

The attempt to prevent postal fraud and cut costs in the USA through the lens of the 3c denomination: 1861 - 69

Purpose

The purpose of this exhibit is to showcase, through the lens of the 3c denomination, the US Post Office's attempts to prevent fraud and cut costs between 1861 and 1869. All developments are covered: the competition for the original contract, the issued stamp, patent and surface printing experiments based on the issued stamp, derivative designs, alternative designs; and the efforts of the N.B.N.C.'s competitors. The exhibit ends with an epilogue showing rare official reprints.

Background

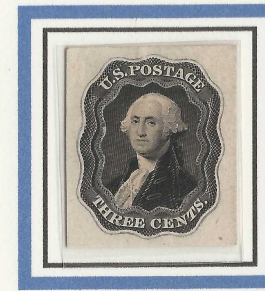
On December 20th, 1860, South Carolina voted to secede from the United States. Six southern states soon followed. In February 1861, the seven adopted a new constitution and the Confederacy was born.

The USPO reacted swiftly. In March it advertised for new stamps; and by 17 August, the first of the new stamps, the N.B.N.C.'s 3c Washington, was in use. The report of the Postmaster General (December 2nd, 1861), tells us why: '... to prevent the fraudulent use of a large quantity of stamps remaining unaccounted for in disloyal states...'.
 And so the 1861 issue owes its existence to the attempt to prevent the fraudulent use of postage stamps.

The 3c denomination (and the Washington design, in particular) was at the heart of these efforts. At the time, 3c was the standard domestic letter rate for distances under 3000 miles. In 1863, this was extended to all distances in the United States; and the 3c Washington became the workhorse of the postal service. About 2 billion were issued, more than 14 times the 138 million of the next most used stamp, the 1c Franklin. As a result, the Washington design and its derivatives dominated experiments to prevent fraud and cut costs.

My exhibit presents an integrated picture of this process of development, experiment, and use; with the 3c denomination as its focus at a time when the USA was emerging as a world leader in the printing of securities.

Noteworthy items



e: PF

Unique model produced by the **American Bank Note Company** in the competition for the 1861 contract.

Engraved frame, pencil border. Center mounted over vignette. India on card.

Unique items are boxed in **black** and **royal blue**. **Rare items** are framed in **royal blue**. Among such items are:

- The **agenda-setting letter** from MacDonough to Zevely, detailing patent and surface printing experiments;
- The **three unique** A.B.N.C. models for the 1861 contract;
- Both of **the only two recorded** 'earliest known use' of the 1861 stamp on cover;
- The **Morison-Leeds letter** from Barclay Leeds to his brother, Lewis, securing the Morison patent for Leeds;
- The only known **signed Loewenberg essay** and the Loewenberg se-tenant USA-France;
- Liberty head essays **signed by the designers** Jones and Ronaldson;
- Grill essays **signed by** Steel, MacDonough, Duke, and others;
- Steel's unique **patent-claiming grill essay**
- The **only known** F-grill used and printed on both sides.

Research

Gibson patent (1864)

41,118: safety network overprint



There are only 3 types, not 4 as stated in Scott's

MacDonough patent (1866)

52,869: glycerin-based fugitive ink



Yellow orange



Dusky violet red

Unattributed to a patent in Scott's

Thorpe patent (1869)

95,624: double printing



Brown on Scarlet
Unattributed to a patent in Scott's

The exhibit features **original published research** (highlighted in the text in **royal blue**): '3c 1861 First-Design Essays: An Analysis of the Dies' (The Chronicle, November 2015); 'Linking 3c Washington Essays to their Patents' (The Chronicle, August 2016); 'Typing the Network Safety Overprints' (The Chronicle, February 2017). Among the discoveries:

- The vignette die numbers on which two of the A.B.N.C. essays are based;
- Corrections that lead to an accurate description of the N.B.N.C. 'first design' essays;
- A new method to describe safety network overprints that shows that there are only three types;
- The identification of multiple errors in current cataloguing;
- An improved understanding of the link between patents and essays;
- The Harmon patent (which promises to explain the origin of the 'bedspring' essays);
- The Thorpe patent for double-printing – not just a safety network under-print.

