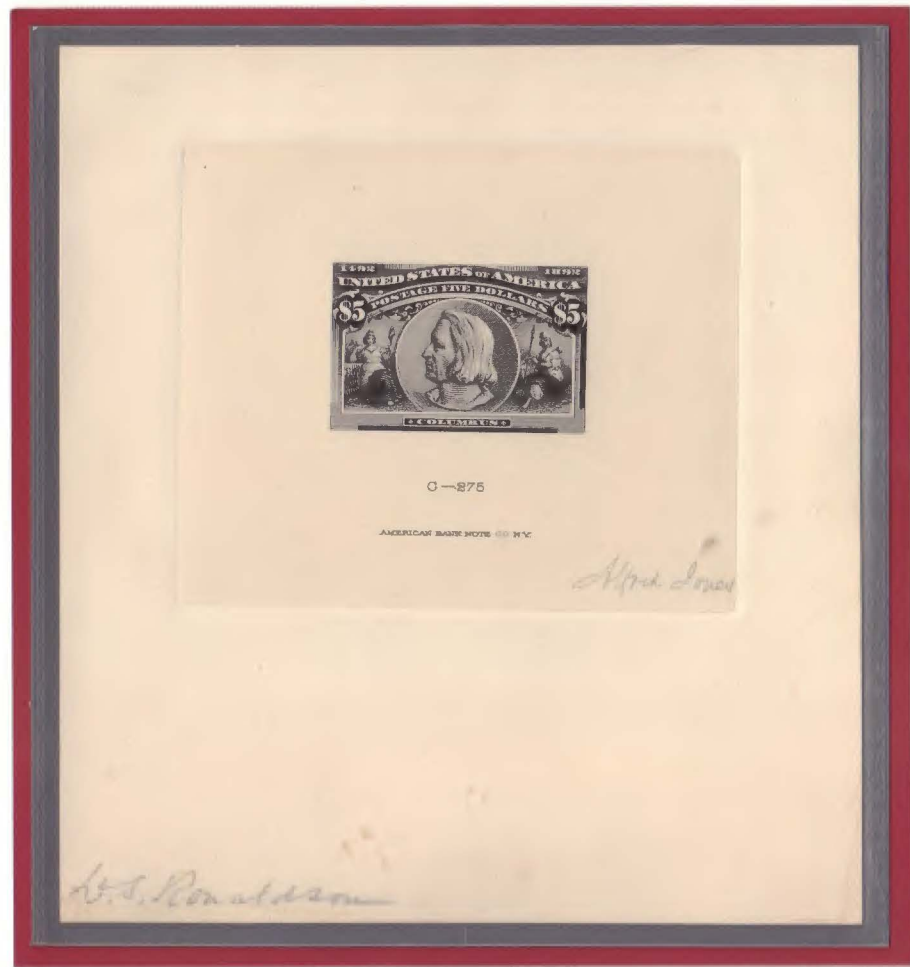


The progressive die essay at right, printed on India paper and die sunk on card, represents the last known unfinished state of the \$5 die.

In this state, the design is almost entirely complete, including the scroll work and lines under "Postage Five Dollars".

Some additional shading will be added to the final die.





The \$5 Columbian issue stamp was engraved by Alfred Jones, Charles Skinner, and Douglas S. Ronaldson.

The large die proof above is signed by the vignette engraver (Alfred Jones) and also by the frame engraver (D.S. Ronaldson).

This proof is from a set of signed presentation, all printed on India paper and die sunk on card cut between 100-110mm wide and 110-120mm high.

The \$5 large die proof below is signed by the designer (Alfred Major) and by one of the vignette engravers (Charles Skinner).



This proof was pulled from a book containing a complete set of signed 1893 Columbian Issue large die proofs, all printed on India paper and die sunk on card.

The 1893 Columbian issue was the last U.S. stamp issue produced by the American Bank Note Company before the stamp contract was awarded to the Bureau of Engraving and Printing for almost the entirety of the 20th century.

After the ABNCo. lost its bid to manufacturing U.S. postage stamps in 1894, the Bureau of Engraving and Printing became the primary printer of stamps until 2005. (Only one issue of postage stamps during that span was not produced by the BEP - the ABNCo. returned to print the 1943-43 "Overrun" issue.)

Part of the ABNCo.'s contract stipulated that the dies for printing the U.S. Stamps were property of the United States Post Office Department. After printing the Columbian issue, the dies were delivered to the BEP for storage in their collection. The BEP occasionally used these dies to print tests, gifts, or display proofs of discontinued stamps. Two of the most famous posthumous proof sets are the 1903 "Roosevelt" and the 1915 "Pan-Pacific" small die proofs.

The Roosevelt proofs were printed for a series of presentation albums. These books included mounted sets of small die proofs for each of the U.S. stamp issues from 1847 to 1903. The proofs were printed on white wove and mounted on stiff gray card pages. It is believed that only 85 albums were produced.



Photograph of intact Roosevelt presentation album given to Francis E. Leupp.

Photograph taken from Siegel Auction Galleries, 2013 *Rarities of the World* sale. (Sale 1048, lot 105.)

Intact Roosevelt albums are very rare. Only fifteen were known in 2015. While such an album is not present in this collection, this photograph is provided to better illustrate the context of the pages at right.

Because the Roosevelt Albums were only intended for an elite few, their creation was frowned upon by the stamp collecting public. As a result, production of these albums was stopped in 1905.





Today many of the surviving "Roosevelt" small die proofs are cut away from their original album pages, with only a small portion of the original card backing remaining.

These two full Roosevelt presentation album pages include the complete set of 1893 Columbia Issue stamps. These examples are all known as proofs, although the 5¢ value is slightly different in design from the issued stamp.

The second set of Columbian issue proofs printed by the Bureau of Engraving and Printing are known as the “Panama-Pacific” small die proofs.

In 1914, the Post Office Department ordered a special set of stamp proofs for the Panama-Pacific Exhibition in San Francisco. The BEP delivered a set of 413 different small die proofs printed on soft yellowish wove paper. The proofs were placed on display for the public from February 20th to December 4th, 1915.

Only three complete sets of Pan-Pacific are known: one for exhibition display; one for the Smithsonian collection; and a third set that escaped the BEP into the hands of collectors. In addition, some designs were printed more than others, resulting in several incomplete sets that could exist.



Like the Roosevelt small die proofs, the 5¢ stamp printed for the Pan-Pacific proofs is a slightly taller design than the issued stamp.

Although the Roosevelt and Pan-Pacific small die proofs are the most well known posthumous proofs printed by the Bureau of Engraving and Printing, they are not the only sets. BEP records show that several sets were printed in the 1930s, including the “Texas Centennial” proofs in 1936.

An example of a very late BEP posthumous proof printing can be seen in the \$4 section on the previous frame.

