

Stamp Identification: The 1847 Issue and Reproductions

by John F. Dunn

This study is based in part on information in our United States Reference Manual. See the page 6 for information on the Manual.

The 1847 5¢:

The following description for the 5¢ stamp is taken from *United States Postage Stamps*, U.S. Government Printing Office, 1970:

“A portrait of (Benjamin) Franklin from a drawing by James B. Longacre [see photo below], three-quarters face looking left, white neckerchief and fur collar to coat, the ground enclosure surrounded by a faintly engraved wreath of leaves, on which are the letters ‘U’ and ‘S’ placed in the left and right upper corners, respectively, and in each of the two lower corners a large figure ‘5’. On a line curved with the upper portion of the medallions are the words ‘Post Office’, and following the lower line of the medallion outside the enclosure the words ‘Five Cents.’ A border of fine straight lines surrounds the entire stamp. Color, light brown.”



The source of the 5¢ design has subsequently been ascribed to this portrait by Joseph S. Duplessis

The designer was James Parsons Manor, who based his design on stock portraits that were used by the printer, Rawdon, Wright, Hatch and Edson of New York City, on numerous bank notes (see page 2). Note their initials “R. W. H. & E.” at the bottom of the individual stamp.

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A \$5 note of the New Jersey State Bank at New-Brunswick. The die cut designs used for this and other currency notes were the same as those used for the 1847 Issue.

The 1847 10¢:



Using the source for the 10¢ stamp, *United States Postage Stamps*, U.S. Government Printing Office, 1970):

“Portrait of Washington from Stuart's painting, three-quarters face, looking to the right, white neckerchief and black coat, faint wreath of artificial leaves surrounding the enclosing lines of the medallion and extending to the border, on which are the letters ‘U’ and ‘S’ in

the left and right upper corners, respectively, and in each of the lower corners a large Roman numeral ‘X’. In a curved line around the upper and lower lines of the medallion are the words ‘Post Office’ at the top and ‘Ten cents’ at the bottom, with a straight-line outer border, as shown on the 5-cent stamp. Color, black.”



The design also was taken from stock portraits that were used by Rawdon, Wright, Hatch and Edson on numerous bank notes, with their initials, “R. W. H. & E.” at the bottom of the stamp.

The 1875 Reproductions

Two of the more unusual issues in U.S. philately are the 1875 Reproductions (Scott 3 and 4) of the 1847 First Issue (Sc. 1 and 2).

- From the moment they were placed on sale to the present , they have never been valid for postage.

- Even though neither they nor the First Issue (which had been demonetized effective July 1, 1851) were valid for postage during the life of the Reproductions, they are catalogued among the postage stamps and some postally use examples are known!

- Though issued in much smaller quantities than the First Issue, they carry only a fraction of the 1847 Issue catalog values.

These apparent contradictions are explained by another:

- Although they were issued in 1875 for the 1876 Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia, they were not available for sale at the show. Instead, these and the other 1875 “Special Printings” were produced so that the Post Office Department would be able to display for the viewing pleasure of Exposition visitors a complete set of all United States stamps issued to that time.

They also were intended for sale to collectors who wished to own a set of all designs issued to that time, but to prevent their being used at the Expo, they were placed on sale to collectors from the office of the Third Assistant Postmaster General in Washington, D.C., and were issued without gum.

After years of being listed among the General Issues, with #3 and #4 immediately after #1 and #2, for the 1991 *Scott Specialized Catalogue*, the editors were swayed by the purists and decided to move them to the back-of-the-book, placing them in a Special Printings section, just before the Essays and Proofs sections.

Following protests from dealers, owners, and traditionalists, and even though purists still insist they should not be included among the General Issues, in 1994 they were placed back with the General Issues, but in their own sec-

tion with all of the other 1875-1885 Special Printings. In the 1998 Specialized and in the 1999 Volume 1, the Special Printings section was discontinued and, for example, Scott 3 and 4 are listed immediately following Scott 1 and 2. This restores the Special Printings to their status before the first round of changes were made in 1994.

The ready availability of the 1875 Reproductions of the 5¢ and 10¢ First Issue (relative to the 1847 stamps themselves) in sound unused condition explains why the 1875s carry a considerably lower value than unused 1847s. Here are the comparisons:

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Scott #	Quantity	Unused value
1847 5¢, #1	c. 3.7 million	\$6,750
1847 10¢, #2	c. 865,000	35,000
1875 5¢, #3	4,779	825
1875 10¢, #4	3,883	1,000

As a result of these relative values, collectors need to be concerned about the Reproductions being misidentified as the First Issues, either on or off cover. Fortunately, there are characteristics that make identification relatively simple. Here they are:

- **For both values**, the Reproductions are slightly shorter and a bit wider than the First Issues.
- The initials “R. W. H. & E.” below the central medallion on the First Issue, are more legible than on the Reproduction.

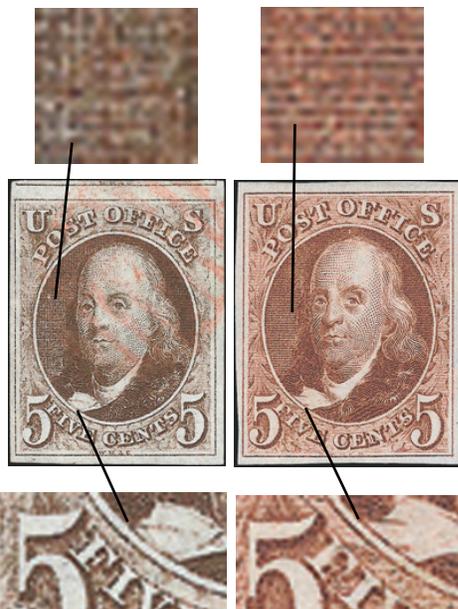


There are other differences, but the most commonly used distinguishing characteristic for the 1847 issue (Sc. 1 and 2) and the 1875 Reproductions (Sc. 3 and 4) are the “R. W. H. & E.” initials at the bottom of each stamp. They are more distinct on the 1847s. Above, left to right, Sc.1, Sc. 3, Sc. 2, Sc. 4.

For the 5¢ stamp:

- The **vertical** lines within the medallion of the original (left stamp) are distinct, while in the Reproduction (right stamp), they are less distinct or barely visible.

- A better test that requires no comparisons is the position of the frill on Franklin's shirt. On the 1875, it touches the medallion frame about on the same vertical with the top of the numeral 5 in the lower left corner; on the 1847, it touches somewhat lower, more on a line with the top of the letter "F" in FIVE.



For the 10¢ stamp:

- Comparative characteristics include Washington's mouth (straighter on the 1875—right stamp—than on the 1847—left stamp—especially visible along the lower lip); his eyes (with a somewhat sleepy look on the 1875 relative to the original); and a dot in the curl of the hair near his left cheek (more distinct on the 1875, circled here).



- Another test that is easier to apply without viewing both versions at the same time, is the white shirt collar. On the original it is distinct; on the Reproduction it is so dark that it almost blends with the dark collar of the coat.



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