

Essays and Proofs of 19th Century U.S. Envelopes & Wrappers

This exhibit will show U.S. postal stationery essay and proof items produced during the 19th century to illustrate the development of postal envelopes and wrappers and to show types of essay and proof material that exist.

U.S. postal envelopes were authorized by the Postal Act of August 31, 1852 wherein the Postmaster General was authorized to provide envelopes such that

“...all letters enclosed in such envelopes...may be sent, conveyed and delivered otherwise than by post or mail...provided that said envelope shall be duly sealed, or otherwise firmly and securely closed, so that such letter cannot be taken therefrom without tearing or destroying such envelope..”

Postal stationery has always been produced privately under contract for the Post Office. Embossing was considered necessary as a security measure and thus the Post Office sought contractors from stationers rather than banknote companies which produced stamps.

Envelope and wrapper **stamp dies and/or designs were changed according to needs of the Post Office and each time the contract was awarded to a new company.** This exhibit contains items from contract awardees, Nesbitt, Reay, Plimpton and Purcell, as well as others who were not successful contract bidders.

Items will not be marked for scarcity since, **with two exceptions, all envelope and wrapper essay and proof items are thought to exist in less than six copies.** Many items of the exhibit, including all artists' drawings and models, are unique.

All items first reported by the exhibitor will be indicated with a thick, black frame.

Particularly significant items will be marked with a triple frame.

Exhibit Outline

- I. Nesbitt essays and proofs
 - a. First Issue
 - b. Second Issue
 - c. Third Issue
 - d. Fourth Issue
- II. Essays of Unknown Source
- III. National Bank Note essays
- IV. Dempsey and O'Toole essays
- V. Reay essays and proofs
- VI. Plimpton essays and proofs
 - a. First Contract – 1874
 - b. Centennial Proofs
 - c. Design Changes of 1883-1884
 - d. Design Changes of 1886
 - e. Two Cent Essays for Columbian Exposition
- VII. Purcell proofs
- VIII. Plimpton-Morgan 1899 essays and proofs
- IX. Return envelope essays
- X. Official/Penalty envelope essays

Die impressions in red wax were produced by Plimpton Manufacturing Company as favor items in 1880's and 1890's.



George F. Nesbitt, stationer in New York, received the first contract for producing stamped envelopes for the Post Office. The first issue, in denominations of 3¢, 6¢, and 10¢ was released in 1853; the second issue (Star Dies), in denominations of 1¢, 3¢, 1¢ + 3¢, 6¢, and 10¢, was released in 1860 to 1861; the third issue was released in 1861 to allow demonetization of first two issues in Confederate hands and included the first high values (12¢ to 40¢ values in bicolors); the fourth issue, including monicolor high values, was released in 1864 and 1865.



1st Issue



2nd Issue



3rd Issue



3rd Issue



3rd Issue
High Values



4th Issue



4th issue
High Values

The Post Office decided that **stamped envelopes should have embossed stamps to prevent counterfeiting**. A stamped envelope (believed to be the pink 1850 Victoria issue of Great Britain at right) was circulated to companies as an example of what the Post Office desired.

George F. Nesbitt made the essay (below) with obvious design similarities to the British envelope. This is the first known essay for U.S. envelopes and has **four strands in the braid** rather than three as the issued design. No other essays or proofs are known for the first issue of U.S. postal stationery.



green on white paper



violet-brown on buff paper

Third Assistant Postmaster-General John Marron critiqued specimens (believed to be the above) in a letter to George F. Nesbitt dated December 23, 1852:

"The Postmaster General is of opinion that the impressions of the head of Washington on the specimen envelopes furnished by you today are not sufficiently plain and bold. The figure does not come out sufficiently, nor does it represent the likeness of Washington with characteristic force. These defects in the die must be remedied, and approved specimens must be sent here before a precise or specific order will be given for the envelopes."

Nesbitt: Second Issue

Three Cents Essays (1860)

Nesbitt made bicolor essays for three cents value of the second issue. Apparently the Post Office was considering bicolor issues for all values of envelopes.



red lettering on white collar
bust on blue background



blue lettering on buff collar
bust on red background

A **model** is a combination of drawings, embossing and engraved prints pasted together, used to mock up a proposed design of a stamp. The above models have built up design without stars at sides. The collar with hand lettering and embossed bust are pasted on rest of design.



blue collar with red background
on white paper



blue collar with red background
on buff paper



red collar with blue background
on buff paper

The above models have a built up design with stars at sides. Collar with hand lettering and embossed bust are pasted on rest of design.



rose on white



black on white card



yellow on white



Yellow on buff

Trial colors printed with type 8 die on small cut squares



Black on white



Yellow on white



Rose on white



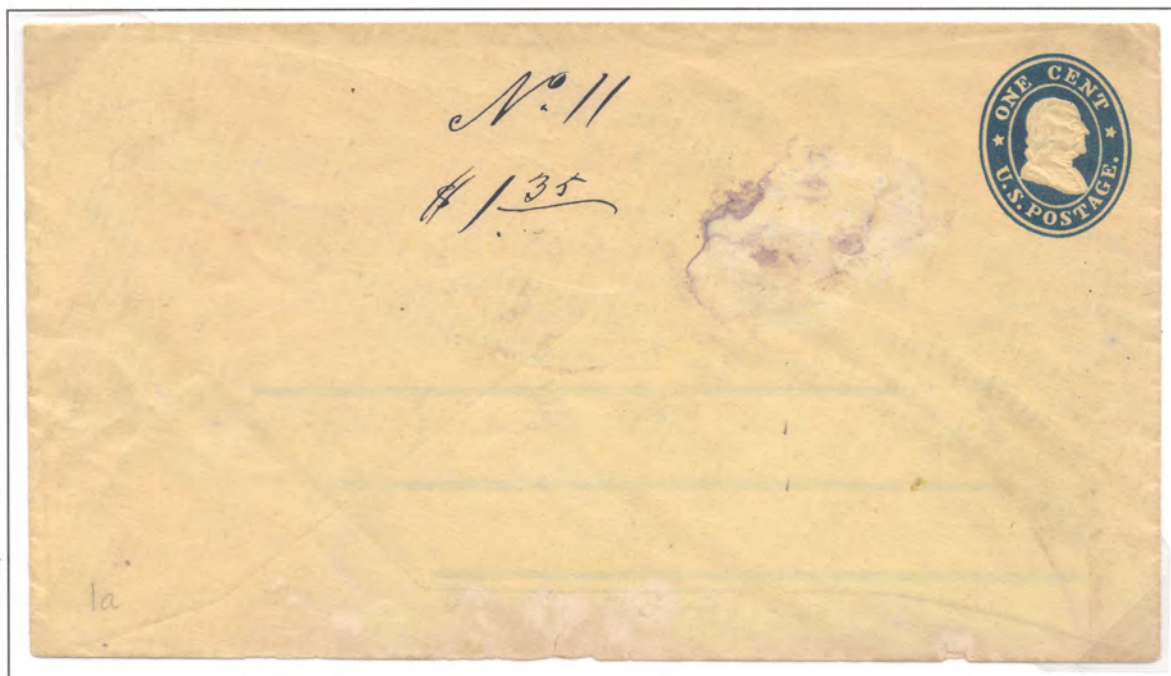
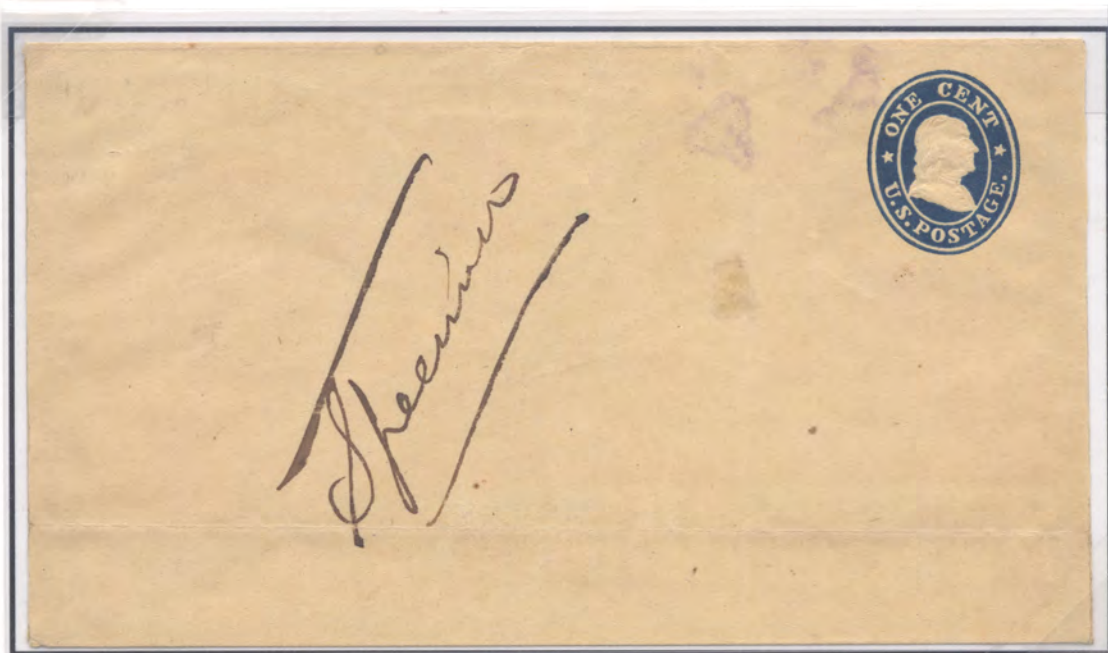
Black on buff



Yellow on buff

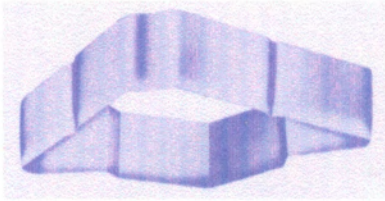
Trials colors printed with type 8 die on envelope paper, cut to shape and then mounted on white or buff envelope paper.

The envelope to right was cut down and fabricated from a larger envelope. It is a knife essay and, like the one below, is a unique bidders' sample.

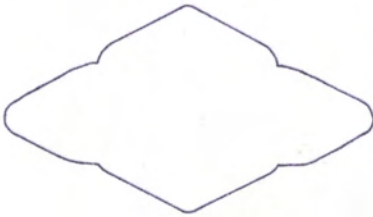


The above **envelope is a unique knife essay** as well since this knife (envelope shape) was never used to produce stamped envelopes. The knife is similar to UPSS knife 23 but slightly (10mm) larger. The safety lines are printed on the side flap instead of the bottom flap and this flap is pointed rather than rounded. The right side flap is also shaped differently than the issued envelope. The “N. 11” refers to **item number 11 in a series** of envelope paper type, size and quality options sent to the Post Office Department and “\$1³⁵” refers to the **price per thousand** that George F. Nesbitt was bidding to manufacture these envelopes.

Die 12A (with bust touching inner frame in front) **was likely the first die of this issue** produced and used for proofs of the one cent envelope like the unique items above. **The die was then put aside** and a new master die was made for working dies. Die 12A was, however, used for one special request order of orange envelopes with an ‘AMERICAN EXPRESS’ corner card.



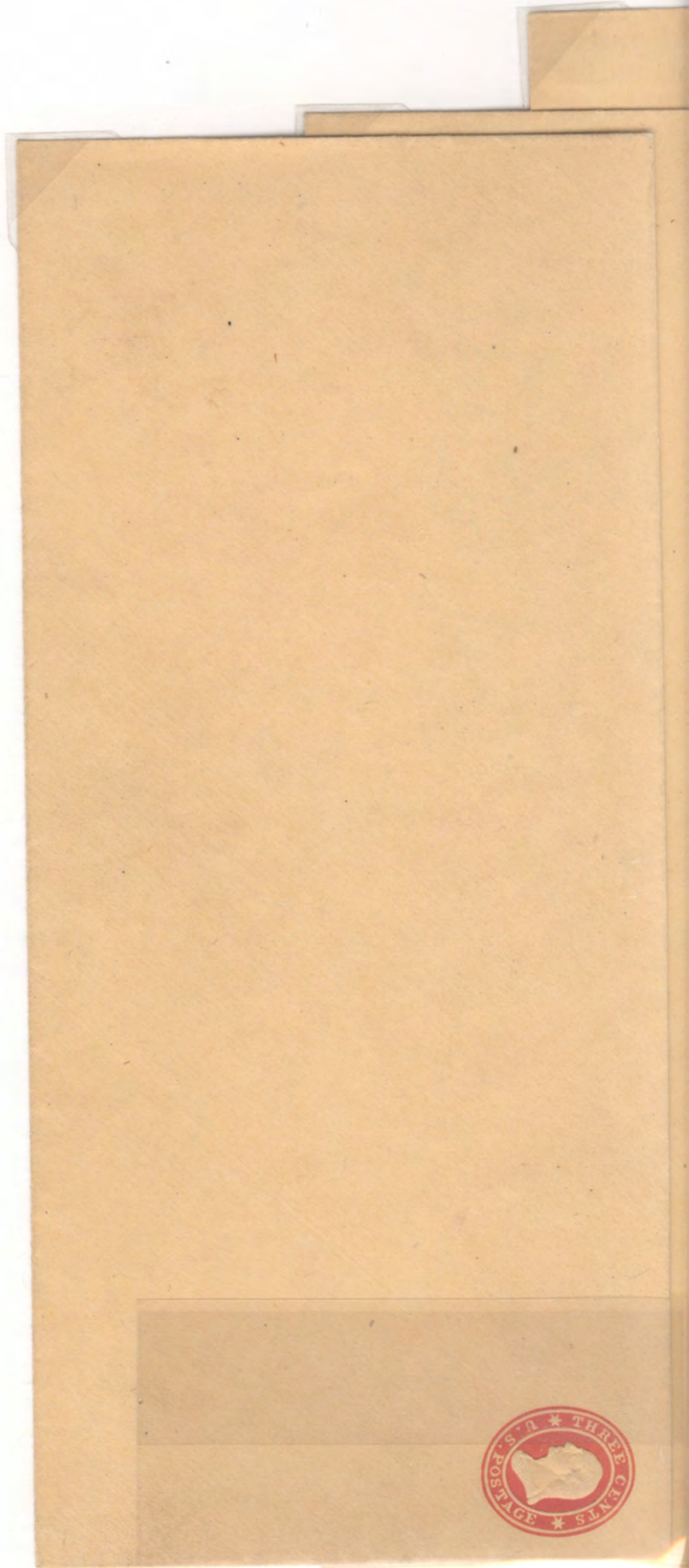
Metal envelope blank cutting knife



Envelope blank cut with specific knife

A **knife** is either the metal tool used to cut envelope blanks or the specific size and shape of an envelope cut by a particular metal knife.

Stamps on envelopes to right were printed in the issued color from the die used to manufacture envelopes but on **envelopes cut with knives not used for envelope production**. Therefore, these are envelope knife essays. Only three sets are known to exist.







The Post Office decided to produce a compound **1¢ plus 3¢ envelope for postage plus the added one cent carrier fee** (local delivery service available in some major cities).

For the first compound die essay (above) had the one cent Die 12A added to the left side of a 3¢ envelope. The above is **one of three known essay envelopes** of this type and the only one with horizontal patent lines (visible just below and to left of stamp).

The patent lines are printed on the inside of the left flap. As such, this is an essay both of the **1¢ plus 3¢ compound envelope and of the envelope knife** since this envelope shape (knife) was never used to produce envelopes for the public - issued envelopes had patent lines on the bottom flap.

The design with stamps in opposite corners of the envelope **was quickly decided against** because postmasters would have to **strike the envelope twice** (once in each corner) to cancel the envelope.



The envelopes above are **two of three known essays** with the two stamps together on the right side of the envelope. They were produced by **opening a 3¢ envelope and adding the 1¢ stamp**. The one cent stamp is die 12A (bust touching inner frame line) not used for general production of envelopes. It is reported that these envelopes were given to Gilbert Harrison by then Third Assistant Postmaster Zevely during the Lincoln and Johnson Administrations. Note that the envelope on top with white paper has the horizontal patent lines printed on the left flap.

Nesbitt: Third Issue

Three Cent Washington (1861)



Green printed on buff paper

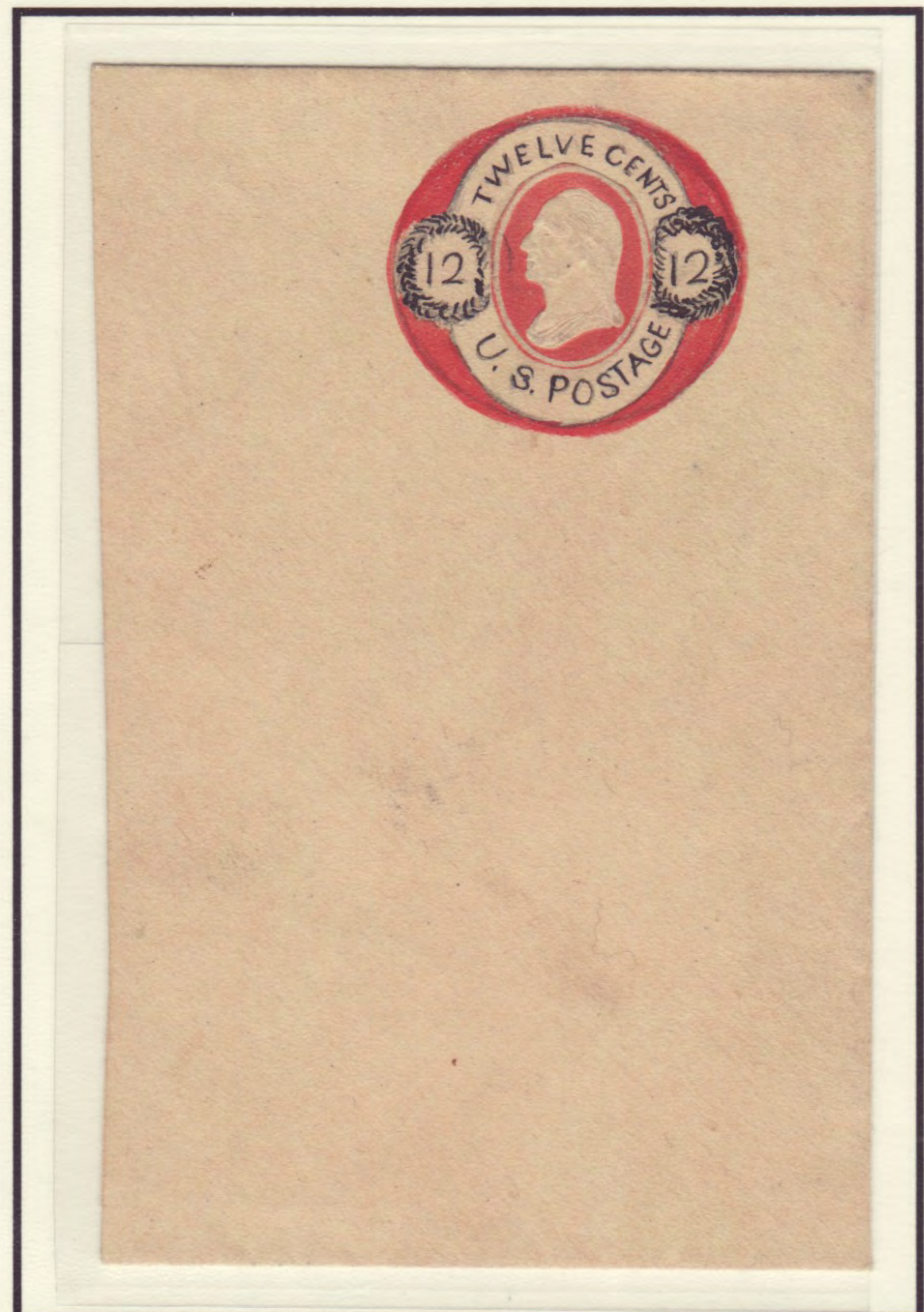
The dies for the 3¢ and 6¢ third issue were **hurriedly prepared so that previously issued stationery could be demonetized** to reduce losses from that in Confederate hands. No essays are known for 3¢ and 6¢ denominations of this issue and only two green trial proofs for the 3¢ denomination are known.

Nesbitt: Third Issue

High Value Essays (1861)



Two crude models for 12¢ were made by mounting cutouts of oval and bust of the previous three cents envelope issue on diagonally laid paper and then drawing the outer portion of the design in pencil and overwriting in ink to provide color.



Model mounted on right end of an envelope.



Blue and red



Green and red

Model with bust of Washington pasted on inner oval which itself is pasted on rest of the design. Printed design produced from woodcut.



Red and black



Gray and red



Red and gray

Model with bust of Washington pasted on and rest of design printed. Printed design produced from woodcut.



Red and green



Red and black

Model with bust of Washington printed on inner oval which is pasted on rest of the design. Printed design produced from woodcut.



Gold outlines and numerals



Black outlines and numerals



Blue outlines and numerals

The entire design of the above essay was printed from woodcut. **Woodcuts** were used for essays until a design was approved because they were **less expensive to produce** than engraved dies. This set above does **not have clipped corners** as did the items listed by Thorp and Maisel. Therefore the above are from a second, previously unreported set.



black outlines and numerals with red background

Model with head of Washington pasted on rest of design. Design similar to previous but with shaded ball in outer ovals.



