

# The Columbian Series of 1893

By Dr. Roberto M. Rosende

When John Wanamaker, the 38th U.S. postmaster general (1889-1893), authorized in 1892 the issuance of a set of postage stamps to commemorate the 400th anniversary of Christopher Columbus's discovery of America, he probably did not realize he was creating philatelic history.

The first U.S. commemorative stamps, with a face value of \$16.34 (twice the average weekly wage at the time), were the subject of both praise and criticism by philatelists and the general public alike after their release in 1893 to promote the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago that year. Since then their popularity has grown until today, 99 years after their issuance, they are among the most sought-after U.S. stamps. Many collectors have the completion of this set as their goal.

We wonder if today's ideas of the U.S. Postal Service for issuing "salable" stamps and aggressively marketing them are based on the November 20, 1892, report of the Honorable A. D. Hazen, third assistant postmaster general. The following quotes are of special interest:

## To Encourage Sales

*During the past summer the determination was reached by the Department to issue during the progress of the Columbian Exposition at Chicago, a special series of adhesive postage stamps of such a character as would help to signalize the four hundredth anniversary of the discovery of America by Columbus. This course was in accordance with the practice of other great postal administrations on occasions of national rejoicing, and it was consistent with the idea of a display at the Exposition of such articles as would illustrate the history, progress and administrative functions of the Post-Office Department, which Congress, by statute, has directed to be made part of a general governmental exhibit. The same idea has been carried out in a limited way during the Centennial Exposition at Philadelphia, in 1876, by the issue concurrently with that event, of a special design of stamped*



Fig. 1. This painting, thought to have the closest resemblance to Columbus, comes from a group called the "Giovios" after Paul Giovio (1483-1552), Bishop of Nocera, who possessed a collection of portraits of famous people in his palace at Como, Italy. In 1556 Cosimo de Medici, Duke of Florence, ordered these paintings sent to Florence for himself.

*This painting belonged at one time to the Orchi family in Italy and could have been taken there by Columbus's son, Hernando, in one of his many trips to that country. The likeness is very close to the description of how the "Great Admiral" looked, which Fray Bartolome de las Casas, a contemporary of Columbus, printed.*

*What turned out to be a similar portrait, obviously based on this one, was discovered underneath another painting in Spain's National Library in Madrid by Valentin Carderera, an historian. Fully uncovered and restored by Martinez Cubells, the curator of the Prado Museum in Madrid, it is now on view at the Naval Museum in Madrid.*

This article, focusing on the \$5 value, is the first in a series that will cover the entire Columbian issue. We wish to acknowledge especially the help of Jack Rosenthal, who has made his superb collection of this issue available to us for study and photography.





Fig. 2. Full set of card proofs from special presentation album. Above each value is the signature of the frame engraver, and below each value is the signature of the vignette engraver.

envelopes appropriate to the celebration. The measure was not only calculated to prove a popular one, but to be the means, through the sale of the stamps to the collectors, and by specially stimulating the use of the stamps to the public, of adding largely to the revenue of the Department....

The collecting of stamps is deserving of encouragement, for it tends to the cultivation of artistic tastes and the study of history and geography, especially on the part of the young, by the examination and comparison of stamps of different nations of the world, and to a more accurate knowledge of their postal systems. The new stamps will be purchased in large quantities simply for the use of collections,

without ever being presented in payment of postage; and the stamps sold in this way will, of course, prove a clear gain to the Department.

The benefits to accrue to the Exposition from the issue of such a series of stamps by constantly drawing it to public attention, both at home and abroad, are too patent to need elaboration.

The necessary arrangements for manufacturing the new stamps were made with the present contractors for furnishing all the other stamps in use. The work was begun late in September last, and it has progressed with such rapidity that a supply of upwards of 100,000,000 of the leading denominations has





The engravers for the American Bank Note Company who signed these proofs were Alfred Jones, Charles Skinner, Douglas S. Ronaldson, Robert Savage and George H. Seymour.

already been accumulated. It is expected that the full series will be completed in time to place the stamps on sale on Monday the 2nd of January, the period fixed for their issue being the whole of the calendar year 1893, and the estimated quantity to be required during that time being 3,000,000,000. The new stamps are, however, not intended to displace the current series of stamps, but will be in addition thereto so that anyone needing postage stamps will be able to procure either or both kinds, as he may prefer.

