

# CHANGING THE SUBJECT

## A HISTORY OF THE 1898 TRANS-MISSISSIPPI ISSUE

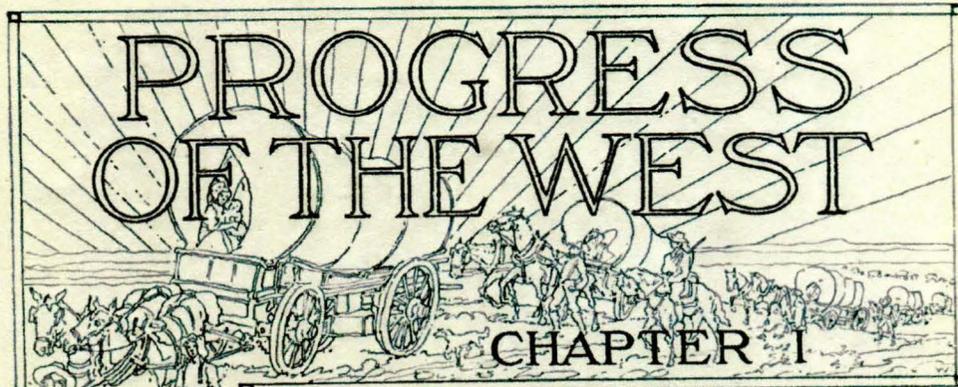
### SUMMARY

In 1898, the Bureau of Engraving and Printing issued a set of nine commemorative stamps to celebrate the Trans-Mississippi Exposition held in Omaha, Nebraska. This set was the United States' second commemorative series of postage stamp, and the first to be produced by the Bureau of Engraving and Printing (BEP). This set also represents the first stamps issued by the BEP using completely original designs and engraving.

During the six-month period from the announcement of the series in January, to its issue in June, the series underwent many changes. While all nine of the stamps were changed from their original designs, no values underwent more drastic changes than the 2¢ and \$2 values, whose subjects were swapped only one month before the series' issue. **The purpose of this exhibit is to explain the process of designing and engraving the 2¢ and \$2 Trans-Mississippi issue stamps. This exhibit will cover the selection of the stamp subjects, the process of engraving the dies, and the major changes made before printing.** This exhibit will also show the results of this process, including the finished stamps, and how they were used.

### OUTLINE

- I. Background
  - a. The Trans-Mississippi Exposition
  - b. Requesting a Commemorative Issue
- II. The Bureau of Engraving and Printing
  - a. Designers and Engravers
- III. Choosing the Subjects
  - a. Suggestions & Speculation
  - b. Rosewater Essays
  - c. The Indian Vignette
  - d. Alternate Values
- IV. The Farming in the West Vignette
  - a. Subject Background
  - b. Die Progression Essays
- V. The Mississippi River Bridge Vignette
  - a. Subject Background
  - b. Die Progression Essays
- VI. The Frame
  - a. Frame Design Essays
- VII. Bi-Color Essays
  - a. Presentation Essays
  - b. Trial Color Essays
- VIII. The "Big Switch"
  - a. Cause for Change
  - b. Changes Made
    - i. Bi-color to Monochrome
    - ii. Switching Vignettes
- IX. Composite Essays
  - a. Combining the Dies
  - b. Farming in the West
  - c. Mississippi River Bridge
- X. Die Proofs
  - a. Large Die Proofs
  - b. Plate Proofs
  - c. BEP Number Proofs
  - d. Small Die Proofs
    - i. Roosevelt
    - ii. Pan-Pacific
- XI. Issued Stamps
  - a. Trans-Mississippi Series
    - i. 2¢ Stamps
    - ii. \$2 Stamps
  - b. Stamps at the Exposition
  - c. Non-Postal Usages
    - i. Specimen Stamps
    - ii. Revenue Stamps
- XII. Philatelic Miscellany
  - i. Homemade Bi-color
  - ii. Modern Reprints
- XIII. Summary and Conclusion
- XIV. Exhibit Details
  - a. Bibliography
  - b. Supplementary Information



*"The mission of the Exposition is to communicate to mankind the impulses to which it owes its origin."*

—JOHN J. INGALLS.

**D**URING the prosperous years antedating the Chicago World's Fair, when the West made unexampled progress, there was an oft-expressed desire that an interstate exposition might be held in Omaha. The suggestion contemplated only a sectional exhibit of the products and industries of Nebraska and adjoining States, and was born of a knowledge of the wealth-producing power of this region, and of an urgent call for the spreading of that knowledge throughout the East. The World's Fair of 1893 was a revelation to the people of the nation. Its unprecedented success inspired leading men of population centers in the West to project similar enterprises in spite of the depressing effects of a financial panic then felt throughout the whole country. California erected a mid-winter exposition, a State enterprise, which opened its gates in San Francisco in January, 1894. Kansas City began to advocate the holding of a mid-continent exposition. Denver proposed to hold a Western States' exposition, and raised a large fund for the purpose, but upon further consideration postponed work to a future date, intending to celebrate the purchase of Louisiana Territory from France. Texas planned to have a Western and Southern States' exposition at Galveston. Minneapolis and St. Paul contemplated a Northwestern States' exposition, and had begun the work of promotion.

Public-spirited men of Omaha took note of the progress of the agitation for a Western exposition, and determined to protect Omaha's interests in the matter. In the fall of 1894 the Trans-Mississippi Congress held its annual session in St. Louis, composed of representative men of Western States, who

assembled to discuss measures designed to promote the commercial and material interests of the region they represented. Its delegates held credentials from governors of States and from mayors of the larger cities. The Nebraska delegation in that Congress presented a formal invitation to the Congress to meet in Omaha the following year, which was accepted. Late in November of 1895 the Congress assembled in Omaha. The Nebraska delegation named a committee of five to prepare proposed resolutions to be presented to the Congress, the object of which was to obtain official approval of the proposal to hold an exposition at Omaha intended to measure the progress of the Trans-Mississippi States. Hon. William J. Bryan, chosen as the spokesman

of the committee, introduced the following resolution, which was unanimously adopted:

"WHEREAS, We believe that an exposition of all the products, industries and civilization of the States west of the Mississippi River, made at some central gateway where the world can behold the wonderful capabilities of these great wealth-producing States, would be of great value, not only to the Trans-Mississippi States, but to all the homeseekers in the world; therefore,

"Resolved, That the United States Congress be requested to take such steps as may be necessary



Monarch of the Plains

to hold a Trans-Mississippi exposition at Omaha during the months of August, September and October, in the year 1898, and that the representatives of such States and Territories in Congress be requested to favor such an appropriation as is usual in such cases to assist in carrying out this enterprise."

In the assembly which adopted the resolution after debate there were delegates from Minnesota, Missouri, Colorado and Utah. Returning to their respective homes they reported the adoption of the resolution, which was enough to check the efforts then being made in some of those States to gain recognition for an exposition city. Thus the Trans-Mississippi Congress paved the way for the Trans-Mississippi and International Exposition which was held at Omaha from June to November, 1898.

## THE TRANS-MISSISSIPPI EXPOSITION

Following the success of Chicago's World Columbian Exposition in 1893, interest grew among the western United States to hold their own exposition showcasing the economic and social growth of the West. The idea was popular among members of the Trans-Mississippi Congress, a committee of politicians and businessmen dedicated to promoting the commercial expansion of the American west. In November of 1895, delegates from Nebraska proposed to the Congress that a great exposition be hosted in Omaha.

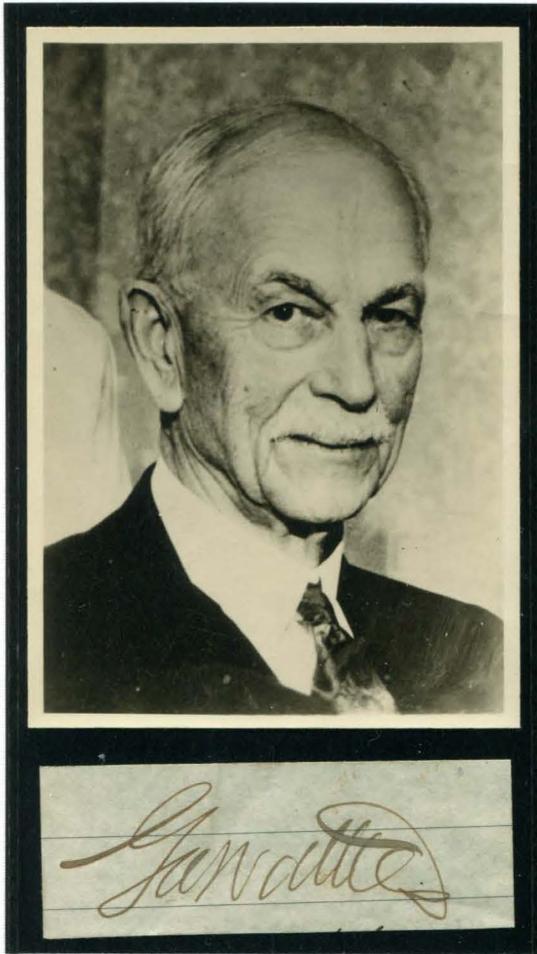
Reading the proposal, the president of the congress, William J. Bryan, preceded with the following speech:

"This resolution, while it immediately concerns the city of Omaha, concerns also, in a general way all of this Trans-Mississippi country. Those of you who attended the World's Fair know you met people who have never been West. I have met a number of people who have never been West, and they told me that they thought Chicago was "West". There is now being held in Atlanta what is known as the Atlanta Exposition, and people are going there and seeing that country who have never visited that country before, and who would not have been there but for this Exposition. It is not only necessary that the merchant shall have good wares on his shelves, but it is also necessary that the people who want to buy, shall know that he has the wares there. People who live in the East do not know the West. Any person who travels from the West to the East will be astonished by ignorance he finds there in regard to our Western country. They have no idea of our resources, and we believe an Exposition here will bring the people from the East and other parts of the World, and it will be of a great and lasting benefit to the whole Western country. It was said by one man down east, that under certain conditions the West would do all of the manufacturing for the country. It does furnish productions that are not know down in the East. We believe that an Exposition here will draw people here that will be of great value to all of the citizens. The only difference of opinion would be as to the particular place for holding this Exposition. There are other great cities that would like to have it; Saint Paul, Minneapolis, Denver, Kansas City. We believe that Omaha would be the best place. All of the northern part of the country can find its way here on direct lines. We believe this city is the proper place for this Exposition and therefore we state it in the resolution. All we ask is to have a vote upon this resolution, and we would like to have all votes in favor of a Western Exposition, and to locate it at this place. If the people here think this is the best place, we ask you to vote for this in this resolution. I ask the unanimous consent that this resolution be placed upon its final passage at this time."

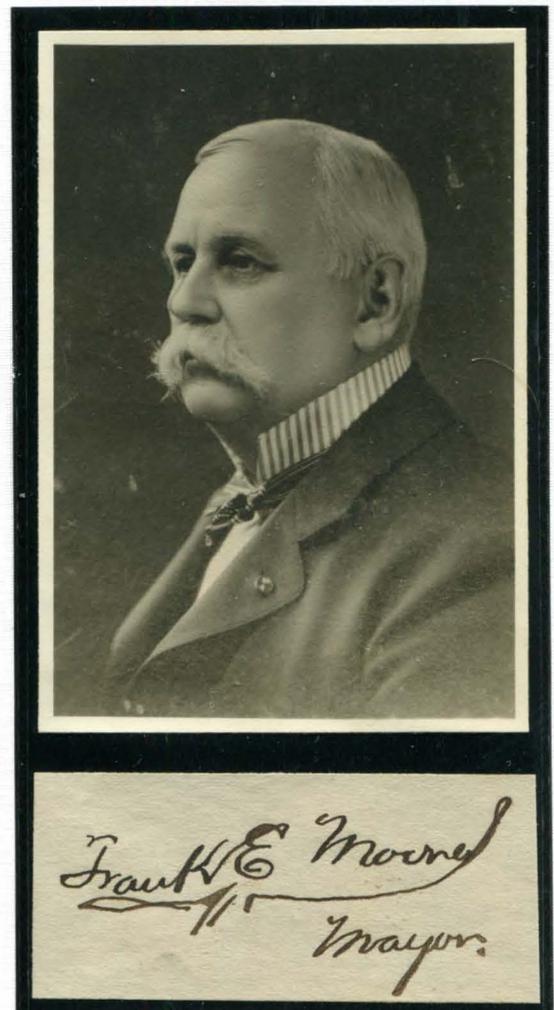
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<sup>1</sup> (Wakefield 1903)

After only a little discussion regarding the approval of the host city, the congress unanimously adopted the proposal. The congress began planning for the Trans-Mississippi Exposition, which would be held in Omaha from June to November, 1898.



At left: Photograph and signature of Gurdon Wallace Wattles, the President of the Trans-Mississippi Exposition, and a key organizer of the event.



At right: Photograph and signature of Frank E. Moors, the Mayor of Omaha during the Trans-Mississippi Exposition.

## REQUESTING A COMMEMORATIVE ISSUE

The first commemorative series of postage stamps produced by the United States was issued to celebrate the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the landing of Christopher Columbus in the Americas. The set of sixteen stamps were printed by the American Bank Note Company, each stamp featuring an artistic depiction of events in Columbus's life. These stamps were issued in conjunction with the 1893 World's Fair in Chicago and were promoted as souvenirs of the event.

Because the Trans-Mississippi Exposition was inspired by the success of Chicago's World Fair, it was natural to suggest another commemorative stamp series. The first record of this idea is found in the *Omaha Daily Bee* newspaper on January 1<sup>st</sup>, 1897.

**EXPOSITION STAMPS SUGGESTED.**

**Contract Awarded for Printing Application Blanks.**

An enterprising resident of Omaha, who has taken more than a passing interest in the success of the Transmississippi Exposition and who has already mentioned a number of ideas in connection with the great fair, has suggested to the members of the executive committee the idea of making an effort to persuade the government to issue a series of Transmississippi postage stamps, much after the same manner as was done in the case of the World's fair. The original act of congress providing for an appropriation for a government exhibit contains a clause giving the proper parties the right to have struck at the government mints such medals in commemoration of the exposition and for awards as may be deemed advisable. This section is construed to cover souvenir medals and the party in question argues that a series of souvenir postage stamps would serve as a most effectual advertising medium and at the same time be worthy of preserving as souvenirs of the occasion. The matter will be laid before the executive committee at its next meeting for consideration.

A contract was let yesterday to the Pestner Printing company for printing the application blanks for space desired by exhibitors. These blanks will contain the rules and regulations which will govern exhibitors. There will be 100,000 of the blanks printed and they will be mailed to all of the leading manufacturers and prospective exhibitors as an inducement to them to at once make application and commence the work of preparing their exhibits.

**In Olden Times**  
People overlooked the importance of ner-

*Omaha Daily Bee*, January 1, 1897

### "Exposition Stamps Suggested. -

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This suggestion explained that if the government could be requested to produce a commemorative medal at a government mint, then it could also be requested to produce a postage stamp. The request to coin a souvenir medal at the exposition had already been made and approved in 1896.<sup>2</sup>



**Trans-Mississippi official souvenir medal, with photocopy of reverse.**

Listed in Hibler and Kappen's *So-Called Dollars* as 283 (Brass)

These medals featured an image of a Native American hunting a buffalo on one side, and a woman's face on the other.

The "Most Beautiful Woman in the Trans-Mississippi Country" is actually a composite portrait of forty-four women. The exhibition vice-presidents (one for each state and territory west of the Mississippi River) received photos of women from their respective states.<sup>3</sup> These vice presidents selected who they believed were the two most beautiful women. The selected images were sent to an artist in who created a composite photograph to use as the medal's face.

The United States Mint at Philadelphia engraved the dies for the medals, which were coined in the Government Building at the exposition. Visitors could watch the medals be struck and purchase them afterwards. About 25,000 of these medals were struck during the fair.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> (*Omaha World-Herald*, January 4, 1896)

<sup>3</sup> (*Omaha World-Herald*, December 9, 1897)

<sup>4</sup> (Wakefield 1903)

It was not long after the first suggestion to request the stamps that the Omaha *World-Herald* published an article mentioning that Nebraska congressman David Henry Mercer spoke with William L. Wilson, then Postmaster General, regarding the stamps. At that time, the exposition was not considered important enough to warrant a commemorative issue.

Almost a year passed before the possibility of a commemorative issue was mentioned again. Edward Rosewater, the exposition's publicity manager, spoke directly to the new Postmaster General, James Albert Gary, in December 1897. He requested that a single commemorative postage stamp to be issued in honor of the exposition. By this time the exposition could be classified as a true World's Fair, with support from the US government and invitations extended to foreign countries.

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est	POSTAGE STAMPS STICKY YET	on
ise	Whether the government will issue	per
ely	postage stamps commemorative of the	brill
	exposition has not been settled Con-	pro
ist,	gressman Mercer is working to get the	nal
t	issue, but has not met with much, en-	
ach	couragement The postmaster general	I
s to	has told him that the part to be taken	4 4
ren	by the United States in the exposition	at
nes,	is not so considerable as to warrant	I
aber	calling the exposition a national one,	I
	and for this reason he does not think	HI
tion	that it would be proper for him to	I
the	give an order for the stamps and more-	ca
our	over, if he did so, it might establish a pre-	I
and	cedent that would prove troublesome	I
with	Merced does not consider, however, that	ca
Pat-	this ends the matter, and he is con-	I
world-	tinuing his efforts He now reports	I
	that the third assistant postmaster gen-	sh
	eral is favorable to the request, and he	aft
	hopes to succeed	
	MORE APPLICATIONS	

Omaha World-Herald, January 28, 1897

all	WASHINGTON, Dec. 1.—(Special Tele-	1
he	gram.)—This has been another busy day for	1
re	those promoting the Transmississippi Ex-	1
is	position in the departments. Mr. Rosewater	1
es	had a long interview with Postmaster Gen-	1
er	eral Gary in relation to a commemorative	1
nd	stamp for the exposition. Mr. Gary at first	1
st	was opposed to the scheme of issuing a stamp	11
er	on account, as he thought, of the non-	11
le	international character of the exposition. It	11
be	was shown to him that the act of congress	11
ed	made the show international and that the	11
or	president had directed that invitations be	11
ly-	sent to foreign governments to participate	11
ry	in the Omaha fair. This placed a somewhat	11
he	different light upon the question and Post-	11
he	master General Gary finally agreed to sanc-	11
ts	tion the issuance of a commemorative stamp	11
r-	if the State department would certify to the	11
ch	international scope of the exposition. This	11
ty	was all Mr. Rosewater had asked for and	11
sh	before the day was over he had a strong	11
n.	letter from Assistant Secretary Day of the	11
N.	State department, addressed to the postma-	11
in	ster general, wherein it was stated that all	11
rs	foreign governments had been asked to par-	11
ed	ticipate in the Transmississippi Exposition	11
or	and many had accepted. This, it is expected,	11
as	will complete the negotiations for the issu-	11
	ance of commemorative stamps.	11
	INDIAN EXHIBIT.	11
	In an interview Secretary Bliss of the In-	11
	terior department, informed Mr. Rose-	11

Omaha Daily Bee, December 2, 1897



Portrait of Edward Rosewater

Photograph from the Nebraska State Historical Society ( RG2411-4772 )

Edward Rosewater, who was best known as the publisher and editor of the *Omaha Daily Bee* newspaper, was also a Republican politician. It is primarily through his effort and political connections that the Trans-Mississippi commemorative series was created. Rosewater had experience with, and interest in, postal matters: He had been appointed as a United States delegate to and elected vice president of the Universal Postal Congress in 1897. Among his connections with the US Post Office was a direct line of communication to the First Assistant Postmaster General Perry S. Heath.<sup>5</sup>

Rosewater's contribution to securing the creation of the commemorative issue was well known, even at the time. A report from the *Greenwood Record* newspaper, republished in the *Omaha Daily Bee*, directly names him as the responsible party:

Greenwood Record: The Transmississippi Exposition will have special stamps which will be sold at the Omaha postoffice and on the Exposition grounds, but will be received as postage at any postoffice in the United States. It is said that Edward Rosewater was the first man to suggest that there be stamps of special design for the exposition. Allow us to suggest that Mr. Rosewater's picture be on one of them.

Although nothing has been done as yet to have the  
 courtly represented.  
 Greenwood Record: The Transmississippi  
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 Allow us to suggest that Mr. Rosewater's  
 picture be on one of them.  
 Schuyler Herald: The Transmississippi  
 Exposition is the one grand epoch in the  
 history of Nebraska, where it shall be the

*Omaha Daily Bee*, December 13, 1897

<sup>5</sup> (Neil 1997)

Postmaster General Gary not only agreed to Rosewater's request for a commemorative, he expanded on it. December 22, 1897, the Omaha *World-Herald* published an announcement that Gary approved a series of five stamps for the exposition.

## OMAHA, NEBRASKA, WED

### T-M. EXPOSITION STAMPS

Special Issue Ordered Commemorating the Trans-Mississippi Event.

Electric Contractors Meet to Ask They Be Given a Chance to Bid on Wiring.

Stock Subscription Certificates Ready to Send Out--Doings of the Great Show's Managers.

Washington, D. C., Dec. 22.—Postmaster General Gary has decided to order a special issue of stamps commemorative of the holding of the Trans-Mississippi exposition at Omaha, next year. This is done at the request of persons prominent in the management of the exposition.

They will be of the denominations of 1 cent, 2 cents, 5 cents, 10 cents and \$1. Suggestions for designs for the new issue will be received at the postoffice department from any persons who desire to submit them. There will be no attempt to withdraw from sale the regular stamps, as was the case during the World's fair, when almost all postal business was transacted with the Columbia stamps, but they will be freely supplied, whenever there is a request for them from postoffices.

The new series will be different in color from the existing ones, so that they will be readily distinguished.

ELECTRICAL CONTRACTORS.

“Washington, D.C., Dec 22. — Postmaster General Gary has decided to order a special issue of stamps commemorative of the holding of the Trans-Mississippi exposition at Omaha, next year. This is done at the request of persons prominent in the management of the exposition.

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## DESIGNERS AND ENGRAVERS

The Bureau of Engraving and Printing began preparing the stamps in February of 1898. The US government shifted stamp production from private printing companies to the BEP in 1893. Their first issue of postage stamps in 1894 used modified dies from the previous (1890) stamp issue by the American Bank Note Company (ABNCo.). The BEP saw the Trans-Mississippi commemorative issue as an opportunity to demonstrate their skill by designing and engraving an artistic new series.

The BEP announced their plans for the ambitious issue, which would be of the same size as ABNCo.'s commemorative issue for the Columbian Exposition. They planned to print the Trans-Mississippi in two colors, with black vignettes and colored frames.



Overseeing the creation of the issue was the Director of the BEP, Claude M. Johnson. Johnson was appointed to the position of director in 1893, the same year that the company took over printing postage stamps.<sup>6</sup>

After the subjects were selected, the task of designing the stamps belonged to Raymond Ostrander Smith. Smith, who previously worked for the ABNCo. worked at the BEP until 1902. He was known for his elaborate designs including opulent framework.<sup>7</sup>



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<sup>6</sup> (Printing 2016)

<sup>7</sup> (Galleries 2013)

The work of creating the stamp dies was tasked to four engravers: Smillie, Baldwin, Ponickau, and Ronaldson. Many of these engravers recently came to the Bureau from American Bank Note Company.



Chief Engraver George F. C. Smillie worked for the BEP from 1894 to 1911. He was a well-known engraver who previously worked with ABNCo. and other companies. Smillie was responsible for engraving the vignettes for the 1¢, 4¢, and 50¢ Trans-Mississippi stamps.

Marcus W. Baldwin, who joined the BEP in 1897, is considered one of the most accomplished security engravers. Baldwin engraved the vignettes for the 2¢, 5¢, 10¢, \$1 and \$2 Trans-Mississippi stamps. He also engraved all of the framework for the issue, with the exception of the 2¢ frame, which was engraved by Ronaldson.



Douglas S. Ronaldson engraved the letters and numerals in the frames for all values of the issue. He also engraved the complete frame for the 2¢ value. Ronaldson worked for the BEP from 1897 until his death in 1902.

The final contributor to the Trans-Mississippi engravings was Robert F. Ponickau, responsible for the 8¢ stamp vignette.<sup>8</sup>



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<sup>8</sup> (Galleries 2013)

## SUGGESTIONS & SPECULATION

With a series of five stamps in mind, the Post Office Department called on the public to provide design suggestions. In charge of selecting the subjects was Third Assistant Postmaster General John A. Merritt.

Merritt specified that the subjects should commemorate the westward expansion of the United States with images of either famous people; of historical events; or of natural landscapes evocative of the West.

Merritt's own suggestions, published in the *Omaha Daily Bee* on December 24, 1897, included the statue of Thomas Hart Benton; the painting *Westward the Course of Empire Takes Its Way*; and the painting *Discovery of the Mississippi* by De Soto. None of these suggestions were selected for the issue.

Later newspaper articles would publish suggestions from the public including: landscapes of Yosemite and Yellowstone, flour mills, grain elevators, train stations, or hydraulic mining equipment.<sup>9</sup>

WASHINGTON, Dec. 23.—(Special Telegram.)—Third Assistant Postmaster General Merritt, who will have charge of the selection of subjects for the series of Transmississippi Exposition stamps, which the postmaster general has officially announced will be issued to commemorate the exposition, has written a number of letters to leading artists of the country asking for suggestions relative to designs. Three divisions are suggested in the letter:

First—That they should contain portraits of distinguished people identified with the country.

Second—Appropriate historical events should be represented as illustrated by existing paintings or engravings.

Third—Unique pictures of national scenery or of other things associated with the progress of the transmississippi region.

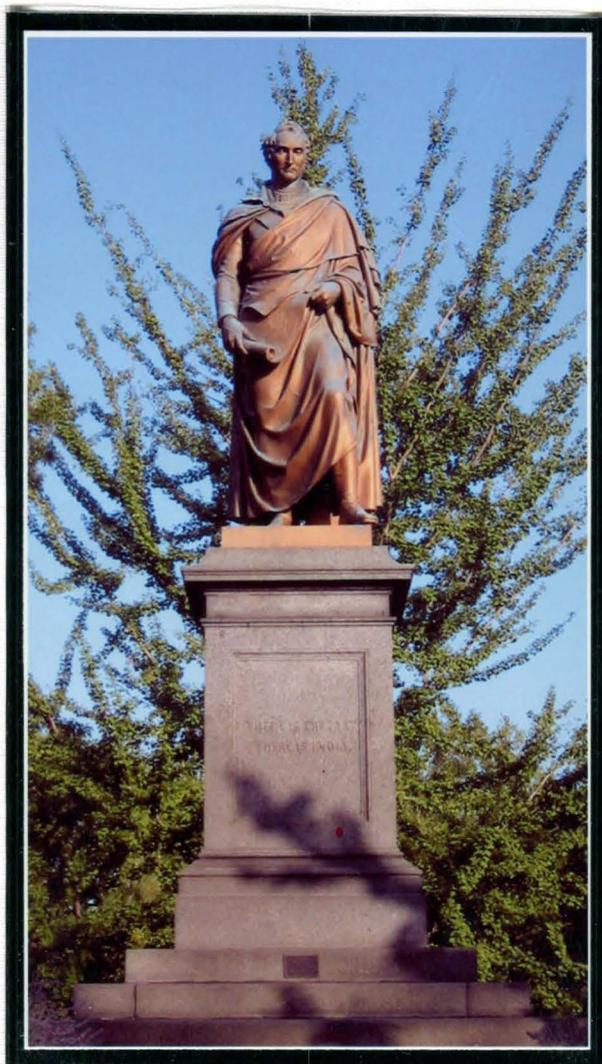
General Merritt said today that it would be his aim to give the exposition a series of stamps that would be artistic in character and would appeal to all classes of people, and especially typical of the greater west. Incidentally he suggested that possibly one of the stamps might contain the reproduction of the celebrated etching known as "Fremont Hoisting the Flag on the Rocky Mountains." The well known statue of Thomas H. Benton at St. Louis contains upon one side of the base a quotation from one of Mr. Benton's celebrated speeches, wherein he outlines the possibilities of the country beyond the Mississippi, and it has been thought that the Benton statue would be an appropriate design for one of the stamps. The complex picture which hangs in the south corridor of the capitol, known as "Westward ho," emblematical of the hardships attendant upon the pioneer, and suggested by Bishop Berkeley's quotation, "Westward the course of the empire takes its way," was also mentioned by General Merritt.

There is a picture in the rotunda of the capitol—De Soto's discovery of the Mississippi river—which might also be used upon one of the denominations. General Merritt said the department would endeavor to select subjects that had been painted or engraved and would not call upon artists to draw new scenes, which would necessitate a great amount of time, but on the contrary, would endeavor to get photographs, reproductions of famous paintings and personages, so that the engraving of dyes might be quickly done.

The stamps will be somewhat of the same shape as the Columbian stamp, twice the size of the present postage stamp. They will be sought after by collectors, and as there are nearly half a million of these people in the world, the government, instead of being philanthropic, expects to realize handsomely upon the issue. Columbian stamps today are selling at prices many times higher than was once paid for them and they are growing more valuable each year. It is the same way with the Centennial stamp, and it will also be true of the Transmississippi stamp. Suggestions of scenes on stamps are invited by the Post-office department, as it is General Merritt's desire to give the exposition the handsomest set of stamps ever issued, to commemorate an exposition.

*Omaha Daily Bee*, December 24, 1897

<sup>9</sup> (*Omaha World-Herald*, December 30, 1897)



**Photograph of statue of Thomas Hart Benton.**

One of Merritt's suggestions for a stamp subject was this statue, sculpted by Harriet Hosmer. Benton was a Missouri senator and supporter of westward expansion. His support of gold over paper money earned him the nickname "Old Bullion". The statue was erected in 1868 at St. Louis's Lafayette Park.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>10</sup> (Wikipedia, Thomas Hart Benton 2016)



Photograph of painting, *Discovery of the Mississippi by DeSoto* by William H. Powell.