Red and brown, cut corners



Red and brown



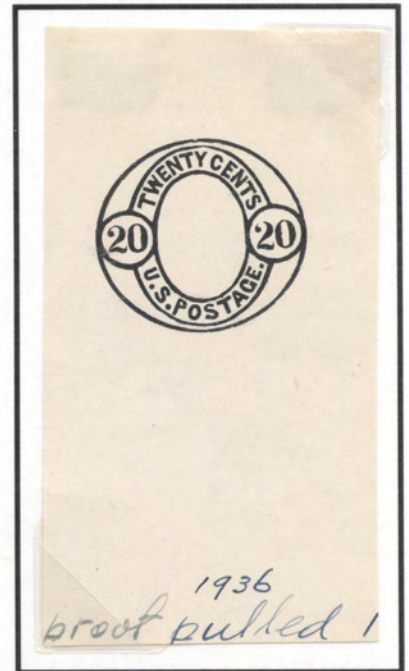
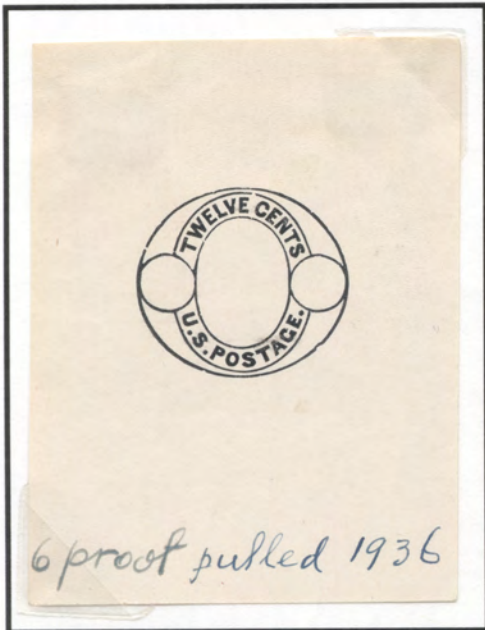
Red and green

These are from a previously unknown set since the Maisel listing stated that all known copies had cut corners as at left.

Essay of previous model with entire design printed from woodcut. Original woodcut is in the Smithsonian Museum of Postal History.



Model with center oval, including white ring, pasted on remainder of design printed on corner of envelope.



Posthumous proofs of twelve and twenty cents frames printed in 1936 on glossy paper during the Farley Administration.

Nesbitt: Third Issue

Three Cents Shield Essays (1862)



Shield with '3' in circle in center



Shield as at left with additional scroll work



Shield with '3' in star from untrimmed die



Circular die with ornate shield and '3'



Shield with '3' at top, no stars in border from untrimmed die



Die with large shield and '3' touching border

The shield essays were an attempt by George Nesbitt to **consider some design other than a portrait** on stamped envelopes. All are known only as cut squares and most occur on both white and buff paper.



Octagonal Shield Essay



Entire envelopes on laid and wove paper

Pair of impressions with "Condemned"

Oval Shield Essay



Entire envelopes on laid white and buff paper with two different proposed fifteen cents shield dies.



Blue



Blue green



Green



Albino



Vermillion



Orange

Trial color proofs of Die 23 ('POSTAGE' spelled out and with '2' open where down stroke and bottom meet), printed on envelope paper and cut to shape.



Red brown



Brown



Dark purple



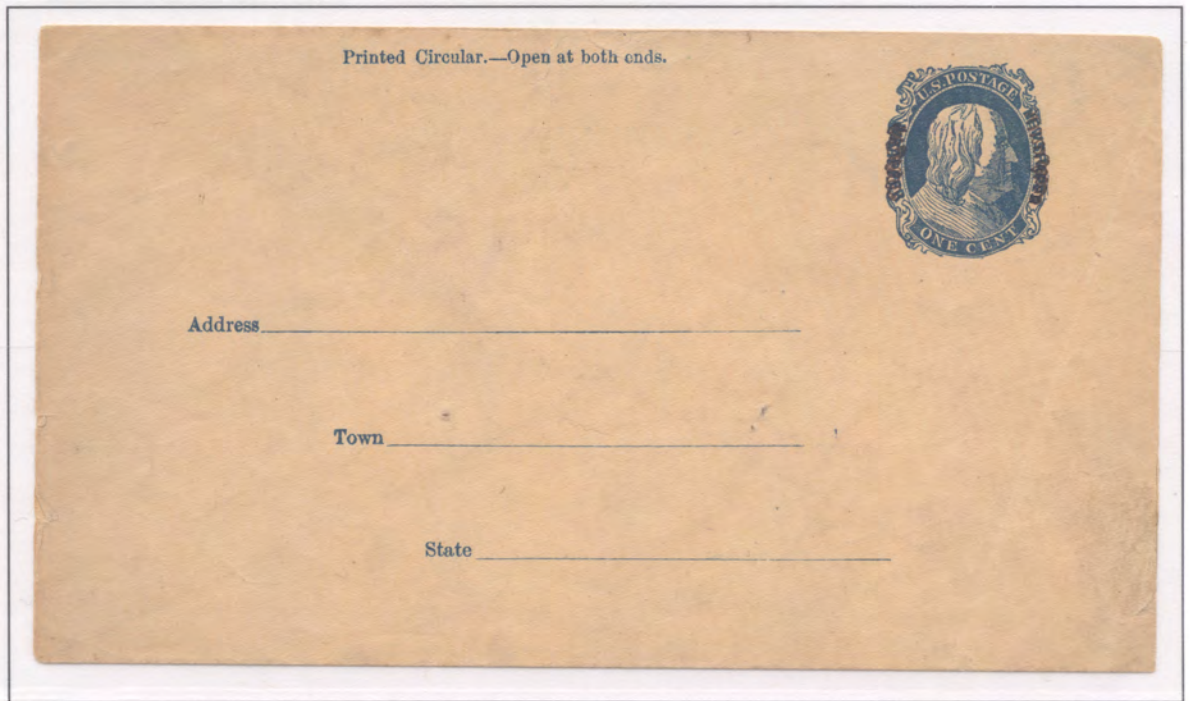
Black

Trial color proofs of Die 23 printed on stamp paper as cut squares

This is the only reported hybrid proof of a Nesbitt issue. The impression was printed on India paper which was mounted on the card.



Envelopes of varying sizes with surface printed stamp on buff and orange paper with or without patent lines. Surface prints were likely essayed because of manufacturing lower cost to compete with National Bank Note Co essays.

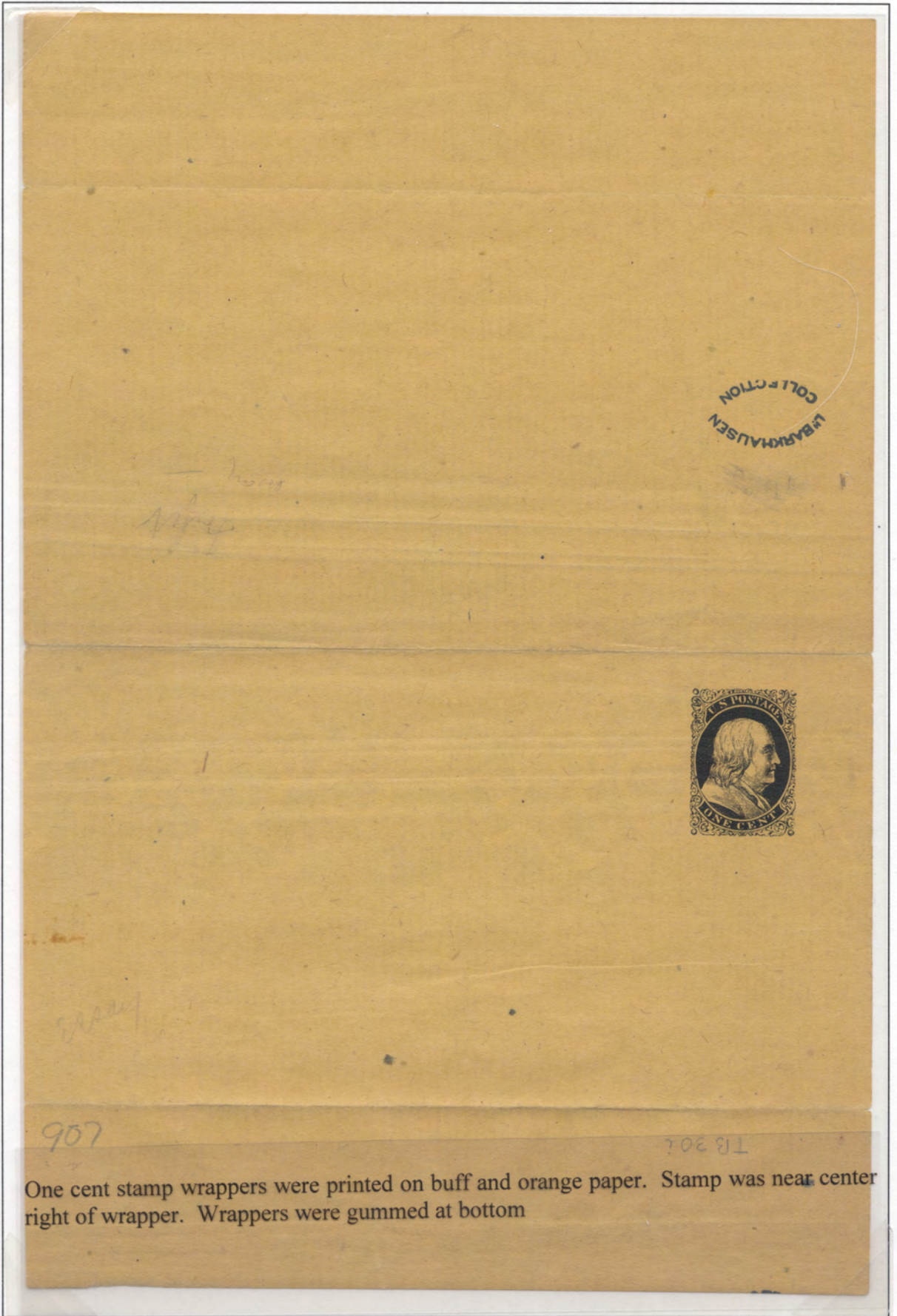


Sides cut straight



Sides cut with curve

Above are the two known copies of one cent Franklin essay surface printed on envelope and modified to be a wrapper by cutting sides out. The items have the printed legend 'Printed Circular – Open at both ends.' and printed address lines.



One cent stamp wrappers were printed on buff and orange paper. Stamp was near center right of wrapper. Wrappers were gummed at bottom



Three cents circular ornament without fringe printed on envelope with watermark #1



Three cents circular ornament with fringe printed on left end of envelope with watermark #1.

Bulls-eye essay printed in black (only known copy) with embossed head of Washington cut from two cent envelope and mounted over center of essay.



Bull's-eye essay printed in **yellow on vertically laid**, unwatermarked paper, 163x91 mm in size. The stamp is at upper right simulating envelope. This is the only reported copy of the twenty-four cents printed in this color and on such a sheet.



Conneticut



New Jersey



Maine

With seals of state capitals in the center, as initially proposed



Franklin



Franklin



Washington



Washington



Webster



Webster



Webster

With portraits of historic individuals in the center

“**Bull’s-eyes**” were surface printed designs with 12¢, 20¢, 24¢, and 40¢ denominations on light and dark buff stamp paper. There are two styles of designs shown by the two left items in the middle row with Franklin centers. It was intended to print or mount the **coat-of-arms** of states or **portraits** of historic individuals. Note that the Webster centers were cut from stamp die proofs made by the National Bank Note Company.

Nesbitt: Fourth Issue

Three Cents Washington (1864)



With black '3' on white paper



With black '3' on buff paper



With pink '3' on white paper



With pink '3' on buff paper

Model with oval and bust cut from three cents envelope of 1861 issue and remainder printed from wood cut.



Entire envelopes, pink on white and buff, watermark 1

Essay with small figure '3' (3½ mm high rather than 5 mm as issued) and without serif.

Nesbitt: Fourth Issue

Six Cents Washington (1864)

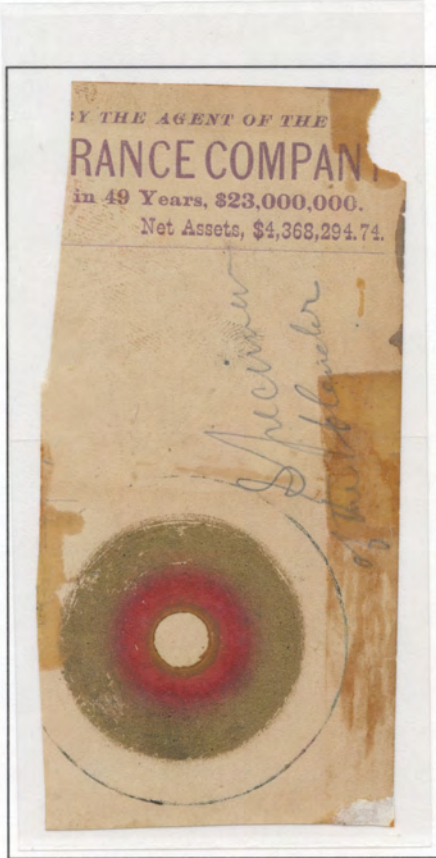


Trial color proofs on complete envelopes



With manuscript 'Adopted 24 July, 1865' in George Nesbitt's handwriting

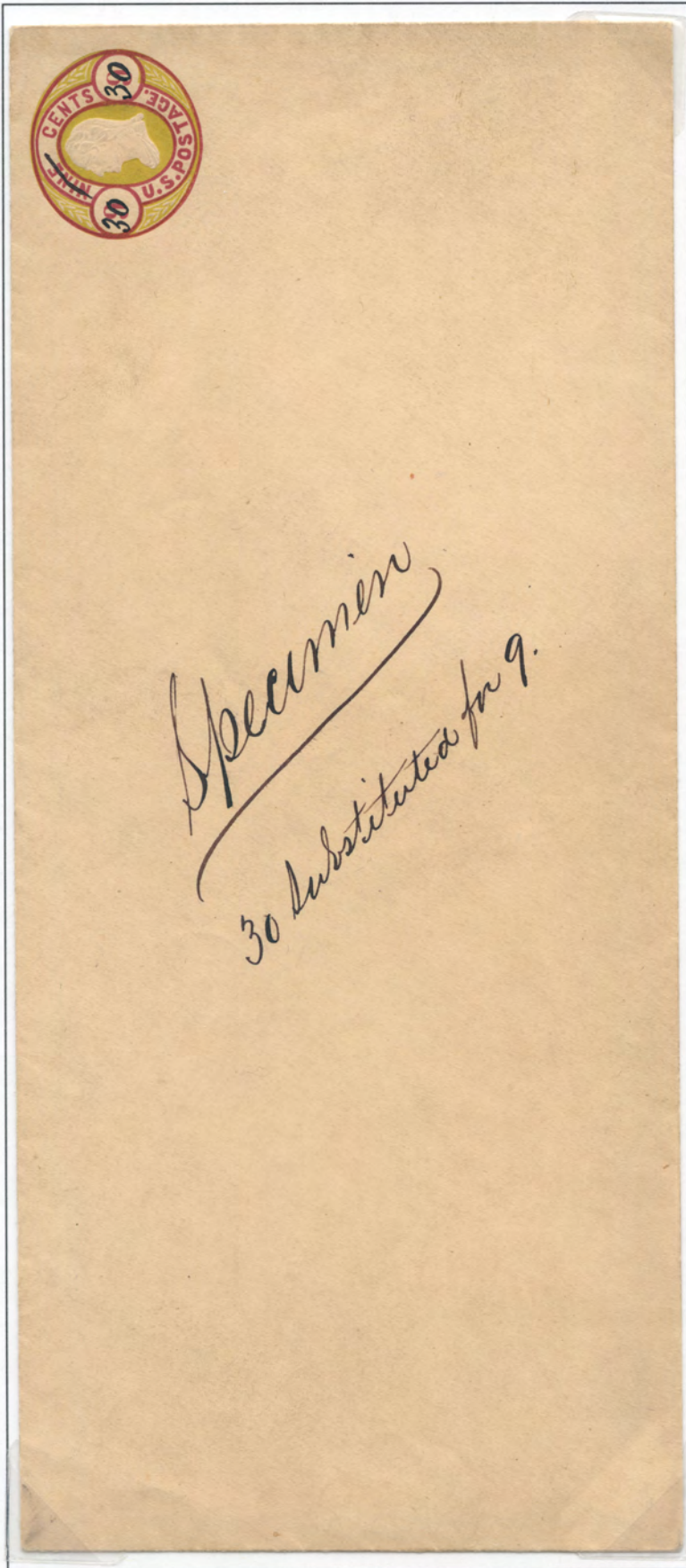
These envelopes are signed by George Nesbitt approving the ink colors used for the three cents (brown) and six cents (purple) stamped envelopes when the colors were changed in 1865.



An early security essay consisting of a ring of gold, 32 mm in diameter printed on a buff scrap of paper. There is a red ring printed over the inner portion of the gold ring. The red and gold rings are surrounded by a single line circle 45 mm in diameter. The paper has in pencil manuscript "*Specimen of the blender*" vertically.



Security experiment with six cents red printed over a gold ring. In addition to being a trial with the gold ring, the six cents stamp die is an essay because **the head is embossed and the remainder of stamp design is not.**



The envelope to the left with notation indicates that Nesbitt essayed a bicolor of the thirty cents design after the other values had been engraved.



Die for high value envelope issued essayed in bi-color.



SPECIMEN.

Nesbitt essayed bicolor stamped envelopes for the second series of high values. The design was accepted, but issues were printed in a single color, likely to reduce cost.

1865
Nesbitt
1865



SPECIMEN.



4727C



Pink on white cut square and albino on white envelope with 'CSA' watermark
Three Cents Essay



Red on white



Blue on white



Dark blue on white

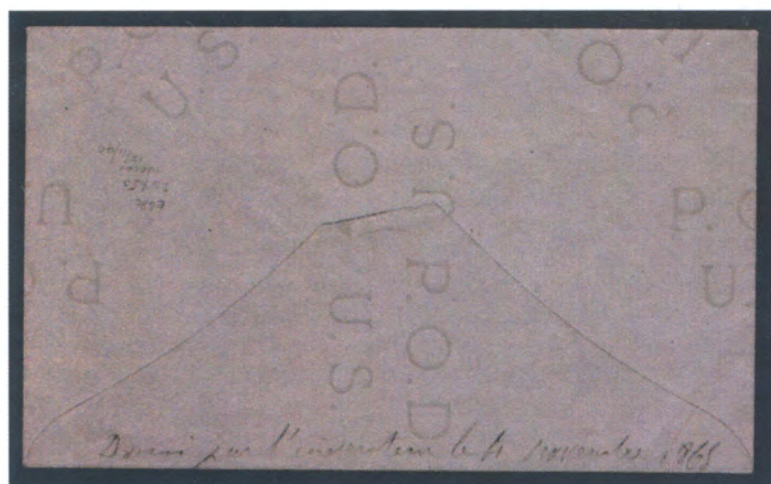
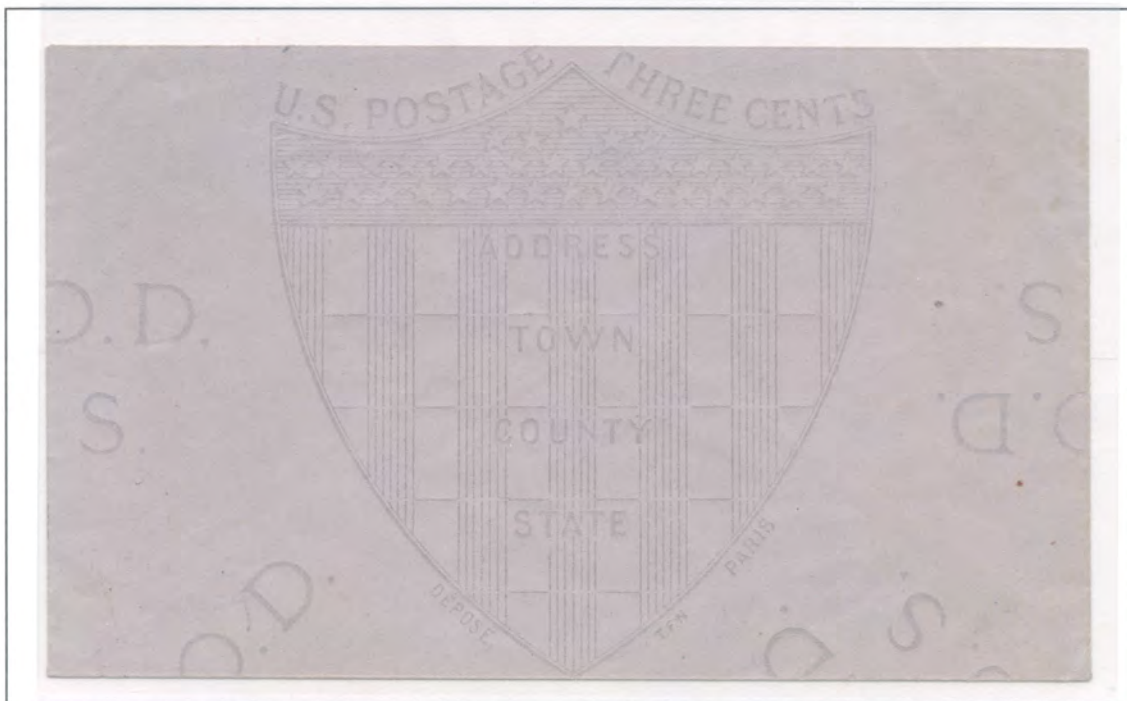


Dark blue on buff

Fifteen Cents Essay

While both a Lincoln memorial three cents envelope essay for first class and a fifteen cents essay were created after Lincoln's death, only the black fifteen cents stamp was issued and none of the dies above were ever used to produce stamped envelopes.

