

Yesterday in Mekeel's:

The Civil War and Philately

by Ernest S. Craighead (From Mekeel's Weekly, July 22, 1946, with images added)

The great effort put forth as a nation in the First and Second World Wars has led many people to think that the Civil War was small in the face of these later conflicts—in fact a horse and buggy and candle-light affair. Each reader can make his own comparisons so only a few figures will be presented here. The Civil War population of the Northern States was some twenty-two and a half million from which one million seven hundred thousand soldiers were enlisted or approximately one-twelfth of the population. Conservative historians estimate the loss of the North at five hundred thousand and if that figure is accepted then about one out of every three soldiers engaged on the side of the North was slain. Practically every able bodied man in the Southern States served in the Confederate Army and altogether, North and South combined the Nation lost nearly a million men killed, the flower of young American manhood, and this out of a population hardly one-third that of 1940.

Unnumbered readers of Mekeel's are sons, grandsons or great-grandsons of Northern and Southern soldiers—in fact, many still living have clear recollections of the time when the great conflict seemed very near. The Civil War was costly not only in lives but in treasure and required every effort of the civilian population to sustain the armies in the field. This necessity for funds taxed the ingenuity of the Governments, both Federal and Confederate, resulting in a multitude of devices, the mementoes of which are so prized today by collectors of postage and revenue stamps, paper money and American generally. One of the fiscal features of the Civil War was an income tax, the amount of income returned by every tax payer being published in the daily papers. The Civil War, like our later Wars, was partially financed by bond issues, but one great difference was the rate of interest which ran as high as 7% on some issues.

In presenting a brief review of the philatelic items born in the fiery furnace of the great Civil conflict it must be born in mind that the size of the subject forbids touching any but the high spots. Any one item alone offers material for a lengthy article.

The outbreak of the Civil War found large stocks of United States postage stamps in the hands of Southern



The demonetized 1857 issue used in combination with the 1861 issue that replaced it: 1857 3¢ upper right (Sc. 26) tied by "Chicago Ill. Oct. 22" double-circle datestamp and duplex grid on cover to Detroit with printed corner card, blue "OLD STAMPS / Not Recognized" two-line handstamp and matching "Held for Postage" oval, also with 3¢ 1861 (Sc. 65) tied by "Chicago Ill. Oct. 23" double-circle datestamp and duplex grid.



Sc. 72



Sc. 73 in a plate block of 8

sassinated on April 14, 1865 (just as the Civil War was ending) and to honor the martyred President his portrait in black was used on the first fifteen cent stamp, issued for use upon the introduction of the new registration fee in 1866. This stamp is generally considered as the first United States commemorative. Other Presidents similarly honored by mourning stamps have been Garfield (brown color) and McKinley, Harding and Wilson in black.



Sc. 77



Sc. EP1, 1¢ encased postage issued by the Aerated Bread Co.

their names on the back in embossed letters. Small copper "tokens" with a value of one cent were extensively issued by private firms and to take care of this pressing necessity for change the Government issued "Postage Currency" under the Act of July 17, 1862.

The First General Issue August 21, 1862 to May 27, 1863 had on each note a facsimile of the postage stamp then current: on the five cent denomination, one Jefferson five cent stamp in

postmasters. To take care of this situation the Federal Government demonetized all outstanding issues and on August 15th, 1861 a new series was placed on sale, produced by the National Bank Note Company and consisting of 1, 3, 5, 10, 12, 24, 30 and 90 cent denominations all with numerals in upper corners and "U" "S" in lower.

The Act of 1863 reduced letter postage to the uniform rate of three cents and raised the local rate to two cents, resulting in the handsome 'big face' Jackson two cent black, familiarly known as the "Black Jack" placed on sale July 1, 1863.

President Lincoln was as-



Front and back of Sc. PC7, the 1862 25¢ Postage Currency with 5 x 5¢ stamp facsimiles.

brown; on the ten cent denomination, one ten cent Washington stamp in green and on the twenty-five and fifty cent denomination the five cent and ten cent stamps are drawn over-lapping



each other, five in a row, respectively, brown for the twenty-five cent and green for the fifty-cent. A set of the four postage currency notes in crisp new condition can be purchased perforated for about \$22 and imperforate for about \$6 [Scott 2018 lists the total of the first four "in crisp new condition", Sc. PC1-PC4 at \$915]. Altogether, five general issues of fractional currency (shinplasters) were produced, comprising some thirty-seven major varieties and some seventy-eight major and minor varieties in denominations of 3, 5, 10, 15, 25, 50 cents. A collection of Civil War Postage Currency and Fractional Currency is very beautiful and fascinating. The Confederate States also issued a profusion of paper money the collection of which makes an interesting sideline.

