

Who Needs a Doctor? This Elixir Will Do!

A Primer on the U.S. Revenue Act of 1862; the use of U.S. Private Die Proprietary Revenue Stamps; and the Firms and Nostrums they Marketed.

By Dr. Charles J. DiComo, PhD

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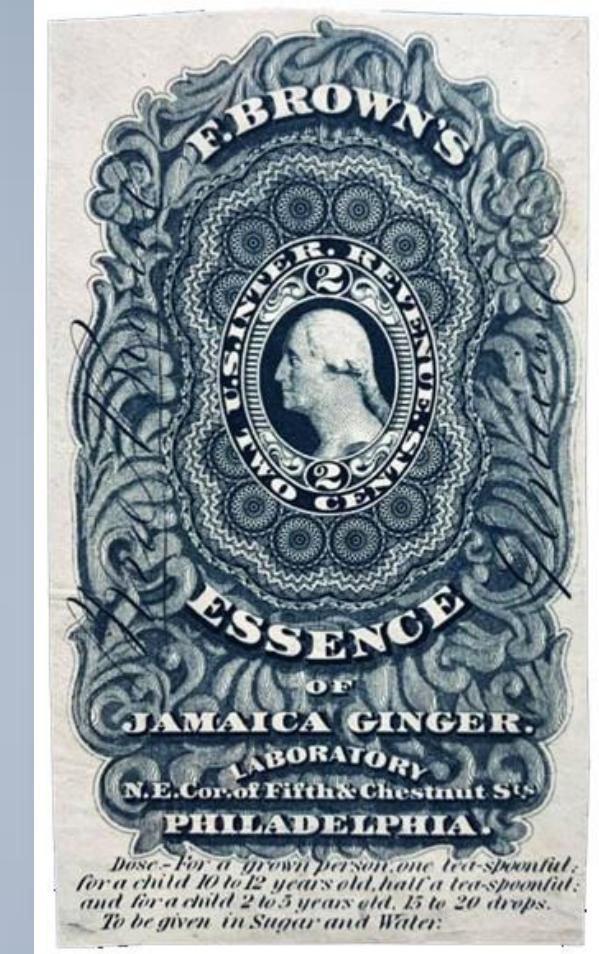
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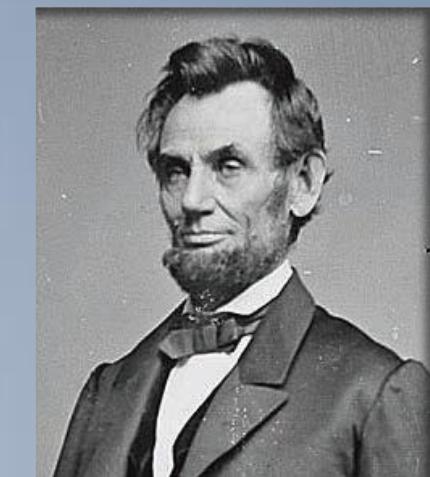
Overview



- ❖ The Revenue Act of 1862.
- ❖ The Rise of Private Die Proprietary Revenue Stamps.
- ❖ Advertising Value & Seal of Approval.
- ❖ What is a Nostrum and Who Peddled these Wares?
- ❖ A selection of U.S. Private Die Proprietary Revenue Rarities.
- ❖ The 1883 Repeal of the Revenue Act.
- ❖ Summary and Select References.
- ❖ Q&A.

The Revenue Act of 1862

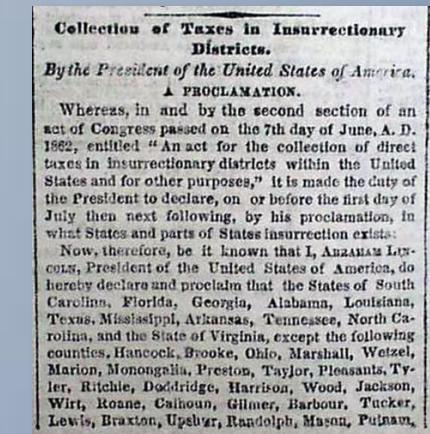
With the attack and subsequent surrender of Fort Sumter and the impending confrontation with the southern states, Abraham Lincoln immediately issued a proclamation on April 15, 1861 to raise an army of 75,000 men to suppress the southern uprising and to convene Congress to draw up a comprehensive excise tax bill, which would aid the federal government in the long and costly Civil War ahead.



Library of Congress

On July 1st, 1862, the bill was passed by Congress and the Revenue Act of 1862 was established. This act called for taxation through the use of stamps that were to be used on a number of items including legal and business documents of all kind, as well as a number of commodities including proprietary medicines, matches, perfumes, cosmetics, playing cards and canned fruit.

The newly formed Commissioner of Internal Revenue set out to advertise for bids in printing the large number of revenue stamps that were required. On August 8, 1862, a letter was sent from the Treasury Department from Commissioner George S. Boutwell awarding the contract to the firm Butler & Carpenter of Philadelphia to print the first general issue documentary and proprietary revenue stamps in the U.S.



NY Times, July 3, 1862





The Rise of Private Die Proprietary Revenue Stamps



Not long after Butler & Carpenter (B&C) started printing regular revenue stamps, a number of manufacturers of proprietary medicines saw an opportunity to advertise their products through the use of the proprietary stamps that they were now obliged to use. They questioned whether they could obtain their own distinctive stamps that bore their company design and trademark.

The first company to recognize this and take advantage of the new regulations was Dr. L.R. Herrick & Co. of NY who marketed “Herrick’s Pills & Plasters” & “Harvell’s Condition Powders.”

- Oct. 15, 1862, B&C wrote to Dr. Herrick stating “We will do all we can – no more. Your stamp will be the first private proprietary die printed: and, in this respect, you will enjoy an advantage over your equally afflicted brethren in trade.”
- Nov. 6, 1862, B&C wrote “We have seized the first opportunity to get your stamps out and you are far ahead of all other private proprietary stamps.”

This advantage was eventually extended to all proprietary companies by a regulation set in place by the Commissioner of Internal Revenue issued in January of 1863.



Advertising Value & Seal of Approval

Section 99: Clarity for Use of Revenue Stamps on Wares



Soon after, other proprietary companies followed and would have to incur the additional costs of producing their own private die and any additional cost in producing the plates and printing the stamps. The cost was satisfactory, as they were outweighed by the advantages that were found in using such stamps.

The stamps carried an additional advertising value to the products they were placed upon, and these distinctive government stamps conveyed the notation that the federal government was placing a 'government seal of approval' on the products that bore these stamps. *NOTE: the U.S. Government was not and put a stop to that early on.*

Section 99 of the revenue law stated in part, "That in all cases where such stamp is used, instead of his or their writing, his or their initials and the date thereon, the said stamp shall be so affixed on the box, bottle, or package, that in opening the same, or using the contents thereof, the said stamp shall be effectually destroyed;..."

The relative scarcity of these utilitarian revenue stamps is due to Section 99, and that sound examples of these issues are quite rare.

