

## U.S. \$15 Mortgage Fiscal History: Synopsis

The exhibit is now online at <https://revenuedocuments.wixsite.com/mysite>.

**Treatment.** Arrangement by stamp appears to be the only effective choice.

**Rarity/Difficulty of Acquisition.** Every item shown here justifiably ranks as a high-level rarity, an attribute shared by precious few exhibits past or present. Acquiring enough to fill a frame has been the work of four decades, and a second frame, even if possible, would add nothing to the “story.”

**Importance.** This subject was chosen in an effort to maximize Importance, as explained more fully in “Small Pond, Fairly Big Fish; or, In Search of the Perfect Nine,” *The Philatelic Exhibitor*, 4th Quarter 2023, pp. 35-9:

<https://www.yumpu.com/en/document/read/68582519/the-philatelic-exhibitor-q4-2023-digital-edition>

The salient point is that a “big pond”-class story is being told in a single frame.

From that article, “As background, within the universe of possible exhibit topics or ‘stories,’ **single-frame exhibits, even the most successful, by their nature typically tell ‘small’ stories:** a single stamp or two used for a brief period; a short-lived postal rate; the postal history of a single city for a year or so; and so on. . .

“**Exhibits of classic single stamps or short series, used nationwide over a period of years,** have a long history of success at the highest level. . . Topics of this type **are automatically “big,”** but virtually always require multiple frames.

“And so it would be with **U.S. Civil War era fiscal history** [whose stamps were used nationwide for a full decade, 1862-1872] . . . **Is it possible to find a stamp, or small related group of them, whose fiscal history can be satisfactorily told in a single frame?**”

**The \$15 Mortgage is one such.** Only about twenty examples have been recorded on document, yet these show a surprising diversity. Arguing that “**the material is limited**” misses the essential point that **this is precisely what allows the story of a First Issue denomination to be told in a single frame!** Similar arguments did not stop a single frame of the Canada 1851 12d “Black Empress” from winning the 2016 CofC, and other similar examples could be cited.

**A Fiscal History “Perfect Storm.”** Despite the rarity of surviving documents bearing the \$15 Mortgage, they include a diverse range of usages, including:

- early matching usage
- imperforates used East and West (California, Oregon)
- perforated stamps used East, West (California) and South (Alabama)
- the plate number
- the unique Scott-listed shade (the \$15 “Milky Blue,” *the only Scott-listed shade of any First Issue!*)
- the unauthorized printing in ultramarine

Of the **six spectacular high-denomination large format \$15 through \$200 First Issue revenues** — \$15 Mortgage, \$20 Conveyance, \$20 Probate of Will, \$25 Mortgage, \$50 USIR and \$200 USIR — **only for the \$15 Mortgage** have the stars aligned to allow the **survival of documents in all of these desirable fiscal history categories.**

**(Rarity Details).** The twenty or so recorded uses encompass several much rarer subclasses, including just :

- four with the imperforate;
- two with the milky blue;
- five with the ultramarine;
- one with the plate number;
- two in combinations with Nevada stamps.

(All based on the exhibitor’s meticulous four-decade census of revenue-stamped documents.)

Four documents shown here are among the top items in all of Civil War era fiscal history, featured in the Grand Pix-nominated exhibit, *U.S. Civil War Era Fiscal History Panorama*:

- the unique EMU, an 1863 mortgage with Mortgage \$15 tax paid by matching \$15 Mortgage imperforate
- the “Blue Boys,” the deed bearing \$15 Mortgage in both dark blue and milky blue
- the historic deed to the Mexican Mill, Carson River, Nevada, with \$130 in U.S. and \$130 in Nevada stamps (shown here)
- the Chicago, Burlington & Quincy Railroad Co. \$400,000 note with \$200 tax including \$15 ultramarine

The others are not far behind!

- Unique combination of \$15 Mortgage imperforate with Nevada stamps
- \$15 Mortgage imperforate, four recorded on document, remarkable Oregon usage
- \$15 Mortgage **ultramarine pair**, one of five recorded multiples, the only one on document
- \$15 Mortgage with **plate number**, the most striking First Issue plate number on document
- \$15 Mortgage milky blue subshade, one of four recorded milky blues on document
- \$15 Mortgage ultramarine, one of five recorded on document, on **deed executed in the Philippines!**
- \$15 Mortgage used in Alabama, extraordinary Southern usage

