

The Beautiful Trans-Mississippi

In one of my recent columns I discussed the beauty of the Trans-Mississippi Issues. Recently, I came across a Siegel Galleries auction that included a section featuring The Edward and Linda Morton Collection of the 1898 Trans-Mississippi Issue. With that, I decided to present a “Viewing” focusing

on the beauty of the designs. This also brought me back to a 2013 Viewing that featured the Trans-Mississippi. With that, what follows is a combination that includes material from the 2013 article, the recent 2023 Siegel auction, and some other stamp and artwork images I added to fill in the gaps.

Viewing Collections:

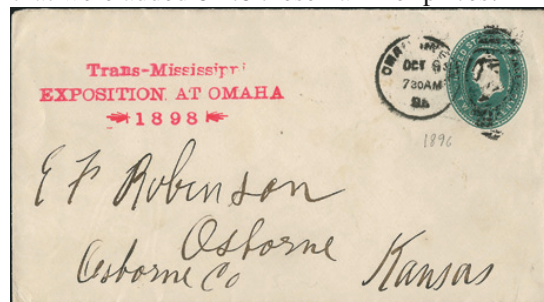
The “World’s Fair” Trans-Mississippi Collection

by John F. Dunn

On November 6 Robert A. Siegel Auction Galleries offered the “World’s Fair” Collection of the 1898 Trans-Mississippi Issue. The first lot offered was this pass to the Exposition Grounds in Omaha, Nebraska, with a green seal in background, made out



to F. W. Bandhaus, signed on back by John Wakefield, secretary of the Exposition. Estimated at \$100-150, it sold for \$275. (All prices quoted here do not include the 15% Buyers’ Premiums that were added on to these hammer prices.)



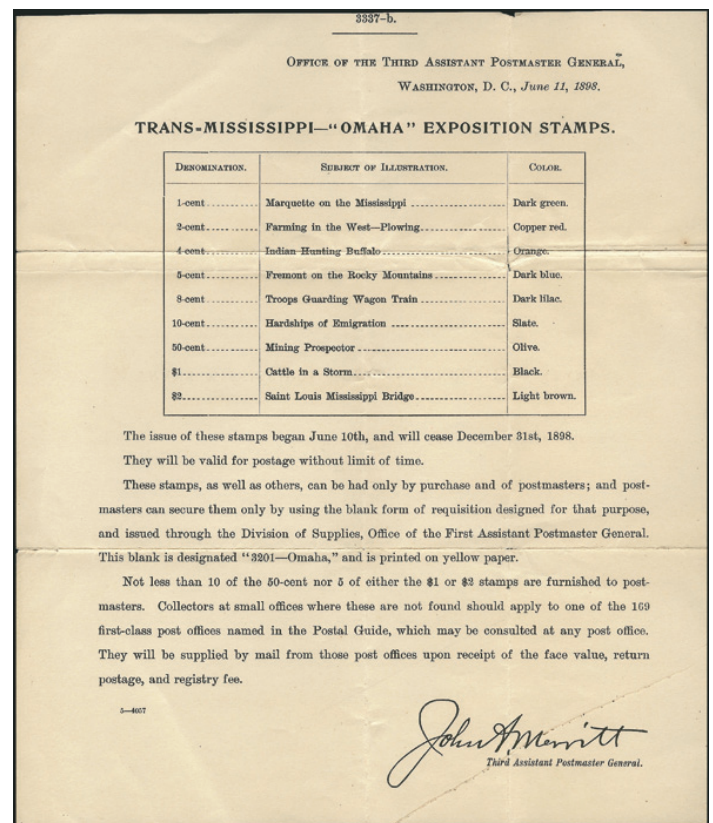
The next lot was this cover with a “Trans-Mississippi/Exposition at Omaha/1898” large red three-line handstamp used as a corner card on a 2¢ entire cancelled by “Omaha Nebr. Oct. 9 7:30AM 96” duplex and used to Osborne, Kansas—mailed two years before the opening of the Exposition. As explained in the lot description, “in 1895, two years after the Columbian Exposition, Congress stated its desire to hold an “exposition of all the products, industries, and civilization of the states west of the Mississippi River, made at some central gateway, where the world can behold the wonderful capabilities of these great wealth producing states...” Estimated at \$150-200, this cover realized \$350.

At the top of the next column we display an illustrated cover produced by *The Omaha Philatelist* with a vertical pair of the 1¢ blue (Sc. 264) tied by an “Omaha Nebr. Sta. A Nov. 14 1:30PM 97” duplex and used to Howe, Neb. Estimated at \$150-200,



this colorful cover went for \$140.