Exhibit Plan

An Abbreviated Visual Summary of the Exhibit Plan

The competition for the contract



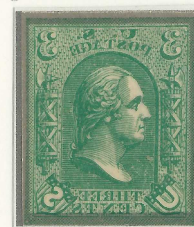
The NBNC's 'first design', red on India

The issued stamp and its uses



Issued stamp with Bridgeport Fireman cancel

Cost cutting and the prevention of reuse



Loewenberg decal patent on lithographic print

The winning idea: an embossed stamp



e:PF, the E-grill, rose red

Reprints showcase the USPO's stamps



For the Atlanta Exposition: blue on card

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The Concerns of the Decade

The prevention of reuse and surface printing to cut costs – in MacDonough's letter of 23rd March, 1863, to the 'third assistant postmaster general', Anthony Zevely.

Unique example of the Loewenberg Experiment

Stuck to the back of the first page of the letter



Loewenberg's Patent is described on page two

'On the page opposite please find another plan... to print the stamps on a transparent paper (and) gum them on the printed side... when they are fastened upon an envelope the paper may be removed but **the ink leaves the paper** and is held by the gum on the original envelope...'

Surface printing to cut costs (P2)

'In regard to our other experiments of obtaining a **surface printing** die by a scientific process – the first attempt was a failure – the second we think promises well...'

Page two of the MacDonough-Zevely letter describes the Loewenberg patent and surface printing experiments

We see but two objections to it. it injures the appearance of the engraved work - and it will cost the expense of one extra printing.

On the opposite page please find another plan we are experimenting with. it is to print the stamps on a transparent paper - chemically prepared - gum them on the printed side - and when they are fastened upon an envelope the paper may be removed but the ink leaves the ~~gum~~ paper and is held by the gum on the original envelope. we are not ready yet to report upon it, but send you the result as far as obtained.

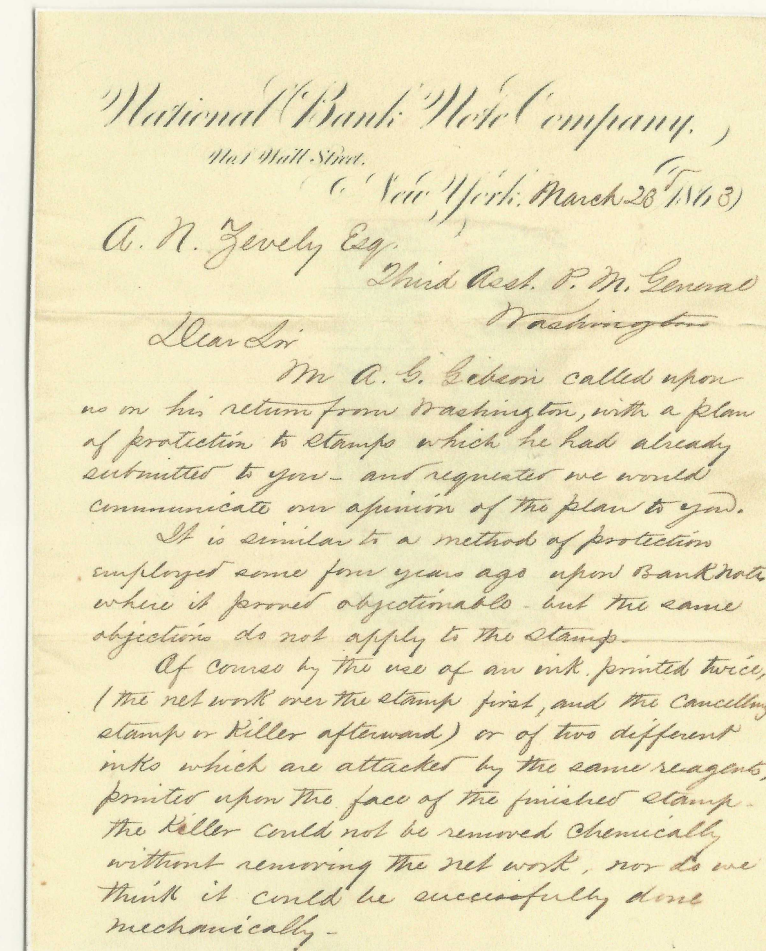
In regard to our other experiment of obtaining a surface printing die by a scientific process. the first attempt was a failure - The second we think promises well altho there are serious difficulties to be overcome.

