

# The New York Postmaster Provisional


## Purpose and Scope

This is a traditional exhibit of the most widely used provisional stamp issued by postmasters in 1845. It covers the period July 1845 to Dec. 1849, 2½ yrs. after this stamp ceased being sold at the NYPO.

## Organization

- Pre-production material: essays and proofs
- Plate reconstruction
- Paper varieties
- Cancellations
- Control Markings
- Postmarks
- Domestic use
- Foreign use

The term “recorded” refers to covers reported in the Scheuer census at [www.uspcs.org](http://www.uspcs.org). “Known” refers to knowledge gathered by the exhibitor from publications, auctions, exhibits, etc.

Primary research is noted with the symbol . Important or unusual items are framed in red.

## Background

The Act of Congress of 1845 reduced and simplified rates but did not authorize the printing, distribution and use of adhesive stamps. Rather than wait for the U.S. Government to issue stamps, several postmasters issued their own for prepayment of letters sent from their post offices. These included Alexandria, Va., Annapolis, Md., Baltimore, Md., Boscawen, N.H., Brattleboro, Vt., Lockport, N.Y., Millbury, Mass., New Haven, Ct. New York, N.Y., Providence, R.I., and St. Louis, Mo. The New York Postmaster Provisional stamp was issued by Robert H. Morris, postmaster of New York City. A total of 143,600 of these stamps were printed - on various papers, with a variety of control markings, and used both domestically and on foreign mail. Letters bearing this stamp are also known sent to New York City from other cities, considered unpaid by their postmasters, but accepted once they arrived in New York.



Robert Hunter Morris

## The Widespread Use of the New York Postmaster Provisional

Of all the Postmaster Provisionals, the New York adhesive was by far the most broadly used, both throughout the United States and to several foreign countries as well. The map on the left shows the use of this stamp in the U.S. - from Maine in the north to St. Louis in the west and Texas in the south. It was also used to Canada and New Brunswick, and to Mexico (not shown). The map on the right shows its use to many of the countries in Western Europe.





## Preamble

## Postage Rates Prior to July 1, 1845

Prior to the Act of 1845, letter rates were both expensive and confusing. They ranged from 6c for a single sheet letter sent up to 30 miles, to 25c for one sent over 400 miles. Letters with two and three sheets were twice and three times more expensive, respectively.

The Independent Mail Companies took advantage of these high prices, offering faster service and cheaper rates (measured by weight) between cities on the East Coast and to towns further inland.

### Letter sent *via* U.S. Post Office prior to July 1845 - 18 $\frac{3}{4}$ c

The rate for a letter sent from New York to Providence by the U.S.P.O. was 18 $\frac{3}{4}$ c.

Providence was in the same distance zone from New York as was Boston.



New York to Providence, RI

June 6, 1843

### Letter sent *via* American Letter Mail Co. prior to July 1845 - 6c



Boston to New York, Mass.

May 6, 1844

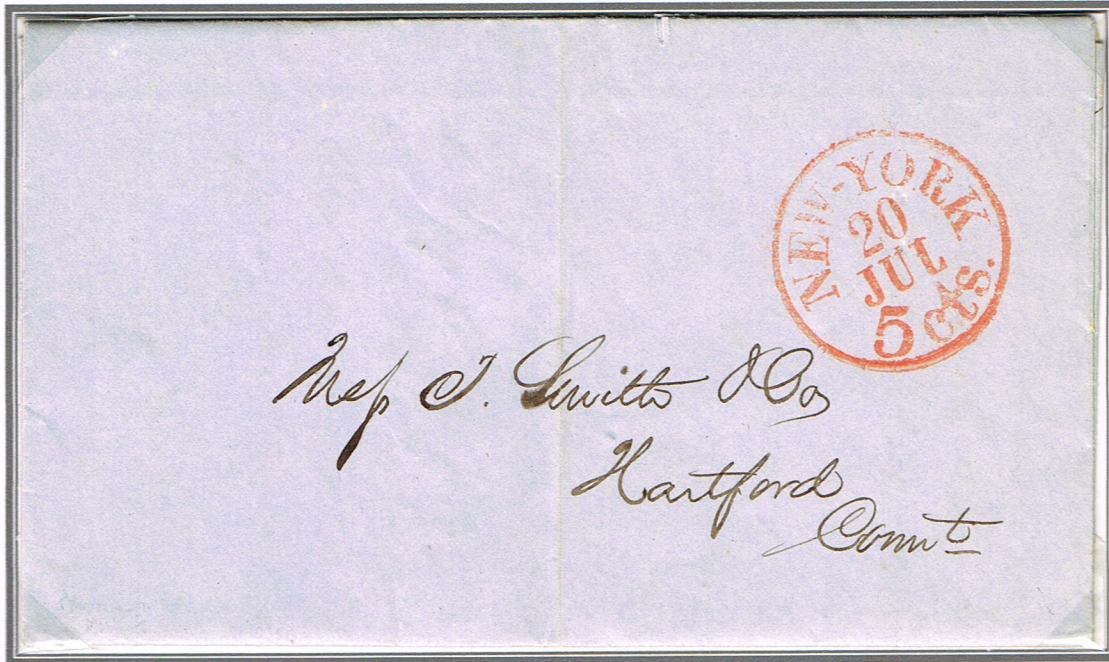
FORWARDED BY  
AMERICAN MAIL CO.

The rate for a letter sent between Boston and New York by the ALMCo. was only 6c per  $\frac{1}{2}$  oz., compared to the 18 $\frac{3}{4}$ c per sheet that would have been charged by the U.S. Post Office.

This two-line hand stamp was used at Boston only in May 1844.



Despite legal harassment by the government, the Independent Mail Companies continued to take business away from the U.S. Post Office, and created public pressure on Congress to lower postal rates. The Act of Congress, March 3, 1845 reduced and simplified postal rates to 5c per ½ oz. for a letter sent up to 300 miles, and to 10c per ½ oz. for a letter sent over 300 miles.