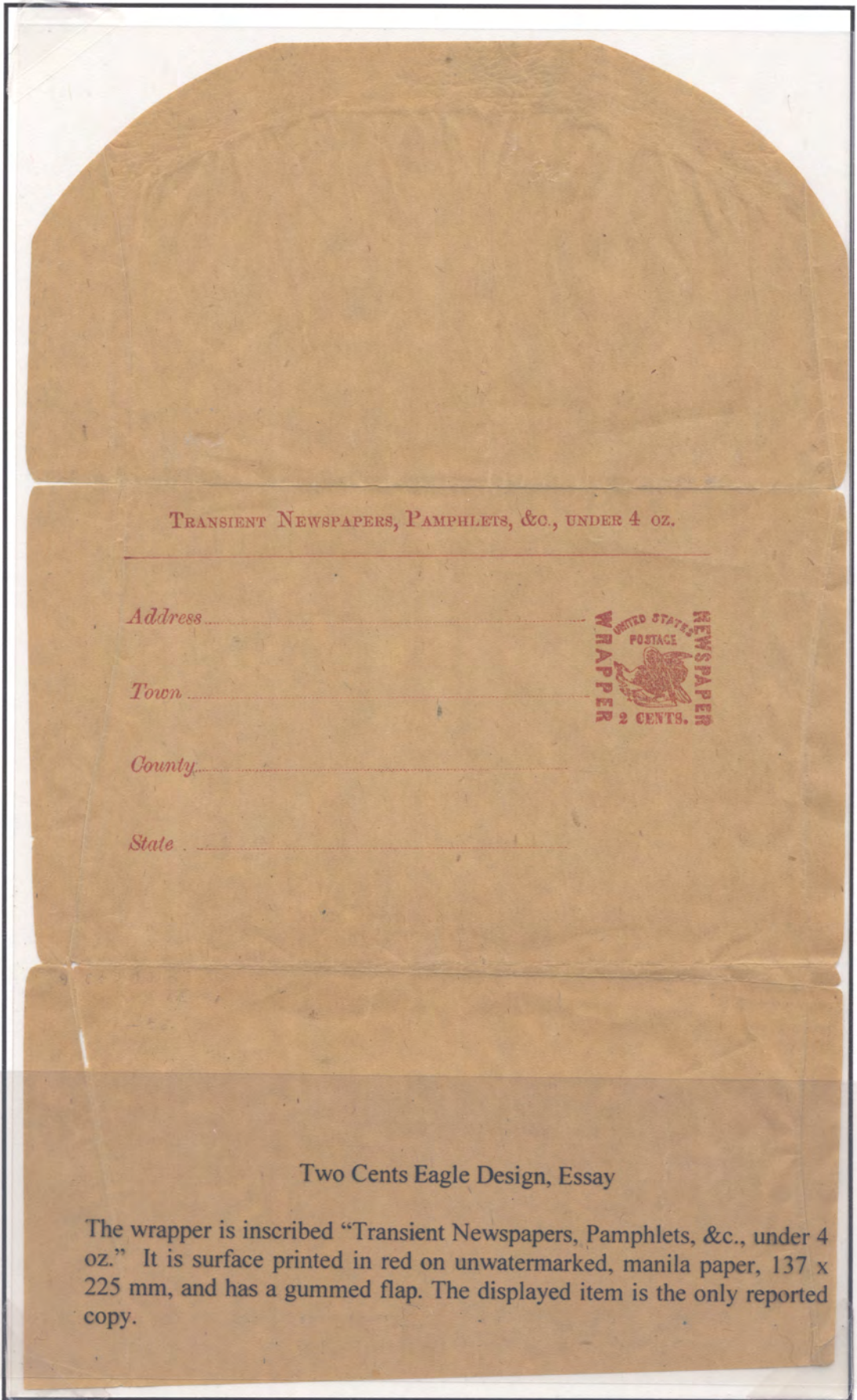
Essays of Unknown Source Envelope with Watermark as Design (1865)



The writing on the back of this envelope establishes that the **date of manufacture of these essays was 1865**, not 1869 as previously thought. The penciled notation, in French, reads: "*Donné par l'inventeur le 4 Novembre 1865.*" This translates to "Gift of the inventor on 4 November, 1865."

Back of envelope, upside down

This item is from an unknown source believed to have been produced in France. The **design is in the paper itself in the form of a watermark** so pronounced that it seems to be printed. The envelopes bear the inscription "DEPOSE" and "T.F.N. PARIS" below the shield. DEPOSE translated meaning copyright or patent and the initials possibly being those of the designer.



TRANSIENT NEWSPAPERS, PAMPHLETS, &C., UNDER 4 OZ.

Address

Town

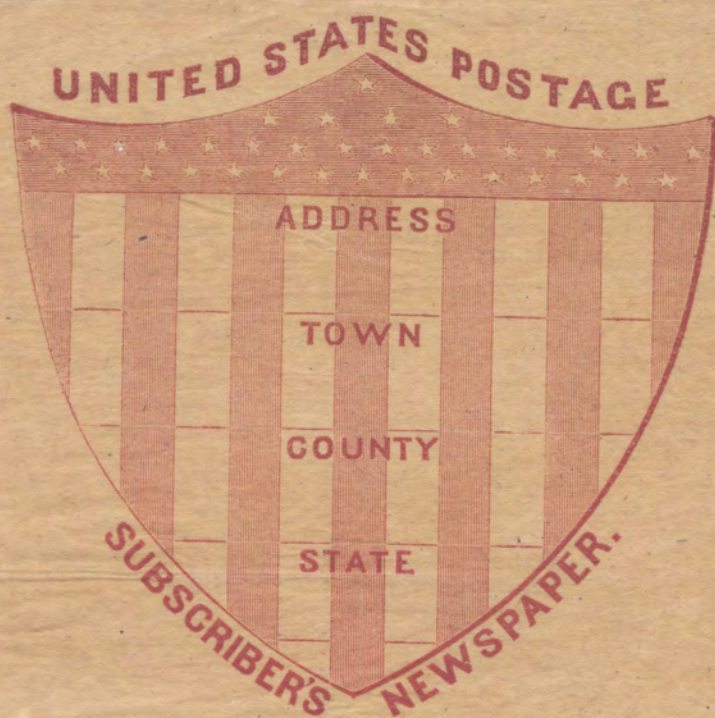
County

State



Two Cents Eagle Design, Essay

The wrapper is inscribed "Transient Newspapers, Pamphlets, &c., under 4 oz." It is surface printed in red on unwatermarked, manila paper, 137 x 225 mm, and has a gummed flap. The displayed item is the only reported copy.



This nondenominated Shield Design Essay is surface printed in red on lightweight, brown, kraft paper, 154 x 227 mm, and is without watermark. It is also ungummed. The displayed item is one of two known copies and previously unreported.

The National Bank Note Company protested that their stamp contract with the Post Office required that they be allowed to print postal stationery. When the Post Office decided otherwise, the National Bank Note Company continued to submit envelopes with engraved stamps printed on them using stamps or essays of stamps from the stamp issues of 1861, 1869, and 1870. Most of these items had the stamp printed on the envelope after the envelope was assembled.



Lake on white wove and amber diagonally laid paper

The National Banknote Company made essay envelopes with the one, three and fifteen cents stamps of 1861 printed in the upper right corner. The envelopes are folded but unglued.



The National Banknote Company tried again for the contract of 1870 by making envelope essays with the one cent Franklin essay of 1869. Above are purple and brown printings on manila paper.

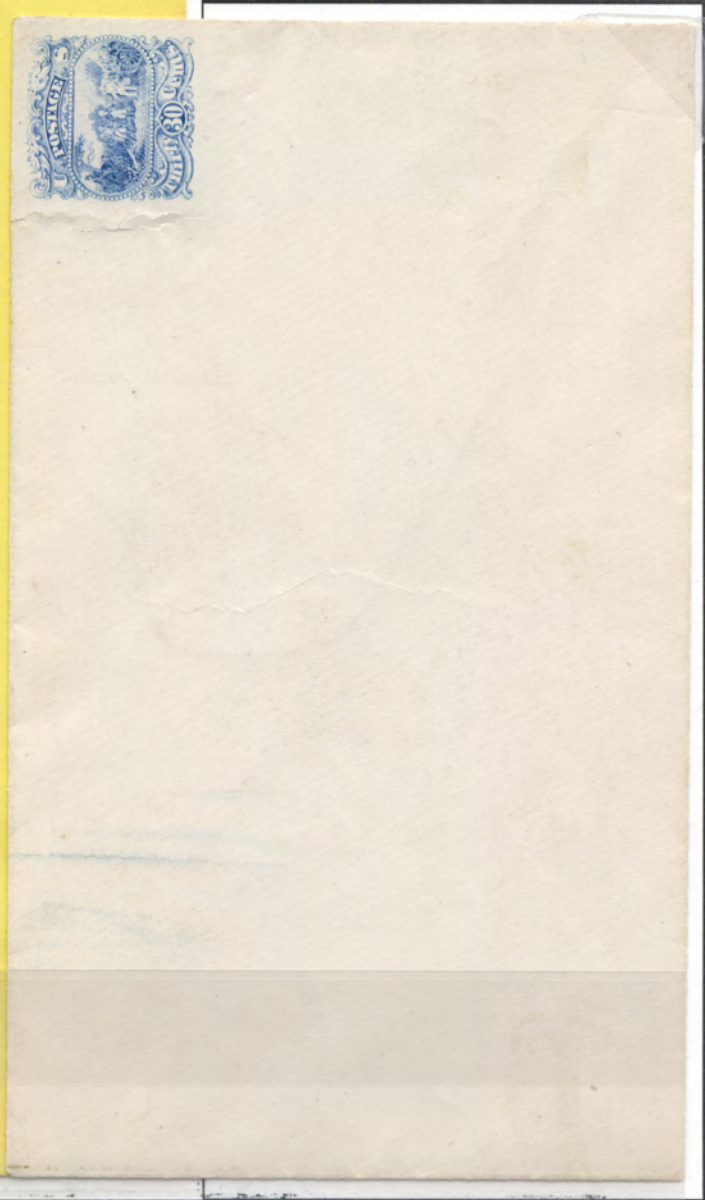


The National Banknote Company also produced a wrapper essay with the same one cent Franklin essay. Unfortunately these beautiful designs were never used for either stamps or envelopes.



The National Banknote Company when trying for the contract of 1870 made envelopes of several sizes, stamp colors and paper types of the five cents, ten cents and thirty cents essays of the 1869 series.

Below is a previously unreported size of the blue thirty cents on white paper.





In addition, the National Banknote Company printed the 1869 stamp essays stamps in the left corner of Nesbitt envelopes. Each of the above combinations is thought to be unique. The blue-green on the six cents purple is the only known incomplete impression.

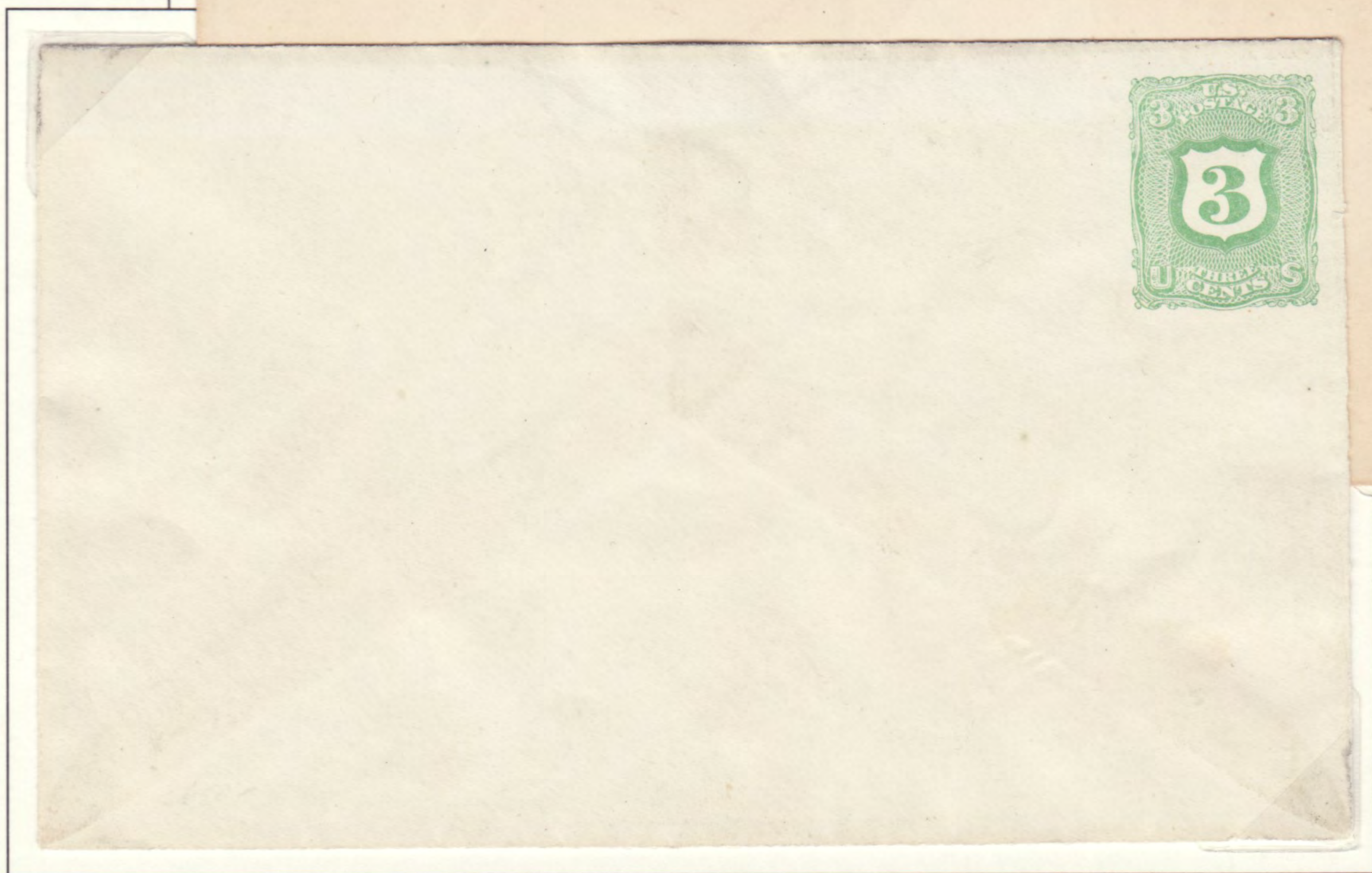


Only reported National Banknote Company impression of 1869 stamp essay on Nesbitt wrapper.

National Banknote Company

Surface Printed Essays (1869)

Engraved surface
printed 2¢ black



Engraved surface
printed with 3¢
green and red
stamps

The National Banknote Company also essayed numeral designs on envelopes in 1869, made using dies engraved for stamps in mid 1860s.



Two copies of a previously unknown proof of the two cents numeral essay die embossed on card (above).



Purple embossed 2¢ stamp on envelope entire with "PIRIE & Son 1869" watermark



A previously unreported example of the 3¢ numeral essay engraved to produce embossed impression. Die is different from previous page as shield is larger.



Three cents Liberty essay impressed heavily on card using a stamp die, possibly to emulate embossing.

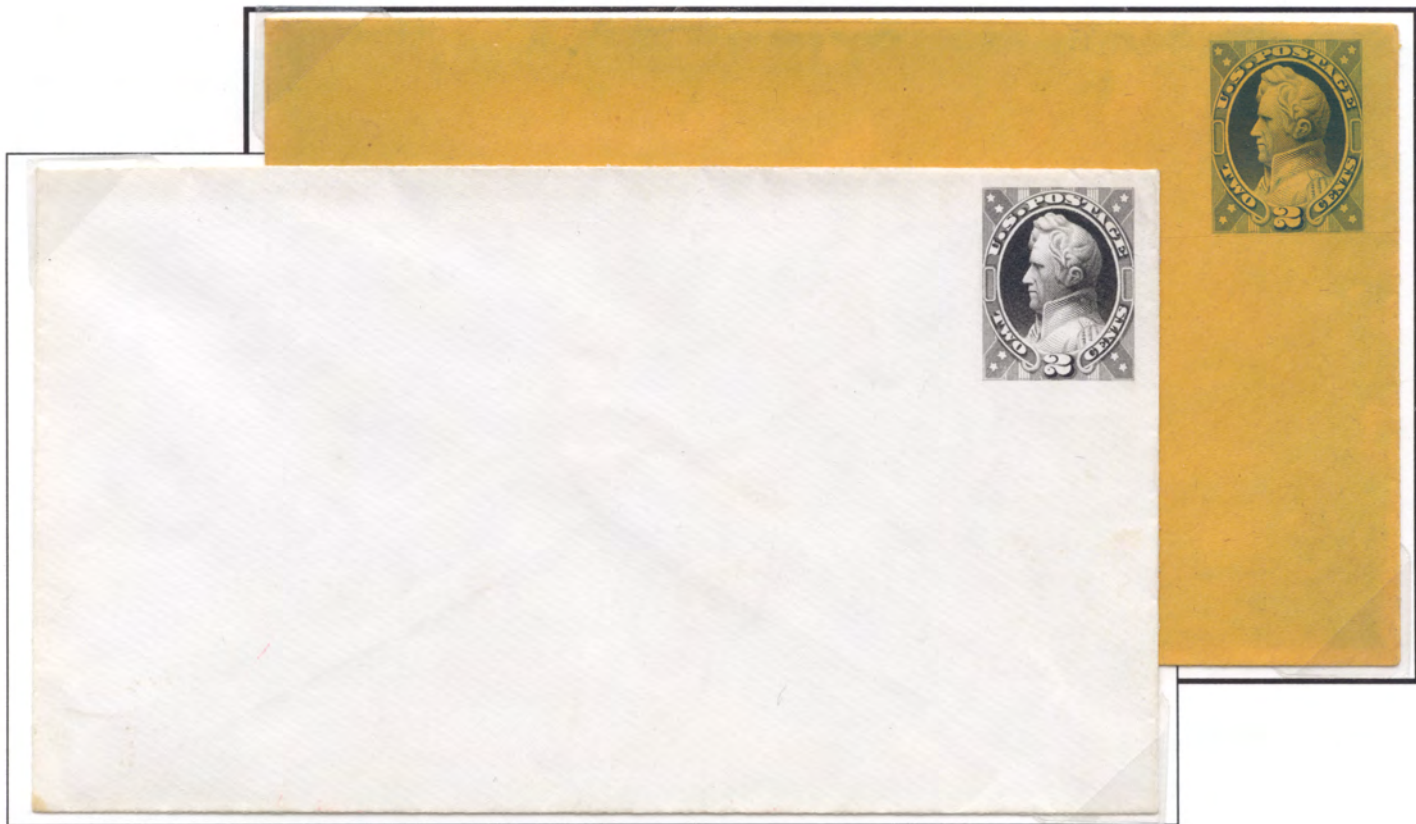
The National Banknote Company also essayed embossed designs with numerals in the center for the envelope contract of 1870. The embossed designs were **new engraved dies** changed slightly from the stamp dies because the fine lines of surface printed stamps do not emboss well.



The National Banknote Company also printed, in several colors, **essays for the stamp issue of 1870 on envelopes** on varying paper colors and sizes while trying for the 1870 envelope contract.

Dies of essays rather than dies of issued stamps were likely used because envelopes were needed early in 1870 before most final stamp dies had been engraved.

These one cent envelopes are the two discovery copies and **only known examples** of a previously unreported envelope made from the one cent stamp essay die believed to have been engraved during November, 1869. The essay differs from the issued stamp by having **the bust face right rather than left and having vertical lines below the bust** rather than horizontal lines.



Only reported copies of the **rejected two cents stamp die** on white and orange paper envelopes.



The two cents stamp essay printed **without leaves in bands on sides of vignette** as issued stamp. Larger envelope is on canary paper and the one on white paper is the **unique example of the smallest envelope size essayed**.

The three cents issued stamp with carmine ink on white paper.



Three of the four known copies of the rejected ten cents stamp essay. Envelopes are folded but not glued.



The twelve cents essay has stars in band on either side of vignette rather than "TWELVE CENTS" as issued stamp. The fifteen cents essay has incomplete shading in corner bevels. The ninety cents essay has the rope above the vignette unfinished.

National Banknote Company



Yellow on white India paper

Surface Printed Essays (1870)



Brown on orange
Diagonally laid paper



Green on white card



Black on white glossy paper



Brown on white entire, 151x85 mm
Washington in oval with small numeral



Green on white paper, die, cut to shape and mounted on white paper



Same design as above but reverse coloring impression of lettering and numbers, printed from untrimmed die.



Same as at right, cut to shape and mounted on card with manuscript notation "cut from a ~~die~~ die 25 in same color"



Discovery copy of hybrid proof of Washington in oval with small '3' and reverse coloring of lettering and numbers. This die is completely re-engraved with different bust and geometric work than the above die.



This previously unreported model of three cents design, on 47x65 mm card, has the frame drawn with **pencil** around an **engraved Winfred Scott vignette** taken from the twenty-four cent stamp proof on India paper.

Orange on blue,
thin, wove
tissue paper



The three cents essay design from the above model was **engraved with the Washington vignette** and printed on many different combinations of envelope sizes, ink colors, and paper types and colors. The white and cream envelopes are previously unreported types.

Orange on blue,
thin, wove
tissue paper



The three cents essay design from the previous page was engraved with the Washington vignette and was printed on many different envelope sizes in different ink and paper types and colors.



The National Banknote Company also essayed one cent envelopes with the same Liberty design that was used for postal cards in 1873.



