

Stamp Specialist:

The 6-Cent Lincoln Bank Note Issues, Pt. 3

By George C. Hahn (*From the Stamp Specialist Volume 11, The Gray Book*)

Note: See page 7 & subsequent for all illustrations added to supplement the this text and photos.

THE 1870 ISSUE

Inasmuch as the previous issue of 1869 failed to satisfy the new Postmaster General, as stated in his report mentioned previously, the National Bank Note Company was instructed by the Post Office Department to submit new designs. It was the National Bank Note Company, who was awarded the original contract for a period of four years and who began with October 3, 1868, to furnish the stamps required by the Post Office Department.

John N. Luff, in commenting on the change of design, states: "Whether the National Bank Note Company were interested in stirring up unfavorable comment, in the hope of bringing about a change in the issue, we have no means of knowing. Probably the stamps printed in two colors were difficult and expensive to produce, but as the terms of their contract required them to supply any new designs and plates without expense to the Government, it is doubtful if they were anxious to make so costly a change."

Clarence W. Brazer does not agree with the statement that the stamps of the 1869 issue were expensive to produce. On the contrary it is his opinion that the small size of the stamps, allowing fifty percent more stamps to the plate, at the same cost of printing, was very profitable to the contractor. He claims that the real opposition originated by the competitors who lost the contract in 1868. After a Congressional investigation the opposing political press made the small size stamps a political issue. After the election the new Postmaster-General consequently requested a new set of designs, dies and plates at the expense of the National Bank Note Company.

In this connection it will be of interest to quote certain extracts from the correspondence between J. MacDonough, Secretary of the National Bank Note Company of New York, and W. H. Terrell, Second Assistant Postmaster General, which began October 2, 1869 and ended April 6, 1870. These excerpts were compiled by Al Burns and published in "Weekly Philatelic Gossip" of September 19, 1936 and furnished through the courtesy of Mr. F. L. Ellis. This correspondence throws some interesting high lights on the issue of 1870.

"There is a dirty bust of Lincoln in possession of an importer of claret, who declines to loan or sell it. I am, however, preparing myself for an attack on his premises and hope to capture it." "One remark in your letter troubles me. I trust it is not your intention to retire from the Department. . . . When we get gum that will stick and stamps that please, your office will be a comparative paradise" writes MacDonough to Terrell.

Regarding the Lincoln design Mr. Terrell wrote: "Cannot the cheek below the cheekbone be brought out a little, so that the expression will be somewhat less cadaverous and less like that of the Knight of the sorrowful Figure, Don Quixote. I think the hair on top might be shortened slightly and tumbled a little, as, according to my recollection, Old Abe never, or at least very seldom, wore his hair smooth." In a letter of March 24 Terrell writes: "The Lincoln hair, as to the parting, will do. Please look after the back hair—is it not too clumsy, or too much after the style of Webster's whiskers, which you worked over and very much improved? Another point to be corrected is the shade under the jaw of Lincoln. . . . It reminds me of the makeup of some who undertake theatrical business—the foundation of their wigs don't harmonize with their complexions." [See page 7 for hairline change. JFD.]

Although the National Bank Note Company, at the time of these changes, held the contract for furnishing the stamps to the Government, the Continental Bank Note Company submitted a number of large die essays. Undoubtedly the Continental Bank Note Company decided to take advantage of the political change to try to obtain the contract. The essays, submitted by the Continental Bank Note Company, are similar to the revenue tax-paid stamps, which they produced. It was very fortunate that their designs were not accepted by the government for they were anything but artistic.



148 E-A Continental Bank Note Company Essay for 1870 issue.

The National Bank Note Company also submitted a series of essays, all of which were generally similar to the final design adopted. The vignette of the 6-cents stamp was engraved by J. P. Ourdan. While the first day of issue of the 6-cents denomination is not definitely known, it has been generally conceded that the stamps made their first appearance some time during April 1870, however, the Postoffice Department's report of 1878 gives the date as May 1870. William H. Terrell, Third Assistant Postmaster General, announced under date of April 9, 1870, that "at an early date, in the regular course of business, the Department will issue to Postmasters, postage stamps of a new design." (See illustration on following page.)

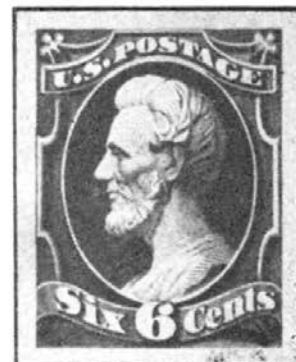
The stamps, uniform in size, measuring 20x25 mm, were printed from 200 subject plates, divided vertically into post office panes of 100, each such pane having a straight edge where the gutter came at the right or left. An arrow was placed at the top and bottom of the pane gutter. The imprint appears at the middle of the top and bottom of each half of the plate. Between each imprint and the central dividing line is the plate number, in script num-



148 E-Bd Incomplete die, vignette with horizontal line background, lines on cheek and hair incomplete, diagonal lines added in background. Submitted by National Bank Note Company, 1870 issue.



