

Second Bureau's Ugly Duckling: Two Cents Washington Flag, 1903-04



Chicagopex

November 21-23

Itasca, IL

George Washington appeared on two face different stamps of the United States 1902 Second Bureau definitive issue. The “flag” version was current for ten months because print quality issues led to many complaints. According to Johl, “When the philatelic writes of the day saw the die proof of this stamp they too, proclaimed it a masterpiece, but unfortunately when the stamp itself appeared the result was most disappointing. The die proof had been made in black and the fine details showed particularly well...but when printed on regular paper by fast presses, red ink plus dampened stock gave a very mediocre effect.” (United States Postage stamps 1902-1935, pg. 26)After two months, it was announced a redesigned tamp would be issued.

Purpose and Scope

This postal history exhibit is a study of the Washington Flag stamp that was current from January 17 to November 12, 1903, when it was replaced by the Washington Shield stamp. The stamp was not withdrawn at this time but continued to be sold until stocks were depleted. When depletion occurred is not definitively known, but it appears to be in the first quarter of 1904 since, as the exhibit shows, its use drops sharply thereafter.

The exhibit demonstrates the way the denomination was used to pay various contemporary rates, as solo, multiples or in combination with other denominations. Several more unusual uses are included: drop rate, diplomatic mail, supplementary and postage due.

Treatment

The Flag was meant to be the workhorse of the series since it paid both the first-class domestic letter and the first-class foreign postcard rates. The exhibit begins with solo uses with one page showing progressively lower quality strikes of the stamp, demonstrating why it was replaced. First class uses from remailings to treaty ports follow. Booklet stamps, multiple rates, wrapper uses, third and forth classes followed by registration finish the exhibit.

Important items are bordered in red.

Rarity and Importance

With a production of over a billion, the Flag on cover is not difficult to find. However, due to the short period of availability, many uses and combinations are challenging. The cover with the Flag used as a postage due from the Philippines is likely unique. The cover processed in Nagasaki is the only I have seen. Booklet panes used on cover are rare and any identifiable booklet pane stamp uses are scarce, this exhibit has three. Although the bisect is an illegal use, it appears to have been accepted and is rare for the time period and issue. Supplementary uses presented to a foreign ship and cancelled on board by a foreign seapost are very scarce according to Piskiewicz (United states Supplementary Mail, pg. 53) .

Rate Chart

First-class letter	2c/ oz.	Registration	8c
Third –class	1c/2oz.	Foreign First-class	5c/ oz.
Forth-class	1c/oz.		

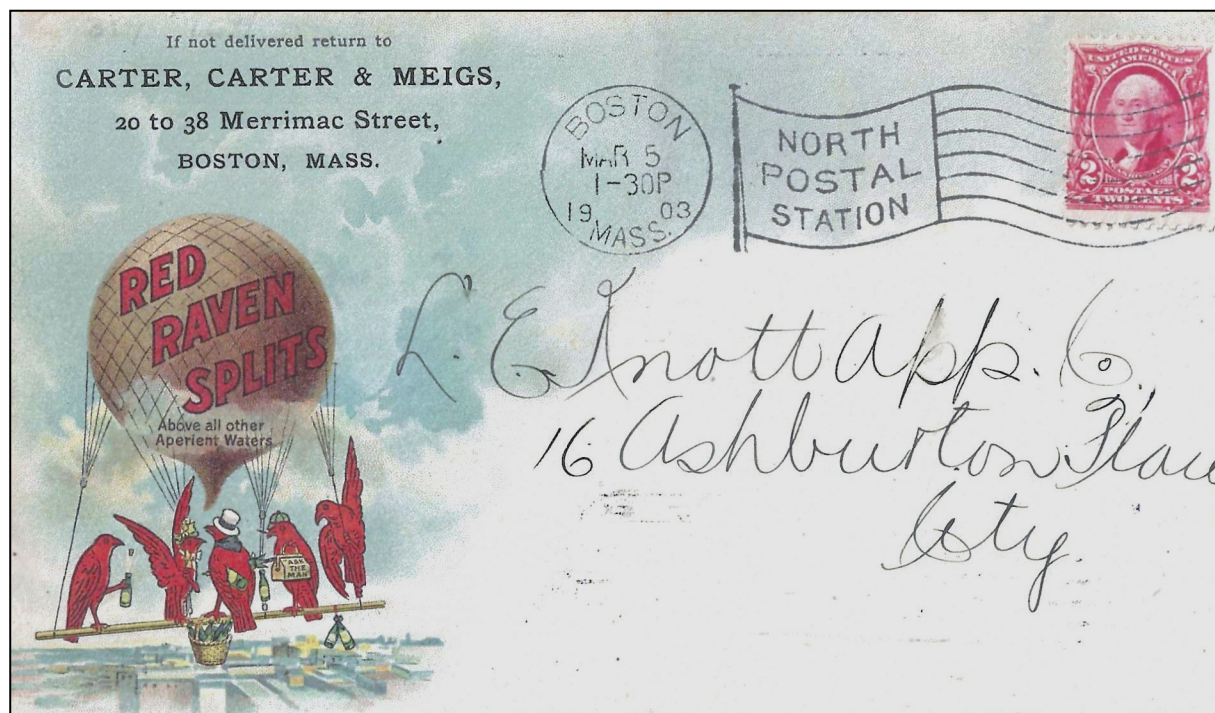


Second Bureau's Ugly Duckling: Two Cents Washington Flag, 1903-04



George Washington appeared on two face-different stamps of the United States 1902 Second Bureau definitive series. Paying both the first-class domestic letter and foreign postcard rate, the two cent was meant to be the workhorse of the series. Because of print quality issues, the “flag” version was current for ten months. According to the *New York Times*, “...if not labeled WASHINGTON it could be taken for ADAMS, MADISON, or MONROE.” Within two months of being issued, the announcement was made it would be replaced. The Washington Sheild was issued November 12, 1903. This exhibit demonstrates the many rates and uses of this relatively short-lived definitive.

P	Solo Uses: Various first-class	N	Solo: Used from Nagasaki
L	Solo Uses: Remailing, Postage due, territorial	O	Illegal: Bisect
A	Make-Up: Wrappers and multiple rates	T	
N	Make-Up: Domestic and foreign registration	A	Combinations: Philippine postage due
		B	
		L	
		E	Multiples: Booklet pane, supplementary



The Washington flag stamp used to pay the first-class letter rate. Although this is a drop-rate use, at carrier offices, the rate was the still 2c/oz.

Significant items are framed in red.