The principal feature of the Columbian stamps, with two exceptions, is the delineation of some scene in the life of Columbus associated with the discovery

of America, one of the exceptions being a stamp bearing a profile portrait of Columbus, similar to that on the souvenir 50 cent coin issued by the Treasury Department, and the other a stamp bearing portraits of Queen Isabella and Columbus in three-quarters face. There is a general resemblance in the two portraits of Columbus, both being taken from the same original picture. To properly illustrate the subjects selected it was found necessary to adopt a larger size than that in present use; the new stamps being of the same height and of nearly double the length of the regular stamps, the engraved space measuring  $\frac{7}{8}$  of an inch by  $1\frac{11}{32}$  inches.



The denominations are the same as those in the present series, except that the 50 cent stamp is substituted for the 90 cent, and additions are made of 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 dollars, such high denominations having heretofore been called for by some of the principal post-offices. The subjects on some of the stamps--1 cent, 2 cent, 5 cent, 6 cent, 50 cent and 2 dollar stamps--are copied from the works of American artists.

## Background

The stamps were printed by the American Bank Note Company, and all values with the exception of the 8-cent were placed on sale on January 2, 1893, with the idea that their use would create publicity for the forthcoming World's Columbian Exposition, which President Grover Cleveland opened in Chicago on May 1, 1893.

When the exhibition time came, the Post Office Department secured a prominent position in the United States Government Building (Figure 3), considered by many to be one of the most attractive of the 400 buildings in the exposition, and there presented a "state of the art" post office that handled all the mail for the exposition, employing 25 carriers and 25 clerks. All services were provided, all values of the Columbian set were sold, and several special cancellations were used during the six months the post office remained opened.

An adjacent gallery was used to hold a stamp exhibition (Figure 4). The March 1893 issue of *The Metropolitan Philatelist* contains a report from Al-

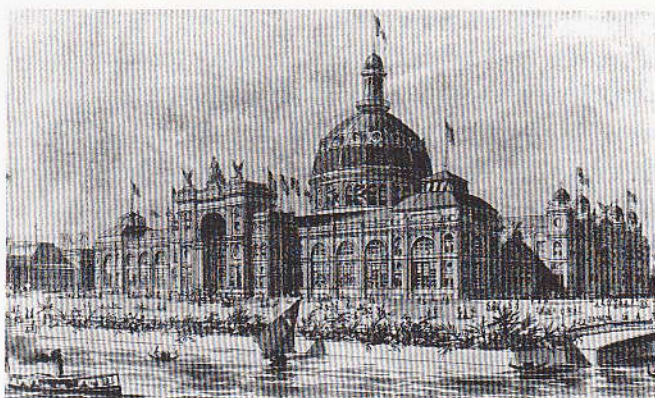


Fig. 3. United States Government Building at the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition, the site of the exposition's post office and stamp exhibits.

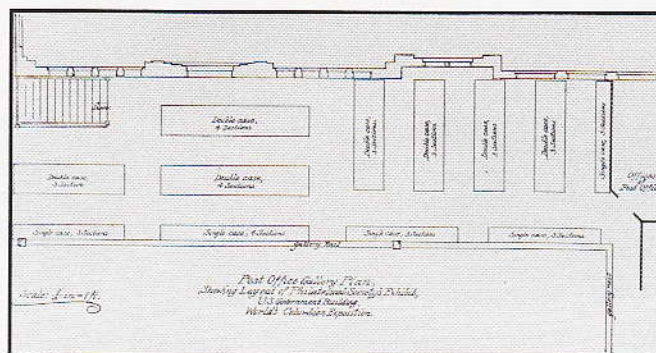


Fig. 4. Floor plan for the stamp exhibits gallery adjacent to the post office at upper right.

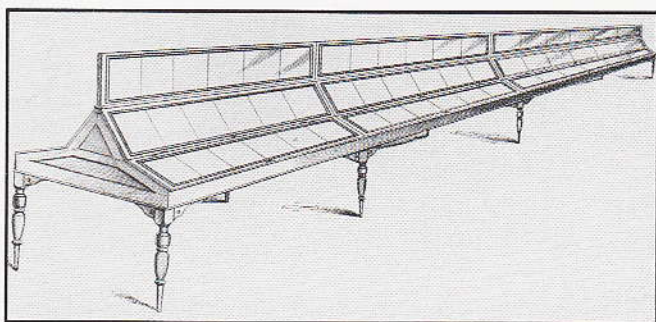


Fig. 5. One of the display cases especially designed for the stamp exhibits.

bert R. Rogers, chairman of the World's Fair Exhibit Committee of the American Philatelic Association, announcing the plans for the upcoming exhibition. He reported that Mr. Hazen had set aside for the use of the American Philatelic Association a gallery 65 feet long by 25 feet wide overlooking the post office. As to how the stamps were to be exhibited, he wrote that they were to be displayed in handsome cases made especially for them (Figure 5). There would be enough room to show 1,116 sheets averaging "forty-five" stamps to a sheet, for a total of about 50,000 stamps. He then exhorted all members to help by exhibiting "complete" collections of any country they had or helping to defray the estimated \$3,000 that the exhibition would cost.

