

Multiples of the United States Private Die Proprietary Revenue Stamps: Their Purpose, Use, and Variety

This exhibit shows examples of the private die proprietary revenue stamps of the United States in multiple format: pairs, strips, and blocks.

To help defray the costs of the Civil War, Congress levied an array of taxes affecting nearly every aspect of everyday life. The taxes imposed in 1862 on patent medicines, perfumery, cosmetics, and playing cards, and in 1864 on friction matches, remained in effect until 1883.

The patent medicine, perfumery and cosmetics tax was revived in 1898 to help fund the Spanish-American War.

The law allowed the makers of these proprietary articles to purchase their own private dies, resulting in specially-designed revenue stamps, a fabulous field of philately familiarly known as the "match and medicines."

Many of these revenue stamps were printed in small quantities, were used for a short period of time, and saw only local or regional use.

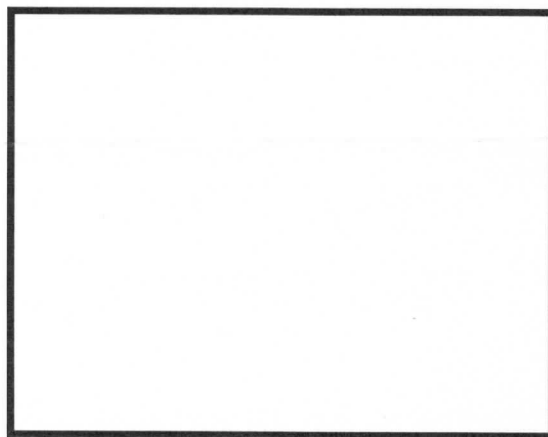
The firms often chose to use multiples of their stamps to pay the tax on their full line of products. Since the tax was based on the retail prices of the products (or in the case of matches, on quantity), a two cent stamp, used on a fifty cent product, could be used in pairs for one dollar products.

Many surviving examples display signs of use, such as creases, tears, or pieces missing, as the law specified that stamps be affixed to containers such that they would be destroyed upon opening.

Stamp collectors of old removed the stamps from their wrappers, bottles, and boxes, while other multiples made it into the hands of collectors directly from the firms themselves. Some of the examples herein displayed are such remainders, but most show signs of actual usage.

These used multiples show how the firms actually stamped their products. Large remainders can help determine the plate positions of double transfers and other varieties.

Eleven of the multiples shown herein are the only recorded examples. Another thirty are the second largest recorded. Nineteen others are the largest recorded examples. The more important items are framed in **dark** borders.



Radway & Co. silk paper pair on a carton of Radway's Renovating Resolvent, priced at one dollar. The right panel of the upper stamp has a 17 mm plate gouge.

Only five patent medicine revenue stamp multiples are recorded on their original containers.