This painting, suggested as a subject by Merritt, was commissioned by Congress in 1853. It hangs in the Rotunda of the Capitol Building in Washington D.C.<sup>11</sup> Although this painting was not used, a similar subject (the explorer Marquette's discovery of the Mississippi River) was selected for the design of the 1¢ stamp.



Photograph of mural, *Westward the Course of Empire Takes Its Way* by Emanuel Gottlieb Leutze.

Also known as *Westward-Ho*, this 20-by-30-foot mural is located behind the western staircase of the House of Representatives chamber in the Capitol Building.<sup>12</sup> This was a common suggestion by Omaha newspapers.

<sup>11</sup> (Architect of the Capitol 2016)

<sup>12</sup> (Wikipedia, *Westward the Course of Empire Takes Its Way* 2016)

## THE ROSEWATER ESSAYS

While Third Assistant Postmaster General Merritt sought after artist suggestions, Postmaster General Gary contacted Edward Rosewater specifically. Rosewater published Gary's letter in the December 27 issue of his paper.

brought up to the stucco and covering the entire building.

**ASKS FOR STAMP SUGGESTIONS.**

**People Who Have Ideas to Burn Should Come Forward.**

Postmaster General Gary has written the following letter to Manager Edward Rosewater of the Department of Publicity and Promotion of the exposition regarding the souvenir postage stamps which are to be issued by the government in honor of the exposition:

"Upon receipts of your letter of the 13th inst. I immediately considered the proposition contained therein as to the issue of a special set of stamps to commemorate the Transmississippi and International Exposition to be held in your city next year, and have decided to issue a set of the denominations of 1 cent, 2 cents, 5 cents, 10 cents and \$1. The time is short, however, in which to prepare for this issue, and we are desirous of having any suggestions you may wish to offer to aid us in selecting the proper designs for the stamps. Will you not kindly give me your views as early as possible on that point? We are receiving suggestions from other sources and out of the abundance of material from which to choose we hope to be able to select designs that will be satisfactory, not only to the department, but to the exposition authorities. Kindly give prompt attention to this matter, as it will take nearly all the time between now and the opening of your exposition to prepare the dies for printing the stamps."

Manager Rosewater desires to receive suggestions from anyone who thinks he has an original idea regarding the designs to be placed on these stamps. The Postoffice department wishes to make these stamps desirable from an artistic standpoint and also to make them illustrative of the transmississippi region and the Department of Publicity and Promotion wishes to render all possible assistance in the matter.

**NEW SUMMER THEATER IN SIGHT.**

**Krug Brewing Company Will Erect**

"Upon receipts of your letter of the 13<sup>th</sup> inst. I immediately considered the proposition contained therein as to the issue of a special set of stamps to commemorate the Transmississippi and International Exposition to be held in your city next year, and have decided to issue a set of the denominations of 1 cent, 2 cents, 5 cents, 10 cents, and \$1. The time is short, however, in which to prepare for this issue, and we are desirous of having any suggestions you may wish to offer to aid us in selecting the proper designs for the stamps. Will you not kindly give me your views as early as possible on that point? We are receiving suggestions from other sources and out of the abundance of material from which to choose we hope to be able to select designs that will be satisfactory, not only to the department, but to the exposition authorities. Kindly give prompt attention to this matter, as it will take nearly all the time between now and the opening of your exposition to prepare the dies for printing the stamps."

In response, Rosewater created a series of wash drawings of his own stamps designs, which he submitted to the Postmaster for consideration. These drawings, known as the "Rosewater Essays" were the first essays produced for the issue.

Rosewater's design for the 1¢ stamp included a cattle herd. Although this design was not adopted, a herd of cattle was used as the subject for the final \$1 design.



A dull orange wash drawing on tracing paper, backed by card.

Listed in Scott's *Specialized Catalogue* as 285-E11

Listed in Clarence W. Brazer's *Catalogue* as 285E-A

Rosewater's design for the 2¢ stamp featured the image of a Native American on horseback, waving to a wagon train in the distance. The subject of an Indian on horseback was used on the issued 4¢ stamp, and a wagon train was the subject of the 8¢ stamp.



A deep red-orange wash drawing on tracing paper, backed by card.

Listed in Scott's *Specialized Catalogue* as 286-E11

Listed in Clarence W. Brazer's *Catalogue* as 286E-A

Rosewater's design for the 5¢ stamp included a farmer plowing a field. While this design was not adopted, the subject of farming was used for the final design of the 2¢ stamp, which included an image of a horse-drawn plow.



A dark yellow wash drawing on tracing paper, backed by card.

Listed in Scott's *Specialized Catalogue* as 288-E9

Listed in Clarence W. Brazer's *Catalogue* as 288E-A

Rosewater's design for the 10¢ stamp featured a train rounding a mountain. Rosewater was eager to include a locomotive in the issue. Aside from the image below, he also submitted a suggestion to include a scene of the Golden Spike being driven, completing the trans-continental railroad.<sup>13</sup>



**A dusky blue wash drawing on tracing paper, backed by card.**

Listed in Scott's *Specialized Catalogue* as 290-E9

Listed in Clarence W. Brazer's *Catalogue* as 290E-A

<sup>13</sup> (*Omaha Daily Bee*, February 6, 1898)

Rosewater's design for the \$1 stamp featured the image of a woman, representing the goddess Columbia, holding three lights while standing atop a globe.



**A deep orange yellow wash drawing on tracing paper, backed by card.**

Listed in Scott's *Specialized Catalogue* as 292-E9

Listed in Clarence W. Brazer's *Catalogue* as 292E-A

# THE CHEYENNE WARRIOR VIGNETTE

1898.

## STAMP DESIGNS ACCEPTED

Trans-Mississippi Exposition  
Government Issue of Nine  
Denominations.

Subjects Illustrate Conditions and Progress of the West From Past to Present.

Medal Also Being Designed Which Shows a Composite Picture of the Feminine Beauty of This Region.

Washington, D. C., Jan. 12.—The authorities of the postoffice department have determined upon the subjects which shall be illustrated upon the new series of postage stamps to be issued by the department in commemoration of the Trans-Mississippi and International exposition, to be opened the first of next June, at Omaha. They are illustrative of the conditions, progress and accomplishments of the great west from its discovery to our own day.

The series comprises nine denominations of stamps as follows:

One-cent—The discovery of the Mississippi river by Marquette.  
Two-cent—An Indian chief.  
Four-cent—A buffalo hunting scene.  
Five-cent—The Pathfinder, being a picture of Fremont raising the flag on the summit of the Rockies.  
Eight-cent—A train of emigrants crossing the plains.  
Ten-cent—A mining scene.  
Fifty-cent—A cowboy and cattle.  
Dollar—A harvesting scene, or a great flouring mill.  
Two-dollar—The Rock Island bridge, showing part of the city of Omaha.

The director of the mint, who is required by special act of congress to prepare the commemorative or souvenir medals for this enterprise, has today approved the subjects to be illustrated, and artists are now preparing the designs.

The reverse will be a group, comprising a mounted Indian spearing a buffalo. Above will be the words Trans-Mississippi, and below the date 1898. The obverse of this medal will show the head and profile of the typical young woman of the Trans-Mississippi region.

The design is to be prepared by Rockwood, by means of composite photography, and the types are now being selected by the states and territories of the entire region. The medals, like the stamps, testify the progress of civilization, from the beginning of things fifty years ago, to the finest and most refined product of the half century. The medals are within the protection of all the laws against counterfeiting the coins of the government.

EDUCATIONAL EXHIBIT.

From the original plan for five stamps, the series expanded to eight values, then later to nine. The first published list of subjects for all nine values of the Trans-Mississippi issue was posted in the Omaha *World-Herald* on January 12, 1898.

### Stamp Designs Accepted

Washington, D.C., Jan. 12. — The authorities of the postoffice department have determined upon the subjects which shall be illustrated upon the new series of postage stamps to be issued by the department in commemoration of the Trans-Mississippi and International exposition, to be opened the first of next June, at Omaha. They are illustrative of the conditions, progress and accomplishments of the great west from its discovery to our own day.

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- Five-cent – The Pathfinder, being a picture of Fremont raising the flag on the summit of the Rockies.
- Eight-cent – A train of emigrants crossing the plains.
- Ten-cent – A mining scene.
- Fifty-cent – A cowboy and cattle.
- Dollar – A harvesting scene, or a great flouring mill.
- Two-dollar – The Rock Island bridge, showing part of the city of Omaha.

From this first article, the 1¢, 4¢, 5¢, and 8¢ stamps would maintain their original subjects. Of particular interest in this article is the listed subject for the 2¢ stamp: "An Indian chief."

Another article published two months later, describes a similar subject, this time for the 4¢ value.

...

The 4-cent stamp has a simple yet a unique design which will commend it to curio hunters. It will be that of an Indian mounted upon a pony and is from a drawing by Frederic Remington.

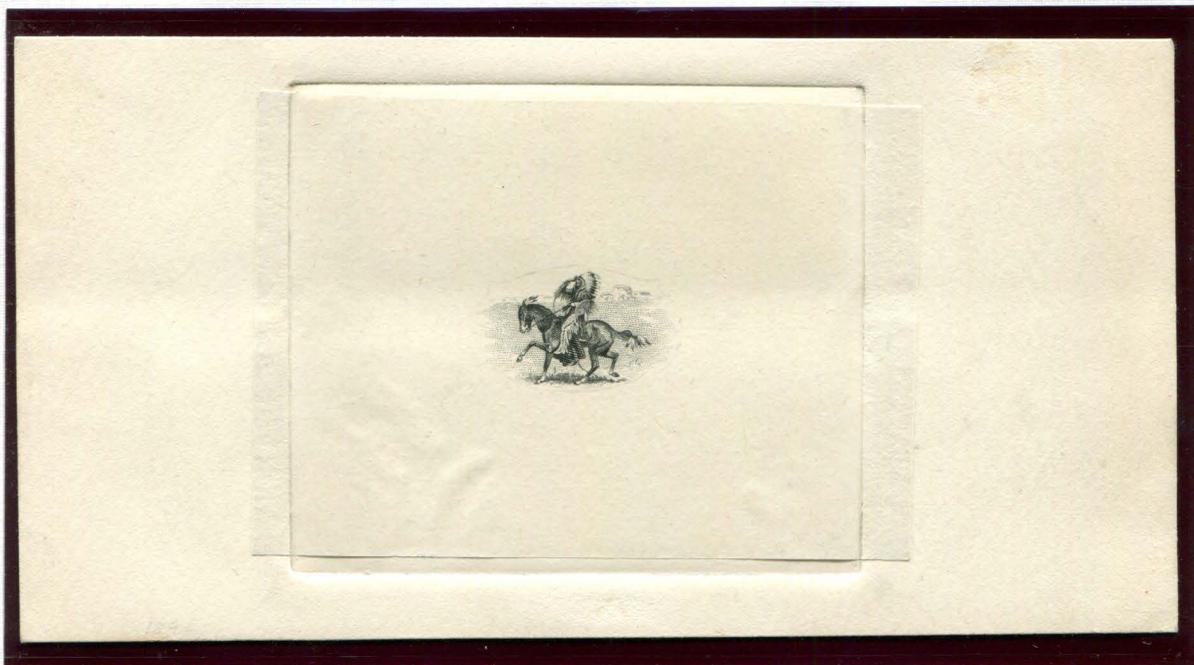
...

The article goes on to describe subjects used for the other values: Marquette at the Mississippi (1¢), the Eads bridge (2¢), a Schoolcraft illustration of hunting buffalo (5¢), Fremont on the Rocky Mountains (8¢), a Heaton painting of an emigrant with a fallen horse (10¢), a miner with mules (50¢), a herd of cattle in a storm (\$1), and a harvesting scene (\$2). Although the values are shifted, most of these descriptions are accurate to the final issue.

All of the subjects in these two articles were eventually used for Trans-Mississippi stamps *except* for the Frederic Remington "Indian chief". Many of the subjects changed values during production.



A vignette die of a Native American chief mounted on horseback was engraved for the Trans-Mississippi issue by Marcus W. Baldwin, but was never used. This so called "Indian Vignette" has been a source of philatelic mystery. It is unknown for certain what value it was intended for, or the reason why it was not used.



**Vignette die on India paper, sunk on card.**  
Listed in *Scott's Specialized Catalogue* as 289-E1 (8¢)  
Listed in *Clarence W. Brazer's Catalogue* as 289E-A (8¢)

The design is based on a drawing titled "A Cheyenne Warrior" by Frederic Remington, an artist famous for depicting the American West. Two of Remington's other works, "Protecting a Wagon Train" and "The Gold Bug" were used for the 8¢ and 50¢ Trans-Mississippi stamps, respectively.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> (Brookman 1967)



**“A Cheyenne Warrior” by Frederic Remington.**

Photograph of original wash drawing.

While the initial newspaper article linked this unused subject to the 2¢ stamp, and the second listed it as 4¢, arguments have been made that the vignette was intended for the 8¢, or \$2 values.

Clarence Brazer, a philatelist responsible for a majority of the early research on United States stamp essays and proofs, believed the vignette was intended for the 8¢ stamp. He based this on Bureau of Engraving and Printing records that tied the subject to the 8¢ frame. His listing of the vignette has carried over to the Scott *Specialized* Catalog.

Brazer supposedly acknowledged that his example of the essay included a pencil notation on the reverse stating “engraved for the \$2.00 Omaha”.<sup>15</sup> It is worth noting that that essay featured in this exhibit does not include such a notation - whether the notation ever existed, or if was written on part of the card that was cut away, is unknown. It is most likely that more than one essay was pulled of the die.

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<sup>15</sup> (Neil 1997)

Speculating on the vignette’s intended value is difficult, as many of the other subjects were also changed from their originally planned denominations during the planning process.

For whatever reason, the subject was not included in the final issue. Featured here are a series of mock-up designs, demonstrating what the vignette could have looked as an issued stamp. The four most likely values are shown.



Bi-color “Cheyenne Warrior” vignette mock-ups.



Single color “Cheyenne Warrior” vignette mock-ups.

## ALTERNATE VALUES

The January 12<sup>th</sup> article in the Omaha *World-Herald* listed “A cowboy and cattle” as the subject for the 50¢ stamp. While no cowboy is included with the herd, cattle were eventually the subject for the \$1 stamp.



**Early bi-color essay on India paper.**

Unfinished “Western Cattle in Storm” vignette in black,  
with early 1¢ frame die in red brown.

Listed in Scott’s *Specialized Catalogue* as 285-E10

Featured here is a bi-color essay of the “Western Cattle in Storm” vignette printed in the 1¢ “Marquette on the Mississippi” frame.

In another essay recorded by Brazer, the “Western Mining Prospector” vignette was printed in an early version \$2 “Harvesting in the West” frame.<sup>16</sup>



**Photocopy of essay from Brazer book.**

Unfinished “Western Mining Prospector” vignette in black,  
with early \$2 frame die in dusky violet.

Listed in Scott’s *Specialized Catalogue* as 293-E1

Listed in Clarence W. Brazer’s *Catalogue* as 293E-A

These early essays imply that even as the dies were being engraved, the exact values of the subjects were not finalized. It seems that even before the “Big Switch” in May, the BEP was experimenting with matching subjects to different denominations.

By May, a final list of selected subjects and values was announced by the BEP and published for the public.

<sup>16</sup> (Brazer, *Essays for U.S. Adhesive Postage Stamps* 1947)

**TO ISSUE JUNE 1.**

**Postoffice Department Has Handsome Exposition Stamps in Nine Denominations Nearly Ready.**

The May number of the Postal Guide just issued contains the following information regarding the new Trans-Mississippi stamps:

On the 1st of June next, or sooner if practicable the department will begin issuing to postmasters, and will continue to issue until December 31, 1898, the new series of postage stamps. They will be known as the trans-Mississippi series, and will comprise the following denominations: 1, 2, 4, 5, 8, 10, and 50 cents, and \$1 and \$2. These stamps are not intended to supersede the ordinary series now in use; so that postmasters may obtain supplies of either or both whenever needed.

The trans-Mississippi stamps differ materially in size from the ordinary series, the engraved space being about seven-eighths of an inch wide by about one and three-eighths long. The designs are also radically unlike those of the ordinary stamps—consisting of a border substantially the same in all the denominations, except that the colors, and the figures and letters representing values are different) and a central scene in black, indicative in some way of the development of the great region beyond the Mississippi river.

The scenes represented on the stamps, together with the colors of the borders of the several denominations, are these:

One-cent—"Marquette on the Mississippi," from a painting by Lamprecht, now in possession of the Marquette college of Milwaukee, Wis., representing Father Marquette in a boat on the Upper Mississippi, preaching to the Indians. Color of border, dark green.

Two-cent—"Mississippi River Bridge," from an engraving, a representation of the bridge over the Mississippi at St. Louis. Color of border, carmine.

Four-cent—"Indian Hunting Buffalo," reproduction of an engraving in Schoolcraft's History of the Indian Tribes. Color of border, red brown.

Five-cent—"Fremont on Rocky Mountains," modified from a wood engraving, representing the Pathfinder planting the United States flag on the highest peak of the Rocky mountains. Color of border, dark blue.

**To Issue June 1. - Postoffice Department Has Handsome Exposition Stamps in Nine Denominations Nearly Ready.**

[...]

One-cent - "Marquette on the Mississippi," from a painting by Lamprecht, now in possession of the Marquette college of Milwaukee, Wis., representing Father Marquette in a boat on the Upper Mississippi, preaching to the Indians. Color of border, dark green.

Two-cent - "Mississippi River Bridge," from an engraving, a representation of the bridge over the Mississippi at St. Louis. Color of border, carmine.

Four-cent - "Indian Hunting Buffalo," reproduction of an engraving in Schoolcraft's History of the Indian Tribes. Color of border, red brown.

Five-cent - "Fremont on Rocky Mountains," modified from a wood engraving, representing the Pathfinder planting the United States flag on the highest peak of the Rocky Mountains. Color of border, dark blue.

Eight-cent - "Troops Guarding Train," representing a detachment of United States soldiers conveying an emigrant train across the prairies, from a drawing by Frederic Remington, permission to use which was kindly given by the publisher, R.H. Russell of New York. Color of border, dark lilac.

Ten-cent - "Hardships of Emigration," from a painting kindly loaned by the artist, A.G. Heaton, representing an emigrant and his family on the plains, in a "prairie schooner," one of the horses having fallen from exhaustion. Color of border, light brown.

Fifty-cent -

"Western Mining Prospector," from a drawing by Frederic Remington (permission to use which having been kindly given by the publisher, R.H. Russell of New York), representing a prospector with his pack mules in the mountains, searching for gold. Color of border, orange.

One Dollar - "Western Cattle in Storm," from a picture by J. MacWhirter, kindly loaned by Mrs. C.B. Johnson, representing a herd of cattle, preceded by the leader, seeking safety from a gathering storm. Color of border, copper red.

Two Dollar - "Harvesting in the West," from a photograph, representing a grain field with a long line of harvesters at work. Color of border, sapphire blue.

[...]

Eight-cent.—"Troops Guarding Train," representing a detachment of United States soldiers conveying an emigrant train across the prairies, from a drawing by Frederic Remington, permission to use which was kindly given by the publisher, R. H. Russell of New York. Color of border, dark lilac.

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Fifty-cent.—"Western Mining Prospector," from a drawing by Frederic Remington (permission to use which having been kindly given by the publisher, R. H. Russell of New York), representing a prospector with his pack mules in the mountains, searching for gold. Color of border, orange.

One Dollar.—"Western Cattle in Storm," from a large steel engraving, after a picture by J. MacWhirter, kindly loaned by Mrs. C. B. Johnson, representing a herd of cattle, preceded by the leader, seeking safety from a gathering storm. Color of border, copper red.

Two Dollar.—"Harvesting in the West," from a photograph, representing a grain field with a long line of harvesters at work. Color of border, sapphire blue.

No trans-Mississippi postal cards or stamped envelopes will be issued.

Although this series of stamps will be discontinued on the 31st of December, 1898, they will be good for postage at any time afterwards.

**Omaha World-Herald**  
May 16, 1898

## FARMING IN THE WEST - THE SUBJECT

Originally titled “Harvesting in the West”, this vignette represented the development of the West from untamed prairie to an agricultural community. The Congressional Postal Committee also hoped that the image would inspire more people to migrate to the potential farmlands.

The source of the vignette’s subject is a photograph of workers preparing to plow the North Dakota fields of an Amenia and Sharon Land Company farm. The Amenia and Sharon Land Co. was a bonanza farm – a company that owned and managed a large area of agricultural land. The photograph was taken around 1888 and features modern farming technology of the time. An enlarged version of the photograph was on display at the Chicago World’s Fair in 1893.<sup>17</sup>



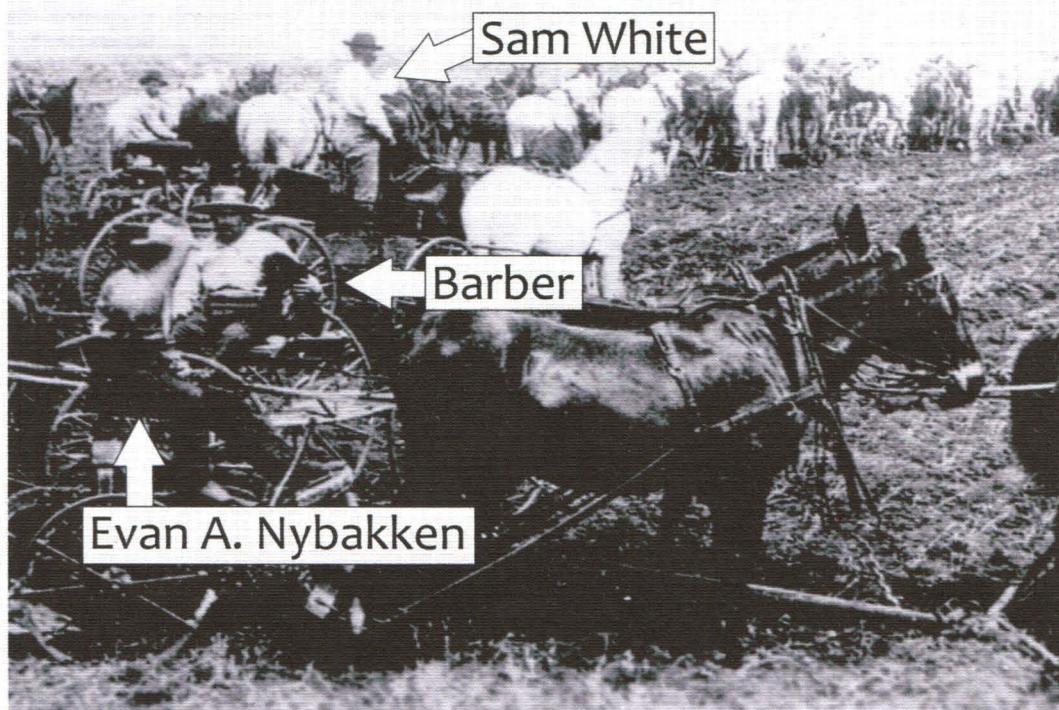
**Plowing scene photograph – Source of “Farming in the West” Vignette.**  
Taken on a wheat field of the Amenia and Sharon Land Company in North Dakota.

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<sup>17</sup> (Neil 1997)

This subject represents first example of living people depicted on a US postage stamp. At the time, the Postal Laws and Regulations stated that *“No portrait shall be placed upon any of the bonds, securities, notes, fractional or postal currency of the United States while the original of such portrait is living.”*<sup>18</sup> This rule was not lifted until 2011.<sup>19</sup> The farming scene is not technically a portrait, however. This is why it, along with several later stamps featuring living people (such as the 1932 Arbor Day stamp), was permitted. Although these exceptions were allowed, it still remains uncommon for living people to be featured on US stamps.

Several workers are featured on the stamp, but only three can be accurately identified by name. These men are Evan A. Nybakken, a Norwegian immigrant working for the Amenia and Sharon Land Co.; Sam White, a foreman; and Barber, the field boss, with his dog.<sup>20</sup>



Plowing scene photograph enlarged and labeled to identify known farmers.

<sup>18</sup> (United States Congress 1893)

<sup>19</sup> (Service 2011)

<sup>20</sup> (Neil 1997)

### What is an essay?

“A proposed design, a designer’s model or an incomplete engraving. Its design differs in some way – great or small – from the issued item.”

– Scott Specialized Catalog

The word “essay” comes from the old French “essayer” meaning “to test the quality of”. A philatelic essay is essentially a rough draft for the final stamp. The term covers everything from designer’s sketches and engravers progress proofs, to tests of experimental papers or inks.

## FARMING IN THE WEST – DIE PROGRESSION ESSAYS

As engraver Marcus Baldwin worked on the Farming in the West vignette die, the working image appeared in reverse and in the negative. Essays were pulled from the working die periodically in order to check the progress in positive, as it would appear when printed.

Each essay represents a different state of the die. For the Farming in the West vignette, there are five distinct states, although the die would be further engraved and changed later, when it was combined with the frame.



Click above to view an animation of the *Harvesting in the West* vignette die as it is “built” through states of engraving.

Changes made between the progressive essays might be drastic or barely noticeable when compared side by side. **To highlight these changes, this exhibit uses digital overlays.** The overlays are created using high-resolution scans of the die states. The states are colored, one green, one red; when combined digitally areas that are the same between the states appear brown in color. Areas showing on only one state will appear in either green or red.

First State: Pulled February 19, 1898



**Die on India Paper, sunk on card.**  
Listed in *Scott's Specialized Catalogue* as 293-E2  
Listed in *Clarence W. Brazer's Catalogue* as 293E-Ba



**Enlarged photocopy – First State of Vignette Die.**

The first state of the die was lightly engraved. A thin pencil line marks where the shield border should go.

The digital overlay below compares the first and second states of the vignette die. Lines added to the die in the second state show though in red. A significant amount of shading was added after the first state was pulled. In the second state, the horses are much darker.

#### Vignette Die Overlay:



First state of die = Green : Second state of die = Red

Second State: Pulled February 24, 1898



Die on India paper, sunk on card.  
Listed in *Scott's Specialized Catalogue* as 293-E3  
Listed in *Clarence W. Brazer's Catalogue* as 293E-Bb

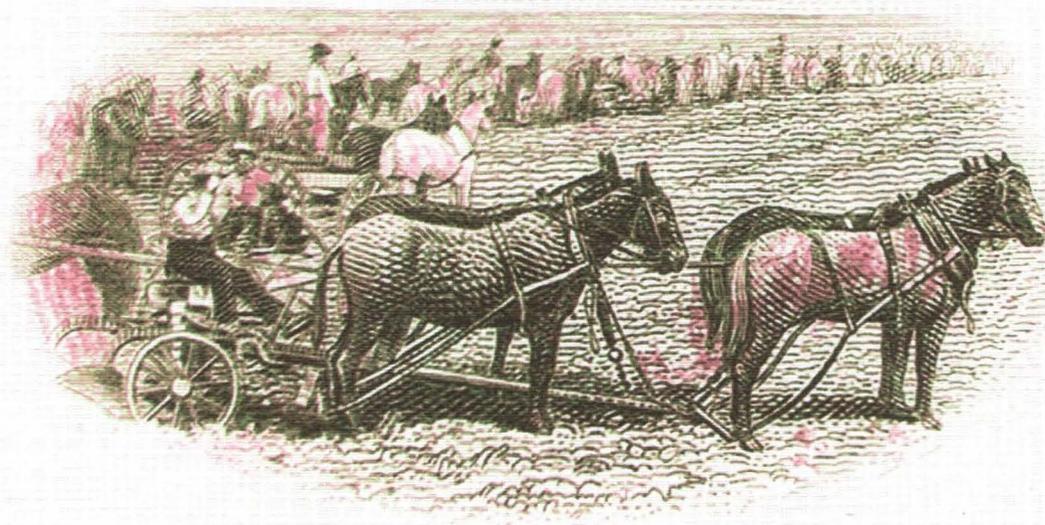


Enlarged photocopy – Second State of Vignette Die.

Not long after the second state of the vignette die was pulled, an essay was produced for the third state of the die. The third state is identified by pencil shading added over the print, marking where further engraving and shading would be added to later states of the die.

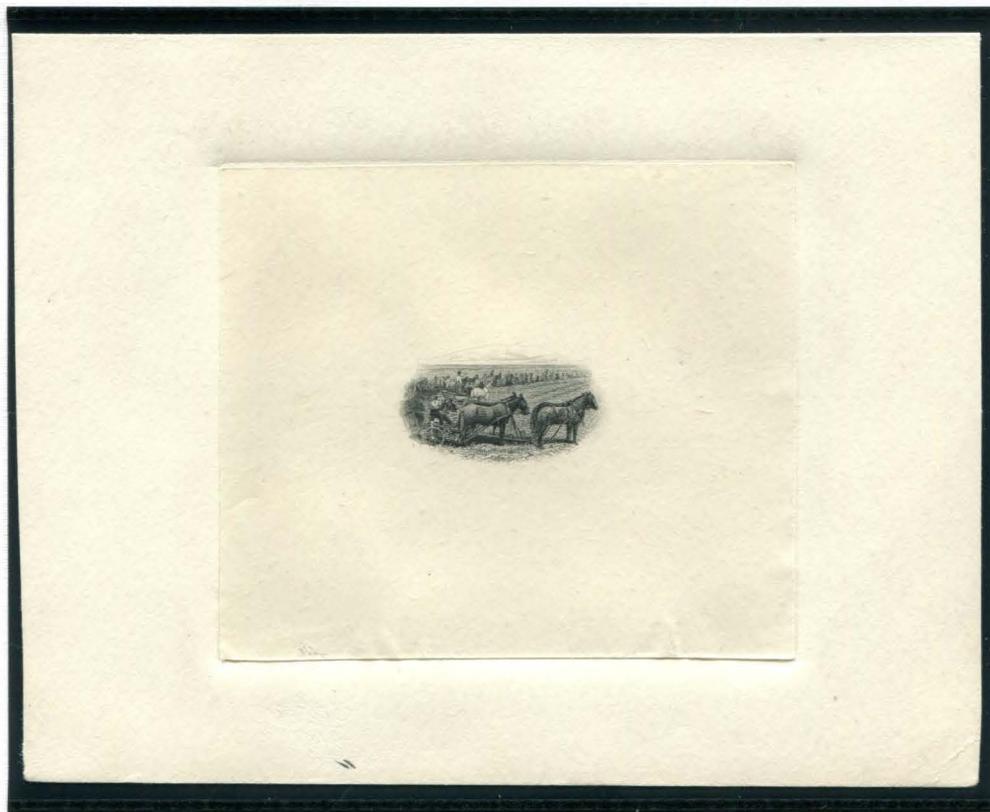
The digital overlay below compares the second and third states of the vignette die. The pencil shading on the third state shows through in red patches. It is very noticeable on the lead horse and at the left edge of the vignette.

