

Yesterday in Mekeel's: The United States One Cent 1861 Issue, Part II

by E. Tudor Gross (From Mekeel's Weekly, April 21, 1941, with images added)

(As noted last month, this is a rather lengthy article, so I am breaking it up over a series of USSN issues and trimming out less relevant sections. It is one man's approach to collecting one specific issue and can be emulated for this or any number of less expensive and/or more recent issues. JFD.)

Design

Naturally, the first thing that attracts us to any stamp is its design. If this does not appeal, many of us pass it up and look for one that does. In the case of the stamp we are considering, I feel we may safely say that it ranks as one of the finest of all U.S. emissions. The question then arises as to who was the artist that designed this stamp. Was it copied from an engraving, or was it the result of a combination of engraving and photographic work? I feel the latter is the truth.

In the October, 1928, issue of the *American Philatelist*, I presented a paper which attempted to answer this question. To incorporate this article in this study of the 1¢ stamp would be superfluous, and a reference to it will suffice to tell the story. As I am, however, attempting to write an account of a certain stamp, a brief resume of this article may not be inappropriate at the present time.

Luff's book says "the portrait is probably intended as a copy from Rubricht". Note that this says "the portrait" and not "the design" of the stamp. After nearly two years of searching, I failed to find an etching or drawing which might have served as the original from which the stamp was made, nor could I find any reference to an artist by the name of Rubricht.

A study of the stamp reveals that the central portion, showing the head of Franklin, was undoubtedly taken from a bust and not from a painting or etching. The quest for the original of this bust was fascinating, and only thru the cooperation of Mr. George Simpson Eddy of New York was I able to reach the final solution. Mr. Eddy, an outstanding authority on Franklin matters, wrote me that the stamp resembled the profile of the bust by Jean Antoine Houdon, in marble, in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City. I, therefore, procured a profile view of the left side of this bust and found it tied up absolutely with the stamp I was studying.

The only other original, of this size, was a plaster bust in the American Academy of Arts and Sciences in Boston, but thru measurements which I made of the stamp design and this plaster bust, the answer was conclusive. The New York, and not the Boston, bust was the "model" for the 1¢, 1861 stamp, and Houdon, not Rubricht, was the artist, or rather the sculptor.

How the name Rubricht ever became associated with this bust, I do not know, but a man by the name of Gobrecht was an engraver and die-sinker at the Philadelphia Mint. He died in 1844, but was not a sculptor and therefore could not have made the bust which appears on the 1¢ 1861 stamp. In justice to Mr. Luff, I should say that his statement about Rubricht was taken from the official government description and, therefore, was not put out on his own authority. For those who are interested, I would state that the Houdon bust, which for years occupied an obscure position in the Metropolitan Museum, is now prominently placed at the entrance to the American Wing. Such is fame!

Who made the frame design which surrounds the bust of Franklin, I have not been able to learn. I believe it was an engraver employed in New York by the National Bank Note Company, and that the central portion was copied from a wet-plate photograph of the Houdon bust, which was, of course, easily available in the New York Museum.

Supplemental Information

I present here an article from Baker's U.S. Classics the September 26, 1964 *STAMPS Magazine* and reproduced with

images added in our November 2015 USSN.

The article in a June issue of *Life*, illustrating busts by Jean Antoine Houdon, reminded me of the almost 100 letters E. Tudor Gross wrote in his successful research to find the source of the profiles used on the 1ct U. S. stamps. The research disclosed that the 1¢ and 30¢ 1861, the 1¢ 1869, and the 1¢ 1870-79, including the departmentals, and 1¢ 1882 were all engraved from busts by Houdon.



The source of the 5¢ design, a portrait ascribed to Joseph S. Duplessis, which was considered by Baker to be the work of Longacre.



The 5¢ 1847 and the 1¢ 1902 were from paintings, not busts, while all others are from busts by, or copied from Caffieri. The 5¢ 1847 portrait of Franklin is attributed to James B. Longacre, E. Tudor Gross, said in an April 1934 letter to Harold E. Gillingham, of Philadelphia: "I believe the correct way to describe

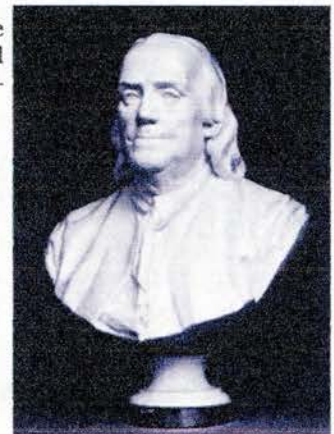
the 5¢ 1847 stamp is by saying that it was from a painting of John (now known to be James) B. Longacre after a portrait by Duplessis...I feel the copyist is not the one to be given the credit so much as the artist who was responsible for the original from which the copy was made."