Other sources report that the post office was a center of activity, filled with visitors who acquired stamps as souvenirs, mailed postcards or letters, and walked around the cases in the gallery admiring the exhibits.

It is clear now that the Columbian stamps were *news* in their time. Even *The New York Times* thought they were, and as early as August 1893 it printed the following commentary:



*In a few years the Columbian stamps will become rare, and the prices correspondingly high, so that many large holders are putting their collections aside in anticipation of such prices as are paid for the Centennial varieties of 1876, which are hard to find. This is especially true of the one, two, three, four and five dollar Columbian stamps. None of these varieties are used in the domestic mail service, as the heaviest printed matter which the Government will handle weighs but four pounds and requires but 64 cents in postage. Accordingly, the man who wishes to procure cancelled stamps of these higher values must overpay his postage at considerable loss to himself, a fact which goes to explain the Postmaster General's statement that the Government would realize between \$2,000,000 and \$3,000,000 profit on the sale of these stamps.*

### Great Demand

*So great is the demand for the Columbian varieties that several large business houses in this city have made contracts with stamp dealers who take all the Columbian stamps at one-third of their original value. Corresponding agents of these houses throughout the United States have been ordered to use on their large packages only stamps of large denomination, and many of these agents reply that post offices in several instances refuse to sell the higher values on the ground that the demand exceeds the supply. In Orange, N.J., the ladies of one of the churches have discovered that by selling 10,000 Columbian stamps of the commoner varieties enough may be obtained to support a bed in the local hospital for a stated period, and, accordingly, husbands, brothers and sweethearts in Orange are undergoing mild forms of torture in the philanthropic efforts of the ladies to wring from them every available Columbian stamp.*

*In Europe the craze for the little Columbian souvenirs is even more pronounced. The other day one of the large insurance companies of the city received a request from its branch office in Berlin to use only Columbian stamps on the company's mail, and to select the highest denominations possible. The letter went on to say that every house in Berlin having American connections has been besieged by collectors, and that the manager had reached the serious*

*conclusion that, if presented with a handful of the Columbian stamps, a good many persons could be induced to insure their lives. A tourist who recently returned from Italy relates that when he reached his hotel in Florence and announced his name he was instantly surrounded by an excited group of porters and hall boys, who said that there was mail awaiting him, and might they have the Columbian stamps. The same gentleman says that there is a corner of the Stock Exchange in Hamburg devoted to traffic in Columbian stamps, and that bulls and bears daily buy and sell as carefully as though they handled the highest gilt-edge securities.*

*Venezuela has borrowed the idea of the Columbian stamp in use in the United States and is now using a Columbian stamp of its own, but so nearly like ours that only careful observers can detect the difference. The Argentine Republic celebrated a centenary of some sort in 1892, and put into circulation a set of souvenir stamps which appear to have suggested the idea of the Columbian set in use in the United States. The Argentine stamps, however, were only sold on one day of the year, and in such small quantities that many of the genuine ones can now scarcely be bought at any price. All these stamps, and, in fact, all the stamps used by the several countries of South America and Central America, are made in this city.*

As we enter 1992, we thought that our readers would like to know what the PF records show on this most interesting issue. Of course, the dollar values have a mystique of their own: small printings, rare multiples, scarce usages. They are among the most submitted items for expertization.

We will start with the \$5 value.

### The \$5 Design

The official Post Office Department description of the "five dollar" stamp is:

"Profile of head of Columbus after a cast provided by the Treasury Department from the souvenir silver piece authorized by Act of Congress. The profile is in a circle looking left. On the right of which is the figure of America, represented by a female Indian



with a crown of feathers. On the left, a figure of Liberty, both figures being in a sitting posture."

It is said that a Spanish medal struck in Madrid served as the basis for Oliver L. Warner's rendering of the Columbian exposition 50-cent commemorative coin. The actual engraver of the coin was C. E. Barber. The cast provided by the Treasury Department served as guidance for the engraver of the stamp, Charles Skinner.



Fig. 6. This portrait of Christopher Columbus by Lorenzo Lotto is the most probable source for the profile of Columbus's head used on the \$5 stamp.

exhibited during the exposition. Without doubts, it was this semblance of Columbus that was reproduced on the \$4 value.