Vignette Die Overlay:



Second state of die = Green : Third state of die = Red

Third State: Pulled February 25, 1898



Die on India paper, sunk on card.  
Listed in Scott's *Specialized Catalogue* as 293-E4  
Listed in Clarence W. Brazer's *Catalogue* as 293E-Bc



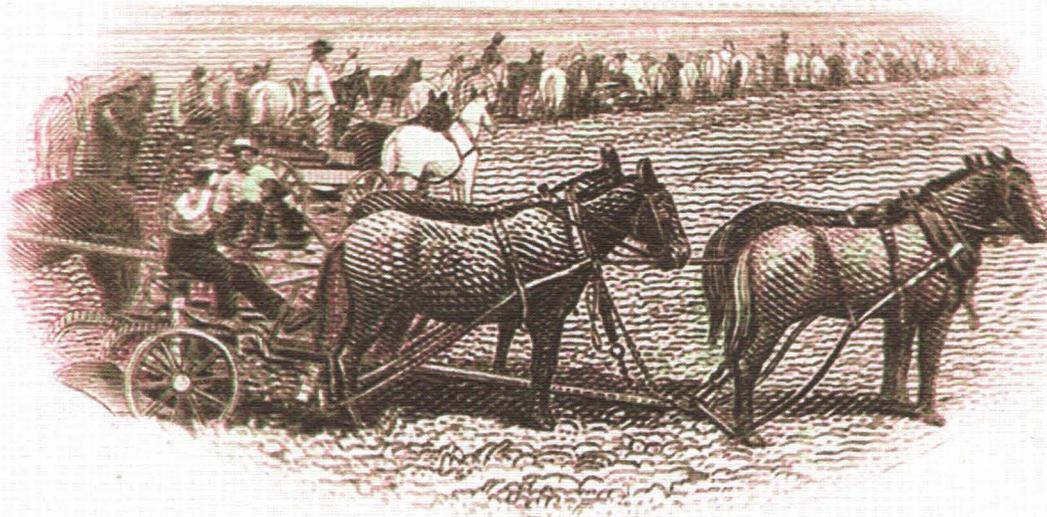
Enlarged photocopy – Third State of Vignette Die.

After the third state essay was pulled, the die was further engraved all over. By the time the fourth state essay was printed, it was significantly darker.

The digital overlay below compares the third and fourth states of the vignette die. The overlay appears more red overall because the lines were darkened to create the fourth state. The most noticeable change when viewed side-by-side is the tail of the center horse, which is thickened in the fourth state.

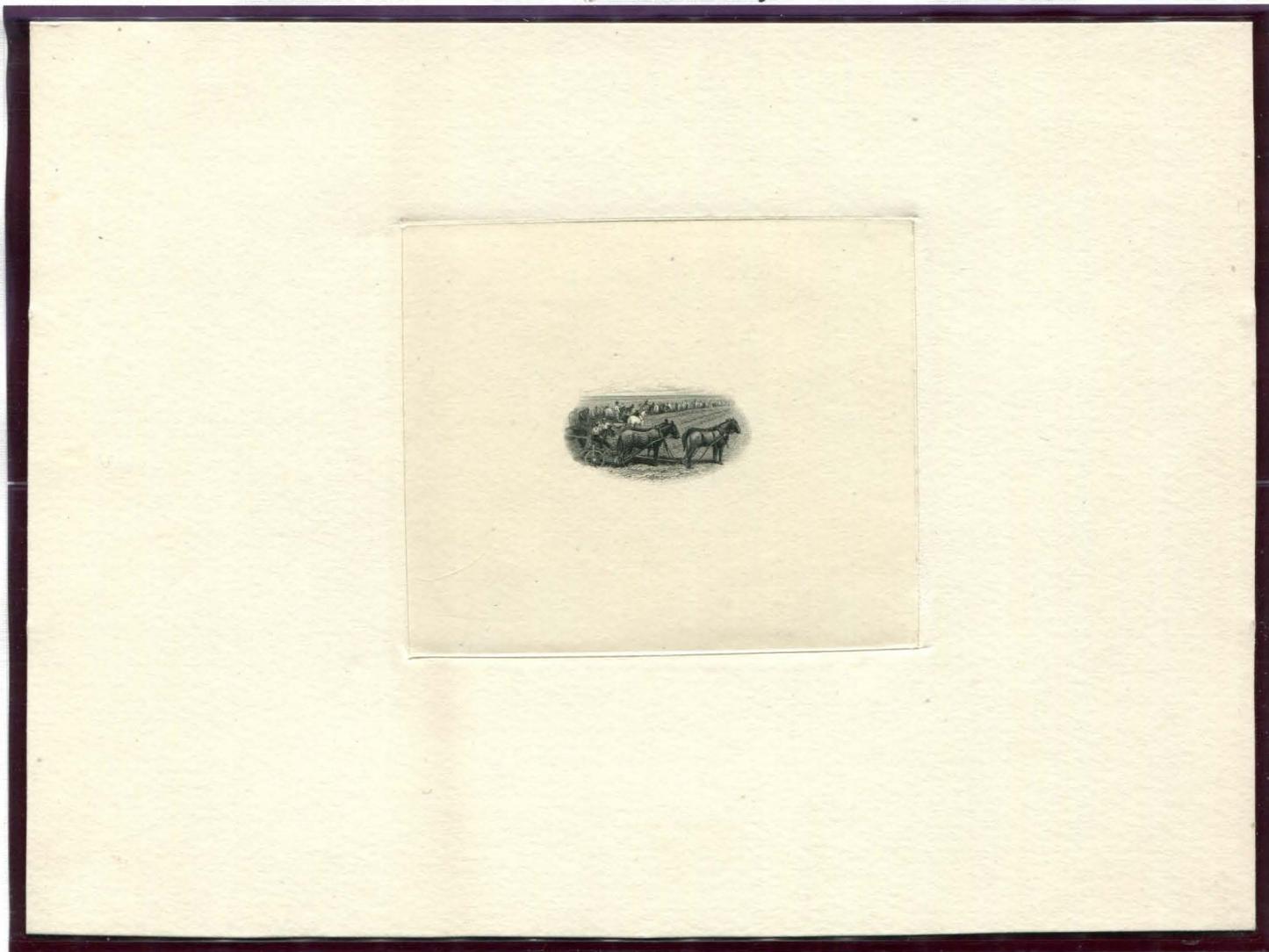
The pencil shading from the third state of the die is not present on the fourth state essay. This shading shows through in the overlay as soft patches of green.

#### Vignette Die Overlay:



Third state of die = Green : Fourth state of die = Red

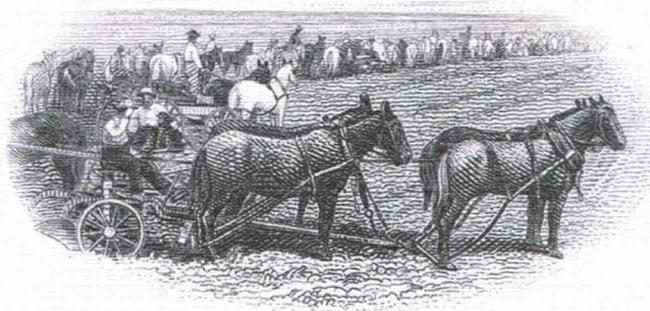
Fourth State: Pulled February 26, 1898



**Die on India paper, sunk on card.**

Listed in *Scott's Specialized Catalogue* as 293-E5

Listed in *Clarence W. Brazer's Catalogue* as 293E-Bd

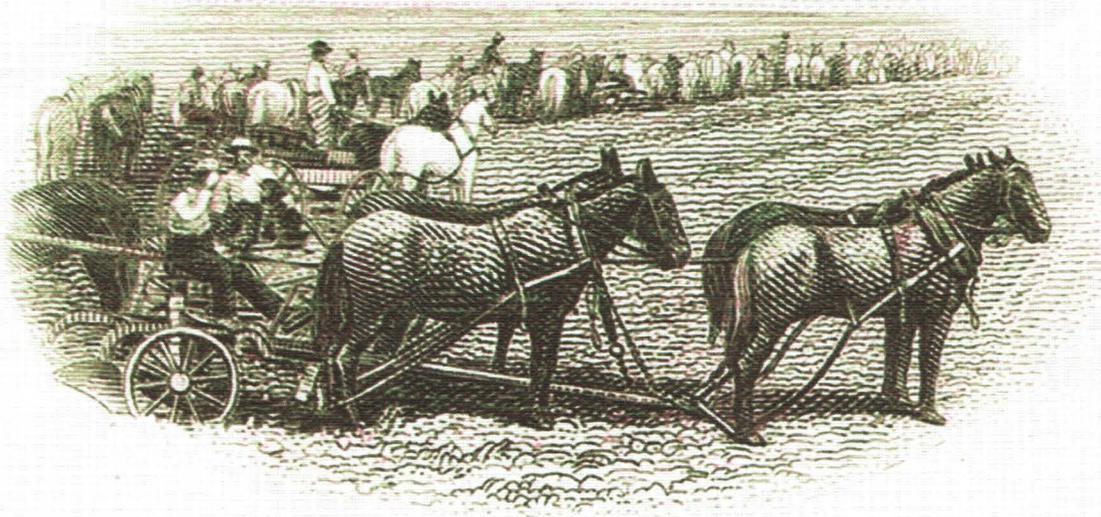


**Enlarged photocopy – Fourth State of Vignette Die.**

The fourth state represents a vignette that is nearing completion. Between the fourth and fifth state essays, very little is added.

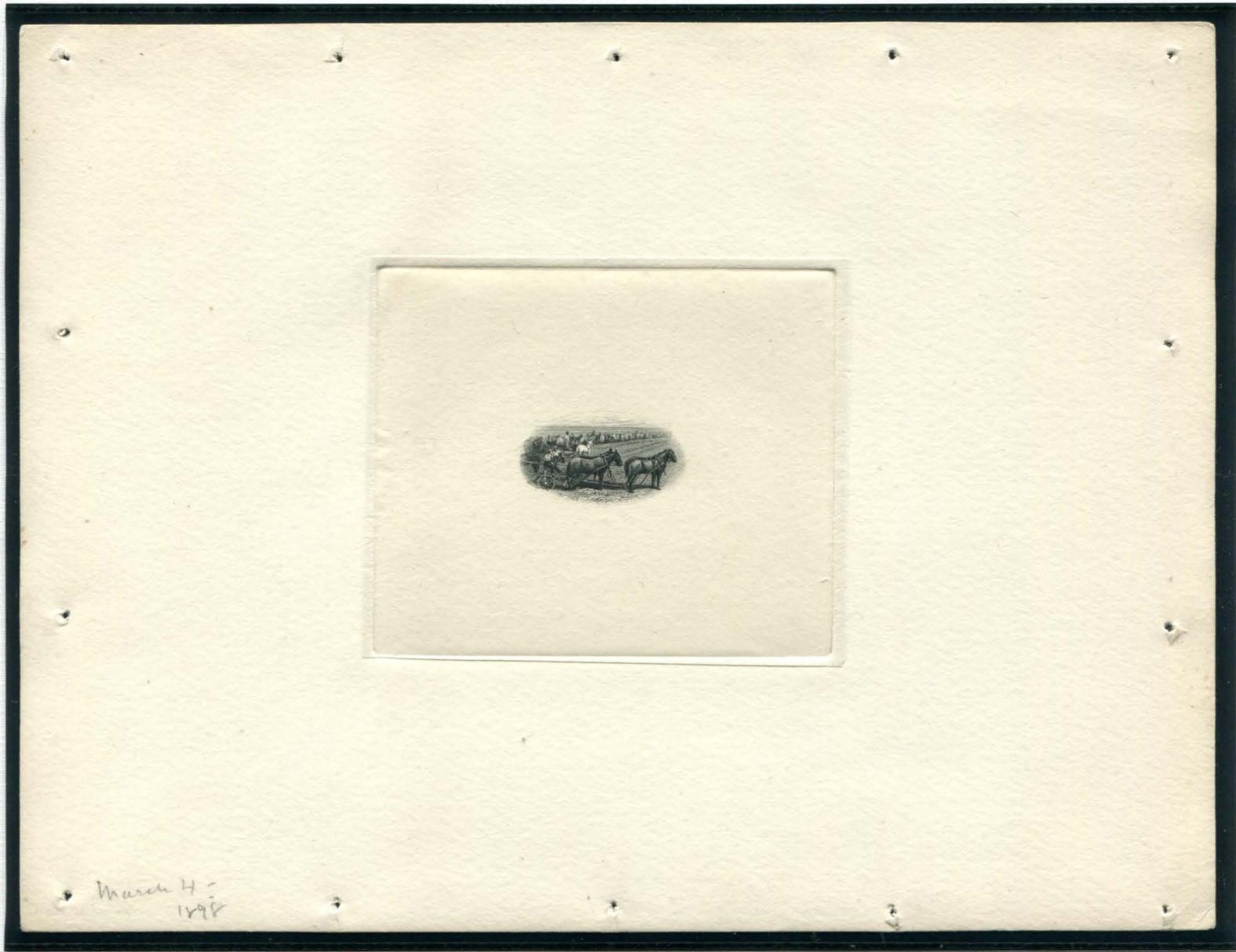
The digital overlay below compares the fourth and fifth states of the vignette die. The key addition to the fifth state are the dots added to the sky, near the horizon at left. Some areas in the fifth state are also darkened slightly.

Vignette Die Overlay:



Fourth state of die = Green : Fifth state of die = Red

Fifth State: Pulled February 24, 1898



**Die on India paper, sunk on card.**  
Listed in Scott's *Specialized Catalogue* as 293-E6  
Listed in Clarence W. Brazer's *Catalogue* as 293E-Be



Enlarged photocopy – Fifth State of Vignette Die.

The fifth state of the die is the last state with a pulled vignette-only essay. However, additional engraving was added to the vignette before it was used to produce the bi-colored essays. In the overlay below, the additional engraving added to extend the sides of the vignette so that it better fits the frame shows through in red.

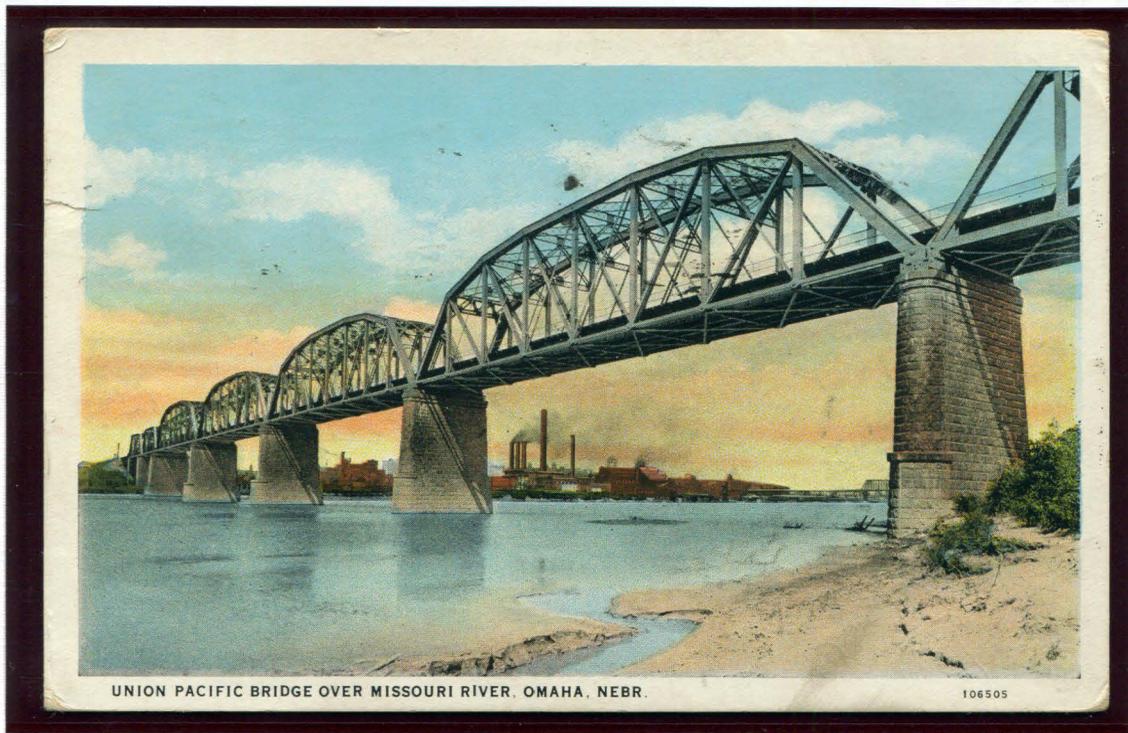
Vignette-Only and Bi-color Essay Dies Overlay



Fifth state of die = Green : Bi-Colored essay die = Red

## MISSISSIPPI RIVER BRIDGE - THE SUBJECT

An early suggestion claimed the Rock Island Bridge (also known as the Union Pacific Railroad Bridge) in Omaha would be used as the subject of a stamp.<sup>21</sup>

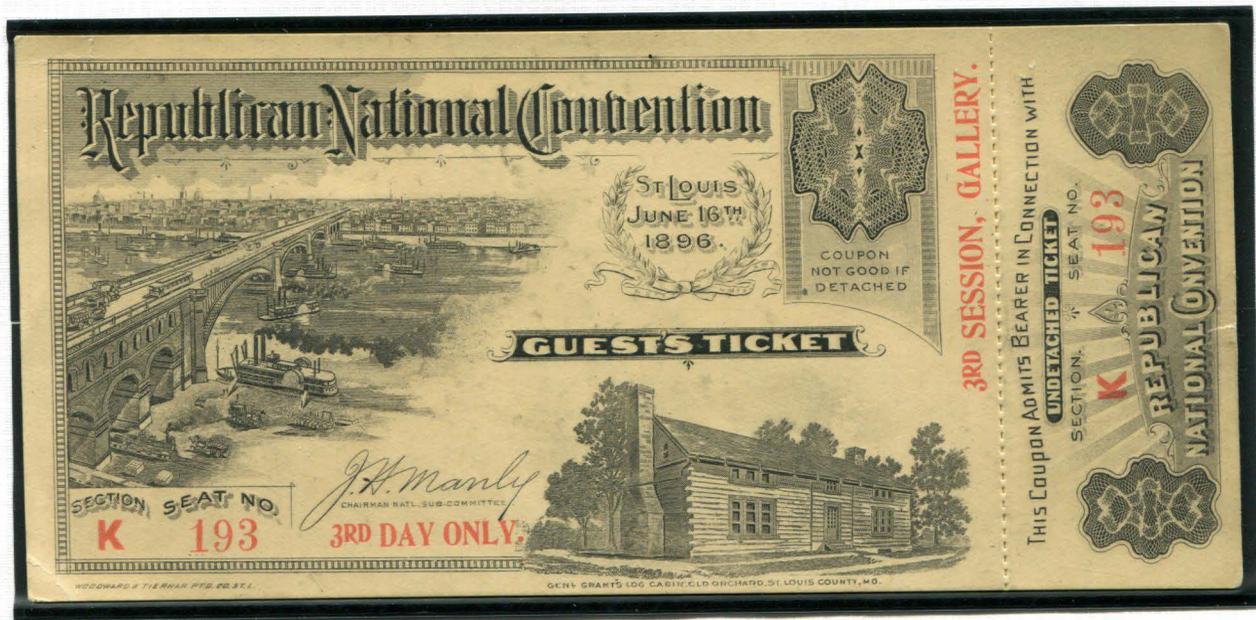


**Union Pacific Bridge Over Missouri River, Omaha, Nebraska.**  
Postcard published by MC Laughlin & Barnhart, Omaha, Nebraska. Circa 1910.

While this was preferable for the exposition leaders, who wanted to promote the city of Omaha, Postmaster Gary selected instead the Eads Bridge in St. Louis. A Mississippi River crossing was more representative of the theme than the Rock Island Bridge over the Missouri River; and St. Louis, considered the “Gateway to the West”, represented an important crossing for emigrants.

<sup>21</sup> (Omaha World-Herald, January 12, 1898)

An engraving of the James B. Eads Bridge used on admission ticket for the 1896 Republican National Convention was the model for the stamp vignette die. The ticket's engraving was produced by the Woodward and Tiernan Printing company. Although the stamp design is heavily based on this engraving, several elements were changed when adapting the design for a smaller size die.



1896 Republican National Convention ticket - 3rd day only

Model for the \$2 Mississippi river bridge vignette. Engraved and printed by Woodward & Tiernan.



William McKinley, circa 1900.

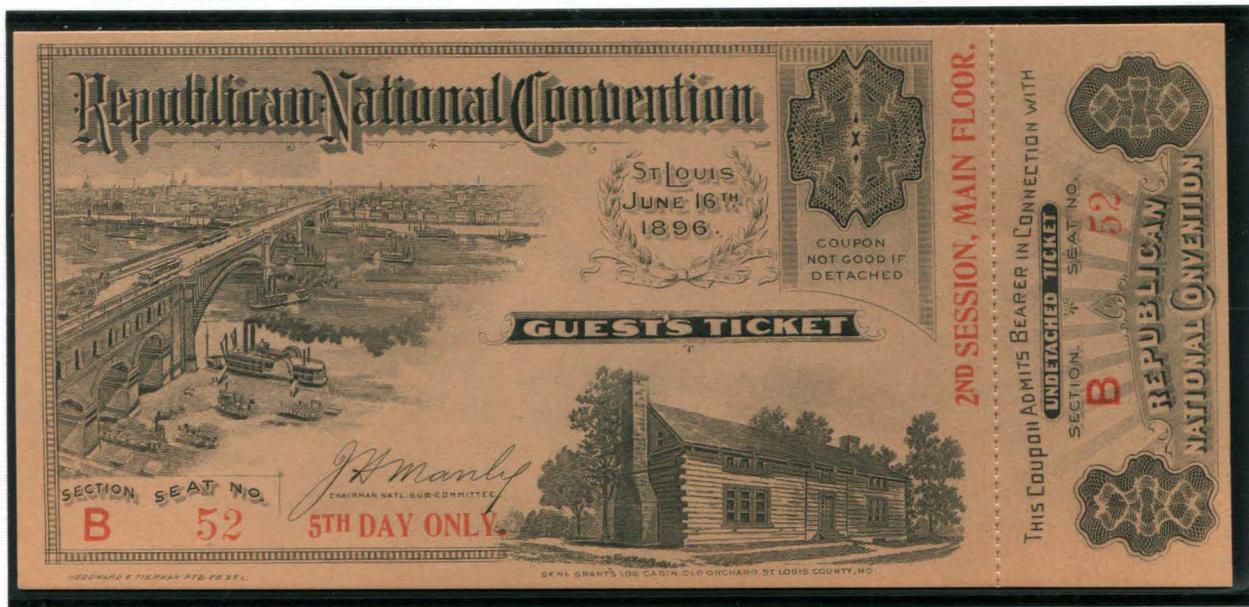
The 1896 Republican National Convention was held from June 16<sup>th</sup> to the 18<sup>th</sup>, in St. Louis, Missouri. It was there that Ohio Governor William McKinley won the Republican nomination for president. McKinley served as President of the United States from 1897 to 1901, and the Trans-Mississippi series of postage stamps was issued under his administration.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>22</sup> (Wikipedia 2016)

\* Picture: (Library of Congress 2016)



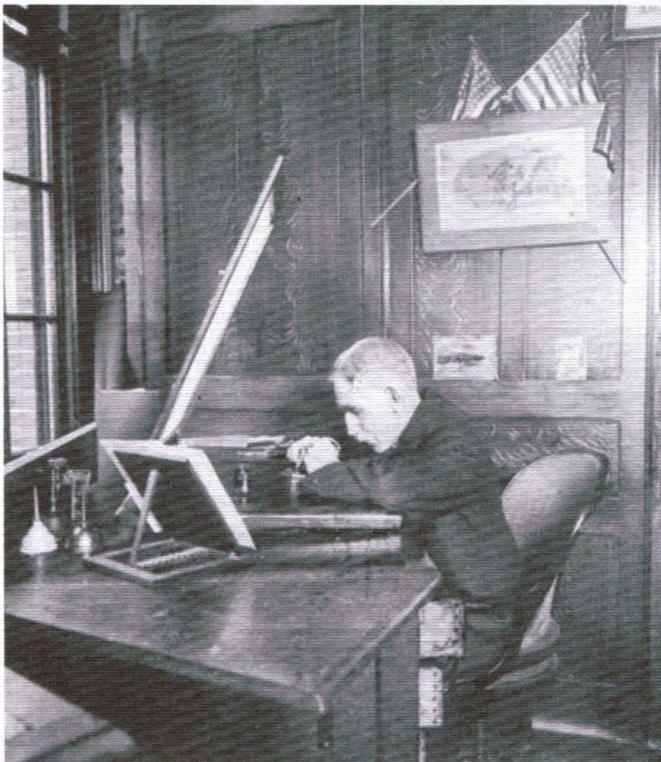
1896 Republican National Convention ticket – 4th day only  
Model for the \$2 Mississippi river bridge vignette. Engraved and printed by Woodward & Tiernan.



1896 Republican National Convention ticket – 5th day only  
Model for the \$2 Mississippi river bridge vignette. Engraved and printed by Woodward & Tiernan.

## MISSISSIPPI RIVER BRIDGE – DIE PROGRESSION ESSAYS

Minor changes were made to the design of the convention ticket for the smaller stamp vignette engraving. Several boats on the river and spires in the skyline were removed, as was one of the horse drawn carriages crossing the bridge.

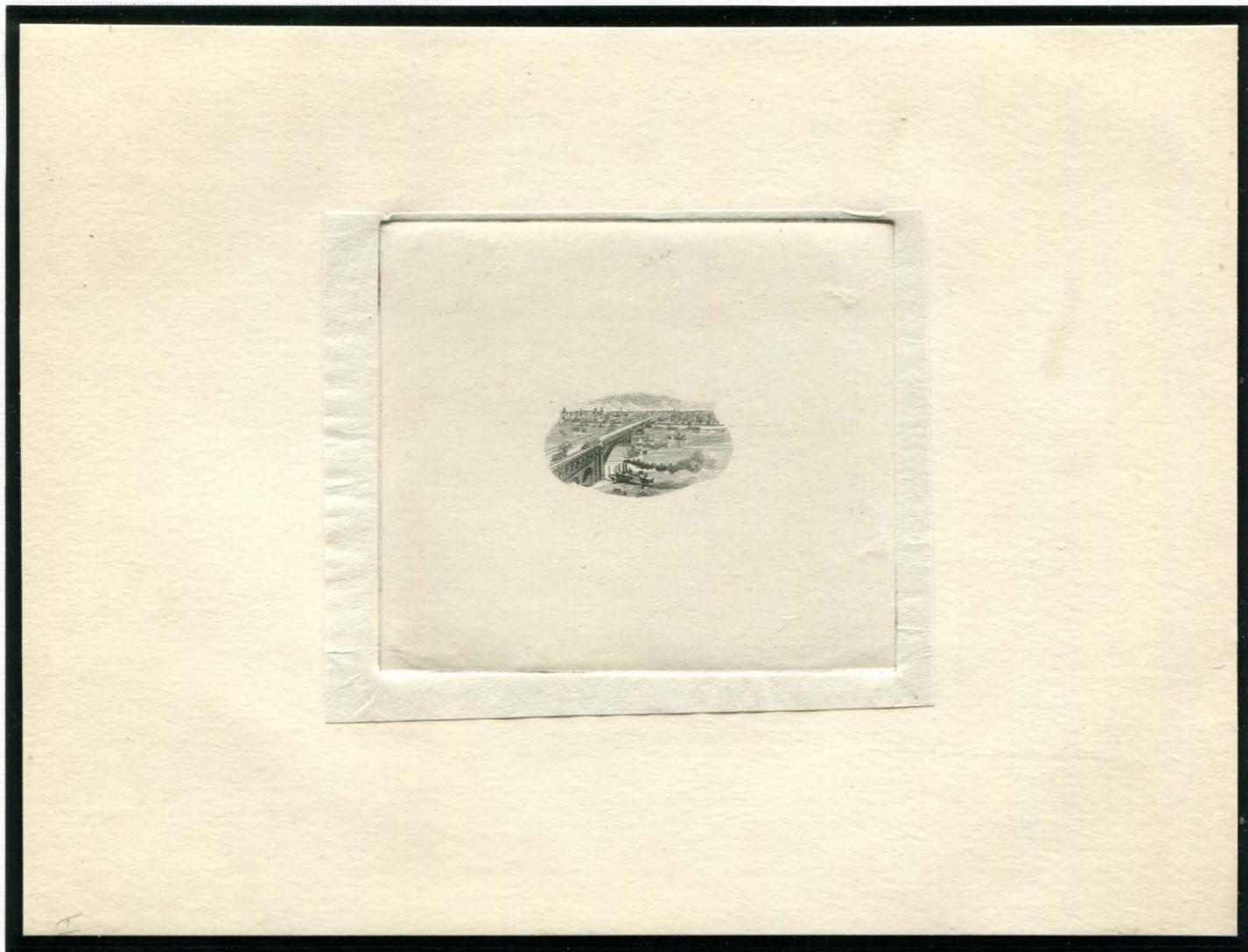


Engraver Marcus Baldwin at work.