148 E-Bb Incomplete engraved vignette with horizontal line background mounted on pencil and water color frame design, submitted by National Bank Note Company 1870 issue.



148 E-C Complete Essay submitted by National Bank Note Company 1870 issue.

erals, preceded by "No". The imprint reads "NATIONAL BANK NOTE CO. NEW YORK", in white capitals, on a small panel with rounded ends, surrounded by two thin colored lines. Plates #26 and #27 were used by the National Bank Note Company for its printing.

A white, thin, hard paper of good quality and fairly uniform thickness was employed by the National Bank Note Company in producing this issue of stamps. The paper has a slightly rough appearance on the back of the stamps. At times the paper has the appearance of having been slightly tinged, however, it is believed that this has been due to the heavy brownish shade of the gum employed.

The Post Office Department in its official reports describes the color of this stamp as red, a color description used for all of the 6-cents Lincoln Bank Note issues. However, Scott's "United States Stamp Catalogue" lists the color as carmine. Shade varieties, as listed by John N. Luff, are carmine-rose, pale carmine-rose, carmine.

The stamps of this issue as well as the subsequent issues carry a size 12 perforation. The "*American Journal of Philately*" in 1888 mentions some imperforated stamps, which supposedly were issued in 1872, and are described the same as the ungrilled 1870 issue. The magazine, however, states that these stamps were "unperforated" accidentally.

The stamps of the 1870 issue were produced both grilled as well as without a grill. Both styles seem to have been in use at the same time. It is not definitely known whether both of the plates used for the printing of the 6-cents stamps of this issue were used to produce the grilled stamps.

The matter of grills on the early issues of United States stamps has been the subject of much study and research on the part of students of this particular variety of stamp manufacture. The method of embossing stamp paper with small grills was devised by Charles F. Steel of Brooklyn, N. Y., Superintendent of Stamp Manufacture for the National Bank Note Company, and was patented by him under a patent issued under date of October 22, 1867, Patent No. 70,147.

The purpose of the grilling of stamp paper was to avoid the fraudulent removal of cancellations and thereby make it possible to re-use them for the payment of postage. For many years, after stamps came into use in this country, it was customary in many of the smaller post offices to apply cancellations with pen and ink. By the aid of certain chemicals cancellations of this type are not difficult to remove. Consequently this question of fraudulent re-use of postage stamps was a matter of great anxiety to the Post Office Department and much study seems to have been devoted to preventatives of this possibility by the Department as well as by stamp manufacturers.

Steel, according to his patent, claimed that he has "invented new and useful Improvements in the Manufacture of Postage-Stamps, etc." He stated that

"the object of my invention is to produce a stamp which shall stick better than usual, and which it shall be impossible to fraudulently remove and use again. Many efforts have been before made in this direction, but the difference in the dryness between the recently-applied cancelling-ink and the long-before-applied ink of the printing so greatly facilitates the removal of the former that it is frequently easy to wash off cancelling-ink with so simple chemicals as common soap and water, even when the cancelling-ink is of the same kind and quality as the ink with which the stamp is printed.

"A part of my invention consists in embossing or partially breaking the paper, so as to open the texture of the paper along certain lines, without removing any part thereof. This causes the stamp, label, etc., to stick better, and allows the oil of the cancelling-ink, when such is used, to strike in very deeply.

"Another portion of my invention consists in applying the gum to such stamps prior to the breaking operation. This avoids its too much filling such broken places, and impairing its appearance on the front side.

"Another portion of my invention consists in smoothing the paper again after the embossing or breaking, and prior to printing. This allows it to be printed better, and to present a more finished appearance. And another portion of my invention consists in leaving certain parts of the stamp, so broken, in a clean or unprinted condition. This allows such part to absorb the cancelling-ink still more perfectly, when such is used."

Charles Steel continues to describe his method of proposed operation of the patent.

"I select suitable paper, and, applying the gum on one face, let it dry. I then press the entire sheet between embossed plates, or pass it through between embossing-rollers. I then flatten a portion or the whole of the paper, so as to nearly remove all indications of embossing, except that the fibre of the paper remains disturbed, and partially broken. After this I print on the surface thus prepared."

While Steel recommended that a portion of each stamp remain unprinted, and untouched by either the printing or the flattening device, he admitted also that this was not absolutely necessary.

The exact date at which grilled stamps first came into use is not known. Under date of November 26, 1867, the Postmaster General in his report calls attention to experiments having been in progress with a postage stamp printed on embossed paper, which seems to afford good security against fraud.

