

The 2¢ Stamp of the U.S. 1869 Pictorial Issue

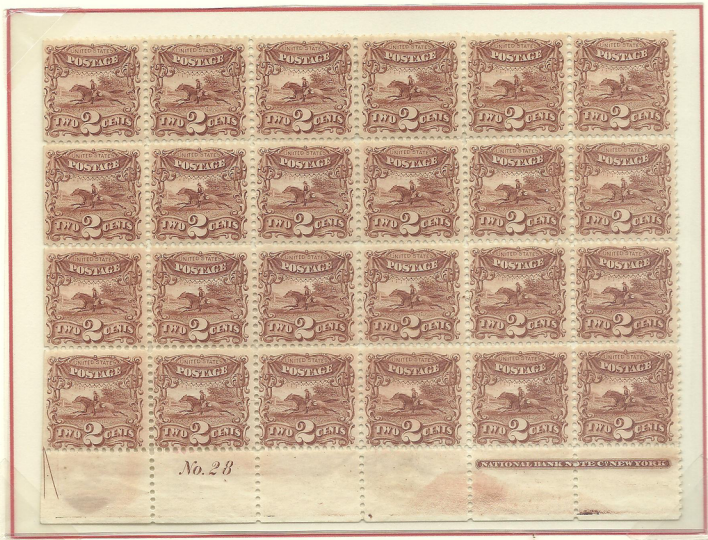
This exhibit shows development, production and uses of the 2¢ 1869 stamp, including **essays, proofs, printing varieties, cancels, plus domestic and international uses on cover**. This was the first Pictorial stamp placed into circulation, the only one with a pre-cancel, the source of most 1869 bisects, and for several years served as a key stamp across the spectrum of both U.S. domestic and international mail usage.

This stamp also has a colorful pre-production history. National Bank Note Company, as part of its bid for the

1869 contract, created an array of 2¢ die and plate essays, large and small proofs, and sample sheets in multiple colors (exhibit sections 1 & 2).

The issued stamp features a range of printing varieties, including color shades, mis-perforations, ink and grill anomalies. Representative examples appear in section 3, followed by an in-depth display of cancels in section 4.

Sections 5 & 6 demonstrate that the 2¢ Pictorial enjoyed a wide range of both domestic and international usage — arguably the broadest of any stamp in the 1869 Pictorials..



One of best centered of six recorded full plate blocks

Exhibit Plan	
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	7. Late Uses
	7.1 Proofs
	7.2 Stamps

■ Indicates original research by exhibitor

Special Pieces have a red border

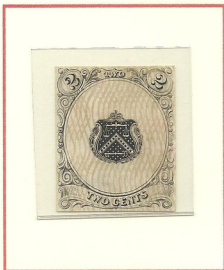
Census data is noted in **bold**

(e) = item expertised

Two leading competitors for the 1869 stamp contract were private security printer George Jones and the National Bank Note Company. Each developed proposed stamp designs in the form of engraved die essays on India paper.

For the 2¢ denomination, both competitors departed from 20 years of U.S. postage tradition and chose designs other than images of American statesmen.

George Jones Essay

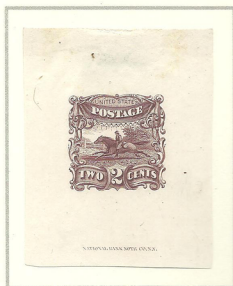


Black with wavy, red-violet safety overprint

Fewer than 10 recorded examples of 2¢ Jones essays, including two with multiple colors. This **bi-color format** with U.S. Treasury seal is **recent discovery, not yet listed in any catalog.**