From a September 1933 letter: "There is no question but that the bust for the 1ct 1861 stamp was by Houdon and the bust for the 1¢ stamp of 1851 was by Caffieri."

A letter to Stanley B. Ashbrook in December 1936 remarked: "While I feel certain that the 1¢ stamp of 1851 was copied from the Philadelphia bust, you will note by comparing it with the stamp that the ear does not show on the stamp. This may be due to liberties taken by the engraver.

"There are two types of Franklin busts—one of the Houdon type and the other of Caffieri type. It is very obvious that the Houdon bust does not, in any way, resemble the Caffieri bust and the stamp of 1851 can only have been made from the Caffieri type of bust.

"In the case of the 1¢ 1861, the stamp was engraved by the National Banknote Company whose head-



quarters were in New York. They, consequently, were in the same city where the Houdon bust was located and, therefore, it is presumed could make these illustrations from this bust very easily. In the case of this stamp (1¢ 1851), it was engraved by Top-



pan, Carpenter, Casilear & Company whose main office, so far as I know, was in Philadelphia. They had easy access to the bust by Caffieri at the Philadelphia Society."



Back to the Tudor Gross Article:

Forming A Collection

To one attempting to get together a representative showing of the 1¢ 1861, there are seven divisions that should be considered, to wit:—

- A. Proofs and Essays.
- B. Unused, including Shades.
- C. Cancellations.
- D. Covers, including Carriers.
- E. Grills, and Reissues.
- F. Plate Varieties.
- G. Paper Varieties.

I realize fully that collectors, even specialists, have their own peculiarities. Some want only covers, and anything off cover does not appeal to them. Others seek only unused copies, and even the rarest cancellation on their favorite stamp is passed up. In my own case, cancelled copies interest me far more than those that are unused. I am not, however, unmindful of the fact that if one desires to specialize, and wishes to make a comprehensive showing, he must not overlook all [any] phases of the subject. So, in forming my collection, I have tried to cover the seven divisions above noted, realizing that each one, by itself, affords an opportunity for special study.

Let us consider these divisions in the order named.

A. Proofs and Essays

In this field, I am fully aware that I am far from being an authority, and that my holdings are very limited. However, for the benefit of the less informed, it may not be out of place to say a few words. (For more complete information, see writings of Clarence W. Brazer.)

When the new issue was decided upon, the National Bank Note Company was asked to submit designs for consideration by the Post Office Department. This was done and numerous designs were presented. These were termed "essays" or "tryouts", and finally one was selected for each stamp of the series as the approved subject. From these approved designs dies were made and printings submitted to the government in the form of "proofs". Even the color scheme on the accepted stamps was tried out, with the result that we find proofs of the finished design in various colors and on different kinds of paper (next column).

While these proofs were never intended to be available for distribution to the public, the facts are that they were printed in fairly large numbers and ultimately, thru government channels, reached the hands of dealers, and so, of course, collectors. Some



1¢ Blue, Large Die Proof on India (63P1). Die sunk on 68 x 67mm card with full die sinkage, albino die no. 440 and black imprint at bottom



1¢ olive green Trial Color Plate Proof, perforated and gummed (Sc. 63TC) in a bottom imprint and plate number strip.

were printed imperforate, some perforate, and some were even put out "with coupon attached", a scheme never adopted by the Post Office Department. This latter idea was conceived by a visionary who thought that, to save time in canceling, the stamps could be put out with a label affixed to the top of each stamp. The label read "stamp of no value without coupon—coupon to be removed only by the postmaster". When the stamp was applied to an envelope, with the coupon intact (there was no gum on the coupon), the coupon would be cut off, as a receipt for postage paid, and the stamp could then be passed thru the mails without the necessity of cancellation. This was, of course, a cumbersome idea, required a lot of bookkeeping, and was too impractical ever to meet with government or public approval. It is only fair to say that these "proofs with coupons" are not common and are prized not only by proof collectors, but by those who specialize in the 1¢ 1861 stamp. [See page 34 for a reprint of an article on this subject from the June 2016 USSN.]

In this connection, I cannot refrain from mentioning a matter which may seem outside of our study. I refer to "encased postage". During the Civil War, small coins became scarce, and were hoarded, just as gold was hoarded after 1929. To meet the emergency, a number of business concerns conceived the idea of using unused United States stamps, in metal frames and protected by mica glass, as substitutes for this type of currency. As might be expected, they used the back of these disks for advertising their "wares", and so we find such names as Ayer's Sarsaparilla, No. American Life Insurance Company, and others sponsoring these emergency projects. While, in a sense, these interesting oddities may more properly be classed in the field of numismatics, they nevertheless constitute a side line of philately, and should be included in a specialized collection of the 1861 issue. Thirty-four different concerns issued "encased postage" and a complete collection of the 1¢ stamp, used in this manner in their original frames, would be very difficult to get together. Some are so scarce that they are not even priced in Scott's Catalogue. [In the 2020 Specialized, all but one of the 1¢ 'micas' are priced, ranging from \$450 to \$25,000.]



