



THE COLLECTORS CLUB

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U. S. ENGRAVERS

of Bank Notes and Stamps

Data on the development of the Bureau of Engraving & Printing in the U. S. Treasury Department

By CLARENCE W. BRAZER

IN 1861, when the Civil War came on, there were only three bank note engraving firms operating in the northern states that, according to W. L. Ormsby, were capable of producing satisfactory bank notes. These firms were the American Bank Note Co., formed in 1858; The National Bank Note Co., founded in 1859; and the short-lived New York Bank Note Co. Waterman L. Ormsby, bank note engraver since 1844, had produced good bank notes, but then was probably not equipped for large production. In 1863 he became an employee of the newly founded Continental Bank Note Co.

It has previously been reported,¹ that all three existing firms, prior to President Lincoln's proclamation of April 18, 1861 against trading with the enemy, had produced bank notes and bonds for the Confederate States. The *New York World* of April 26, 1861, reported government seizure of some of these C. S. A. bond and bank note plates. On July 17, 1861, Congress passed an act providing for U. S. notes to be signed by the Treasurer and Register of the U. S. Treasury, and a contract for producing them was awarded the American Bank Note Co. Sheets of four of these notes were delivered to and signed in the Treasury Department, and a woman was employed to cut and trim.

The July 11, 1861, Act of Congress had authorized a second issue of legal tender notes, and Salmon P. Chase, Secretary of the Treasury, instructed S. M. Clark, Chief

Clerk, to prepare designs for them; James Duthie was the first vignette engraver employed. Since the Comptroller did not approve, proposals were invited and the contract was awarded to the American Bank Note Co. which produced the first U. S. greenbacks from their own designs with portraits of Chase and Hamilton.

Congress by Act of July 11, 1862, authorized the Treasury Department to produce paper money:

"SECTION 2—AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That the Secretary of the Treasury be, and is hereby, authorized in case he shall think it inexpedient to procure said notes, or any part thereof, to be engraved, printed, and executed in such form as he shall prescribe, at the Treasury Department in Washington, and under his direction; and he is hereby empowered to purchase and provide all the machinery and materials, and to employ such persons and appoint such officers as may be necessary for this purpose."

About this time the various operations which had been performed in separate divisions of the Treasury Department were consolidated into one division known as the "First Division of the National Currency Bureau," which by January 1, 1869, was changed to the "Bureau of Engraving and Printing." Prior to the consolidation, the work was done under S. N. Clark, Chief Clerk of the Bureau of Construction, who had a hand-operated machine constructed to cut the notes apart.

¹ THE COLLECTORS CLUB PHILATELIST, January, 1941, by the author.

The Act of July 11, 1862, authorized 70 clerks to perform this work, and the signatures and seal previously engraved by the American Bank Note Co., were printed on the notes. This work began on August 29, 1862, under Chief Clerk S. M. Clark in a room in the basement of the south wing of the present U. S. Treasury building.

Postage Currency

Postage Currency was authorized by Act of Congress of July 17, 1862, and the National Bank Note Co., which had the postage stamp contract, engraved and printed the faces for the 5, 10, 25 and 50 cents and the American Bank Note Co. produced the backs. The first postage currency was issued August 21, 1862, a week before work began in the National Currency Bureau. In the first four months of 1863 nearly 90 million faces were printed by the National Bank Note Co. under instructions without contract of the latter part of July 1862, which was billed at a fine profit. On October 7, 1862, S. M. Clark recommended, and Secretary Chase approved, a plan to engrave and produce a second issue of fractional currency from a \$25,000 plant then established in a room of a new attic of the west wing and in one basement and one cellar room of the Treasury building. Four engravers, including James Duthie and Elisha Hobart, transferrer, were employed on this currency, engraved from a design prepared for S. M. Clark, Chief Clerk. George W. Casi-

lear was employed September 1, 1862, to assist in designing, and he probably was responsible for this fractional currency. Joseph Prosper Ourdan engraved the first portrait of Washington used on the second issue of fractional currency.

By April 30, 1864, James Guthie was Superintendent of the artists room, and Elisha Hobart, Superintendent of the Transferring room with Uzal C. Ryerson as assistant. S. M. Clark was in charge of the First Division of the Currency Bureau, and in December was given the title of Chief of the Bureau. Large parts of the basement and attic were by then occupied in the manufacture of paper money.