In comparison with the \$5 stamp, it is curious that the half-dollar Columbus coin is relatively common (Figure 7). It was available as a souvenir during the exposition at a price of \$1 each, but the initial minting of 950,000 pieces did not sell out. Later the



Fig. 7. The obverse and reverse sides of the commemorative half dollar Columbus coin issued in conjunction with the exposition.

left-over coins were put in general circulation at face value, to be joined later by an additional minting of 1,550,000 pieces.

The most striking of all essays and proofs is the incomplete engraving of the frame and vignette with blank spaces for side figures (Figure 8). Clarence Brazer believed this to be unique. It is black on india paper and die-sunk on card. The design measures 34.2 x 22.5 mm., the size of the larger die proof being 74.5 x 61.3.

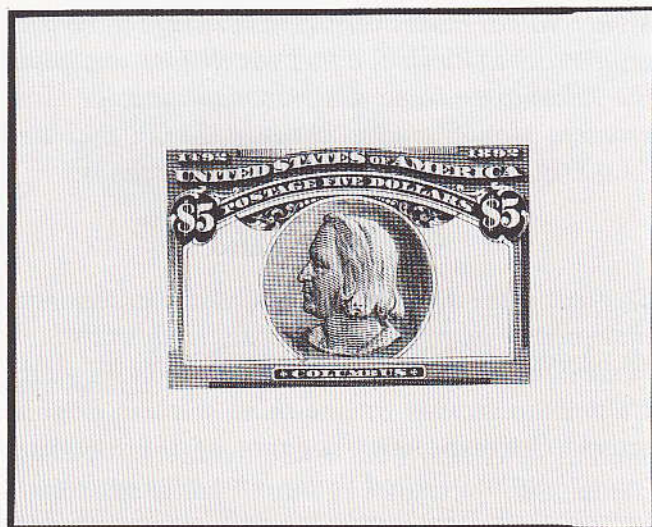


Fig. 8. Unique proof of the incomplete engraving of the \$5 frame and vignette, with blank spaces for side figures.

Five different stages of this die are known, each progressively moving towards the final stamp. On the second stage, silver prints were placed in the blank side spaces, and this design was approved by the third assistant postmaster general, A. D. Hazen (Figure 9).

The final stage of the die can be founded printed black on india paper, as well as black on wove paper sunk on full-size card, showing the die number C-275. A variety, surface-printed directly on card, does not bear the number.

Some black-on-white wove-paper die proofs were mounted on gray card with the rest of the series. They became part of the "1903 Roosevelt presentation albums."



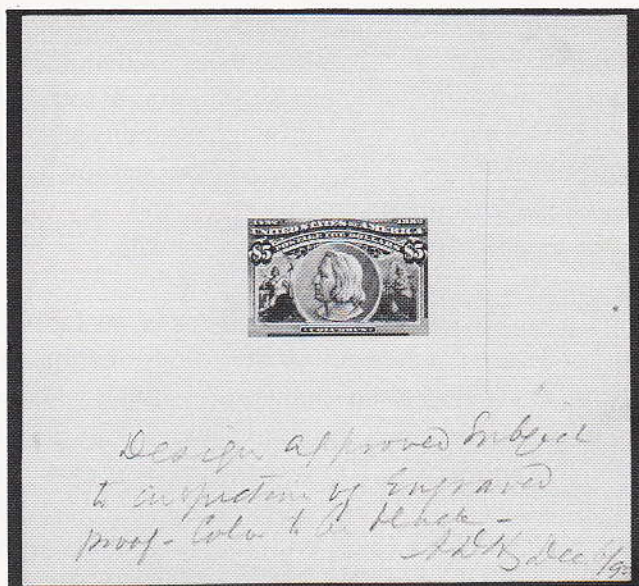


Fig. 9. Engraver's progressive die proof, with silver prints placed in the blank side spaces. Beneath the proof is the initialed approval of A.D. Hazen, third assistant postmaster general.

Another printing was completed for the Panama-Pacific Exposition of 1915, this one on yellowish wove paper and much more scarce.

In addition, different stages of plate proofs can be found.

The Jack Rosenthal Collection of this issue contains a letter dated January 25, 1893, from Charles Skinner, the engraver, in response to a request from a friend for a sample proof. We quote its content because of its interest not only for this stamp, but as an indication of the policies followed by the postal authorities.

