

The U.S. 2¢ Columbian of 1893

Purpose: This exhibit is a traditional exhibit of the development of the design, the production and the use of the U.S. 2¢ Columbian of 1893. The stamp's uses well illustrate the handling of all classes of mail that could be paid by ordinary stamps during 1893 and 1894, the period during which it saw substantial use. The organization of the exhibit is described on the next page.

Background: The 2¢ Columbian paid the domestic letter rate at the time that it was issued. The Columbian Series was issued to commemorate the 400th anniversary of Christopher Columbus's first voyage to North America as well as to mark the Columbian Exposition. The vignette of the 2¢ Columbian, depicting the landing of Columbus on San Salvador in 1492, was taken from a painting by John Vanderlyn that is in the U.S. Capitol building. The Post Office Department believed that the landing scene was the one of the most important events depicted by the Columbian Series, so it chose the scene for the vignette of the letter-rate stamp so that it could be seen as widely as possible by the public using the Columbian stamps.



Earliest recorded use of a Burdick advertising cover showing an aerial view of the Columbian Exposition grounds. The Columbian Exposition was a World's Fair held in Chicago, Ill. From May 1, 1893, to October 30, 1893. This is one of six recorded covers franked with a 2¢ Columbian bearing a National Letter Return Association label.

Significance: The 2¢ Columbian was a significant stamp for many reasons:

- It was the first letter-rate commemorative stamp issued by the United States.
- The Columbian Series was the United States' first set of commemorative stamps.
- The Columbian Series was the first of a series of commemorative stamps issued by the United States over the next 22 years that made claims about the national importance of particular historical events.
- More than 1.4 billion copies of the 2¢ Columbian were printed, just under three times the number of all other stamps in the Columbian Series combined.
- The 2¢ Columbian was widely used – in the first six months of 1893, more than two-thirds of the letter-rate stamps distributed by the Post Office were 2¢ Columbians.
- The Columbian Series was the last set of stamps printed by the American Banknote Company in the 19th Century.

Plan

This exhibit has five chapters and an epilogue. The first page of each chapter has a chapter heading in bold, as well as a brief introduction and an outline of the chapter. The chapters are:

Design and Production: This chapter (Frames 1 to 3) includes essays and proofs, plate markings, intentional and unintentional constant printing varieties, non-constant production varieties, specimen overprints and pre-first day and first day covers.

World's Fair Station: The Post Office Department had a model post office on the Columbian Exposition grounds, which, as a branch of the Chicago post office, provided the services that any other post office would have provided. Because the 2¢ Columbian was issued to mark the Columbian Exposition, the exhibit includes a chapter (Frames 3 and 4) devoted to the postal markings of, and uses from, the World's Fair Station post office.

Domestic Usage: The third chapter (Frames 4 to 6) shows domestic uses of the 2¢ Columbian on both first class and other classes of mail.

Foreign Usage. The fourth chapter (Frames 6 to 8) shows foreign uses under the postal conventions with Canada and Mexico, non-Universal Postal Union ("UPU") uses, and uses under the UPU convention.

Usage -- Origin. The final chapter (Frame 8) show uses that are notable for their point of origin.



This cover, advertising Columbian Exposition accommodations and adopting the Landing of Columbus painting, was mailed from Chicago, Ill., to Elizabeth Lake, Cal., and forwarded to Neenah, Cal.

Legend:

Throughout the exhibit, **notable items** are matted on **red**.
Certain perforation freaks are matted on black for visibility.
Certificated items are noted by expertizing service.
Original research is designated by the symbol:

