

Confederate States of America

The 10c and 2c Altered Plates

John L. Kimbrough MD

The 5c Blue (Jefferson Davis) and 1c Yellow-Orange (John C. Calhoun) De La Rue stamps of the Confederacy were featured in the October 2012 issue of *Gibbons Stamp Monthly*. Intimately linked with these De La Rue stamps are what are known as the 10c and 2c stamps printed from the “Altered Plates.” These value altered stamps have the same central design as the original 5c and 1c stamps but appear in various colors. These “altered” stamps have puzzled collectors for decades as they appear to be real Confederate States stamps, but they cannot be found in the Confederate listings of any of the major catalogs. That is because they are not truly Confederate States stamps as they were not authorized or printed by the Confederate government but rather were privately printed well past the time of the Confederacy and saw no postal use. The story of these altered plates is quite complex and begins in London with De La Rue and Co in 1862.

10c Altered Plate



Genuine 5c Blue London De La Rue Print Pair



10c Altered Plate Pair in Dark Blue

Beginning on July 1, 1862, the 5c rate for distance less than 500 miles was eliminated within the Confederacy, and all first class letters were to be rated 10c per ½ ounce for any distance within the Confederate States. Anticipating the need for an additional quantity of 10c stamps because of the rate change, the Confederate government requested some time in early to mid 1862 that De La Rue & Co in London supply a printing plate for a 10c value. Since there were extreme time constraints involved, De La Rue & Co simply took the existing “Five Cents” design and changed or altered the value tablet to read “Ten Cents” and constructed a new and different printing plate. The alteration was apparently done on an intermediate die from which the 10c altered printing plate was constructed as the original 5c De La Rue engraved master die is still in existence in the possession of the British Library and has not been altered. The 10c Altered Plate maintained the same format of a full sheet of 400 in four panes of 100. De La Rue & Co records show that the altered plate was ready by November 1862. As far as is known, only one plate was prepared. There is no record of any proof impressions taken from the altered plates by De La Rue & Co in London, although it is entirely possible that some original De La Rue plate proofs may exist and are still waiting to be discovered.

The 10c Altered Plate was successfully shipped through the blockade to the Confederacy, but it is not known precisely when the plate reached the Confederacy as the plate was never used. De La Rue shipped only the plate and did not print any stamps from the plate for use by the Confederate Post Office Department. **The Confederate Government never printed any stamps from the 10c Altered Plate.** It is, however, entirely possible that some proof impressions were taken from the plate on its arrival in Richmond. August Dietz does illustrate a pane of 100 in his 1929 book *The Postal Service of the Confederate States of America* which he claimed was a proof of CSA origin and in his possession at that time. The pane that August Dietz illustrated in 1929 has not been seen since and has simply disappeared. As to exactly why the plate was shelved and never used, there is no precise answer. Since engraved stamps were either in development or perhaps already in production when the plate arrived from England, it can be speculated that Confederate Postmaster General John H. Reagan simply did not want to print any further stamps that were not engraved.

What is known about the 10c Altered Plate is that it was found and looted at the end of the war by Union soldiers and broken into sections. August Dietz in his 1929 book tells the story of a hospital steward of the 95th Ohio Regiment named Richard Glenn who came into possession of the plate and proceeded to cut it into sections as souvenirs. The story is very much lacking in detail as it is not known exactly when Richard Glenn came into possession of the plate or whether he had the entire plate or just a portion of the plate.

Three cut up sections from the same pane of 100 are known. A block of 9 known as the "Baltimore Block" ended up with Glenn's sister, Mrs. Anthony of Baltimore, Maryland. This particular printing block section was used only infrequently over the years for reprint impressions and remains in private hands. A second block of 9 is more well-known and is termed the "Columbus Block" as it is in the possession of the Ohio State Museum in Columbus, Ohio. The Columbus Block printing section has been used numerous times over the years for either direct or indirect reprints. The third plate section is a block of 70. As this was first reported in 1888 when a sheet printed in blue from this block of 70 was found with an advertisement for an Atlanta, Georgia bookseller on the back, it is known as the "Atlanta Block." There is also a contrived sheet of 25 that was made up from a single impression from the original plate. Numerous reprints and impressions related to the Atlanta block of 70 and the contrived sheet of 25 have been taken, some very well done with almost proof-like impressions and some very poorly done to say the least. For example, it is known that in 1896 W. H. Diamont had 500 sheets printed in red, blue and green from the Atlanta Block. This printing has been known for many years as the "Diamont Printing." The initial impressions for the notorious "New York Counterfeit" were taken from the Atlanta Block. Many very low quality reproductions also exist. The current whereabouts of the "Atlanta" printing block is not known to the author.

