

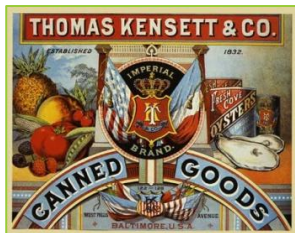
## A Brief History of T. Kensett & Co., Food Packers & the U.S. Private Die Proprietary Canned Fruit Revenue Stamp they Briefly Issued in 1867.



Featuring a New 2023 Census of Known #RP1a Stamps, updating the 1994 Census.

by Charles J. DiComo, PhD  
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2023

# Overview



- Introduction:
  - Kensett & Co., the Early Years, NYC
  - Kensett & Co. Prospers in Baltimore, MD
  - Pictorial History of Oyster & Fruit Packing Industry
- The Short-Lived Canned Goods Tax and Stamp:
  - Recently acquired RP1a – finest extant
  - The unique Trial Color Proof in black
  - The use of general issue Proprietary Stamps
- Revisiting the 1994 RP1a Census
  - Montage of known examples (from 27 to 43)
  - Individual digital images of known examples
- Summary and Call to Action

# History of T. Kensett & Co., the Early Years

- Thomas Kensett (1786-1829), an Englishman born in Hampton Court, was an engraver who emigrated to America and settled in New Haven, CT before 1806. He began canning food in New York City in ~1810. His son and namesake was one of the first to process “Fresh Cove Oysters” in Baltimore beginning in 1849. “Cove” refers to Cove St., a lane in Baltimore where several oyster houses were located.

## Kensett Family & “Vessels of Tin”

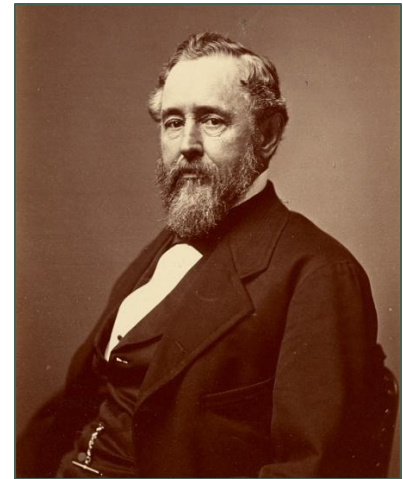
- In 1813, Thomas Kensett married Elizabeth A. Daggett, a sister of engraver Alfred Daggett (1799-1872).
- In 1814, Thomas Kensett II (1814-1887), their first child was born in Cheshire, CT.
- In 1819, Thom. Kensett Sr. went into partnership with his father-in-law Ezra Daggett in New York City where they processed salmon, lobsters and oysters in glass containers (expensive & prone to breakage).
- In 1825, Kensett & Daggett were awarded a U.S. Patent for preserving food in "vessels of tin"
- In 1825, Ezra Daggett retired and Kensett Sr. continued the business until his death in 1829.



Tin of Fresh Cove Oysters, Packed by T. Kensett

# T. Kensett & Co. Prospers in Baltimore, MD

- In 1849, Thomas Kensett II partnered with his brother-in-law Mr. Ira B. Wheeler and expanded the NYC company to Baltimore, MD which afforded far greater facilities for procuring oysters and fruits.
- He established a canning plant on York St., near Light St., on the waterfront and as the business prospered, built two factories, one for packing fruits and the other for manufacturing the tin canisters or “cans” for their expanding “hermetically sealed” oyster & fruit trade.
- Before the Civil War, the company processed large quantities of oysters, fruit (peaches), and vegetables (corn, green peas, tomatoes).
- In 1857, Wheeler died and Thomas ran the business alone until 1864, then his son Thomas H. Kensett & nephew H.N. Vail took control.



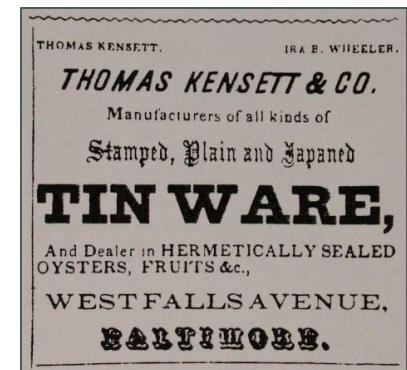
Thomas Kensett II (Getty Image)



Imperial Brand, Fresh Cove Oysters Can Label, T. Kensett & Co.

