

Viewing Collections: The William Fekete Proofs & Essays

by John F. Dunn

Last October the Robert A. Siegel Auction Galleries auctioned off the William Fekete Collection. The Collection included an outstanding array of United States Proofs and Essays, which is what we will focus on in this viewing.

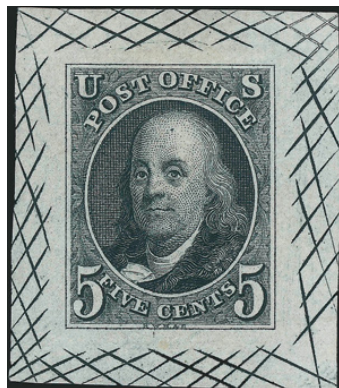
The auction opened with a lot containing seven Die Essays in different colors for the Gavit & Co., Albany N.Y., 5¢ Franklin, on India, Bond, Card (Sc. 1Xa-E1c, d, e). With a Scott Catalog Value (SCV) of \$2,400, it realized \$850. (All prices quoted here do not include the 15% Buyer's Premiums that are added on to these hammer prices.)



Next we view one of four obsolete bank notes with the designs that were used for the 1847 First Issue. The



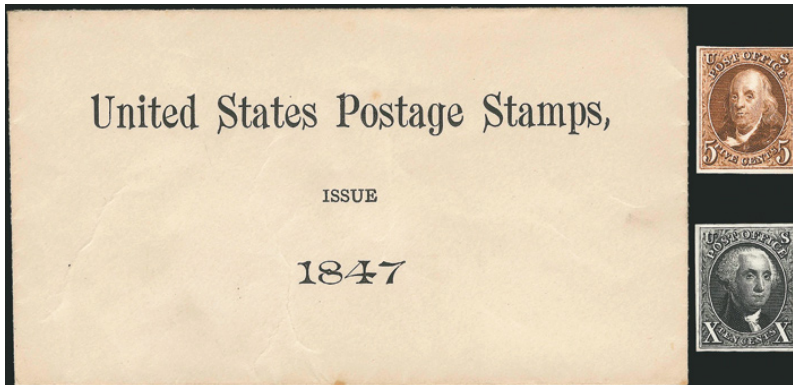
lot that also included a 30 x 33mm stock die. Two of the notes were \$2.00 Washington, one was a \$3.00 Franklin, and the one here, a Bank of New Brunswick, N.J. with both vignettes. Estimated at \$300-400, it sold for \$700.



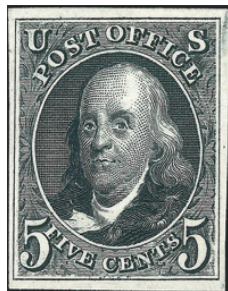
The 5¢ black Large Die Trial Color Proof on Bond paper (Sc. 1TC1b) with cross-hatching sold for \$375 against its \$800 SCV; and the 10¢ golden brown



Large Die Trial Color Proof on Bond (Sc. 2TC1b) did better, going for \$600 against an \$800 SCV.



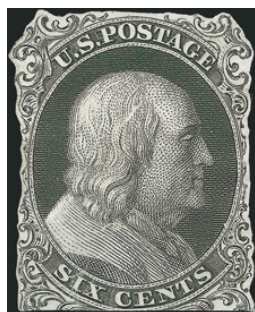
Next is a lot that included the original envelope and the contents, which are 1875 Reproduction Plate Proofs on Card of the 5¢ Red Brown and 10¢ Black (Sc. 3P4-4P4). The SCV of \$400 does not include the rarely seen envelope, so the lot attracted interest and fetched \$475.