Mr Gibson will remain in New York during the week. Hoping to hear from your department in regard to his plan

Very Respectfully
Your Aft Servt.

J. Macdonough
Secretary

Scan of page one of the MacDonough-Zevely letter



The Gibson Patent (described on page one above)

'Dear Sir

Mr A.J. Gibson called upon us on his return from Washington with a plan of protection to stamps...

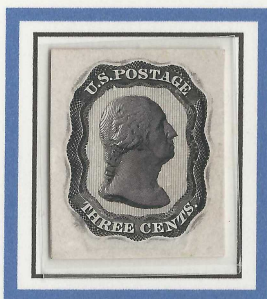
... by the use of an ink printed twice (**the network over the stamp first**, and the cancelling stamp...afterward)... the killer could not be removed chemically.'

Competition for the 1861 contract

In March 1861, the US Post Office advertised for new stamps to prevent the Confederates from raising money by selling the existing stamps. This section focuses on the competition for the contract. It shows:

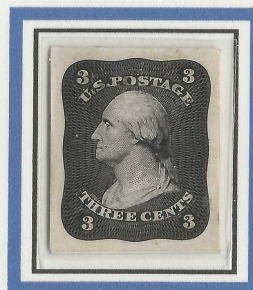
- Unsuccessful essays by the American Bank Note Company and Toppan, Carpenter & Co.
- The evolution of the National Bank Note Company's bid from 'first design' to the issued stamp

Unique models by the American Bank Note Company for the 1861 contract



Model: engraved frame, pencil border. Center mounted on ruled background. India on card.

Vignette from die V 36953.



Model: Bald, Cousland & Co. vignette. Numbers mounted in place. India on card.

The American Bank Note Company: additional essays

Uncatalogued essay

Only one known



Lathework frame on India on card

Master die 81 frame on card



Orange red



Brown yellow

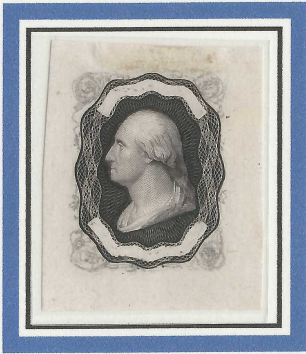


Dark green

Competition for the 1861 contract

The American Bank Note Company: unique essay and progressive dies

Stage 1: Essay on India with pencil sketch

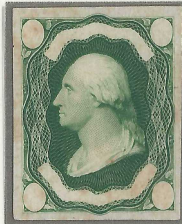


Uncatalogued essay on India; pencil additions to frame.

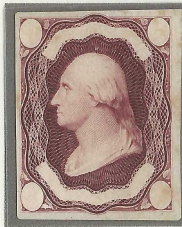
Danforth, Bald & Co. vignette from die V-39907.

Stage 2: complete design, empty value tablets

Green: die on India



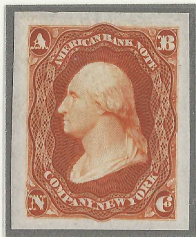
Brown Purple: die on India



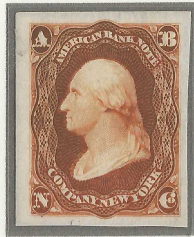
Black: die (62 x 52 mm) on India sunk on card (65 x 56 mm)

Stage 3: Capital 'A', 'B', 'N', 'C' in corners

Blue: cut down die (33 x 37 mm) on India



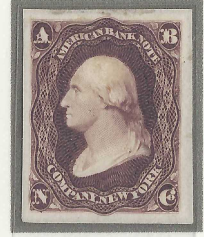
Orange brown
Cut down die (28 x 23 mm) on India



Brown



Brown red
Cut down die (28 x 23 mm) on India



Dull purple



Red brown: cut down die (33 x 28 mm) on India

Competition for the 1861 contract

The American Bank Note Company: reprints from a poorly stored die

The A.B.N.C. returned to this essay repeatedly during the first half of the 1860's. But the die was poorly stored. A small early flaw can be seen outside the top margin of the die sunk on card. There is significant deterioration in the margins of the two dies on India.