The 5c rate was for a 0-½ oz. letter sent up to 300 miles.

New York to Hartford, Conn.

July 20 1848



The 10c rate was for a 0-½ oz. letter sent over 300 miles.

New York to Chicago, Ill.

December 20, 1847



However, the March 1845 law did not authorize the printing, distribution or use of adhesive stamps. Britain issued the Penny Black – the world’s first postage stamp used in a public postal system - five years earlier, in May 1840, and private mail companies in the United States began using them in early 1844. The American Letter Mail Co. - with initial service between Baltimore, Philadelphia, New York and Boston, began using them in January 1844 and Hale & Co., whose service included New England, New York, Pennsylvania, Maryland and the province of New Brunswick, did so two months later. Both ALMC and Hale sold their adhesives at “20 for a dollar.” Letters without adhesives were 6¼c per ½ oz.

**Worn “Oval of Diamonds” Cancel**

A rate of 5c was for a 0-½ oz. letter sent within the ALMC network.

An oval of diamonds struck in red ink is known used (probably in New York) to cancel the first ALMC adhesive from Feb. to May 1844. Later examples appear to be quite worn.



Boston to New York, NY

May 18, 1844

The rate of 10c was for a ½-1 oz. letter sent within Hale’s network.

The 24x6mm “PAID” is known used in red from Jan. 24, 1845 to June 27, 1845.



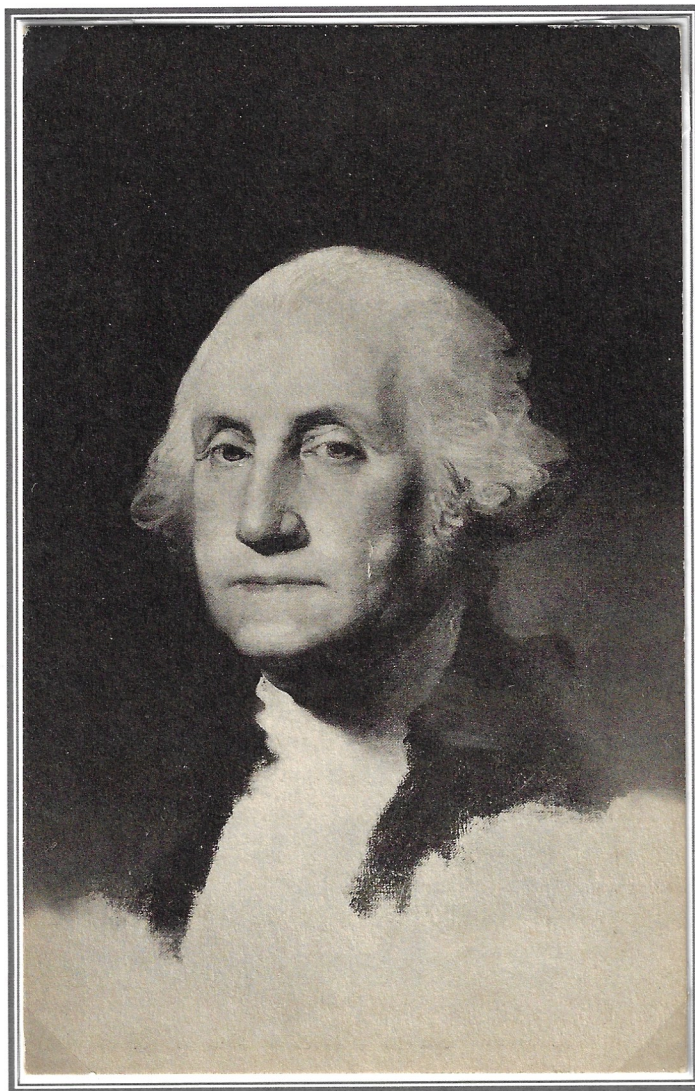
Boston to New York, NY

April 9, 1845



## Master Die for the New York Postmaster Provisional Adhesive

After three one-year terms as Mayor of New York, Robert Hunter Morris became Postmaster of that city on May 21, 1845. This was right after the new simplified rates had been approved by Congress. Because that Act of 1845 permitted postmasters to issue their own stamps, Morris and ten others decided to do just that. Morris contracted with Rawdon, Wright & Hatch to print 5c stamps with the portrait of George Washington. Rawdon, Wright & Hatch was a very prominent engraving company, and one of their stock dies used for currency was a bust of Washington taken from a painting by Gilbert Stuart in 1797.



Postcard published by  
Garrison Toy & Novelty Co., Inc.,  
Washington D.C.

## Unused \$100 Note from the Canal Bank of New Orleans Showing Use of the Master Die





## Master Design - Secondary Die

The master design for the New York Postmaster Provisional stamp was a bust of George Washington that Rawdon, Wright and Hatch had used to produce banknotes. A secondary die of the head and neck was made from the master. This essay is known on India paper, thin bond paper and thin glazed card.

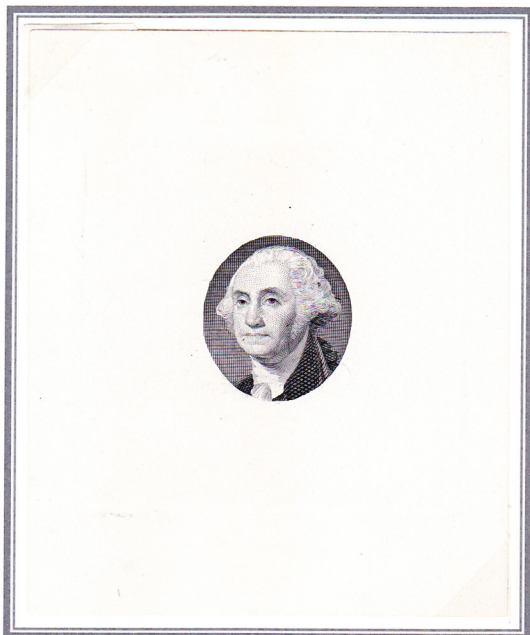
1845



**Black on India paper**  
**Affixed to 40x39mm card**  
**Scar running from lip to chin**



1890 (Last Printing)



