

From Sparre to the De La Rue through the essay and the proofs

by Giuseppe Cirneco

When the contract with Francesco Matraire, the sole supplier of stamps to the Kingdom of Sardinia, approached the expiration, the Italian Government signed a contract for postage stamps with the Swedish Count Ambjörn Sparre.

But the reports from London by Costantino Perazzi about the quality of the production of the De La Rue firm, the rumors about the reliability of Sparre and his inability to respect the schedule of production, led to the negotiation of a contract with De La Rue for the supply of postage stamps.

The urgent need of a stamp for the new rate for internal letters, reduced from 20 to 15 centesimi in new postal law of May 5th 1862, brought to a supplementary order to Francesco Matraire although his contract had expired. The new stamp was printed by lithography.

A particular feature of the stamps produced by De La Rue for the Italian Government was introduced on request of Perazzi: a security underprint in colorless ink that prevented the copying of the stamps by anastatic methods.

In the exhibit it also shown the use of specimen De La Rue stamps for the testing of the new cancellers that were to be introduced for standardizing the variety of cancellers then in use.

The exhibit ends with the proofs and essays prepared by other printers in the hope to be selected as suppliers of stamps and seals for the Government.

Plan of the exhibit

| | |
|----------------------|--------------|
| Count Ambjorn Sparre | Page. 2 |
| Francesco Matraire | Page. 3 |
| De La Rue | Pages. 4-13 |
| Other printers | Pages. 14-16 |

Count Ambjörn Sparre

For the production of stamps for Italy he made a partnership with Giuseppe Pellas, a lithographer from Genoa. Before his contract was severed he had prepared a number of dies, from which proofs were produced

Die proofs in various colors on glossy coated card



On thick white paper



On thin colored paper



Printing proof from sheetlets with offset print at back



Some stamps are printed on paper with dry impressed arms of Savoy watermark.

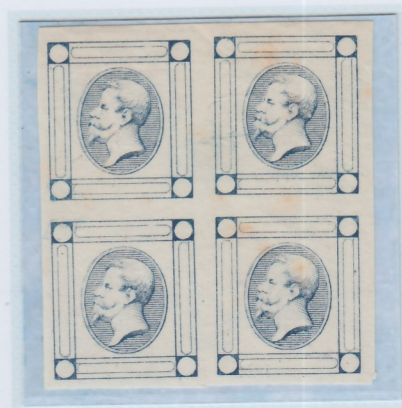
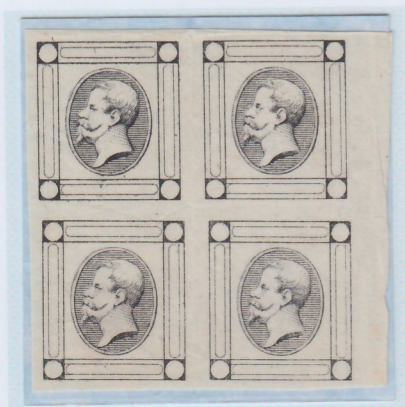


Some stamps are printed on paper with dry impressed crown in watermark



Francesco Matraire

Sole supplier of postage stamps to the Kingdom of Sardinia since 1850. His contract was still standing at the proclamation of the Kingdom of Italy and was to expire in September 1862 but was extended for the printing of provisional revenue stamps and of 15 centesimi postage stamps, needed on the 1st of January 1863, when the reduced letter rate become effective.



Essays of the 15 centesimi stamps without inscriptions, initial type with small boxes for the inscriptions

Modified
inscription
boxes



Completed
with
inscriptions



Printing
proof in
light blue



Essay with
mirror image
and modified
inscriptions
boxes



Essay with
modified
inscriptions
boxes and
unadopted
angled "15"
and "C"



Printing proof with triple
impression in blue and in
black; the black one is
inverted and one is
mirrored.
Proofs printed also on the
reverse.