It will be noted that according to the patent Steel planned to have the embossing precede the printing of the stamps. This, however, did not appear to have been practical. Instead the sheets were printed, gummed, pressed, embossed, perforated and lastly pressed under hydraulic pressure of about 500 tons.

This pressure was so great as to reduce the embossed portion nearly to the level of the rest of the stamp but the important part, the breaks in the paper, remained.

The grilling of the stamps, however, lost considerable favor as a method of preventing the fraudulent re-use of the stamps. Furthermore the grilling of the stamps was quite an expense to the contractor. Therefore the embossing of the stamps was gradually dropped by the National Bank Note Company during the latter part of their contract, in spite of the fact that all of the stamps produced by them under their contract were supposed to have been grilled. The grilling process later on was used intermittently and we find consequently two distinct varieties listed in the Catalogue for the issue of 1870, viz. Stamps with Grill and Stamps without Grill.

The grills were applied to the paper by means of a roller pitted with small depressions forced into the roller by means of a knurl, or by a roller that was covered with small raised pyramids machined on the roller in such fashion that when the roller was applied to the sheet of stamps, a certain area of each stamp was forced into the shape of the depressions or pyramids of the grilling units.

According to J. B. Leavy, as published in the "*American Journal of Philately*" in April 1868, the National Bank Note Company used two sizes of grills on the 6-cents denominations. One of these contained 13x15 rows of points and measured 10x12 mm. This type is called the "II" grill. The other type of grill, the "I" grill contained 11x12 rows of points and measured 8½x9½ mm. On the 6-cents stamps of this issue all of the grill points are found pointing downward.

Among the grill varieties, which have been located on the 6-cents denominations of this issue, is the marginal or end roller grill. This variety consists of a continuous row of grill points extending along the margin of the stamp from top to bottom and to the right or left edge. This variety is one of the rarer grill varieties found on this stamp and according to L. G. Brookman same was produced by a strip of grilling units which ran around the end of the cylinder.

Another grill variety, almost as rare as the marginal grill, is the so-called double grill. This variety shows the result of two applications of the grill roller, which apparently was caused by the attempt on the part of the operator to rectify the faulty impression of the grill due to his haste or carelessness. Such faulty impressions were generally a faint, slightly oblique, or badly centered application of the grill.

Next in rarity are the quadruple split grills and the ordinary split grills. These varieties are caused by the sheet of paper having been fed through the grill roller in an off-centered position, thereby showing portions of two or more grills on the stamp.

To those, who are interested in the study of the grills on United States stamps, I heartily recommend "Notes on the Grilled Issues of the United States," compiled by L. G. Brookman, and published as Handbook No. 6 by the *American Philatelic Society*.

The issue of 1870, like all of the subsequent printings of the 6-cents Lincoln Bank Note stamps, was printed on unwatermarked paper. However, some of

the stamps are found with the so-called stitch watermark. This of course is not considered a true watermark but is caused by the stitches, which join the ends of the band on which the paper pulp is first formed. It has the appearance of a row of short uneven parallel lines.

A paper variety, which occurs only on the ungrilled stamps, is the "double paper" variety. This type of double paper must not be confused with the double paper found so often of late on the current rotary press stamps, but is a special type of paper, which was used to prevent the cleaning and re-use of the stamps. This type of paper was another one of the prolific inventions of Charles F. Steel. He patented the same under Patent No. 86,952, issued February 16, 1869. The double paper consisted of a very thin paper, backed by a thicker and firmer one. The printing was supposed to have been done on the thin paper, which would be destroyed by any attempt to remove the cancellation.

Double transfers and double impressions have been reported on the 6-cents stamps of this issue, however, I have not seen these varieties and therefore regret not being able to report on them in detail.

Colored Plate No. position dots in the top of the colorless oval surrounding the portrait have been found on these stamps. This variety seems to occur only once on each pane and is only present on early plates, Nos. 18 and 21.

Cancellations on the 6-cents stamps of this issue are varied both as to type and color. Scott's "United States Stamp Catalogue" lists cancellations in black,



A few of the interesting cancellations to be found on the 1870-1872 "Bank Note Issues"

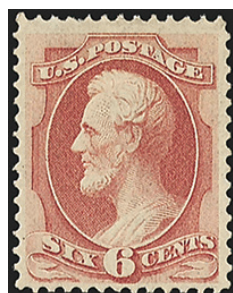
blue and red on the grilled issues and in black, blue, purple, violet, ultramarine, brown, red and green on the ungrilled issue. Many of the usual Bank Note cancellations have been applied on these stamps and some of the outstanding ones, as listed by Scott, are “Town” and “Paid” on the grilled issues and “Paid”, “Town”, “China”, “Japan”, “Steamship”, “Paid All”, and Supplementary Mail cancellations.