Albino impression on glossy white paper



Albino impression on India paper

The National Banknote Company also commissioned embossed vignettes of the previous design. These are known only as albinos and only on the two paper types shown above.

Dempsey and O'Toole were awarded the contract for stamped envelope production in the bidding for the 1870 contract. They began to engrave the dies below. The contract with Dempsey and O'Toole was revoked by the Post Office when it was determined they did not have facilities to manufacture sufficient quantity of envelopes to meet contract requirements.

Reasons for rejection of die by Post Office:

"Nose too small on the bridge. The muscles of the cheek, face and jaw are not full enough; the muscles under the jaw ('double chin') are too sharp; they should be softer and fuller. The letter 'O' in the words 'one cent' is imperfect. It should be lined inside the 'O'."



One Cent

Reasons for rejection of die by Post Office:

"The nose is too small and peaked. The eye-brow is a little too high, and the eye itself too far forward. The hair is finely displayed, but the muscles of the mouth are too close and contracted; in the samples furnished you they are full and rounded, and, at the same time, express the firmness of character for which Jackson was noted. The lines of the face are too flat; to correspond with the samples they should be a little more marked and rounded. The jaw is too angular; it should be toned down or rounded a little."



Two Cents

Reasons for rejection of die by Post Office:

"Nose not full enough by a very little on the upper part. The hair on the forehead should be slightly increased—only a little bit. The face is too flat and expressionless, the chin and jaw somewhat too sharp and angular."



Three Cents



Black and buff on white, 149 x 83 mm, complete envelope

Self cancelling envelope printed with instructions at either end of the band (impressed into paper) "Write over the stamp". The envelope is addressed to P.M.G. Alexander W. Randall in Washington and is postmarked with a blue Bordentown, N.J. February 18 circular date stamp.



Red on white, 156x95 mm, resembling envelope face

This essay by **R.C. Root**, a stationer in New York City, was submitted with the intent was that the address would be written across the center of the envelope, self-canceling it. Root proposed to manufacture these for the Post Office Department in quantities of not less than 100,000 for \$1.50 per thousand.



Black on white, wove paper, 145 x 94 mm, envelope front



Red on white paper, 149 x 87 mm, complete envelope

A self-canceling essay proposed by the **Excelsior Bank Note Company** for the **1876 Centennial**. The intent was that the name and address would be written across the center of the envelope, self-canceling it.

Reay Essays and Proofs

First Essays (1870)

George H. Reay was awarded the postal stationery contract for 1870 after it became clear that Dempsey and O'Toole could not fulfill the contract. The stamp designs were changed and his company engraved what are generally considered the finest dies of the 19th century. He produced stamped envelopes and wrappers ranging in value from 1¢ to 90¢.



Two Cents Jackson



Six Cents Lincoln

The pencil and ink artist's drawings were Reay's first proposal for stamped envelope designs. The designs were likely considered too ornate, not of standard oval shape and refused by the Post Office.

Reay Essays and Proofs

First Essays (1870)



One Cent Franklin



Two Cents Jackson



Three Cents Clay



Six Cents Lincoln

The Reay's second attempt was embossed oval essays which had **small numerals** below the portrait for the one cent and two cents. He essayed **rectangular designs** for the three cents and six cents envelopes which are printed on glossy sheetlets, folded in half vertically and watermarked "A PIRIE & SONS 1869."

Reay Essays and Proofs

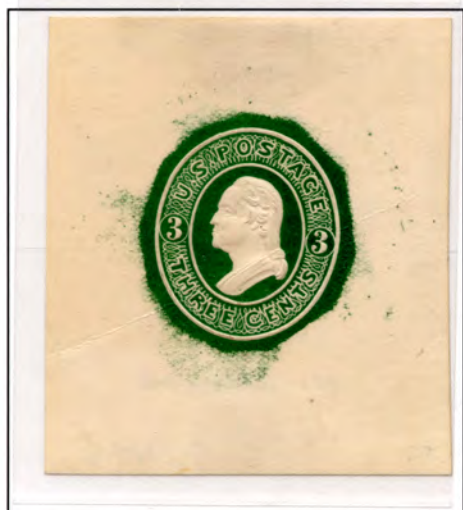
First Essays (1870)



Reay made trial color proofs by cutting out stamps from proofs of untrimmed dies and pasting them in the upper right corner of envelopes

Reay Essays and Proofs

Second Three Cents Essay (1870)



Green on white



Carmine on white

Proofs from untrimmed die



Blue on thick white paper



Black on yellowish white

Proofs from trimmed die

Essay of three cents with more heavily outlined lettering, narrower numbers, fold under chin and top of head flatter than issued item.

Reay Essays and Proofs



One Cent Franklin with gold bust



Twelve cents Clay with gold bust and green and blue numerals

Bi-color Trial Color Essays (1870)



Two cents Jackson with silver and gold bust



Six cents Lincoln with silver bust and numerals



Fifteen cents Webster with silver and gold bust



While there is no record of this experiment, it is apparent from the above proofs from untrimmed dies that Reay submitted **bi-color essays** for Post Office consideration for the contract of 1870. Busts and numerals were **hand painted**.

Reay Essays and Proofs

Trial Color Proofs of Issued Dies (1870)



Proofs with the ring of color around the die were taken from the engraved dies before they were trimmed for final use in printing envelopes. The many colors suggest that there was some uncertainty about the final color of the issued envelopes.

An extremely unusual proof printed in orange on black paper. This is the only envelope proof I have seen printed on black paper and was likely a presentation copy for some special purpose. The fact that the proof is cut to an octagonal shape and mounted on white paper also suggest a special purpose.



Reay purchased his high quality paper for proofs from Alexander Pirie & Sons paper mill near Aberdeen, Scotland. Likely the business arrangement occurred because Reay was also from Scotland. The founder of this firm, in 1770, was Alexander Smith, whose grandson, Alexander Pirie, gave the firm its name. Alexander Pirie, as manager, introduced three Fourdrinier machines and developed the mill's range of fine papers while more than doubling the mill's production capabilities. Paper with watermark "**A. Pirie & Sons 1869**" was produced by this company.

Above is the **only known U.S. envelope proof with the logo of the A. Pirie & Sons Company** in addition to the watermark.

Proofs of the six cent issue from untrimmed dies.

Reay Essays and Proofs

Model for Issued Dies (1870)



Untrimmed variety of incomplete engraving of Perry vignette. Image on india impressed into card with manuscript "90c" and "Commodore O.H. Perry" on front and with manuscript on back "This essay probably sent Reay as a copy for envelope engraver, Laubenheimer".

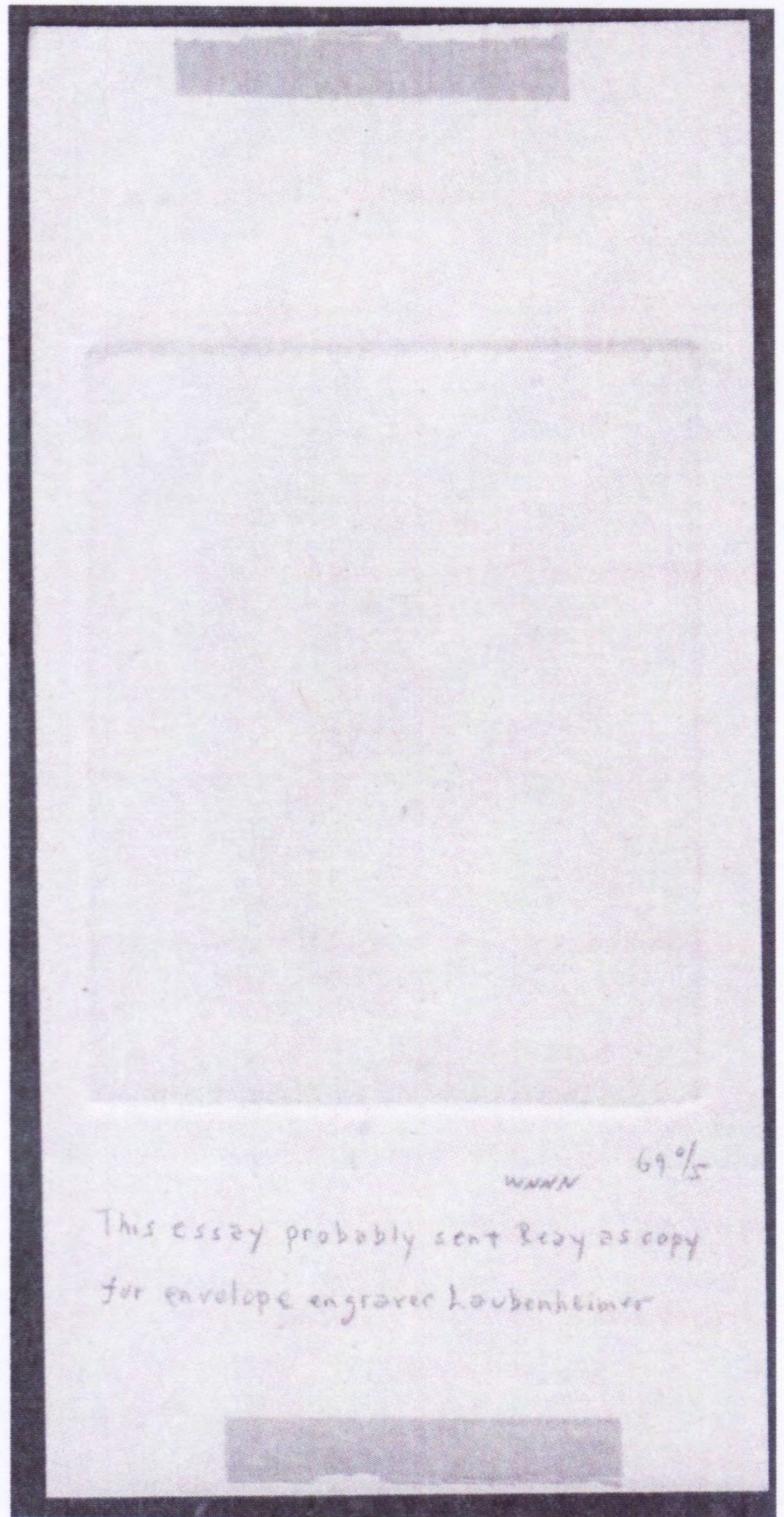


Image of back

Reay requested proofs of stamp vignettes currently in use to serve as models for the envelope stamps. The National Bank Note Company sent proofs such as the above to Reay for use by Rudolph Philipp Laubenheimer, a German-born engraver, die sinker, and medaillieur.

Reay Essays and Proofs

Trial Proofs From Untrimmed Dies (1870)



Printed on thick card



Printed on a folded sheetlet

These proofs were taken from the engraved dies before they were trimmed for final use in printing envelopes.



The only reported wax proof of a Reay die. The impression was made in black wax and mounted on card. All other wax proofs were made with red wax. Wax proofs served no purpose in the production of envelopes or wrappers; they were made solely for presentation to dignitaries.



Plimpton Essay and Proofs

First Contract Essays and Proofs (1874)

Plimpton Manufacturing Company received the Postal Stationery Contract in 1874 and kept it for 29 years. Their first production issue had the same designs as the Reay Issue but with discernable differences since the dies were re-engraved. The first issue has 1¢ to 90¢ values with the values of highest production (1¢, 2¢, 3¢, and 10¢) having multiple master dies.



One cent essay
(with circle in 'O's')



One cent proof
from untrimmed die (Die 46)

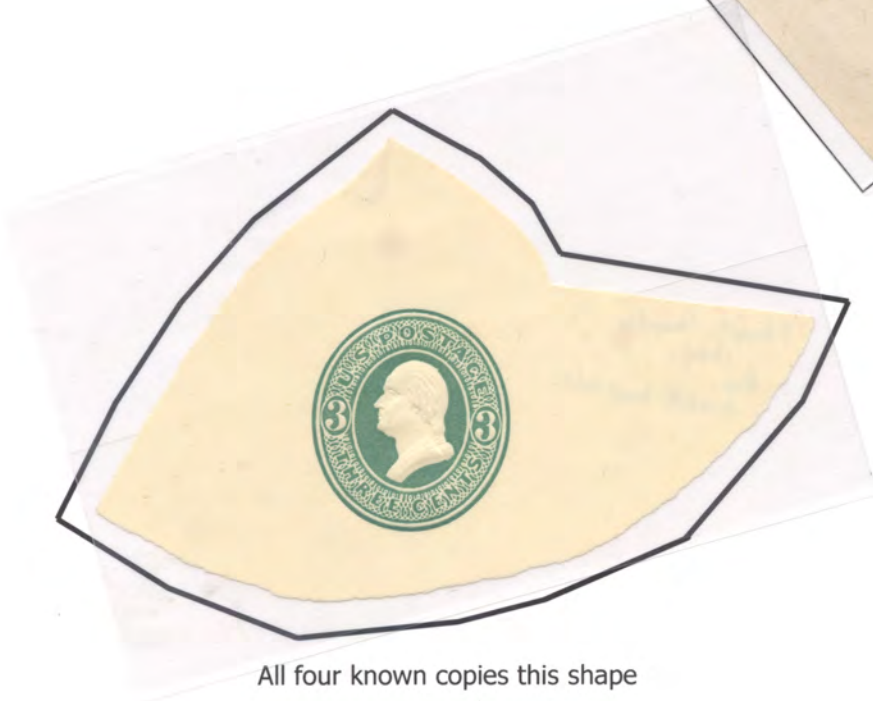


One cent proof
from trimmed die (Die 47)



Two cents proofs in red and black from untrimmed die (steel not cut away from around die).

Front of bust short and narrow
Three cents essay



All four known copies this shape
Three cents proof (Die 56)



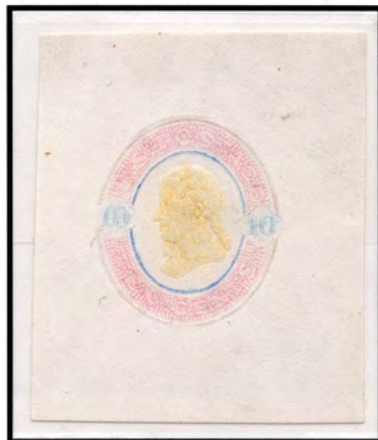
On silver-gray, wove paper
Three cents proof (Die 57)



Orange, wove paper, unwatermarked
Five cents Taylor (Die 59)



Proofs of ten cents die 65 from untrimmed die. Note the second albino impression on the bottom proof.



Hand colored 'tricolor' proof



Five Cents Garfield (Die 61)



Fifteen Cents Webster (Die 67)



Ninety Cents Perry (Die 70)

There was no purpose for wax proofs in the production of stamped envelopes. Therefore these were made solely for presentation as gifts to dignitaries. The five cents Garfield is of a different style than the fifteen and ninety cents wax proofs and was possibly made at a different time. It is mounted on a 1875 Liberty postal card, cancelled in 1882.



Seven Cents Stanton (Die 63)
Printers' Waste



Trial color proof of Die 64
from untrimmed die



Trial color of Die 65
from trimmed die



Essay for Die 66
Hair lines different
Front of Bust rounded



Second Essay for Die 66
Reverse Impression
Hair lines different, lettering heavier



Trial color proof for Die 68
Reverse Impression

Reay & Plimpton Proofs for Exhibition Proofs mounted in shield on gray



The 1, 2 and 3 cents proofs are from untrimmed Reay dies and the 10 and 12 cents are from untrimmed Plimpton issue of 1874 dies. These trial color proofs were mounted on small squares of heavy paper with the shield drawn around them, apparently from some unknown exhibit.

Plimpton Essays and Proofs Centennial Issue Trial Color Proofs (1876)



Trial color proofs of the first die (Die 71, single line under 'POSTAGE'), complete envelopes



Trial color proofs of the second die (Die 72, double line under 'POSTAGE') also were made.

These envelopes were designed and released in conjunction with the Philadelphia Centennial Exhibit. The **double-line die (72) in green** was used at the Centennial Exhibition to demonstrate envelope manufacture, and is called the "Philadelphia Die". **Die 71 (Hartford Die)** was used at the Plimpton plant in Hartford for general envelope manufacture. It was printed in green for size 7 ("No. 3, full letter") and red for size 8 ("No. 4½, commercial").

When the first class rate was lowered from 3¢ to 2¢, effective October 1, 1883, the Post Office decided to move the Washington vignette to the two cents stamped envelope. Several designs of the two cents were tried to find one that had good production characteristics. The Jackson vignette was moved to the four cents envelope and the five cents Taylor envelope was replaced with Garfield.



Die 73 was the first new design. However, once in production, it was quickly found that this die had faults in the numerals and did not print well in the upper right corner so a new die (die 74, below) was designed and engraved. The design below was approved.

Trial color proof of green (Die 73) on white paper, cut to shape and mounted on lemon paper

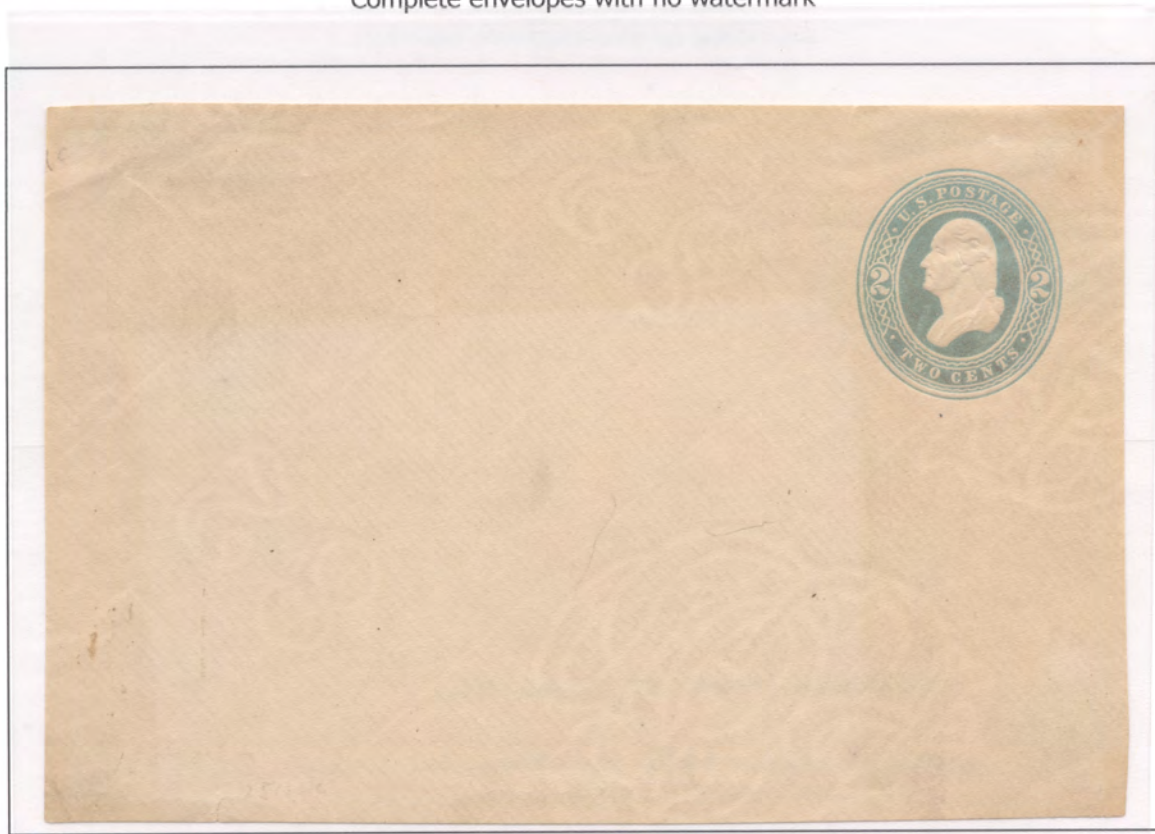


Turquoise on white cut square and blue on white complete envelope (previously unreported).

Trial colors of Die 74, with double outer lines.

