

These Stamps are worth *Real Money*!

By Tom Broadhead

Yes, I know that stamps have value to us as collectors, but here I mean stamps *used* as money. Pouring over the pages of the Scott U.S. specialized catalog, I have always been fascinated by the Postage Currency and Encased Postage Stamps, which were produced during the U.S. Civil War. Although U.S. Postage Currency may be unique in world history, showing single or multiple images of then-current stamps, it turns out that Encased Stamps have been used by other countries.

During the U.S. Civil War, citizens on both sides began to hoard silver and gold coins, and soon unused postage stamps substituted for small change on the Union side. The U.S. printed Postage Currency utilizing images of the new 5c and 10c stamps – and these small banknotes could be redeemed for stamps. In turn, large accumulations of stamps could be redeemed at some banks for coins!



Perforated example of a 5c note



Imperforate 50c note with 5 stamp impressions

At about the same time in 1862, a device to preserve individual stamps in brass holders with transparent mica tops was patented by John Gault – imagine how much more fun it would have been to carry these in your pocket or purse, instead of a bunch of loose stamps, which could easily become stuck to each other. Some of these encased stamps had advertising on the back. Other countries (including France and Spain) have done the same, and Germany used aluminum and celluloid holders.



1c U.S. stamp with advertisement – 1862



German 25 pf stamp from the post WWI period

One of the most unusual and recent encased stamps is the 1 øre stamp of Denmark, which was attached to a small piece of cardboard and then encased in celluloid in 1941 during a coin shortage of WWII. I think that all of these are fascinating uses of stamps or stamp images as substitutes for coins!



References:

Denmark - http://www.cam.org/~anfc/timdan_e.htm

U.S. - <http://alphabetilately.com/W.html>

www.lynncoins.com

www.civil-war-token.com/civil-war-coinage-replacements.htm