Bank Note Paper

Dr. Stuart Gwynn was given a contract to make (in the Treasury building) membrane paper, which could not be split or dissolved with water, with an unremovable non-photographic tint in its spider-leg fiber that wore better than any previous bank note paper.² This paper was manufactured by the department until demands exceeded the supply, and then paper was purchased from James M. Wilcox Co., Glenn Mills, Pa., until June 30, 1879. From that time until July 1, 1885 a

The engraving room in the 1914 building as seen about 1919. Engravers at left include E. M. Hall, E. E. Myers, L. K. Siggons, J. C. Benzing, F. Lamasure, et al.



silk-threaded paper was used. The paper used in 1921 was made by Crane & Co., Dalton, Mass.³ Nylon has now replaced the silk threads in the paper for bank notes.

In 1868 a few essays for postage stamps (112E-A, 113E-A, 113E-B) were produced by the Bureau for George T. Jones, bidding for the contract for the 1869 stamps. The American, National and Continental Bank Note companies continued to produce U. S. bank notes until 1869, when a share in the work was given to the Bureau of Engraving and Printing. National bank notes from 1863 to July, 1875, were produced by the Continental Bank Note Co., when the Act of March 3, 1875 provided that not more than one printing should be done by commercial establishments, and the final printing be executed by the Treasury Department. After this the backs only were produced by the Continental Bank Note Co.

In 1872, the Bureau began sharing the production of U. S. Revenue Stamps, including the private proprietary, beer and tax-paid stamps, with the National and Continental which, after consolidation into the American Bank Note Co., continued until 1882; since then all these have been produced by the Bureau.⁴ From October 1, 1877, all notes and securities have been produced by the Bureau. From 1878 to July 1, 1889, steam-power presses were used but, on objection of the Plate Printers Union, hand-power presses were used on all work except postage stamps until 1912.⁵

On June 30, 1878, Congress appropriated \$300,000 for the purchase of a site and erection of a red brick building for the Bureau at Fourteenth and B Streets, S. W.; the building was completed July 1, 1880. In 1891 a south-west wing, and in 1904 a west wing and fire-



The engraving room in the old red brick building, with Edward M. Weeks (left) and Melvin C. Sharpe (right).

proof outbuildings, were erected for the mechanical shops. In 1914 the new stone building at Fourteenth and C Streets, S. W., was completed and occupied. The Engraving Division returned to occupy the old red brick building on B Street from 1925 to 1936, when the new Annex on the east side of Fourteenth Street was completed in November, 1938. The former stone building is now known as the "Auditors Building."

Postage Stamps

Upon solicitation of the Postmaster General, the Bureau submitted a proposal for the 1885 postage stamp contract in regular competition with the American Bank Note Co. and Charles F. Steel, but the Bureau's bid was about 20 per cent higher.

On October 16, 1893, the Post Office Department advertised for proposals to furnish postage stamps for four years from July 1, 1894. Bids were received at noon on November 15, 1893, with price per 1,000 ordinary postage stamps from the American Bank Note Co., .0585 cents; Hamilton Bank Note Co., .0642 cents and Charles F. Steel, \$5.25.⁶ The bids were no doubt publicly opened, and the American Bank Note Co. protested the bid of C. F. Steel.

On November 20, 1893, Charles M. Johnson, the new Chief of the Bureau of Engraving and Printing, approved by the Secretary

² Considerable information in this section is adapted from a paper given me by Thomas F. Morris Jr., and later published in *The Stamp Specialist*, Gray Book, 1943.

³ Brief History of the Bureau of Engraving and Printing, 1921 and 1929.

⁴ *THE COLLECTORS CLUB PHILATELIST*, April, 1940, by the author.

⁵ Dedication address by Alvin W. Hall, director, November, 1938.

⁶ House of Representatives, 53rd Congress, 2nd Session, Ex Doc. No. 223.