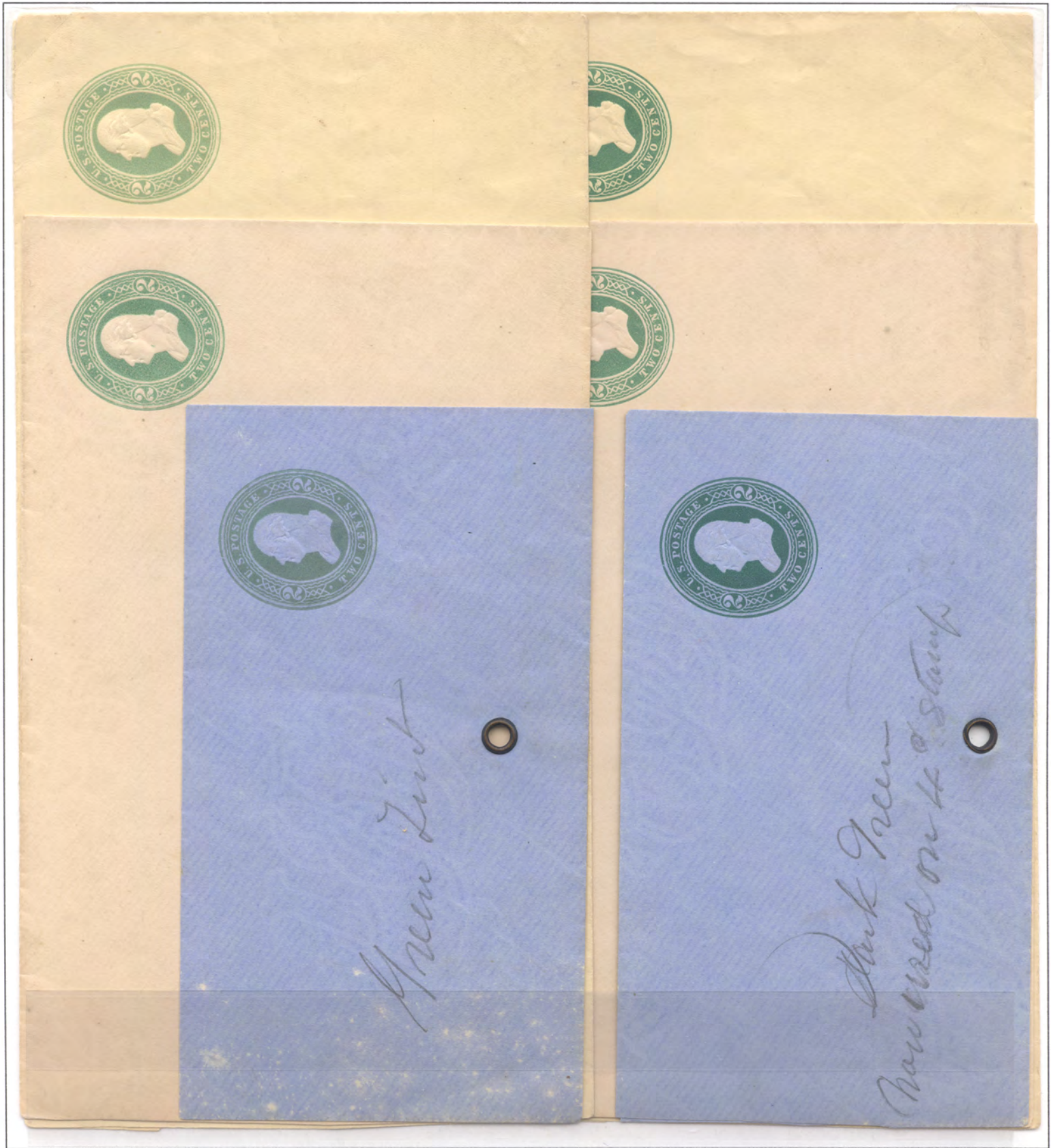


Complete envelopes with no watermark



On piece of paper with watermark 6

However, the two outer lines of Die 74 were too fine and did not print well. Therefore a new die (Die 81 above) was engraved with a single wavy line around the perimeter and proofs were made in several colors.



Three two cents proofs (die 81) printed in yellow green (left) and dark green (right) on amber, white, and blue paper, and fastened together with an eyelet. Notation reads "*Dark Zinc*" on left and "*Green now used on 4c stamp*" on right.



With the rate change of 1883, the Jackson vignette was also moved from the two cents envelope to the four cents envelope. Above is a trial color proof of this die.



The five cents vignette was also changed from Taylor to Garfield. This trial color proof was printed in the upper right corner of a piece of horizontally laid paper with watermark 7, simulating an envelope front.

The contract of 1886 allowed the Postmaster to change the designs. He chose to do so and the Plimpton Company had to design and engrave new dies for the lower values.



Previously unreported green trial color proof from untrimmed die

The rejected one cent die differs from the issued die in that the head is large and leans forward, the side ornaments are larger, and there are 71 points in the outer row and 42 points in the inner row. This is the **'Tiffany die,'** so called because a Mr. Tiffany is alleged to have obtained the total supply of 500 and burned all but 25.



Rejected die in blue



Trial color proofs were made of Die 83 on sheets of paper, 149x85 mm, watermark 7, with stamp in upper right corner, simulating an envelope.

The approved die 83 had smaller side ornaments, a smaller bust that does not lean forward as the rejected die and 68 points in the outer row and 44 points in the inner row.



Blue-green on white paper, struck from untrimmed die

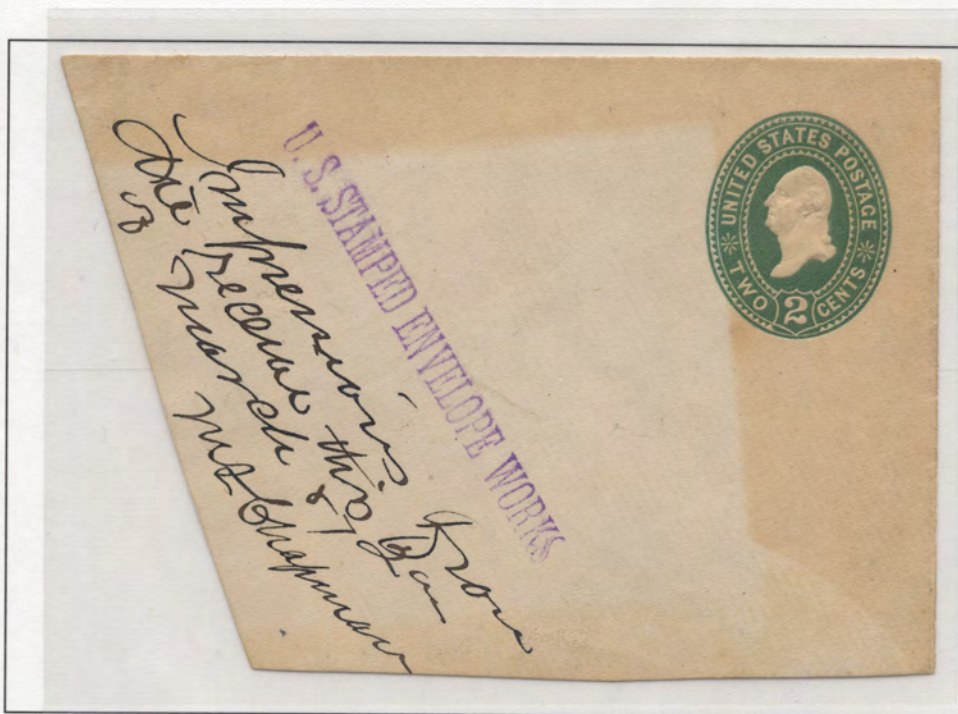
On the first two cents essay the numeral and lettering are wider and heavier than final die, the bust points between second and third teeth, and there is no cross bar on "G" of postage.



On the second essay the numeral "2" is still large but lettering is smaller and the die has 67 points on the outer row and 45 in the inner row rather than 72 and 47 as issued.



Die 87 on complete envelope, blue on white paper



Proof on partial envelope, laid paper, watermark 7, with hand stamp "U.S. STAMPED ENVELOPE WORKS" and manuscript "Impression from die received this 2nd of March 87 M.S. Chapman" Maro S. Chapman was in charge of envelope manufacture at Plimpton after 1874.

Plimpton Essays and Proofs Four and Five Cents Trial Color Proofs (1886)



Plimpton Essays and Proofs Thirty and Ninety Cents Trial Color Proofs (1886)



Proofs for Dies 69 and 70 produced on paper with watermark 8

Plimpton Two Cents Essay for Columbian Exposition First Essay (1893)

The Post Office asked the Plimpton Manufacturing Company to make special commemorative envelopes for the Columbus Exhibition in Chicago, Il. The issued set contained 1¢, 2¢, 5¢, and 10¢ values with the same design but values changed.



Issued die with stars on side and wings within inner circle



Two Cents Essay with very wide wings that extend across the inner circular frame and without side ornaments. A number of the essay envelopes have the “SPECIMEN” corner card with the date ‘December, 30, 1893’ which was after the exposition ended and envelopes had ceased being printed.

Plimpton Two Cents Essay for Columbian Exposition First Essay (1893)

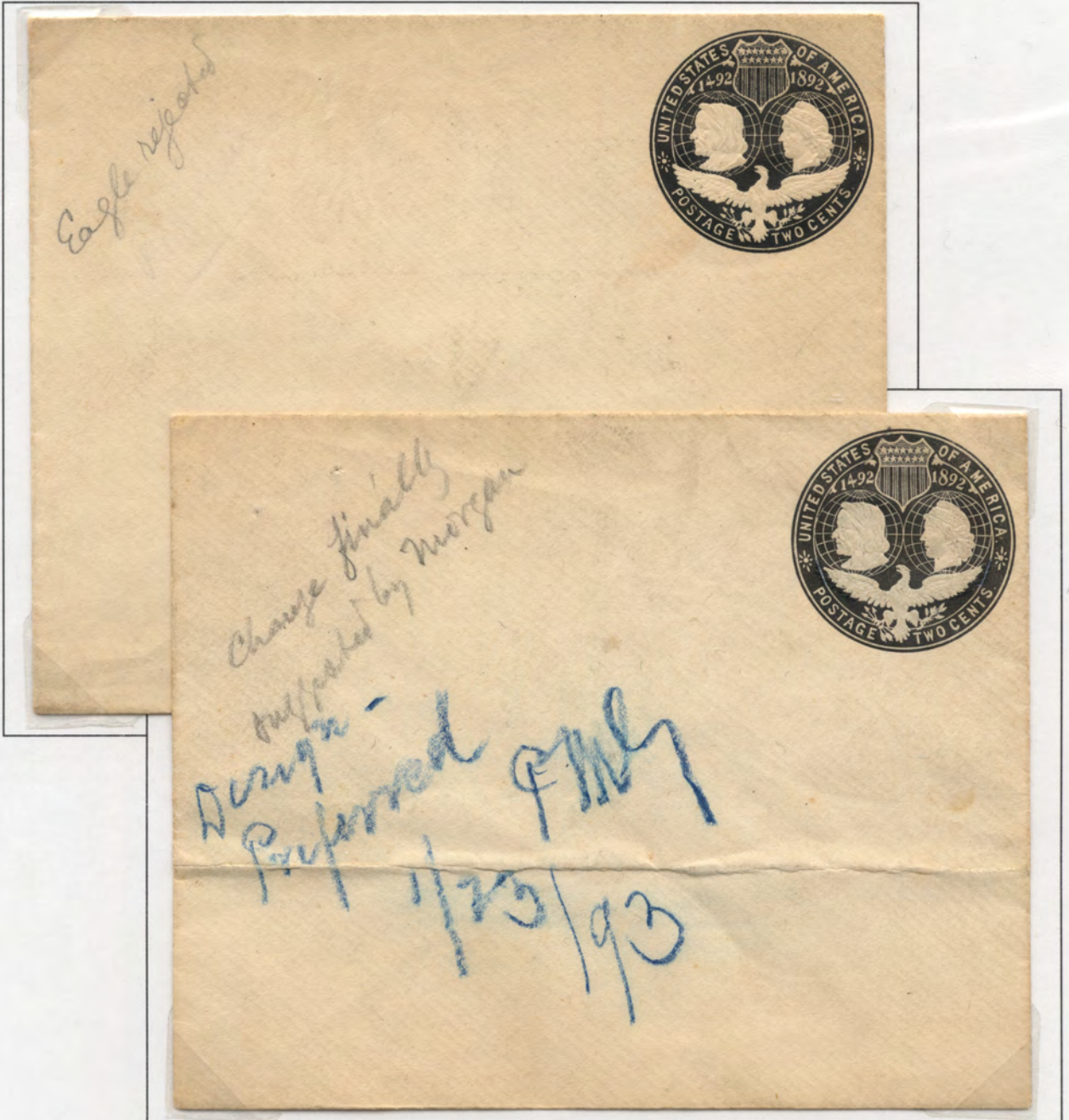
The Post Office asked the Plimpton Company to make special commemorative envelopes for the Columbian Exhibition in Chicago, IL. The issued set contained 1¢, 2¢, 5¢ and 10¢ values with the same design but values changed.

Issued die with stars on side and wings inside inner circle



The upper envelope is the first essay having **wide wings** and with manuscript "*Original submitted.*" The lower envelope is the same die **hand retouched with ink** to shorten the wings and redraw the inner circle with manuscript "*Change finally suggested by Morgan.*"

Plimpton Two Cents Essay for Columbian Exposition Third essay (1893)



Upper card is a third essay with shorter wings than the first and having side ornaments. The lower envelope has been hand retouched with ink to shorten the wings and redraw the inner circle. The retouched envelope has the notation "Design Preferred by PMG 1/23/93."

Plimpton Two Cents Trial Color Proofs for Columbian Exposition (1893)

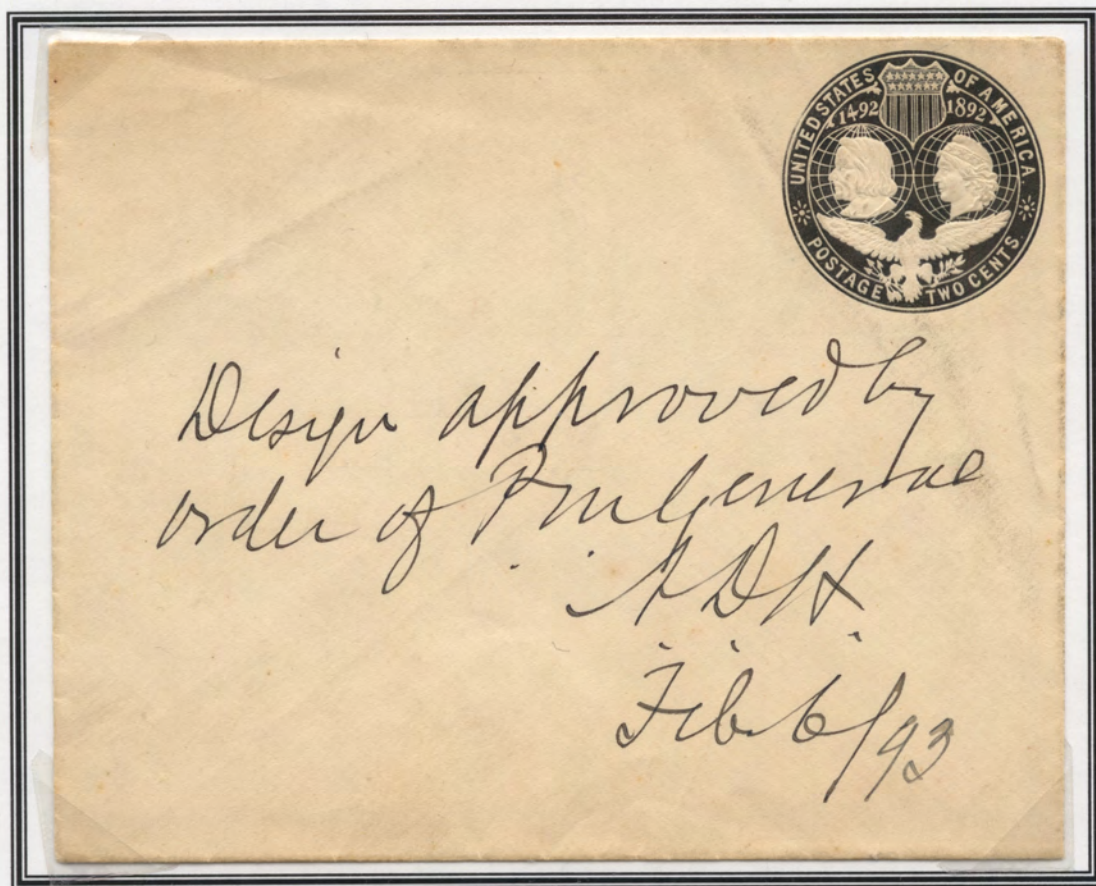


Trial color of type I essay in green on amber paper



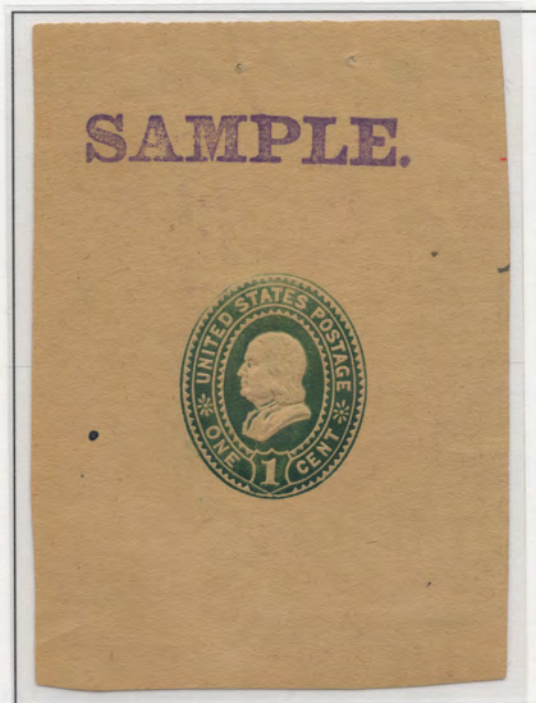
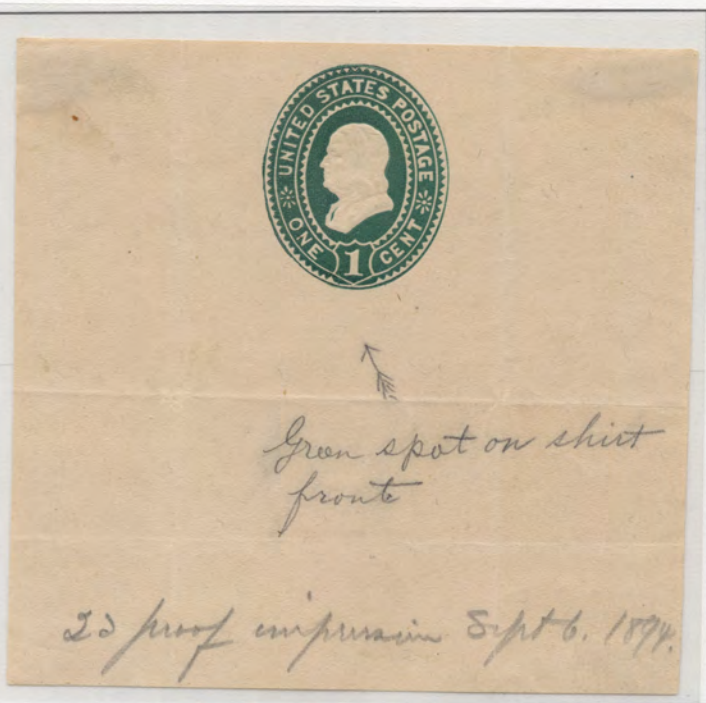
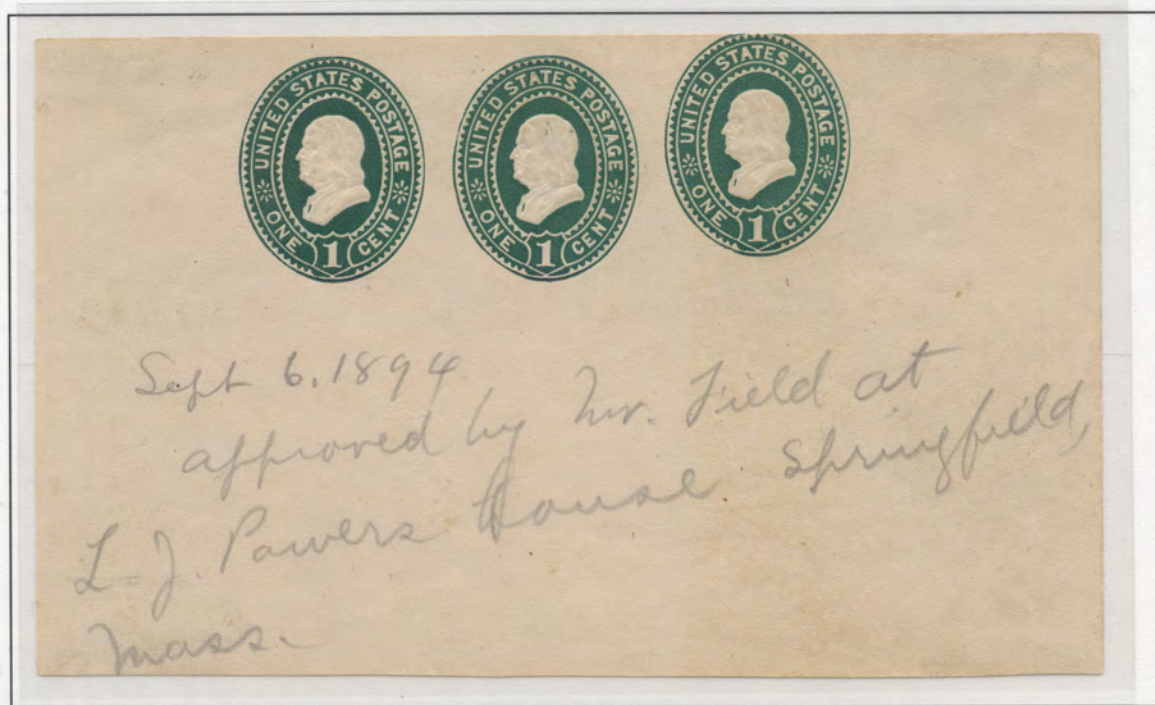
Type 4 essay in green on white paper

Trial color proofs of type I and type 4 essays printed in green. Each item is unique. The upper item was initially cut apart by a previous owner who changed his mind.



This envelope is printed with the final accepted design in dark brown on white laid paper with a standard watermark. This is the copy submitted to and approved by Post Office as indicated by notation "Design approved by order of PM General A.D.H. Feb 6/93." A.D.H. are the initials of A.D. Hazen, Third Assistant Postmaster General.