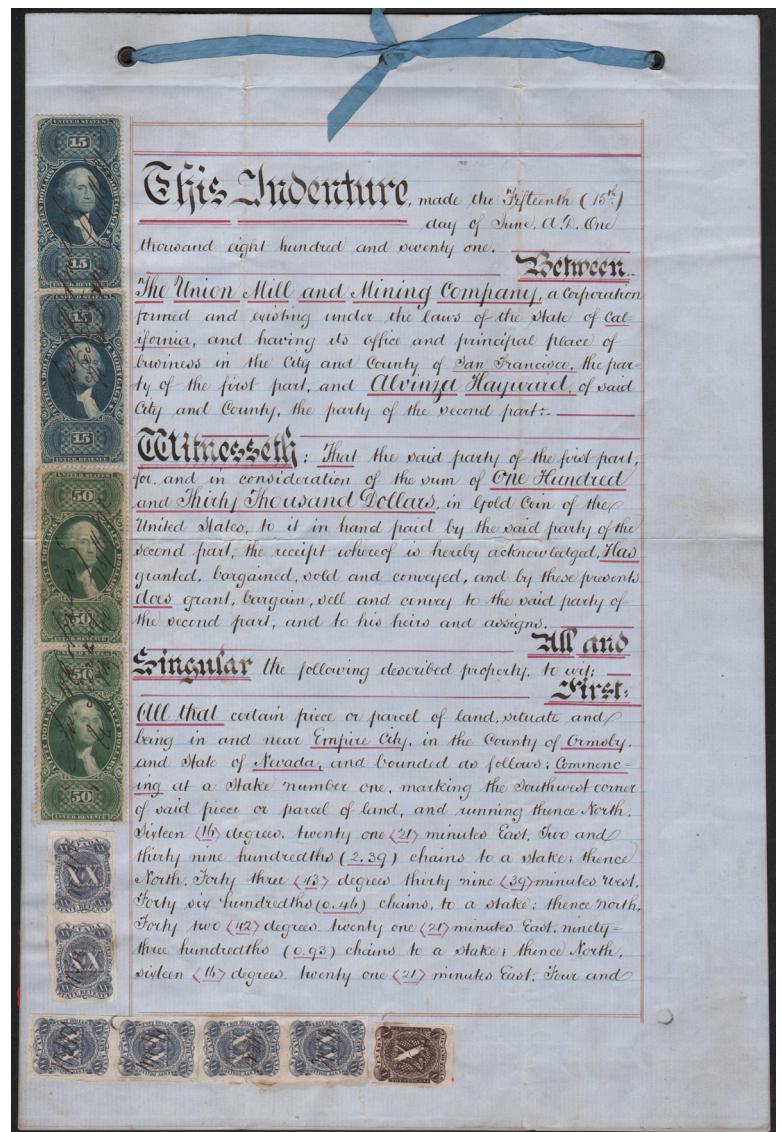
Finally, the **trifecta of single, multiple and mixed usages** of the \$15 Mortgage is included here.

**Knowledge/Research.** The captions here, and specifically the numbers recorded of the various stamps on document, are based on the exhibitor’s four decades of record-keeping. Five of the items shown here were profiled or mentioned in:

Mahler, Michael. 1999. *A Catalog of United States Revenue-Stamped Documents of the Civil War Era by Type and Tax Rate*. American Revenue Association.

And two more in:

Mahler, Michael. 1997. The “Newlands Find” of Nevada Revenue-Stamped Documents: John P. Jones, Alvinza Hayward, the Crown Point Conspiracy and its Aftermath. *Western Express* Jun 1997 (No. 184):32–42, Sep 1997 (No. 185):26–42.



1871 deed to Mexican Mill, Carson River, Nevada, amount \$130,000, bearing two \$50 USIR, two \$15 Mortgage, Nevada \$20 (x6) and \$10. Ex-“Newlands”

## The U.S. \$15 Mortgage Stamp, 1862–1872: A Fiscal History “Perfect Storm”

**Purpose.** This exhibit illustrates and explains the range of on-document usages of the U.S. \$15 Mortgage revenue stamp.

Apart from the bicolored \$200, the **large size and color variations** of the \$15 Mortgage make it **the most distinctive of the U.S. First Issues**, whose **use contributed significantly to the Union Civil War effort**. At the same time it was **one of the least used**. **Only 18,358 were sold** over the decade of broad Civil War era stamp taxes, 1862–1872, and \$15 was the only First Issue denomination not included in the Second Issues. Today **only about twenty have been recorded on document**.

Remarkably, these few exhibit a **diversity unique among the high-denomination First Issues**, as detailed below and in the Epilog:

### Exhibit Plan

#### 1. Imperforate

- 1.1 1862 Mortgage \$15 rate
- 1.2 With Nevada \$5
- 1.3 Oregon use

#### 2. Perforated, Dark Blue

- 2.1 \$15 Plate Number
- 2.2 Alabama solo use
- 2.3 With Nevada \$10, \$20

#### 3. \$15 Milky Blue

- 3.1 Combination with Dark Blue!
- 3.2 Milky Blue subshade

#### 4. \$15 Ultramarine

- 4.1 Philippines deed
- 4.2 \$400,000 note
- 4.3 Ultramarine pair

Numbers recorded are based on the exhibitor’s four-decade census. **Red borders or print: special significance.**