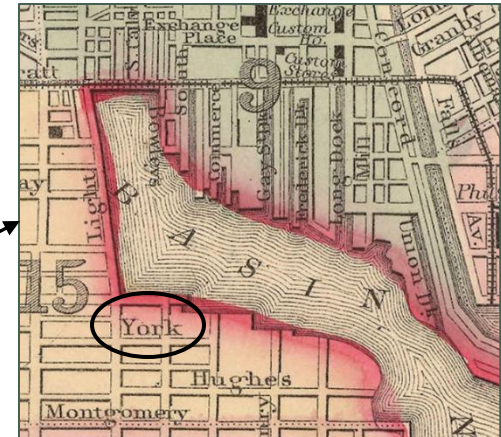
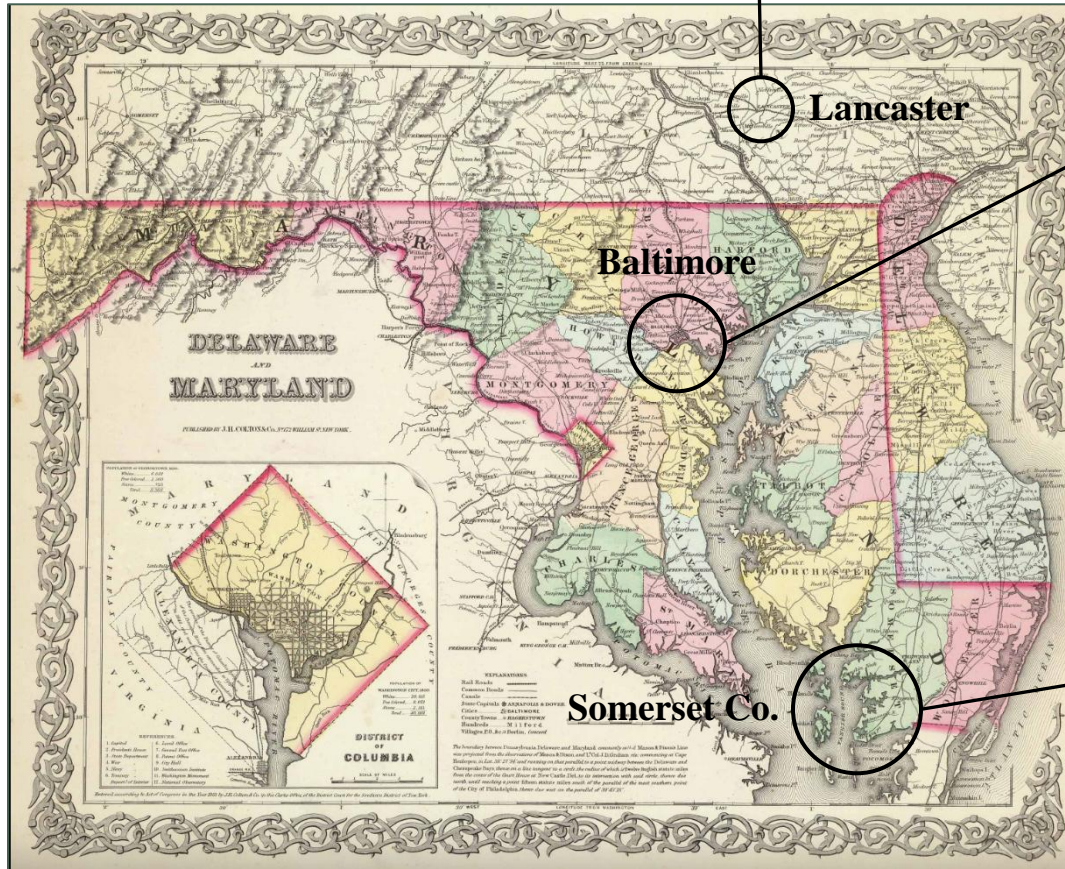


Kensett Packers Token ca. 1865

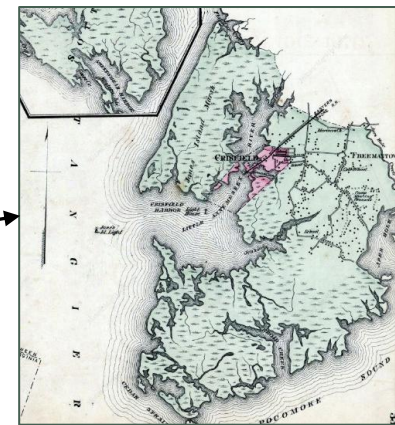


Kensett & Co. Ad, ca. 1850

# Baltimore, Maryland and the Chesapeake Bay



1860 Map of Inner Harbor, Baltimore  
Kensett Factory, York & Light Streets



Oyster Houses, Crisfield, MD,  
(Lake, Griffing & Stevenson, 1877)

Delaware & Maryland Map, from Colton Atlas of the World, 1856.