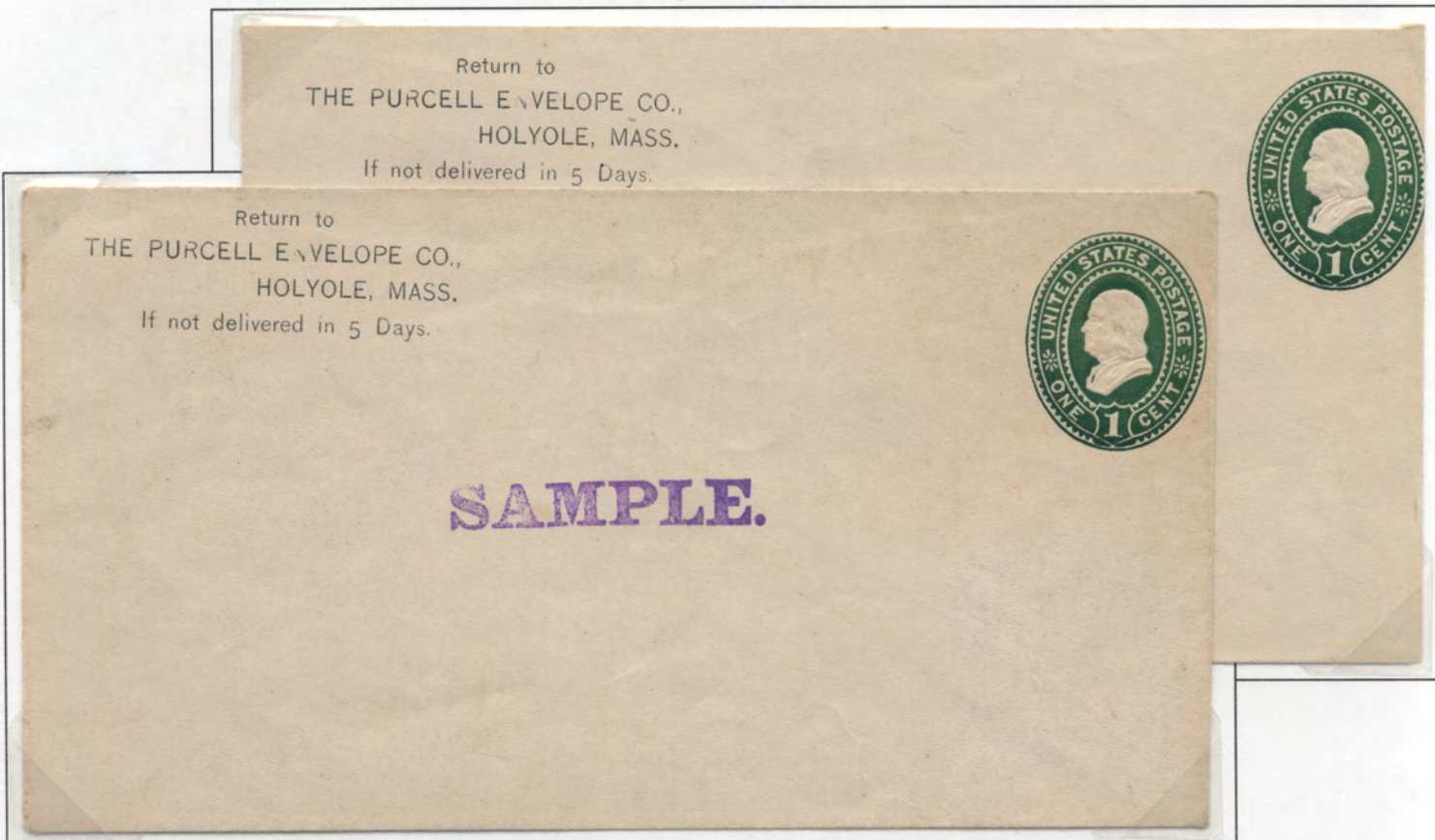
The Purcell Company got the contract for printing envelopes in 1894. The same designs as previous were used but Purcell had to engrave new dies and the colors were changed. The contract was turned over to Plimpton and Morgan in about a year because Purcell was unable to meet contract production requirements.



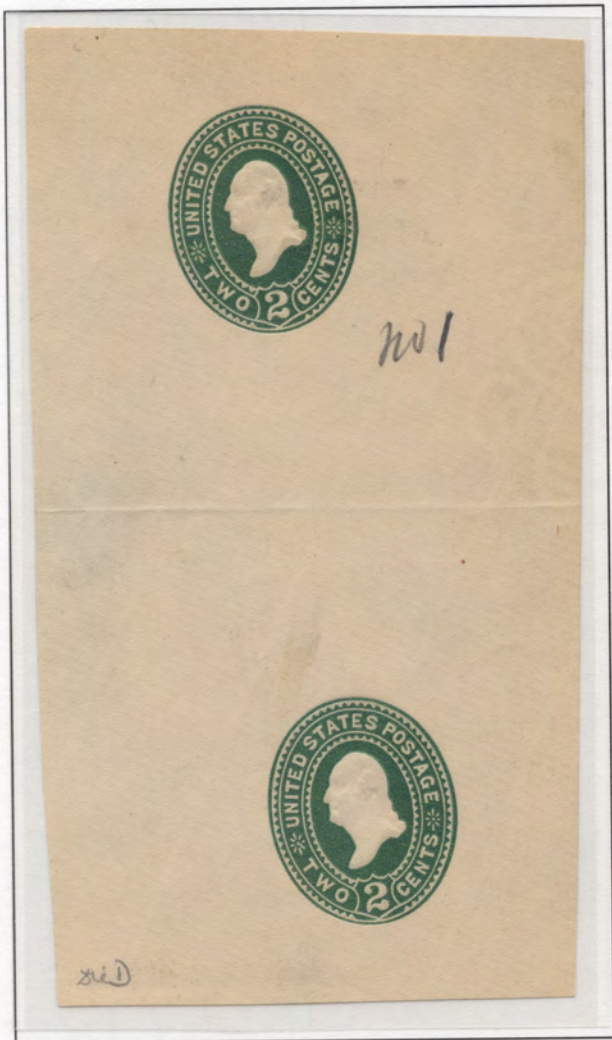
One cent Purcell proofs are characterized by the “necktie” on the front of the Franklin bust. The Top item has the manuscript notation “Sept 6, 1894 Approved by Mr. Field at L.J. Powers house. Spring Field, Mass.” Mr. Field was the Post Office stamp agent responsible for envelopes.



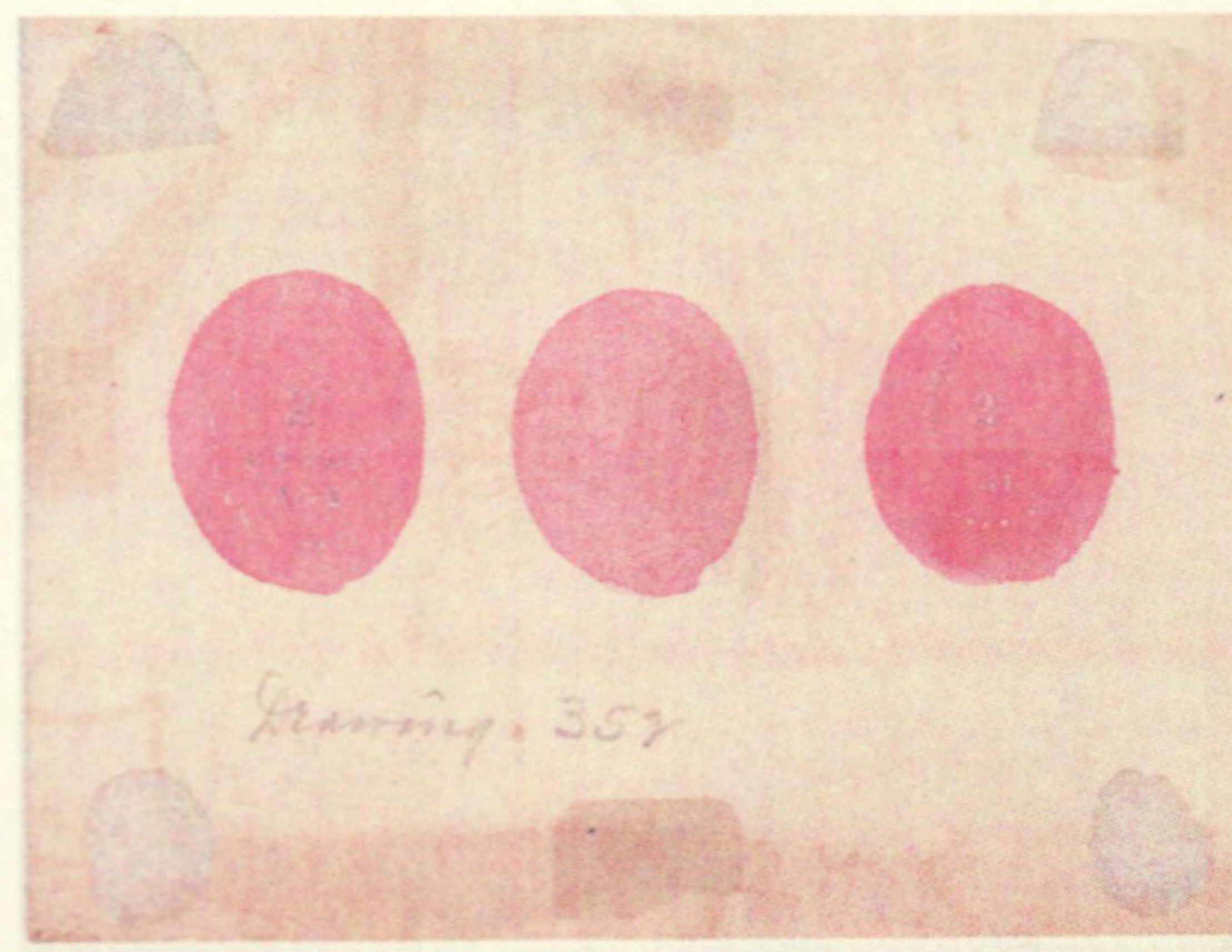
Carmin on white, on large piece of vertically laid paper, watermark 7, with stamp in upper right corner simulating an envelope.



Dark shade of green (characteristic of Purcell printings) on white wove envelopes with Holyoke Envelope Co. corner card and with unglued flaps. One with hand stamp with "SAMPLE."



The upper right item has manuscript "3.25 p.m. 1st impression Press No 1. Sept 13, 1894." - the beginning of the Purcell envelope manufacture. Note that the impression is under inked, indicative of the inexperience that caused many production problems. The "No 1" and "No 2" on the lower proofs likely indicate the press on which they were printed.

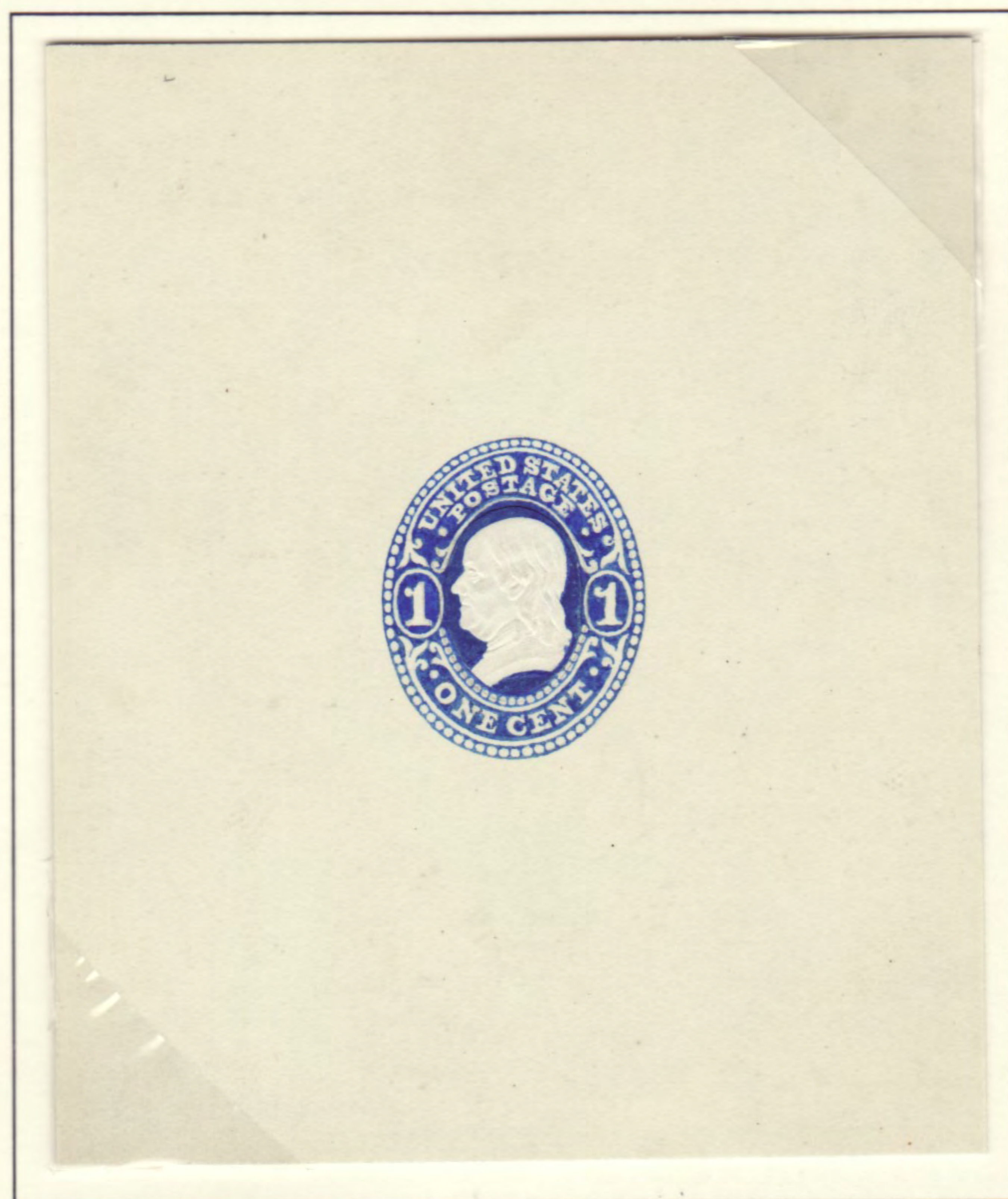


On back of model

Left oval - 2/U.S. POST/AGE with dashes

Right oval - 2 with dashes

Model of frame painted in water color around cutout of embossed vignette from unknown source



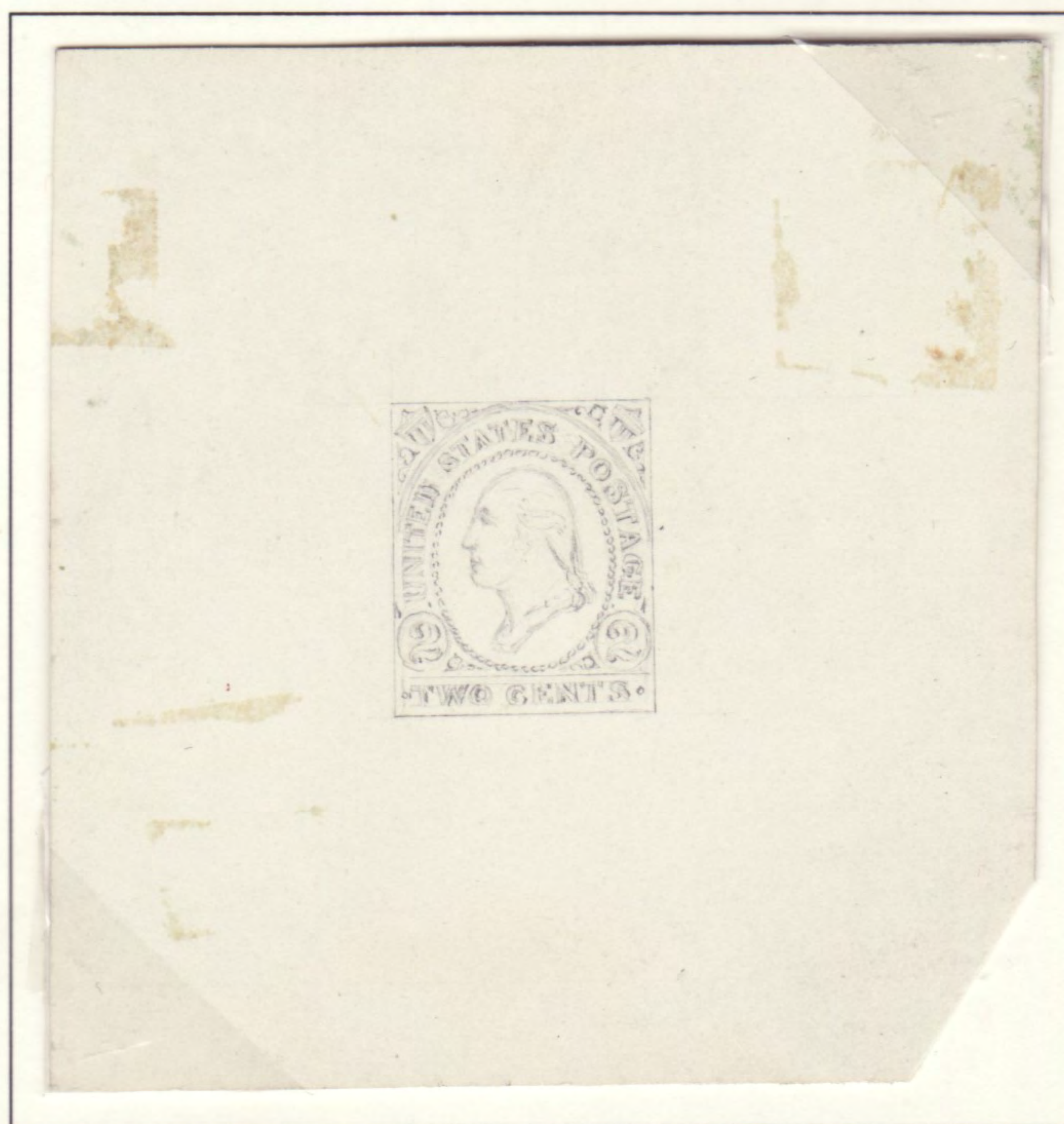
New designs were considered for the contract of 1899. Work began by making a series of models.



The model at right has frame drawn by pencil and others have frame drawn with blue watercolor.



Models were made by cutting out the vignette from the 1890 one cent stamp, pasting it onto card and drawing differing frames around the vignette with blue watercolor.



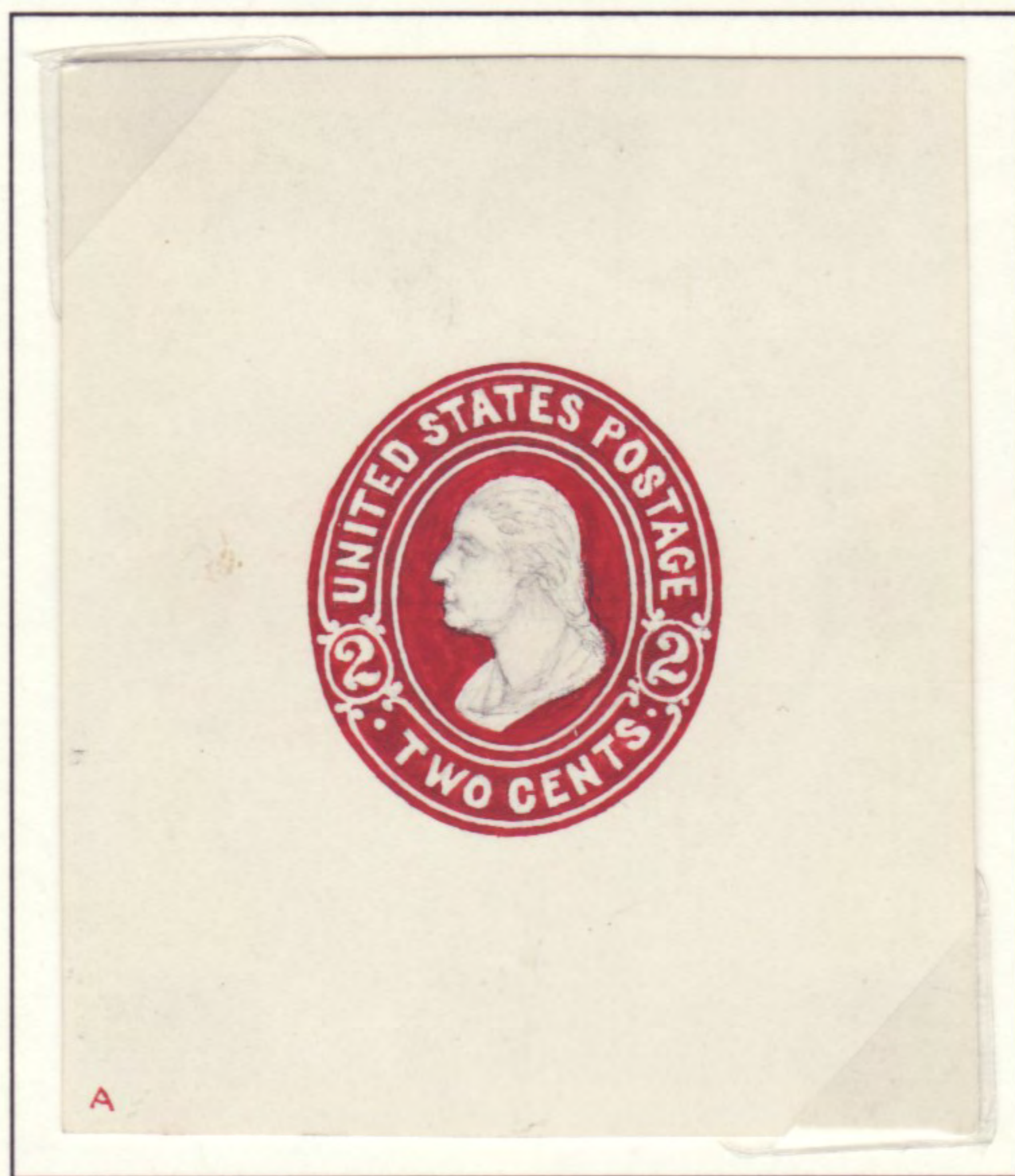
The first essays were artist drawings in pencil. Note that both oval and square designs were considered.