**Black on 63x78mm Thin Glazed Card**  
**Scar and dot on chin; scratch on neck; dots in hair**

1879



**Black and Green on Bond**  
**Dot on Chin**

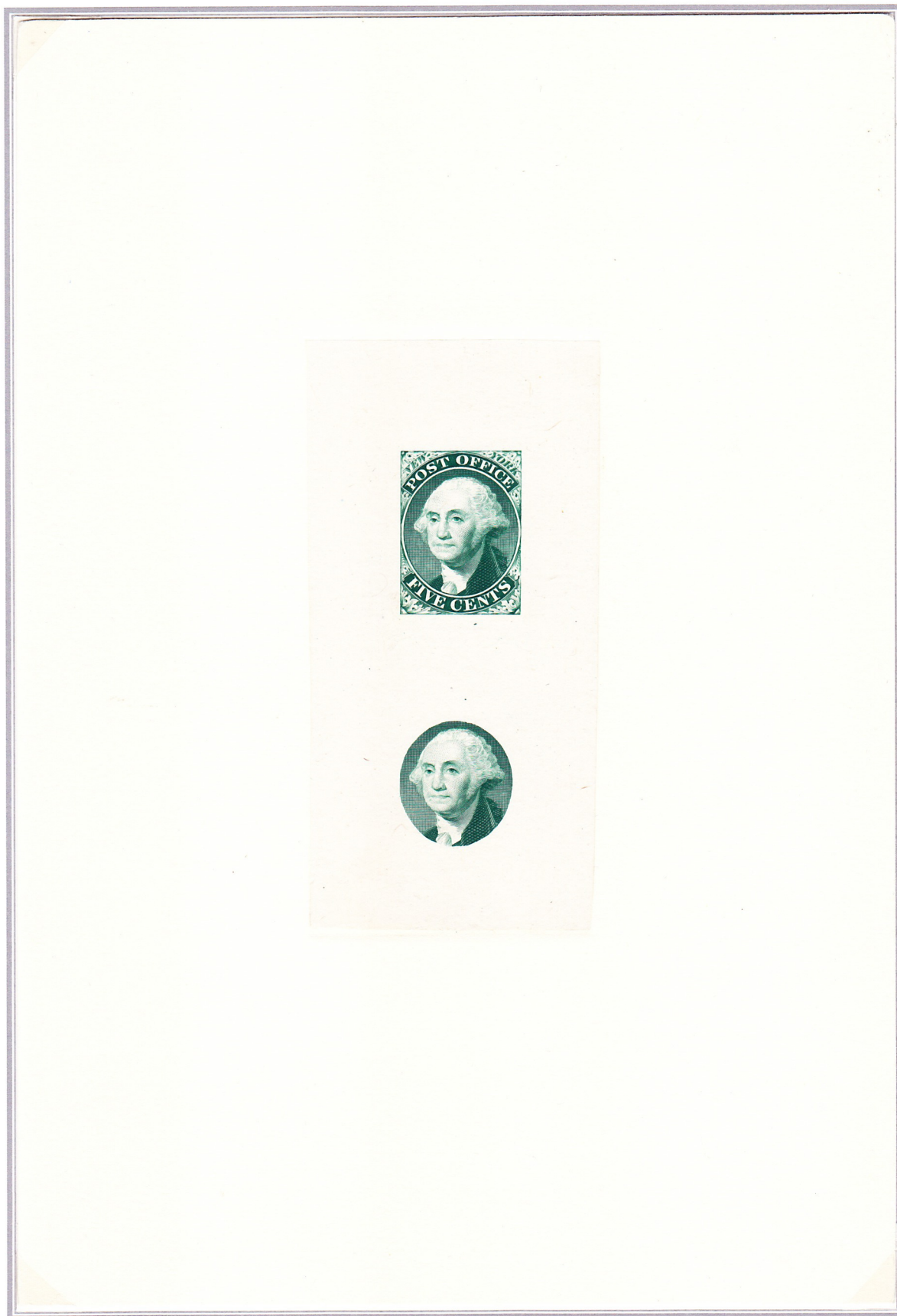


## **Large Combination Die Proofs**

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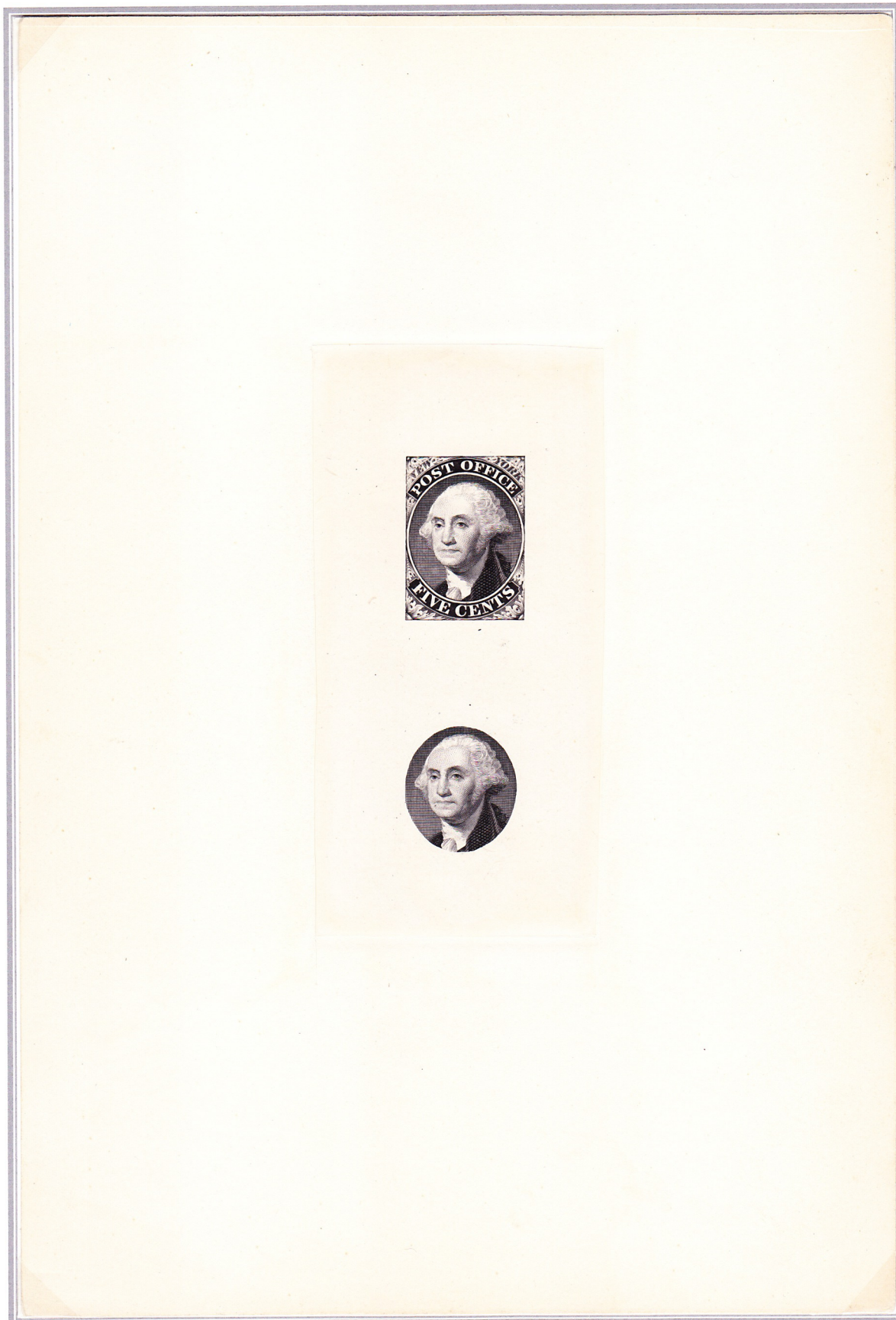
Combination large die proofs were printed on India, the top being a proof from the 1879 state of the die, showing the dot in "P" and scar on neck, and the vignette having the dot on the chin but not the scar on neck. They are known in black, dull scarlet, orange, dull green, ultramarine, dull brown and violet.