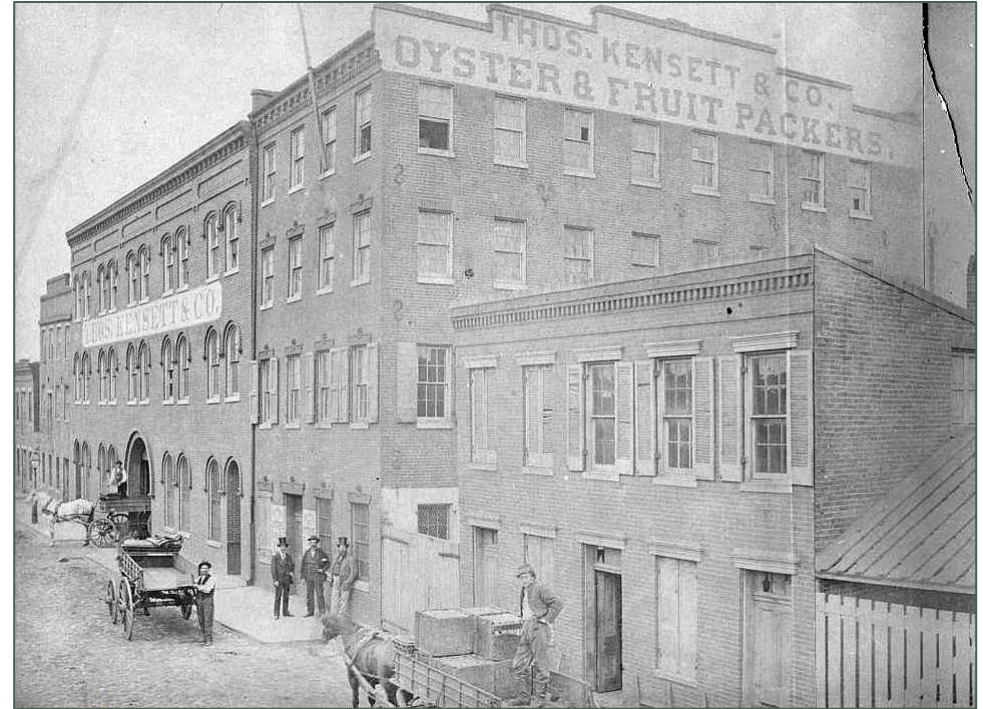
# Thos. Kensett & Co. Oysters & Fruit Packers



Oyster Houses with Shells, Crisfield MD 1890s



Baltimore Packinghouse, March 1872, *Harper's Weekly*



Thomas Kensett & Co. Oyster & Fruit Packers, Baltimore, MD circa 1861-62

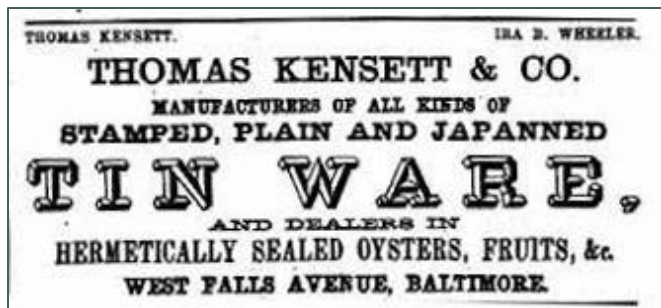


Oyster Shucking  
Knife, Crisfield,  
MD, early 1900s

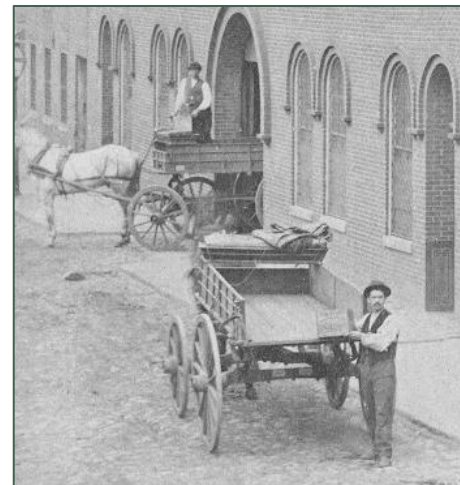
# Fresh Cove Oysters: Hermetically Sealed & Crated