Scarlet



Dark green: die (62 x 52 mm) on India
sunk on card (70 x 58 mm)



Brown

Plate proof: imperf, ungummed, bottom strip of four

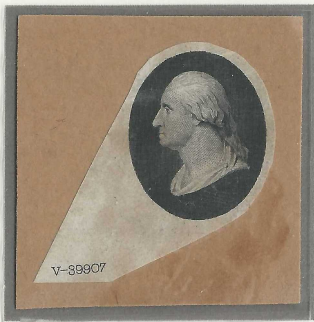


Green

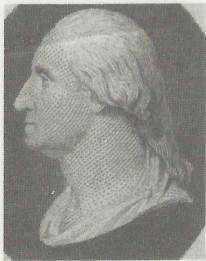
Competition for the 1861 contract

The American Bank Note Company: derivation of the essays from vignettes V 36953 and V-39907

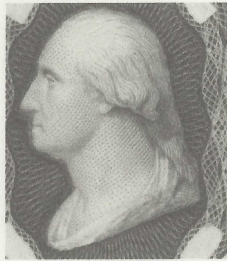
These vignettes were released for auction by the A.B.N.C. during the 20th century.



Original **Bald, Cousland & Co.** die (V-39907) on India pasted on card.



Scan of the die (V-39907)



Scan of the essay (Scott 65-E7A)

Brazer states that the model uses a Bald, Cousland & Co. vignette. This is an instance of the vignette.



Scan of the model (Brazer 56E-C)



Scan of the die (V 36953)

Vignette V 36953

Die on India, stuck on card

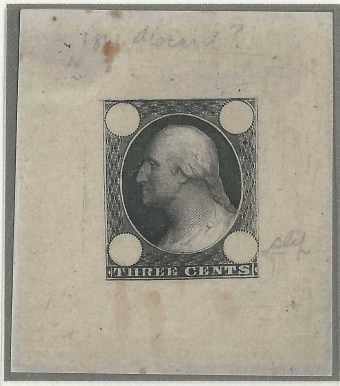


This vignette isn't catalogued in Mason, Brazer, or Scott. It serves as the basis for the head of the model essay (Brazer 56E-C, Scott 65-E6).

Competition for the 1861 contract

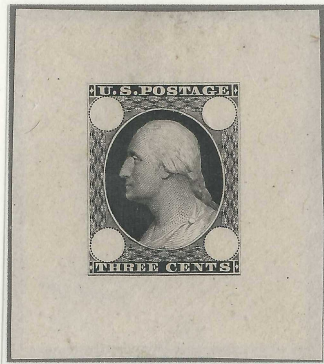
Toppan, Carpenter & Co: progressive essays

Toppan, Carpenter & Co. held the 1857-61 contract. When they merged with the A.B.N.C. in 1858, a unit was spun off to service the original contract. This unit competed for the 1861 contract under the name of Toppan, Carpenter & Co. The design was wholly based on the existing stamp, except that it included numerals as required by the new contract.



e:PF

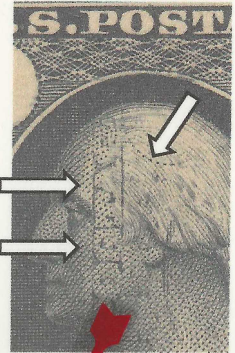
Black: Die on old proof paper without top label



Black: on old proof paper



Brown Red: on old proof paper



Die on thick old proof paper with rare die error: The die has picked up an image of the design lying on its side.



Black

Carmine: Die on India (20 x 25 mm) cut to shape



Carmine: Die on India, sunk (75 x 76 mm) on card (78 x 79 mm)



Designer: Edward Purcell. **Engravers:** Joseph Pease (portrait); Cyrus Durand (lathe border); Henry Earl (lettering).

The portrait is from a drawing by Jean Houdon for which Washington sat in 1785. The original hangs in the Washington museum at Mount Vernon.

Competition for the 1861 contract

National Bank Note Company: Washington vignettes, April 1861

In 1853, Danforth, Bald & Co. split to form Danforth, Wright & Co. and Bald, Cousland & Co. The latter merged with six other companies to form the A.B.N.C. in 1858. In 1859, Danforth, Wright & Co. were joined by three bankers and four dissatisfied staff from the A.B.N.C. to form the National Bank Note Company.

The N.B.N.C. won the contract for the 1861 issue.