"Friend Schoff:

"Yours of the 23rd received. In reply to the request for a Set of Proofs of the "Columbian Stamps" in black, such a series has not been printed in each case. They were proved in the Colors that were selected for each denomination by the P.O. Dept. and such instructions were given by the Dept., and the officers of the Co. (American Bank Note Co.) to prevent proofs getting out. The only stamps printed in black is the five dollar, of which I send you an unfinished Proof. I also send a Proof of the 50c and 5c. These were my own work, and I happen to have them on

my desk and claim the right to give my own work to an old friend. Of course, you will keep them quietly to yourself.

"Yours very truly,

"Chas Skinner"

## Printing

The American Bank Note Company used only plate DD108 to print all the \$5 stamps. Top and bottom plate imprints exist. Ten percent of all \$5 Columbians have a straight edge (no perforations) either at top or bottom.

According to official records, 27,350 \$5 stamps were delivered to postmasters and put on sale January 2, 1893. John Luff quotes that 5,506 remaining copies were destroyed in June 1899, leaving a total of 21, 844 copies for the public and collectors.

Not all stamps were printed at the same time since there exists a clear distinction between black and grayish black stamps. There are also two types of gum, a yellowish gum characteristic of issues printed by the American Bank Note Company and a whitish gum more like that used at the U.S. Bureau of Engraving and Printing. Also, there are stamps with even perforations, and some with more irregular ones. It is known that in 1894, when it was decided that the Bureau of Engraving and Printing would be the producer of U.S. stamps, the American Bank Note Company was compelled to turn over all dies, transfer rolls, plates and printed sheets to the U.S. postal agent. The gumming and perforations of these sheets by the bureau could explain the differences.

## Catalog Value

Back in 1923, thirty years after the issuance, the first *Scott Specialized Catalogue of United States Stamps* priced the \$5 Columbian at \$12 for a mint copy and \$8.50 used. Eleven years later in 1934 it was valued at \$28 and \$26, or about six times face value. By 1945 the prices were \$75 and \$60. Twenty years later in 1965 they had reached \$170 and \$145.



Then as we entered the 1980s, this stamp became a favorite of the investors. By 1985 it reached the all-time-high value of \$3,750 mint. In 1991 Scott's introduced its new "retail" prices, and the \$5 was valued at \$2,850, only to rise to \$3,100 in 1992.

As a used stamp the \$5 received its highest catalog value at \$1,700 in 1988, then dropped to \$1,100 in the 1991 "retail"-priced catalog.

## The Multiples

Over the years, The Philatelic Foundation has issued certificates for 26 multiples (blocks or strips of four or more) of the \$5 value, several of them submitted more than once.

The first certification ever issued for this stamp (PF No. 3743) was for a block of four with original gum. The opinion of genuine in all respects, dated July 21, 1952, was signed by Theodore Steinway.

The largest known multiple is a block of 14 stamps now in the collection of Jack Rosenthal, for which The Philatelic Foundation issued certificate No. 250,000 on October 24, 1991 (Figure 10, front cover). This unique block was bought in 1893 by an Englishman visiting the Chicago World's Colum-

bian Exposition. Obviously a man of means, he acquired a total of 10,422 stamps of all denominations, mostly in complete sheets, for a total of \$1,313 U.S. dollars. Why he bought so many stamps we'll never know. After his death the stamps were found, some of them stuck together, and they were given to H. R. Harmer in London for sale.

This remarkable find was offered "as is" as lot No. 489 of Harmer's November 30, 1954, auction. A contingent of American stamp professionals went to London to examine the lot. Finally, the Weill Brothers' bid of \$37,100 was the winner. The full lot contained only 22 examples of the \$5: a vertical pair, a block of six (3x2) with the upper left stamp damaged and the superb right-margined block of 14. Unfortunately this block of 14 was stuck to the back of a block of 10 (5x2) of the \$2 Columbian, which was stuck in turn to a defective pair of the 50-cent value (Figures 11 and 12).

With great care, Roger Weill "bathed" the stamps, obviously sacrificing the gum but conserving the multiples. In 1963 the Weill Brothers sold the block to an anonymous "Texan" collector. Later it was offered as lot No. 164 in the 1983 Robert A. Siegel "Rarities of the World" auction, selling for \$47,500.



Fig. 11. The \$5 right-margined block of 14 as it was found stuck to other Columbian stamps (see Figure 12) and offered in the Harmer's auction of November 30, 1954.





Fig. 12. A \$2 left-margin block of 10 stuck to the back of the \$5 block of 14, and a 50-cent pair stuck to the front of the \$2 block.