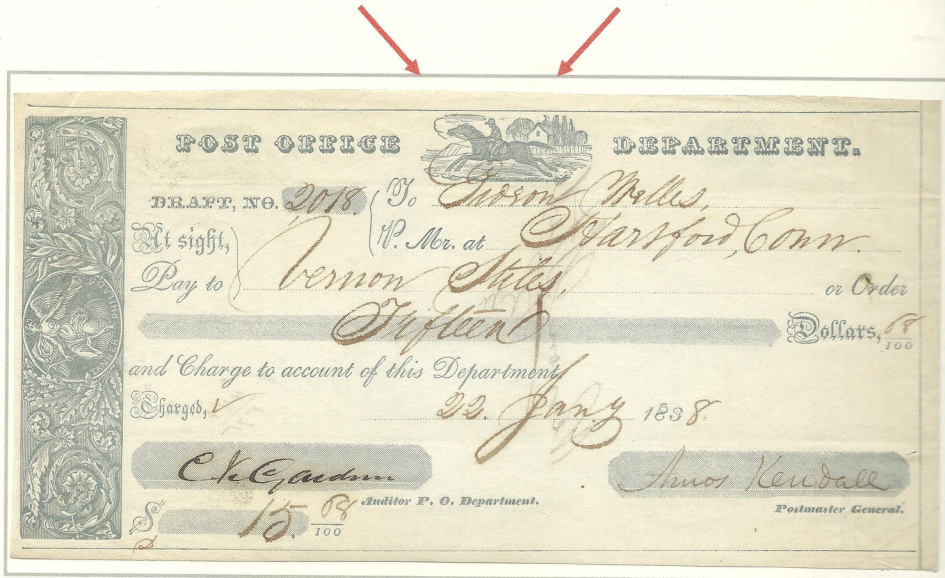
National Bank Note Co. Essay

As part of its winning bid for 1869 postal issue, National Bank Note Company developed a series of "pictorial" images for the stamps. The 2¢ denomination drew its inspiration from a well-known symbol of postal service before the machine age — the fleet post-rider rushing to complete his rounds.



Dark Brown

Inspiration for the 2¢ NBC Co. design may have come from the logo on early Post Office Department checks. More than 30 years before the 1869 issue, the image of a galloping post-rider was already an iconic symbol of the U.S. postal system.



Official 1838 P.O.D. check signed by Amos Kendall, Postmaster General under President Andrew Jackson

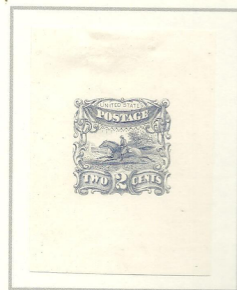
2¢ Die Essays on India paper



Scarlet



Dark Green



Dusky Blue

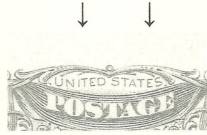
All essays prepared by the National Bank Note Company feature a small number "2". At Post Office direction, the issued stamp has a much larger numeral.

Some early NBN Co. die essays also have incomplete vertical shading within the top tablet containing "UNITED STATES."



Orange Red

Incomplete vertical shading around "UNITED STATES"



India paper, die sunk on card



Yellow

Complete vertical shading



India paper, die sunk on card, in issued brown color. This die was used to make a transfer roll that produced plate proofs for further evaluation.

Trial Colors

During competition for the 1869 stamp contract, the National Bank Note Company produced a few sample sheets of 150 stamps in various trial colors for the 2¢ denomination. These sheets were printed on stamp paper, gummed, grilled and perforated — simulating actual production sheets. Their purpose was to convince the Post Office Department that NBN Co. had the technical expertise to deal with all production aspects of the new issue.

These "sample" sheets had margin imprints for the National Bank Note Company at top and bottom, but plate numbers could not be assigned to these unapproved designs. Only one or two sets (top and bottom) of these NBN Co. imprint blocks are known today for each of the trial colors.



Green



Blue



Yellow



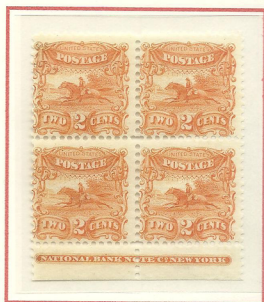
Violet



Rose



Double grill error: One of the NBC plate essay sheets in the orange color mistakenly received a double grill. Below are the **unique inscription blocks from this error**



Orange



Trial Color



Black-Brown

As the National Bank Note Company moved forward in preparing 2¢ brown essays on gummed, perforated stamp paper, it also created some grill varieties. Since NBN Co. knew that successful application of grills was an expected contract feature, it is likely that these variations were accidents arising from experiments with grill production.

Issued Color



Without Grill



With Grill



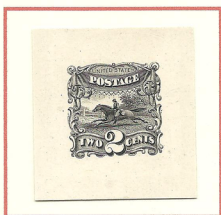
Double Grill



Without and With Grill



Large Die Proof, inscribed "NATIONAL BANK NOTE CO. N.Y." Fewer than 10 full-size examples known.



Only printed in black color for the 2¢ denomination. **Only two are known.**

2.3 Plate Proofs



“Hybrid” proofs are India paper plate proofs cut to shape from a sheet, mounted and pressed onto a large card to resemble large die proofs.

The 1869 stamp contract did not provide payment for proofs. When a large number of proofs was officially requested, usually for presentation purposes, the National Bank Note Company sometimes filled the order with such “hybrids.”

India Paper Proofs

Production of India paper plate proofs in sheet format is one of the final steps before a plate is sent to press for printing stamps. The ink used is generally the approved color, allowing for slight variations in batch mixing. The color shades shown on this page are similar to variations found in the printed stamp, illustrating that India proofs were pulled at different times, perhaps as NBN Co. sought to refine the final shade.