Although the main varieties of Confederate postage stamps are not too numerous, their collection is a specialty in itself and one requiring a rather deep pocket book.



Two positive Patriotics: Jefferson Davis honored on a cover with the Memphis 5¢ Provisional, Sc. 56X2; and a Magnus Patriotic Camp Scene design with the 3¢ Sc. 65 stamp tied by a fancy cancel. See next column for two additional examples.

and with postage stamps and post-marks affixed they rank high as philatelic curiosities.

The envelope stamps of the Civil War period consist of the series of 1861, distinguished by outline letters and with the higher denominations from 12 to 40 cents bicolored (rare and high priced).



1861 24¢ corner, Sc. U44



Two 'less positive views': positive: a Jefferson Davis "Jackass" cover from the Union side—turn it upside down and it pictures a jackass; and a "Hanging Lincoln" cover from the Confederate side.

Add to this series the two cent black profile of Jackson, with the curious topknot, resembling an Indian headdress and issued in 1863-64.

The Sanitary Fair Stamps of 1863-64 while not valid for postage are today very rare. In our generation the Red Cross performs on battlefield and in hospital many of the functions inaugurated in the Civil War with funds raised by the Sanitary Fairs.



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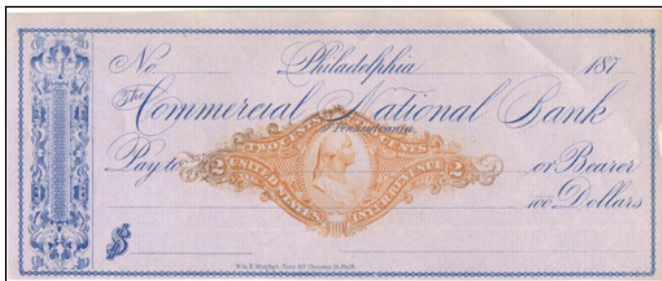


Left to right: 1862 First Issue proof, Sc. R1P4; 1871 Second Issue 20¢, in this case with the black center inverted, Sc. R111a; 1872 Third Issue \$20, Sc. R150.

As far as the Northern States are concerned, Revenue Stamps played a conspicuous part in financing the Civil War and continued in use for seventeen years after the War ended, or until 1882. The First Issue, from 1862 until 1871, both imperforated and perforated were followed by the Second Issue in 1871 in which the vignettes are blue with a black medallion (Stuart's) portrait of Washington. The Third Issue

used the same plates as the Second but with the vignettes in various colors. (Front cover, the 1872 Third Issue 1¢ Proof in a Plate Block of 8, Sc. R134P4). It would seem as though the engravers' art reached a pinnacle of excellence in the production of these Civil War revenue stamps that has never been equalled since. A beautiful collection can still be formed for a moderate outlay.

Although not generally collected, "Revenue Stamped Paper" presents a fascinating field for the collector of Civil War items with some twenty-three different types or dies and innumerable colors denominations and varieties. These stamps are imprinted on checks and other documents and should be collected on the whole document, never clipped. In use for twenty years, many are not at all rare and a beautiful, but not complete collection can be acquired at modest cost.



Revenue Stamped Paper: 2¢ Orange J Die, Sc. RN-J11, on 187_ Commercial National Bank of Pa. check printed on violet laid paper. Printed by Wm. F. Murphy's Sons, Philadelphia.

"Private Proprietary" Match, Medicine, Perfumery and Playing Card stamps complete this review of Civil War philatelic items. These stamps performed a double duty: paying the revenue tax to the Government and



Left: San Francisco Match Co. on silk paper, Sc. RO165; right, Hunt's Remedy Medicine stamp, Sc. RS56

serving to advertise the firms that issued them. Many of these can still be had for a few cents each



and no Civil War collection can be considered complete without a representative showing.



Left: Baird's Bloom of Youth Perfumery stamp on pink paper, Sc. RT14c; right, Goodall Playing Cards stamp on old paper, Sc. RU8a

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