

Continental's 16 Ounce Tobacco Strip Stamps (1869–1872)

In 1869, an entirely new series of tobacco stamps was issued, with production split between CBNCo and the Treasury Department. Of the numerous stamps produced by both entities, only CBNCo's **16 ounce tobacco strip stamp** incorporated Black imagery.

1869 First Design

White Paper, Used

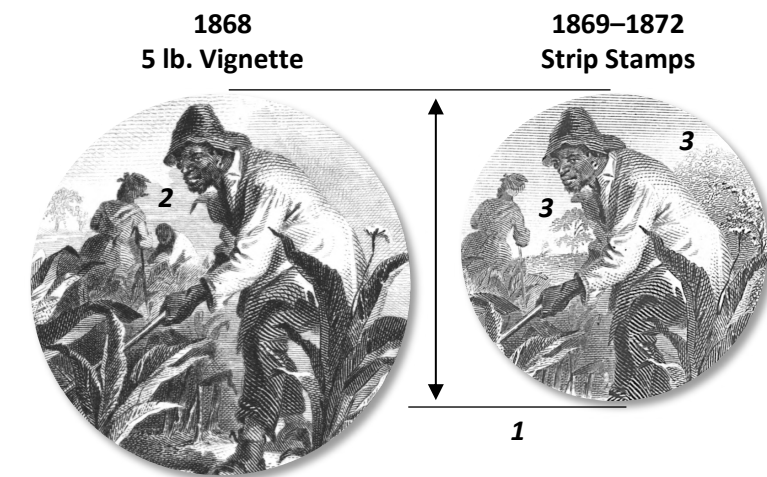


Large Die Vignette Essay

3-5 Examples Known



For this stamp, CBNCo reprised the **Hoeing Man** vignette from the 5 lb. stamp of 1868, albeit with modifications: (1) the vignette was cropped by reducing its overall diameter; (2) the child laborer from the center of the design was removed; (3) trees and foliage were added in the background.



As shown on the next page, this stamp saw use through 1872, undergoing a slight design change in 1870, a color change in 1871, and provisional usage in 1872.

1870 Altered Design

For reasons unknown, the 1870 design omitted the “16 oz” figure from the right hexagonal medallion. Compare with the 1869 stamp. Violet silk paper, used.



1870

Printed on “Mottled Paper,” a reference to the security underprint pattern, not the paper’s texture. Violet silk paper, unused.



1871

The stamp of 1870 printed in black. Violet silk paper, unused.



1872 Provisional

Stamp of 1870 with overprint indicating a congressionally-mandated change in tobacco taxes. Violet silk paper, used.



ISSUED UNDER ACT OF CONGRESS, APPROVED JUNE 6, 1872.

EPILOGUE: The 1869–1872 strip stamps mark the last time Black imagery was used in the design of federally-issued stamps until the debut of the Booker T. Washington commemorative in 1940. It should be noted that the Black imagery used in these 19th-century stamps was selected for illustrative purposes, drawing on what was then a status quo association of black labor and tobacco production. In contrast, Washington’s portrayal in the 20th-century stamp was honorific. Yet there is a nexus between these disparate stamps: Booker Washington was born into slavery on a tobacco farm in 1856, and would have experienced the very conditions depicted in the vignettes of these tobacco stamps.