Here we have just two examples, in black, of the Atlanta Trial Color Proofs on Card (Sc. 3TC4, 4TC4), from a complete set in all five colors. As explained in the lot description, "These Atlanta trial color plate



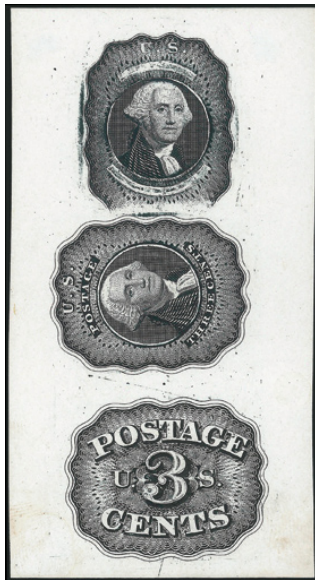
proofs on card were prepared for display at the 1881 International Cotton Exposition in Atlanta. Only one sheet of 50 in each color was made available after 1881. They were cut up into one set of blocks of eight, two sets of blocks of four, two sets of pairs and singles." With an SCV of \$3,000, the lot sold for \$2,000.



This next piece is a Toppan, Carpenter, Casilier & Co. "Six Cents" Black Die Essay on India (Sc. 5-E2) for what eventually became the One Cent Blue classics. Cut to shape as always, the lot description explained, "according to Ashbrook's One-Cent book, a 6¢ stamp was contemplated to pay the single-letter rate for distances

over 3,000 miles, it appears that the 6¢ was changed to 1¢ because of the greater need for this value.” With an SCV of \$2,750, but some faults, it brought \$1,000.

Here’s another beautiful piece that demonstrates why some specialists are so fascinated by Essays. It’s a Bradbury, Wilkinson & Co. 3¢ Dull Scarlet Die Essay on Card (Sc. 11-E5b), a scarce essay with a \$1,250 SCV and a \$550 hammer price.



Likewise, this attention-grabbing piece is from a lot with three Bald, Cousland & Co. 3¢ Triple Die Essays, two on India and one on White Glazed (Sc.11-E14Ab, 11-E14Ad, respectively). With an SCV of \$2,250, it sold for \$2,100.

This next 10¢ Green

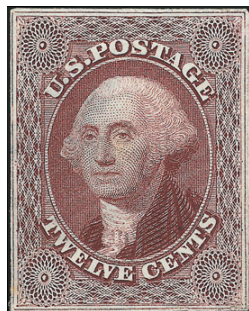


Type I Large Die Proof on India (Sc. 13P1) is of especial interest because it shows the layout lines around

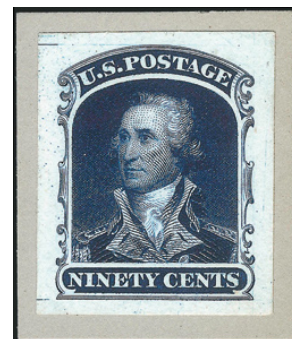


design at the top. (For a closer look at the complete proof and the layout lines, please use your pdf magnifier.)

However, with an SCV of \$5,000, this lot could do no better than \$275.



At left is the Toppan, Carpenter, Casilier & Co. 12¢ Brown Violet Die Essay on India (Sc. 17-E2). With some thinning, it brought \$300 against its \$900 SCV; and at right we view the high value in a lot that included the complete 1¢-90¢



1857-60 Reprints in Small Die Proofs

on Wove paper (Sc. 40P2-47P2), each on its original gray card backing. As explained, “In 1903, during the Theodore Roosevelt administration, the Bureau of Engraving and Printing prepared 85 special “Roosevelt” presentation albums with small die proofs on white wove paper of all issues printed to that date. The proofs were artfully arranged in albums, and most of the albums were given to government officials.”

With an SCV of \$2,800, this set realized \$1,800.

And here we have the 90¢ value from another complete set of Atlanta Trial Color Proofs on Card, this one for the 1857 Reprints (Sc. 40TC4-47TC4), consisting of all five colors as seen here for the 90¢ for each of the eight denominations—a total of 40 pieces.



Only one sheet of 100 of each value and color was printed, and very few have been kept together as intact sets such as this. With an SCV of \$4,160, it brought \$4,750.



From a showing of experimental Essays, we see a 2¢ Dull Red Violet & Bronze “U.S. Postage” Re-Use Prevention Essay (Sc. 79-E1, Turner E45). Opened here for display, the folded design for re-use prevention has the “2” punched out. As explained, “the inventor of these designs is unknown, it was intended to be affixed to a cover folded, the postmaster would then remove part of the stamp, exposing punched out or different colored numerals underneath, the background of the design is also scored so that any attempt to remove a cancel or the

stamp from the cover would result in its breaking apart.” With an SCV of \$5,000, this example realized \$1,100.