And below we show a printed notice dated June 11, 1898 from the Office of



the Third Assistant Postmaster General, Washington, D.C., with a table at the top listing each denomination, its design and color. [Note: for a closer look at this notice, use your pdf magnifier tool.]

The notice states, “The issue of these stamps began June 10th, and will cease December 31st, 1898” and details how postmasters can go about requisitioning the stamps. Estimated at \$150-200, this lot fetched \$375.

This next lot is from a set of the 1¢-\$2.00 Trans-Mississippi, Bi-Color Large Die Essays on India (285E8-293E7, shown, Sc. 293E7) on cards with full die sinkage. With an SCV of \$3,125, the set realized \$3,000.



Next we view the high value from a set of 1¢-\$2.00 Trans-Miss Small Die Proofs on Wove paper (Sc. 285P2-293P2), removed from their original gray cards, the \$1.00 slightly reduced. Approximately 85 sets were produced, and some were broken up, so complete sets are scarce. With an SCV of \$5,200, this set went for \$3,500.



And now for a Specimen: the \$1.00 Trans-Mississippi \$1 with "Specimen" overprint Type E (Sc. 292S-E), with a clear purple "Specimen" applied horizontally at the bottom, just beneath the lead bull. This scarce item, with original gum and lightly hinged fetched \$900 against a \$600 SCV.



Next up is the \$1 Trans-Mississippi stamp as issued, the \$1.00 (Sc. 292), VF LH, SCV and hammer price \$1,100; and the \$2.00 Trans-Miss (Sc. 293),



NH, SCV \$6,000, realization \$10,000.

And here we view a 4¢ Trans-Mississippi (Sc. 287)

cancelled by an intricately carved Admiral Dewey fancy cancel of East Clarendon, Vermont. Dewey was born in Montpelier Vt., served in the Civil War and in the Spanish-American War where on April



30, 1898, over the course of six hours, he sunk or captured the entire Spanish Pacific fleet in Manila Bay. The stamp has a small thin spot, but the rare cancel is what carried the day. With an SCV of \$25 for the stamp, but estimated at \$500-750 for the fancy cancel, it sold for \$600.

One of the great error rarities is seen next, the 8¢ Trans-Mississippi in a Vertical Pair, Imperforate Horizontally (Sc. 289a) with top imprint and plate no. 609. Described as the finer of the two recorded imprint and plate number blocks, with original gum, light natural gum wrinkles and a light horizontal crease at the top above the stamps and margin markings. With an SCV of \$125,000, it fetched \$140,000.



Another Imprint & Plate Number block is seen here, in the form of the \$2.00 Trans-Mississippi (Sc. 293) with LH original gum. The auctioneers tell us there are perhaps three imprint and plate number blocks of six in existence, and imprint and plate number block of four format are also "extremely scarce" especially from the top position. With an SCV of \$90,000, this block realized \$80,000.



Among covers, we start with a 2¢ Trans-Mississippi (Sc. 286) tied by a pre-FDC-date "Harrisburg Pa. Jun. 16 12:30 PM 1898" machine cancel. The cover to "Blade" in Brooklyn, N.Y., has a Harrisburg Paper Company return address and receiving



backstamps of June 16 and 17. The official First Day of the Trans-Mississippi Issue was June 17, 1898. This is one of two recorded June 16 pre-first day covers. Estimated at \$7,500-10,000, it went for \$8,000.

This next lot shows the 1¢-10¢ Trans-Mississippi (Sc. 285-290) tied by “Washington D.C.” registry ovals to a cover to Germany with a purple “Registered, Jun. 17, 1898, Washington D.C. Sub-Station No. 29, No. 766” five-line datestamp with registry number in manuscript (just below and to the left of the 10¢ stamp), this being the First Day of Issue of the Trans-Mississippi stamps.



The only known cover with the 2¢-10¢, it was estimated at \$50,000-75,000 and drew a top hammer price of \$52,500.

This spectacular cover to Munich, Germany, bears the complete, 1¢-\$2.00 set (Sc. 285-293) tied by “Madison Square Branch” registry ovals, also with a purple “Registered, Jul. 18, 1898 Madison Square Branch, New York P.O.” five-line boxed datestamp on the back of the cover to Munich, Germany.



The earliest usage of the three known covers with complete sets, used just one month after the First Day of Issue, it sold at the top end of its \$30,000-40,000 estimate range.