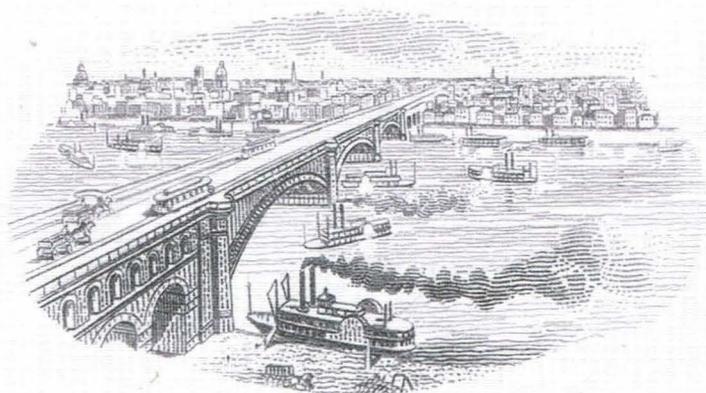


Only three states of the Mississippi River Bridge vignette die are known. This vignette would undergo more changes during the additional engraving after it was merged with the frame for the monochrome printing.

First State: Pulled March 7, 1898



**Die on India paper, sunk on card.**  
Listed in *Scott's Specialized Catalogue* as 286-E1  
Listed in *Clarence W. Brazer's Catalogue* as 286E-Ba

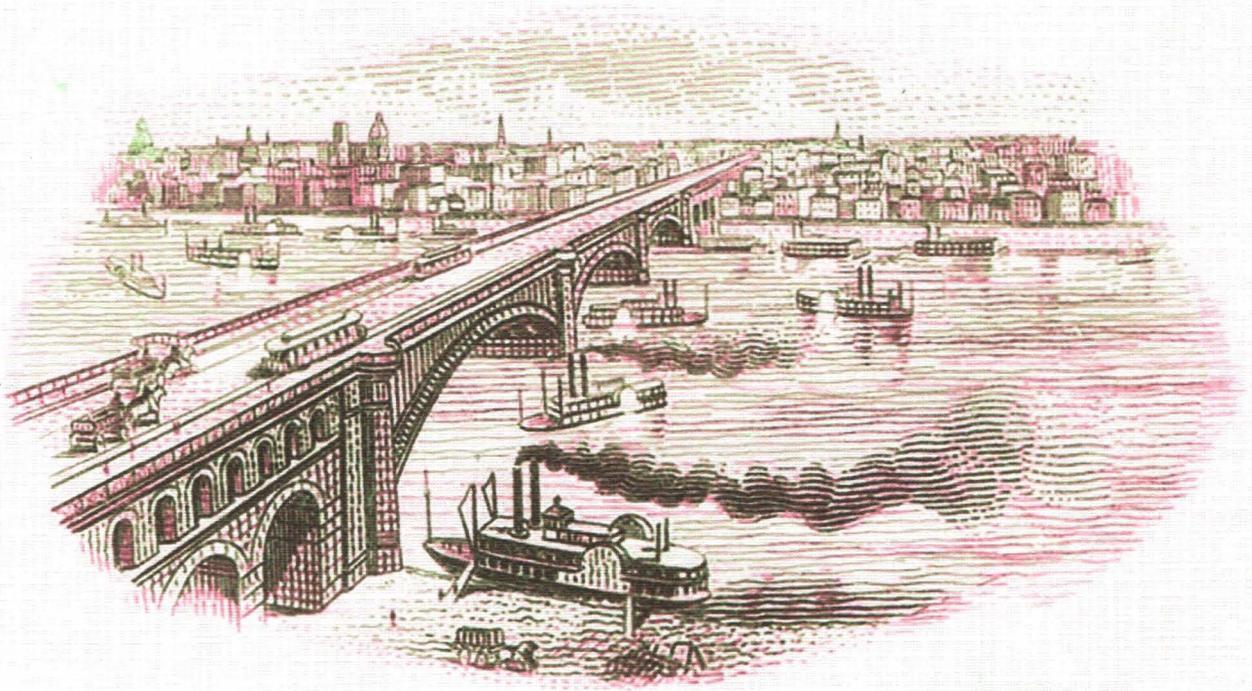


**Enlarged photocopy – First State of Vignette Die.**

The first state of the vignette die is lightly engraved, and is missing lines on the center arch of the bridge.

The digital overlay below compares the first and second states of the vignette die. Lines added to the die in the second state show though in red. These lines include additional waves in the water, more distinct shapes in the city along the shoreline, bars in the railing of the bridge, and shading under the arches of the bridge.

Vignette Die Overlay:



First state of die = Green : Second state of die = Red

Second State: Pulled April 5, 1898



**Die on India paper, sunk on card.**

Listed in *Scott's Specialized Catalogue* as 286-E2

Listed in *Clarence W. Brazer's Catalogue* as 286E-Bb

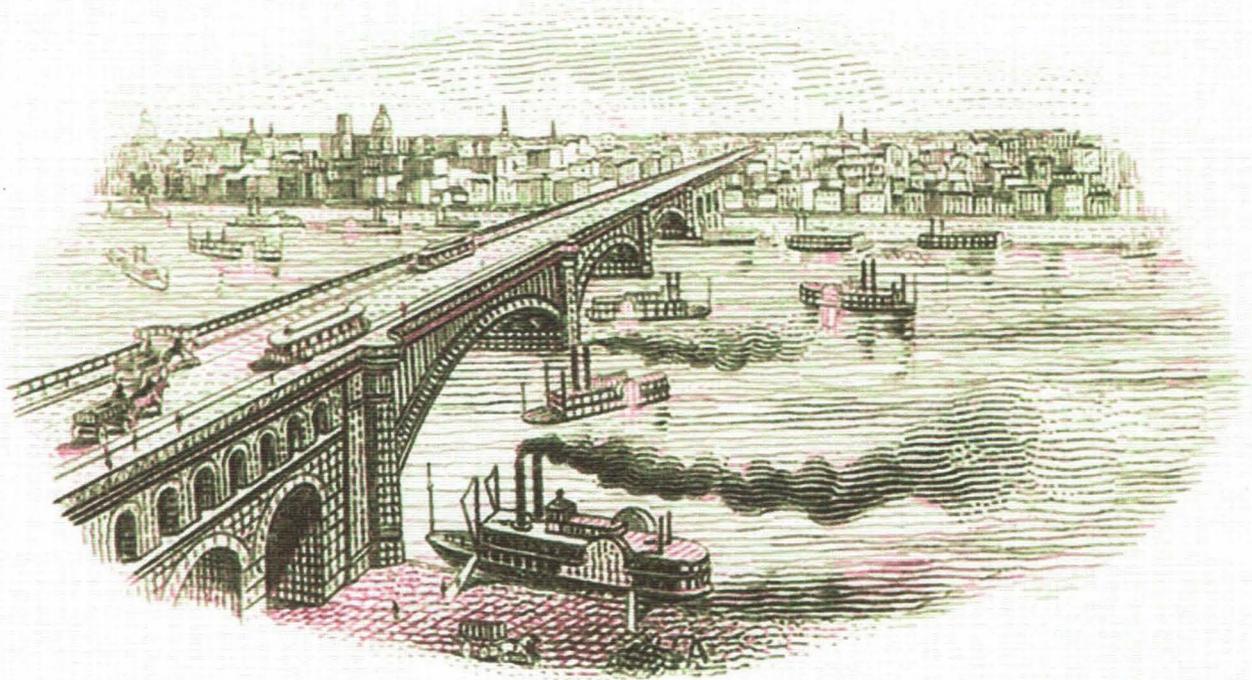


**Enlarged photocopy – Second State of Vignette Die.**

The second state of the die is neatly engraved with details on the bridge and city skyline, but has no crosshatching on the shore in the foreground. This is added in the third state of the die.

In addition to the easily noticeable crosshatching in the foreground, the digital overlay below highlights some of the other changes. The paddlewheels of the boats in the river are more defined and the horse carriage crossing the bridge at left is darkened.

#### Vignette Die Overlay:

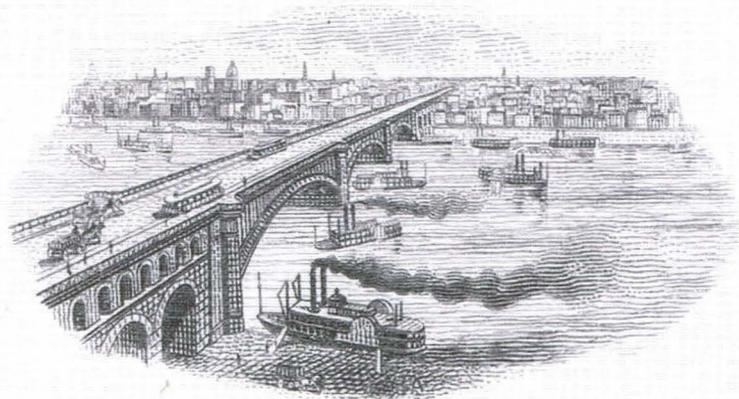


Second state of die = Green : Third state of die = Red

Third State: Pulled April 7, 1898



Die on India paper, sunk on card.  
Listed in Scott's *Specialized Catalogue* as 286-E3  
Listed in Clarence W. Brazer's *Catalogue* as 286E-Bc



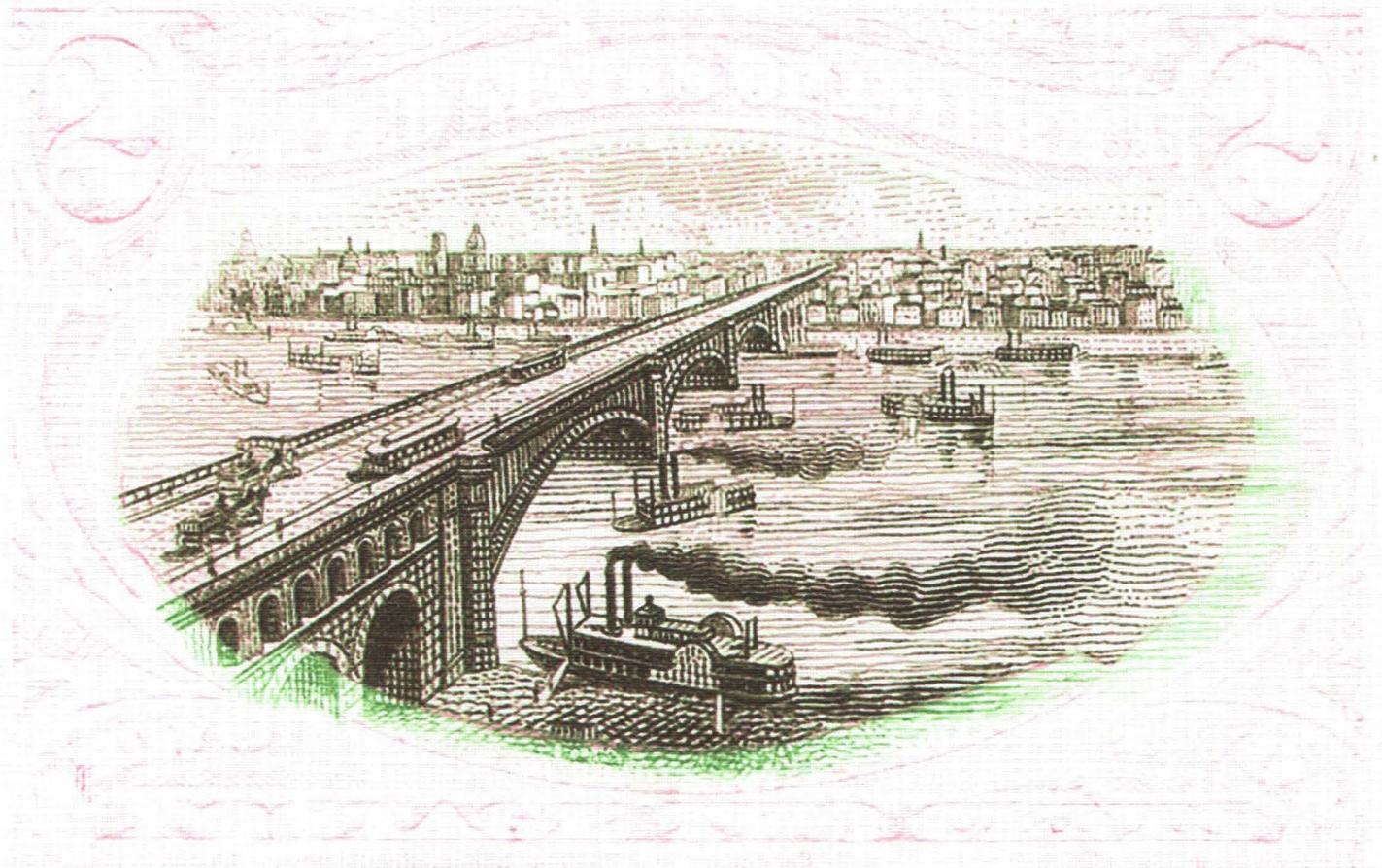
Enlarged photocopy - Third State of Vignette Die.

The third state of the vignette die represents an almost entirely complete design, although several changes would be made later during its merger with the frame.

Because the stamps were intended to be bi-colored, it was practical to make the vignette smaller than the frame space. This would allow for the vignette to fit into the frame during the two step printing process without as much risk of overlapping.

The Mississippi River vignette was larger than the intended frame space, so a significant amount of engraving was cut away from the bottom prior to the production of the bi-color essays. The overlay below compares the third state of the die with the bi-colored essay. The areas that show through in green are the parts of the engraving that were cut away from the third state.

#### Vignette-Only and Bi-color Essay Dies Overlay

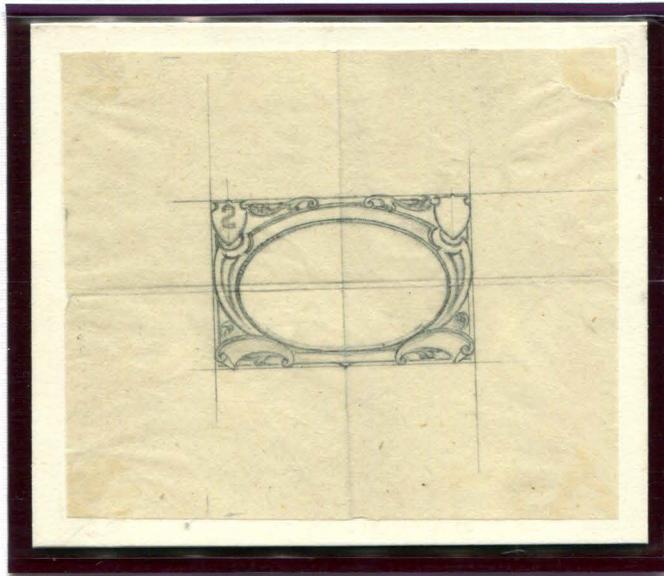


Third state of die = Green : Bi-Colored essay die = Red

## FRAME DESIGN ESSAYS

The frame for the Trans-Mississippi issue is essentially the same for each stamp. Only the value and subject title were changed for the individual denominations. The frame was designed by Bureau of Engraving and Printing designer, Raymond Ostrander Smith. With the exception of the 2¢ frame, the base frame dies for all values were engraved by Marcus W. Baldwin, and the numerals and lettering for each frame were engraved by Douglas S. Ronaldson. Ronaldson engraved the entirety of the 2¢ frame.<sup>23</sup>

The essay below is a drawing by Smith of the accepted frame design concept. It is drawn in pencil on tracing paper, at same size as the stamp design.



Pencil sketch of early frame design on tracing paper.

Listed in *Scott's Specialized Catalogue* as 286-E7

This essay represents an early frame design. The fluted columns at the sides remain constant to the final design, but the shape of the top and bottom banner are not accurate to the final design.

Note also the leafy flourish at the top, which was replaced with wheat in the final design. The decision to add the agricultural elements of corn and wheat to the frame is documented in the following essays.

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<sup>23</sup> (Galleries 2013)

The frame essay below is an ink and wash drawing by Smith. It is based heavily on the previous penciled design, although the top and bottom banners are more accurate to the final design.



**Ink and wash drawing of early frame design on thick paper.**

Listed in *Scott's Specialized Catalogue* as 286-E7A

While experimenting with the addition of agricultural elements, the Bureau of Engraving and Printing used a photographic process to quickly create new frame essays. By using photocopy prints of the ink and wash essay above as a background, the designer could draw new elements into the design without having to recreate the entire frame.

The essays below include ears of corn covering the fluted columns on the left and right sides of the frame.



**Photo process design with white overpainting.**

Unlisted in *Scott's Specialized Catalogue* (286-E7A variation)



**Photo process design with white overpainting.**

Unlisted in *Scott's Specialized Catalogue* (286-E7A variation)

Wheat and corn were the primary crops of the west, and the Post Office Department felt it was important to include both. The following essays feature corn *and* wheat added to the frame, covering the fluted column decorations at the sides. Corn is drawn on the left side of the frame, and wheat is drawn on the right side.



**Photo process design with white overpainting.**  
Unlisted in Scott's *Specialized Catalogue* (286-E7A variation)

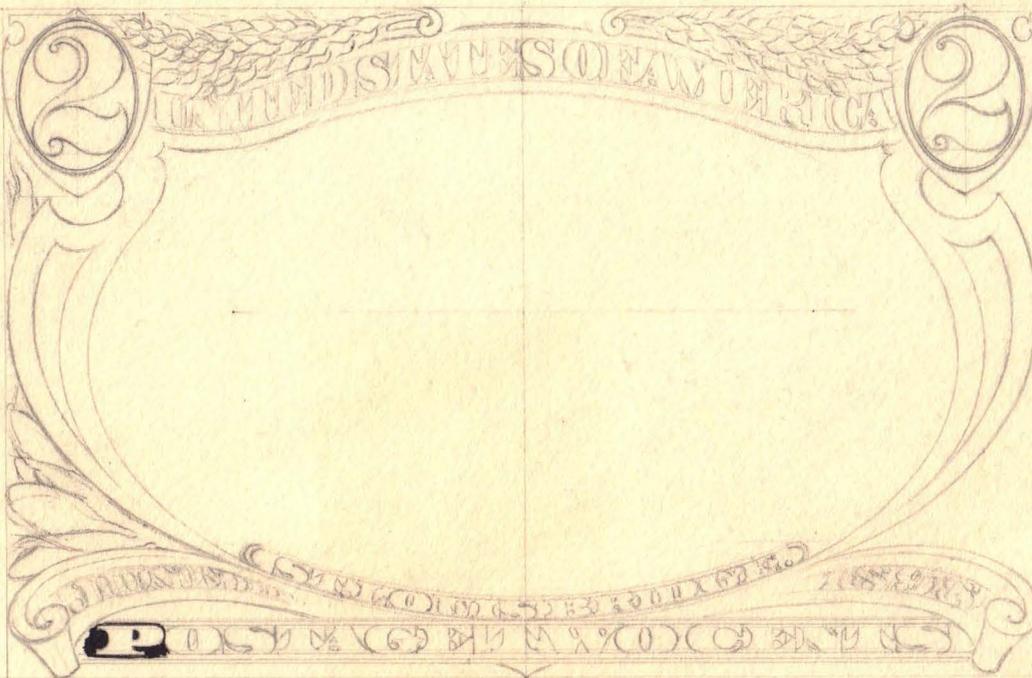


**Photo process design with white overpainting.**  
Unlisted in Scott's *Specialized Catalogue* (286-E7A variation)

In the final design, wheat was added to the top of the frame, replacing the leafy flourish present on these essays. In this way, both crops could be incorporated in the frame.

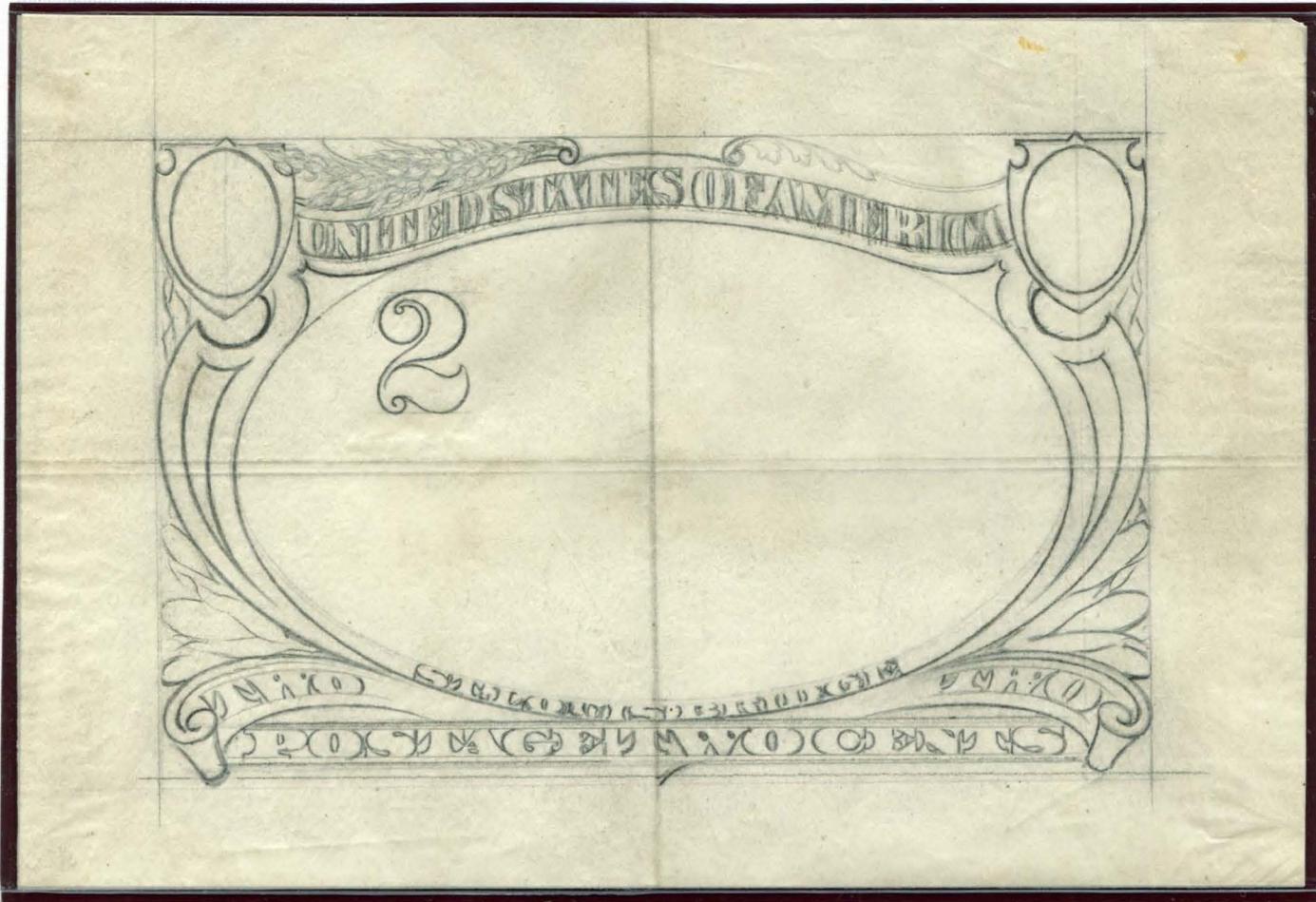
This essay is a drawing similar to the adopted design with wheat at top, corn at sides, and numerals in shields. The frame is labeled "St. Louis Bridge" based on the planned subject choice for the 2¢ stamp at the time.

In this essay, the date "June 1898" is written in the scrolls at bottom. This was rejected, and the final design includes the value written in this space.



Pencil drawing on Whatman Illustration Board.  
Listed in Scott's *Specialized Catalogue* as 286-E6

The essay below is a drawing of the frame very similar to the adopted design, although the frame is labeled "St. Louis Bridge".



Pencil sketch on tracing paper.

Listed in Scott's *Specialized Catalogue* as 286-E5

The top of this essay is divided in the center. The left side includes a rough sketch of wheat, similar to the final design. The right side has a starting sketch of a leafy flourish, similar to the kind that is present on the earlier essays.

The lower half of this essay is of the design as adopted, with the value written out in the lower scrolls.

Featured here is an unlisted frame essay of the frame design as adopted. This essay appears to have been produced in a manner similar the photo process essays, with a design based on the earlier ink and wash essay. It is labeled "St. Louis Bridge", the proposed subject choice for the 2¢ stamp at the time. The center of the frame has been cut away.



**Photo process design with white overpainting.**  
Unlisted in Scott's *Specialized Catalogue* (286-E7A variation)

This essay includes all elements of the final design: fluted columns, numeral "2" in shields, "TWO" in scrolls over bottom banner, wheat at the top of the frame, and corn at the left and right sides.



**Photocopy of final frame design for comparison.**

## THE BI-COLORED ESSAYS

To produce stamps in two colors, the paper would need to pass through the intaglio press twice. The first pass would impress the frame in one color, while the second pass would impress the vignette image in black. The Bureau of Engraving and Printing developed the frame and vignette for each value as separate dies for this reason.



**Bi-color Essay on India, die sunk on card.**

2¢ "Mississippi River Bridge" in "Normal" Bi-color (Dark Red)  
Listed in Scott's *Specialized Catalogue* as 286-E8



**Bi-color Essay on India, die sunk on card.**

\$2 "Harvesting in the West" in "Normal" Bi-color (Dark Red Orange)  
Listed in Scott's *Specialized Catalogue* as 293-E7

When the series was changed from bi-color to monotone, the vignette and frame dies were merged using a transfer roll process. The new composite die was then further engraved and modified to perfect the combination.

The original separate dies remained. With these the BEP was able to produce several special printings of the stamps as they were originally intended.<sup>24</sup> Although most of these essays are posthumous (printed after the stamps were issued), they represent earlier states of the die. The bi-color and trial-color essays are not only examples of what could have been, but important links in the development of the die from two pieces into one.

<sup>24</sup> (Neil 1997)

## SIGNED PRESENTATION BI-COLOR ESSAYS

Featured here is a large die essay of the proposed 2¢ “Mississippi River Bridge” stamp printed in the proposed colors of ox-blood red frame with black vignette.

This essay is autographed by the engraver, M. W. Baldwin, for public display. Printed in 1899, this is the only signed example of its kind known.



*M W Baldwin*

**Bi-color Essay on India, die sunk on card.**  
2¢ “Mississippi River Bridge” in “Normal” Bi-color  
Listed in Scott’s Specialized Catalogue as 286-E8



*M. W. Baldwin*

**Bi-color Essay on India, die sunk on card.**

\$2 "Harvesting in the West" in "Normal" Bi-color  
Listed in Scott's *Specialized Catalogue* as 293-E7

Above is a large die essay of the proposed \$2 "Harvesting in the West" stamp printed in the proposed colors of Hay's russet for the frame with a black vignette.

Printed in 1899, along with the previous essay, it was also autographed by the engraver, M. W. Baldwin, for public display. It is the only signed example of its kind known.

## TRIAL COLOR BI-COLOR ESSAYS

Bi-colored essays were produced for each stamp, not only in their proposed colors, but also in several other colors. The exact date that these trial color essays were printed is unknown. The reason that these trial color essays were produced is also unknown, but they were likely offered as gifts for public officials and dignitaries.

The example below is a trial color essay printed on India paper and die sunk directly on card.



**Trial Color Bi-color Essay on India, die sunk on card.**

2¢ "Mississippi River Bridge" in Garnet Brown ( Ridgeway: 3k/0 )

Listed in Scott's *Specialized Catalogue* as 286-E8: Dark Orange Red



**Trial Color Bi-color Essay on India, hybrid on card.**

2¢ "Mississippi River Bridge" in Garnet Brown ( Ridgeway: 3k/0 )

Listed in Scott's *Specialized Catalogue* as 286-E8: Dark Orange Red

The example above was produced in "hybrid" style. Unlike the previous essay, it was not pressed into the India paper with card backing. This essay was printed on India, then cut down close and mounted to India paper already die sunk to card. This gives the appearance of a die sunk large die proof or essay.

Although the Trans-Mississippi trial color bi-color essays are known in die sunk and hybrid styles, they are also commonly known printed on India paper and mounted directly to card with no die sinkage at all. The example below, is mounted on card that has been cut close.



**Trial Color Bi-color Essay on India, mounted on card.**

2¢ "Mississippi River Bridge" in Garnet Brown ( Ridgeway: 3k/0 )

Listed in Scott's *Specialized Catalogue* as 286-E8: Dark Orange Red

The trial color essays in this exhibit are listed by both their Ridgeway color name, and their color as it appears in the Scott's *Specialized Catalogue*. Ridgeway colors are listed and demonstrated in Robert Ridgeway's *Color Standards and Color Nomenclature*, published in 1912.<sup>25</sup> These colors are identified with both a name and a color code (such as 3k/0, above). The Ridgeway colors were used by Clarence Brazer when cataloging these essays, and have continued use today alongside the more modern Scott catalogue names.

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<sup>25</sup> (Ridgeway 1912)



**Trial Color Bi-color Essay on India, die sunk on card.**

2¢ "Mississippi River Bridge" in Morocco Red ( Ridgeway: 5k/0 )

Listed in Scott's *Specialized Catalogue* as 286-E8: Dark Orange-Orange Red

Some variations in stamp color shades can occur due to exposure to light, toning paper, and oxidization/sulpheretting of inks. The chemical makeup of yellow and orange stamps makes yellow and orange stamps more likely to be affected by oxidization, as demonstrated in the example below. These essays were once the same color.



