

# U.S. State Department

## The Dollar Values

Due to their imposing size, high denominations, and scarcity (the \$5 is the rarest face different United States postage stamp), a mystique and prestige surrounds the State Department dollar values. The artist's model, essays, proofs, trial color proofs, inverted proofs, special printings, multiples and usage shown here form the most complete collection of this material ever assembled and exhibited. Space limitations prevent inclusion of the hybrid large die proofs and one of four known complete sets of India plate proof sheets.

The official stamps authorized on March 3, 1873 included 1 cent through 90 cent values for use by the nine departments of the Executive branch. Dollar values however, were prepared only for the State Department which sent parcels around the world. Such bulky mail required significant amounts of postage prior to adoption of the attempted standardized lower General Postal Union (G.P.U.) rates in 1875, and the broader Universal Postal Union (U.P.U.) rates of April 1, 1878.

Penalty franks introduced in 1877 had little effect on dollar value use as franks were not recognized as valid postage by foreign governments. However, an 1879 U.P.U. ruling must have curtailed their usage as only generally issued postage stamps were declared valid on foreign mail. A single cover, shown in this exhibit, has survived to demonstrate the use of these stamps. Postally used \$10 and \$20 values are so rare it has been theorized they were never affixed to overseas parcels, but were used as receipts by the Post Office Department to account for postal services rendered.



William H. Seward  
(1801 - 1872)

- Only recorded signed design sketch
- Only recorded frame plate proofs
- Only recorded inverted proof strips
- Only recorded cardboard proof sheets
- Only recorded inverted \$5 proof sheet
- Only recorded set of blocks
- Three of four specimen overprints  
(\$20 stolen in 1999, reported)
- Only recorded dollar value on cover

Untrimmed sheet margin  
Two recorded examples