According to John N. Luff's tabulations a total of 27,398,850 of the 6-cents stamps of this issue were printed and delivered to the Stamp Agent. However, as the stamps of the 1870 issue appeared in April of that year and the contract of the National Bank Note Company expired on April 30, 1873, it is evident that the above figures, which include printings from April 1870 to April 1873, do not accurately report the total issue of the stamps manufactured by that company.

6¢ National Production Illustrations



1869 6¢ ultramarine,
Sc. 1115



1870 6¢ carmine H Grill,
Sc. 137



1870-71, National
Bank Note without
grill, Sc. 148



6¢ Carmine, 11 x 14 Point Essay
Grill, Points Down (unlisted
137-E). Strongly impressed grill,
without gum, extremely rare and
possibly unique, believed to
originate from Charles F. Steel
(inventor and patent holder for
grilling device).



6¢ Carmine, 11 x 14 Point
Essay Grill, Points Up
(unlisted 137-E). Strongly
impressed grill, without
gum, extremely rare and
possibly unique, believed
to originate from Charles
F. Steel for grilling device).

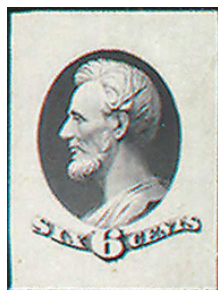
[Above each stamp is a magnified and computer enhanced image of the grills as they appear on the face of the stamp. It's tough to see the grills point up, perhaps because of how the scanner light hits each stamp. JFD.]



Continental Bank Note Co.
6¢ Blue “Monroe Doctrine”,
Frame Only, Large Die Es-
say on India (148-E1a), may
be unique, submitted in an
unsuccessful attempt to wrest
the printing contract from
National.



6¢ Lincoln, Large Die
Essay on India (148-
E11), with hairline be-
fore being changed. See
page 2.



6¢ Lincoln, Vignette Only,
Large Die Essay on India
(148-E13) showing vi-
gnette and value label at
bottom, hair brushed for-
ward as in adopted design.

6¢ 1870-71 National
Bank Note Co., Large Die
Proof on Card (148P1) on
card with full die sinkage.



1870-71 6¢ National Bank Notes: The Cancellations



Sc. 137 with blue target cancel



Sc. 137 H. Grill with neat Leaf cancel



Sc. 137) H Grill, with New York Foreign Mail Geometric cancel



Sc. 137 H Grill, with bold large "S" cancellation



Sc. 137 with perfect circle of wedges cancel



Sc. 137 with clear strike of "(ST. JO)HN NB/ (SHIP L)ETTER" two-line handstamp



Sc. 137A I. Grill with red New York circular datestamp



Sc. 137A I Grill with captured "NATIONAL BANK N" part imprint and completely struck blue Chicago Flag cancel



Sc. 148 with "Yokohama, Japan May 22" circular datestamp



Sc. 148 with red 8-Point Solid Star New York Foreign Mail cancel



Sc. 148) horizontal pair, each with NYFM Shield fancy cancel

1870-71 6¢ National Bank Notes: The Covers



1870-71 2¢ Red Brown, 6¢ Carmine, Grill (Sc. 135, 137), two 6¢ and one 2¢ for 14¢ total paying the 6¢ rate to England and 8¢ registry fee, tied by negative "E" cancels, with unreadable New York circular date stamp on small June 1873 cover addressed in blue, also with red British registry handstamp.



Sc. 137 H Grill cancelled by blue Star cancel and tied by matching "Chicago R.P.O. Aug. 9" circular datestamp on 1871 cover to Montreal, Canada, with receiving backstamp.



Sc. 137 H Grill, four, two with strong grills, other two lightly grilled, tied by circle of wedges cancels, with red "New York Paid All Via Eng. & Ostd. Aug. 16" (1873) circular datestamp on small cover to St. Imier, Switzerland, Basel and St. Imier backstamps, very scarce 6¢ H Grill franking,



Sc. 148 horizontal strip of three with full "National Bank Note Co. New York" imprint in top sheet selvage, tied by cork cancels, with "Richmond Va. Nov. 5" (1872) circular datestamp and "Registered" framed handstamp on cover with printed address to C. E. Hartung (hair and wig dealers) in New York City, also with blue company receiving datestamp, paying the 3¢ rate plus 15¢ registry fee.



Sc. 148 tied by bold negative "5" handstamp with "New York Feb. 12 2 P.M." (1875) circular datestamp on cover originating in Italy to New York and forwarded to Columbia S.C., origination postage consists of Italy 10c Buff (27), 40c Carmine (31) and 60c Lilac (32) tied by "26" in square lozenge, also with "Pisa 19 Gen 75" circular datestamp, and red New York backstamp.