**Trial Color Bi-color Essay on India, die sunk on card. Oxidized.**

2¢ "Mississippi River Bridge" in Morocco Red ( Ridgeway: 5k/0 )

Listed in Scott's *Specialized Catalogue* as 286-E8: Dark Orange-Orange Red



**Trial Color Bi-color Essay on India, mounted on card.**  
2¢ "Mississippi River Bridge" in Hessian Brown ( Ridgeway: 5m/1 )  
Listed in Scott's *Specialized Catalogue* as 286-E8: Dim Dusky Orange-Orange Red



**Trial Color Bi-color Essay on India, mounted on card.**

**2¢ "Mississippi River Bridge" in Chestnut ( Ridgeway: 9m/o )**

**Listed in Scott's *Specialized Catalogue* as 286-E8: Dusky Orange-Red Orange**



**Trial Color Bi-color Essay on India, mounted on card.**

2¢ "Mississippi River Bridge" in Bone Brown ( Ridgeway: 13m/3 )

Listed in Scott's *Specialized Catalogue* as 286-E8: Dismal Dusky Orange-Yellow Orange



**Trial Color Bi-color Essay on India, mounted on card.**  
2¢ "Mississippi River Bridge" in Dark Cadet Blue ( Ridgeway: 49m/1 )  
Listed in Scott's *Specialized Catalogue* as 286-E8: Dim Very Dusky Blue



**Trial Color Bi-color Essay on India, mounted on card.**  
2c "Mississippi River Bridge" in Rose Red ( Ridgeway: 71-0 )  
Listed in Scott's *Specialized Catalogue* as 286-E8: Deep Violet Red Red



**Trial Color Bi-color Essay on India, mounted on card.**  
\$2 "Harvesting in the West" in Spectrum Red ( Ridgeway: 1-0 )  
Listed in Scott's Specialized Catalogue as 293-E7: Red



**Trial Color Bi-color Essay on India, mounted on card.**  
**\$2 "Harvesting in the West" in Garnet Brown ( Ridgeway: 3k/0 )**  
**Listed in Scott's Specialized Catalogue as 293-E7: Dark Orange Red**



**Trial Color Bi-color Essay on India, mounted on card.**

\$2 "Harvesting in the West" in Claret Brown ( Ridgeway: 5m/0 )

Unlisted (as color) in Scott's *Specialized Catalogue* - 293-E7: Dusky Orange Orange Red



**Trial Color Bi-color Essay on India, mounted on card.**

**\$2 "Harvesting in the West" in Hay's Russet ( Ridgeway: 7k/1 )**

**Unlisted (as color) in Scott's Specialized Catalogue - 293-E7: Dim Red Orange**



**Trial Color Bi-color Essay on India, mounted on card.**  
\$2 "Harvesting in the West" in Bay ( Ridgeway: 7m/0 )  
Listed in Scott's *Specialized Catalogue* as 293-E7: Dusky Red Orange



**Trial Color Bi-color Essay on India, mounted on card.**

**\$2 "Harvesting in the West" in Van Dyke Brown ( Ridgeway: 11m/2 )**

**Unlisted (as color) in Scott's Specialized Catalogue - 293-E7: Dull Dusky Orange**



**Trial Color Bi-color Essay on India, mounted on card.**

\$2 "Harvesting in the West" in Mars Orange ( Ridgeway: 9i/o )

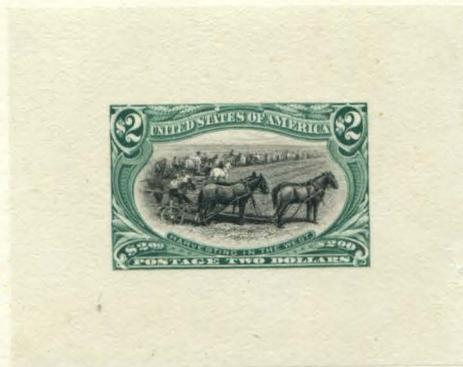
Unlisted (as color) in Scott's *Specialized Catalogue* - 293-E7: Deep Orange Red Orange



**Trial Color Bi-color Essay on India, mounted on card.**

\$2 "Harvesting in the West" in Chestnut ( Ridgeway: 9m/0 )

Unlisted (as color) in Scott's *Specialized Catalogue* - 293-E7: Dusky Orange Red Orange



**Trial Color Bi-color Essay on India, mounted on card.**  
\$2 "Harvesting in the West" in Dark Green ( Ridgeway: 35m/1 )  
Listed in Scott's *Specialized Catalogue* as 293-E7: Dim Dusky Green



**Trial Color Bi-color Essay on India, mounted on card.**  
\$2 "Harvesting in the West" in Duck Green ( Ridgeway: 39m/1 )  
Listed in Scott's *Specialized Catalogue* as 293-E7: Dim Dusky Blue Green



**Trial Color Bi-color Essay on India, mounted on card.**

**\$2 "Harvesting in the West" in Dusky Orient Blue ( Ridgeway: 45m/2 )**

**Listed in Scott's *Specialized Catalogue* as 293-E7: Dull Dusky Blue-Green Blue**



**Trial Color Bi-color Essay on India, mounted on card.**  
\$2 "Harvesting in the West" in Very Dark Cadet Blue ( Ridgeway: 490/1 )  
Unlisted (as color) in Scott's *Specialized Catalogue* - 293-E7: Dim Very Dusky Blue



**Trial Color Bi-color Essay on India, mounted on card.**  
\$2 "Harvesting in the West" in Pomegranate Purple ( Ridgeway: 71i/0 )  
Listed in Scott's *Specialized Catalogue* as 293-E7: Deep Violet Red Red

## CAUSE FOR CHANGE: THE SPANISH-AMERICAN WAR

In February of 1898, an explosion caused the US Navy ship USS *Maine* to sink while patrolling the harbor in Havana, Cuba. Although the exact cause of the explosion is still uncertain, an early investigation lead the US to believe it was the result of a Spanish mine. Tensions between Spain and the United States were high at the time, and "Remember the Maine" became a rallying cry for those who supported United States intervention in a Cuban war for independence. On April 25, President McKinley declared war on Spain, beginning the Spanish-American War.



### Spanish American War Patriotic Cover.

Mailed with 2¢ copper red (Scott 286) & 4¢ Orange (Scott 287) - Quartered Cork Cancellations  
Circular Date Stamp: Peshtigo, Wisconsin July 17, 1899

The patriotic cover featured here was published by J.C. Wilson & Co. Limited, a Canadian paper company. Originally manufacturing paper grocery bags, Wilson became well known for his decorative and patriotic stationary. The image on this, "Old Glory and The Maine", features an all-over print of a forty-six star flag and a seal of a woman mourning over a monument for the Maine while an eagle carries a banner reading "Canada Memorabilis."<sup>26</sup>

<sup>26</sup> (Steve 2016)



**Spanish American War Patriotic Cover.**

Mailed with 2¢ copper red - Barr-Fyke Machine Cancel, CDS & Line of Bars ( Billings Type A2-102a )  
Washington, D.C. July 24, 1898

The patriotic cover above includes a portrait of Secretary of War Russell Alexander Alger on an all-over print of the forty-five star flag (1896-1908). It was mailed from Washington, D.C. to Mr. Dennis Nelligan, a clerk in Evansville, Indiana.

In May of 1899, Secretary Alger opened Camp Alger near Falls Church, Virginia. This camp would host of 31,000 troops for the Spanish-American War, all volunteers.<sup>27</sup>

To cover the cost of the war, congress passed the War Revenue Law of 1898. These new taxes required the production of new revenue stamps, which the Bureau of Engraving and Printing would need to prepare before they became effective in July.

As the BEP rushed to produce plates for two new sets of revenue stamps (documentary and proprietary), it became clear that changes would have to be made to the ambitious Trans-Mississippi issue.<sup>28</sup> The bi-color process would have required twice the time to print and, with a high demand for revenue stamps, that time could not be afforded.

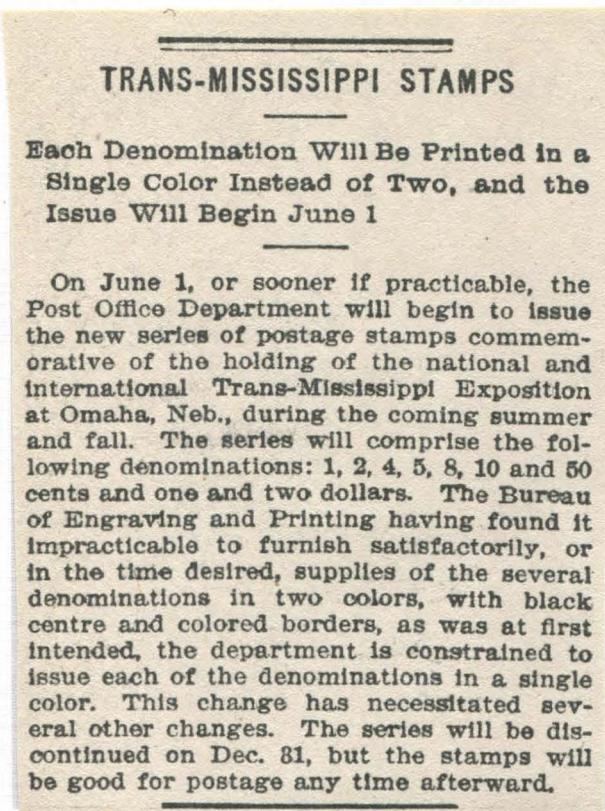
<sup>27</sup> (Wikipedia 2016)

<sup>28</sup> (West 1979)

## CHANGES MADE: BI-COLOR TO MONOCHROME

In response to the time and budget constraints caused by the Spanish American War, the Bureau of Engraving and Printing made the decision to change the series from bi-color to monochrome.

The change was first announced in an official Post Office circular on May 16, 1898.<sup>29</sup> Within the next few days the newspapers began printing the new information regarding the stamps.



*Boston Evening Transcript, May 19, 1898*

On June 1, or sooner if practicable, the Post Office Department will begin to issue the new series of postage stamps commemorative of the holding of the national and international Trans-Mississippi Exposition at Omaha, Neb., during the coming summer and fall. The series will comprise the following denominations: 1, 2, 4, 5, 8, 10 and 50 cents and one and two dollars. The Bureau of Engraving and Printing having found it impracticable to furnish satisfactorily, or in the time desired, supplies of the several denominations in two colors, with black center and colored border, as was at first intended, the department is constrained to issue each of the denominations in a single color. This change has necessitated several other changes. The series will be discontinued on Dec. 31, but the stamps will be good for postage any time afterward.

As the issue was changed from two colors to one, there were also changes to the colors selected. Five of the nine colors published in the *World-Herald's* article only three days prior, were changed. 2¢ from "carmine" to "copper red"; 4¢ from "red brown" to "orange"; 10¢ from "light brown" to "slate"; 50¢ from "orange" to "olive"; \$1 from "copper red" to "light brown".

<sup>29</sup> (Brookman 1967)

Ten days later, on May 26, a second circular was released. In this circular, the Post Office Department made two significant changes to their previous announcement:

- ◆ First, they changed the estimated date of issue from June 1<sup>st</sup> to June 15<sup>th</sup>.
- ◆ Second, they changed the colors of the \$1 and \$2 stamps
  - \$1 from "light brown" to "black"
  - \$2 from "sapphire blue" to "light brown"

#### CHANGE IN TRANS-MISSISSIPPI STAMPS

POST OFFICE DEPARTMENT,  
OFFICE OF THIRD ASS'T P. M. GENERAL,  
WASHINGTON, D. C., May 26, 1898.

Postmasters have been advised that the Trans-Mississippi stamps would be issued about the 1st of next June. It is now found impracticable to do this, and postmasters and the public are therefore informed that the filling of requisitions from postmasters for these stamps will be delayed until the 15th of next June—i.e., they cannot be placed in the hands of postmasters before that date.

It is also found expedient to change the first announcement of the color of the \$1 stamp, which was to have been light brown, to black; and that of the \$2 stamp, to which sapphire blue was assigned, to light brown.

No requisition for a less number than 10 of the 50 cents denomination, or 5 of the \$1 or \$2 denomination will be filled.

Postmasters will keep in mind the instructions heretofore given—that they cannot secure these stamps in any other manner than by using form 3201—Omaha, which is printed upon yellow paper. These forms can be had upon application to the Supplies Division, where all other blanks are furnished.

Since these applications for Trans-Mississippi stamps will not be filled, as stated above, for two weeks yet, postmasters who desire postal cards or stamped envelopes during this period should make their requisitions for them on the regular white form, 3201; otherwise they will not secure such cards and envelopes until the Trans-Mississippi stamps are issued. After the 10th of June they can call for the postal cards and stamped envelopes which they desire on the yellow form in ordering their Trans-Mississippi stamps.

JOHN A. MERRITT,  
Third Assistant Postmaster-General.

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May 26<sup>th</sup> Circular, as republished in *The United States Postage Stamps of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century*.

The following pages from *The Post Office*, a monthly journal for stamp collectors, were published in June of 1898. They contain a reproduction of the circular sent by Third Assistant Postmaster-General Merritt. This reproduction was almost identical to the original circular, but with the changes in color for the \$1 and \$2 stamps applied to the descriptions.

# The Post Office.

A MONTHLY JOURNAL FOR STAMP COLLECTORS.

VOL. VIII.

NEW YORK, JUNE, 1898.

No. 87.

## TRANS-MISSISSIPPI STAMPS.

In answer to an inquiry, Third Assistant Postmaster-General Merritt informs us under date of June 3d, that the Trans-Mississippi series of postage stamps will probably be on sale at the New York post office after the 15th inst. Mr. Merritt also sent us a copy of the official circular which we print herewith. From this it seems that another change has been made; the color of the One-Dollar stamp is now given as *black* and that of the Two-Dollar as *light brown*, whereas the original circular gave these colors as *light brown* and *sapphire blue* respectively.

POST OFFICE DEPARTMENT,  
OFFICE OF THIRD ASST. P. M. GEN'L,  
WASHINGTON, D. C., May 16, 1898.

The Bureau of Engraving and Printing having found it impracticable to furnish satisfactorily or in the time desired supplies of the several denominations of Trans-Mississippi stamps in two colors, or with black centers and colored borders, as was at first intended, and as is announced in the current—May—number of the Postal Guide, the Department is constrained to issue each of the denominations of these stamps in a single color. This change has necessitated several other changes; so that the description of the stamps as given in the May Guide must be ig-

nored. The following description is now the correct one:

The Trans-Mississippi stamps differ materially in size from the ordinary series, the engraved space being about seven-eighths of an inch wide by about one and three-eighths long. The designs are also radically unlike those of the ordinary stamps—consisting of a border (substantially the same in all the denominations, except that the figures and letters representing values are different), and a central scene indicative in some way of the development of the great region beyond the Mississippi River. The scenes and the borders are all printed from lined engravings on steel, executed by the Bureau of Engraving and Printing of the Treasury Department.

The border, which forms in its inner line an irregular oval framework to each of the scenes represented, consists of a fluted figure on either side, with interior crossbars, beginning in a single line near the bottom of the stamp, and enlarging until it reaches a shield in each of the upper corners, wherein is engraved in white the Arabic numeral of denomination—the dollar mark being also included in the case of the one and two dollar stamps. At the top, connecting the two shields, and united to the fluted framework on the two sides,

## THE POST OFFICE.

is a curved tablet, on which are engraved in small white capitals the words "United States of America." Above this, on either side, are heads of wheat, and between these a small scroll. Immediately below the central scene is the title of the picture in diminutive white Gothic letters on a curved tablet, and below this on either side, in scrolls, are the words of value, "one," "two," and so on, in white capitals, except in the case of the two highest denominations, when "\$1.00" and "\$2.00" are substituted for letters. Above each of these is a projecting ear of corn, and at the bottom of all on a straight black tablet are the words "Postage One Cent," "Postage Two Cents," and so on, in white capitals.

The scenes represented on the stamps, together with the colors of the several denominations, are these :

**ONE-CENT.**—"Marquette on the Mississippi," from a painting by Lamprecht, now in possession of the Marquette College, of Milwaukee, Wis., representing Father Marquette in a boat on the Upper Mississippi, preaching to the Indians.—Color, dark green.

**TWO-CENT.**—"Farming in the West," from a photograph, representing a western grainfield with a long row of plows at work.—Color, copper red.

**FOUR-CENT.**—"Indian Hunting Buffalo," reproduction of an engraving in Schoolcraft's History of the Indian Tribes.—Color, orange.

**FIVE-CENT.**—"Fremont on Rocky Mountains," modified from a wood engraving, representing the Pathfinder planting the U. S. flag on the highest peak of the Rocky Mountains.—Color, dark blue.

**EIGHT-CENT.**—"Troops Guarding

Train," representing a detachment of U. S. soldiers conveying an emigrant train across the prairies, from a drawing by Frederic Remington, permission to use which was kindly given by the publisher, R. H. Russell, of New York.—Color, dark lilac.

**TEN-CENT.**—"Hardships of Emigration," from a painting kindly loaned by the artist, A. G. Heaton, representing an emigrant and his family on the plains in a "prairie schooner," one of the horses having fallen from exhaustion.—Color, slate.

**FIFTY-CENT.**—"Western Mining Prospector," from a drawing by Frederic Remington (permission to use which has been kindly given by the publisher, R. H. Russell, of New York), representing a prospector with his pack-mules in the mountains, searching for gold.—Color, olive.

**ONE-DOLLAR.**—"Western Cattle in Storm," representing a herd of cattle, preceded by the leader, seeking safety from a gathering storm, reproduced from a large steel engraving after a picture by J. MacWhirter—the engraving having been kindly loaned by Mrs. C. B. Johnson.—Color, black.

**TWO-DOLLAR.**—"Mississippi River Bridge," from an engraving—a representation of the great bridge over the Mississippi at St. Louis.—Color, light brown.

No Trans-Mississippi postal cards or stamped envelopes will be issued.

Although this series of stamps will be discontinued on the 31st of December, 1898, they will be good for postage at any time afterwards.

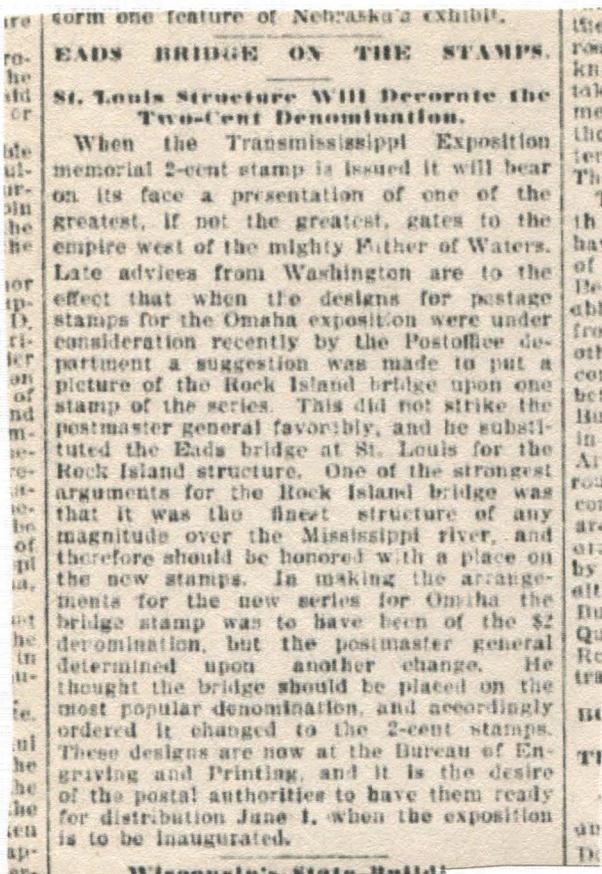
JOHN A. MERRITT,

Third Assistant Postmaster General.

## CHANGES MADE: SWITCHING VIGNETTES

The Post Office's announcement included another major change to the series: the proposed subjects of the 2¢ and \$2 stamps were switched. The exact reason for the swap was not officially recorded, but there are several factors to consider:

The value of the Eads Bridge stamp was debated before the stamps were engraved. A January 24, 1898 article in the *Omaha Daily Bee*, writes that the bridge was first suggested as the subject for the \$2 value.



*Omaha Daily Bee*, January 24, 1898

### Eads Bridge on the Stamps

#### St. Louis Structure Will Decorate the Two-Cent Denomination

When the Transmississippi Exposition memorial 2-cent stamp is issued it will bear on its face a presentation of one of the greatest, if not the greatest, gates to the empire west of the mighty Father of Waters. Late advices from Washington are to the effect that when the designs for postage stamps for the Omaha exposition were under consideration recently by the Postoffice department a suggestion was made to put a picture of the Rock Island bridge upon one stamp of the series. This did not strike the postmaster general favorably, and he substituted the Eads bridge at St. Louis for the Rock Island structure. One of the strongest arguments for the Rock Island bridge was that it was the finest structure of any magnitude over the Mississippi river, and therefore should be honored with a place on the new stamps. In making the arrangements for the new series for Omaha the bridge stamp was to have been of the \$2 denomination, but the postmaster general determined upon another change. He thought

the bridge should be placed on the most popular denomination, and accordingly order it changed to the 2-cent stamps. These designs are now at the Bureau of Engraving and Printing, and it is the desire of the postal authorities to have them ready for distribution June 1, when the exposition is to be inaugurated.

2¢ was the domestic postage rate – the 2¢ stamp would be the most commonly used stamp of the series. For this reason, it would be the keynote of the series.

The decision to use a St. Louis landmark, rather than an Omaha one, was already not appealing to some people in the exposition community. That St. Louis would be the focus of the most widely used stamp, made it even less so. Moving the "Mississippi River Bridge" vignette from the 2¢ to the \$2 softened the blow.

In its place, the "Farming in the West" vignette moved to the important 2¢ value. The transformation of the American West from untamed prairie to cultivated farmland was arguably a greater representation of the theme.<sup>30</sup>

Supporters of the farming scene also believed that by including it on the domestic letter rate, it might encourage migration to the available western farmland. With the vignette's depiction of modern farming equipment and organized workers, they believed it would be an ideal advertisement.<sup>31</sup>



The following composite models were created to demonstrate the appearance of the combined dies. They were created by mounting a cut-out of a vignette die essay over an essay of the 2¢ frame die.

Both the "Farming in the West" and the "Mississippi River Bridge" vignettes are used, perhaps to compare the appearance of each subject in the 2¢ frame.

These model essays are unique. They were unknown to Brazer and are unlisted by Scott. They are both signed and numbered by Baldwin with notes on the card backing.

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<sup>30</sup> (Brookman 1967)

<sup>31</sup> (Neil 1997)



INSCRIPTION  
MISSISSIPPI RIVER BRIDGE

MODEL

M.W. Baldwin No 15

**Composite Model Essay: Vignette on India mounted over frame essay on India, die sunk on card.**

**"Harvesting in the West" vignette in Black; 2¢ frame in Copper Red**

**Card signed by engraver, M.W. Baldwin, "No. 15"**

**"Model", "Inscription / Mississippi River Bridge"**



Composite Model Essay: Vignette on India mounted over frame essay on India, die sunk on card.

"Mississippi River Bridge" vignette in Black; 2¢ frame in Orange

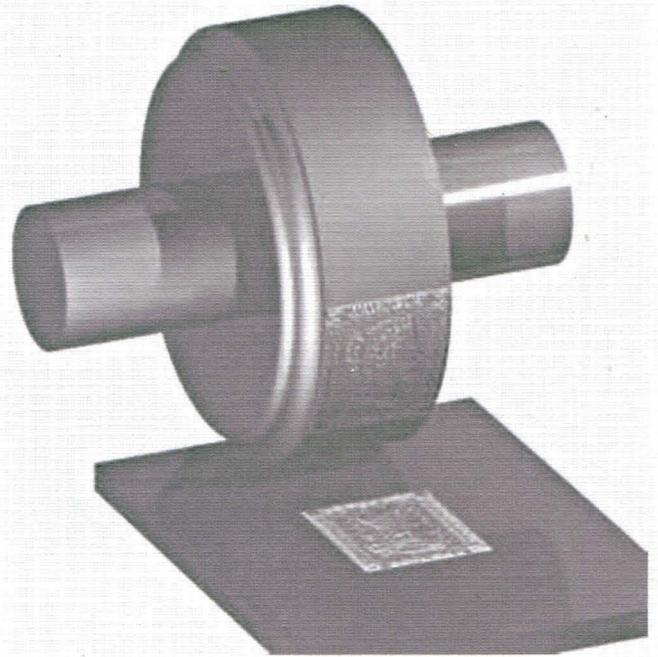
Card signed by engraver, M.W. Baldwin, "No. 16"

"Essay of Frame / Model", "Miss R. Bridge"

## COMBINING THE DIES

The dies were combined using a transfer roll process. Transfer rolls were rocked into the vignette dies, which were hardened in the state used for the bi-color essays. The transfer rolls, now holding a relief copy of the die, were then carefully rocked into the frame.<sup>32</sup>

The vignettes had been engraved slightly smaller than the frame area on purpose. This was done to account for shifting during the printing process – it would be less likely for the ink colors to overlap even if the vignettes did not perfectly align with their frames.<sup>33</sup>



After transferring the vignettes into the frames, the new dies would require additional engraving to fill in gaps. As the engravers updated the dies, several other adjustments were made to both the vignettes and the frames.



According to an entry in the personal diary of Marcus Baldwin, the engravers started combining the dies on May 11<sup>th</sup>, five days prior to the public announcement that the series would change from bi-color to monochrome and that the subjects would be swapped.<sup>34</sup>

Early composite essays exist that combine the “Farming in the West” vignette with its original \$2 “Harvesting in the West” frame. These essays imply that the decision to switch the vignettes was finalized sometime between May 11<sup>th</sup> and May 12<sup>th</sup>, when the first composite essay in the correct frame was pulled.

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\* Picture: (About Printing 2016)

<sup>33</sup> (Neil 1997)

<sup>34</sup> (Neil 1997)

## FARMING IN THE WEST COMPOSITE DIES

Featured here are two essays of an early die, combining the "Farming in the West" vignette with its original \$2 "Harvesting in the West" frame.



Early \$2 Composite Essay.

"Harvesting in the West" vignette and frame in Blue  
Unlisted in Scott's *Specialized Catalogue* (293-E var.)



Early \$2 Composite Essay.

"Harvesting in the West" vignette and frame in Black  
Unlisted in Scott's *Specialized Catalogue* (293-E var.)



Photocopy of left side of die, enlarged for detail.



Photocopy of left side of die, enlarged for detail.

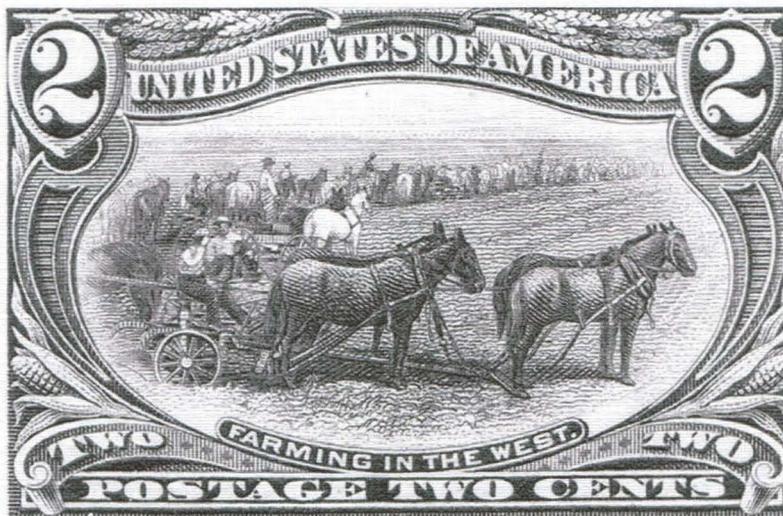
Additional engraving was added to the sides of the vignette to connect it to the frame design. These essays served as a test of how much engraving would be required to combine the dies.

Around the time the subjects were switched, it was pointed out to the Post Office Department that the machinery used in the image were plows, used to prepare fields for planting. It became clear that “harvesting” was an inaccurate title, so frame engraver Douglas S. Ronaldson changed the label to “Farming in the West”.

First State: Pulled May 12, 1898



First composite essay on India, die sunk on card.  
2c Black; Unlisted in Scott's *Specialized Catalogue* (previously 286-E10)



Enlarged photocopy – First State of Composite Die.

The first composite essay combining the 2¢ frame and “Farming in the West” vignette has blank space between the frame and vignette. As the die was further engraved, the edges of the vignette were extended to connect completely with the frame.

The overlay below compares the first and second states of the composite die. The additional engraving shows through in red. This is particularly noticeable on the left side.

Composite Die Overlay:



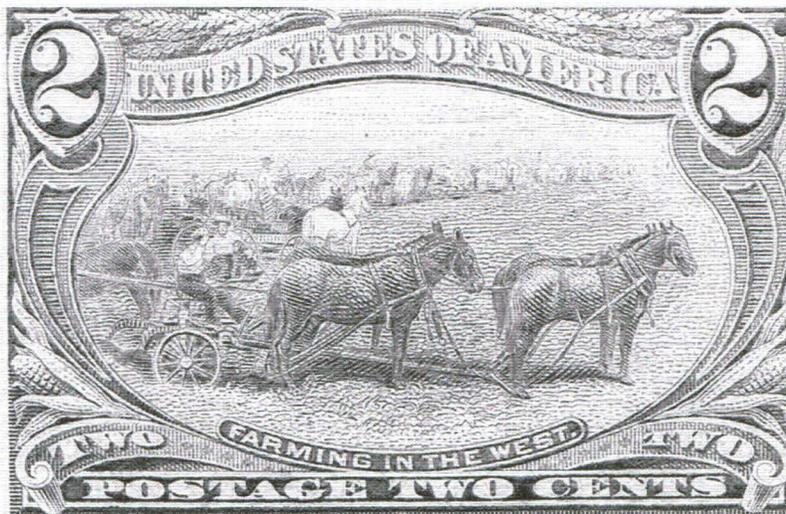
First state of die = Green : Second state of die = Red

The second composite essay contains additional engraving that connects the vignette to the frame, filling the blank spaces on the edges that were present in the previous composite essay. This is still an incomplete engraving, however. Note the space on the right side of the vignette, in front of the lead horse. In this essay, the field appears to be mostly flat.