Sc. EP1, the Aerated Bread Co. Encased Postage with the 1863 1¢

"Emergency script" was used at the same time by certain mercantile houses as a substitute for small change. (Not to be confused with postage currency.) Oblong strips of paper were printed, bearing the name of the concern putting them out, and 1¢ or 3c unused stamps were stuck on the sides. These were given in change and were redeemable for a like amount by the company issuing them. On our front cover we reproduce a William Newton & Co., Newport R.I., 5¢ "Script" Precursor Fractional Currency with two 1¢ Blue (Sc. 63) and one 3¢ Rose (Sc. 65), with trimmed perfs as found on each of the few known examples, printed dateline "Newport, July 4, 1862".

Baker's U.S. Classics:

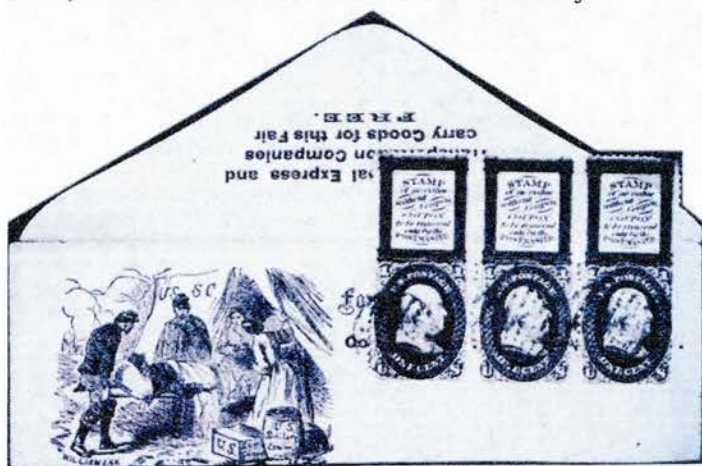
The One-Cent 1865 Coupon Essay

(From STAMPS Magazine, Feb. 6, 1965-Aug. 12, 1967, with images added)

February 6, 1965

The late Clarence Brazer listed four premiere gravure essays produced by the National Bank Note Company for the 1¢ design in 1861. Later they produced essays for a Mr. C. W. Bowsby to demonstrate his patent, issued December 26, 1865. The purpose of the patent was to eliminate the necessity of canceling the stamp by the removal at the Post Office of a coupon attached to the top of the stamp. These essays were printed in red or blue on white paper with and without grills. Some were perforated all around and between stamp and coupon, some were not perforated between stamp and coupon, while others were rouletted between stamp and coupon and were gummed.

These Bowsby essays were never accepted and ordered issued for postal use. The accompanying illustration may show the only use of these coupon essays in the regular mails. This strip of three was applied to a U.S. Sanitary Commission Fair cover, the bottom half of which has been cut away.



Since the coupon instructs the postmaster to remove it, or cut it off, why was the coupon not removed? First, the coupon was not perforated at the stamp. Second, and most probably, the essays were applied with the top of the stamp about a quarter of an inch below the top edge of the envelope and the balance of the coupon folded over the top and sealed. This illustrates perfectly the impracticality of the idea. How could the postmaster remove the coupons so applied?

Have you seen a use of these essays as postage or do you have an example of this one in your collection?

This patent was but one of many ideas developed in this period to prevent the reuse of the stamp. Other ideas included grills, patent cancels which cut the stamp, envelopes designed to tear the stamp or a small webbing when the contents were removed.

January 8, 1966

A letter from Falk Finkelburg [an expert on Essays] concerning our column under the above title, February 6, 1965, offers some comments and criticism. The column concerned the 1861 one-cent essays with coupon attached, patented by

C.W. Bowsby, erroneously spelled "Bowsby." Mr. Finkelburg's comments follow:

"Not having seen the item in question, it is rather difficult, if not impossible, to assay the genuineness of the cancellation or usage. The fact that the bottom half of the cover is cut away leaves some suspicion in my mind as to its originality.

"In the thirty years that I have been collecting and studying U.S. Essays, I have not seen this item cancelled on or off cover, nor had the late Dr. Clarence Brazer, our foremost student of this most interesting phase of philately, ever mentioned that he had seen or heard of the existence of such item cancelled.

"In the period between 1861 and 1880, the Post Office Department authorized the National Bank Note Co. and later, to some extent, the Continental Bank Note Co. and the American Bank Note Co. to experiment with many patents submitted by ingenious inventors. These companies even went to the extent of producing die and plate essays. These essays never went beyond the stage of experimentation. In my collection there are a number of essays on piece with trial cancellations, but these were made for experimental purposes only. None of these were ever sold over the counter to the public for commercial use, except for the "Grill" which was adopted.