What is in that Nostrum?

A nostrum is a “medicine,” especially one that is not considered effective, prepared by a charlatan.

Many proprietors proclaimed their “magic cures.” There were physicians, or persons claiming to be physicians. There were also retail and wholesale druggists, apothecary’s, ministers, clerks, liquor merchants, showmen, bookbinders, etc.

By the end of the 19th Century there was an outcry by journalists, physicians and pharmacists over the secrecy of these nostrums and elixirs, exposing the possible dangers in some patent medicines.

This led to the enactment of the 1906 Food and Drug Act.

What follows is a brief overview of the firms and products they manufactured and the beautiful affixed proprietary revenue stamps.



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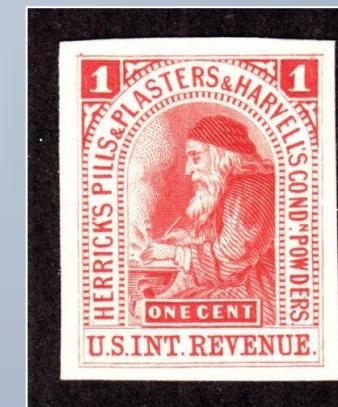
Dr. Herrick's Sugar Coated Pills (& Plasters)



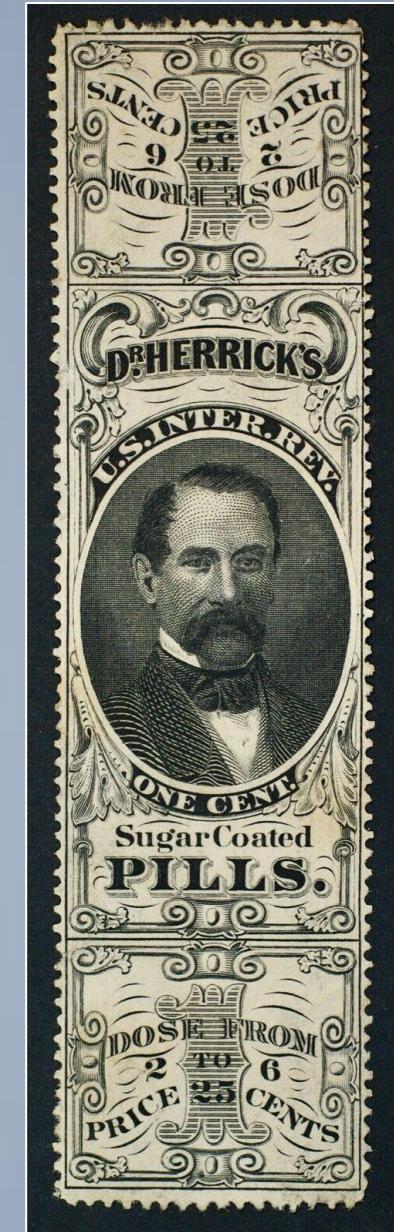
- › In late 1862, certain manufacturers questioned if they could obtain distinctive stamps with their own design and/or trademark.
- › Dr. Herrick had his request approved on Oct. 25, 1862 and became the first to take advantage in the trade.
- › L.R. Herrick, MD originated his sugar-coated vegetable health pills, a cure for many ailments.
- › He also sold many different kinds of plasters (an adhesive strip of material for covering cuts and wounds).



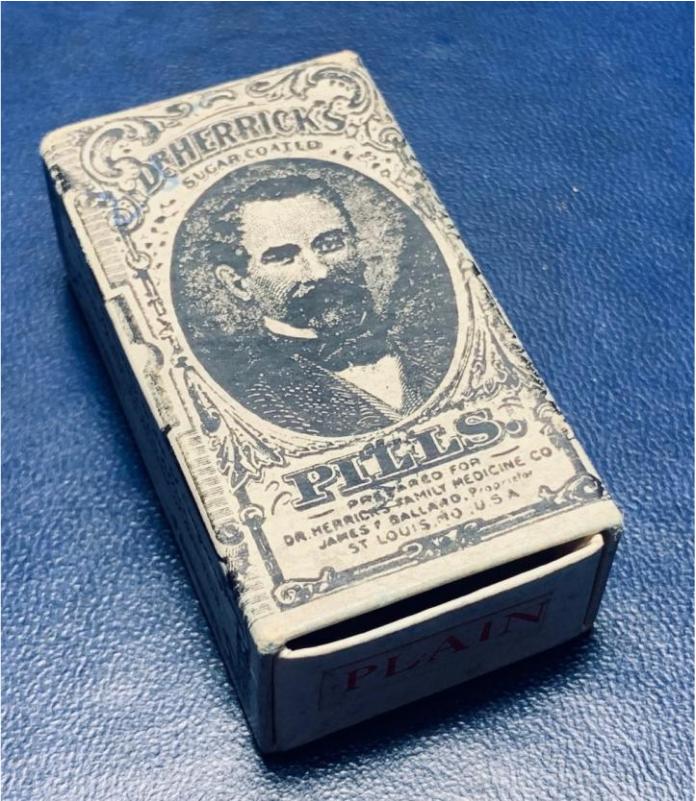
RS118 1¢ Red



RS118P 1¢ Rec

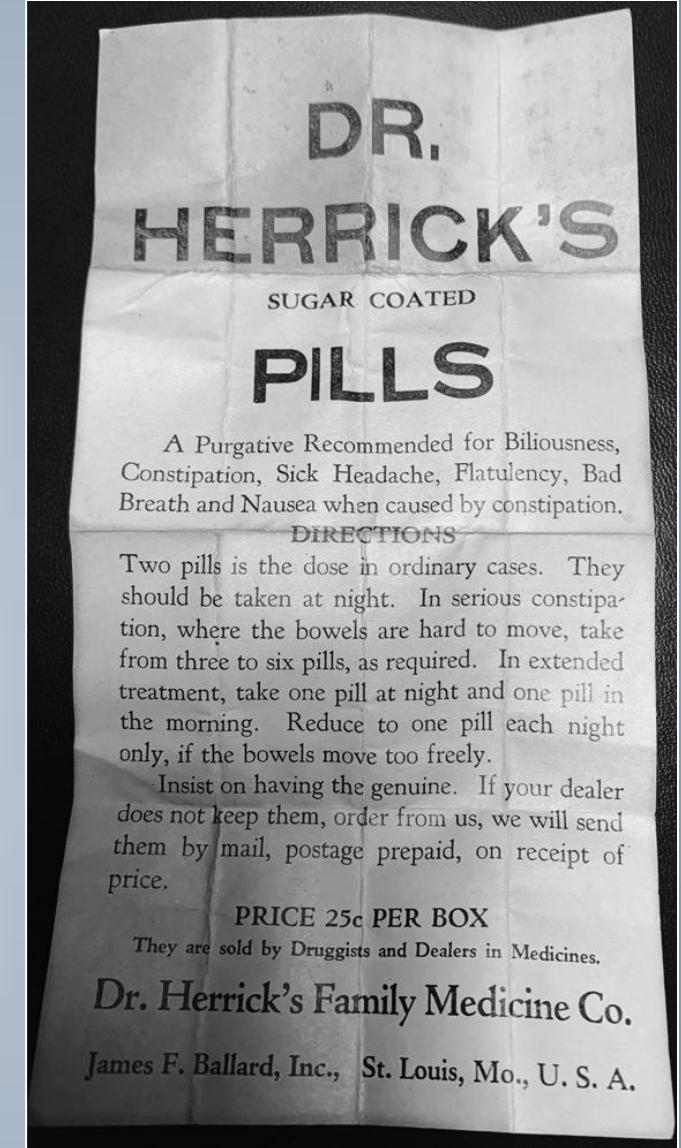


RS117 1¢ Black



Dr. Herrick's Sugar Coated Pills Box, "Plain", circa 1920 with original contents.