Second State: Pulled May 13, 1898



Second composite essay on India, die sunk on card.  
2¢ Dark Orange Red; Unlisted in Scott's Specialized Catalogue



Enlarged photocopy – Second State of Composite Die.

The third composite essay for the 2¢ stamp added engraving to the right side of the vignette, creating a darkened trench. According to Marcus Baldwin's diary, this furrow was added on May 24<sup>th</sup>, the final day of engraving on the die.



Second State of Composite Die.  
Enlarged photocopy of right side



Third State of Composite Die.  
Enlarged photocopy of right side

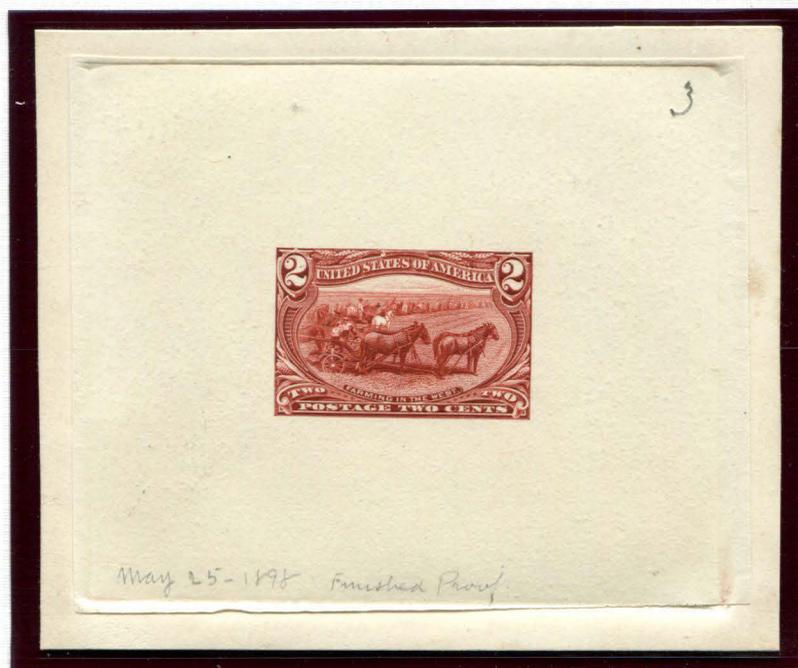
The enlarged photocopies above show where the furrow was added, directly in front of the lead horse. The engraving was also darkened overall.

Third State: Pulled May 24, 1898



**Third composite essay on India, die sunk on card.**  
2¢ Copper Red; Unlisted in Scott's Specialized Catalogue

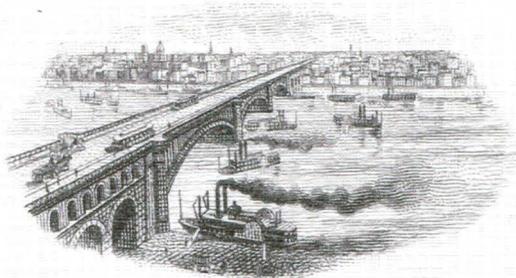
After the addition of the furrow, acid etching was applied to complete the die.



**Large die proof on India, die sunk on card.**  
Listed in Scott's Specialized Catalogue as 286P1, 2¢ Copper Red

## MISSISSIPPI RIVER BRIDGE COMPOSITE DIES

The "Mississippi River Bridge" vignette die had been cut down at the bottom to better fit the frame for the bi-color printing.



Enlarged photocopy – Third State of Vignette Die.



Enlarged photocopy – Fourth State of Vignette Die  
(As used in Bi-color Essay.)

When the vignette and frame were combined into one die for the single color printing, the vignette had to be re-engraved to fit the frame. These new lines are very faint in the first composite essay.

### Bi-color Essay & Composite Die Overlay:



Bi-color essay = Green : First state of composite die = Red

Below is an overlay comparing the third state vignette die essay to the first composite essay. You can see how the new engraving differs from the original engraving before it was cut away. The horse drawn carriage at the bottom is not re-engraved.

### Vignette Die & Composite Die Overlay:

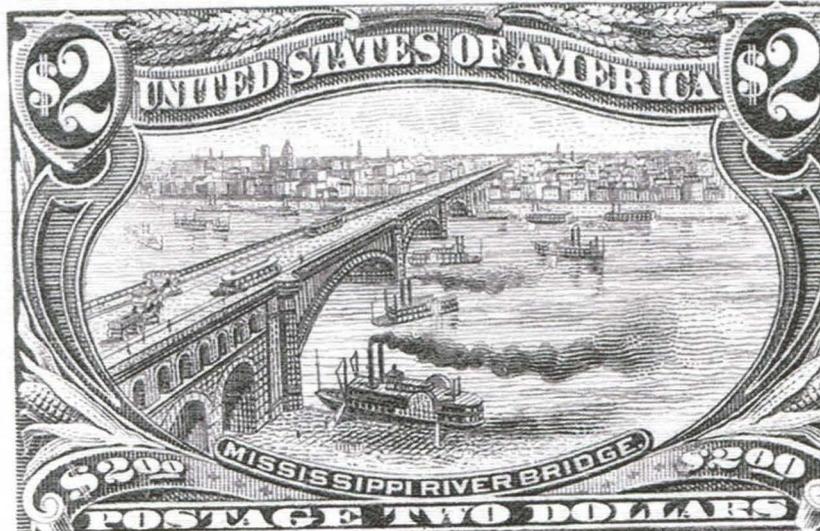


Third state of vignette die = Green : First state of composite die = Red

First State: Pulled May 21, 1898



First composite essay on India, die sunk on card.  
\$2 Black; Listed in Scott's Specialized Catalogue as 293-E11

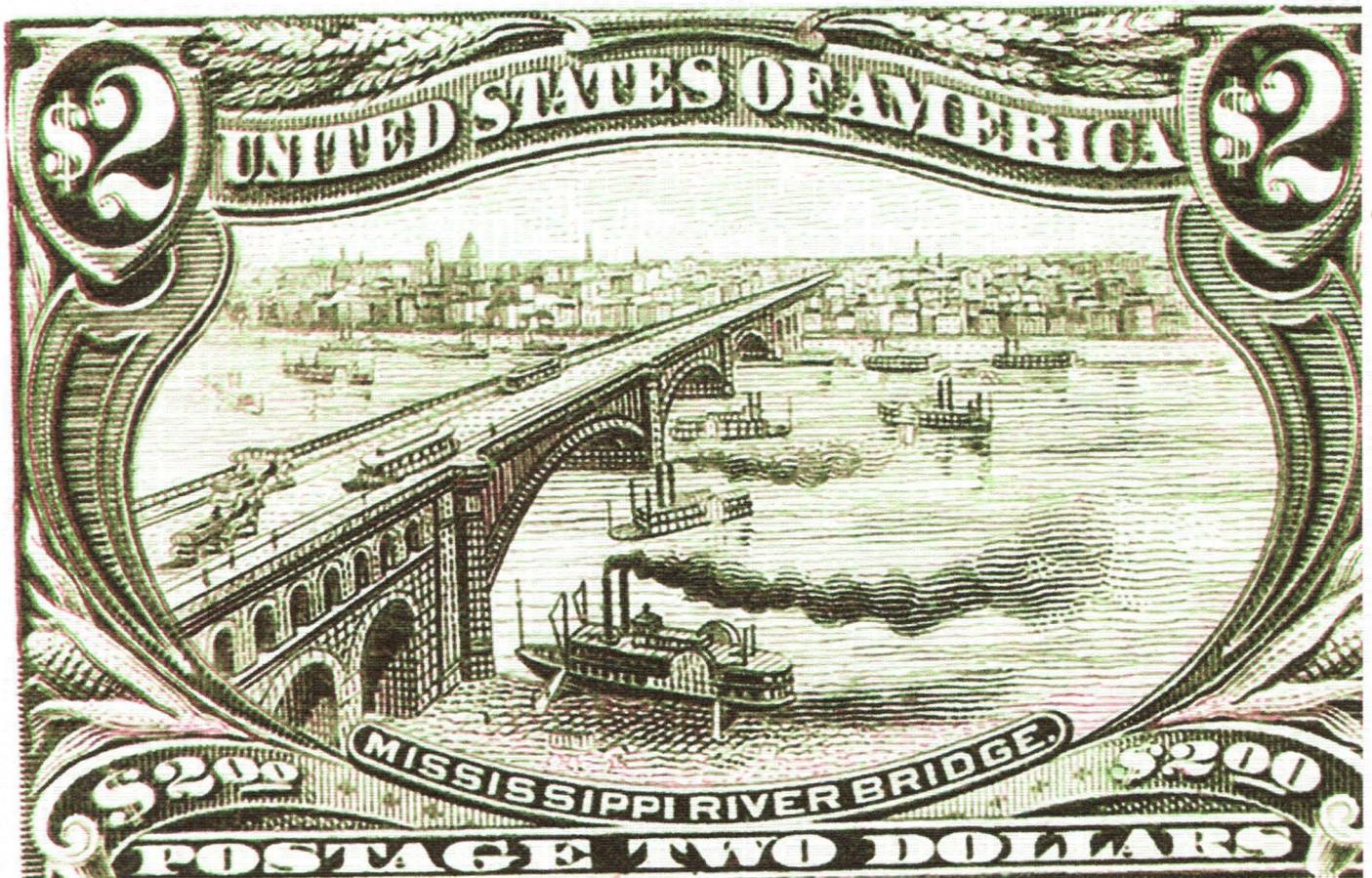


Enlarged photocopy – First State of Composite Die.

The first composite essay is lightly engraved at the bottom where the cut-away section was re-engraved. In this first state, the frame is also incomplete: shading is missing from the corn husks at the sides.

The overlay below compares the first and second states of the composite die. Additional engraving on the second state fills in several blank spaces, most notably the areas above and directly to the right of the "Mississippi River Bridge" label. Engraving was also added to the front of the bridge's first arch, the buildings at the far right shore, and the corn husks in the frame. These new lines show through in red.

Composite Die Overlay:

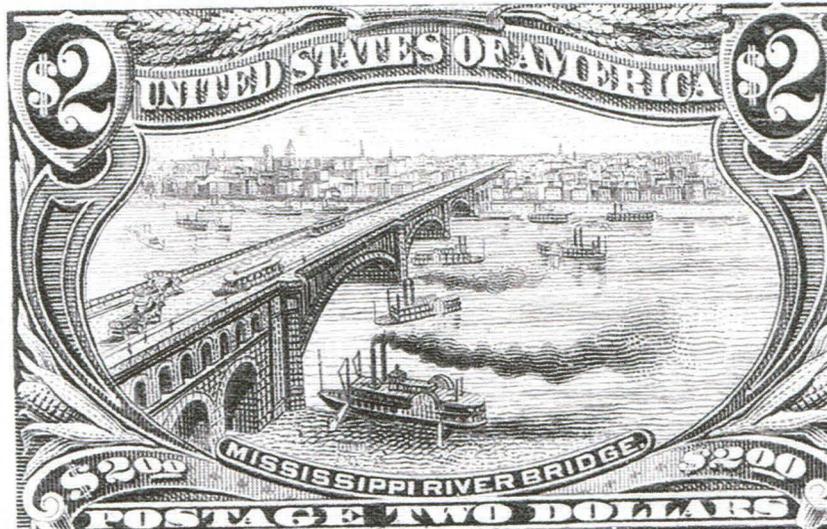


First state of die = Green : Second state of die = Red

Second State



Second composite essay on India, die sunk on card.  
\$2 Black; Listed in Scott's Specialized Catalogue as 293-E10

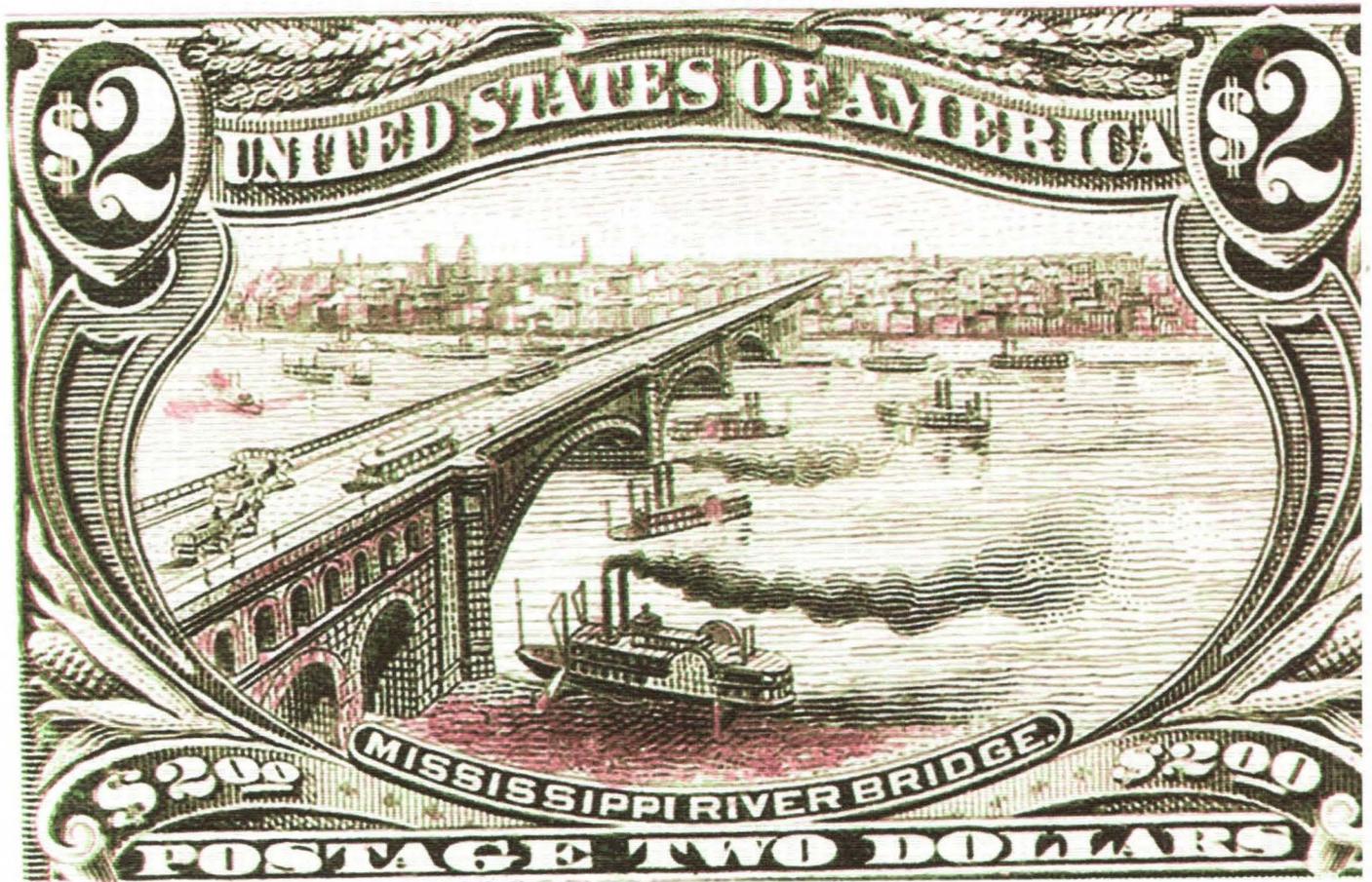


Enlarged photocopy – Second State of Composite Die.

The second composite essay is mostly complete, but additional shading would need to be added. The third state of the composite die, identical in engraving to the second state, adds an ink wash over several areas. This wash is the model for where more engraving will be added in the final state.

The second and third state essays of the composite die are compared in the overlay below. In this overlay the ink wash shows through in red. It is visible over the shore in the foreground, the city in the background, the bridge face, and the paddlewheels of several boats.

Composite Die Overlay:

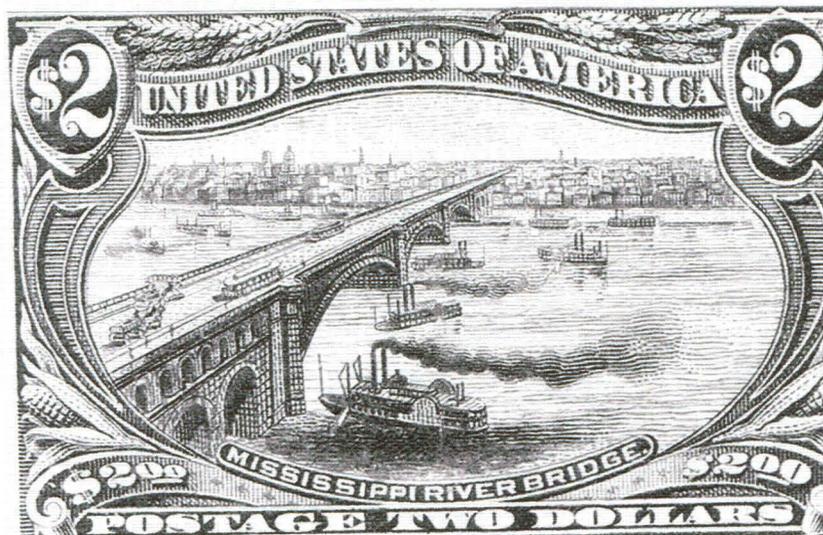


Second state of die = Green : Third state of die = Red

Third State



Third composite essay on India, die sunk on card.  
\$2 Black; Listed in Scott's *Specialized Catalogue* as 293-E9



Enlarged photocopy – Third State of Composite Die.

The ink wash modeling in the third state of the die was used to mark where shading would be added to the die. Although a fourth state of the die is not recorded, the additional shading engraved into these marked areas can be seen on the final die used to print the large die proofs.

The ink wash on the third state essay covers and darkens the shore in the foreground. The final design also darkens this area. The horse-drawn cart originally engraved on the vignette die is completely removed by the darkened engraving, leaving only its cargo on the shore. Although the ink wash darkens the paddlewheels on the river boats in the third state essay, the boats are not significantly darkened on the final product.



Previous location of horse-drawn cart.

The overlay below compares the third state composite die essay and a large die proof of the final die. Additional or darkened engraving from the final state shows through in red, while the ink wash shading that was not engraved shows through in green.

Composite Die & Die Proof Overlay:



Third state of die = Green : Large die proof = Red

## Final State of Die (Large Die Trial Color Proof)



**Trial color proof on India, die sunk on card.**  
\$2 Black; Listed in Scott's *Specialized Catalogue* as 293TC1a

The black trial color proof above was printed from the final state of the die. It is presented here as a comparison to the composite essays.

**What is a proof?**

“Trial printings of a stamp made from the original die or the finished plate.”

– Scott *Specialized Catalog*

Proofs are high quality printings of completed stamp designs. They represent a finished state of the die, although they may be produced in different colors or on different paper than issued. Proofs are printed as tests before issue, as records for the printing company, or as special gifts.

## LARGE DIE PROOFS

The two proofs featured here were most likely trial proofs used to test the dies. They feature writing labeling them as "Proof from 1<sup>st</sup> Die" and "New Die". There is no significant difference between the two dies.



Trial color proof on India, die sunk on card.  
2¢ Black; "Proof from 1<sup>st</sup> Die"  
Listed in Scott's Specialized Catalogue as 286TC1a



Trial color proof on India, die sunk on card.  
2¢ Copper Red; "New Die"  
Listed in Scott's Specialized Catalogue as 286P1

The approval proof featured here is marked in pencil "May 17, 98 / Approved by Director". It is mounted on a large card with the remains of a hinge at the left. It is very likely this was once a page of the BEP's sample book.



Large die proof on India, mounted on card.  
2¢ Garnet Brown; Listed in Scott's *Specialized Catalogue* as 286-P1

Large die proofs of the Trans-Mississippi issue stamps were printed between May of 1898 and February of 1899. These proofs were printed on India paper, die sunk on card. It is believed that about seventy-five copies of each value were produced. The full size of the card was 204mm by 153mm, but most surviving examples have been cut down.<sup>35</sup>



**Large die proof on India, die sunk on full size card.**  
2¢ Garnet Brown ( Ridgeway: 3K/0 ); Listed in Scott's *Specialized Catalogue* as 286-P1 (Copper Red)

<sup>35</sup> (Neil 1997)



**Large die proof on India, die sunk on full size card.**  
\$2 Hay's Russet ( Ridgeway: 7k/1 ); Listed in Scott's *Specialized Catalogue* as 293-P1 (Orange Brown)

A printing on October 28, 1898 produced sets of Trans-Mississippi large die proofs die sunk on cards measuring 204mm by 127mm. These proofs were often in shade variations differing from the large die proofs of other printings. Clarence Brazer believed that only two sets of proofs were produced at this printing.<sup>36</sup>



**Large die proof on India, die sunk on card.**  
2¢ Garnet Brown ( Ridgeway: 3K/o ); Listed in Scott's *Specialized Catalogue* as 286-P1 (Copper Red)

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<sup>36</sup> (Neil 1997)



**Large die proof on India, die sunk on card.**

**\$2 Dark Hay's Russet ( Ridgeway: 71/1 ); Listed in Scott's Specialized Catalogue as 293-P1 (Orange Brown)**

The large die proof above is an example of a color variation during this October printing. It is a slightly darker shade than the other large die proofs.

## PLATE PROOFS

Plates are used to print stamps for issue. Using transfer rolls, the original die engraving can be transferred multiple times onto a large plate. The Trans-Mississippi stamps were printed from plates of 100 subjects.

The only plate proofs of the Trans-Mississippi Issue that are known to have been produced are of the 2¢ and \$2 values. Only one sheet of each value was printed.<sup>37</sup>



**Plate Proof on Card.**

**2¢ Copper Red; Listed in Scott's *Specialized Catalogue* as 286P4**



**Plate Proof on Card.**

**\$2 Orange Brown; Listed in Scott's *Specialized Catalogue* as 293P4**

The Trans-Mississippi plate proofs were printed on card. Proofs made from plates are often small because single stamps are cut from the proof sheet.

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<sup>37</sup> (Neil 1997)

Plate proofs of the 2¢ Trans-Mississippi stamp were printed on card in five colors.



2¢ Purple



2¢ Black



2¢ Blue



2¢ Brown



2¢ Deep Carmine Rose

**Trial color plate proofs on Card.**  
Listed in Scott's *Specialized Catalogue* as 286TC4, a-e.

Although the Neil/Rosenthal book notes that 119 plates of 2¢ trail color proofs were produced, these proofs are quite rare. Brazer only recorded three to five singles and one or two pairs of each color. As of today, Siegel Auction records note that only one to three individual examples of each color have been sold through their establishment.

## BUREAU CONTROL NUMBER PROOFS

Sets of Trans-Mississippi large die proofs are known marked with blue control number handstamps from the Bureau of Engraving and Printing. These are *posthumous* die proofs, proofs pulled after the stamps have been printed and issued.



Large die proof on India, with blue control number handstamp: 361055.  
2¢ Copper Red; Listed in Scott's *Specialized Catalogue* as 286P1

The Bureau of Engraving and Printing records show that this 2¢ control proof was pulled on February 12, 1934. A total of six proofs were pulled that day, with records showing they were to be destroyed the following day.

An additional five proofs (control numbers 361095 to 361099) of the 2¢ stamp were recorded to be printed on February 13 and destroyed on March 8.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> (Warm 1980)



Large die proof on India, with blue control number handstamp: 361077.  
\$2 Orange Brown; Listed in Scott's *Specialized Catalogue* as 293P1

The control proof featured here was printed in the proving room of the Bureau of Engraving and Printing on February 12, 1934. According to records from the Bureau, nine \$2 control proofs were pulled on that date. These proofs were recorded as destroyed on February 13.

The Bureau records do not show any additional printings of the \$2 Trans-Mississippi control proofs.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> (Warm 1980)

## SMALL DIE PROOFS: ROOSEVELT ALBUM PROOFS

Small die proofs were produced in special posthumous printings. They are called “small die” because of the small-sized paper they were printed on.

The first type of small die proofs are the Roosevelt Album proofs, printed on white wove paper and mounted on card pages for the Roosevelt Albums.

The Roosevelt Presentation Albums were printed by the Bureau of Engraving and Printing in 1903. These books included mounted sets of small die proofs for each of the US Postage issues from 1847 to 1903. It is believed that only 85 albums were produced.

These albums were specially created for President Theodore Roosevelt’s administration, and were distributed as special gifts for friends, cabinet members, and dignitaries.

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.<sup>40</sup>

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.



<sup>40</sup> (DeSimio 2000)

Complete set of Roosevelt small die proofs on original album page.  
Listed in Scott's Specialized Catalogue as 285P2 - 293P2



A set of small die proofs, printed for the "Roosevelt Albums" in 1903. These proofs, although individually cut from the book pages, are still mounted on their original gray card.



1¢ Green  
Scott listing: 285p2 (RA)



2¢ Copper Red  
Scott listing: 286p2 (RA)



4¢ Orange  
Scott listing: 287p2 (RA)



5¢ Dull Blue  
Scott listing: 288p2 (RA)



8¢ Violet Brown  
Scott listing: 289p2 (RA)



10¢ Gray violet  
Scott listing: 290p2 (RA)



50¢ Sage Green  
Scott listing: 291p2 (RA)



\$1 black  
Scott listing: 292p2 (RA)



\$2 orange brown  
Scott listing: 293p2 (RA)

## SMALL DIE PROOFS: PANAMA-PACIFIC PROOFS

In 1914, the Post Office Department ordered a special set of proofs to be printed for the Panama-Pacific Exposition in San Francisco. The Bureau of Engraving and Printing delivered a set of 413 different small die proofs, which were placed on display for the public from February 20th to December 4th, 1915.

Only three complete sets are known to have been printed; one for the exhibition display; one for the Smithsonian collection; and a third set that escaped from the BEP into the hands of collectors. In addition, some designs were printed more than others, resulting in several incomplete sets that could exist.<sup>41</sup>



**1¢ Green**  
Scott: 285p2a (PP)



**2¢ Copper Red**  
Scott listing: 286p2a (PP)



**4¢ Orange**  
Scott listing: 287p2a (PP)



**5¢ Dull Blue**  
Scott listing: 288p2a (PP)



**8¢ Violet Brown**  
Scott listing: 289p2a (PP)



**10¢ Gray violet**  
Scott listing: 290p2a (PP)



**50¢ Sage Green**  
Scott listing: 291p2a (PP)



**\$1 black**  
Scott listing: 292p2a (PP)

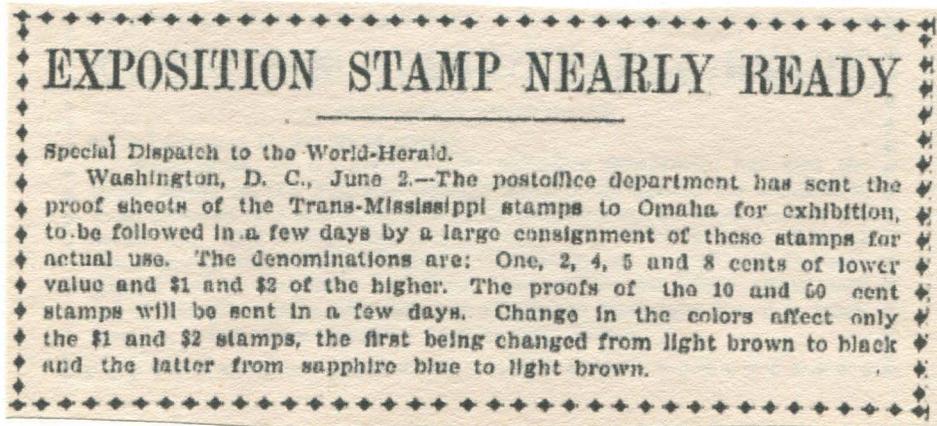


**\$2 orange brown**  
Scott listing: 293p2a (PP)

<sup>41</sup> (Burns 2016)

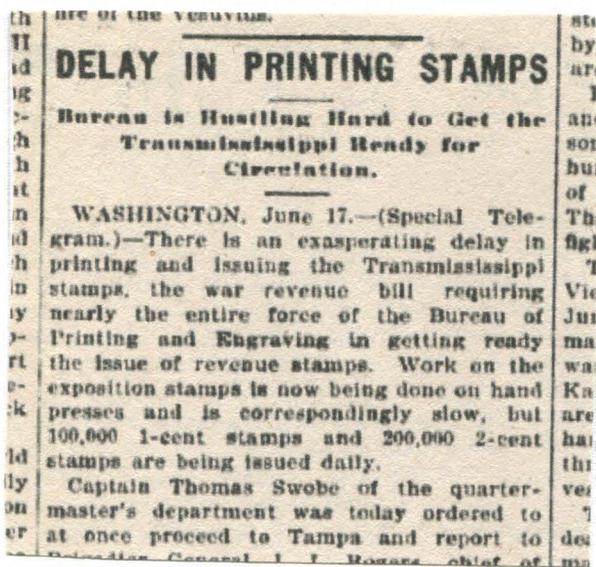
## TRANS-MISSISSIPPI SERIES OVERVIEW

By the end of May, the Bureau of Engraving and Printing was hard at work producing the stamps for distribution to postmasters.



*Omaha World-Herald, June 3, 1898*

The issue date for the stamps had already been pushed back multiple times. While the BEP had hoped to have them ready for the opening day of the Exposition on June 1<sup>st</sup>, they later changed their projected issue date to June 15<sup>th</sup>, two weeks later. The actual first day of issue was unrecorded, but the earliest known usage of the stamps is dated June 16<sup>th</sup>. Most sources claim June 17<sup>th</sup> as the series “official” first day.<sup>42</sup>



*Omaha Daily Bee, June 18, 1898*

### Delay in Printing Stamps

Bureau is Hustling Hard to Get the Transmississippi Ready for Circulation.

