

The Grobbe's Comestibles stamp imitation mystery

If at first glance the 2¢ gray stamp-like label in Figure 1 looks familiar, it is because the frame, the portrait and the arrangement of the text mimic the genuine 2¢ carmine Washington stamp (Scott 301) also shown in Figure 1. The Washington stamp was issued in 1903 as part of the Second Bureau Issue.

The color is not the only difference between the two stamps in Figure 1. The central design of the gray cinderella stamp shows a portrait of a man who is identified as either "Mr. Kinnie" or "McKinnie." Under the portraits are the dates 1732 and 1799, probably the dates of his birth and death.

Presumably he is the founder of "Grobbe's Comestibles", the inscription beneath the dates.

With the march of time, some words go out of fashion, and "comestibles" is a word seldom heard anymore. It is a word from Middle French, and it came to mean "edibles" in English — another word that has all but disappeared today. However, I think we can classify Grobbe's Comestibles as a food store.

Google has failed me on this. An online search revealed nothing for the name of the person shown nor the name of the company.

I am sure there is an interesting story behind this look-alike, but the only thing I know is that someone took a great deal of care in producing it.

Also it is so similar to stamps of its time that the Secret Service could not have been pleased. It would have been ripe for seizure as a stamp forgery.

If you can shed any light on



Figure 1. The 1903 2¢ carmine Washington is almost matched by the imitation next to it produced by persons unknown to publicize Grobbe's Comestibles.

this production, please drop me a line by email at jmh-stamp@verizon.net, or write to John Hotchner, Box 1125, Falls Church, VA 22041-0125.

DETROIT'S 250TH BIRTHDAY

The city of Detroit, Mich., celebrated its 250th birthday in 1951. This event received a postal honor with the issuance of a 3¢ stamp on July 24 celebrating the founding of Detroit by French explorer Antoine de la Mothe Cadillac (Scott 1000). He established Fort Pontchartrain du Detroit in 1701 on the site that became the city.

Figure 2 shows the 3¢ commemorative.

But in March 1951 before the stamp was issued, the Michigan Stamp Club held its 37th annual exhibition and bourse and arranged for a cacheted cover with a commemorative message as part of a meter stamp. The March 11, 1951, cover is shown in Figure 3.

The "Detroit 250th Birthday Festival" meter message was placed over the 1945 Coast Guard commemorative (Scott 936) used to pay the 3¢ postage for the cover.

Note that the meter stamp is

a "double zero" with no postal value. Had this envelope actually been placed in the mail, the Post Office Department might have rejected the 3¢ stamp as valid postage as overprints on mint stamps invalidated them. This one might have slipped through, though, because the meter might not have been considered to be an overprint.

Anyway, it's an interesting souvenir of the time.

USING STAMP ILLUSTRATIONS TO INTEREST YOUNG ADULTS

Collector and exhibitor Fran Adams has hit on an idea for encouraging youngsters to get involved with stamp collecting. He has begun a series of children's books featuring Ameri-

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Figure 2. A 3¢ stamp issued July 24, 1951, marked the 250th anniversary of the founding of the city of Detroit by Antoine de la Mothe Cadillac.

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can history subjects illustrated by postage stamps and other philatelic items.

The first book in the series, *O. C. Marsh, Chief Red Cloud, and the Thunder Horses* was published in 2020.

Othniel Charles Marsh was a 19th-century paleontologist who discovered and described dozens of new species as he examined fossilized remains from the western badlands

of the Dakotas and Wyoming. In this book, Adams tells the story of Marsh's work, how he and Indian tribes cooperated to facilitate it and the discoveries he made.

At 72 pages, it is an easy read and might well turn a young adult onto science and how philately can reinforce it in fun ways. The book is available in paperback from Amazon, priced at \$19.95. ■



Figure 3. The Michigan Stamp Club held its 37th annual exhibition and bourse in March 1951, a few months before the release of the 3¢ 250th anniversary of Detroit commemorative stamp in Figure 2, so it had to use another stamp on its cover honoring the philatelic get-together and the city's anniversary. A postage meter stamp celebrating the anniversary was applied over the 3¢ Coast Guard commemorative on the cover.