

## *Stamp Specialist:*

# The 6-Cent Lincoln Bank Note Issues, Pt. 4

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

*Note: See pages 6-8 for additional images and  
page 9 for the 1875 Special Printing text and image.*

### THE 1873 ISSUE

The contract with the National Bank Note Company expired on April 30, 1873. Consequently the Postmaster General advertised for bids for the printing and supplying the postage stamps required by the Post Office Department. The bids, which were advertised in December 1872, specified that the contract was to be in force for a period of four years beginning with May 1, 1873. No bidders' essays were required to be submitted with the proposals and consequently no such essays were prepared. The contract was awarded to the Continental Bank Note Company of New York on a bid of 14.99 cents per thousand stamps. The new contractors immediately began preparing the necessary plates and soon thereafter began the printing of the stamps.

The stamps of the National Bank Note Company, the previous contractors, having been well received and having given universal satisfaction, no changes in the design of the 6-cents Lincoln stamp were called for and the dies as well as plates were transferred into the hands of the new contractors.

The printings of the Continental Bank Note Company can be easily distinguished from the printings of the predecessor by the so-called secret marks, which were placed on the original dies. This secret mark on the 6-cents Lincoln stamp consists of four heavy lines of shading in the ribbon. It is located where the ribbon at the left of the stamp curls around and shows its reverse side to the left of the word "SIX".

According to John N. Luff (1901) this secret mark, while quite sufficient to distinguish the two different printings, nevertheless was of so unobtrusive a nature as to escape detection for many years. It is quite apparent that collectors in the olden days did not pore over their stamps with high-powered magnifying glasses as it is the custom to-day. It was not until March 1895 that the secret mark was discovered on the 12-cent stamp of this issue and was followed, in succeeding months, by the finding of similar marks on the other values.

Scott's "United States Stamp Catalogue" states that "the object of secret marks was to provide a simple and positive proof that these stamps were produced by the Continental Bank Note Company and not by their predecessors."

However, by whom were these secret marks added? Most philatelic students have heretofore felt that they were added by the Continental Bank Note



Left hand portion shows arrow pointing to ribbon of 6c national; right hand portion shows the 6c Continental and the arrow points to the secret marks in the ribbon.  
 Courtesy Lester G. Brookman.

Company to the die in order to distinguish their work from that of the previous contractor, so that no criticism could be placed against them in the event that any of the stamps previously printed by the National Bank Note Company might later be rejected by the Post Office Department due to possible unsatisfactory work. John N. Luff had the following to say: "It is understood that the Continental Bank Note Company believed that large quantities of the stamps made by their predecessors were of inferior quality. And they feared, because the designs used by the two contractors were identical, that the inferior stamps might, at some later date, be thrown on their hands by the Government, with the claim that they were produced under their contract and must be replaced by them. To forestall any such possibility the secret marks were added."

This theory, however, was not accepted by students of this issue and to-day it is generally felt that the data discovered by Clarence W. Brazer, a noted and outstanding student of printing and engraving, is the correct answer to the question, which has occupied the minds of philatelists for many years. It is Clarence W. Brazer's theory, as explained in one of his articles published in "*The American Philatelist*," (Jan. 1943) that these secret marks actually were a sort of "cancellation" placed on the dies by the National Bank Note Company before the dies were turned over to the Continental Bank Note Company when the former's contract expired.



According to Clarence W. Brazer, American engravers always have insisted upon retaining dies and plates, which they engraved for bank notes, securities, stamps, and other items of value. This was done mainly to make certain that these dies and plates would not improperly be used by others.

In substantiation of his theory, Mr. Brazer quoted from a letter, written by the National Bank Note Company to Third Assistant Postmaster General Terrell on July 29, 1872. The National Bank Note Company stated in that letter

"the custom of the company, which has obtained the approval of the U. S. authorities, and of the patrons of the company, who require engraved securities of whatever nature, viz: that all dies, rolls, and plates, when taken from the custody of the company, are only delivered cancelled, so that no responsibility or danger can attach to the company from an improper use of engraved work, after the plates, etc., are out of our hands."