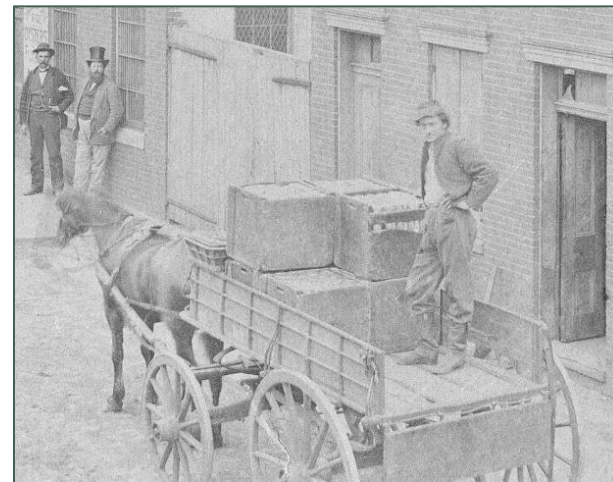
Crate of Fresh Cove Oysters and Tin Cans, illustrated in *Treasure in a Cornfield*, by Greg Hawley on the discovery and excavation of the steamboat *Arabia*, sunk in the Missouri River in 1856. Kansas City: Paddle Wheel Publishing, 2005.



Thomas Kensett & Co advertisement, circa 1850's

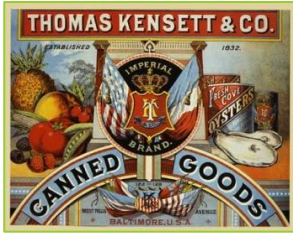


Kensett Man with Box of Oysters



Kensett Man with multiple crates of unlabeled oysters

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# The Short-Lived T. Kensett & Co. Canned Fruit Stamp

The tax on canned goods began Oct. 1, 1866 “For each can, bottle, or other package, for each two pounds weight or fraction thereof, one cent.” Kensett was the only canned fruit proprietor to issue a stamp in Jan. 1867. On Mar. 1, 1867, meats, shell-fish, fruits and vegetables became exempt.



#RP1a: 1¢ Green. Die Approved Dec. 4, 1866. First Issued Jan. 3, 1867, 210 stamps per sheet. Last Issued Mar. 7, 1867. Total No. Issued 528,000, old paper. Design: Large basket of fruit with more on shaded ground, with colorless rectangle, arched top, bordered by double-lined frame with ornamental corners. At top “T KENSETT & C<sup>o</sup>. BALTIMORE, M<sup>d</sup>.”, below “ONE CENT.”, surrounding basket an arched “U.S. INTER. REV. PROPRIETARY.” and in upper left and right corners a colorless numeral of value “1”.

**Reference:** “An Historical Reference List of the Revenue Stamps of the United States,” G.L. Toppan, H.F. Deats, A. Holland, Boston Philatelic Society, Boston, Mass., 1899.

## #RP1a: Backlit, highlighting Condition and Paper Texture

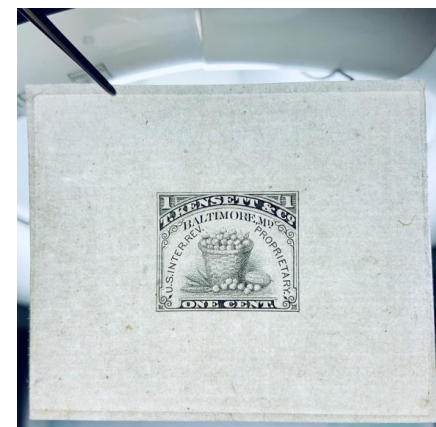


Collection of Charles J. DiComo, PhD | ©2022



Choice stamp, extra fine appearance and centering, four margins, deep rich color, complete perforations. 20+ of the 27+ examples recorded in Aldrich 1994 census are faulty, many profoundly so (tears, thins, repairs) and a number also showing rust stains from the fruit cans. This copy has no flaws, no thins, no tears, and an inconsequential rust spot above “C” in “CENTS”.

## The Unique Trial Color Proof RP1TC1 in Black Pulled by Butler & Carpenter, Die approved Dec. 4, '66, Stamp issued Jan. 3, '67.



Backlit Image of RP1TC1  
on India Paper, 65 x 54 mm

Proofs are examples of the finished design as ultimately issued that are printed on fine papers (India, Card or Bond), but not on stamp paper. The proofs can be made from the die or from a plate. Both die and plate proofs can be made in the color(s) of the issued stamp or in a range of unissued or trial colors. Match & Medicine die proofs exist in a variety of sizes. Originally, die proofs were printed on a card backing due to fragility of India paper. The immense pressure of the proofing press caused an area known as “die sinkage” and the pressure caused the dampened India paper to bond to the card backing without the use of adhesives. Butler & Carpenter held the contract to produce private die proprietary issues from 1862 to 1875, hence they engraved a majority of the dies. They can be identified when the India paper extends beyond the die sinkage area and there are no die numbers or imprints on the paper.

**Reference:** “*Collector’s Handbook for Private Die Proprietary Proofs and Census of the Morton Dean Joyce Collection of These Issues,*” by Richard Friedberg. See page 16 for RP1P1 (green, 4 known 1 BEP, 3 unknown)) and RP1TC1 (black, 1 from B&C, 2 from BEP, 1 unknown).

# Prior to the Canned Fruit Stamp being Issued, Kensett & Co. used First Issue R3c 1¢ Red Proprietary Revenue Stamps



Provisional Canned Fruit Stamp, R3c surcharged in black, Type I: three horizontal lines reading across, Roman type, dated.

*Care of Mike Morrissey*



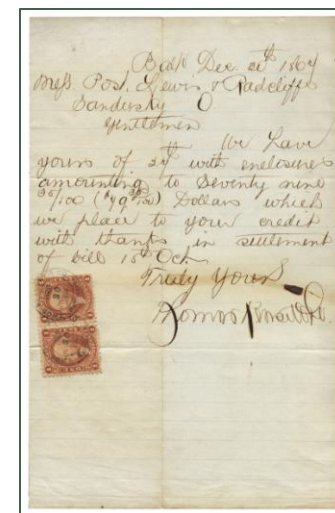
Provisional Canned Fruit Stamp, R3c surcharged in black, Type II: two vertical lines reading up, Roman type, undated.

*Care of Mike Morrissey*

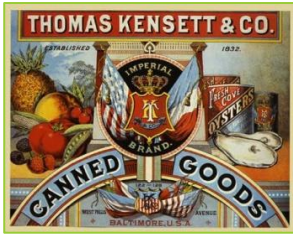


Horizontal pair of 1¢ Red Proprietary stamp R3c, used improperly as documentary revenue stamps, cancelled by black d-c "THOS KENSETT & CO Baltimore DEC 30 1867" handstamp. (#5148)

*Care of Dan Harding*  
[www.revenue-collector.com](http://www.revenue-collector.com)



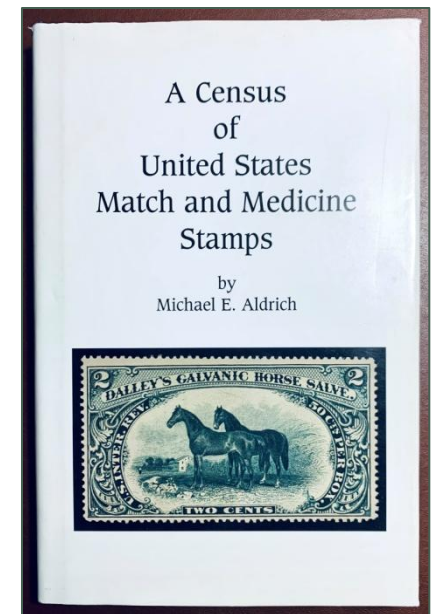
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# Revisiting the Census of Known Copies of #RP1a

- The Kensett Canned Fruit stamp has been one of the more popular U.S. Private Die Proprietary Revenue stamps due to its design, limited quantity issued (528,000) and its narrow use over a two month period in early 1867 before the tax on meats, shell-fish, fruits and vegetables was repealed on Mar. 1, 1867.
- In 1997, Michael E. Aldrich published his seminal work entitled “*A Census of United States Match and Medicine Stamps*” which built upon earlier censuses from 1934 and 1987; referred to as the “1994 Aldrich Match and Medicine Census.”

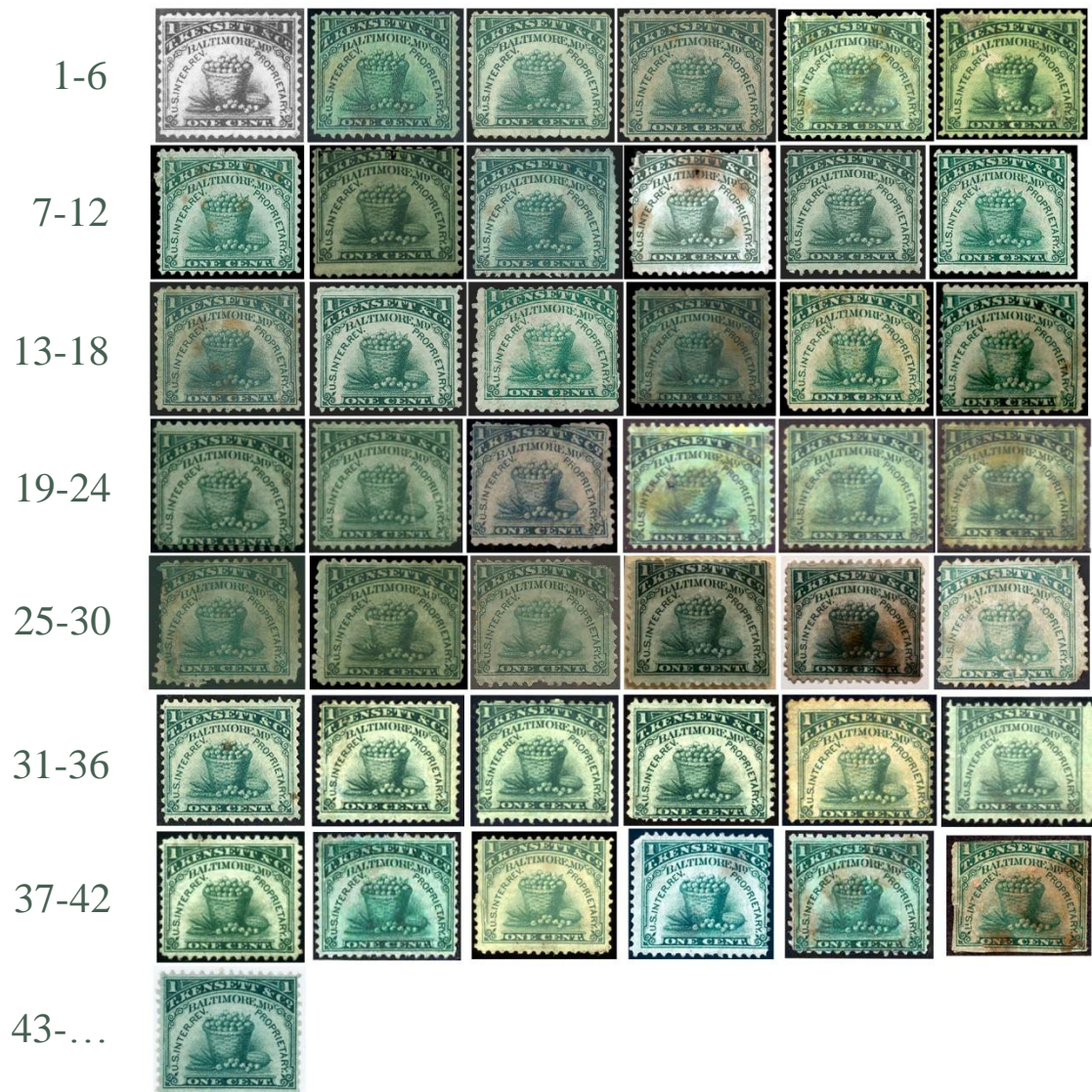


**Reference:** Aldrich, Michael E., *A Census of United States Match and Medicine Stamps*, Aldrich Publishing, Saint Paul, MN, 1997.

## Revisiting the Census, continued...

- This 1994 Census consists of 227 items with a full population of 4,630 private die proprietary stamps.
  - At that time, only 27 known copies of #RP1a were available to collectors, where 20+ exist very faulty.
- Quality is usually quite poor in that RP1a's were used on steel cans of canned fruit, often torn off; exhibiting tears, thins and rust stains.
- My recent discovery and acquisition of the choice copy shared in this presentation prompted me to revisit the 1994 Census and to attempt to locate digital images of all documented specimens available to collectors and/or in collections.
- For the 2023 Census, I have thus far identified 43 copies.
  - What follows are the best representative digital images I could obtain from the internet and colleagues. Towards the end is a “Call to Action” if you would like to assist.

