

stamp was then made green, with the head of Washington in the centre of the design. The stamp is of such recent date that its design is familiar to every one.

The green 3-cent stamp which was adopted in 1870 continued in use longer than any of its predecessors. It was used until October 1, 1883, and it might have continued in vogue much longer had not Congress reduced the rate of letter postage to 2 cents. Under the new law a brown 2-cent stamp was issued. It continued in use until 1887, when its color was changed to the green now in use, to which the public seem to have taken a strong dislike.

Among the rarest American stamps are some which were not issued by the Government. When Congress, in 1845, authorized the use of stamps it neglected to make such provision as warranted the postal authorities in their estimation in the issue of stamps.

During the period of two years preceding the issue of Government stamps, the principal cities of the United States issued what were known as postmasters' stamps. They were intended for the convenience of business men who desired to mail letters after the closing of the post office, for the post office did not remain in operation all night in the primitive days of the postal service.

These stamps were issued by postmasters at New York, Philadelphia, Washington, Baltimore, St. Louis, Providence, Alexandria and a great many other places.

Some of the stamps were merely slips of paper bearing the signatures of the postmasters. Collectors value the Baltimore stamp at \$200. A stamp which was issued by the Postmaster of New Haven is worth on an original-unused envelope \$300 and more. A postage stamp issued by the Milbury Postmaster, which was of elaborate design for those days, and bore the head of Washington, brings readily \$300 to \$500,