

## The Marvelous Persian Rugs – By Alex Gill

In 1861, the United States faced a massive economic crisis because of the Civil War. With 11 seceded states and the loss of tariff revenue collected on goods imported from the south, the government was forced to develop a plan to generate internal revenue – money collected from taxes placed on domestic goods such as tobacco, medicine and playing cards. The Revenue Act of 1862 was signed into law on July 1, 1862 by Abraham Lincoln which generated funds to help fund the Civil War and created stamps which provided proof of payment.

In 1871, the U.S. Government issued a second series of revenue stamps replacing the First Issue revenues. In response to the popular trend of removing cancellations and reusing stamps, the \$200 and \$500 stamps in the second series were printed in two colors as a security feature. These two stamps are renowned for their elaborate designs and scrollwork which resembles Persian rugs which is how they earned their nickname.

The \$200 Persian Rug (Scott No. R132) was printed one to a sheet with margins on all four sides. In total, 446 copies were printed with only 125 known surviving examples. Today only four recorded \$200 stamps are known to have survived on documents. One surviving example is known to have been used to pay the tax on an 1872 will of Erastus Corning Sr. (of Corning Glass Works). On the other hand, the \$500 stamp is larger than the \$200 stamp measuring 2 1/8 x 4 inches and is considered by many as the most beautiful of all United States Revenue stamps. Only 204 copies were sold and today only 67 surviving copies have been recorded with one copy recently sold at auction for \$35,000. One \$500 example is known with the side imprint margins intact which was purchased alongside the full imprint margin \$200 stamp to be used on the will of Erastus Corning, Sr. Although the stamps were not applied to the documents, they were kept with the documents and remained in the family for over 100 years.

Today, these stamps are considered one of the great prizes of philately. When issued, the Persian Rug stamps were intended to pay railroad or other mortgages. In the 1870s, a \$500 revenue stamp would have paid the tax on a \$5,000,000 transaction which was a large sum of money at the time, which made cleaning cancels and reusing stamps tempting. For comparison, a \$500 tax in 1871, would exceed \$10,000 in 2020. The existing copies featuring better centering, crisp impressions and rich, bold colors are highly desired by revenue collectors.



Large Persian Rug stamp with side margins intact



Corning Small Persian with four margins intact

Together with all and singular the estates, buildings, rights, members, privileges, advantages, hereditaments and appurtenances to the same belonging, or in anywise appertaining; and the reversion and reversions, remainders and remainders, rents, issues and profits thereof: And also, all the estate, right, title, interest, claim and demand whatsoever, both in law and equity, which the said Testator had in his \_\_\_\_\_ lifetime, and at the time of his decease, and which the said parties of the first part, have by virtue of the said last Will and Testament, or otherwise, or in, and to the same, and every part and parcel thereof, with the appurtenances: To have and to hold the said premises above mentioned and described, and hereby granted and conveyed, or intended so to be, with the appurtenances, unto the said party of the second part, his heirs \_\_\_\_\_ and assigns to his and their only proper use, benefit and behoof forever.



And the said parties of the first part \_\_\_\_\_ covenant grant, promise and agree to and with the said party of the second part, his \_\_\_\_\_ heirs and assigns, that the said party of the second part his \_\_\_\_\_ heirs and assigns, shall and lawfully may from time to time and at all times forever hereafter peaceably and quietly have, hold, use, occupy, possess and enjoy, all and singular the said hereditaments and premises hereby granted and conveyed, or intended so to be, with their and every of their appurtenances, and receive and take the rents, issues and profits thereof, to and for his and \_\_\_\_\_ their \_\_\_\_\_ heirs and assigns, without any lawful let, suit, hindrance, molestation, interruption or denial what

\$200 Small Persian Rug on a will accompanied by 3 \$50 revenues (R131) and one \$10 Revenue (R128). Sold at auction for \$11,500.