Dimensions:
50x30x20 mm





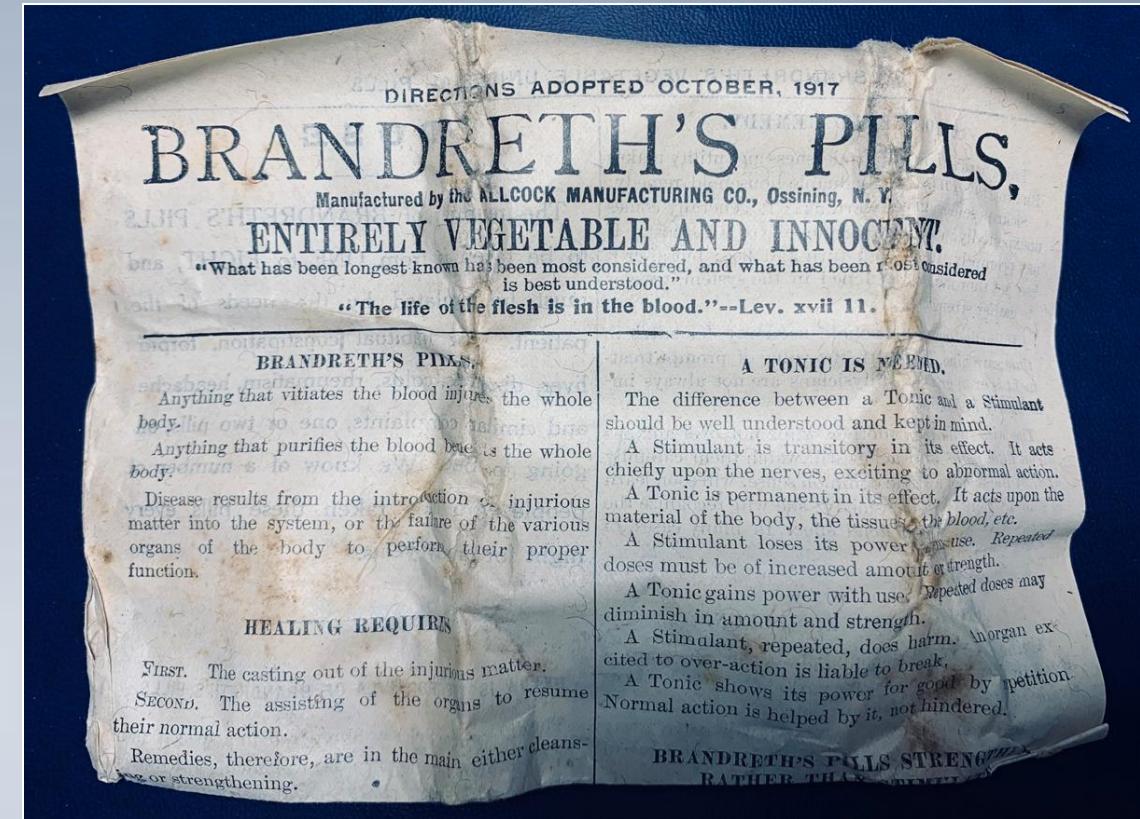
B. Brandreth's Pills & Allcock's Porous Plasters

- › Brandreth's Pills were first manufactured around 1835 in NYC and shortly thereafter moved to Ossining, NY.
- › Soon Allcock's Porous Plasters became another product line.
- › Brandreth was attuned to advertising and commissioned private die stamps early on.
- › Issued imperforate Jul. 1863 to Feb. 1865.
 - 4,925,084 were issued on old paper
 - 10,542,572 on silk paper
 - 105,600 on old paper & 550,000 on silk paper were perforated.



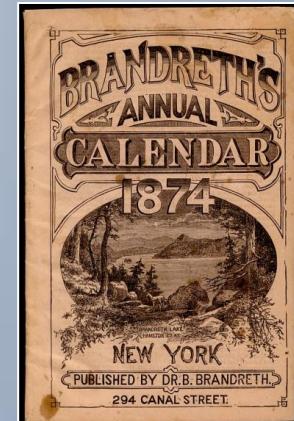
RS34b 1¢ black 41x50mm on silk paper





Brandreth's Pills Wrappers:
Chocolate Coated & Plain
with a facsimile stamp
resembling issued revenue.

Dimensions:
60x45x20 mm



Fleming Brothers, Pittsburgh, PA

Dr. McLane's Celebrated Vermifuge & Liver Pills

- › Dr. C. McLane died in 1855, his proprietary medicines lived on as products of the Fleming Brothers.
- › These included:
 - Dr. C. McLean's Celebrated Liver Pills
 - Dr. C. McLean's Celebrated American Worm Specific or Vermifuge and Cruciform (for rheumatism of man or beast)
 - Fleming's Ivory Polish (for the teeth)
 - Fleming's Mikado Cologne
 - Kidd's Cough Syrup.



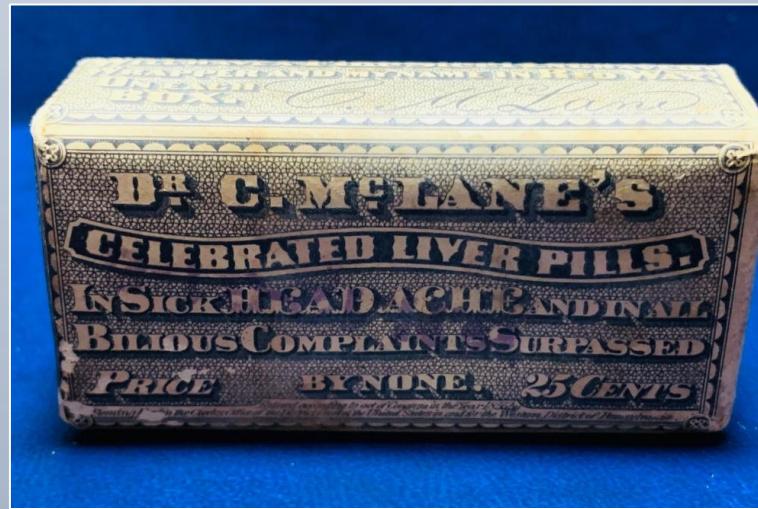
RS88: 1¢ black, issued May 1863 to Oct. 1880. 2,488,362 on old paper & 1,596,573 on silk/watermarked papers.