Washington, June 17. – (Special Telegram.) – There is an exasperating delay in printing and issuing the Transmississippi stamps, the war revenue bill requiring nearly the entire force of the Bureau of Printing and Engraving in getting ready the issue of revenue stamps. Work on the exposition stamps is now being done on hand presses and is correspondingly slow, but 100,000 1-cent stamps and 200,000 2-cent stamps are being issued daily.

<sup>42</sup> (Neil 1997)

The stamps were printed on paper with a USPS double line watermark (Scott type 191), and were perforated at gauge 12. Featured here is a complete set of the Trans-Mississippi stamps as issued.



1¢ Dark Yellow Green  
Scott listing: 285



2¢ Copper Red  
Scott listing: 286



4¢ Orange  
Scott listing: 287



5¢ Dull Blue  
Scott listing: 288



8¢ Violet Brown  
Scott listing: 289



10¢ Gray Violet  
Scott listing: 290



50¢ Sage Green  
Scott listing: 291



\$1 Black  
Scott listing: 292



\$2 Orange Brown  
Scott listing: 293



**1¢ Dark Yellow Green**  
**Circular datestamp cancel:**  
**Tacoma, Washington.**

The 1¢ stamp paid the domestic post card rate. Fourteen different plates were used to print the 70,993,400 stamps distributed to post offices.<sup>43</sup>

The 2¢ stamp paid the domestic letter (1 oz.) rate. More 2¢ stamps were produced than any other stamp in the series. One hundred and twenty-one different plates were used to print the 159,720,800 stamps issued to post offices.



**2¢ Copper Red**  
**Barred ellipse & CDS**  
**duplex cancel.**



**4¢ Orange**  
**Double oval handstamp:**  
**Omaha R.D.**

4¢ paid the rate for a double weight letter mailed within the US. Three plates were used to print 4,924,500 of these stamps.

<sup>43</sup> (Neil 1997)



5¢ Dull Blue  
Wavy lines machine  
cancellation.

The 5¢ Trans-Mississippi stamp paid the international letter rate to any Universal Postal Union member country. Three plates were used to produce the 7,694,180 of these stamps that were distributed to US. postmasters.

The 8¢ stamp was produced to pay the additional fee for registered mail. It would need to be used in addition with the appropriate postal rate stamp. Two plates were used to print 2,927,200 of these stamps.



8¢ Violet Brown  
Double oval handstamp  
cancel.



10¢ Gray Violet  
Double oval handstamp:  
Chicago, Illinois.

The 10¢ stamp could be used to pay the postage *and* registration for letters mailed domestically. It could also be used to pay a double weight international letter. Three plates were used to print 4,629,760 stamps of this value.



**50¢ Sage Green**  
**“V” registration handstamp:**  
**New York**

The 50¢ stamp, like the other high-value stamps, was used to mail overweight items and packages. Only one plate was produced and used to print the 530,400 stamps distributed to post offices.

The \$1 Trans-Mississippi stamp represented a high-value collector item. Adjusted for inflation, \$1 in 1898 would amount to roughly \$28.75 today.<sup>44</sup> A legitimate postage use at the time could pay the rate for 50 ounces of mail. One plate was used to print only 56,900 stamps.



**\$1 Black**  
**Barred ellipse “P”**  
**duplex cancel.**



**\$2 Orange Brown**  
**Double oval registration**  
**Handstamp: New York.**

The \$2 stamp saw almost no use. Most covers including this high-value stamp that exist today are philatelic in nature, and even those are scarce. When adjusted for inflation, the \$2 price for this stamp in 1898 would be equivalent to \$57.45 in today’s currency. Only one plate was used to produce 56,200 stamps, and it is believed that less than half of those were actually sold to the public. The entirety of \$2 stamps made were printed in one day: June 3, 1898.

<sup>44</sup> (Friedman 2016)

## 2¢ STAMPS

As the most widely used stamp of the series, the 2¢ stamp is known with an array of printing variations.

Recorded ink shade varieties include: Red brown, light red brown, claret brown, bright claret brown, and deep claret brown. Plate varieties include double transfers and worn plate printings. Perforation errors are also known for the 2¢ value.

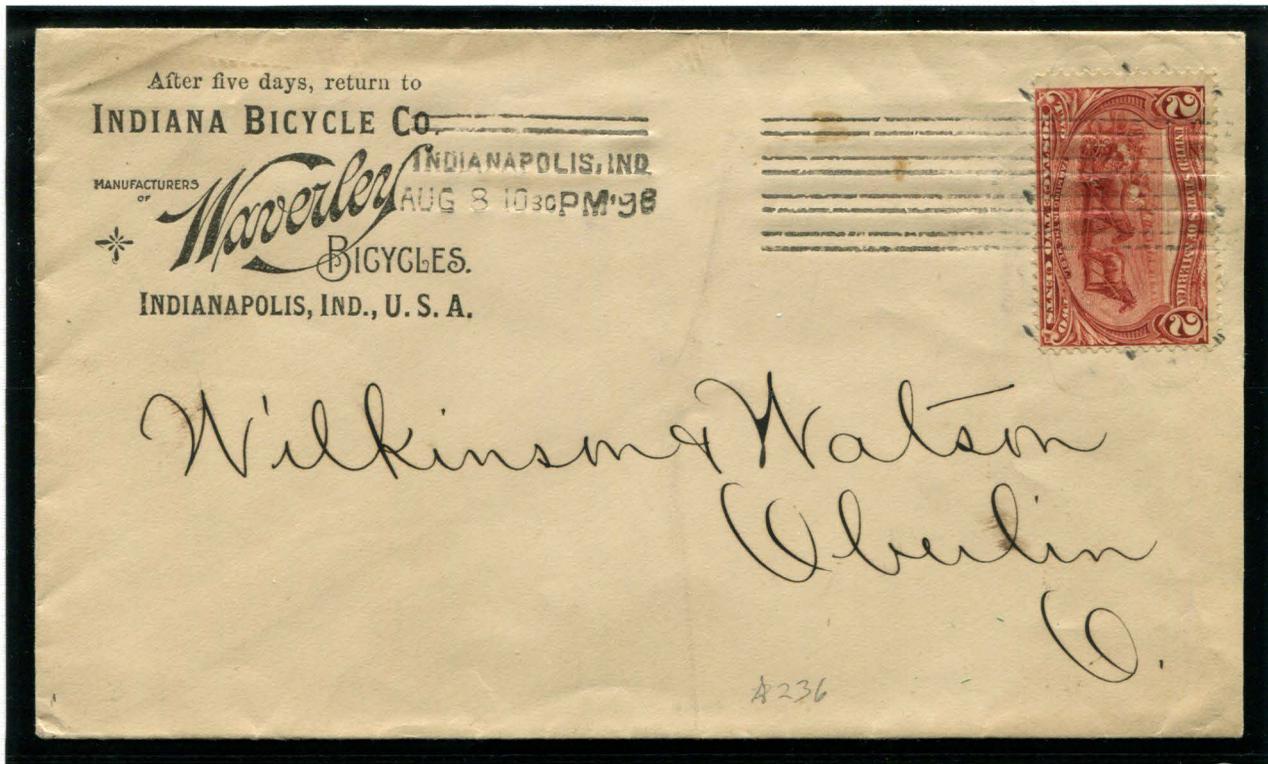
Featured here are two examples of a paper fold error during printing. Because the paper went through the printer with a crease, a gap appears in the printed design.



**Paper fold error on 2¢ stamp.**  
Used with quartered cork cancellation.

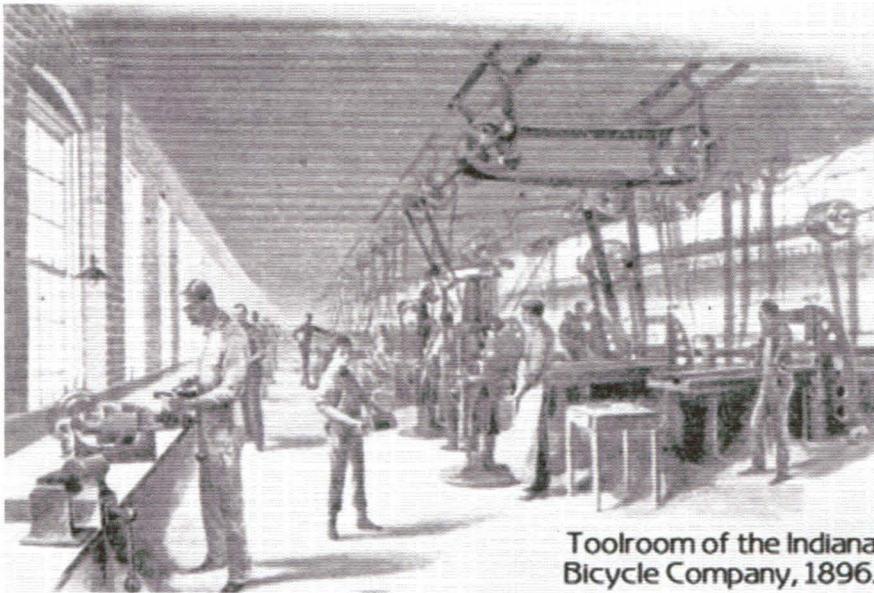


**Paper fold error on 2¢ stamp.**  
Used with barred ellipse cancellation.



**Indiana Bicycle Co. advertising Cover.**

Mailed with 2¢ copper red - Pneumatic Cancelling Machine Co. cancel, Datestamp & Double-line Bars ( Billings Type A2b-2a )  
 Indianapolis, Indiana August 3, 1898



Toolroom of the Indiana Bicycle Company, 1896.

An advertising envelope from the Indiana Bicycle Company sent to the Wilkinson & Watson Hardware store in Oberlin, Ohio. The domestic postage rate was paid with a 2¢ Trans-Mississippi stamp.

The Indiana Bicycle Co. was one of nine bicycle manufacturing companies in Indianapolis in the 1890s.<sup>45</sup> They produced Waverley brand bicycles, in models such as the “Belle” and “Scorcher”.<sup>46</sup>

<sup>45</sup> (Indiana Historical Bureau 1996)

<sup>46</sup> (Hoosier Antique & Classic Bicycle Club 2016)

An envelope from the office of Charles B. Scott, clerk of the Floyd Circuit Court in New Albany, Indiana. The letter was mailed with a 2¢ Trans-Mississippi stamp to Otto Cunningham, clerk of the Harrison Circuit Court in Corydon.

Scott was appointed to the position of Clerk of the Courts in November of 1898, and served until 1904.<sup>47</sup>



**Floyd Circuit Court illustrated Cover.**

Mailed with 2¢ copper red - Duplex handstamp cancel, New Albany CDS & Barred Ellipse

New Albany, Indiana December 3, 1898

Corydon receiving CDS on reverse – December 5, 1898

<sup>47</sup> (Caron City Directory Co. 1899)

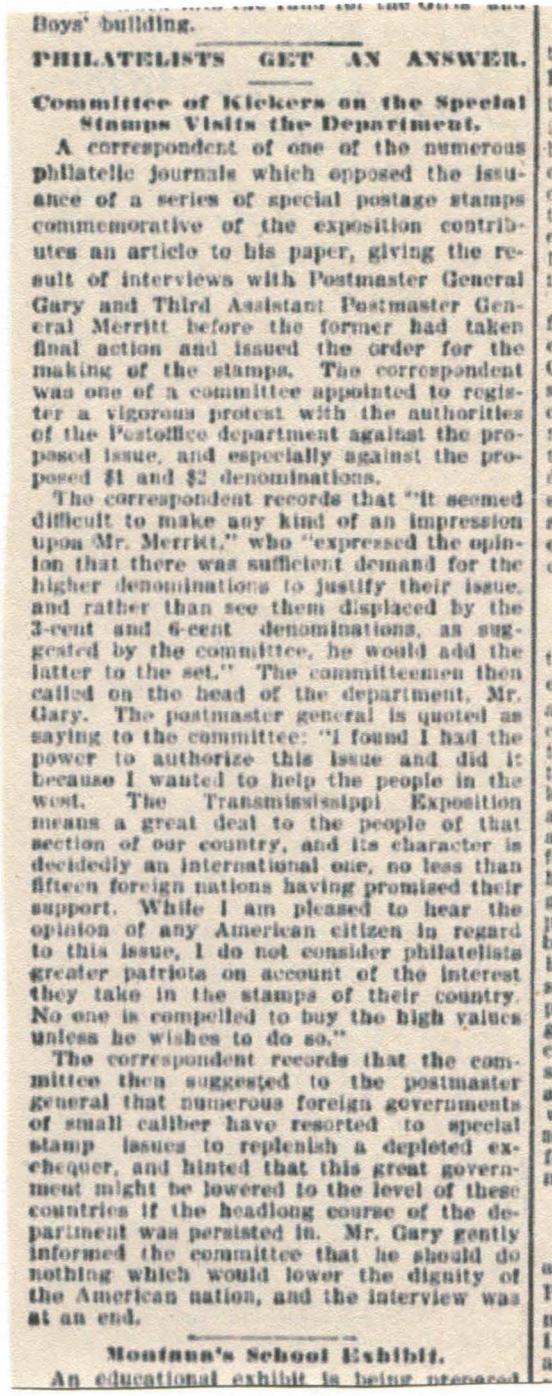
## \$2 STAMPS

The very production of the \$2 stamp was a small controversy. Many stamp collectors were still bitter about the production of the Columbian commemorative issue in 1893. They believed the government was taking advantage of them by offering high priced sets as collectors' items rather than stamps for actual postage use. Even before the stamps were issued, there were calls among stamp collectors to boycott the series.<sup>48</sup>

Some philatelic groups, rather than boycott, attempted to convince the Postmaster to remove only the high value stamps, replacing them instead with 3¢ and 6¢ denominations.

In response to the complaints, Postmaster General Gary said the following [emphasis added]:

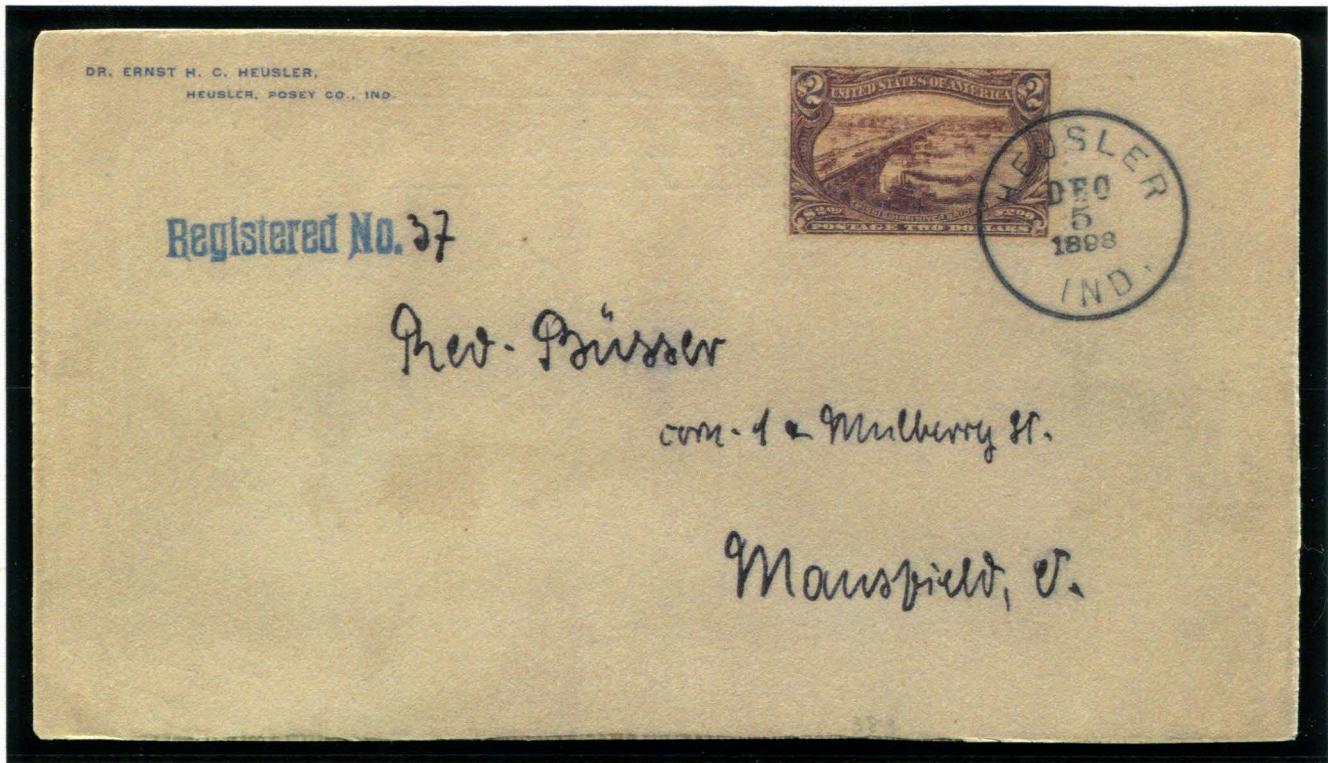
"I found I had the power to authorize this issue and did it because I wanted to help the people in the west. The Transmississippi Exposition means a great deal to the people of that section of our country, and its character is decidedly an international one, no less than fifteen foreign nationa having promised their support. While I am pleased to hear the opinions of any American citizen in regard to this issue, I do not consider philatelists greater patriots on account of the interest they take in the stamps of their country. **No one is compelled to buy the high values unless he wishes to do so.**"



Omaha Daily Bee, December 27, 1897

<sup>48</sup> (Neil 1997)

Despite some collectors' public misgivings toward the series and the high-value stamps in particular, at least some collectors were willing to spend money on the \$2 stamps. There are few surviving covers sent with the \$2 stamp, and many of those recorded are philatelic in nature.



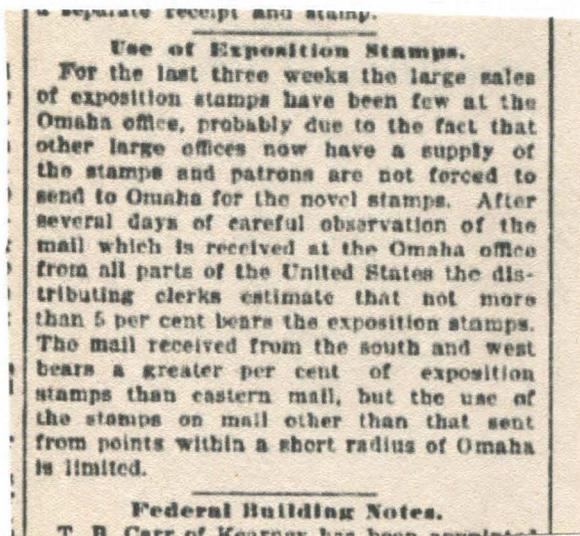
Registered cover with "Ernst H.C. Heusler" corner card.  
 Mailed with \$2 orange brown - CDS handstamp cancellation.  
 Heusler, Indiana December 5, 1898  
 "Registered No." blue handstamp with manuscript "37".

This cover represents a philatelic usage of the \$2 Trans-Mississippi stamp. Ernst Heusler was the postmaster of Heusler, Indiana from 1893 to 1903. During that time, he also acted as one of Indiana's first stamp dealers.

Heusler sent several covers using Trans-Mississippi stamps, including high value stamps, to stamp collectors in the United States and Germany.

Although the stamps could be used as regular postage, the Trans-Mississippi stamps were primarily a collectors' issue. Newspaper articles recorded orders for stamps from both US post offices and foreign stamp collectors.<sup>49</sup>

After only a few months of issue, however, excitement over the stamps began to wane.



*Omaha Daily Bee*, August 17, 1898

### Use of Exposition Stamps

For the last three weeks the large sales of exposition stamps have been few at the Omaha office, probably due to the fact that other large offices now have a supply of the stamps and patrons are not forced to send to Omaha for the novel stamps. After several days of careful observation of the mail which is received at the Omaha office from all parts of the United States the distributing clerks estimate that not more than 5 per cent bears the exposition stamps. The mail received from the south and west bears a greater per cent of exposition stamps than eastern mail, but the use of the stamps on mail other than that sent from points within a short radius of Omaha is limited.

The stamps were ordered to be removed from sale on December 31<sup>st</sup>, after only seven months of printing. The Third Assistant Postmaster General requested that all postmasters return their unsold stock of the stamps, and in March of 1899, these remaining stamps were destroyed. An accurate count of the stamps destroyed has not been recorded.<sup>50</sup>

It appeared that for most people, the stamps served as a souvenir for the Omaha World's Fair, rather than a means for sending mail.

<sup>49</sup> (*Omaha Daily Bee*, January 18, 1898) (*World-Herald*, April 3, 1898) (*Omaha Daily Bee*, May 11, 1898)

<sup>50</sup> (Brookman 1967)

## STAMPS AT THE TRANS-MISSISSIPPI EXPOSITION

During the Trans-Mississippi Exposition, the United States Post Office Department hosted an exhibit in the Government Building. This exhibit contained a showcase of all US postage stamps issued since 1847, including postage due, special delivery, newspaper stamps, and stamped envelopes and wrappers.

It also displayed mail carrying equipment, including full sized models of uniformed postal workers alongside scale models of dog sleds, horse carriages, boats, train cars, and automobiles.



Interior of US Government Building: US Post Office Department Exhibit at 1898 Exposition.  
Photograph by F. A. Rinehart, courtesy Omaha Public Library<sup>51</sup>

The Dead Letter Office held a special display of articles confiscated for breaking postal laws which included bombs, live tarantulas, and letters written on human skulls.<sup>52</sup>

<sup>51</sup> (Center for Digital Research in the Humanities 2016)

<sup>52</sup> (Omaha Daily Bee, January 10, 1898)



Photocopy of Exposition Cancel.

A special postal station was set up on the fairgrounds and unique handstamp was used to cancel mail sent from this station. The handstamp is a duplex cancel including a “1” barred ellipse and a circular datestamp reading “Exposition Sta. / Omaha, Nebr.” around the inside and the date in the center.

This postmark is known on several covers sent from the exposition. A second, much more rare exposition postmark is a four line registered handstamp. This marking is only known on one cover.



Photocopy of Exposition “Registered” handstamp.  
From *Postal Markings of United States Expositions.*

The rare registry postmark featured above is only known on one cover, which was mailed with a full set of the Trans-Mississippi postage stamps, cancelled with the exposition CDS and “Omaha R.D.” double oval handstamp. That cover – not featured in this collection – was sent from John M. Biddle at the exposition’s United States Government Exhibit.<sup>53</sup>



<sup>53</sup> (Bomar 1986)

The partial cover below includes one each of the Trans-Mississippi stamps up to 10¢ in value. Each stamp is cancelled with a partial Exposition Station handstamp. In addition, the cover is neatly cancelled at right with a duplex device including a “1” barred ellipse cancel and a clear strike of the Exposition Station circular datestamp. It is dated June 30, 1898. This is only three days after the stamps were issued at the exposition.

The piece is addressed to Joe H. Simpson in Sedalia, Missouri. Simpson was an advertising representative for the Missouri Press Association from 1892 to 1899. He would later go become a manager for the Western Newspaper Union.<sup>54</sup>



Joe H. Simpson, circa 1917.



Partial cover with six, lower value Trans-Mississippi postage stamps.

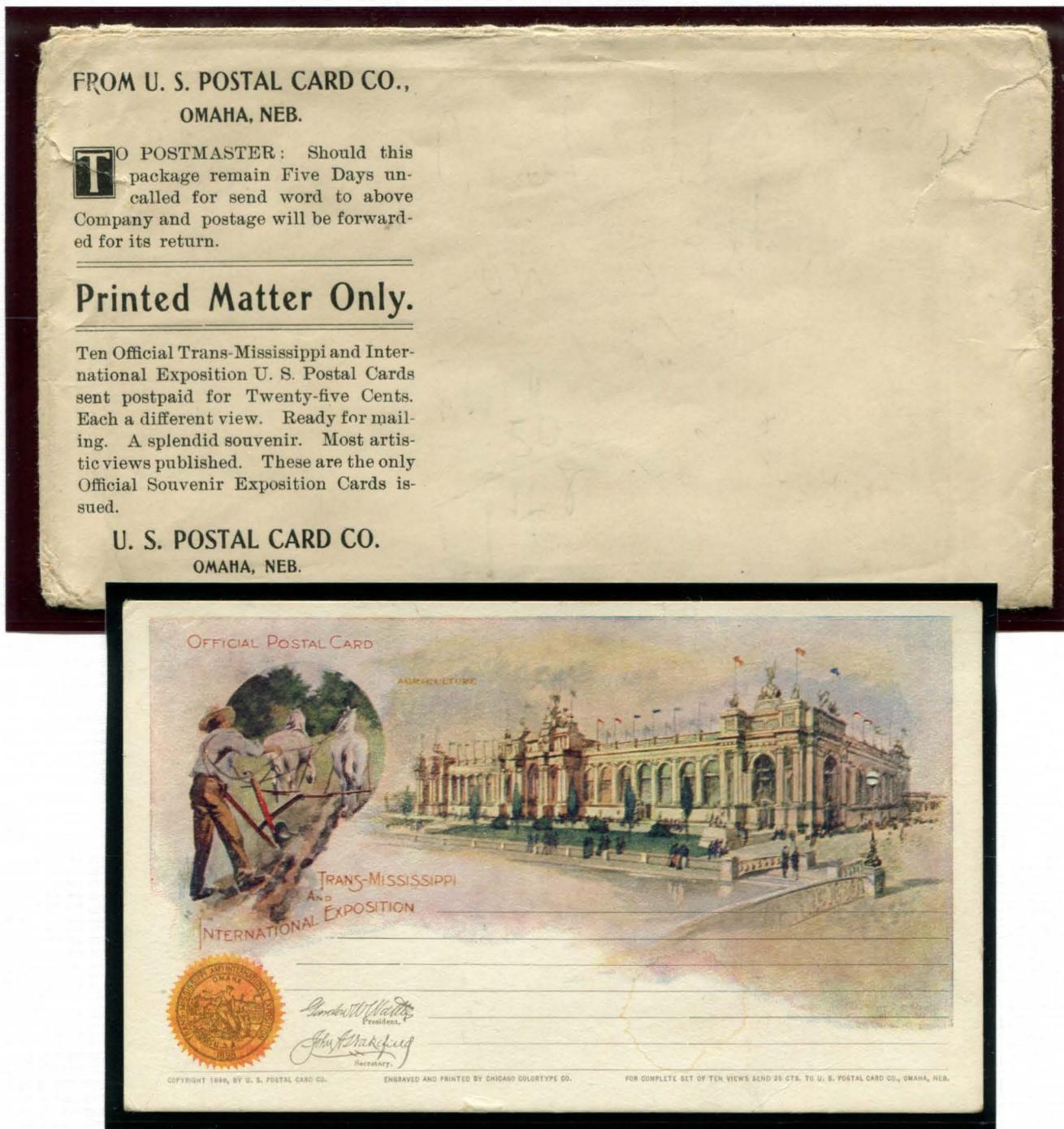
Mailed with 1¢, 2¢, 4¢, 5¢, 8¢, and 10¢ Trans-Mississippi stamps.

Exposition CDS & barred ellipse cancellation (Bomar type 098-01).

Exposition Station, Omaha, Nebraska June 30, 1898

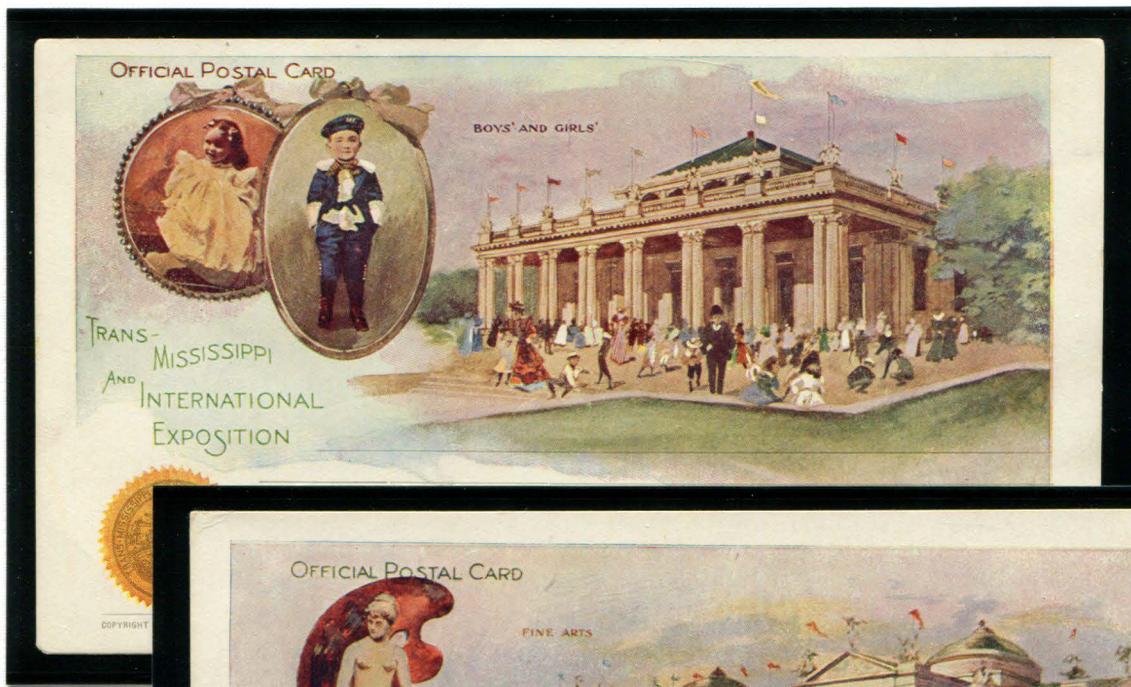
<sup>54</sup> (Fourth Estate Publishing Company 1917)

Although the Post Office did not issue any commemorative stamped stationary as they did with the Columbian Exposition, they permitted a series of official souvenir picture postal cards printed by the US Postal Card Company in Omaha, Nebraska. This set of ten souvenir postal cards was printed on 1¢ stamped postal cards from the 1897 issue. Sets were sold for twenty-five cents, packaged in a simple souvenir envelope. Each card in the set of ten featured an illustration of one of the twelve exposition buildings.<sup>55</sup>



Original envelope for exposition souvenir postal card set with “Agriculture” postal card.