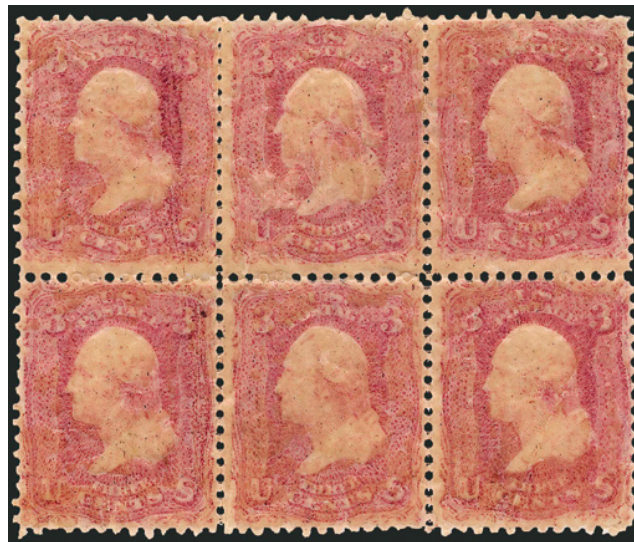


This 3¢ Black & Bronze, “U.S. Postage” Re-Use Prevention Essay (Sc. 79-E4, Turner E45) shows the experimental Essay unopened. Also with an SCV of \$5,000, this lot brought \$950.

Also of unknown origin is this 8¢ Orange on White Eagle Essay (Brazer 57aEa). The design depicts an eagle surrounded by a field of stars, “Specimen” at the top, “8” in each corner and “E Pluribus Unum” at the bottom. Reportedly one of only two known, it was given a pre-sale estimate of \$400-500 and sold for \$700.



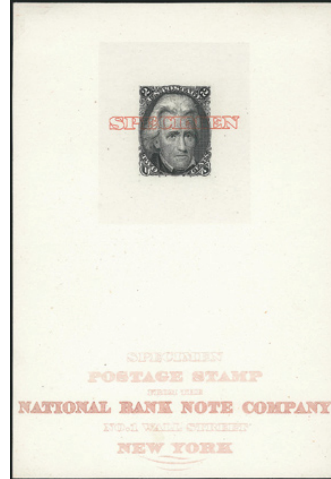
This block of six of the 3¢ 1861 Issue looks odd because it is printed on onion skin, or “Goldbeater’s”, paper—another Re-Use Prevention Essay. The Lowenberg Decalcomania Plate Proof (Sc. 79-E65P5b) had some normal wrinkling and some perf separations. With an SCV of \$600, it realized \$225.



Here’s another high value from a complete set lot, this one from the 1¢-90¢ 1861-66 Issue Small Die Proofs on Wove (Sc. 63P2/78P2) on original card backing from a Roosevelt presentation album, for which only 85 sets were produced.

With an SCV of \$2,550, this lot was hammered down for \$1,300.

Next we view a 2¢ Black Die I Large Die Proof on India with “Specimen” Overprint, mounted on card with red “SPECIMEN” overprint across stamp (Sc. 73P1 variety) and full imprint in red at the bottom, from a National Bank Note Co. sample book. Per the lot description, “the Die I large die proof is exceedingly rare—none were offered in major Black Jack sales, except with the ‘Specimen’ overprint as offered here.” This would explain why this “Specimen” variety fetched only \$1,200 against a \$10,000 SCV for the 73P1 without the “Specimen” overprint.



Aptly described as a “Beautiful Showpiece” is this rare 12¢ Black First Design Plate Essay on India (Sc. 69-E6d; formerly 59P3) in a bottom imprint and plate No. 5 block of nine. Per the lot description, “This is the only plate block of the 12c First Design on India we have offered since keeping computerized records more than 20 years ago.”