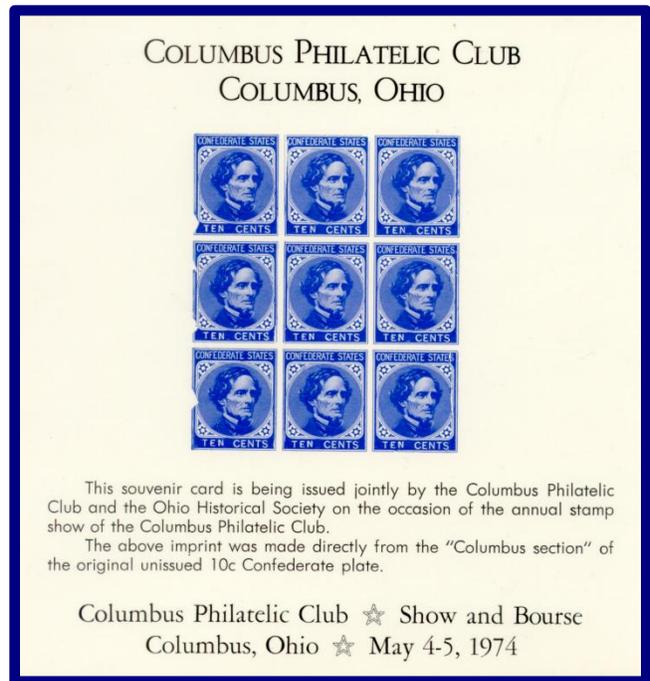
For many years, the above brief summary was all anyone knew about the 10c Altered Plate. Even August Dietz believed initially that the plate had been altered by Archer & Daly in Richmond, Virginia and not by De La Rue in London. It was not until the intact discovery in 1926 of the 2c Altered Plate that it was firmly established that De La Rue & Co in London was responsible for the alteration.

Not until near the turn of this century were two additional panes of 100 from the original altered plate discovered. This discovery was published in 2001 in *The Chronicle* (the journal of the US Philatelic Classics Society) by Leonard H. Hartmann of Louisville, Kentucky. Mr. Hartmann managed to track down and identify two additional panes of 100 both of which are located in Chicago, Illinois and apparently came from the same source. One pane is in the possession of the Chicago Historical Society, and the other is in the possession of a private Chicago printing firm. Mr. Hartmann has named these two newly discovered panes the “Chicago Historical Society Plate” and the “Sitter Plate” named for the current owners. Over the years, relatively few impressions have been made from these two newly discovered plate sections. According to Mr. Hartmann, these impressions were only for archival purposes and none are currently in collectors’ hands. There still to this date remains one additional pane of 100 from the original altered plate whose whereabouts remains a mystery.



10c Altered Plate Block of 9 printing in black taken from the “Baltimore Block”

Block of 9 section from the cut up 10c Altered Plate known as the “Columbus Block” as it is in the possession of the Ohio State Museum (Ohio Historical Society). This block has been used numerous times to create reprints such as this illustrated souvenir card for the Columbus Philatelic Club annual stamp show in 1974.





Contrived Sheet of 25 constructed from a single impression taken from the original 10c Altered Plate and printed in red. Such sheets can be found in various colors.



10c Altered Plate Block of 70 in black known as the "Atlanta Block"

2c Altered Plate



Genuine 1c Yellow-Orange London De La Rue Print Pair

2c Altered Plate Pair in Emerald Green from the 1926 Dietz Private Printing



At the same time that the Confederate government requested a 10c plate from De La Rue & Co a 2c plate was also requested for the drop letter rate. The 1c stamps printed by De La Rue and the 1c printing plate shipped to the Confederacy earlier in 1862 were never used by the Confederate Post Office Department. At the time the 1c stamps and printing plate were ordered, a 1c rate was anticipated but was never officially adopted. Thus there was no need for the 1c stamps.

Like the 10c Altered Plate, De La Rue & Co simply took the existing 1c stamp and altered the value tablet to read "Two Cents" preserving the original format of a sheet of 400 divided into panes of 100. Whether this alteration was done on the original die or an intermediate die is not known. A search of the archives for the 1c original die has been undertaken, but the original 1c die has not been found. After making the alteration, De La Rue & Co constructed the 2c printing plate which was ready by the end of November 1862. There is no record that De La Rue ever printed any stamps from this 2c Altered Plate, but one can certainly speculate that some plate proofs may exist somewhere in the archives and have yet to be discovered.

While the 10c Altered Plate successfully made it to Richmond, the 2c Altered Plate simply disappeared. Whether it reached Richmond or not, the fact remains that the Confederate government printed no stamps from the 2c Altered Plate. The ultimate fate of the 2c Altered Plate was unknown until it was discovered completely intact in Southern Louisiana by August Dietz in 1926. How and when the plate ended up in Louisiana is a total mystery. It was not until the discovery of this intact plate that the true story of the altered plates began to unfold and that it was shown that the alterations were definitely performed by De La Rue in London and not by Archer & Daly in Richmond.