### Imprint Blocks and Strips

The largest plate number block in existence now is a bottom imprint block of eight with wide selvage (Figure 13), which received PF certificate No. 38848 on June 26, 1972, the opinion reading, "It is genuine with light gum staining around some strengthened perforations." This block was last of-

fered by Robert A. Siegel on May 31, 1972, as part of the United States Trust Company Collection.

There exist three imprint blocks of six. The only one with imprint at top received PF certificate No. 239,245 on March 31, 1991, stating that "it is genuine with original gum." This was originally a block



Fig. 13. The largest \$5 Columbian plate number block still in existence.





Fig. 14. The "Crocker" top imprint block of 10 before it was divided into an imprint block of six (right) and a block of four (left).

of 10 (Figure 14), owned by the famous collector William H. Crocker, who assembled one of the most spectacular U.S. collections. The block was last seen as such when auctioned as lot No. 417 of the Crocker material by Harmer, Rooke & Company in London on November 23-25, 1938. The auctioneer's description of the slanted perforations explains why it was later "dismembered":

"5 dollars, black, mint corner block of 10 (5x2) from top left of sheet, with outer margins and plate number DD No. 108, the block is centered to bottom, but is in immaculate mint condition and with full original gum, a wonderful piece."

It sold for 300 British pounds.

As a block of six in the "Lilly" collection (Figure 15), lately it has been acquired through private treaty by the Columbian Stamp Company. It is the subject of PF certificate No. 239245. The remaining upper left corner block of four has not been submit-

ted for expertization and perhaps has been broken into singles.

The two other blocks of six have bottom imprints.

The one with PF certificate No. 49251, issued on June 2, 1975, has a reduced selvage but is exceptionally centered and has full original gum (Figure 16). It last sold at the Cherrystone Stamp Center auction on December 4-5, 1991, reaching a record price of \$176,000.

The second block with full bottom imprint is perfectly centered, also with full original gum, lightly hinged and with a tiny sealed tear on the left top stamp (Figure 17). It sold for \$104,500 at Christie's sale of the Kobacker Collection on September 25, 1991.



Fig. 15. The "Lilly" top imprint block of six, originally part of the "Crocker" block of ten.



Fig. 16. The bottom imprint block of six auctioned by the Cherrystone Stamp Center for the record price of \$176,000.

Only four imprint strips of four have been recorded by the PF. All are bottom imprints, two with wide selvage. Certificates Nos. 33870 and 243105 have





Fig. 17. The perfectly centered "Kobacker" bottom imprint block of six.

been issued for the same imprint, which has original gum (Figure 18). Certificate No. 35827, issued for

have reduced bottom selvage. Certificate No. 39020 (Figure 20) states, "Genuine with a light crease and a tiny thin spot on left stamp." Certificate No. 251138 (Figure 21) reads, "Genuine, original gum, previously hinged."

Sixteen mint blocks of four are recorded by the PF. Certificate Nos. 33417 and 35269/177793 have been issued for two lower right corner blocks with DD on the selvage. PF certificate No. 56522 covers a block with bottom imprint reading "American Bank Note." Among the 13 others, all normal blocks of four, one was regummed and is toned, as described on PF certificate No. 105363.



Figs. 18-21. The only four recorded imprint strips of four.

the other wide selvage strip (Figure 19), reads, "Genuine, slightly toned and with thin spots at the extremities of the bottom margin." The two others

Another mint block of four, the second ever submitted to the PF, turned out to be a "perforated plate proof," as recorded on certificate No. 14882.



Two used blocks of four are also recorded (Figures 22-23). Both are canceled in the center with a bull's-eye target cancellation. They were issued certificates Nos. 113831 and 187455.



Fig. 22. Two used blocks of four, both probably canceled to order non-contemporaneously.

Herman "Pat" Herst has reported that in 1945 he canceled unused blocks of four of the \$3, \$4 and \$5 Columbian stamps without gum with a circular bull's-eye cancel that he found in the Shrub Oak, New York, post office which he frequented.

### Usages

There are no recorded \$5 covers with cancellations dated January 2, 1893, the official first day of sale. At least in Chicago the stamps were not available until January 3. Lester Brookman records that Elmer Stuart of Chicago gave him the following information concerning the way the stamps were put on sale:

*Some time ago I obtained a 2c Columbian on cover postmarked with machine cancellation "Chicago, Illinois January 3rd, 12M 1893." In the upper left corner in script is the notation "Postmarked January 3, 1893, 12M, 1st hour and 1st day of issue to public in Chicago." I gave little credence to this inscription thinking that the party who wrote it was mistaken and that it really was a second day cover. But on further thought I decided to investigate. I searched through files in Chicago newspapers of the time and in the Chicago Tribune of Wednesday, Jan. 4, 1893, page 8, I found a two column story of the first day sale at Chicago. I take the liberty to quote the following extracts from this article which to present day collectors are both interesting and amusing and definitely sets the day of issue in Chicago as Jan. 3.*