De La Rue

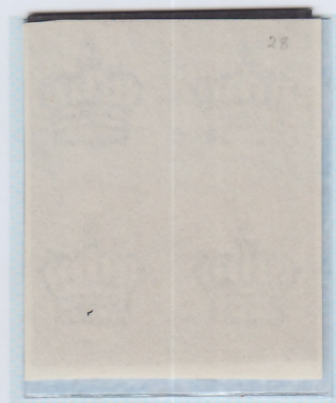
"My company commits itself to produce stamps with the same format of the British ones, with the king portrait or any other approved image, with the same British stamps quality, at the price of 9 pence per thousand items. "

The stamps were printed on watermarked paper initially produced by the Turkey Mills in Maidstone and later by Fratelli Avondo in Serravalle Sesia. The watermark, made by Smith & Brewer, consisted in four groups of 100 crowns each with inscriptions along the four sides.

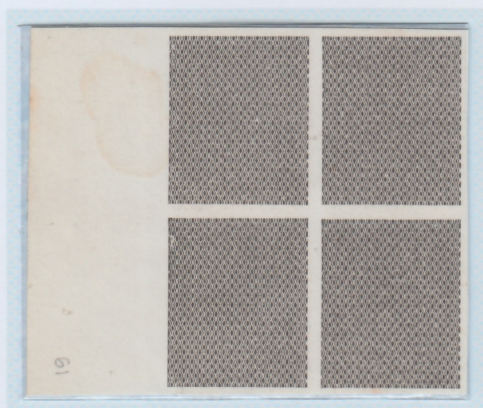
*sample of
paper with
the adopted
crowns*



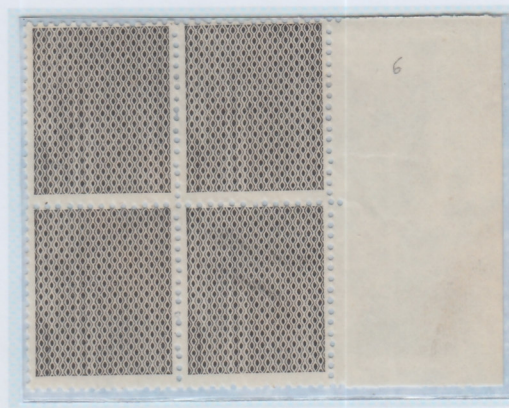
*sample of
paper with
an
unadopted
type of
crown*



To avoid fraudulent reproduction of the stamps by anastatic processes, security underprint was adopted and consisted in a grid of wavy lines and small rhombs, engraved by a Rose engine, printed with a clear varnish.



*Proof in black of an unadopted pattern
of the security underprint on plain
paper*



*Perforated proof in black of the
adopted pattern of the security
underprint*

Die proof, of the 15-cent stamp, prepared in London by De La Rue on 25 April 1863.



Imperforated sheets of stamps were used for the production of the specimens, except for the 2 lire for which completely finished sheets were used. On the specimens page anyway the 2 lire stamps have almost always the perforations cut off.



FRANCOBOLLI POSTALI

1863.



Il Ministro dei Lavori Pubblici,

L. F. MENABREA.

The sheet of stamps specimens annexed to the issue decree, in name of the Finance minister Luigi Federico Menabrea

The registration sheets were not perforated but were watermarked and gummed



Tests were made for the printing on thick paper without watermark produced by the Avondo mills

*Printed in Turin,
with yellowish
gum*



Specimen stamps were produced overprinting the word SAGGIO on finished stamps: whole sheets were overprinted by letterpress and various types and sizes were used. A manual stamping was used for single stamps.

Letterpress overprints

Small type



Very small characters, the overprint is only 8mm long instead of 10mm.