# Montage of Best Representative Digital Images



**NOTE:** It is worth mentioning that this montage puts a "face" on the phrase "most are faulty", so often attached to many Private Die Proprietary Revenue stamps.

In effect, most of the 43 copies illustrated are faulty to some extent, less #43, the most recent discovery.



# Best Representative Digital Images 1-6



19860501 Waggoner ARA V40N5WN385



19910911 Levitt Sale Joyce Lot 990 \$1k



20031008 Siegel S865 L2148 \$425  
Jackson 074211, Aldrich 20221201 Goodhart



20060627 Siegel Sale 915 Lot 3621 \$800



20110922 Bennett Sale 338 Lot 2125 \$



20120203 Harmer-Schau Sale 92 Lot 1522 \$575

## Best Representative Digital Images 7-12



20120426 Rumsey Sale 47 Lot 1564 \$525



20121128 Feldman Sale xxx Lot 2244  
\$1.5k & PFC 501987



20131119 Siegel Sale 1061 Lot 4373 \$1k, 20191120  
Siegel Sale 1212 lot 455 \$1.1k & PFC 516745



20161129 Kelleher Sale 695 Lot 4391 \$500



20170628 Siegel Sale 1160 Lot 889 \$1.6k



20190518 Aldrich Sale 97 Lot 935,  
20181103 Aldrich Sale 95 Lot 1112, Jackson 038241

## Best Representative Digital Images 13-18



20190518 Aldrich Sale 97 Lot 936,  
20140324 Siegel Sale 1067 Lot 712 \$375



20190723 Siegel Sale 1206 Lot 826 \$1.6k 20121003  
Sale 1030 Lot 590 \$1.5k 20080201 Heritage Lot 646  
20071019 Bennett Sale 32 Lot 646



20200529 Siegel Sale 1222 Lot 2169 \$550



20211101 Bush, Alan Hip Stamp \$1.975k  
20220415 Aldrich Sale 107 Lot 940 \$1250



20211120 Aldrich Sale 106 Lot 946 \$



20220101 Hohertz RDHINSTL.com Website

## Best Representative Digital Images 19-24



20220101 Jackson INV-217723 \$2.75k &  
20150630 Kelleher Sale 670 Lot 316 \$1.1k



20220101 Jackson INV-277250 \$2.5k



20220101 North Stamp Ebay 292111645783 \$160



20220101 PFC 296213



20220101 PFC 296214



20220101 PFC 296215

# Best Representative Digital Images 25-30



20220101 PFC 458261



20220101 PFC 513345



20220101 WorthPoint Ebay \$?



20220105 Jackson INV-265341  
personal comm



20220106 Anonymous



20220106 personal comm

## Best Representative Digital Images 31-36



20220127 Jackson INV-038651



20220127 Jackson INV-059617



20220127 Jackson INV-091625



20220127 Jackson INV-117868



20220107 Jackson INV-118292



20220107 Jackson INV-197863 & 20121024  
RumseyBulkley Sale48Lot230 \$1400

## Best Representative Digital Images 37-42...



20220127 Jackson INV-277251



20220331 Friedberg, Richard \$2.5kJB



20220815 Schaefer, Todd Ebay \$2500



20220817 Rumsey S103 L1156 \$1350



20221211 RP1a-F Friedburg \$2200



20230320 RP1a-FB Aldrich 20221201  
S108 L1018 \$2070 Goodhart

# Best Representative Digital Images 43-...



20220102 I.B.RedGuy Ebay  
#373838225146 DiComo



44.....



45.....



46.....



47.....