*"About \$300,000 worth of the new Columbian postage stamps were put on sale at the P.O. yesterday morning and at 4:30 P.M. exactly \$35,822.50 worth had been sold. From the main office at that hour, 1,946,023 jubilee stamps had gone out and 9,000 had been sold at the 13 sub-stations in various parts of the city. Like the old Athenians who were always in search of something new, Chicago people thronged the corridors of the P.O. yesterday eager to secure Columbian souvenir stamps. All sorts and conditions of men, women and children fell in line before the various stamp windows. Of course the stamp collectors were there--that goes without saying.*

*"More than ordinary conditions stimulated the stamp gatherers from the fact that this Columbian series will be in use only a year and it is simply a question of time when the pasters will become as scarce as successful Republican candidates after the recent election. That is why those possessed of the stamp fervor turned out in full force yesterday.*

*"Gentle old maids were wedged in between corpulent business men and small boys carrying books already mutilated and prepared for the new prizes. The young man who clerks it wanted Uncle Sam's latest to send home to folks in the country. The sharp featured stamp speculator betrayed himself in his eagerness to get ahead of the next man.*





Fig. 24. Complete set on registered cover mailed in New York on December 6, 1893.



By Registered Mail,  
 Per U.S. Mail S.S. "St Paul"  
 from N.Y. Feby. 24



Fig. 26. Largest recorded usage of Columbian stamps, \$49.34 on a piece of registered package wrapper, mailed from Bangor, Maine, on February 19, 1897.



RECEIVED  
FEB 19 1907  
WANGON, WASH.





Westport Conn  
Nov 8-1893

Registered No. 84/61

Westport Conn  
Nov 8-1893

191117

Hull Brothers

Care of Jos. Hull

67+69 Front St

New York

NY



Fig. 25. Complete set on registered cover mailed from Westport, Connecticut, in November 1893.



The clerks handled the crowds admirably, the only trouble was with the person and there were hosts of him who insisted on buying a full collection comprising only one of each kind. Politely but firmly the clerk invariably answered that collections were not to be had. Everyone must buy a reasonable amount of the stamps that were nearest at hand, namely those costing less than 15c and supposed to be used for the immediate sending out of mail matter.

" 'Land of Goshen!' exclaimed Cashier Catlin. 'If the clerks were to constitute themselves a bureau for sorting out and selling the stamps in collections, there would be no end of the job. Consequently the collectors had to spend several hours at it getting in line many times before all denominations could be secured. The 50c stamps were not ready for sale till the afternoon.' "

Of course, any Columbian value on cover with a World's Fair cancellation commands a premium which is recognized by its separate Scott catalog valuation.

As we review the other Columbian values in later issues of this *Quarterly*, we will show examples of these cancellations.

## Covers

As you may well surmise, there were no rates that needed the \$5 value. Only parcels could reach the weight necessary to warrant a \$5 stamp. Nonetheless, \$5 stamps were placed on covers and sent to friends or as requested.

Richard Searing, in his article about the \$5 Columbian in the August 1991 issue of the *Chronicle of the*

U.S. Classic Postal Issues, gives a very impressive list of 36 recorded covers.

We have issued certificates for 16 covers, of which nine have a single \$5 value and the seven others have combinations including other stamps. Four of these 16 covers are not on the Searing list.

The earliest recorded cover with a \$5--considered by many to be the top single \$5 cover-- originated from the Pabst Brewing Company in Hoboken, New Jersey; went to Bremerhaven, Germany; and is canceled with a "U.S. German Seapost" office cancel dated January 6, 1893 (Figure 23).

We have records of two covers with the full set of Columbians. One dates from December 6, 1893, and was registered at

the Station K branch post office of New York City (Figure 24, in color). It was prepared by the well-known stamp dealer C. Witt and sent to his wife.

Since Mr. Witt bought large quantities of the Columbian stamps, he protested to the Post Office Department in Washington about the condition of some of the high-value copies, some of them being with a straight edge. Third Assistant Postmaster General A. D. Hazen answered as follows: "...as to the imperfectly perforated stamps in your possession bought at a stamp agency in your city (New York), you are requested to return the same to Postmaster Van Cott and he is hereby authorized to receive the same, giving you perfect ones in exchange and to send the imperfect stamps to this office for proper credit."