Among other interesting usages, we see a 1¢ Trans-Mississippi (Sc. 285) tied by an “Omaha, Neb. Jun. 1898” machine cancel on a Trans-Mississippi and International Exposition, 1898, Department of Publicity and Promotion illustrated corner card cover to Osborne, Kansas.



Estimated at \$200-300, it brought \$170.

The Exposition took place while the Spanish-American War was taking place. One of the more colorful Spanish-American War Patriotic covers, with a “Remember the Maine” theme, is seen here with a 1¢ Trans-Mississippi (Sc. 285) used with two 2¢ pink, Type IV stamps (Sc. 279Bg), all tied by a “San Francisco Cala. Aug. 30 8-AM '98” machine cancel. The stamps pay the 5c UPU rate to Copenhagen, Denmark. Estimated at \$200-300, it sold for \$200.



This next lot represents a 5¢ Trans-Mississippi (Sc. 288) usage, but it is the journey that is of primary interest. The 5¢ Columbian entire (Sc. U350) also bears a 3¢ Columbian (Sc. 232), tied by registry ovals, the cover also with a purple “Cleveland, Ohio Reg. Div., Nov. 1, 1899” double-circle datestamp lower left. It was addressed to “Postmaster, Bagh, Baluchistan” (Baluchistan being an arid region incorporating parts of Iran and Pakistan) and bears a red London transit that also ties the 5¢. It is not shown, but we are told that the reverse of the cover bears 16 postal markings including Dead Letter Office markings from Karachi and Bombay—a red manuscript “Forwarded to D.L.O. Karachi” with “Bombay” written beneath. There is a notation up the left side of the cover, “Please preserve this envelope”. Fortunately it was preserved, and sold for \$800 against a \$300-400 estimate.



Finally, we view a rare single franking of the \$2.00 Trans-Mississippi (Sc. 293) tied by a “Heusler Ind. Dec. 5, 1898” circular datestamp on a registered cover to Mansfield Ohio, the cover also with a purple “Registered, Dec. 10, 1898, Mansfield Ohio” three-line receiving backstamp. One of seven recorded cover with a \$2 Trans single franking, it was estimated at \$7,500-10,000 and soared to \$16,500.



A Comparison of the Bi-color Essays and Final Proofs

(trimmed to focus on the designs)

This display and the design sources are from our Reference Manual study.
Notice that the the 2¢ and \$2 designs in these Essays were reversed in the stamps themselves.



Although they came from different sources, I set up this presentation in Scott number order. Where the realizations are from a specific auction I indicate the year so that you can put those prices in proper perspective. I left the stamp images at a high resolution so that you can make out the engraving details.

1¢ Dark Yellow Green, Scott 285, Extremely Fine Never Hinged with 2021 Philatelic Foundation (PF) Certificate grading it Superb 98.

Scott Value: \$75
Hammer price: \$1,800 (2023 auction)



The source of the design is this 1867 painting by William Lamprecht.



2¢ Copper Red, Trans-Mississippi, Scott 286, Mint N.H., with Jumbo margins, with a Professional Stamp Experts (PSE) Certificate grading it Superb 98 Jumbo.

Scott Value: \$67
Stamp Market Quarterly (SMQ) Value: \$3,600
Hammer \$3,500 (2019 auction)



The source of the design is a photograph of the North Dakota farm of the Amenia & Sharon Land Co., a portion of which they used on their letterhead.



4¢ orange, Scott 287, Mint N.H., vibrant color, extremely fine, graded Superb 98 by PSE.

Scott Value: \$400
Hammer: \$15,500 (2009 auction)



The official source of the design is attributed to an engraving by U.S. Captain S. Eastman.



5¢ Dull Blue, Scott 288, Mint N.H., with wide top imprint selvage, deep rich color and proof-like impression, graded Superb 98 by PSE. SMQ: \$10,500; Scott: \$300; Hammer \$12,000; (2023 auction)

The source of the model used for this design is said to be a wood engraving, but the exact wood engraving is not known. Shown here is one of two similar wood engravings by J. W. Orr. If this was the source, you can see how the peak would have been flattened out and lowered in order to fit other design elements, including the men.

8¢ Violet Brown Vertical Pair, Imperforate Horizontally, Scott 289a, original gum, hinge remnant, with horizontal guide line, few light natural gum creases (not noted on certificates) as found on most examples of this rare error, which originated from one pane of 50, the only major error of the Trans-Mississippi Issue.

