

# FRACTIONAL IMAGES ON STAMPS (or Stamp Images on Fractionals)

by Rick Melamed

When researching fractional currency, it is often good to approach the subject from a different perspective. A fresh angle often leads to an interesting article. I recently came across a stamp of Samuel Dexter whose image from the Fr. 1379, 4<sup>th</sup> issue 50¢ fractional is well known. So, it got me to thinking; since the design of 1<sup>st</sup> issue postage currency was based directly on U.S. postage stamps from that era, how many portraits of those who graced fractional currency also appear on postage or revenue stamps? Quite a few!

Today our currency and coins bear the images of America's political all-stars. Great Presidents like Washington, Lincoln and Jefferson have their images on many issues of stamps, coins and currency. But in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, there were many images on circulating currency from somewhat less lofty perches such as allegorical figures, noted politicians and people of achievement. Robert Walker, Samuel Dexter, William Meredith and William Crawford were accomplished politicians, but probably less than 5% of Americans are aware of their existence. Hence their portraits on stamps are rather limited. For this article, I attempted to find the same (or similar) images found on fractionals as on stamps. I also endeavored to locate stamp images from the 19<sup>th</sup> century and as close to the issue dates of fractionals (1862-1876). The success rate was good, and the bonus is I found something new to collect. However, I did take some liberties when it came to Columbia, whose allegorical image is found on the 4<sup>th</sup> issue 15¢ fractional. Whenever possible, we used Scott numbers to identify the stamp.

## 1<sup>ST</sup> ISSUE POSTAGE CURRENCY NOTES

In 1861, the U.S. Postal Service issued a 5¢ stamp with Jefferson's portrait (Scott 67) and a 10¢ stamp with Washington's portrait (Scott 68). During this time the shortage of circulating coinage was so severe that citizens were forced to adopt clever ways to make change since coins were not available. By 1862, postage stamps were in use as a coin substitute. It was a short term and unsustainable solution since stamps were not meant for repeated use. U.S. Treasurer Francis Spinner solved this crisis by creating postage currency. He used these period stamps as the portrait design to create the 1<sup>st</sup> issue of postage currency. For the 25¢ and 50¢ denominations, Spinner simply quintupled the amount of stamp images.



**2<sup>nd</sup> ISSUE FRACTIONALS: 5¢, 10¢, 25¢ & 50¢.**



1<sup>st</sup> Issue

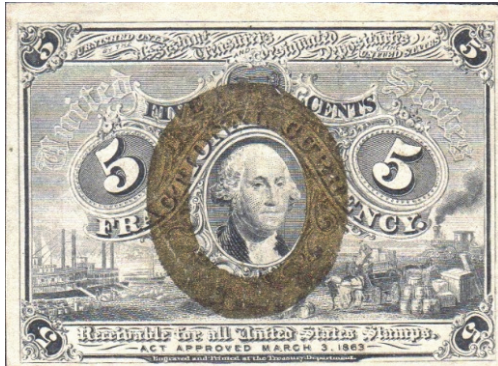


2<sup>nd</sup> Issue



24¢ Stamp

On the 2<sup>nd</sup> issue fractional, only Washington's portrait was used on all 4 denominations. Washington's portrait on the 1<sup>st</sup> issue faces towards the viewers left; on the 2<sup>nd</sup> issue the portrait faces to the right. The ©1861 24¢ postage stamp shown (Scott 70) closely resembles Washington's 2<sup>nd</sup> issue portrait.



**3<sup>rd</sup> ISSUE FRACTIONALS**

Spencer Clark, the first Superintendent of the National Currency Bureau (today known as the Bureau of Engraving and Printing), is not found on any stamp. Clark, who at that time was already under investigation for embezzlement, fraud and sexual harassment put his own image on the 3<sup>rd</sup> issue 5¢ fractional. Talk about an ego! Considering the scandals surrounding his political life it is not surprising Clark's image was never placed on a stamp. Inexplicably, the great Francis Spinner, U.S. Treasurer and the inventor of fractional currency whose image graces one of the 3<sup>rd</sup> issue 50¢ denominations, also never had his image placed on a postage stamp. This is quite unfortunate since Spinner was a great American patriot as well as a political celebrity in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century.

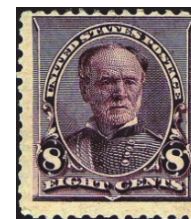
**3¢ Washington.** On the 3<sup>rd</sup> issue 3¢ fractional we found a nice similarity on the red 2¢ stamp (Scott 707). Issued in 1932, the stamp marks the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Washington's birth. The original image was created by the famous Washington portrait painter, Gilbert Stuart. Note on the fractional the body is straight, and the head is slightly turned; on the 2¢ red stamp Washington's body and head are turned to the viewer's left. The portraits are very similar. A 12¢ period stamp (Scott 90) issued in 1867 closely approximates Washington's fractional portrait and year of issue; however, the President's body is turned to the viewers left... more so than the fractional.