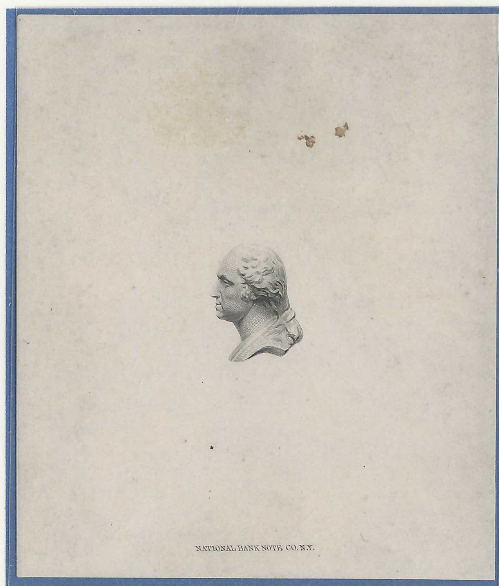


Vignette engraved by
Joseph P. Ourdan

**One of three
recorded copies**

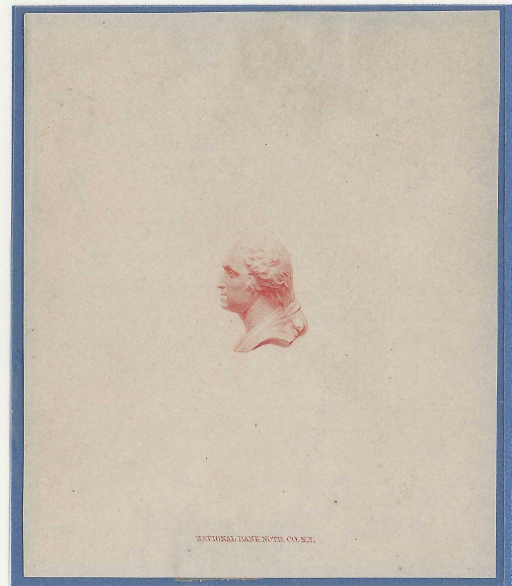
Carmine: Die on India (49 x 60 mm)
stuck on card (58 x 70 mm)

One of six recorded copies



Black: on glazed paper (63 x 75 mm)

One of four recorded copies



Scarlet: on glazed paper (62 x 75 mm)

Competition for the 1861 contract

Original research: on this page I show that the current cataloguing of the 'first designs' is wrong. Although there are two types, neither conforms to the current Brazer or Scott catalogue descriptions.*

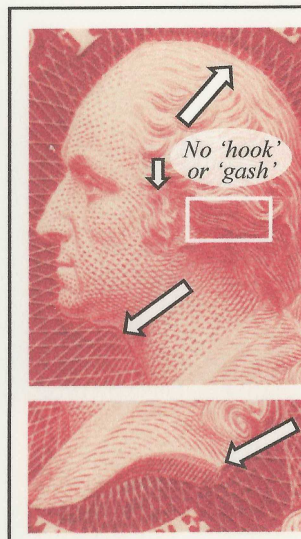
National Bank Note Company: essays for what's known as the 'First Design' (April, 1861)

Clarence Brazer notes two types of the first design with full ornamentation.

Brazer Type 1 (Brazer 56E-Hb): with imprint and die no. 441, no silhouette under the chin.

Brazer Type 2 (Brazer 56E-Hba): design changes include the silhouette on top of the head, lines added to the hair, around the eye, and on the chin. Thicker lines in hair around the ear. Three lines at the base of the bust that extend to the back. No imprint or die number.

My research proves that the historical descriptions are wrong; and that these items have been misclassified in auctions since Hackett (1956). I know of 15 sold on auction since 1856. I show **ten** in this collection.



From: Hackett (1956), Finkelburg (1999); Lake Shore 4 (2006).

Described in all three sales as Brazer T 2.

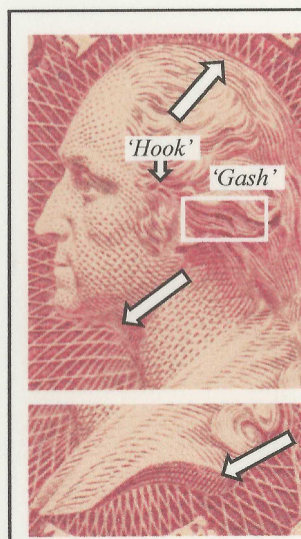
Characteristics

Dark orange red. With imprint, die 441. Die on India sunk on card: 59 x 55 mm.