This letter, according to Mr. Brazer, was answered on August 16 by Mr. Terrell, "You shall be entirely satisfied and protected on this point." Mr. Brazer is of the opinion that this clearly shows it was a universal custom of the National Bank Note Company to apply cancellation marks, philatelically called secret marks, when dies and plates left their hands.

In the Brazer reference collection, as stated in the above mentioned article in the "*AMERICAN PHILATELIST*," there are original large die proofs of each value of the stamps of the 1870 issue, bearing an imprint of the National Bank Note Company, both with and without the secret marks. The colors of the ink used for those with the secret marks are the colors generally attributed to the stamps printed by the Continental Bank Note Company, thus indicating they were printed by the latter company. Such secret mark etched proofs also are found in sets of large die proofs of all postage stamps printed by the Continental Bank Note Company.

Therefore the evidence of die proofs for all values containing the National Bank Note Company imprint without secret mark in original colors, and with secret mark in Continental Bank Note Company colors, is a clear indication that the latter company used the dies, furnished by the government, with the secret marks.

New plates were prepared by the Continental Bank Note Company shortly after the award of the contract. According to Elliott Perry it seems to be well established that the Continental Bank Note Company did not use any of the 6-cents plates of the National Bank Note Company.

While the printing of the stamps began in April 1873, the exact date of first issue again is not definitely known but it is believed that the stamps were first issued some time during July 1873.

Four plates of the 6-cents denomination were prepared by the Continental Bank Note Company and all of these plates were used for the printing of this value. The plates were numbered 18, 21, 304 and 305. Two hundred subject plates were used and the sheets of 200 stamps were halved vertically into post office panes of 100 each and perforated 12.

The imprint on the plates of the Continental Bank Note Company for the 6-cents denomination reads: "PRINTED BY THE—CONTINENTAL BANK-NOTE CO. NEW YORK", in two lines of white capitals, on a panel with pearled edges and surrounded by a thin color line. Between each imprint and the



central dividing line appear "No." and the plate number. On plates 18 and 21 the numbers are ordinary numerals, inserted with hand engraved punches, whereas on plates 304 and 305 the numbers are script numerals from 5½mm to 7½mm high and engraved on the plate. Plates 304 and 305 were replacement plates of the two earlier plates.

The stamps of this issue, in comparison with the preceding printing, appear somewhat paler in color and have a washy, faded look. The color, as listed in Scott's "United States Stamp Catalogue," is dull pink. Shade varieties do not seem to be very plentiful but some of the distinct shades seen are brown, dull brick, pale red, and pale rose.

The gum used by the Continental Bank Note Company, while similar to that of the National Bank Note Company, was much lighter and ranged in color from a yellow brown to almost a white.

The paper seems to be a bit whiter in color and had a smoother appearance than that used by the predecessor contractor.

This issue, like the preceding one, was printed on unwatermarked paper, however, copies with Stitch Watermark have been noted. Some of the stamps of this issue also have been found on the patented double paper as described under the 1870 issue.

Stamps of this issue have been located printed on ribbed paper. This is a thick, hard paper with vertical or horizontal ribbing. However, according to L. G. Brookman, many of the stamps, which appear to have been printed on ribbed paper, are actually not the true ribbed paper variety. Lines in the



Pair with the imprint of the Continental Bank Note Co. of New York.



paper, which are caused by worn blankets on the press, often have the appearance of the lines of ribbed paper and are easily mistaken for the genuine.

Experiments for the purpose of preventing counterfeiting of the stamps were made with a paper containing a small quantity of all black silk fibres.

Several other experiments were made to prevent the cleaning and fraudulent re-use of the stamps. One of these was a chemically treated paper of yellow brown and a violet wove and a violet laid paper. These remind us somewhat of the "Safety" paper used for checks of to-day.

Last but not least, Charles F. Steel patented another one of his ideas. He offered a paper consisting of water-leaf or other soft and absorbent paper and provided on the back with a filling coating of starch or analogous material together with a super-imposed coating of ordinary gum. According to the patent issued, the soft face of the paper will readily absorb the cancelling-ink but will be soaked and washed away on any attempt to remove the latter.