RS90: 1¢ black (193,500 old paper 1863) and 1¢ blue 1863 to 1883. 5,249,78 on old paper, 3,136,888 on silk paper and 3,566,100 on watermarked paper.



Original, unopened box of McLane's
Celebrated Liver Pills, circa 1875.
Dimensions: 63x43x20 mm



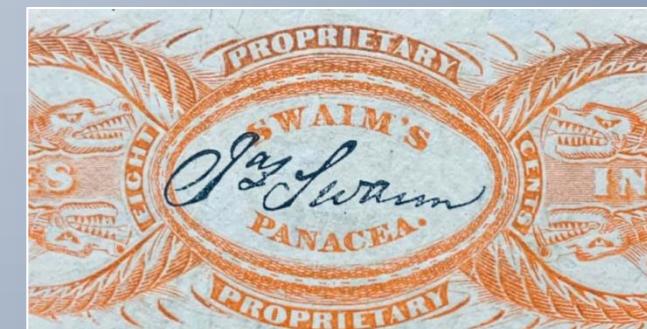
Trade Card for Liver Pills



James Swaim, M.D., Philadelphia, PA

Swaim's Panacea & Swaim's Stomachic Elixir

- › James Swaim, M.D. established a proprietary medicine business in 1820, offering both elixirs until 1870, when William Swaim took over.
- › Butler & Carpenter of Philadelphia, PA were directed to engrave a private die in strip form in orange with dragon-headed snakes which could be used as a cork seal on the Swaim bottles.
- › Measures 160x32 mm, printed in sheets of 16 (2x8), imperforate or die-cut on various paper types, with printed or manuscript signature.
 - RS231: 6¢ issued April 1863, 17,963 on old paper.
 - RS232/233: 8¢ Jas. Swaim issued May 1864.
 - RS234/235: 8¢ Wm. Swaim, issued ~1870 to 1883
 - › 128,805 Jas. and Wm. Swaim issued on old paper
 - › 139,477 on silk paper
 - › 75,553 (presumably all Wm.) on watermarked paper.





1864
WILLIAM AND JAMES SWAIN, PHILADELPHIA, PA
8C ORANGE, DIE CUT



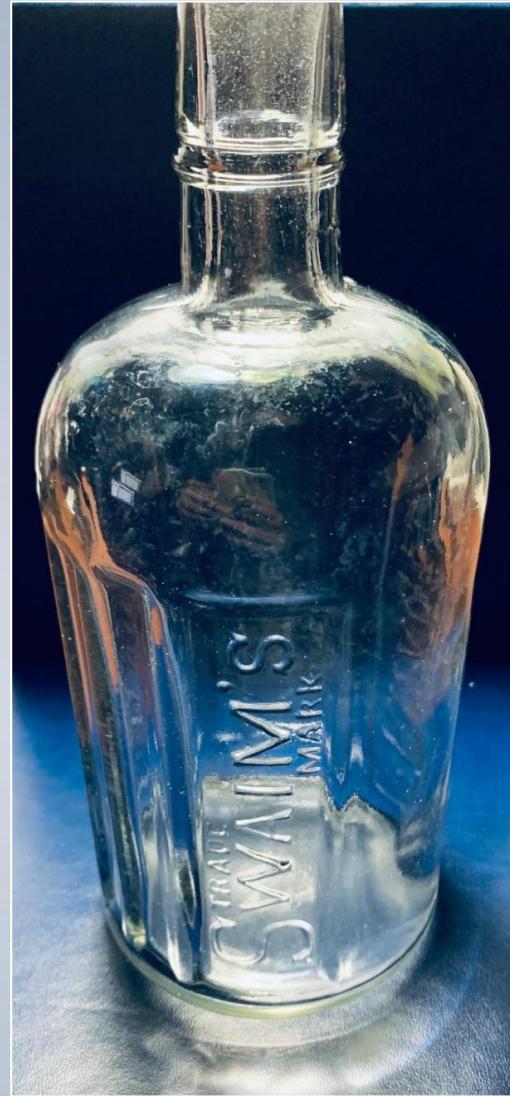
1864
WILLIAM SWAIN, PHILADELPHIA, PA
8C ORANGE, DIE CUT



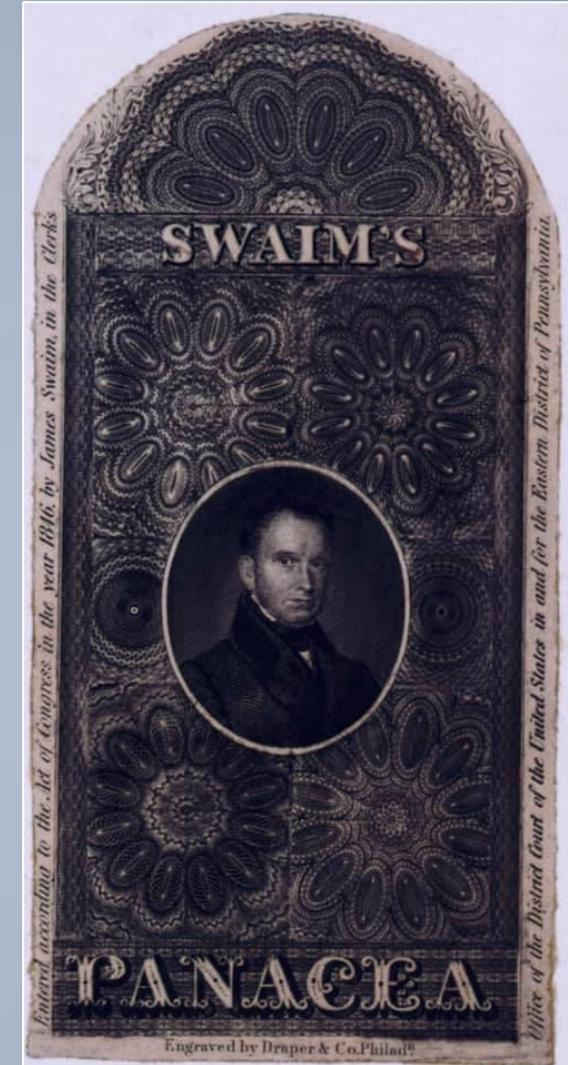
Dr. William Swaim (1830-1883)