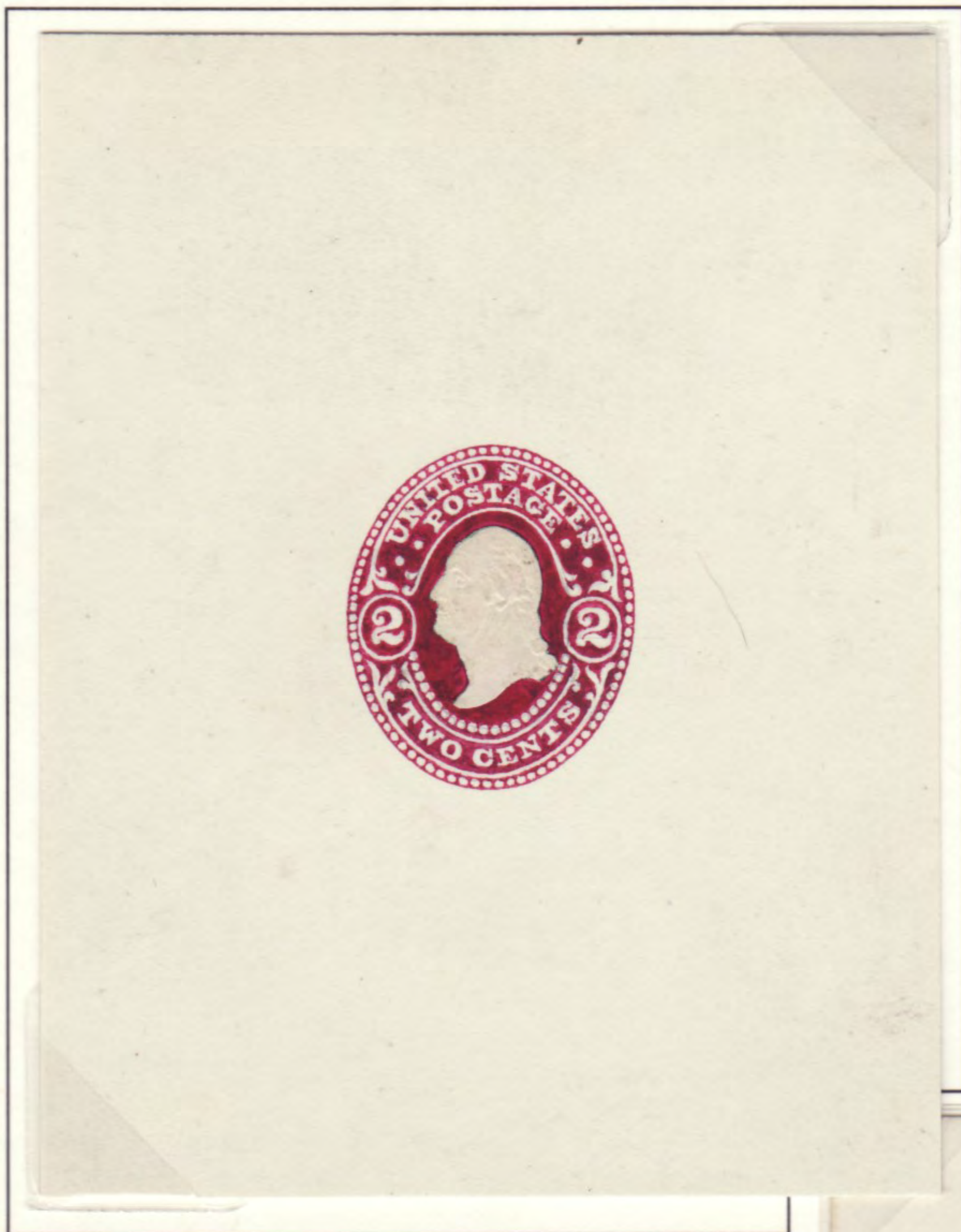
The upper model shows the early stage of the essay with pencil-drawn frame around the vignette. The model to right shows a later stage with the frame drawn in pencil and partially colored in with watercolor.



Models were made by cutting the Washington vignette from the 1890 stamp issue and drawing the frame in around the vignette.

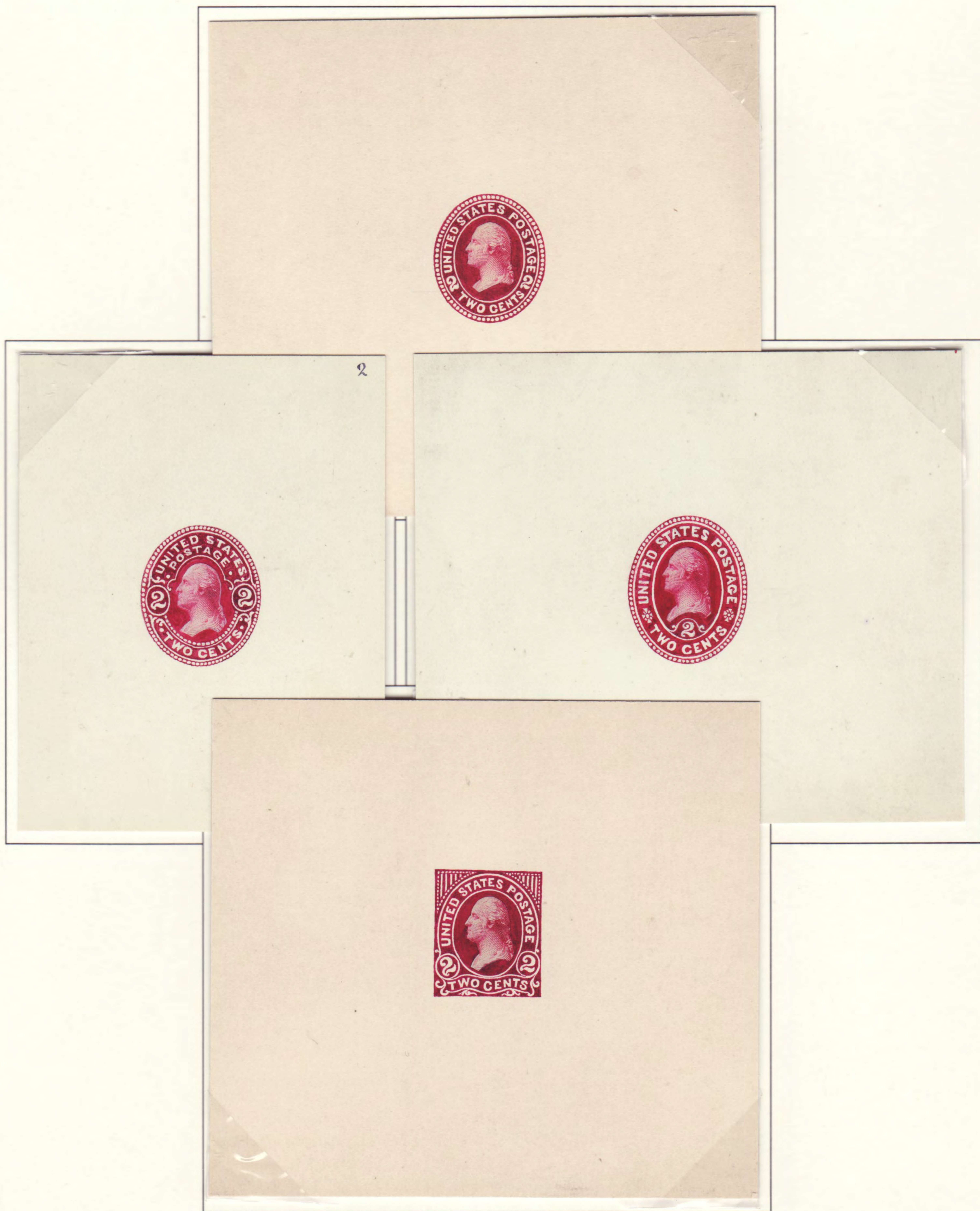


Models were made by **drawing the Washington vignette in pencil**, cutting it out and pasting it onto card, then drawing the frame in around the vignette in pencil and painting with red watercolor. This perhaps was done to give the appearance of an embossed vignette.



Note that the vignette of the top essay is from die E56C, of the middle two essays from die 88 and of the bottom from die E81A. Also only the vignette was cut out for the top three essays while the entire inner oval was cut out and pasted onto the card for the bottom essay.

Models were made by cutting the Washington vignette from various embossed envelope impressions, drawing the frame in around the vignette in pencil and painting with red watercolor.



Models were made by cutting the Washington vignette from the 1890 stamp issue, drawing the frame in around the vignette in pencil and painting with red watercolor.



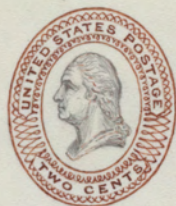
Artist drawings done in pencil and finished with brown watercolor. Note that the right essay was cut out of the card and mounted on another card.



An extremely unusual essay drawn in pencil, and finished in rose watercolor. The essay was then cut from the card and mounted on a green card.

Artist drawings in differing colors and formats than the previous items that may have been done at a different time and/or by a different artist.

The two top items are artist's drawing with vignette in pencil and border in pen.



J.



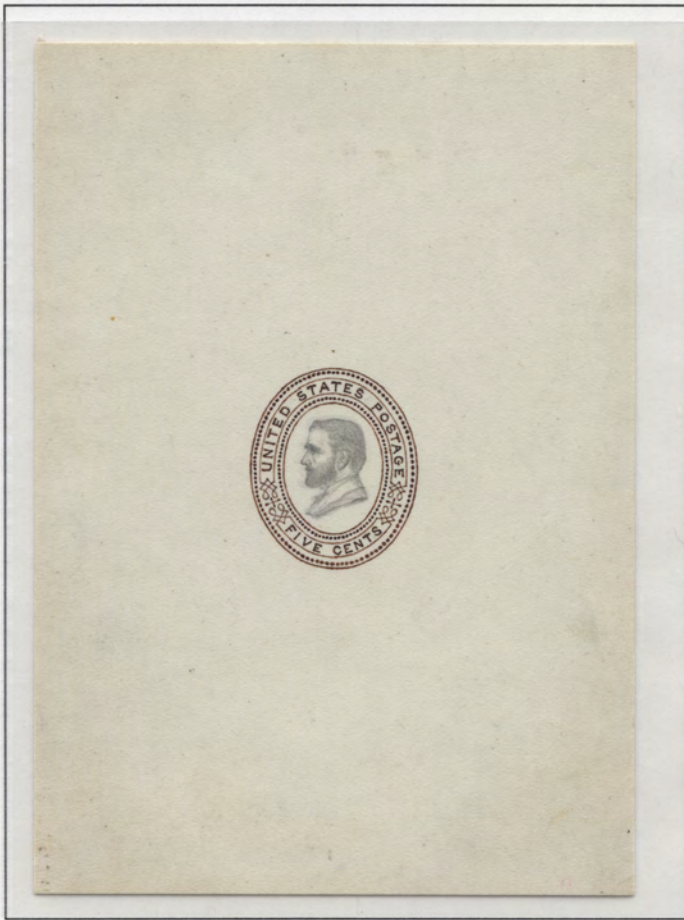
K.

The item at right is a model with the head of Washington cut out and pasted on card and the border hand drawn around the oval with vignette and colored.



Plimpton - Morgan

Artist's Drawing for Five Cents Essay (1899)



Artist's drawing on white card with vignette of Grant in pencil and border in brown pen.

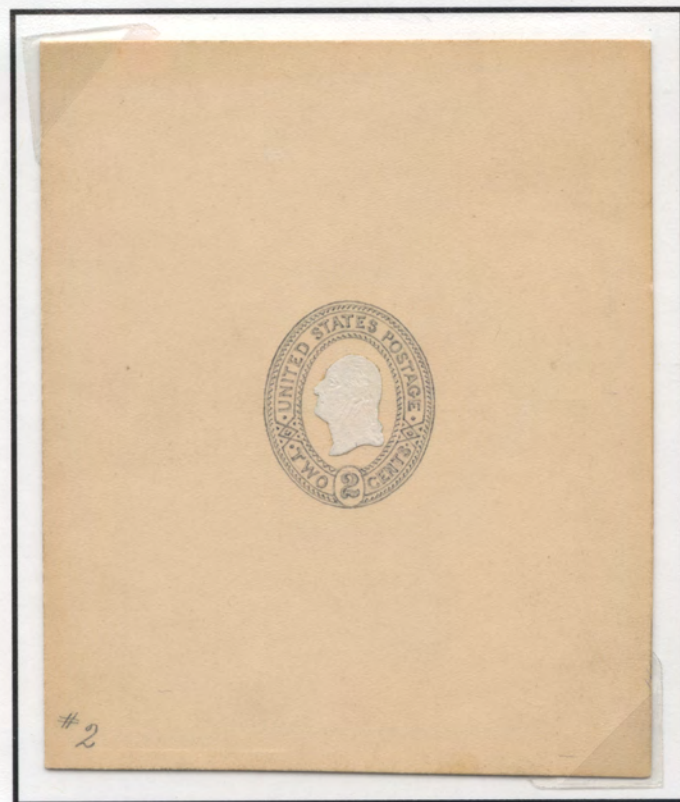
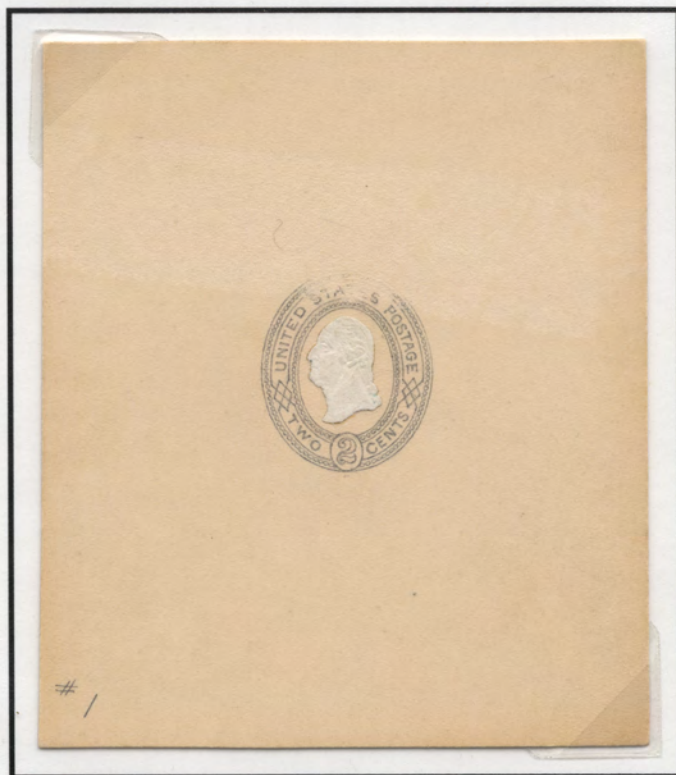


120 a

45.1

Designs are ovals with beaded interior rings, side ornaments, and denomination spelled out.

With manuscript '#1' in lower left corner

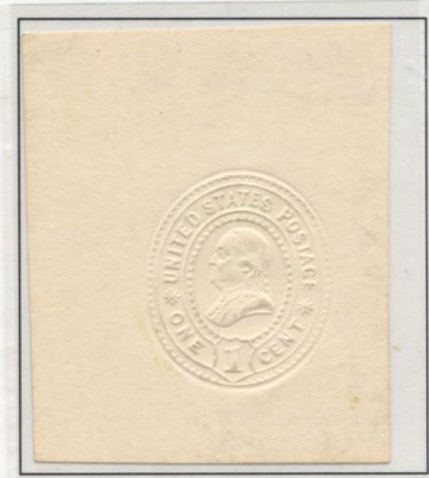


With manuscript '#2' in lower left corner

Build up design; center bust of Washington cut from a 2¢ envelope (DIE 88 (B)), mounted on a card with hand drawing of frame.

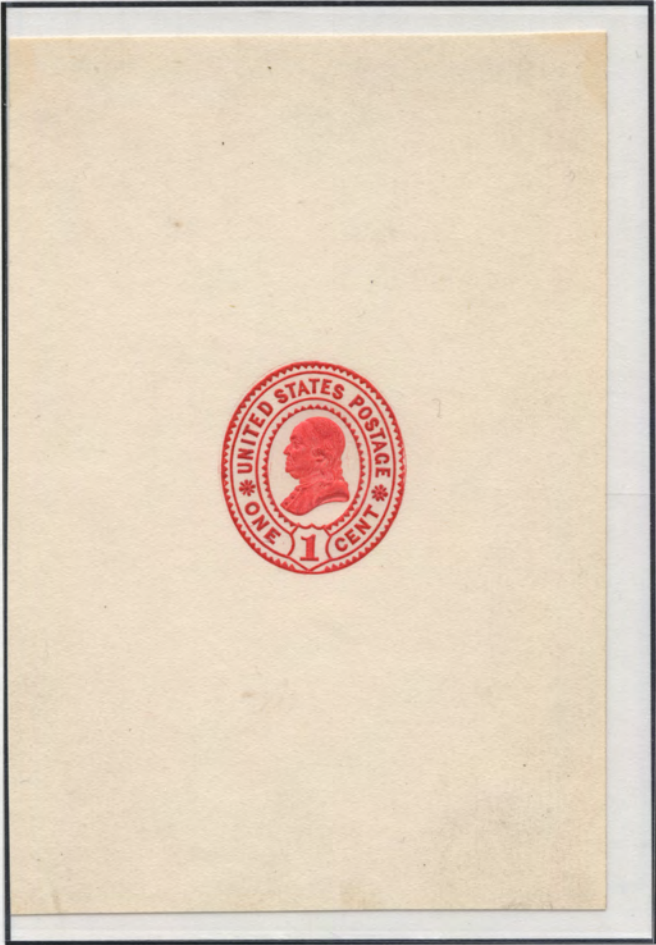


Green on white paper



Albino on white paper

Incomplete Die 98 with outer ring of color missing



Sheetlet with complete Die 98 reverse color impression



Embossed essay on vertically laid paper, no watermark

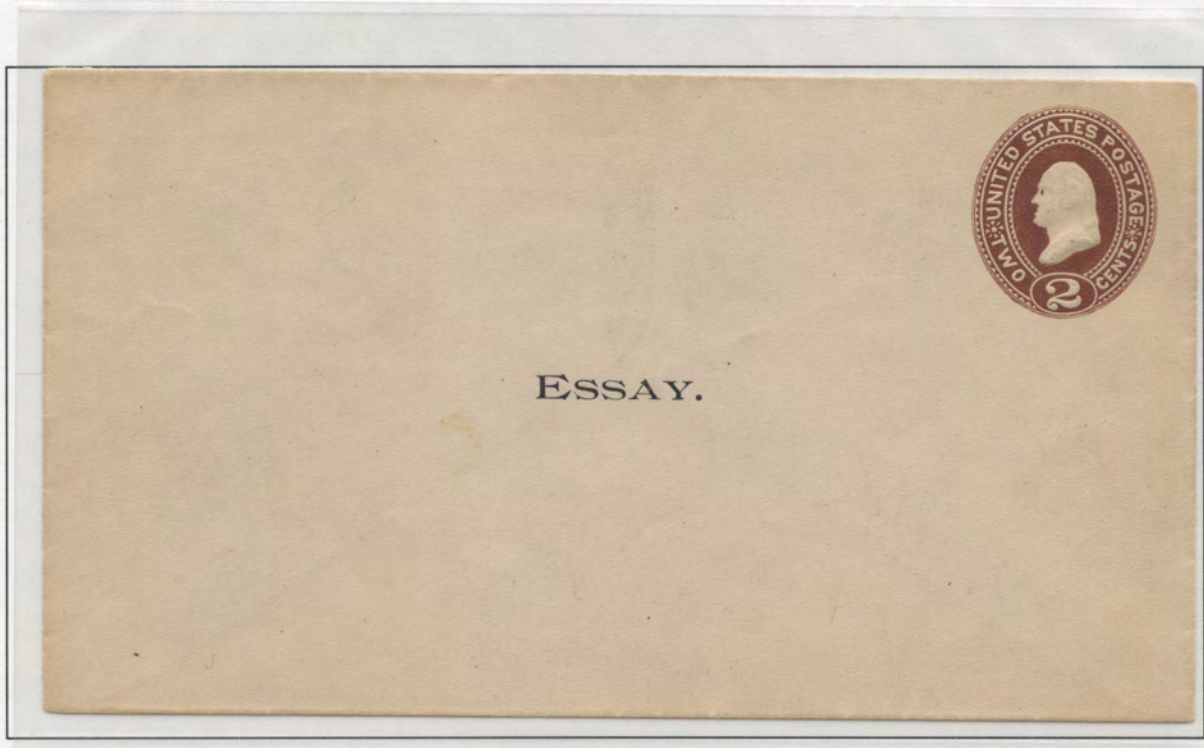


Red on white and manila, watermark 8

Complete envelopes from essay die with small '2'



Trial colors of Die 87, complete envelopes



With "ESSAY." in center of envelope



Without "ESSAY." in center of envelope

Head of Washington in oval with "Two (2) Cents." Numeral is short and broad in oval.