### **In Dull Green**



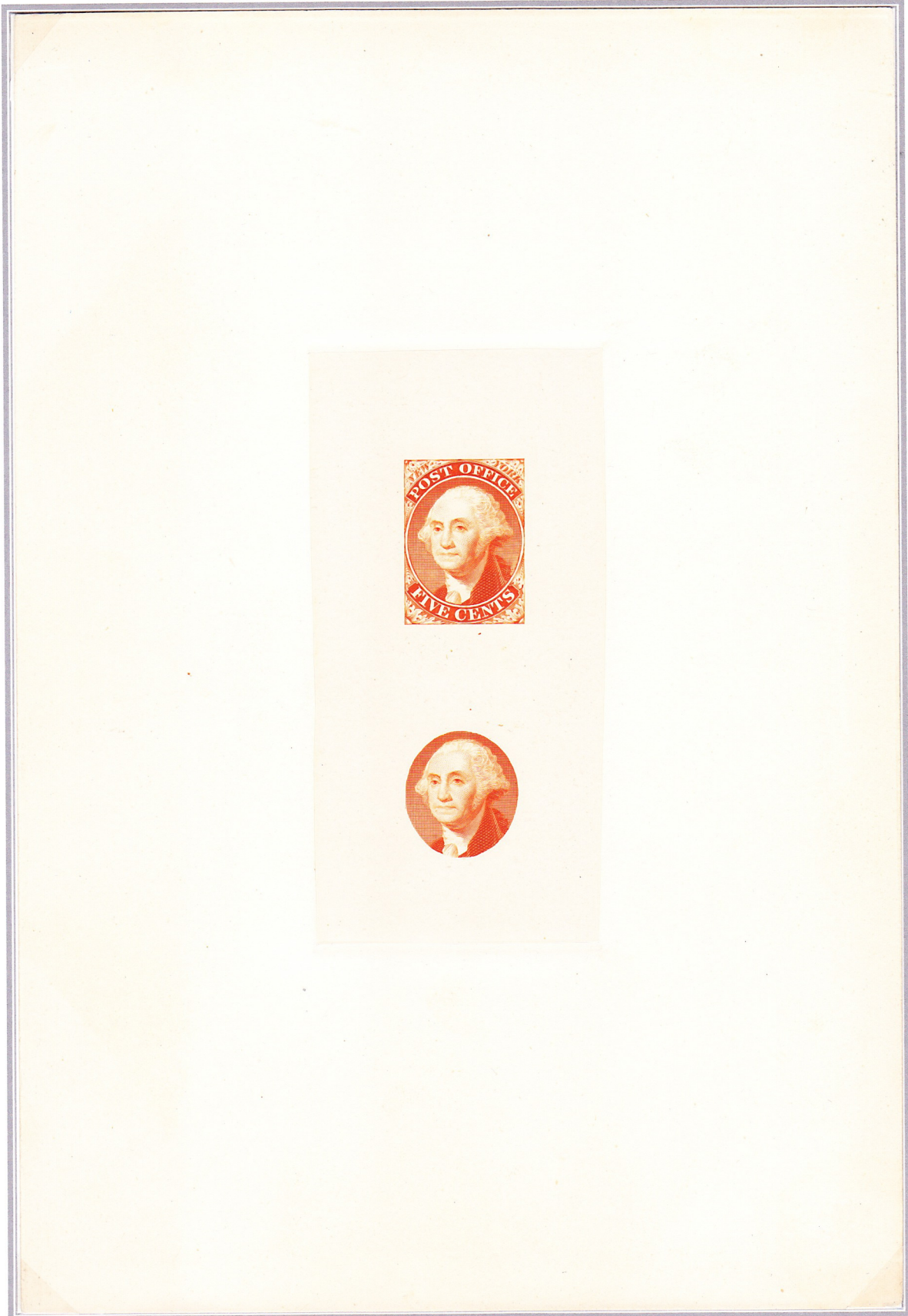


In Black



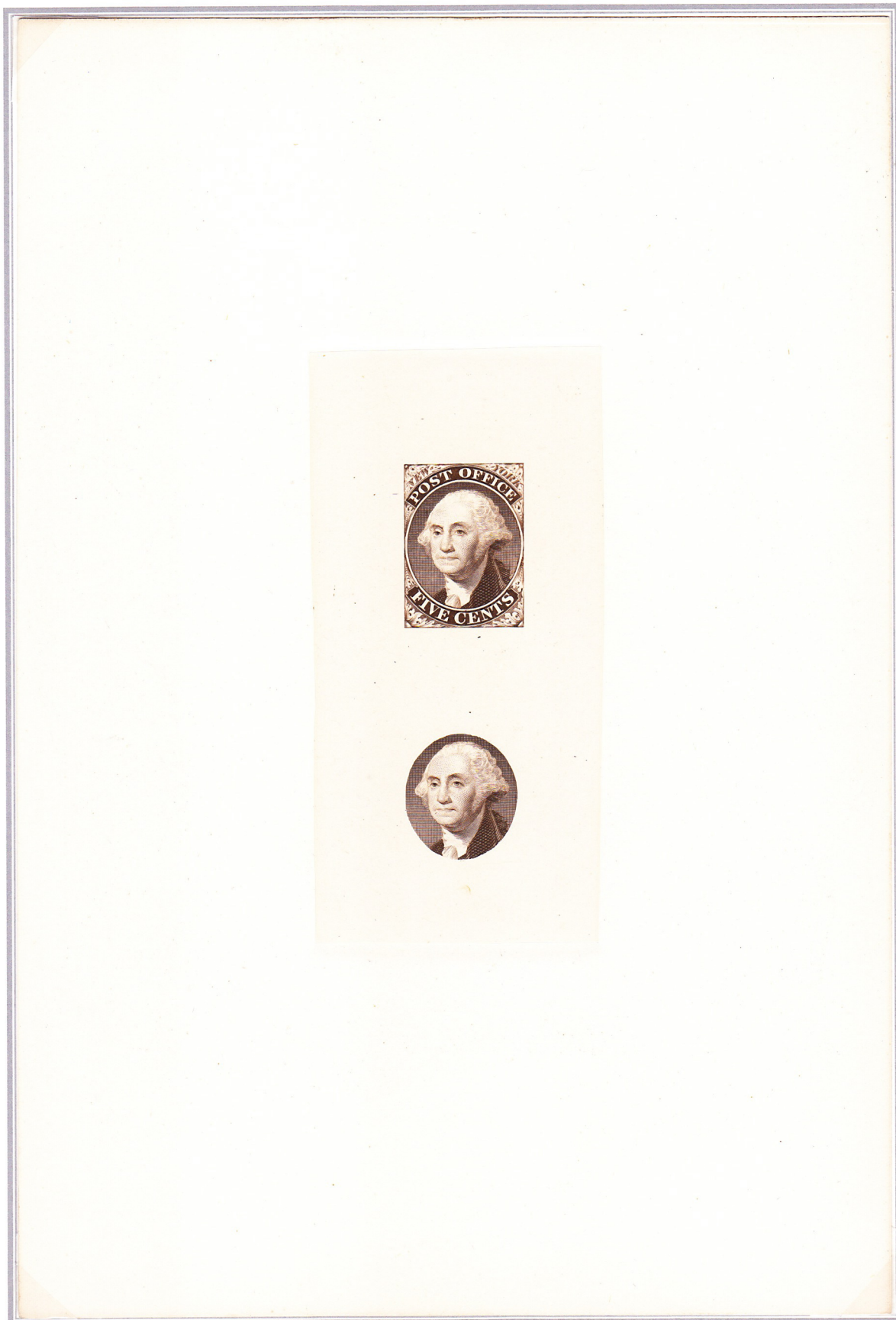


**In Orange**



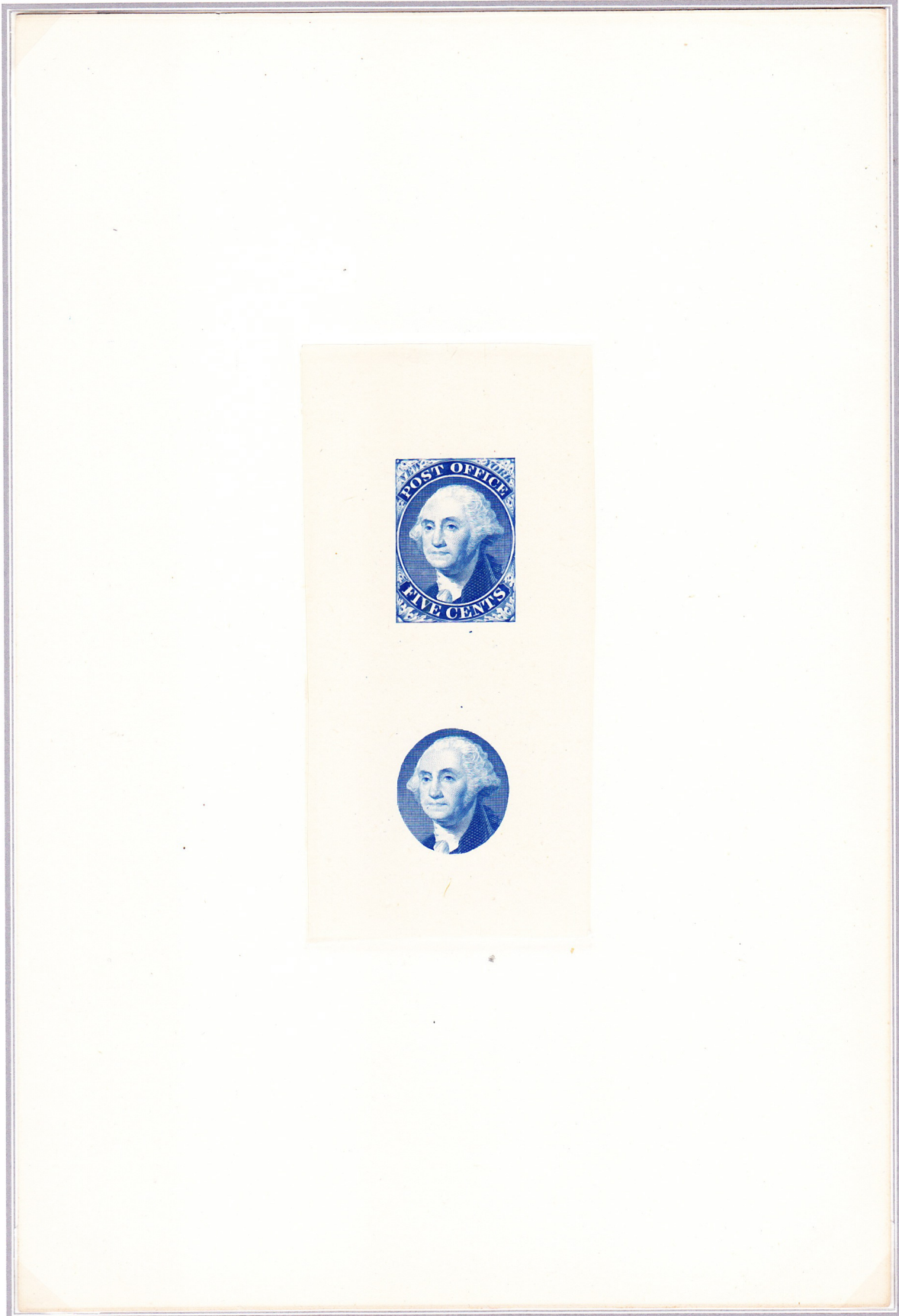


In Dull Brown



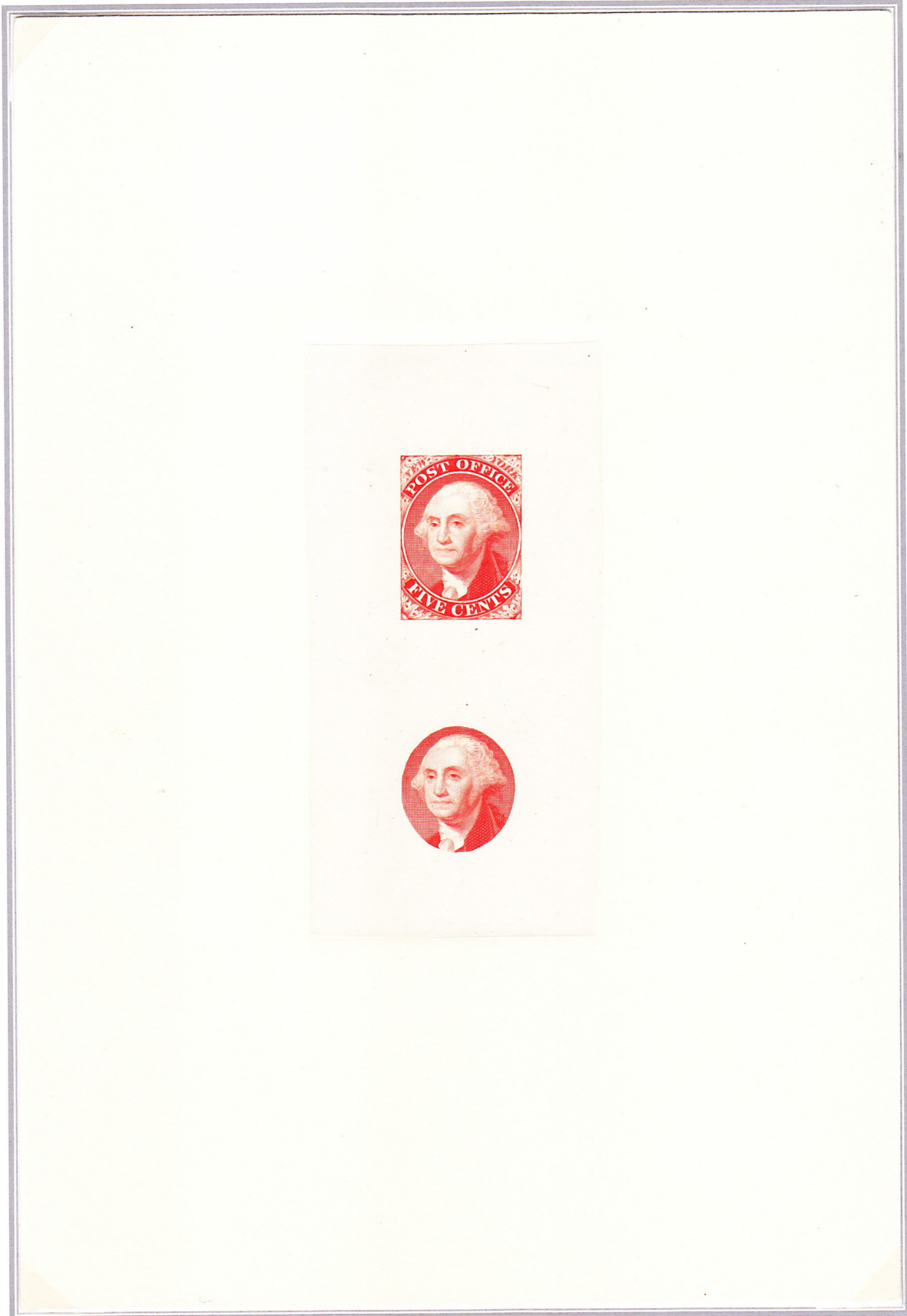


**In Ultramarine**



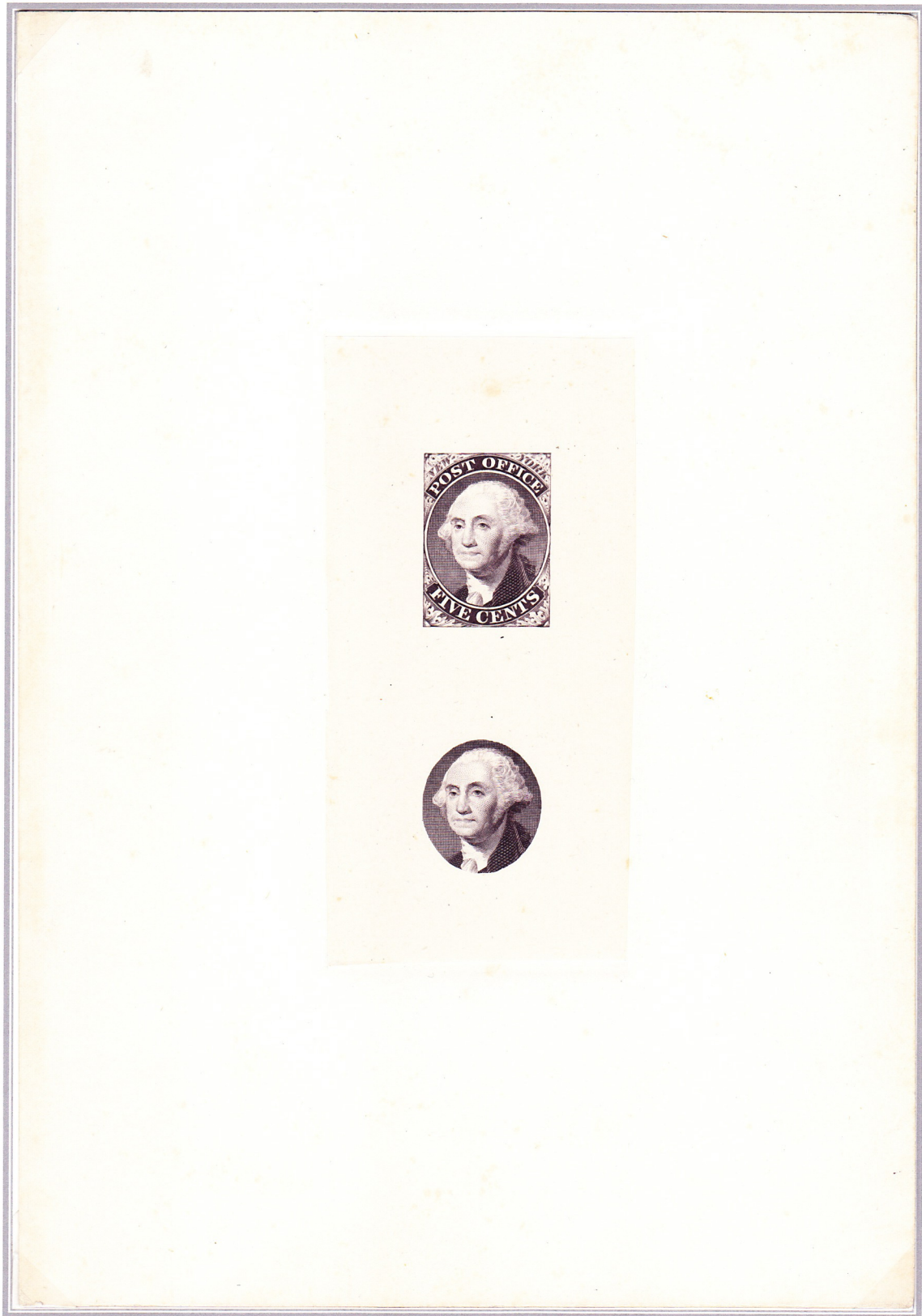