Headstone Wm. Swaim

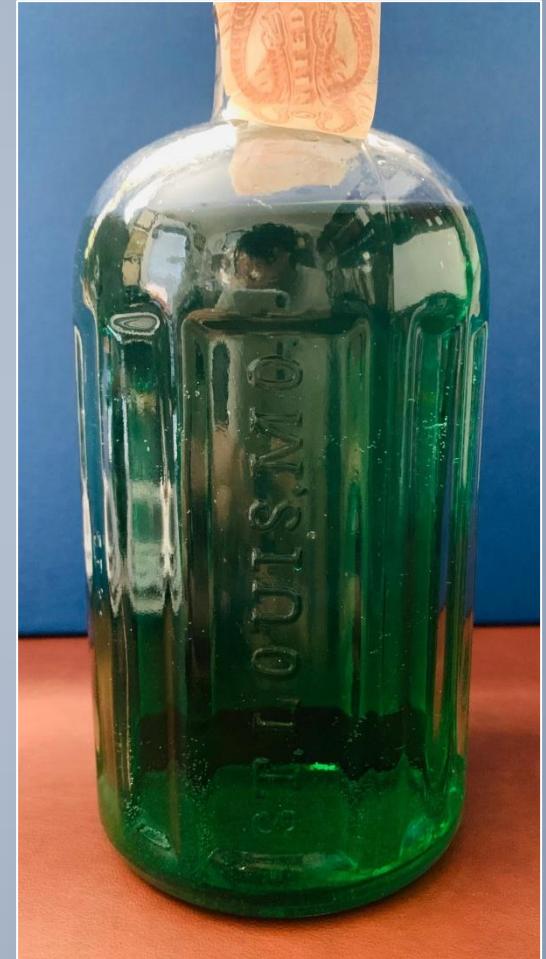


Swaim's Panacea Bottle:
Hand blown in mold, applied lip
(BIMAL) early smooth base,
aqua, round with sunken panels.



Swaim's Panacea Bottle
Label by Draper & Co, Phil.

Facsimile of a Swaim's Panacea Bottle with Draper label & 8¢ Stamp adhered as Cork Seal

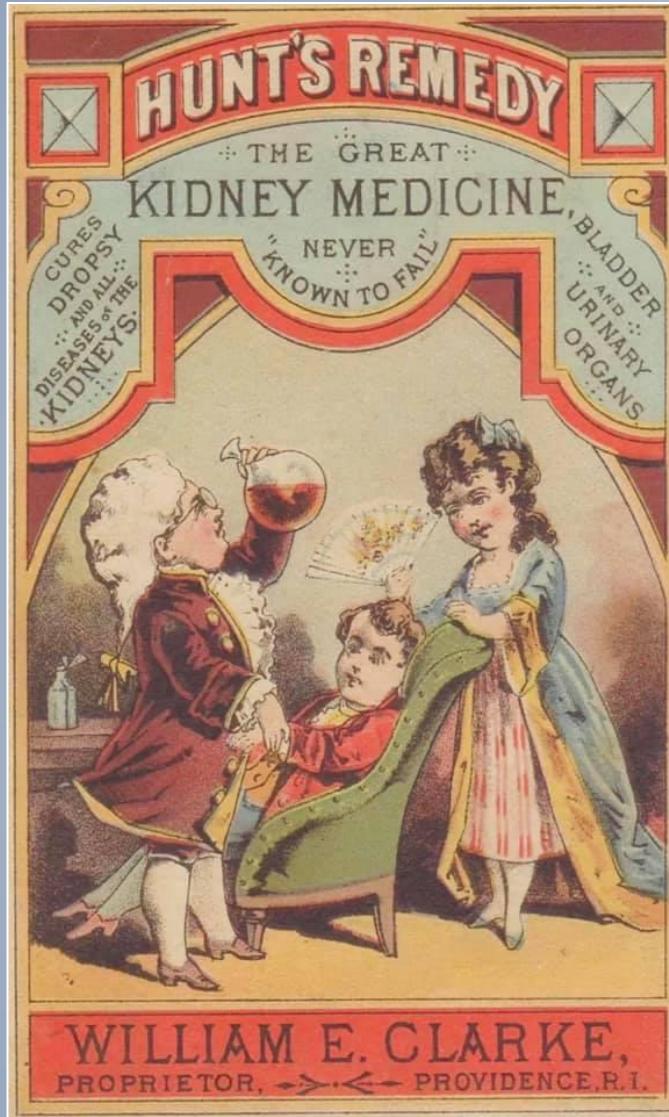


William E. Clarke, Providence, R.I. “Hunt’s Remedy” - the Great Kidney Medicine



- › “Hunt's Remedy” dates back to early days of Manhattan; was manufactured before William E. Clarke of Providence, R.I. took possession in 1872.
- › Clarke then added Health Pills & Liver Cure, as well as “Hunt's Infallible Eye-Wash”, to his products.
- › Hunt passed away in late-1880/early-1881. The business operated as Hunt's Remedy Company; with no new stamps issued.
 - RS56 - 3¢ Blue, macabre image of man grabbing neck of “death” (see scythe and hourglass) preparing to strike with a bottle of Hunt's Remedy.
 - Issued in 1880: 9,000 printed on watermarked 191R paper.





Hunt's Remedy Trade Card, ca. 1880



RS57 - 6¢ Black, image of banner advertising
Hunt's Remedy
"The Great Kidney
Medicine."

Issued in 1879-1880:
115,000 on
watermarked paper.



Hunt's Remedy Trade Card, 1883

Benjamin A. Fahnestock, Pittsburgh, PA

“B.A. Fahnestock’s Vermifuge” – It Never Fails...



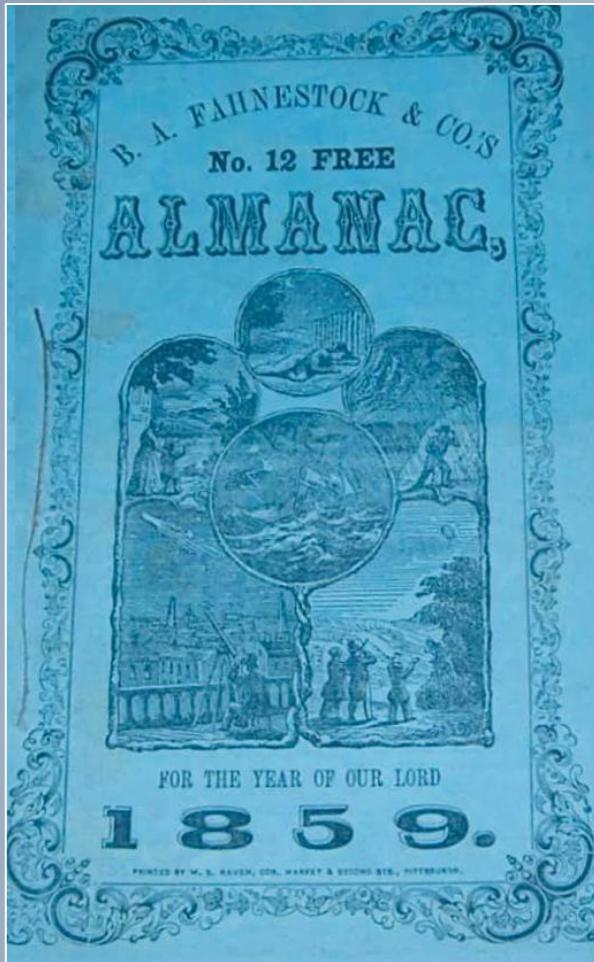
- › Benjamin A. Fahnestock began to market his vermifuge in 1830. It was successful & when stamps were required in 1862 he quickly had one prepared. Issued Feb. 1863 to Aug. 1875. 2,522,750 issued on old paper & 1,322,500 on silk paper.
- › In 1868, Fahnestock died and Schwartz & Haslett took over his drug & proprietary medicine business. They continued to use the Fahnestock stamps until 1875.
- › By then the firm was known as J.E. Schwartz, which appears on revised design in lower left label & ‘Pittsburgh’ moved to lower right label. 750,036 of revised stamps issued on silk, pink & watermarked papers from 1875 to Dec. 1882.