In spite of the fact that National Bank Note Company more or less abandoned the use of grilling its stamps, as evidenced by the two types of their issue, the Continental Bank Note Company made some use of the grilling of stamps.

Grilled stamps, printed by the Continental Bank Note Company, have been located and are listed as such in Scott's "United States Stamp Catalogue." The grill on these stamps is small and very clearly impressed. It measures  $7\frac{1}{4} \times 9\frac{1}{2}$  mm or 10x12 rows of points. The grills are placed 14mm apart horizontally and 18mm apart vertically. The bosses, instead of being perfect pyramids as on the previous grills on the National Bank Note Company printings, are brought to a point but have the top truncated. Thus the impressions have the appearance of a group of tiny rectangles instead of crosses.

Cancellations on this issue are found applied in magenta, black, purple, blue, ultramarine, red and green colors and again the usual types of cancellations in use during the Bank Note period have been used. Some of the rarer of these cancellations are "Japan", "China", "Railroad", "R. P. O.", "Town", "Paid", and the Supplementary Mail cancellations.

The contract with the Continental Bank Note Company, entered into by the government in 1873, was awarded for a period of four years. In the early part of 1877 the government again advertised for bids for the printing and supplying the required postage stamps. According to Clarence W. Brazier at least four

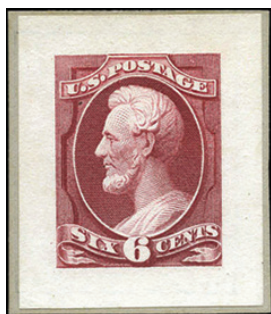


186 E-A Essays for 1877 contract submitted by Philadelphia Bank Note Company.

bids were submitted in response to this advertisement. These were a typographical (newspaper) firm of Syracuse, N. Y., Charles F. Steel for the Franklin Bank Note Company, the Philadelphia Bank Note Company, and the Continental Bank Note Company.

Essays were submitted by the Philadelphia Bank Note Company, which were rather attractive in design and pictured the portrait of George Washington surrounded by an ornate frame. The Continental Bank Note Company also submitted a few essays but none of these were for the 6-cents value. The Post Office Department again awarded the contract to the Continental Bank Note Company for an additional four years' period on their bid of 9.98 cents per thousand. No new plates were prepared and the Continental Bank Note Company continued to use its plates from the earlier contract.

## 6¢ Continental Singles Images



1873 6¢ pink Small Die  
Proof on gray card, (159P2)



1873, 6¢ dull pink with  
"Specimen" handstamp in  
blue (Sc. 159S-B)



1873 6¢ Dull Pink (159),  
with bold Indian Head  
fancy cancel



1873 6¢ Dull Pink (159),  
natural straight edge at  
left, tied to small piece  
by perfect strike of blue  
"76" Liberty Bell fancy  
cancel of Concord, N.H.



1873 6¢ Dull Pink (159).  
bold strike of Worcester  
Mass. North-South  
Shaking Hands fancy  
cancel



1873 6¢ Dull Pink (159)  
with New York Foreign  
Mail Fouled Anchor in  
Circle cancel



1873 6¢ Dull Pink (159)  
with clear strike of blue  
Pool Table fancy cancel  
of Chicago



**1873 6¢ Dull Pink (159) Complete Sheet of 100  
with imprints at top and bottom and natural straight edge at left.**

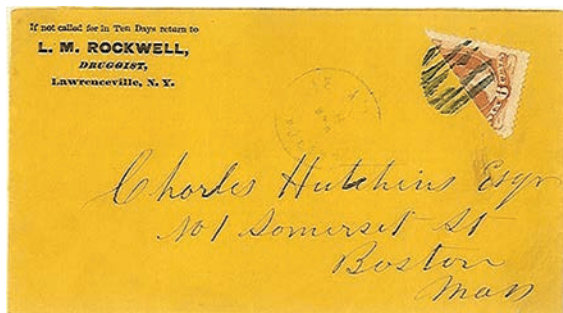




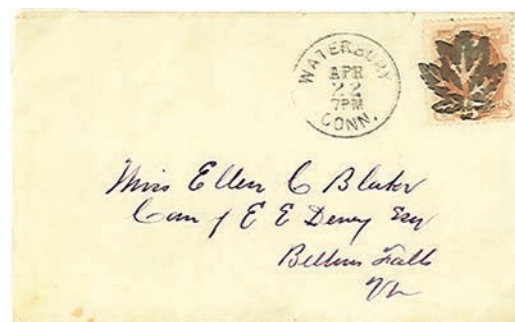
## Additional 1873 6¢ Continental Images