Upon the plate's discovery, August Dietz secured the plate and immediately made his own private printing of perhaps 500 sheets (400 stamps per sheet) from this plate. This was a high quality printing and as far as is known the first printing that was done from the 2c Altered Plate. The stamps were printed in a deep emerald green color on a cream vellum paper. These stamps

known as the “Dietz Private Printing” are very plentiful today as singles, pairs, blocks, gutter blocks, and even full panes and full sheets. There also exists a very high quality printing with a proof-like impression in black which was most likely done by Dietz as well. Surprisingly few printings from this plate have been done, but the reprints are not rare and can easily be obtained by the collector at a very modest price. There was another printing in 1955 which was done by Dietz for the American Philatelic Society Convention held that year in Norfolk, Virginia. The 1955 printing was in green but not quite the same green or as good a quality as the 1926 printing. Additional panes were printed for the 1955 convention in orange and brown. There are also a great many very low quality reproductions that were never printed from the original plate.



2c Altered Plate Block of 4 in green from the 1955 Dietz Private Printing for the Norfolk, Virginia American Philatelic Society convention. Similar printing was also done at the same time in brown and orange. The printing quality is far inferior to the initial 1926 private printing.

August Dietz owned the 2c Altered Plate until his death in 1963. It passed from his estate to William G. Bogg, a noted CSA collector, dealer, and one of the publishers of *The New Dietz Confederate States Catalog and Handbook* (1986). It is reported that Mr. Bogg had the plate set into a coffee table. When Mr. Bogg died in 1988, the plate and a number of sheets from the Dietz private printing were part of his estate. The plate passed from the Bogg Estate into the hands of collector Bruce Engsler of Charlottesville, Virginia where it remained until it was sold privately in 2007 to an anonymous buyer. The plate today still remains in private ownership. The plate has since been removed from its coffee table mounting and remounted as a hanging display. In 2006, Mr. Engsler, the then owner of the plate, graciously loaned the plate for display at the author's booth at the Washington DC 2006 International Philatelic Exhibition. Many Confederate collectors attending the International in the summer of 2006 were able to view and study the plate first hand as this was the only time that it was ever on public display. The last printings done from the plate were the 1955 Dietz printings noted above. The plate has since developed a crack at the top of the upper right pane. It is unlikely that any further printings will ever be done from the 2c Altered Plate.



Original De La Rue 2c Altered Plate on public display at the Washington DC 2006 International

5c New York Counterfeit

No discussion of the 10c Altered Plate would be complete without a description of the notorious, infamous, and ubiquitous so-called New York Counterfeit of the 5c Blue Jefferson Davis De La Rue London print stamp. This dangerous fake is tied directly to the story of the 10c Altered Plate. This counterfeit is so common that it is frequently found today in collections and in various dealers' stocks unrecognized as a fake.



New York Counterfeit vs. the Genuine 5c London De La Rue Print

The New York Counterfeit stamps were made in the 19th Century not long after the end of the American Civil War (probably in the 1870's) with the apparent express purpose of deceiving collectors. They were made in New York City, hence the name "New York Counterfeit." This counterfeit has been attributed to J. W. Scott of the Scott Catalog fame, but it is not known for certain who actually created these counterfeit stamps. The New York Counterfeits were created using the "Atlanta Block" (70) of the 10c Altered Plate. According to August Dietz, a wax impression was made of this intact block of 70 and then the value tablet was changed from "Ten Cents" back to "Five Cents" from which a typograph printing plate of 100 subjects was then constructed. A very large quantity of these counterfeits was printed. The counterfeit printing plate itself no longer exists and was most likely destroyed after the printings were made.

However, the counterfeiters made some mistakes. The counterfeits are very easy to distinguish from the originals as long as the collector is aware of their existence and knows what to look for.

- ◆ The counterfeits have a somewhat flat appearance with a very distinctive blue-green color. The original 5c Blue London Print stamps were never printed in a blue-green color. All the originals are a uniform blue or light blue color.
- ◆ There is a somewhat cloudy appearance to the design of the counterfeit and a sleepy look to the portrait with nearly closed eyes. The hair of the portrait appears mostly solid while the original has distinct lines in the hair.
- ◆ The counterfeits have no gum.
- ◆ The easiest to see characteristic other than the sickly blue-green color is the mistake that was made in re-doing the value tablet. The crossbars of the "F" and the "E" of "FIVE" are distinctly shorter than the originals.



Detail showing the short Crossbars "F" and "E" which is the distinguishing characteristic of the New York Counterfeit vs. the Genuine

Beware the New York Counterfeits as they are everywhere. Since they are of mid-19th Century origin, they always turn up in old collections and have only a token value as a reference item.



Block of 20 New York Counterfeit

This article was adapted from the book Collector's Guide to Confederate Philately Second Edition by John L. Kimbrough MD and Conrad L. Bush published by the authors in 2011. To learn more about Confederate stamps, please visit the author's website at www.csastamps.com