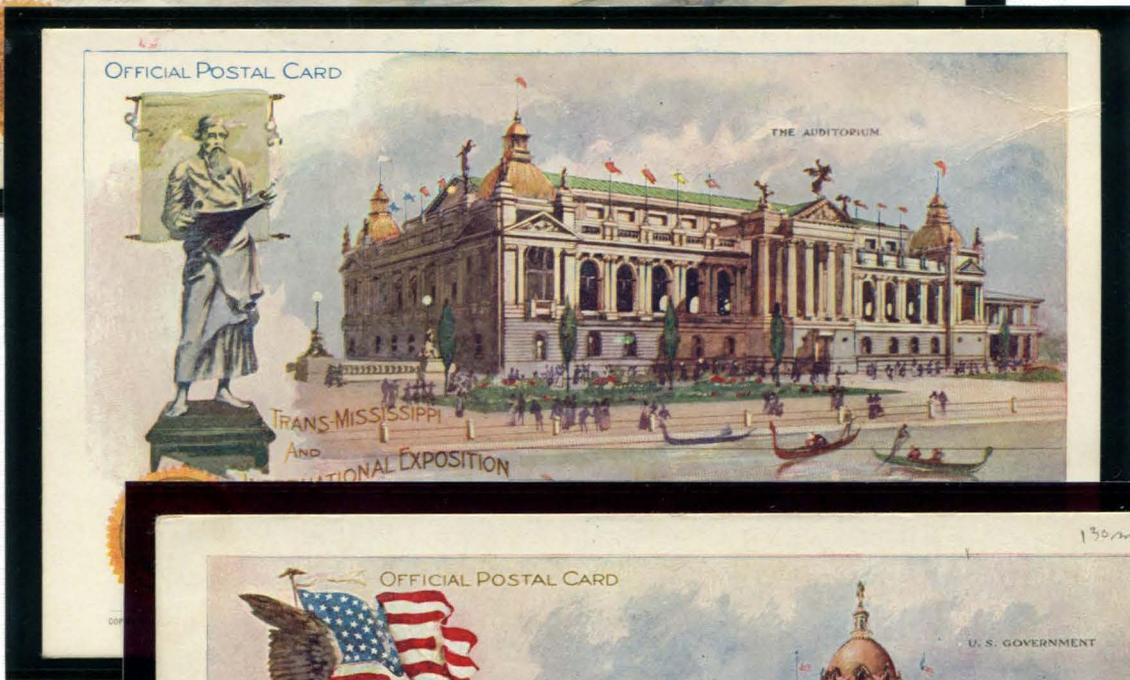
<sup>55</sup> (Bomar 1986)



Trans-Mississippi Exposition official souvenir postal card set:  
“Boys’ and Girls”, “Fine Arts”, and “Horticulture”



Trans-Mississippi Exposition official souvenir postal card set: "Liberal Arts", "Machinery and Electricity", and "Manufacturers"



Trans-Mississippi Exposition official souvenir postal card set: Mines and Mining”, “The Auditorium”, and “U.S. Government”

Each card in the set of ten featured an illustration of one of the twelve exposition buildings.<sup>56</sup> The Official souvenir cards were prepaid for the domestic post card rate. Additional postage would be required for the 2¢ international (UPU) post card rate.<sup>57</sup> The postal card featured here, mailed from Iowa to Germany, used a 2¢ Trans-Mississippi stamp to overpay this rate by 1¢.



**Trans-Mississippi Exposition official souvenir postal card “Boys’ and Girls”.**  
 Mailed with 2¢ copper red - Duplex handstamp cancel, Council Bluffs CDS & Barred Ellipse  
 On 1897 1¢ postal card, listed in Scott’s *Specialized Catalogue* as UX14  
 Council Bluffs, Iowa October 17, 1898  
 Altona, Germany receiving datestamp – October 28, 1898

“It has been a long time since I received your Postal from Hamburg, please accept mine as a token from your Uncle Lewis. I also remembered you when I was at the Exposition as you did when you was sitting in the green shadow at Hamburg”

<sup>56</sup> (Bomar 1986)

<sup>57</sup> (Wawrukiewicz 1996)

Featured here is an envelope with a special printed cachet featuring a picture of the exposition's Nebraska Building. This envelope was printed for the Department of Horticulture Superintendent, Peter Youngers, who worked in the Horticulture Building of the fair.



**Trans-Mississippi Exposition, Nebraska Building illustrated cover.**

Mailed with 2¢ copper red - Duplex handstamp cancel, Exposition CDS & barred ellipse cancellation (Bomar type 098-01).  
 Exposition Station, Omaha, Nebraska July 12, 1898

... no one who can come to the convention has a right or an excuse to stay away.

The Horticultural building is now occupied largely with the exhibition of small fruits, although the supply of cold storage apples seems unlimited, and new apples have already appeared. The whole building is delightfully perfumed by the aroma from the various ripe fruits. Nebraska, Iowa and Missouri are contesting closely for supremacy, but Supt. Peter Youngers enjoys special advantages in being closer to his base of supplies and reinforcements are constantly on the march. All the old and many of the new varieties of fruits are exhibited. Every day changes are made and new fruits added.

This is July 14th and it is less than five weeks from the opening day of

The Horticultural Building is now occupied largely with the exhibition of small fruits, although the supply of cold storage apples seems unlimited, and new apples have already appeared. The whole building is delightfully perfumed by fruits. Nebraska, Iowa, and Missouri are contesting closely for supremacy, but Supt. Peter Youngers enjoys special advantages in being closer to his base of supplies and reinforcements are constantly on the march. All the old and many of the new varieties of fruits are exhibited. Every day changes are made and new fruits added.

*The Weekly Florists' Review*, July 14, 1898

A common “advertising cover” from the Trans-Mississippi Exposition is an envelope like the cover below with a cachet image of the exposition seal. These envelopes, with known prints in black, blue, and red, include corner cards for different businesses that were present at the exposition.<sup>58</sup>

This cover is printed in blue with an “Omaha Casket corner card. It was sent from Omaha with a 2¢ Trans-Mississippi stamp to Creston, Iowa. A large magenta handstamp on the back reads “Champion College Embalming / Omaha Sept. 20-23”



Trans-Mississippi Exposition seal illustrated cover with Omaha Casket Co. corner card.  
 Mailed with 2¢ copper red - Barry Postal Supply Co. machine cancellation, datestamp and “1” in wavy bars.  
 Omaha, Nebraska July 7, 1898  
 Creston, Iowa receiving CDS July 7, 1898

**CHAMPION COLLEGE  
 EMBALMING  
 Omaha Sept. 20-23.**

Photocopy of handstamp on reverse.

<sup>58</sup> (Bomar 1986)

## NON-POSTAL USES: SPECIMEN STAMPS

In order to build reference collections, the Universal Postal Union required member countries to supply examples of their stamps. The stamps were then distributed to other member countries. These examples, not intended for postal use, were often marked as “specimens” by the receiving countries.



1¢ dark yellow green  
Scott listing: 285s E



2¢ copper red  
Scott listing: 286s E



4¢ orange  
Scott listing: 287s E



5¢ dull blue  
Scott listing: 288s E



8¢ violet brown  
Scott listing: 289s E



10¢ gray violet  
Scott listing: 290s E



50¢ sage green  
Scott listing: 291s E



\$1 black  
Scott listing: 291s E



\$2 orange brown  
Scott listing: 292s E

Featured here is a set of stamps that were overprinted with a purple “Specimen.” handstamp. This specimen overprint is listed in the Scott *Specialized Catalogue* as “Type E”.



1¢ dark yellow green  
Scott listing: 285s var.



2¢ copper red  
Scott listing: 286s var.



4¢ orange  
Scott listing: 287s var.



5¢ dull blue  
Scott listing: 288s var.



8¢ violet brown  
Scott listing: 289s var.



10¢ gray violet  
Scott listing: 290s var.



50¢ sage green  
Scott listing: 291s var.



\$1 black  
Scott listing: 291s var.



\$2 orange brown  
Scott listing: 292s var.

The “ULTRAMAR” handstamp used by the Portuguese Empire on these stamps is one of the most notable of the UPU specimen overprints. This handstamp was applied to reference collections arriving in Lisbon, where they were kept until they were sent to the Portuguese colonies.

While most of the colonies’ reference archives were destroyed, it is believed that two of the archives were eventually released to the philatelic market.<sup>59</sup>

<sup>59</sup> (Heritage Capital Corporation 2009)

The "SPECIMEN." handstamp on the examples below was applied by the Natal Post Office after receiving the stamps from the UPU. This handstamp is known as "Samuel Type NA2".



1¢ dark yellow green  
Scott listing: 285s var.



2¢ copper red  
Scott listing: 286s var.



4¢ orange  
Scott listing: 287s var.



5¢ dull blue  
Scott listing: 288s var.



8¢ violet brown  
Scott listing: 289s var.



10¢ gray violet  
Scott listing: 290s var.



50¢ sage green  
Scott listing: 291s var.



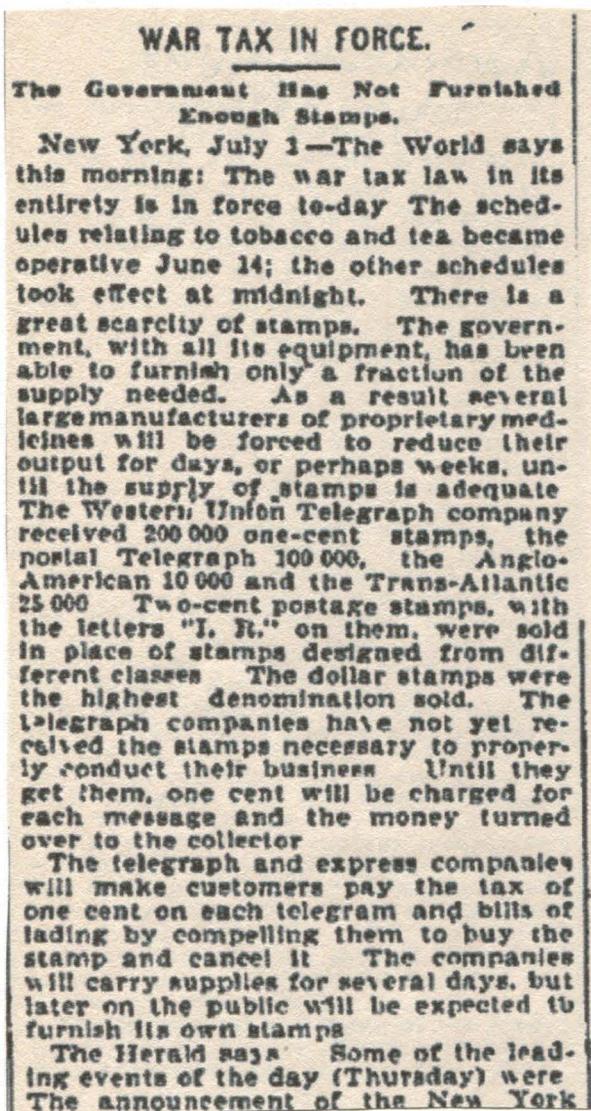
\$1 black  
Scott listing: 291s var.



\$2 orange brown  
Scott listing: 292s var.

## NON-POSTAL USES: REVENUE STAMPS

When War Revenue Law of 1898 was enacted in July of that year the Bureau of Engraving and Printing was rushed to prepare new documentary and proprietary tax stamps. Even after making changes to the Trans-Mississippi issue, the BEP's resources were still stretched thin. Unable to supply enough revenue stamps, postage stamps were surcharged for revenue usage.



Anaconda Standard, (Anaconda, Montana)  
July 2, 1898

New York, July 1 – The World says this morning: The war tax law in its entirety is in force to-day. The schedules relating to tobacco and tea became operative June 14; the other schedules took effect at midnight. There is a great scarcity of stamps. The government, with all its equipment, has been able to furnish only a fraction of the supply needed. As a result several large manufacturers of proprietary medicines will be forced to reduce their output for days, or perhaps weeks, until the supply of stamps is adequate. The Western Union Telegraph company received 200,000 one-cent stamps, the Postal Telegraph 100,000, the Anglo-American 10,000 and the Trans-Atlantic 25,000. Two-cent postage stamps, with the letters "I.R." on them, were sold in place of stamps designed from different classes. The dollar stamps were the highest denomination sold. The telegraph companies have not yet received the stamps necessary to properly conduct their business. Until they get them, one cent will be charged for each message and the money turned over to the collector.

While the government surcharged only postage stamps of the 1898 regular issue, the Trans-Mississippi stamps are also known to be overprinted for revenue use. These stamps were prepared privately by companies who were unable to obtain the required stamps.<sup>60</sup>

<sup>60</sup> (West 1979)

The 2¢ stamps featured here are both privately produced revenue stamps. They were overprinted with a purple “I.R.” handstamp, used by Williamston State Bank.<sup>61</sup>

The first example shows the full “I.R. / W.S.B.” handstamp and a handstamped date, while the other shows only the “I.R.” handstamp with a date and signature in manuscript.



2¢ copper red  
July 5, 1898 handstamp



2¢ copper red  
July 8, 1898 manuscript



Williamston State Bank, Williamston, Michigan circa 1910  
( Photo courtesy the Williamston Depot Museum )

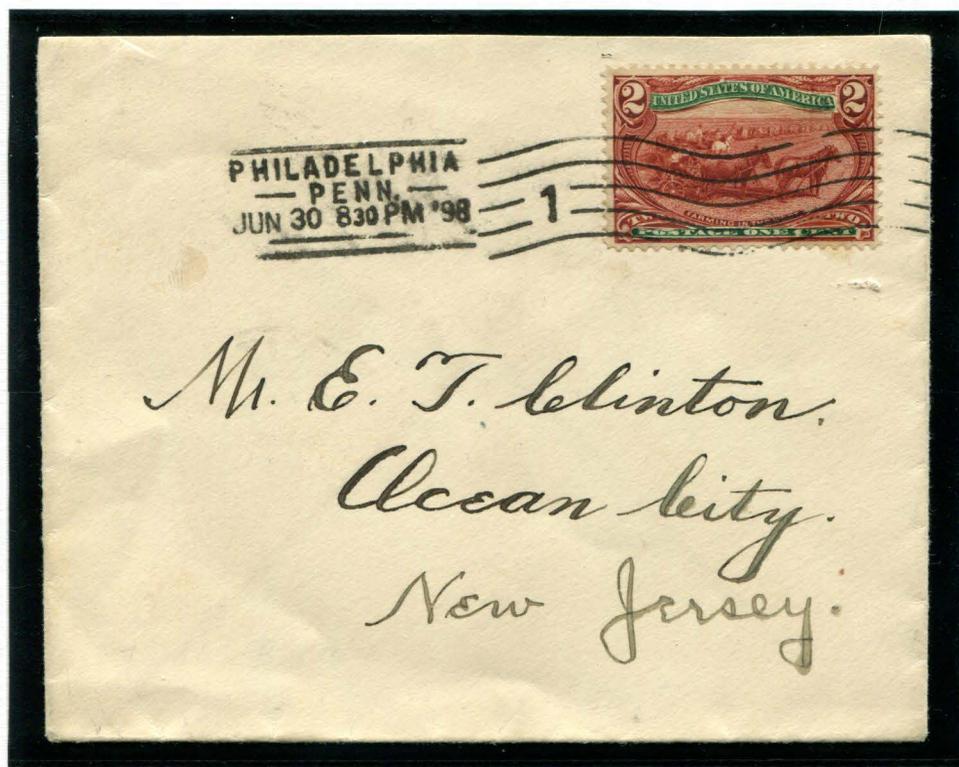
The Williamston State Bank in Williamston, Michigan, was founded in 1888. In 1937 it combined with the Crossman & Whipple Bank to become the People’s State Bank.<sup>62</sup>

<sup>61</sup> (Philatelic Foundation 2008)

<sup>62</sup> (Lutzke 2012)

## HOMEMADE "BI-COLOR" STAMPS

A series of covers addressed to a Mr. Edwin T. Clinton of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania were mailed in 1898 and 1899. The Trans-Mississippi stamps on these covers have been creatively modified by the unknown sender.



**"Homemade Bi-color" cover mailed with modified Trans-Mississippi stamp.**  
 2¢ copper red and 1¢ dark yellow green cut & paste combination  
 Barry Postal Supply Co. machine cancellation - ( Billings type H-8(1) )  
 Philadelphia, Pennsylvania June 30, 1898  
 Ocean City, New Jersey receiving datestamp - July 1, 1898

The "United States of America" banner and "Postage Two Cents" tablet at the top and bottom of the 2¢ Trans-Mississippi stamp on this cover have been replaced with the parts of a 1¢ stamp from the same issue.

The mismatched stamp was cancelled in Philadelphia, and an Ocean City, New Jersey receiving stamp on the reverse indicates that the cover was passed through the mails without issue.

The post office regulations generally do not accept for postage any stamps that have been "mutilated or defaced," however, this crafty philatelist was able to get away with it in 1898.

E. T. Clinton, to whom these letters are addressed, owned a brush factory and a showroom for the sale of brushes – hair brushes, tooth brushes, and paint brushes.<sup>63</sup> Philadelphia newspapers from the time indicate that he and his wife were very social people, often advertising tea or house parties at their home in Philadelphia, or their summer home in Ocean City, New Jersey.

The cover below was mailed with a modified 2¢ Trans-Mississippi stamp, its bottom tablet removed and replaced with that of the 8¢ stamp from the same issue. The machine cancellation and Philadelphia receiving stamp on the reverse indicate that it was successfully delivered through the mails.



Photocopy of  
receiving postmark



**“Homemade Bi-color” cover mailed with modified Trans-Mississippi stamp.**

**2¢ copper red and 8¢ violet brown cut & paste combination**

**American Postal Machines Company machine cancellation – ( Billings type G-W2(5) )**

**Philadelphia, Pennsylvania June 30, 1898**

<sup>63</sup> (Freedley 1867)



**“Homemade Bi-color” cover modified Trans-Mississippi stamps, unmailed.**

2¢ copper red and 1¢ dark yellow green cut & paste combinations

BEP imprint & plate numbers in top margin

The modified stamps on these covers were built using horizontal pairs of stamps, complete with upper plate margin containing BEP imprint and plate number. The vignettes of the 2¢ and 1¢ pairs have been cut out and swapped, creating what appears to be a true bi-color style design. These two covers were not sent through the post.

## MODERN REPRINTS

In celebration of the one-hundred-year anniversary of the issue, the United States Postal Service issued special reprint souvenir sheets of the Trans-Mississippi series. These stamps were printed by the Banknote Corporation of America using plates produced with the original dies used for the bi-color essays.<sup>64</sup> These reprints were issued on June 18, 1998 at the American Stamp Dealers Association Postage Stamp Show in Anaheim, California.



1998 Trans-Mississippi bi-color reissue souvenir sheet.

1¢ green, 2¢ red brown, 4¢ orange, 5¢ blue, 8¢ dark lilac, 10¢ purple, 50¢ green, \$1 red, and \$2 red brown with black vignettes  
Listed in Scott's Specialized Catalogue as 3209

<sup>64</sup> (Carr 1998)



Reissue first day covers with Artmaster cachets.

2¢ “Mississippi River Bridge” and 2¢ “Farming in the West” with first day handstamp cancellation  
Anaheim, California June 18, 1998

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The Trans-Mississippi issue of postage stamps has inspired philatelists since it was first announced in 1897. The purpose of this exhibit is to highlight the challenges of producing such an ambitious postage stamp series, and to show the results of the Bureau of Engraving and Printing's first original issue.

Although the creation of this series, the United States second commemorative issue, was proposed to honor and advertise the Trans-Mississippi exposition at Omaha, it owes much of its production to the political pull of the exposition leaders and to the ambition of the BEP.

With only a short time to produce the series, the dies were prepared and ready for a bi-color printing by May, 1898. The series was changed to monochrome because the BEP's resources were diverted to print revenue stamps to fund the Spanish-American War.

During the "Big Switch" in May, the subjects of the 2¢ and \$2 values were transposed. This most obvious and well recorded change highlights a history of indecision within the creation of the series. Changes in the lists of subjects published between January and May indicate that the choice of subjects and their values was not certain until the final engravings were finished – the existence of the unused "Indian Vignette" and the alternate value bi-color essays are evidence of this.

Despite this indecision, the short time frame for production, and printing restraints due to the Spanish American War, the BEP was able to produce a high quality issue of postage stamps. This is owed to the hard work of the designers and engravers. The Trans-Mississippi issue continues to be one of the most well received US postage stamp series.

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For ease of identification, this exhibit includes catalog listings for items. Listing numbers are from the following sources:

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Scott Publishing Co.

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Clarence W. Brazer

Postal Markings of United States Expositions  
William J. Bomar

A Handbook of U.S. Postal Markings Impressed by Machines  
Bart Billings, Robert Payne and Reg Morris

So-Called Dollars  
Harold E. Hibler and Charles V. Kappen



Research for this exhibit pulled from many sources. The key sources include:

*The Trans-Mississippi Issue of 1898*  
Randy L. Neil with Jack Rosenthal.

The Jack Rosenthal collection.

*Essays for U.S. Adhesive Postage Stamps*  
Clarence W. Brazer.

*The United States Postage Stamps of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century*  
Lester G. Brookman.

Articles from the *Omaha Daily Bee* and the *Omaha World-Herald*  
- collected for the purpose of this exhibit (view collection at [stamps.conceptsindustrial.com](http://stamps.conceptsindustrial.com) )

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## DOWNLOAD THIS EXHIBIT

If you would like to take this exhibit with you to access later, scan the QR code to visit the exhibit website and download a .pdf of the exhibit:



## ABOUT THIS EXHIBIT

This ten frame exhibit is non-competitive for the following reasons:

- ❖ To give credit to the three co-developers of the exhibit.
- ❖ To work outside of traditional exhibit guidelines and set up in hopes of being more accessible to beginning stamp collectors.
  - Inserting definitions and explanations of stamp production terms.
  - Using catalog listing numbers for easy identification and reference.
- ❖ To introduce how new technology can be used in philatelic exhibits.
  - Digital overlays are used to show differences between progressive die essays. It is the hope of the authors that this technology can be utilized to:
    - Find previously unrecorded differences in stamps and essays.
    - Better describe the differences between stamps and essays that are not sufficiently identified in current stamp catalogs.
  - QR codes are used to include animations and supplementary information.
    - Animated images of die progression help demonstrate how an engraving is “built” over time.
    - Additional information that would not otherwise fit into the exhibit is made easily available for those who wish to access it.

## ADDENDUM – THE BRIDGE SELECTION

Prior to the final decision to include the Eads Bridge in St. Louis as the subject of the \$2 Trans-Mississippi stamp, two other bridges were suggested. This addendum will strive to detail and clarify these suggestions.

On January 12, 1898, the *Omaha World-Herald* published the following announcement of stamp designs:

Washington, D. C., Jan. 12.—The authorities of the postoffice department have determined upon the subjects which shall be illustrated upon the new series of postage stamps to be issued by the department in commemoration of the Trans-Mississippi and International exposition, to be opened the first of next June, at Omaha. They are illustrative of the conditions, progress and accomplishments of the great west from its discovery to our own day.

The series comprises nine denominations of stamps as follows:

One-cent—The discovery of the Mississippi river by Marquette.

Two-cent—An Indian chief.

Four-cent—A buffalo hunting scene.

Five-cent—The Pathfinder, being a picture of Fremont raising the flag on the summit of the Rockies.

Eight-cent—A train of emigrants crossing the plains.

Ten-cent—A mining scene.

Fifty-cent—A cowboy and cattle.

Dollar—A harvesting scene, or a great flouring mill.

Two-dollar—The Rock Island bridge, showing part of the city of Omaha.

This listed the \$2 stamp subject as “The Rock Island bridge, showing part of the city of Omaha.

While the Trans-Mississippi Exposition was held to showcase the development of the West as a whole, most of the focus was on the host city. Many of the exposition leaders were from Nebraska – the most notable of these leaders being publicity manager Edward Rosewater, who was closely involved in the development of the Trans-Mississippi stamps.

This article makes it clear that the suggested bridge was located in Omaha. Although it does not currently go by the name “Rock Island Bridge”, one can assume the bridge suggested is the Union Pacific Bridge over the Missouri River. (The Union Pacific Railroad connected with the Rock Island Railroad in Omaha, and would eventually merge with the company.) This bridge is significant to the West in that it connected the first transcontinental railroad.

Twelve days later, an article is published the *Omaha Daily Bee* that announces the Eads Bridge in St. Louis was selected over the Rock Island Bridge.

SOUTH SIDE COURSE OF NEBRASKA EXHIBIT.

**EADS BRIDGE ON THE STAMPS.**

**St. Louis Structure Will Decorate the Two-Cent Denomination.**

When the Transmississippi Exposition memorial 2-cent stamp is issued it will bear on its face a presentation of one of the greatest, if not the greatest, gates to the empire west of the mighty Father of Waters. Late advices from Washington are to the effect that when the designs for postage stamps for the Omaha exposition were under consideration recently by the Postoffice department a suggestion was made to put a picture of the Rock Island bridge upon one stamp of the series. This did not strike the postmaster general favorably, and he substituted the Eads bridge at St. Louis for the Rock Island structure. One of the strongest arguments for the Rock Island bridge was that it was the finest structure of any magnitude over the Mississippi river, and therefore should be honored with a place on the new stamps. In making the arrangements for the new series for Omaha the bridge stamp was to have been of the \$2 denomination, but the postmaster general determined upon another change. He thought the bridge should be placed on the most popular denomination, and accordingly ordered it changed to the 2-cent stamps. These designs are now at the Bureau of Engraving and Printing, and it is the desire of the postal authorities to have them ready for distribution June 1, when the exposition is to be inaugurated.

**Wisconsin's State Building.**

This article mentions that the Rock Island Bridge was selected because it was “the finest structure of any magnitude over the Mississippi River.” At this point, the bridge suggested is not the Union Pacific Bridge in Omaha (which spans the *Missouri River*). Instead this article suggests that the “Rock Island Bridge” in question was the Government Bridge, which connected Rock Island, Illinois and Davenport, Iowa over the Mississippi River

The Post Office department believed that a Mississippi River crossing point was an important inclusion for the series.

It is stated in this article Postmaster General Gary was responsible for selecting the Eads Bridge instead of the Rock Island Bridge. It also states that the bridge was first suggested for the \$2, but that the Postmaster General decided it should go on the 2¢ stamp.

Four months later, on May 17, 1898, the *Omaha Daily Bee* published an article announcing the final selection of subjects for the stamps. At the end of this announcement was the following article:

Color of border, copper red.  
**Officials All Interested.**  
The Washington authorities have been much interested in the designs. Every one had a finger in the pie. Mr. Roosevelt would have a buffalo and wild warfare. The buffalo and the army picture were selected. Mr. Roosevelt also wanted Custer at the head of a troop of cavalry, but no picture could be found. Mr. Merritt selected the harvesting scene. Mr. Gray insisted upon the Rock Island instead of the St. Louis bridge, but as the former was neither picturesque nor costly, and the small town of Davenport would have been portrayed as a leading western city, Mr. Gray was ruled down. Mr. Gray also insisted upon having the St. Louis bridge upon the two-cent stamp instead of at the end of the series, where it properly belongs.  
The designer of these stamps is Raymond Ostrander-Smith. He was imported last July by Mr. Johnson from the American Bank Note company of New York. His first piece of work is the postal which is now in use.  
**WILL TAKE IN OMAHA PRELUDE.**

This article states that "Mr. Gray insisted upon instead of the St. Louis bridge, but as the former was neither picturesque nor costly, and the small town of Davenport would have been portrayed as a leading western city, Mr. Gray was ruled down. Mr. Gray also insisted upon having the St. Louis bridge upon the two-cent stamp instead of at the end of the series, where it properly belongs."

From this we can confirm that the Government Bridge was one of the "Rock Island" bridges suggested.

This article also raises several questions: Who is Mr. Gray? Most likely this is referring to Postmaster General Gary, called "Gray" here by mistake.

If Mr. Gray is, in fact, Postmaster Gary, then this article contradicts the earlier January 24th article. In the first article, Gary preferred the Eads Bridge, and supported changing the value to 2¢; in the second article he preferred the Rock Island Bridge, and supported changing the value to \$2.

It should be noted that the description of the stamps included above this article contained errors (colors for the \$1 and \$2 stamps were incorrectly listed).

## Conclusions:

- The Union Pacific Bridge (Omaha, Nebraska) was a suggested bridge. It was probably included in the first list of subjects due to the influence of the exposition leaders hoping to promote the city of Omaha.
- The Government Bridge (Davenport, Iowa) was another suggested bridge. It was considered over the Union Pacific Bridge because it spanned the Mississippi River.
- The Eads Bridge (St. Louis, Missouri) was ultimately selected as the stamp subject. It is uncertain whether its originally intended value was 2¢ or \$2, but it was eventually printed as the \$2 value.



## SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION – OTHER EXHIBITS

To view more uses of the Trans-Mississippi series, you can see the two-frame *Dr. Ernst H.C. Heusler, Postmaster* exhibit, on display at this show. This exhibit includes several Indiana covers sent with the Trans-Mississippi series, including the high-value stamps.

Scan the QR code at right to download the Heusler exhibit to your device.