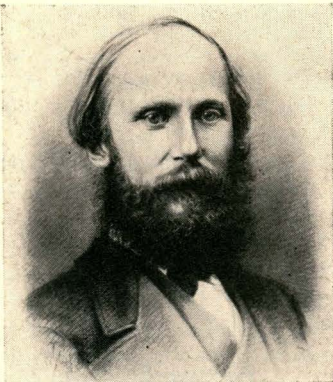
U. S. ENGRAVERS OF BANK NOTES & STAMPS



S. M. Clark
Aug. 22, 1862 - Nov. 17, 1868



George B. McCartee
March 18, 1869 - Feb. 20, 1876



Edward McPherson
May 1, 1877 - Sept. 30, 1878



Edward O. Graves
June 1, 1885 - June 30, 1889

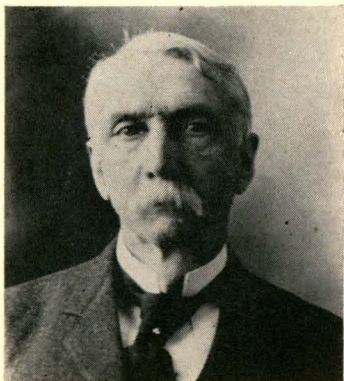


William M. Meredith
July 1, 1889 - June 30, 1893
Nov. 23, 1900 - June 30, 1906



Claude M. Johnson
July 1, 1893 - May 10, 1900

U. S. ENGRAVERS OF BANK NOTES & STAMPS



Thomas J. Sullivan
Twice Acting Director
Director July 1, 1906 - May 4, 1908



Joseph E. Ralph
May 11, 1908 - Oct. 31, 1917



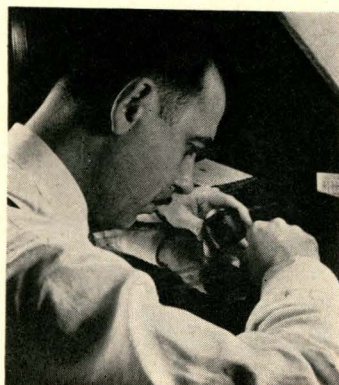
James L. Wilmeth
Dec. 10, 1917 - Mar. 31, 1922



Louis A. Hill
April 1, 1922 - Feb. 14, 1924

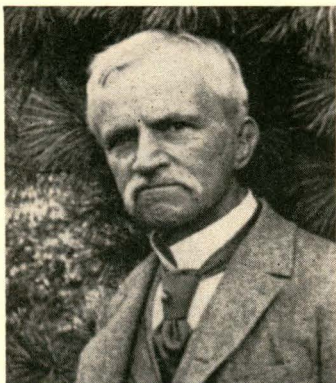


Wallace W. Kirby
June 16, 1924 - Dec. 15, 1924

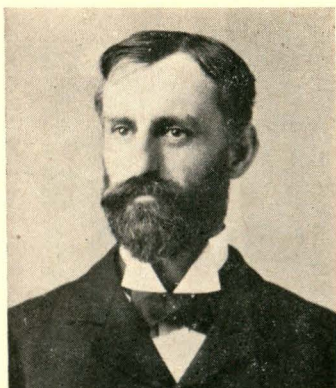


Alvin W. Hall
Dec. 22, 1924 - To Date.

U. S. ENGRAVERS OF BANK NOTES & STAMPS



George W. Casilear
Supt. Engraving Division
(1869? - 1877)



Thos. F. Morris
Chief - Engraving Division
Nov. 1, 1893 - July 1, 1897.



John R. Hill
Chief - Engraving Division
July 1, 1897 - Feb. 14, 1913



George W. Rose, Jr.
Supt. Engraving Division
Feb. 19, 1913 - Mar. 31, 1922



John T. Guilfoyle
Supt. Engraving Division
Apr. 1, 1922 - July 15, 1924



H. Preston Dawson
Supt. Engraving Division
July 16, 1924 - July 1, 1926



Edward E. Meyers
Supt. Engraving Division
July 1, 1926 - Jan. 11, 1933.



Edward M. Weeks
Supt. Engraving Division
Feb. 23, 1933 - Dec. 16, 1935.



Joachim C. Benzing
Supt. Engraving Division
Jan. 10, 1936 - To date.

of the Treasury and before action on the American Bank Note Co. protest, submitted a letter (not on the required form) offering to manufacture all the adhesive stamps required by the advertisement for .05 cents per 1,000. Occupying government buildings, the Bureau had no rent nor machinery depreciation to pay. It was pointed out that this bid would save the government an estimated \$28,000 over the lowest bid during the four-year period, that certain Bureau specially skilled labor was then being only partially employed, and that it was already furnishing adhesive stamps for the Internal Revenue Service. All formal bids were rejected on February 21, 1894, and the work was awarded to the Bureau on its offer.

A House Resolution of March 7, 1894, requested all such information from Postmaster General Wilson S. Bissell, and the above information is from his reply of May 16, 1894, accompanied by letters, etc. One of these letters from Charles F. Steel dated February 15, 1894, remonstrated that the specifications advertised no bids would be received after 12 o'clock noon, November 15, 1893, when his bid was the lowest of the three received; that the bid of the Bureau was not handed in until some days later and after it had access to the price named in his bid; that there was no law authorizing the Bureau to do this work, nor any appropriation from Congress to the Bureau to meet the expenditure required for this work; that the Bureau was at a disadvantage of 20 per cent less hours per day's work, etc., and offered to furnish the stamps at (.4975 cents per 1,000) 25 cents per 1,000,000 less than the Bureau offer, for which reduction by the low bidder he cited previous precedents.