No silhouette on top of the head, wispy hair. The top set of vertical lines at the base are light, clean, and well defined.

I call this the **Primary Die**.

Like Brazer T 1 the primary die has the imprint and die. But like Brazer T 2 it has a clearly defined chin and well-defined lines at the base of the bust.



From: Lake Shore 3 (2005)

Described as Brazer T 2 in the sale.

Characteristics

Oxidised scarlet. No imprint. Die on India sunk on card: 62 x 75 mm.

Silhouette on top of head, thick hair lines. 'Hook' and 'gash' in hair around ear. Poor definition under chin and at the base of the bust.

I call this the **Secondary Die**.

Like Brazer T 1 the secondary die has lines under the chin; and the base of the bust lacks definition. But like Brazer T 2 there are strong hair lines with a silhouette on top of the head.

* Hofmeyr, Jan (2015), '3c 1861 First-design Essays: An Analysis of the Dies', Chronicle 67: 4, November

Competition for the 1861 contract

National Bank Note Company: essays for what's known as the 'First Design' (April, 1861)

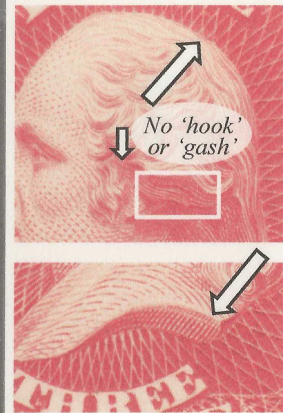
On this page I show three additional examples of what I call the **Primary Die**.

Defining characteristics: die 441 and imprint. Wispy hair. No silhouette on top of the head. No 'hook' or 'gash' in the hair around the ear. Chin outline is well defined. Top set of lines at the base of the bust are well defined. It's the smaller of the two dies.

From: Finkelburg (1999).

Described as Brazer T 2 in the sale.

Scarlet. Die on India sunk on card: 59 x 55 mm.



From: Hackett (1956),
Finkelburg (1999).

Described in both sales as Brazer T 2.

Characteristics

Dark orange red. Die on India sunk on card: 59 x 55 mm.



From: Lake Shore 2 (2005).

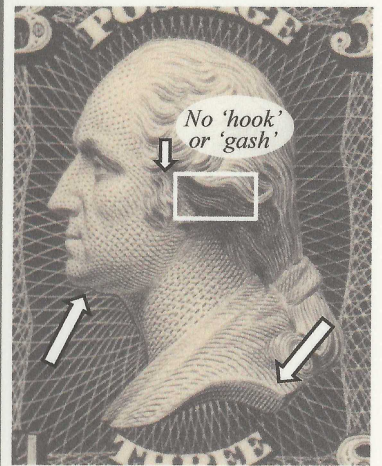
Described as Brazer T 2 in the sale.

Dark orange red. Die on India sunk on card: 59 x 55 mm.

Competition for the 1861 contract

Primary Die: a beautiful clean example

Die (55 x 55 mm) sunk on card (full size: 140 x 220 mm: protective tissue still attached)

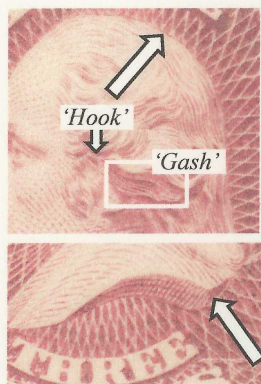


Competition for the 1861 contract

National Bank Note Company: essays for what's known as the 'First Design' (April, 1861)

On this page I show three additional examples of what I call the **Secondary Die**.

Defining characteristics: no imprint. 'Hook' and 'gash' in hair around ear. Poorly defined lines at the base of the bust and under the chin. Appears to be from a bigger die (62 x 75 mm).



From: Lake Shore 2 (2005).

Described as Brazer T 2 in the sale.

Oxidised Pink. Trimmed die in large sunk area (62 x 75 mm) on India pasted on card: 73 x 85 mm.



From: Hackett (1956), Finkelburg (1999); Lake Shore 2 (2005).

