

An Essay-Proof History for the One Cent Franklin of 1887 - Synopsis

Based on original research by the exhibitor, this exhibit presents the material basis and rationale for the present essay listings for this stamp as they now appear in the standard catalog (2025). Using essay-proof material throughout, this historical-traditional exhibit traces the development and subsequent use of the stamp design for the one cent Franklin of 1887, from its earliest known state in 1886 through the accepted design during the period of issuance, and its subsequent use into the twentieth century.

By order of the POD, three stamp designs were to be submitted, one of which was adopted.

Die Group I: Right Facing

die and state	block size:	characteristics	Page in exhibit	Scott Listings: Present
Die I, State 1	2 15/32 x 2 15/32" (62.5x62 mm)	background <u>shading in horizontal lines only.</u>	2	212-E1
Die I, State 2	2 15/32 x 2 15/32" (62.5x62.5 mm)	<u>Diagonal lines</u> added to the <u>background shading</u> , sloping downward from right to left	3	212-E2
Die II, State 1; marked in pencil	2 1/8 x 2 1/2" (55x64 mm)	same image on a new size die block; Pencil shading added to mark need for revision	3-4	212-E2B
Die II, State 2	2 1/8 x 2 1/2" (55x64 mm)	diagonal shading unchanged; shading cut lines deepened for bottom shadows.	4	212-E3
Die II, State 3	2 5/32 x 2 1/2" (55x64 mm)	frame added Rejected design #1	5-6	212-E4

Die Group II: Left Facing

die and state	block size:	characteristics	Page in exhibit	Scott Listings: Present
Die III	2 15/32 x 2 15/32" (62.5x62.5 mm)	die block same size as first die block background diagonals slope downward from right to left	7	212-E5
Die IV, state 1	2 1/4 x 2 1/2" (57x64 mm)	frame added (same frame as in E4) <u>die block</u> is narrowed	7	212-E6
as Die IV, state 1 - - pencil shaded	2 1/4 x 2 1/2" (57x64 mm)	Pencil shading added below the vignette, indicating where additional shading was desired	8	212-E7
Die IV, state 2a&b	2 1/4 x 2 9/16" (57x65 mm)	deeper shadows before and below bust; added arc of shading below vignette frame in two stages	8	212-E8 & 212-E9
Die IV, state 3 (unlisted)	2 1/4 x 2 9/16" (57x65 mm)	deeply cut left background shading extended. Pencil lines and notation,	9	212-E10
Die IV, state 4 (finished form)	2 1/4 x 2 1/2" (57x64 mm)	final die state altered frame (adopted)	10	212P1

This exhibit shows that two separate *series* of dies were created; one series for right facing vignettes, and another for left. This conclusion is derived from comparisons of the die sinkage measurements, which are noted in the exhibit as indicators of the size of the die block necessary to produce the sinkage, hence “block size.” Die sinkage measurements reveal that four die blocks were employed in creating the stamp. Most of these have more than one state.

The vignette as finally adopted is derived from a Franklin vignette engraved in 1861 by Alfred Sealy which he had modeled after an eighteenth century engraving by Thomas Halloway of a bust of Franklin from life, as cast by Jean Jacques, Caffieri in 1777. The engraving by Sealy was “worked over” by Alfred Jones in 1886.



This is an overlay at scale of the Sealy and Jones vignettes, which shows that the relative sizes and positions of the eyes, nose, mouth, hair, curvature of the bust, disposition of the neck and shoulders are all identical for the two designs.

The title page introduces the subject, but also contains material illustrating the printing failure that led to the call for a new one cent stamp in 1886. Though identified as “worn die” in the PMG report for 1887, we here argue the problem arose from the accumulation of dried ink in the printing plates due to a design weakness after the re-engraving in 1881. A full defense of this proposal will be given in a forthcoming study of this stamp.

Subsequent Use of the Dies and Plates:

Color Sampling the Contract of 1889-90 (exhibit pages 13-15)

Late in the period when this one cent was still in current production (1887- early 1890), preparations for a possible size reduction in stamps under the contract of 1889-90 resulted in the creation of a number of proof items that were used to sample the color schemes.

Director’s Books of 1894: (exhibit page 6)

About 1894 the American Bank Note Company prepared for their directors special books of essays. Four colors were devoted to each design and these were printed on semi-glazed ivory paper, cut to just outside the sinkage area, and mounted on the pages. Less than five of each print is known, and one complete set of each design was signed by the engravers.

Roosevelt Albums of 1904

During the administration of President Theodore Roosevelt, in 1904, the Post Office Department called upon the Bureau of Engraving and Printing to produce sets of die proofs on wove paper for all the stamp designs issued in the US up to that time. These were to be printed from the original dies, reduced to nearly stamp size, and put up in sets mounted on pages. As the dies were cleaned and inspected, one or two trial color proofs in black were pulled to test the condition of the die. Two numbered proofs were pulled in India paper die sunk on card for the 1c of 1887. The first of these two is here. In addition we are able to show an identical trial color printed directly on card, which hitherto is unknown and unlisted.

Panama-Pacific Small Die Proof of 1915

POD participation in this exposition resulted in die prints on yellowish wove paper with 2.5-3.0mm margins of all stamps issued up to then. Only 3-5 prints of this type are known.

References:

Brazer, Clarence W. “The 1887 One Cent Essays & Proofs” *The American Philatelist* 56 (1942) 111

Knapp, Rev. Stephen. “Creating the United States 1c Stamp of 1887,” (*Scott Specialized U.S. Catalog*, 2022) 882-884, 886.

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Purpose: This exhibit presents material evidence to justify the recently revised Scott Catalog understanding of the design and die-development sequencing for this stamp. Here we show that the designing of this stamp involved not a single die in several states, but rather two *groups* of dies in various states.

The plan of the exhibit is as follows:

Die Group I: Right Facing	pages 2 – 6
Die Group II: Left Facing	pages 7 - 10
Issued Design items	pages 10 – 11
Color Sampling of 1889	pages 12 - 14
Reprint proofs, 1894 ff	page 15-16

Die sinkage measurements are given first in the U.S. system of linear measurement of 1832 (contemporary in 1880s) then in metric

Although this stamp was in production from March 1887 until early 1890, this exhibit also examines subsequent uses of the final die with later products.

Background: With the advent of fully automated steam press printing in 1885, the design of the one cent of 1882 did not print well. Engraved plates tended to load up with dried ink, which auto-wiping could not adequately remove, resulting in incomplete prints. (see examples below). American was instructed to create a new design more amenable to steam press printing. The Government required three die state models to be submitted; from which the finally approved stamp was selected. Until this last point was revealed, the developmental die sequencing was confused.

Special items: unique items will appear on red mats

Touchup modelling in pencil signaling revisions to be cut into the dies	4,8
Unique Items signed by the engraver(s)	3,4,5,10,15
Item calling for revised engraving as noted by William Main Smillie	9
Earliest documented use of the finished stamp	11
Certified example of the plate proofs on cardboard of 1890	10
One of two die prints in black pulled by the BEP	16
Die print in Black of uncertain origin	16



1881 - Acid reworked design. The Problem:
Ink loading resulting in "silhouette" prints.



Especially acute with steam press printing -1885.
Thinner ink "Specimen" dates to 1886.