**In Dull Scarlet**





**In Violet**





Die proofs were first pulled from the original die in 1845. This was the finished design, but with incomplete shading in the forehead. The design with the completed shading was the same as used for the proof sheet of 9.

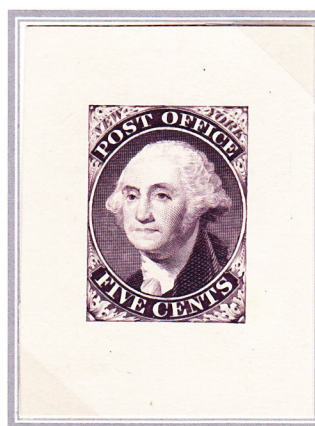
**Small Die Trial Color Proofs**

**Incomplete Shading in the Forehead  
on India paper on Card**

**Deep Blue**

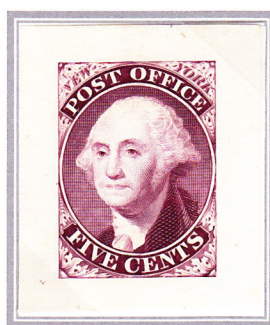


**Dull Dark Violet**



**Complete Shading in the Forehead  
on India paper**

**Deep Rose Violet**



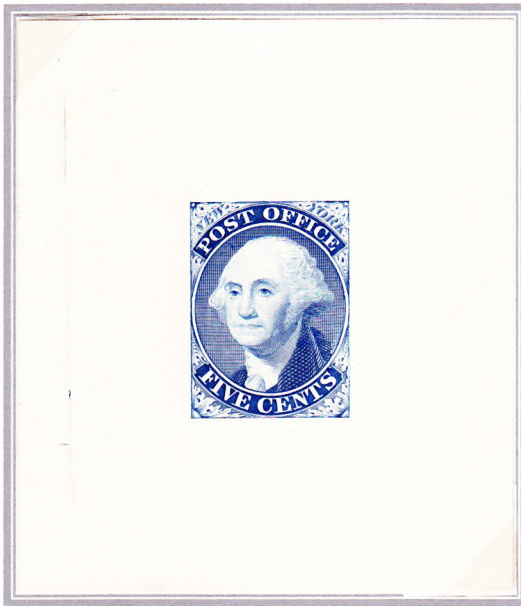


The last proof were believed to have been pulled in 1890. By this point, there was a scar (small white spot) on the neck caused by the accidental dropping of a pointed tool, and a dot of color in the "P" of "POSTAGE." On these examples, there is also a "Devil's horn" near the hair at left. This printing is known on thin glazed card, on India proof paper with large margins or cut to stamp size, and on yellowish bond paper cut to stamp size.

