

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

Objective

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

Production

Line engraved bicolor production necessitated that the stamp panes be passed through the printing press twice: first for the vignette and a second time for the frame. The printers encountered problems not only in aligning the vignettes and frames, but in the case of the inverted varieties, with keeping the stamp sheets top side up. The postage issues were produced by three different printers: The National Bank Note Company (1869), The Continental Bank Note Company (1873), and The Bureau of Engraving Printing (1901). Each experienced similar production problems.

Vignette Double Printed, One Inverted



PIC. repaired

One of three recorded examples

1869 90¢ Value Used on Piece



PIC

“New York Steamship” April datestamp
The only recorded example on piece

Background

The exhibit features examples of all recorded U.S. bicolor postage issues produced in the first three bicolor printing periods. Included are numerous frame and vignette misregistrations, inverts, double printings and misalignments. Many of the examples are true rarities, with only a few surviving examples recorded, such as this 1869 15¢ Type II with a double printing of the vignette, one inverted, shown above on the left; and the 90¢ value used on a piece, above right, where the only other recorded postally-used example of the 1869 90¢ is the “Ice House” cover. Other examples shown illustrate more common varieties and are included in order to present a complete picture of the bicolor issues.

Organization

The exhibit is divided into three main sections, utilizing a chronological format that traces the design, production and uses of the bicolor issues. Included are essays and original art work, proofs, specimens, singles, multiples, varieties, cancellations and postal history.

Exhibit Organization
I. The Pictorial Issue of 1869
A. 15¢ Value
B. 24¢ Value
C. 30¢ Value
D. 90¢ Value
II. The Official Issue of 1873
A. State \$2 Value
B. State \$5 Value
C. State \$10 Value
D. State \$20 Value
III. The Pan-American Issue of 1901
A. 1¢ Value
B. 2¢ Value
C. 4¢ Value
D. 5¢ Value
E. 8¢ Value
F. 10¢ Value