The proposal of the Bureau had been accepted, and new steam-power machinery costing over \$40,000 was installed to produce the stamps. Thomas F. Morris, Chief of the Engraving Division, due to the short time between February 21 and July 1 when the stamps were scheduled to be ready, decided to add triangles to the 1890 series engraved by the American Bank Note Co. These were laid down on new dies which, in addition to the triangles in the upper corners, had the vignettes re-engraved, mostly by George Frederick C. Smillie, Chief Engraver. The 30-

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U. S. ENGRAVERS

(continued from page 83)

cent value was changed to 50 cents, and the 90-cent to \$1. New dies were engraved for the \$2 vignette by G. F. C. Smillie with lettering by Lyman T. Ellis, and for the \$5 by William G. Phillips with lettering by James Kennedy. Since that time all U. S. postage, as well as revenue, stamps have been produced by the Bureau.

Bureau Personnel

The heads of the Bureau, with dates of appointment, follow.⁷ None of these is known to have been an engraver or designer.

Aug. 22, 1862—S. M. Clark, Chief Clerk
Construction Division
Dec., 1864—S. M. Clark, Chief
Mar. 18, 1869—George B. McCartee, Chief
Feb. 21, 1876—Henry C. Jewell, Chief

⁷ *The Stamp Specialist*, Gray Book, 1943, History of the Bureau of Engraving and Printing, by Thomas F. Morris.

May 1, 1877—Edward McPherson, Chief
Oct. 1, 1878—O. H. Irish, Chief
Jan. 28, 1883—Thomas J. Sullivan, Acting Chief
Apr. 1, 1883—Truman N. Burrill, Chief
May 20, 1885—Edward O. Graves, Acting Chief
June 1, 1885—Edward O. Graves, Chief
July 1, 1889—William M. Meredith, Chief
July 1, 1893—Claude M. Johnson, Chief
July 1, 1896—Claude M. Johnson, Director
May 11, 1900—Thomas J. Sullivan, Acting Director
Nov. 24, 1900—William M. Meredith, Director
July 1, 1906—Thomas J. Sullivan, Director
May 11, 1908—Joseph E. Ralph, Director
Oct. 31, 1917—Frank E. Ferguson, Acting Director
Dec. 10, 1917—James L. Wilmeth, Director
Apr. 1, 1922—Louis A. Hill, Director
Feb. 15, 1924—Paul E. Twyman, Acting Director
Jun. 15, 1924—Wallace K. Kirby, Director
Dec. 16, 1924—Paul E. Twyman, Acting Director
Dec. 22, 1924—Alvin W. Hall, Director

MISSION MIXTURE

We have purchased a quantity of mixture that does not appear to have been picked over. Naturally the bulk of the mixture consists of common low values of the current War issue, but there is a fair sprinkling of high values, airmails, specials, commemoratives and Newfoundland. Sold just as received from Canadian and Newfoundland missions.

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The heads of the Engraving Division, with dates of appointment:

- Apr. 30, 1864—James Duthie, Superintendent of Artists Room
1869?-1877?—George W. Casilear, Superintendent of Engraving
Apr. 28, 1885—John A. O'Neill, Superintendent of Engraving
Dec. 16, 1889—George W. Casilear, Superintendent of Engraving
Nov. 1, 1893—Thomas F. Morris, Chief of Engraving
July 1, 1897—John R. Hill, Chief of Engraving
Feb. 19, 1913—George W. Rose, Jr., Superintendent of Engraving
April 1, 1922—John T. Guilfoyle, Superintendent of Engraving
July 16, 1924—H. Preston Dawson, Superintendent of Engraving
July 1, 1926—Edward E. Myers, Superintendent of Engraving
Feb. 23, 1933—Edward M. Weeks, Superintendent of Engraving
Jan. 10, 1936—Joachim C. Benzing, Superintendent of Engraving
Carl T. Alt, Superintendent of Engraving

TO BE CONTINUED

U. S. NEW ISSUES

(continued from page 76)

May 28 with appropriate ceremonies at the White House.

The new Wisconsin Statehood commemorative postage stamp which is to be placed on first-day sale at Madison, Wis., on May 29 will have as its central design a reproduction of the State Capitol Building and a scroll depicting an outline map of the State around which in dark Gothic will be the wording "Wisconsin Centennial 1848-1948." Directly above the Capitol in the same style type will be the word "Forward." Across the bottom of the stamp will appear "United States Postage 3c" in white Gothic.

The Wisconsin stamp will be printed in purple ink and will be 0.84 by 1.44 inches in size, arranged horizontally with a single outline border.

Stamp collectors desiring first-day cancellations of these two stamps may send not in excess of 10 addressed envelopes, accompanied with remittances for the stamps to be affixed, to the Postmasters at Washington, D. C., and at Madison, Wis., for servicing.

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