RS84a -1¢ lake, Eagle on branch facing left, imperforate, old paper.



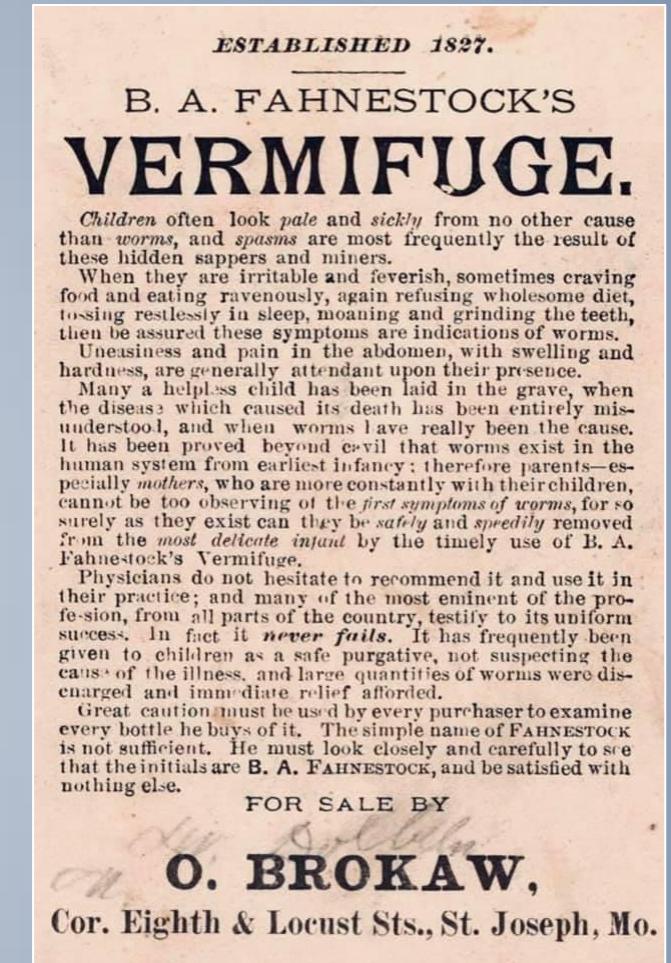
RS215d -1¢ lake, updated design, imperforate, watermarked 191R.



B.A. Fahnestock & Co.'s
No. 12 Free Almanac 1859



Trade Card depicting jolly St. Nicholas dancing, with glove missing, holding holly, as three Owls look down from their perch. Reverse shows an advertisement for Vermifuge.



J.B. Rose & Company, New York Centaur Liniment & Castoria



RS204b - major double transfer of “TWO CENTS” in top label and top frame line. Position 1, top row, guide dot top center, double dots upper right, multiple side scratches at left.

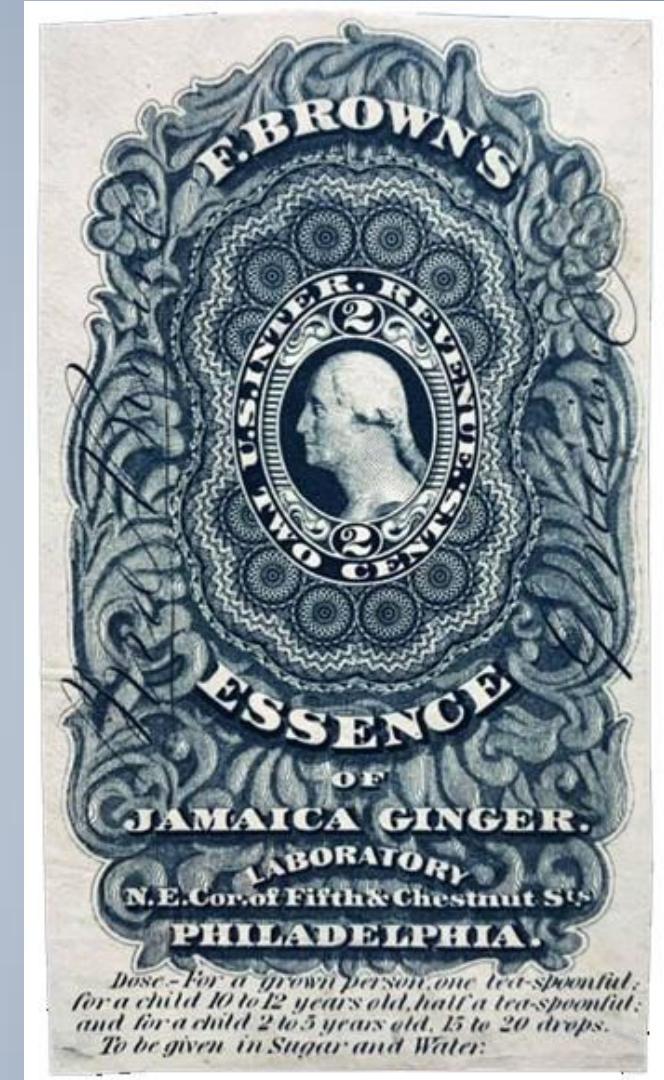


RS204b 40x12 mm



F. Brown's Essence of Jamaica Ginger Proprietary Stamp & Bottle Label

- › Frederick Brown (1796-1864) Co. manufactured and advertised Brown's Essence of Ginger, Brown's Choleral Mixture and several other proprietary's until the early 20th century.
- › In 1822, Fred opened an apothecary shop (Laboratory) at "N.E. Corner of 5th & Chestnut Sts., Philadelphia" (as seen on stamp) and thereafter began manufacturing his Essence of Jamaica Ginger (contained *ginger, calamus, snakeroot, cinnamon, mace, cloves and 50% alcohol*).
- › His eldest son Frederick Brown, Jr. graduated from the Philadelphia College of Pharmacy in 1861, joined his father's firm, and assumed full control of company when his father passed.
- › Jos. Carpenter & Co. engraved the die, approved March 1869, each measures 52x103 mm, found on thin old, silk, pink and watermarked (USIR) papers.