Scott Retail as singles with no premium for the plate block is \$3,150, so it is somewhat surprising that this rare plate block sold for \$2,900.

Next we view a 30¢ Blue 1861 Issue First Design Plate Essay on Card with Specimen Overprint (Sc. 71-E2d)—keeping in mind that the issued color was Orange. Another seldom-seen Essay, per the auctioneers, “this is the only example contained in Power Search and we have not encountered another,” this Extremely Fine example with an SCV of \$750 realized \$375.



It will be interesting to see if Scott begins to reduce their values for these Essays and Proofs, much the same as they move them up when their SCVs are exceeded in major auctions such as this.



Here’s the “...Jack” before it became “Black...” It is one of six Trial Color Plate Proofs (Sc. 73TC) in a range of colors for the 2¢ 1863 Issue that eventually was issued in black. The lot included four plate proofs, a Decalcomania single and an acid paper single. SCV was \$2,100, and the realization was \$600.

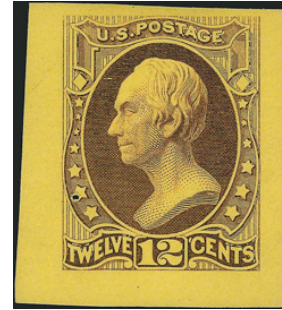


And now for a set of the Atlanta Trial Color Proofs on Card for the 1¢-90¢ 1861-66 Issue (SC. 102TC4-111TC4), in this case all ten denominations in all five colors, for a complete set of 50. With a total SCV of \$5,015, it sold for \$4,000.

To the right is a National Bank Note Co. 2¢ Jackson Unadopted Design Large Die Essay in Blue on White Glazed Paper (Sc. 146-E7b). This attractive piece with an SCV of \$1,000 sold for \$650.



Still another odd looker is this National Bank Note Co. 12¢ Henry Clay Die Essays on Card (Sc. 151-E7 variety), from a lot with nine Die Essays, including five on white and four on yellow card or thick paper in a range of colors including Blue, Orange, Red, Green, Black and four different shades of Brown, each with a staple hole.



Per the lot description, “the stamp essays for this design are listed in Scott as printed on India, wove and yellow card, these may be cut down from the envelope essays, Scott Retail as the lowest priced essays (wove and yellow card, \$700 each” for a total SCV of \$6,300 for this lot, which brought a top bid of \$2,000.

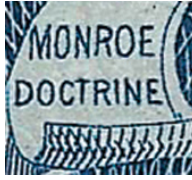
Here’s still another fascinating lot. It’s an Essay for what was eventually issue in a different design as the Continental Bank Note Co. 2¢ Scarlet. This “Impressment 1812” Large Die Essay on India (Sc. 146-E1) in stamp size and mounted on 48 x 49mm card was one of a number of commemorative essays produced by Continental with titles for iconic events in American history. Aptly described



as “among the most beautiful essays of the Bank Note era” this example brought its full \$1,500 SCV.

A similar Essay is this Continental 3¢ Scarlet “Emancipation Proclamation” Large Die Essay on India (Sc. 147-E1). This one is off card, so it brought just \$600 against its \$2,250 SCV.

One other example is this Continental 6¢ Blue “Monroe Doctrine” Frame Only Large Die Essay on India (Sc. 148-E1b), cut to stamp size, SCV \$1,600, hammer price \$1,100.



Next is another Continental Bank Note Co. Large Die Essay on India, this one a 3¢ Black Columbia Portrait (Sc. 147-E1C) 36 x 40mm on card, with the Columbia vignette mounted in place. Described as most likely unique, it has a \$2,250 SCV, but brought just \$1,100, another indication that Scott may have to reduce its values for at least some of these Essays.

This next lot contained American Bank Note Co. 3¢ and (shown here) 10¢ Unadopted Frames Large Die Essays on India (Sc. 207-E1a, 209-E2a), both cut down but still with extra large margins, on original cards, Yellow Brown and Blue respectively. With a combined SCV of \$1,450, the twosome realized \$750.