Described as Brazer T 2 in the sales.

Pink. Die (46 x 52 mm) on India pasted on card: 60 x 71 mm.

From: Lake Shore 2 (2005).

Described as Brazer T 2 in the sale; expertized as Scott 65-E15c by the PF.

Oxidized Pink. Trimmed die in large sunk area (62 x 75 mm) on India pasted on card: 76 x 82 mm.



Competition for the 1861 contract

National Bank Note Company: essays for what's known as the 'First Design' (April, 1861)

The preceding pages establish that the original descriptions of the two dies is confused. On this page I suggest new descriptions; and I show that Scott 65-E15b conforms mostly to the **Primary Die**.

Primary Die: no silhouette on the top of the head, but well defined outline under the chin. Fine wispy hair around the ear – no 'hook', no 'gash'. Well defined lines at the base of the bust. **Imprint and die number 441.** A smaller die.

Secondary Die: silhouette on the top of the head. Poorly defined outline under the chin. A 'hook' and 'gash' in the hair around the ear. Poorly defined lines at the base of the bust. **No imprint or die number.** Apparently a bigger die.

I've designated these as '**primary**' and '**secondary**' dies because the **primary die** was adopted for additional essays and became the basis for the issued stamp.



Dull pink



Deep orange red



Dim red

Various shades on semi-transparent stamp paper with primary die characteristics



Dim deep red

Die on pelure paper with secondary die characteristics



Dim orange red



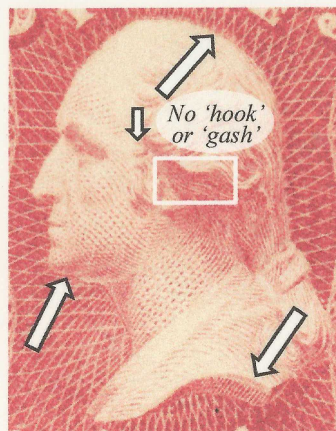
Dim deep red



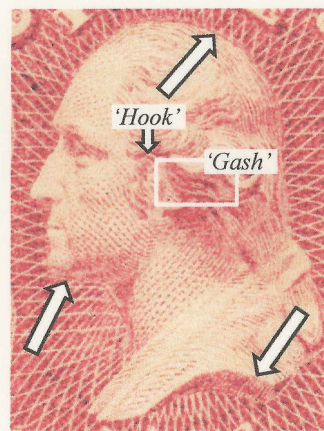
Dim violet red



Deep red orange



Scan of stamp paper die: clearly shows primary die characteristics.



Scan of pelure paper die: clearly shows secondary die characteristics.

Competition for the 1861 contract

National Bank Note Company: essays for what's known as the 'First Design' (April, 1861)

The scans below show that these essays use the **primary die**.

Vignette engraved by Joseph P. Ourdan

Frame engraved by Cyrus Durand

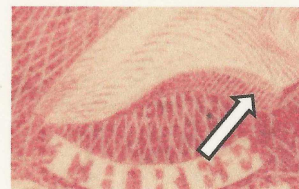
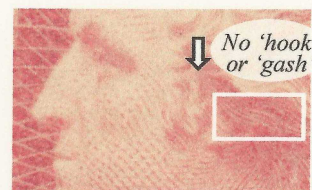
Imperf plate proofs on India



Scarlet



Red

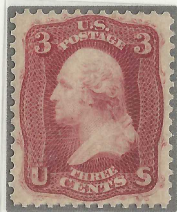


A scan of the red proof shows the distinctive characteristics of the **primary die**: no 'hook' or 'gash'; thin lines at the top of the base of the bust

Essays perfed and gummed on semi-transparent stamp paper



Brown rose



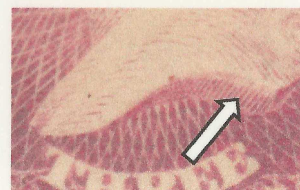
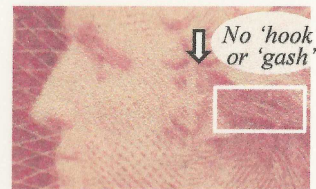
Dim deep red



Pink



Deep pink



A scan of the brown rose essay shows the distinctive characteristics of the **primary die**: no 'hook' or 'gash'; thin lines at the top of the base of the bust