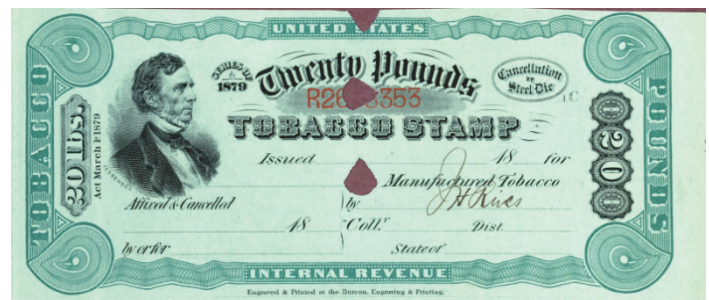
**10¢ Washington.** On the 10¢ fractional, Washington's portrait is again turned to the viewer's right. Rather than show a similar bust, we chose a 2¢ carmine example with a regal profile (Scott 634).



**15¢ Grant/Sherman.** The 1863 15¢ Grant/Sherman fractional specimen sought to commemorate two of the Union Army's great generals: Ulysses S. Grant and William Tecumseh Sherman. The only stamp found containing both portraits was this 3¢ 1937 purple example (Scott 787) that also included General Philip Sheridan. The Grant/Sherman depictions are very similar to the fractional. A more mature General Sherman appears on an 8¢ stamp (©1895 Scott 225); not surprisingly, General Grant's portrait appears on many stamps like the olive colored 8¢ stamp (Scott 560) from 1923.



**25¢ Fessenden.** The 3<sup>rd</sup> issue 25¢ fractional contains the image of William Fessenden, who as the leader of the Republican Senate during the Civil War was renowned for his financial acumen. After Lincoln's strenuous recruiting campaign, the President was finally able to convince Fessenden to take the Secretary of the Treasury cabinet post. Although his term was short, Fessenden tenure was a great success as he found many creative ways to raise the desperately needed funds to keep the Union Army going...something his predecessor, Salmon Chase, could not do. There are no U.S. issued postage stamps of Fessenden, but his image does appear on quite a few series of IRS issued revenue stamps used on tobacco, cigars and distilled spirits. The images on the fractional and tobacco stamp are identical.



**50¢.** Alas, no Spinner stamps; but we did find a semi-decent stamp match on the Justice note. On both the 25¢ newspaper & periodical stamp (Scott PR118) and the fractional, Lady Justice is hoisting a scale in the air declaring justice above all. But just in case she has a sword and shield to defend her virtue. Note that both shields display bald eagles. On the fractional she is sitting; the stamp has Justice striding upright proud and erect. We've enlarged the stamp relative to the fractional to show its details. This stamp series commemorates newspapers and periodicals and were in use between 1865 and 1898. There are 12 different Justice periodical stamps ranging from 1¢ to \$100 in an array of colors.



The 1863 \$50 Interest Bearing Note bears the exact same image as found on the Justice fractional.

**4<sup>th</sup> ISSUE FRACTIONALS**

**10¢ Liberty.** The 10¢ fractional featuring Liberty's allegorical portrait was first released to the public in 1869. I could not find any stamp with a similar image. Mostly because Lady Liberty was not the icon she became in 1886 when the Statue of Liberty was unveiled in New York Harbor. Since 1920, every stamp issued featuring Liberty's likeness was that of the iconic statue. We did locate a non-statue Liberty stamp that was issued in 1875, before the statue was erected. This blue 2¢ IRS stamp (Scott R152) contains a vibrant profile depicting her Ladyship. On both the fractional and stamp, Liberty is wearing a cap adorned with a laurel.



**15¢ Columbia.** The 15¢ fractional portrays Columbia, who is an allegorical personification of the United States and the New World. Images of Liberty after her statue was unveiled largely displaced Columbia as the female symbol of the United States. Closely aligned, Lady Liberty can be viewed as a derivative of Columbia. Images of Columbia on federally issued currency are found on the 4<sup>th</sup> issue 15¢ fractional, early issue \$20 National Bank Notes and on the \$50 Demand Note from 1869. Since being usurped by Liberty, Columbia's image was not found on any stamps. Please pardon the pun, but we have taken some "liberties" in trying to match Columbia's portrait to a stamp. The 1914 IRS issued Documentary revenue stamp (Scott R244) technically is attributed to Lady Liberty. But since Liberty and Columbia are somewhat interchangeable we have included this stamp; you will notice both portraits shown contain a headdress with a laurel and stars above the forehead.



A completely different depiction of Lady Columbia (with the headdress of laurel and stars) is shown on this \$50 Demand note.