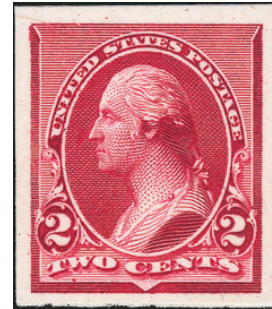


Another appealing aspect of Proofs is their cost relative to the stamps. For example, this 10¢ Brown Plate Proof on India (150P3) Top imprint and plate no. 18 block of 12, touched at bottom left corner, thinning as often with this



fragile paper, also with a small hole between two stamps. As a result, it fetched \$325. However, even at the full catalog value of \$2,000, compare that with the SCV for the issued stamps. Scott does not price the Plate Block of 10, but as three blocks of four the SCV is \$31,500—and that’s without the premium for Plate Block if you could find one.

Next we have a set of 1¢-90¢ 1890-93 Issue Plate Proofs on India (Sc. 219P3-229P3; shown Sc. 220P3, which is mounted on card). With a total SCV of \$789, it brought \$275—again a small fraction of the cost of a set of stamps, and the proofs have brighter, sharper impressions.



By now that gray card backing may be telling you that we have another set of Small Die Proofs on Wove and on original gray card backing from a Roosevelt album. In this lot, it is a complete set of the 1¢-\$5.00 Columbians (Sc. 230P2-245P2),

of which it is believed that only 85 sets were produced. With an SCV, this set realized \$4,250.

This gorgeous piece is a 4¢ Brown Red Original Artist’s Composite Model for the Complete Design (Sc. 233-E1a). It is a watercolor drawing for the unadopted frame. The vignette is a silver print photo. The design size is 33.5 x 22mm, on 41 x 29mm stiff white drawing paper, with unadopted lettering “Columbus on Voyage of Discovery, Ships at Sea” instead of “Fleet of Columbus” as issued, at the bottom.



Described as unique and the earliest Model Design for the 4¢ Columbian, it went for a lofty \$7,000 against its \$4,750 SCV.

This \$4.00 Gray Black Original Artist's Composite Model for the complete Design (Sc. 244-E6) is not as eye-catching as the previous lot. It is on a 50 x 39mm thick artist's card with beveled edges, from the second state of the die, showing a partially engraved vignette with black watercolor frame slightly taller than adopted size. It also is unique, and one of only three Watercolor Models for all five of the Dollar Value Columbians.



And that is where the similarity to the previous lot ends. This one, with an SCV of \$3,000, fetched a cool \$28,000.



Still another interesting aspect of Essays is how they trace the development of the final design of the issued stamp. This is more familiar than most. It is the Bi-Color Large Die Essay on India for the \$2 Trans-Mississippi, a “Harvesting In The

West” design that ended up on the common 2¢ value so that it would be seen on mail more often than the \$2 value, which ended up with the Mississippi River Bridge design that was deemed to be less representative of the West—the primary purpose of the designs.

All but the 8¢ and \$1.00 in this complete set lot (Sc. 285E8a-293E7a) are hybrids. Estimated at \$1,000-1,500, the lot sold for \$1,800.

Speaking of the Mississippi River Bridge, here it is in the form of a 2¢ Dark Orange Brown & Black, Die Essay on India (Sc. 286-E8) before it was reassigned to the \$2 value. With an SCV of \$2,000, it brought \$800.



Next we view a Trans-Mississippi 2¢ Blue Trial Color Plate Proof on Card (Sc. 286TC4), of which only three singles and two vertical pairs were recorded by Brazer. It has an SCV of \$2,500.



It was part of a section of four lots of 2¢ Trans Trial Color Proofs that had a total SCV of \$10,000—and soared to \$23,000 as one lot, as the hammer price for the grouped lot exceeded the total of the realizations for the four individual lots.

Completing this Part One of our viewing of the Fekete Proofs & Essays, we come to a 50¢ Deep Red Orange Large Die Essay on India (Sc. 291-E9), 44 x 32mm, with a tiny pinhole at lower left. Described as a “scarce essay with both frame and vignette printed in the same color, this is the first we have offered since keeping computerized records,” and at \$6,000 hammer it doubled its \$3,000 SCV.



To Be Continued