May 7, 1966

1¢ Essay 1861 Strip of Three

The item referred to is pictured and discussed in our columns of 6 February 1965, and 8 January 1966. C. W. "Bert" Christian of La Habra, California, a collector interested in proofs and essays of the 1861 issue, writes that he bid on the item in the 5 November 1953 sale of Bruce Daniels. The catalog estimate was \$35.00, his bid was \$50.00, and it sold for \$235.00. After the sale it was reported to him as only a front.

Actually from the way the item was pictured and described in the catalog no one could tell that it was only the top half-front and back-of an envelope.

Mr. Christian comments, "I have always thought of this kind of usage as experimental and in view of the strip apparently being attached to such a small piece, it is all the more convincing."

Those desiring a better look at the piece discussed should refer to the Robert A. Siegel auction catalog for 8 March 1966 sale, lot 557, described as "1¢ Blue Coupon Essay (Brazer 63E-Bj) Horizontal strip of 3 tied by grids on top portion of illustrated Metropolitan Fair for U.S. Sanitary Commission envelope showing wounded soldier being carried into Field Hospital." Estimated from \$50 to \$75. Actual sale price \$150.00, probably because of the U.S. Sanitary Commission envelope.

August 12, 1967

Patent "Improvement"

Guest Editor, C. W. "Bert" Christian

Improvement in Postage and Revenue stamps was the essence of many of the letters patent granted through the

1864-1868 period to persons intent upon increasing the effectiveness of the postage stamp. Many and varied were the experiments of this, one of the most interesting being the results of Patent #51782 issued to G. W. Bowsby in 1865.

The coupon essay was but one of many efforts to prevent the re-use of postage stamps, and the National Bank Note Co. spared very little in developing the experiment. The "Coupon" was added to the existing design of the 1861 one cent value and a new die made. A study of the various die printings reveals no significant differences and it is probable the original Second Design transfer roll was utilized in producing the new die.

Die-sunk essays on India paper were printed in many colors. In this form eleven varieties are recorded and additional impressions on white card with glazed surface, called "ivory," are known in black, lilac, and blue. Fourteen different die-essays seem more than ample for a patent experiment but this policy of wide variety was maintained by the National Bank Note Co. in several of the patent printings and in submitting their bids for contract.

A plate was made, and in this form nine varieties are known, these being printed in red and in blue. Collectors are probably more familiar with the varieties that are perforated between or rouletted between the stamp and the coupon or the one that is partially imperforate. A little known essay in red and completely imperforate is printed on tissue paper.

The most interesting plate-essay, and an exceedingly scarce one, is printed on stamp paper, in red, imperforate and with full gum extending over both the stamp and the coupon. In addition the "C" grill (16 x 19 points) has been impressed so that half falls on the stamp and half on the coupon. The grill poses a question: from a Patent granted in 1865 for an experiment that was never accepted for use why was a sheet printed as late as 1867 to receive a grill? The grills on issued stamps first began to appear in August 1867, nearly two years after the Bowsby Patent.

Pairs from the plate printings are occasionally available, as well as numerous singles, but in multiple pieces the writer has not recorded any larger than the block pictured.

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The Nine Scott-Listed One-Cent 1865 Coupon Essay Varieties

These images were found on the exceptional website of Robert A. Siegel Auction Galleries

www.siegelauctions.com



Sc. 63-E13a: 1¢ Bowsby Patent Coupon Die Essay on India. Three different colors, from a lot of seven colors.



Sc. 63-E13b: 1¢ Blue Bowsby Patent Coupon Die Essay on White Glazed Paper, 63 x 76mm.



Sc. 63-E13c: 1¢ Bowsby Patent Coupon Plate Essay pair



Left to right: Sc. 63-E13d, 1¢ Bowsby Patent Coupon Plate Essay on White Paper, with original gum; 63-E13e variety, 1¢ Red Bowsby Patent Coupon Plate Essay on White Paper, 13 x 16mm, Grill split with part at top of coupon and part at bottom of stamp, original gum; 63-E13f, 1¢ Blue Bowsby Patent Coupon Plate Essays perforated all around **and** between; of coupon and part at bottom of stamp, original gum; 63-E13f, 1¢ Blue Bowsby Patent Coupon Plate Essay perforated all around **and** between; 63-E13g, 1¢ Red Bowsby Patent Coupon Plate Essay perforated all around **but imperf** between.



Left, 63-E13h, 1¢ Blue Bowsby Patent Coupon Plate Essay perforated all around **and rouletted** between (arrows).

Right, 63-E13i, 1c Black Bowsby Patent Coupon Plate Essay on India paper