Larger type



Manual overprint

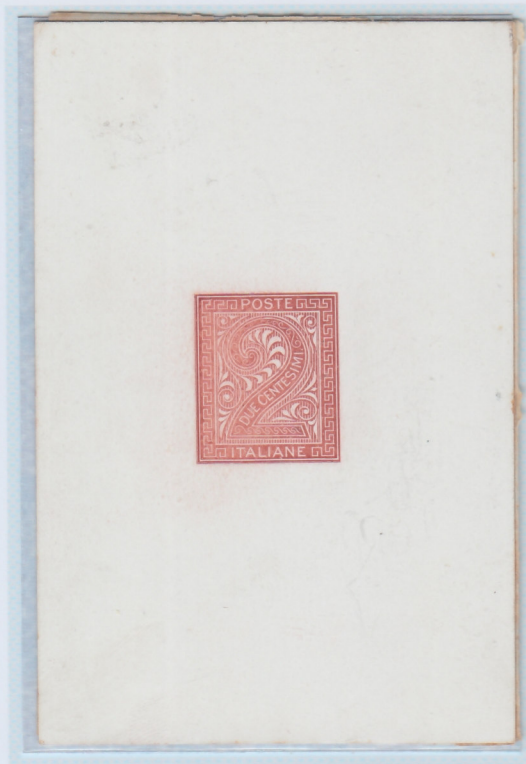
Small type



large type



Die proofs taken in Turin, in the adopted colors, on glossy glazed cards.



On the 1st of January 1867 a 20 centesimi stamp was issued. The SAGGIO overprint on the specimens is the same used for the stamps issued in 1863. It is printed by letterpress.



Specimens with additional pen cancellation.



Color trial in the ochre color used for the 1877 issue.



Imprimatur on watermarked and gummed paper.



Proof in black on watermarked and gummed paper.



Two similar stamps were issued in 1877 with a switch of the color of the stamps and some changes to the portrait.



Following the increase of the letter rate to 20 centesimi a provisional stamp with such denomination was introduced, overprinting the 15 centesimi with the new value and a curved bar cancelling the previous one, the so called "horseshoe".

The specimen received the hand overprint in small type.



An imprimatur of the stamps produced with new dies which had white dots added to the ornaments for security reasons.



Color trials on watermarked and gummed paper.



The 15 centesimi, the most used denomination, was subject to fierce criticism and a few months after its issue a new design was proposed in two variants of the portrait background, printed on watermarked paper and on plain one. The watermarked stamps had also the security underprint

*Solid
background
without
watermark.*



*Solid
background
watermarked.*



*Lined
background
without
watermark.*



*Lined
background
watermarked.*



*Cut-off from a
die proof on
glossy coated
card.*



The stamps for use in the Italian post offices abroad were produced overprinting ESTERO on stamps with modifications of the corner ornaments.

Imprimaturs on watermarked and gummed paper.



An imprimatur with a second albino overprint.



ESTERO overprint on imperforated stamps without modifications to the ornaments and incomplete printing of the bottom stamp.



Proofs of the ESTERO overprint on stamps without modification, sometimes with a second albino overprint.



Albino ESTERO overprint on imperforated stamps without modifications to the ornaments.



Specimens with red SAGGIO overprint.



The surplus SAGGIO overprinted stamps of 1863 were used for test of new cancellers and cancelling inks.



Single circle datestamp of Torino, dated 25th July 1865 4PM



numeral stamp with rhomboid dots



Canceller with diagonal bars and the Savoy arms.



Canceller with diamonds points.



numeral stamp with large dots

The ink for the cancellations was to be made of "black printing ink well mixed with olive oil" or "lamp black well ground with boiled nuts oil and diluted with olive oil".

The check of the resistance of the inks to the action of solvents was made with mixtures prepared by Warren de la Rue.

Cancellations subjected to chemical treatment for checking the insolubility of the marks.



Many printers submitted to the Government essays of stamps and seals in the hope of being selected for their supply.

Claude Perrin
Turin



Pietro
Thermignon
Turin



Hummel
Turin



Wentch
Bologna



Charles
Coucord
Turin



On thin
paper



On carton



Luigi Ronchi
Milan



Giuseppe
Seguin
Paris



Giuseppe Re
Turin



*Fratelli Pellas
Genoa*



*At right on
thick paper;
at left and
up on coated
card*



*Francesco Grazioli
Milan*



*Unknown
printers*