Dark red on white reverse color



Dark blue on white reverse color

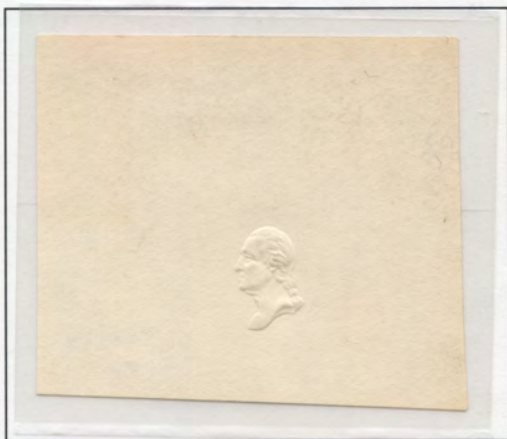


Albino on white proof



Pink on white trial color proof

Two Cents Die 99



Albino bust only



Red on white reverse color

Two Cents Die 100



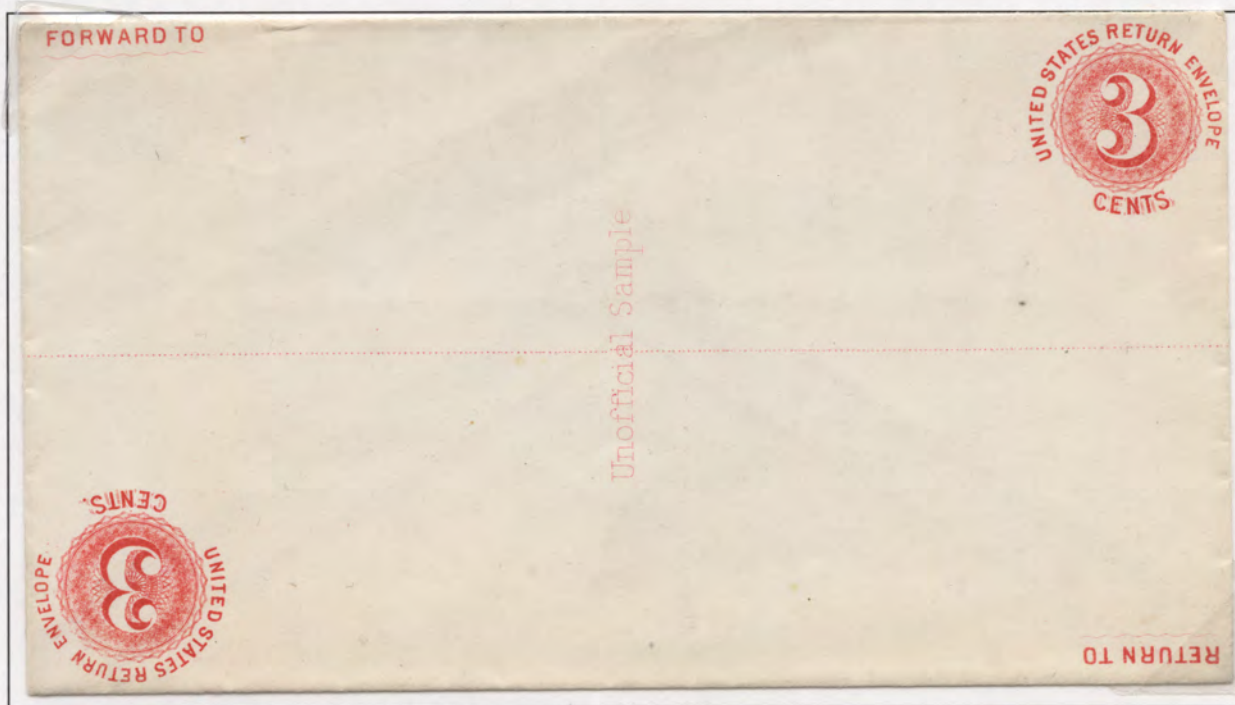
Model with bust of Jackson cut from adhesive stamp pasted onto card and design completed in water color.



Albino proof of Four Cents Die 104



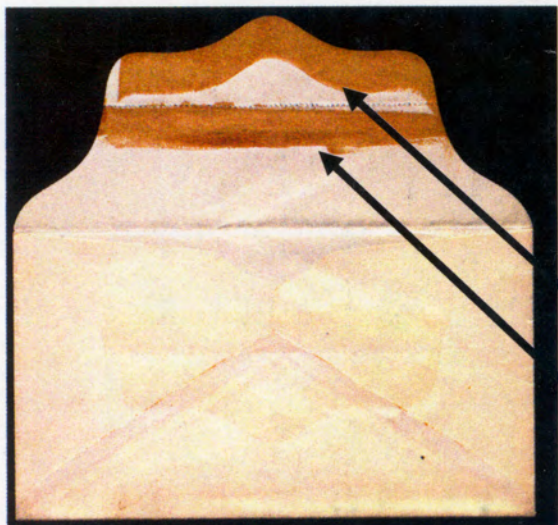
Reverse Die impression of Die 104



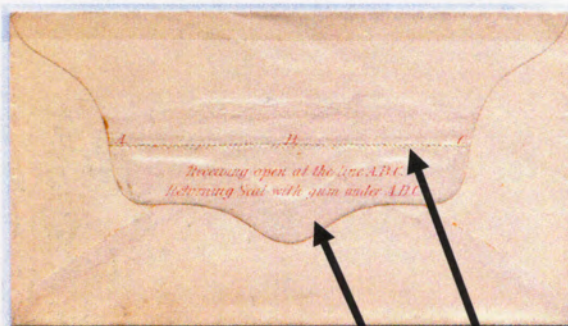
Complete envelope, size 160x90 mm, wove, no watermark, with "Unofficial Sample" vertically in middle front.

Three Cents Charles K. Marshall Essay, surface printed

In 1877, Charles K. Marshall, Vicksburg, MS, patented a return postal card with same stamp design as above. He also proposed the return envelope above and on the following pages.



Back, flap open



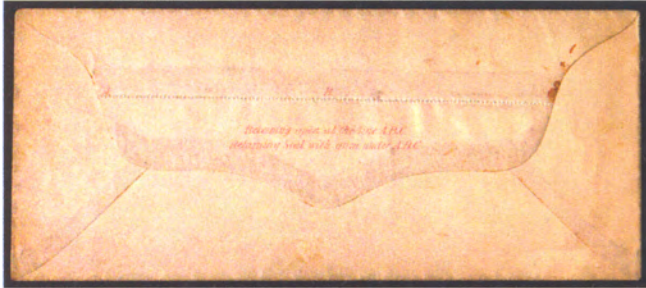
Back, flap closed

The concept called for the first sender to address the envelope in the "Forward to" portion of the front and seal the outer gummed area.

The recipient would open the letter at the perforations between the two gummed portions, and reseal it for return with the remaining gummed strip.

A second style of return envelope by Charles K. Marshall. Same envelope design as previous but with different stamp and envelope size.

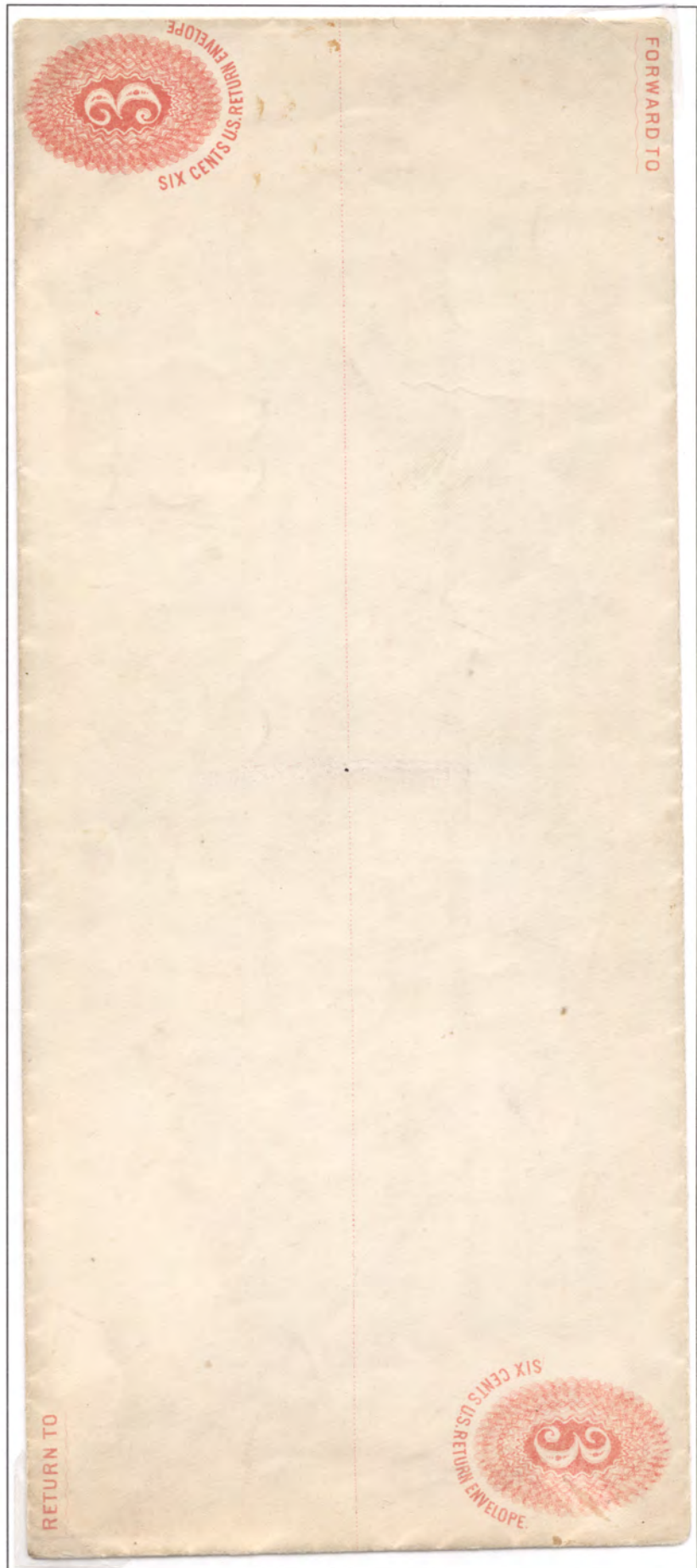
Complete envelope, size 238x104 mm, wove paper, no watermark with "Unofficial Sample" vertically in middle front.

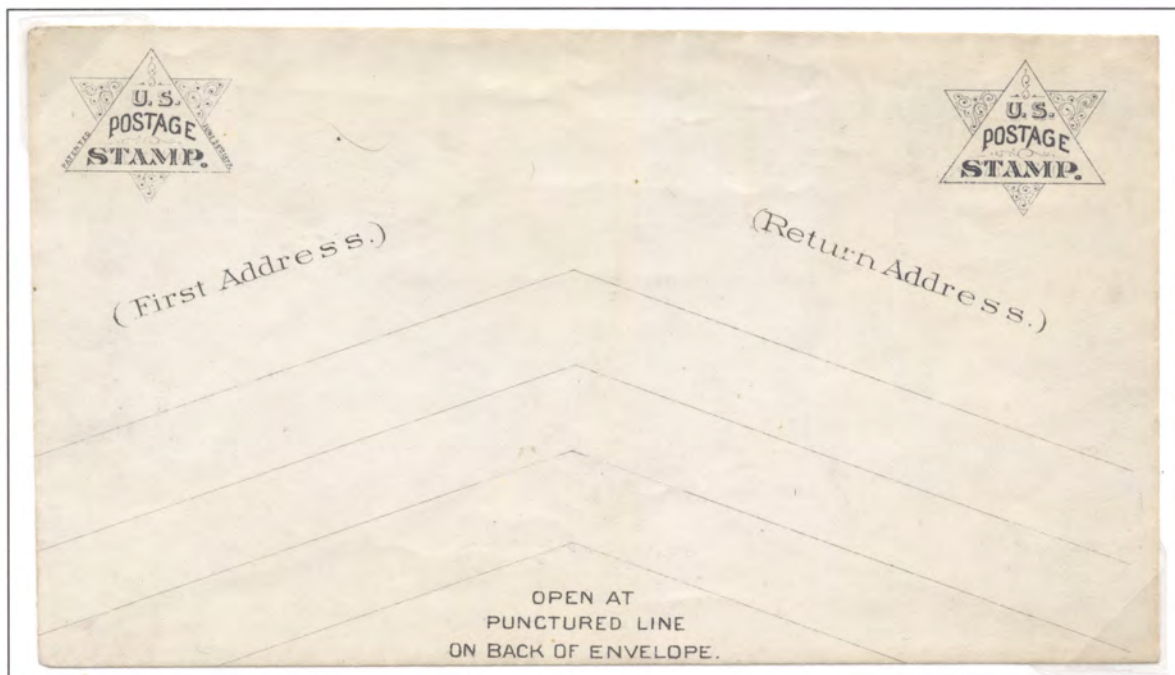


Back, flap closed



Back, flap open





Complete envelope, size 148x84 mm, wove paper, no watermark

Marshal produced a third return envelope essay with different approach for addressing and return address, though concept for sealing and resealing on the back (below) is the same as the first two essays.

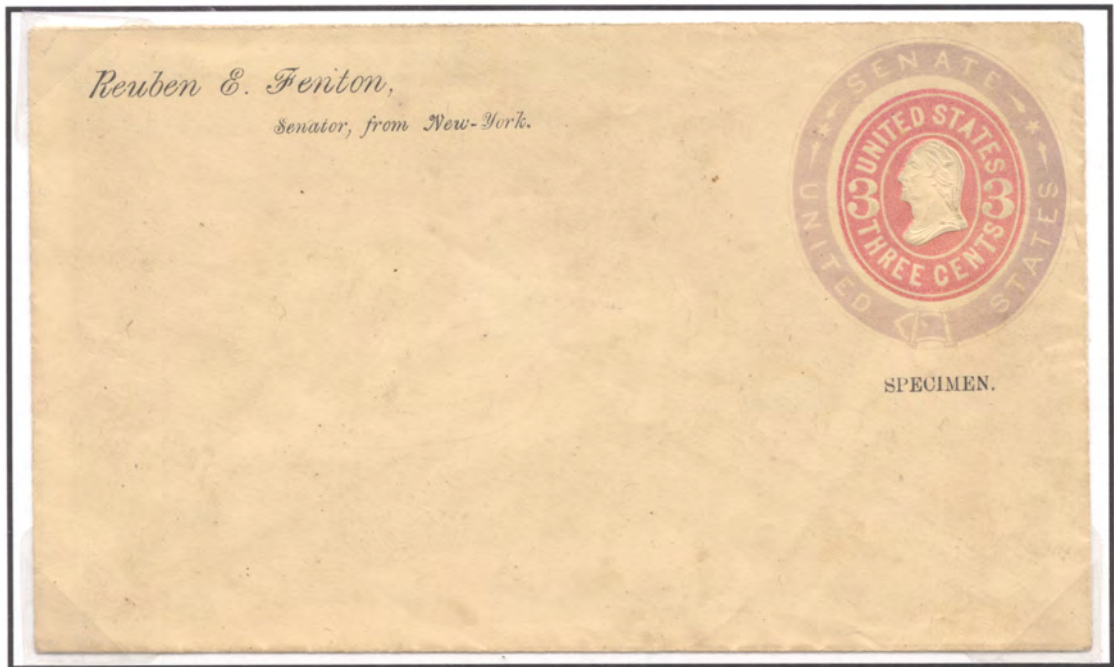
While message-reply postal cards were issued (of a different design), **this idea was never accepted by the Post Office for envelopes.**



Back, flap open



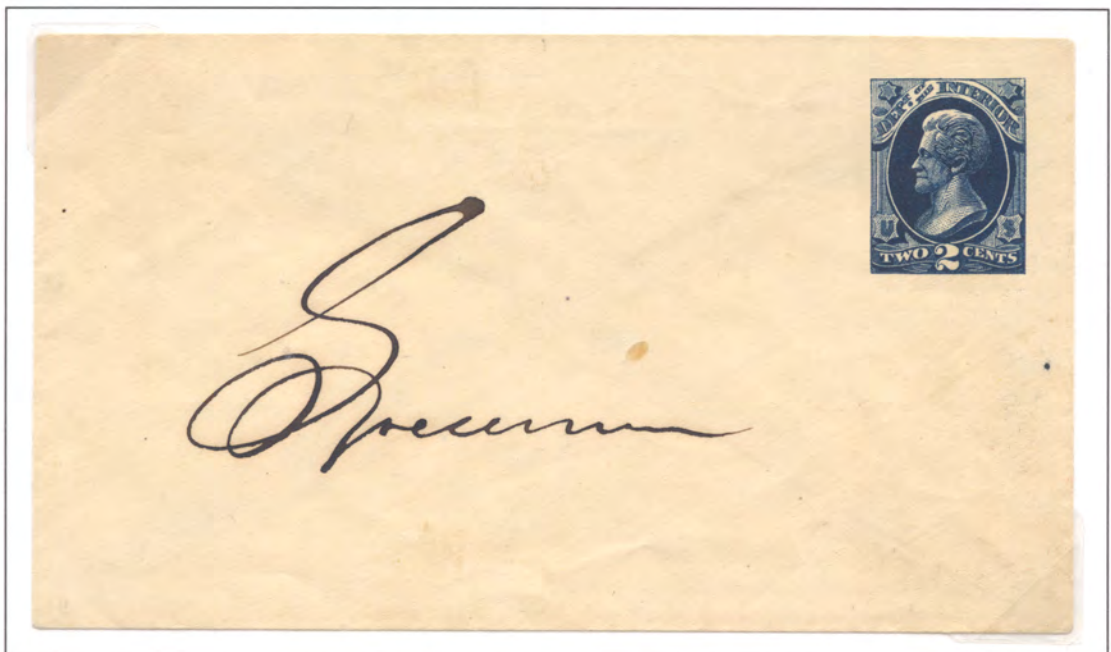
Back, flap closed



George Nesbitt experimented with adding collars around the stamp on envelopes. He made the above envelopes apparently as proposals for official envelopes of the Senate and House of Representatives. Use of collars around the stamp was frowned upon by the Post Office.



Unique cut squares from woodcut on laid and wove paper



Entire envelope, blue on white, laid paper, unwatermarked

Essayed official cut squares and envelope with the stamp printed from a woodcut, not embossed. Designs are similar to stamps issued by Continental Bank Note Company.



Original artist's drawing on white card



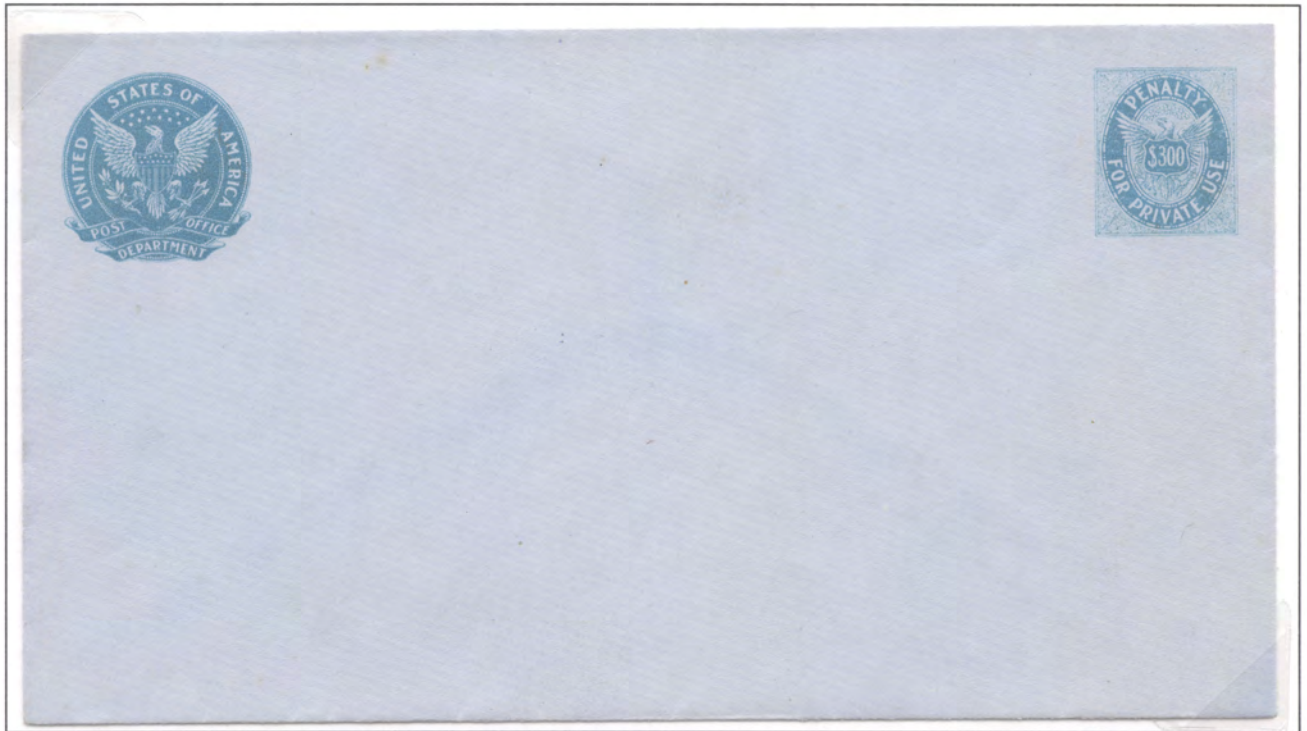
Blue on white

Embossed Shield with \$300 and Eagle



Brown on white paper, watermarked with Seal of United States

Embossed shield with \$300 and Eagle on right with additional embossed Shield and Eagle on left.



Blue on blue paper, watermarked with USA and large eagle

Surface printed shield with \$300 and Eagle on right with additional Shield and Eagle on left (smaller indica than above).