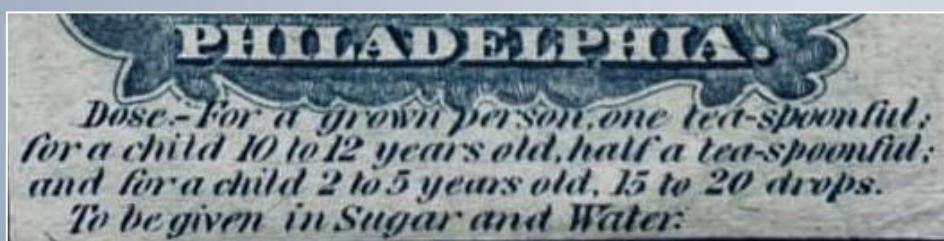
RS37 2¢ black, silk paper, imperforate



RS37 - Die I (incomplete 'E' in 'Fred' facsimile signature)

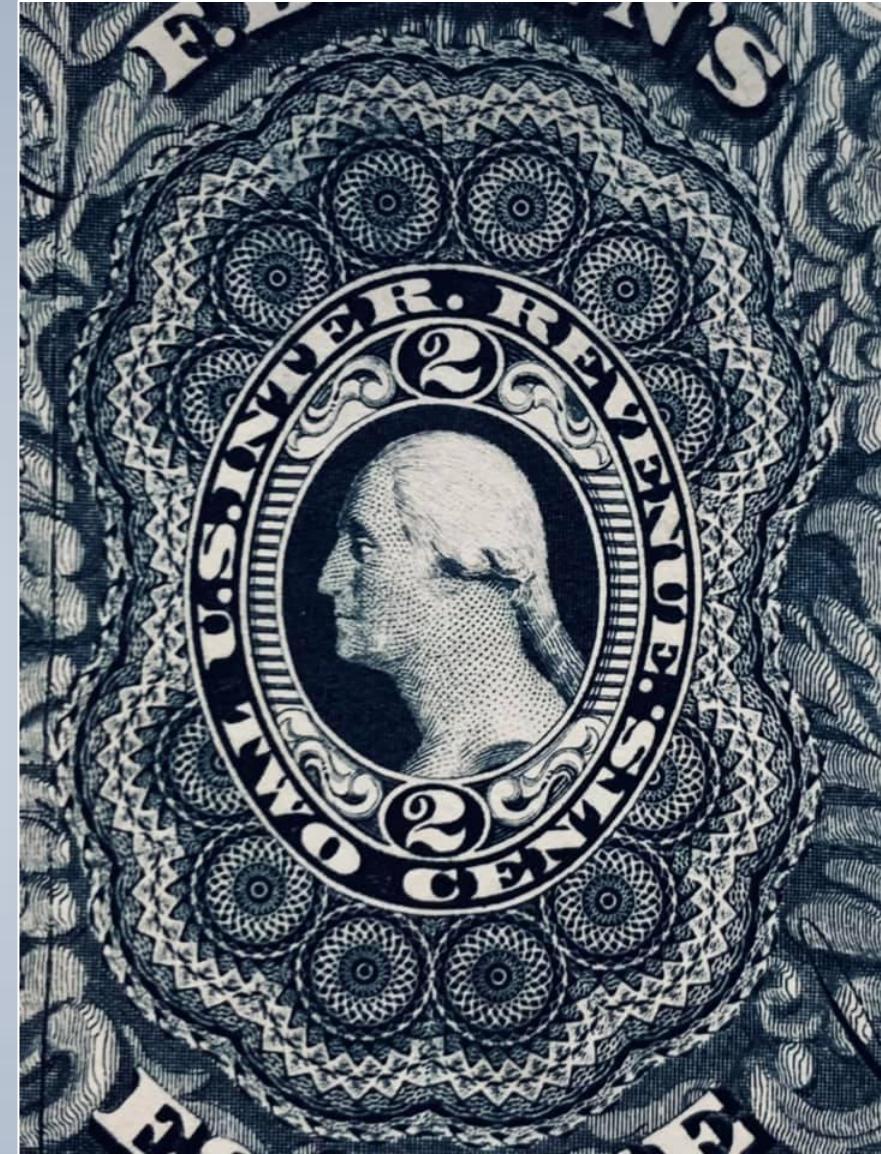


RS38b - Die II (complete recut 'E' in 'Fred' in signature)



The adult and child dose is described in the white space at the bottom of the stamp design, "To be given in Sugar and Water:"

This Private Die Proprietary U.S. Revenue Medicine stamp also served as the bottle label.



The engraving detail (rosettes & tessellation) on these stamps is some of the finest produced by Carpenter.

Demas S. Barnes / D.S. Barnes / Demas Barnes & Co.

A Man of Many Talents, incl. Proprietary Medicines Owner

- ❖ He served as a Congressman, trustee of the Brooklyn Bridge, director of the Long Island Railroad, and owner of proprietary medicine patents bought from various developers.
- ❖ Born in 1827 in Canandaigua, NY. Opened a wholesale drug firm NYC in 1853, later establishing branch offices in San Fran., N. Orleans & Montreal. Served as agent for various proprietary medicines, incl.: Drake's Plantation Bitters; Wynkoop's Pectoral; Lyon's Magnetic Powder; Lyon's Kathairon; Mexican Mustang Liniment; Hagan's Magnolia Balm & Marchisi's Uterine Catholicon.
- ❖ In 1866, Barnes elected to a term in U.S. Congress from Brooklyn and two years later sold his wholesale firm to John F. Henry. He retired 1870, retained financial interest in variety of enterprises, including Lyon Mfg. Co.; P.H. Drake Co.; A.L. Scovill Co. and The Centaur Co. Barnes died May 1, 1888.





The first stamps used by Barnes featured a facsimile of his signature at the bottom, with both his initials issued from March 1863-1865 all on old paper.



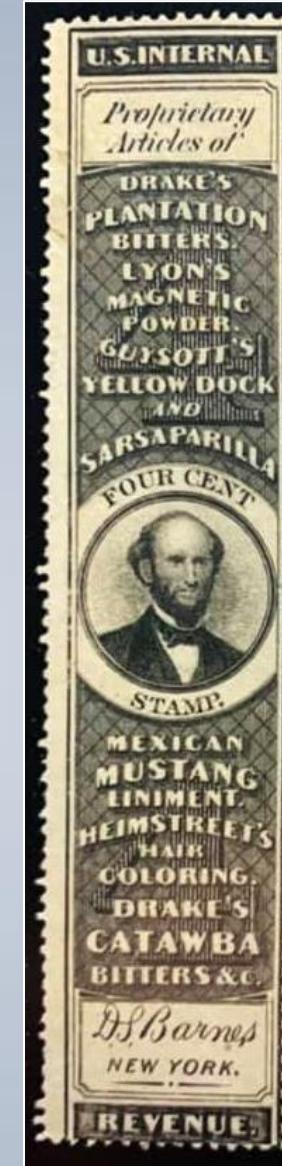
RS15a 1¢



RS16a 2¢



RS17a 4¢ (n=24)



RS20a 4¢



RS19a 2¢

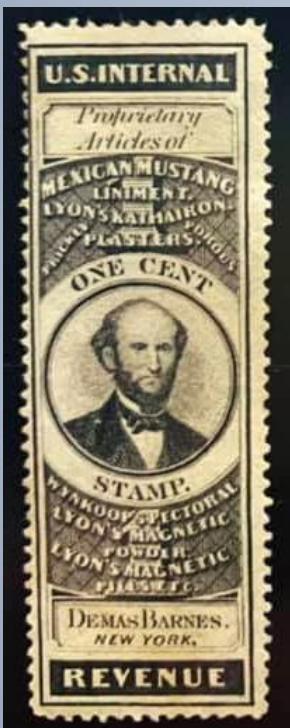


RS18a 1¢

In 1863, Barnes wanted his stamps in carmine, was persuaded to use vermilion due to cost. Vermilion color ran, so after initial supply used printing in black resumed.