Used with 1870's
New York City
duplex cancel (e)



Margin Imprint Block



Laid Paper
(unrecorded)



Dark brown



Red brown

Card Plate Proofs

The National Bank Note Company did not create proofs on cardboard as it prepared to print the 1869 issue. Card proofs began to appear a decade later, printed from original plates in at least five waves between 1879 and 1894 at the request of the Post Office Department.

Most of these card proofs were cut apart and distributed as favors by the POD and Congressmen. All were produced in approximately the same colors as the issued stamps, but shade variations exist. Some experts claim to be able to distinguish the five printings by color shade and thickness of the card stock; but others assert that such distinctions are not reliable to assign individual card proofs to a particular printing.



Deep brown



Brown



Red brown



Yellow brown

2.4 "Specimen" Proofs

During the 1870s and 1880s, the U.S. Post Office Department sometimes provided examples of U.S. stamps to foreign post office departments, in the form of card proofs from available stocks.

Current research suggests that some foreign authorities may have overprinted these U.S. proofs with the word "SPECIMEN" in various formats. To date, only four overprint types are known, and no more than one example exists of each type for any 19th Century proof. Thus, at present, for the 2¢ Pictorial there are only four known SPECIMEN proofs, each with a different type of overprint.

National origin of
overprint unknownOverprint attributed to
Bechuanaland

Two of four known 2c Pictorial card proofs with Specimen overprints.

Issued Stamp

3.1 Color Shades

The 2¢ Pictorial stamp was produced in a variety of brown shades, with only dark brown being somewhat scarcer. No information is available to assign any shade to a particular printing, and no color errors or experimental printings are known.



Dark brown



Deep brown



Brown



Red brown



Light red brown

3.2 Grills

In 1869, the Post Office still used grills impressed on the back of stamps to break the paper fibers and soak up cancellation ink, thereby discouraging the reuse of stamps. Since the 1869 stamps were smaller in size than previous issues, the size of their grills was also reduced.

Application of the grill required a separate, hand-fed pass of the printed sheet through an embossing machine, resulting in occasional variations in grill placement due to misalignment and other production mistakes, such as double grills or no grill.



Split grill



Double grill, one split



Quadruple split grill
(about three examples known)



(Obverse, copies reduced)



End roller grill in selvage



No grill (e)

The 2¢ stamp is notorious for misaligned perforations, due to lack of quality control during the perforation process. This created an occasional stamp with "jumbo" margins, as well as many poorly centered ones.



Large-margined examples



Misperforated vertically and horizontally



Misperforated horizontally

Fewer than 15 blocks of nine or larger are known, most of them with perforations cutting into the design.



Pre-print paper creases



Inking flaw

Plate Numbers

The 2¢ stamp was printed in sheets of 300, cut vertically into 150-stamp panes (10 x 15). Six plate numbers were used: 3-6, 27-28. Plate numbers appear at the top and bottom of each pane, two stamps out from the sheet centerline between panes.



Due to misalignment of perforations, it is possible to find stamps that "capture" a plate number, as shown above and below.



Plate No. 27 (top) and No. 28 (bottom)

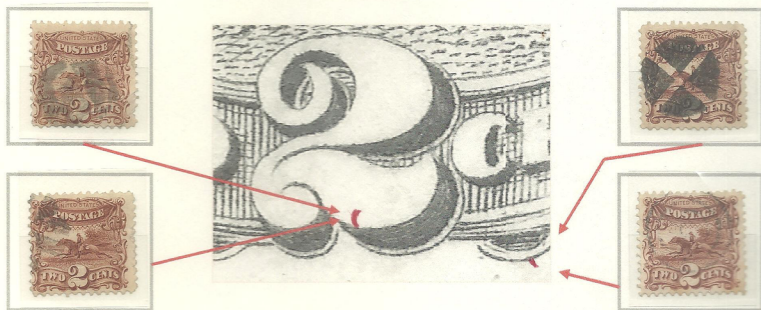
Position Arrows

Guide arrows at top and bottom helped postal clerks when separating the panes.

Arrows were also positioned at the left side of the left pane and right side of the right pane.



Recurrent Plate Flaws



A few stamps show similar, minor flaws in the design. Thus far, these cannot be attributed to a particular position or plate number. ■

Plate Inscriptions

Each pane of 150 stamps had two plate inscriptions identifying the production company. Inscriptions appeared at top and bottom of the pane in the selvage and stretch the width of two stamps. Inscription "captures" are also known, similar to plate number captures.



Captured inscriptions: **NATIONAL BANK NOTE CO. NEW YORK**