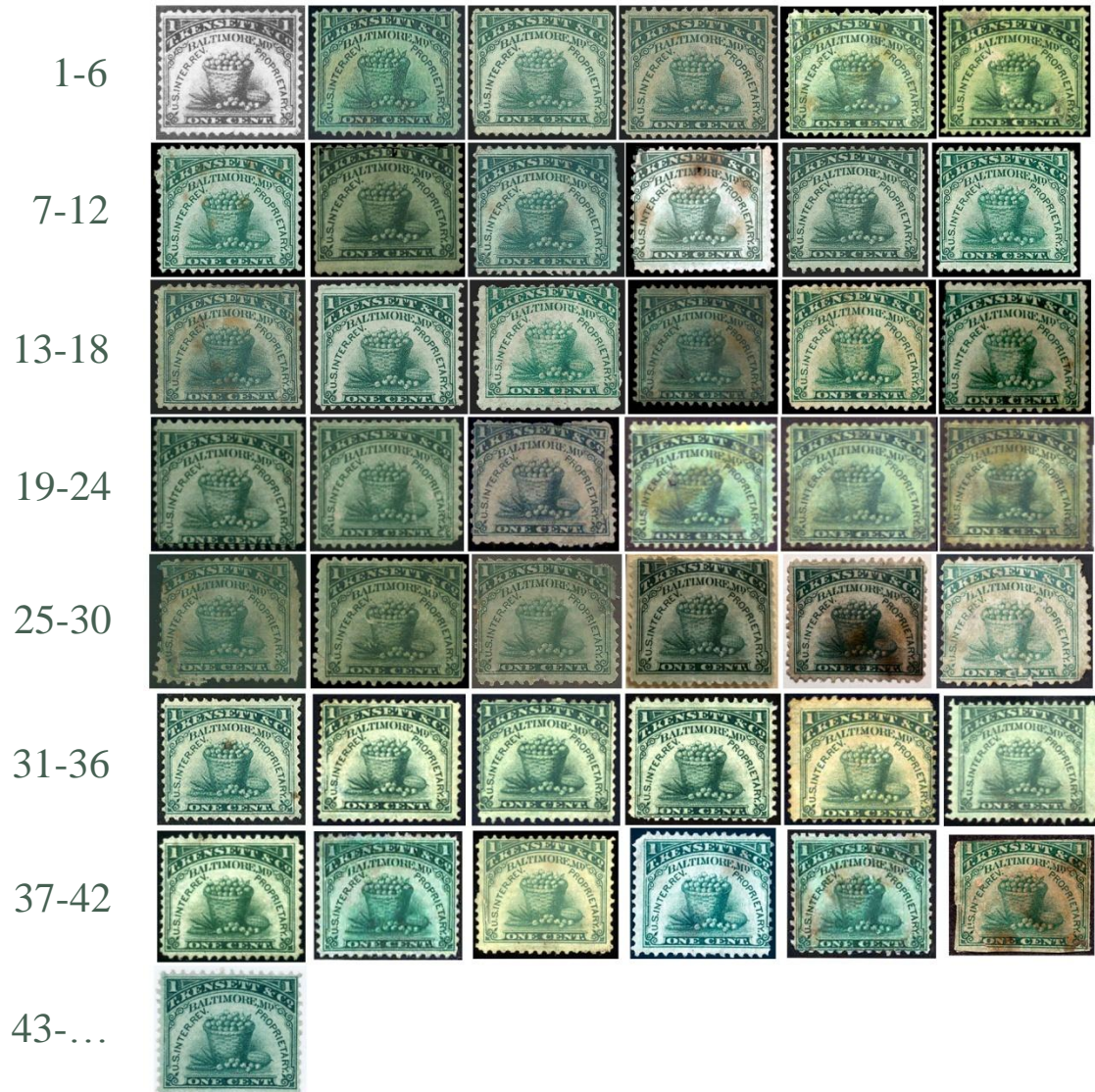


20220102 I.B.RedGuy Ebay





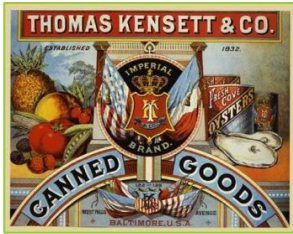
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# Summary & Call to Action

## *Acknowledgments*

- Aldrich
- Berlin
- Bowman
- Bush
- Friedberg
- Hohertz
- Jackson
- Kruse
- Schaefer
- Thompson
- Anonymous



**In Summary:** A choice Kensett & Co. Canned Fruit stamp has surfaced which sparked my interest in exploring the history of the Company as well as to revisit the 1994 Aldrich Census of existing RP1a copies available to collectors. Presented here is the initiation of that investigation. Sixteen additional copies have been identified, bringing the new 2023 Census to 43. I believe more may exist in other collectors hands yet to be shared.

*Thank you to those who have already contributed!*

## **Call to Action:**

If you own (or have access to) one of the RP1a's depicted in this census and would like to submit a high-resolution digital image, please contact me. If you own an RP1a that is not represented and would like submit to the 2023 Census, please contact me. All inquires shall remain confidential.