In 1864, Barnes instructed Butler & Carpenter to change his signature on the stamps to a printed name, dropping middle initial, on old paper.



RS21a 1¢



RS22a 2¢



RS23a 4¢

In 1866, Barnes chose to use Demas Barnes & Company on his stamps when they were re-designed horizontally with central image of the firms 'Medicine Warehouse' at 21 Park Row.



RS24 1¢

RS25 2¢

RS26 4¢

J.C. Ayer & Co., Practical & Analytical Chemists, Lowell, MA.



- › James Cook Ayer was in railroad building, invention and patent medicine, manufacturing his own medicines while running an apothecary in the 1840's.
- › When the 1862 Revenue Act was passed, he began to advertise and differentiate his products through private die stamps.
- › Ayer trialed various colors, with the 1¢ stamp being issued in seven colors. 5,336 each of red, carmine, purple, orange and green stamps were delivered May 1863, along with 18,584 in blue and some number in black (RS4).
- › Black chosen, 12,113,122 issued on old paper; 6,411,995 on silk paper & 6,348,393 on pink & watermarked papers, printed up until Jan. 1883.



Stamp was used to seal the wooden box top to the base, and was torn to access contents.



#RS9b & RS9d, silk and watermarked, 2 shades. Used to seal tops of Bottles.

The 4 ¢ stamps were also issued in small quantities in black, red, vermillion, green and purple: 4,560 of each in April 1863. Blue was also issued up to April 1883: 9,143,374 on old paper; 6,712,339 on silk paper & 5,384,582 on watermarked paper. Most were die cut into star shapes, others left imperforate.



#RS10d, watermarked USIR, ex. Joyce.





Encased Postage EP13 & EP15 for Ayer's Sarsaparilla



Trade Card: Ayer's Sugar-Coated Pills, "The Little Favorites"



Aqua Bottle: Ayer's Ague Cure, Lowell, Mass.

Fetridge & Company, New York

Balm of 1000 Flowers, Perfume

- › One printing of private die stamps, #RT5a, 2¢ vermilion, engraved 89x22 mm, die cut.
- › Issued April 1864 to October 1864: 15,750 printed, all on old paper, 48 per sheet.



Pontiled 8-sided "Balm of Thousand Flowers" bottle, ca. 1850s



2¢ vermilion, design with central bunch of flowers surrounded by colored band "U. STATES INTER. REVENUE PROPRIETARY" with labels at left and right "BALM OF 1000 FLOWERS" and "FETRIDGE & Co. New-YORK"



The 1883 Repeal of the Revenue Act

On March 3, 1883, the Revenue Act of 1862 was repealed after the issuance of approximately 8 billion revenue stamps. Of these stamps, over 5 billion of these issued were private die proprietary issues.



In 1898, at the start of the Spanish-American War, proprietary medicines saw a brief time again to take advantage of the private die stamp when President McKinley signed into law “An Act to Provide Ways and Means to Meet War Expenditures...” which provided for a stamp tax which only lasted until 1901.

In the entire course of the U.S. private die proprietary revenue issues, 277 proprietary companies officially issued their own revenue stamps.





Summary



- ❖ On July 1st, 1862, the Revenue Act of 1862 was established which called for taxation through the use of stamps to be used on legal and business documents of all kinds, as well as commodities, including proprietary medicines, matches, perfumes, cosmetics, playing cards and canned fruit.
- ❖ Butler & Carpenter of Philadelphia were selected to print the first general issue documentary and private die proprietary revenue stamps.
- ❖ The proprietary stamp was to be affixed on the box, bottle, or package, so that when opened the stamp would be destroyed.
- ❖ Many proprietors took advantage of this to advertise their wares and convey a “seal of approval.”
- ❖ By the end of the 19th Century, an outcry by journalists, physicians and pharmacists over the secrecy of these nostrums and elixirs, exposed the possible dangers in some patent medicines.
- ❖ This eventually led to the enactment of the 1906 Food and Drug Act.

Select References



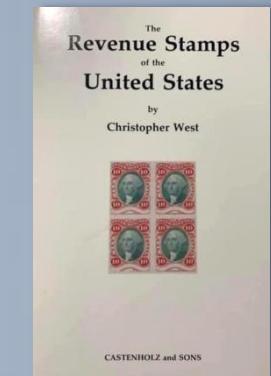
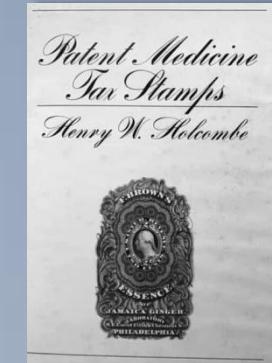
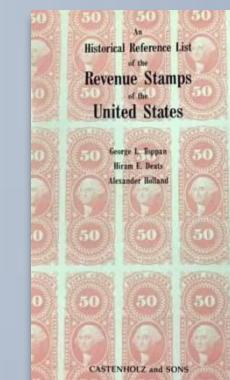
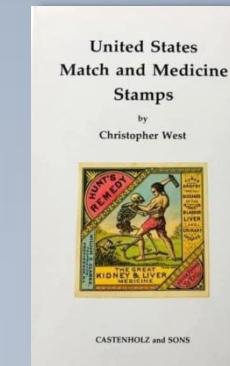
“Patent Medicine Tax Stamps, A History of the Firms Using United States Private Die Proprietary Medicine Tax Stamps,” by Henry W. Holcombe, Quarterman Publications, Inc., 1979.

“United States Match and Medicine Stamps,” by Christopher West, Castenholz and Sons, 1980.

“The Revenue Stamps of the United States,” by Christopher West, Castenholz and Sons, 1979.

“An Historical Reference List of the Revenue Stamps of the United States.” George L. Toppan, Hiram E. Deats, Alexander Holland, Castenholz and Sons, 1990.

“The Morton Dean Joyce Private Die Proprietary Collection,” Auction Catalog, by Andrew Levitt, Philatelic Consultant, Danbury, Ct. 1991.





RS100b, 6¢, Black, on silk paper, S.B. Hartman & Co, Lancaster, PA

Thank You! Questions?

By Charles J. DiComo, PhD

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