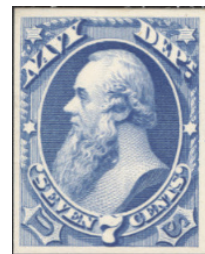
**25¢ Washington.** We will bypass the 4<sup>th</sup> issue 25¢ fractional since the portrait of Washington is the same as used on 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> issue fractionals.

**50¢ Lincoln.** Charles Burt's portrait of President Lincoln on the 50¢ fractional is inspiring. The way Lincoln's distant gaze peers into the future and how it is balanced against the large red Treasury seal, makes this one of the most desirable fractionals ever produced. However, matching Burt's fractional portrait to a stamp proved to be quite challenging. Most stamps issued depict Lincoln facing to the viewers right. Lincoln first appeared on the following 15¢ U.S. stamp in 1866 (Scott 77); a year after his assassination. I viewed over 40 different styles of U.S. postage stamps and found none portray Lincoln in a ¾ portrait positioned to the viewer's left. The only one close was the 1962 issued stamp of the former President from the African nation of Rwanda. We were able to locate an 1875 IRS issued revenue stamp of Lincoln in a similar ¾ pose (but it's a different image).

Lincoln's image is probably one of the most replicated in our country's history. Fred Reed, former editor of the SPMC *Paper Money* magazine, wrote a terrific book in 2009 entitled *Abraham Lincoln: The Image of His Greatness* containing just about every image of Lincoln out there.



**50¢ Stanton.** Edwin Stanton, Secretary of War during the Civil War, has his portrait on the fractional shown. Stanton is only found on one U.S. postage stamp (Scott 138); a 7¢ profile issued in 1871 (2 years after his death). A blue Navy Department stamp (Scott O39) using the same profile was issued in 1873.



A very similar, but not exact, image of Stanton was used on the 1890 \$1 Treasury note.

**50¢ Dexter.** Samuel Dexter was the Secretary of War and Secretary of the Treasury under John Adams and Thomas Jefferson at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. His image is found on the 4<sup>th</sup> issue fractional and shown are stamps bearing his exact likeness on an IRS issue 3¢ revenue stamp from 1940 (Scott R290) and 3¢ silver tax stamp (Scott RG60).



**5<sup>th</sup> ISSUE FRACTIONALS** - All 3 men depicted on 5<sup>th</sup> issue fractionals served as Secretary of the Treasury.

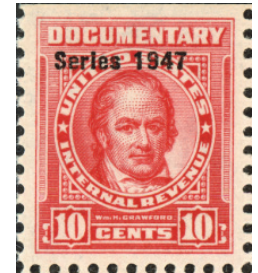
**10¢ Meredith.** William Meredith was the Secretary under Presidents Zachary Taylor and Millard Fillmore. Meredith is not found on any postage stamps, but an exact duplicate of his image can be found on the \$20 IRS issued revenue stamps issued in 1940. Shown is a green stock transfer stamp (Scott RD110) and red documentary stamp (Scott R429).



**25¢ Walker.** Robert Walker, the Treasury Secretary right before Meredith served under Presidents James Polk and Zachary Taylor from 1845-1849. Like Meredith before him, the only stamp images made were on the \$10 IRS issued revenue stamps. Shown are the green stock transfer stamp (Scott RD224) and red documentary stamp (Scott R640) issued in 1940. The images are an exact reproduction.



**50¢ Crawford.** William Crawford had a long and distinguished political career. He served as Secretary of the Treasury under Presidents Madison and Monroe (1816-1825) and as Secretary of War under James Madison from 1815-1816. As with Walker and Meredith, Crawford's image is not found on any U.S. postage stamp, but a very similar image on the fractional can be found on the 10¢ green stock transfer stamp (Scott RD121) and 10¢ red documentary stamp (Scott R294) issued in 1940.



Please excuse any potential Scott numbering errors; I am a dilettante on stamp cataloguing. In many cases there are several Scott numbers for the same basic design accounting for minor differences. Writing this article was quite an enjoyable experience. In the process, I have developed a keener appreciation of stamp collecting and have purchased my first stamp reference. While there are a lot of inexpensive stamps for a couple of dollars, prices on some of the 19<sup>th</sup> postage stamps can run into the thousands for a gem example. Special thanks to Eric Jackson for his use of revenue stamp images and to Heritage for the currency images.



## Meet Mark Drengson, New SPMC Governor

Mark Drengson was born and raised in Pipestone, Minnesota and graduated from St. Olaf College in Northfield, Minnesota. From there he “went west” to California to help form Step1 Software Solutions, a company that provides business software and support services to janitorial supply distributors in the U.S. and Canada and is still going strong more than 40 years later. As a database programmer, he has been involved in several currency-related data projects, including the SPMC Obsoletes Database Project and the SPMC Bank Note History Project. Mark has been collecting and researching National Bank Notes since 2003 and is looking forward to helping SPMC move this great hobby forward.