Hammer price: \$15,500
Scott Value: \$27,500 (2023 auction)

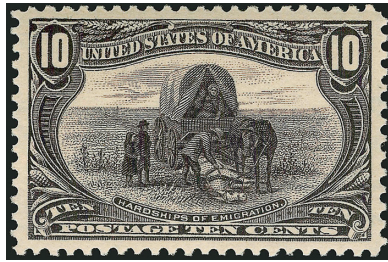


The source for this design is "Federal Troops Convoying a Wagon Train," a drawing by Frederic Remington. Notice the engraved details in the stamp, from the horse's eyes to the trees on the distant hills.

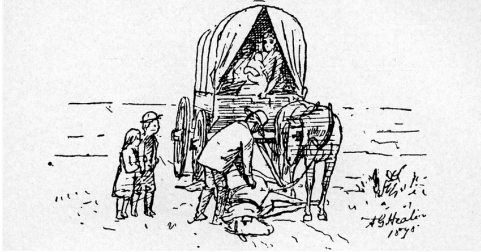


10¢ gray violet, Scott 290, Mint N.H., rich color and perfect impression which shows every nuance of the engraving, one of the finest examples, with a PSE Certificate grade of Superb 98.

Scott Value: \$425
SMQ Value: \$7,900
Hammer: \$26,000
(2006 auction)



The source of the design is “Hardships of Emigration,” a painting by A. G. Heaton, who loaned it to the Post Office Department for use in designing the stamp. That painting was later lost in a fire without any photos or other reproductions available for posterity. Shown here is Heaton’s pen and ink drawing that was the basis for the painting.



50¢ Sage Green, Mint N.H., brilliant color, Extremely Fine.

Scott Value: \$1,750
Hammer price: \$3,000
(2023 auction)



The source of the design is “The Gold Bug”, a drawing by Frederic Remington.



\$1.00, Scott 292, Mint N.H. with top plate no. 606 selvage, intense shade, detailed impression which highlights every minute detail of this wonderful engraving.

Scott Value: \$3,750
Hammer price: \$5,250
(2023 auction)



The design was based on the painting “The Vanguard” by Scotsman John A. MacWhirter. Postal officials had based the stamp engraving on an illustration from an advertising brochure and failed to realize the cattle was not Western U.S., but from the Scottish Highlands.

Another lot in the 2023 Morton Trans-Mississippi auction was an engraving by Edward J. Dillon, “Western Cattle in Storm After Painting by McWhirter” [sic, should be Mac], 165 x 140mm, on heavy stock paper, showing die sinkage, depicting a herd of cattle seeking shelter from a storm.



Estimate: \$500-\$750; Hammer price: \$600

\$2.00 Orange Brown, Scott 293, Mint N.H. with top plate no. 613 selvage, deep rich color, Extremely Fine, Graded XF 90 by the P.F.

The design of the \$2.00 Trans-Mississippi is based on the famed Eads Bridge that spans the Mississippi River at St. Louis. The river has long been considered the dividing line between East and West, and is a fitting theme for this issue.

Here’s an interesting, little known point made by the Siegel auctioneers: All of the \$2.00 Trans-Mississippi stamps were printed in a single day’s run on June 3, 1898. The \$2.00 was printed in sheets that have narrower spacing between the horizontal rows than between the vertical columns. For this reason, it is extremely difficult to obtain stamps with top and bottom margins that equal the sides. This makes it difficult to fit the collecting criteria of most Gem-quality collectors. The stamp offered here, which is Mint Never-Hinged with choice centering and fresh color, is a true condition rarity. The plate number selvage adds to its desirability.

Scott Value: \$5,750
Hammer price: \$13,000
(2023 auction)

The source of the stamp design was an engraving on an admission ticket to the Republican National Convention, held in St. Louis in 1896. In his article in The Stamp Specialist Book #9, The Green Book, published in 1943 by H. L. Lindquist, who also were the founders of STAMPS Magazine, George B. Sloane, a STAMPS columnist, explained, “for many years the source of this design was unknown...until quite recently when, after long and patience vigilance, it was discovered by [stamp dealer] Allan M. Thatcher. Through the courtesy of Dr. Warren G. Atwood, in whose collection it now reposes, I am privileged to illustrate it here for the first time.

“This bridge scene was originally intended for use on the 2¢ stamp but it was subsequently transferred to the \$2 denomination. In the bicolored die proofs the original arrangement of the transposed designs is found.”

(See page 4.)