1873 Dull Pink (159) bottom Continental Imprint and No. 21 Plate Block of 12



1873 6¢ Dull Pink single diagonal bisect (Sc. 159a) to pay the 3¢ single rate from Lawrenceville, N.Y. to Boston, Mass.



1873 6¢ Dull Pink single (159) on cover to Bellows Falls, Vt., with Waterbury maple leaf fancy cancel, paying the double rate.



1873 6¢ Dull Pink (159) horizontal pair and single, the left stamp in the pair with huge Jumbo margins, tied by two clear strikes of New York Foreign Mail Geometric cancel and by red "New York Paid Oct. 21 Sup" Type E Supplementary Mail circular datestamp on orange-buff cover to Richemont, France, also with French transit datestamp, Paris and receiving backstamps.



## THE 1875 SPECIAL PRINTING

These extremely rare stamps were printed in the early part of 1875 on the hard paper, which was then in use, apparently for the purpose of completing a set of United States issues to exhibit at the Centennial Exposition of 1876. The printing was done by the Continental Bank Note Company, the holder of the regular stamp printing contract. It was said that this issue of Special Printing was also intended to satisfy the demands of collectors who seemed to be under the impression that an old supply of issues of the United States stamps were kept in Washington.

The stamps of the Special Printing issue were first placed on sale in Washington on May 5, 1875. A very small quantity of these stamps was sold as there really was no special reason for their having been issued. The stamps were then current and collectors were able to satisfy their needs by purchasing them at their post offices.

The difference between the special printing and the regularly printed stamps is very difficult to distinguish except that the color of the former has a very fresh appearance, the paper is white, and the stamps were issued without gum. While the stamps were perforated 12, the same as the regular issue, they apparently were cut apart with scissors and consequently the perforations as well as the design often are found somewhat mutilated. The color of the stamps was a dull rose.

Although the stamps were supposedly issued for collectors as well as for the Exhibition, none of the stamps seem to have been located in a cancelled condition although they were valid for postage.

The printing was done from the regular Continental Bank Note Company plates.



*1875 6¢ Dull Rose Special Printing (Sc. 170), without gum as issued, intact perforations all around, with top sheet selvage showing large part of imprint*

This image comes from the Siegel Auction Galleries sale of the William Gross Collection, the lot also including the informative description that follows.

Stamps from previous issues were printed for the 1875 Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia, and were intended both for sale and also to showcase examples of every U.S. stamp printed to date. Stamps no longer valid for postage were called Reprints (those with original issue dates prior to demonetization—Scott 3, 4, 40-47 and Carrier stamps). Those still valid for postage were called Re-Issues (1861 and 1869 Issues). **Those printed concurrently with contemporary designs were called Special Printings.** [Emphasis added.]

The Post Office tried to get the original printer to make them where possible. Continental Bank Note Co. printed Scott 40-47, 167-177, 180, 181, Carrier, Official and Newspapers & Periodicals issues. National Bank Note Co. printed Scott 102-111 and 123-132.

The ungummed 1875 Special Printing stamps were only available from the office of the Third Assistant Postmaster General. The Bank Note regular issue, with the same designs and gummed, could be obtained from any post office, so far fewer were sold. [Despite that, the 6¢ commands the second highest catalog value, \$20,000, with only the 3¢, Sc. 169, higher at \$21,500. JFD.]

The only recorded multiples of the 1875 Large Bank Note Continental Special Printings are the imprint and plate number strips of four of the 1¢ through 90¢ (Scott 167-177), which were divided into singles by the Weills sometime after they bought the Phillips collection in 1968.