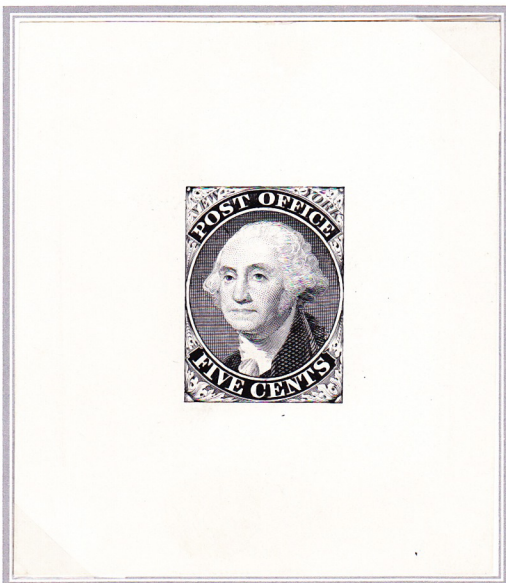
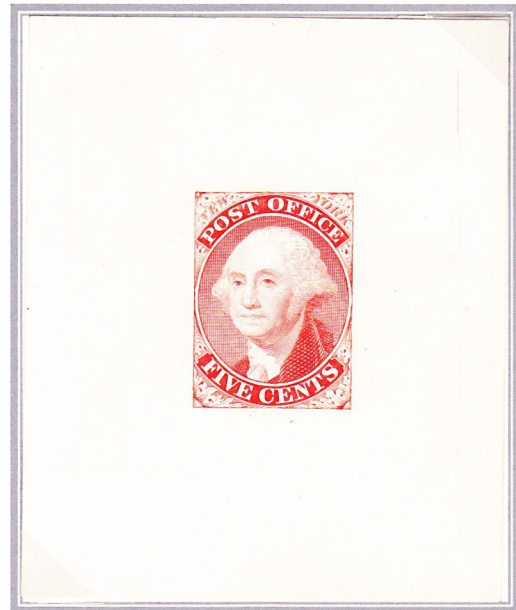
**Large Die Trial Color Proofs**

**Scar on Neck, Dot in "P" and "Devil's Horn  
On Thin Glazed Card**

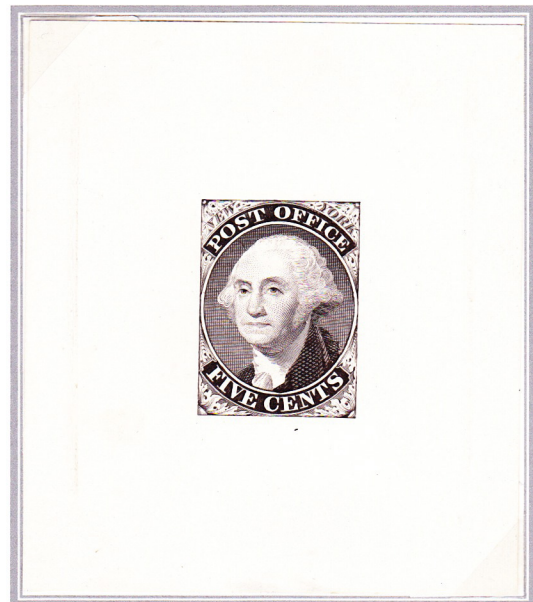
**Deep Ultramarine**



**Orange Vermilion**



**Black**



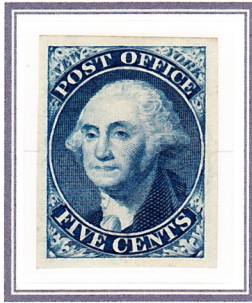
**Brown Black**



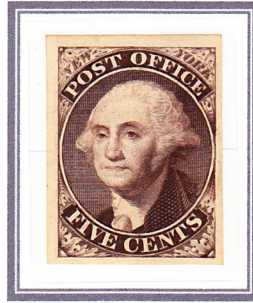
## Plate Proofs

Prior to the creation of the plate of 40 used to make the issued adhesives, a proof plate of 9 was produced. This plate was proofed in dark blue, brown, dark green and scarlet on cream colored paper and in black on blue and white bond paper. The copy below on yellow wove paper is the only one recorded.

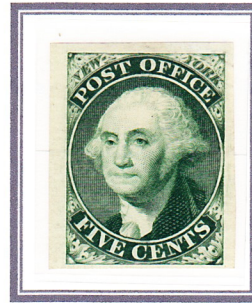
**Dark Blue**



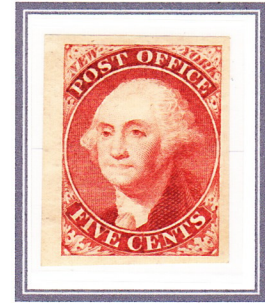
**Brown**



**Dark Green**

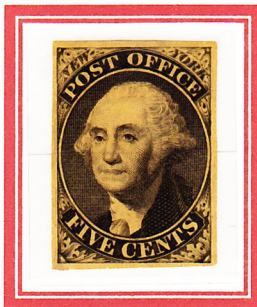


**Scarlet**



**Proof Plate of Nine - Black on Blue Bond**

**Black on Yellow  
Wove Paper**



The only recorded  
example on this paper