The second full-set cover, the subject of certificate No. 191117, originated in Westport, Connecticut; is dated November 1-, 1893; has registration No.



Fig. 23. The earliest recorded \$5 on cover, dated January 6, 1893, from Hoboken, New Jersey, to Bremerhaven, Germany.



84/81; and is addressed to Hull Brothers, New York City (Figure 25, in color). All the stamps have been canceled with a manuscript pen cross. The color of the \$4 value has faded.

Recently the PF issued certificate No. 256700 for a new find, the largest recorded usage of Columbian stamps (Figure 26, in color). The registered piece has, besides a complete set up to the \$1 value, three copies each of the \$2, \$3 and \$4 plus four copies of the \$5 including a strip of three, for a total franking of \$49.34. This fragment of a parcel wrapping, originating in Bangor, Maine, on February 19, 1897, went by the American Line steamship *St. Paul* from New York on February 24, 1897, to Southampton, England. The weight of the parcel was 30 pounds, 8 or 9 ounces. (In 1899 the *St. Paul* became the first American ship equipped with the Marconi wireless ship-to-shore communications system.)

### Counterfeits

The PF Reference Collection contains only two types of very crude imitations. One, of European origin, is marked "IMITATION" in red ink in two different sizes. The other, a forgery, also has a fake cancellation. Neither of these types will fool anybody (Figure 27).



Fig. 27. Crude imitations of the \$5 Columbian. The top two are so marked, and the bottom has a forged cancellation as well.

In 1985 the German firm Pro Phil Forum in Bremen, owned by opera singer Peter Winter, began creating so-called "REPLIKS" of classical issues. Starting with museum-quality photos, it produced engraved

dies at considerable expense and added the word "Replik" (German for "Replica") on the back of reproductions. This word can be easily removed. To the uninitiated, the replicas look like the real stamps.

Most of the stamps the firm reproduced were European, but it also ventured into the U.S. field by imitating Scott Nos. 3 and 4 plus the \$5 Columbian. However, the firm printed the \$5 in two colors of orange, in blocks of four, with perforations and white selvage all around (Figure 28). Also known from the same source is an imperforate single printed in black (Figure 29).

We are reproducing a block offered by the House of Stamps of Switzerland, a sales agency associated with Pro Phil Forum and closed since last year. Notice the asking price of \$250 and the misalignment of the stamps within the block.



Fig. 28. A recent replica in orange from Pro Phil Forum.



Fig. 29. An imperforate facsimile in black from Pro Phil Forum.



## Expertization

As mentioned before, the \$5 Columbian is among the most frequently submitted item for expertization. An analysis leaflet released by the PF in 1982, covering the number received between 1945 and September that year (through certificate No. 109600), shows that 512 Columbians were submitted up to that time. During the last 10 years another 760 \$5 Columbians have been submitted for a total of 1,272, divided as follows:

Single stamps	1,206
Multiples (blocks of four or more)	26
Strips	8
Covers	16
Proofs	13
Specimens	3
	<hr/> 1,272

Of the single stamps, 993 were submitted as mint and 213 as used. No stamp has been submitted with a straight edge.

An analysis of all submissions follows:

Number submitted	1,272
Genuine	568
Other than as submitted (thins, tears, other condition defects)	302
Regummed	196
Reperforated	187
Top	94
Bottom	46
Left	18
Right	29
Altered (counterfeit cancel, perforated proof, etc.)	19

19% of all mint items submitted are regummed.

15% of all items submitted are reperforated.

## Unreported Covers

Concluding this article about the \$5 Columbian value are photos of five covers not previously reported, four of them with PF certificates.



Fig. 30. Cover mailed in Philadelphia on March 24, 1893, delivered within city and canceled with a 7-bar duplex containing "2" in the center. Never certified.



Fig. 31. Entire (Scott No. U350) from Deering Center, Maine, on July 4, 1893, to Boston. Registration (manuscript) No. 117. PF certificate No. 59117.



Fig. 32. Registered cover from Los Angeles on April 4, 1894, to Washington. PF certificate No. 231292.





Fig. 33. Entire (Scott No. U311) from Pittsburgh, on April 7, 1894, to Mittelbergheim near Barr in Alsace, Germany, arriving at Barr on April 26. Overfranked with Columbian 3-cent, 10-cent, 15-cent, 30-cent, 50-cent, \$2 and \$5 values. The 15-cent stamp is torn. PF certificate No. 179897.



Fig. 34. Registered entire (Scott No. U314) from East Bristol, Wisconsin, on April 4, 1896, to Fifiield, Wisconsin. Registration No. 2314. PF certificate No. 91006.

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