

# The General Issue Stamps of the Confederate States of America

**John L. Kimbrough MD**  
**Colonel USAF (Retired)**

Article appeared in the October 2011 issue of *Stanley Gibbons Monthly*.

The formation of the Confederate States of America in 1861 and the four year bloody civil war that followed was a defining period in American history. The Confederate States of America as a national entity lasted only 4 years but left behind a phenomenal philatelic legacy beginning with the 17 general issue stamps produced between 1861 and 1865.

Confederate Postmaster General John H. Reagan of Texas was committed to the use of high quality engraved stamps like the stamps currently being used by the United States and the major European countries. Due to the fact that skilled steel plate engravers were in short supply in the South, it was just not possible for the Confederate Post Office Department (POD) to supply from the outset the engraved stamps that Postmaster General Reagan so badly wanted. It would not be until 1863 when steel engraved Confederate stamps were ultimately made available.

When the Confederate Postal Service began operations on June 1, 1861, there were no general issue Confederate stamps available with which to prepay the postage. The Confederate POD contracted initially with the printing firm of Hoyer & Ludwig of Richmond, Virginia to supply the first Confederate general issue stamps in denominations of 2c, 5c, and 10c. Consequently, the first Confederate general issue stamps were printed by this firm using the stone lithography technique. This was solely a temporary and stopgap measure by Postmaster General Reagan until higher quality steel engraved stamps could be produced. The stone lithograph stamps show a highly variable printing quality and a multitude of color shades.



**5c Green Lithograph** -- The first Confederate general issue stamp is the 5c Green Stone Lithograph bearing a portrait of Confederate President Jefferson Davis. Postage stamps had been in use in the United States since 1847. By 1861, virtually the entire population was familiar with their use. This first Confederate general issue stamp was a radical departure from the stamps issued by the United States in that it honored the living president. No stamp used in the United States prior to this time honored a living person. Jefferson Davis was a plantation owner from Mississippi. He was a graduate of West Point Military Academy and served with distinction in the Mexican War. He was active in politics and served as the Secretary of War and as a United States Senator from Mississippi. He was well known among

the politicians and the upper class planters and businessmen of the day. This popularity with the landed gentry and the politicians allowed him to secure the Confederate presidency. He very likely was not that well known to the average population. So putting Davis' portrait on the Confederate stamps, his portrait appears on 8 of the 14 major cataloged stamps, was entirely political and was actually a brilliant political maneuver. By using the image of the living president on the stamps, Jefferson Davis became instantly recognizable as the Confederate leader. He served as a unifying factor for this new experiment called the Confederate States of America. Even after the war, he remained as a revered father figure and symbol of the Confederacy until his death in 1889. The first stamp was designed and engraved by Charles Ludwig and printed by the Hoyer & Ludwig firm of Richmond, Virginia using the stone lithography process. Four different stones were laid down to print the first stamp known as Stone A and B, Stone 1, and Stone 2. The stamp was first used in mid-October 1861 and was in print for only a few months.

**H&L**



**Paterson**



**10c Blue Lithograph** -- The second Confederate general issue stamp is the 10c Blue Stone Lithograph bearing the portrait of Thomas Jefferson. As a Virginian, Thomas Jefferson, author of the Declaration of Independence and 3rd President of the United States, was held in great esteem by the Southern Nation as a Founding Father just as he was by the Union. The portrait used by the Confederacy as the basis for his likeness is the same portrait that was used by the

Union for the USA 5c issue of 1861. Designed and engraved by Charles Ludwig and printed by the Hoyer & Ludwig firm of Richmond, Virginia using the Stone Lithography process, the stamp was ready for use in early November 1861. By early 1862, it became apparent to the Hoyer & Ludwig firm that the task of supplying postage stamps to the entire Confederacy was simply too overwhelming. The H&L Company could not meet the increased demand for 10c stamps because on June 1, 1862, the 5c rate for distance less than 500 miles was eliminated. The standard letter rate was changed to 10c for any distance. Consequently, some of the printing responsibilities for this stamp were transferred to the printing firm of J. T. Paterson & Co. of Augusta, Georgia. This was most likely done as an internal subcontract as philatelists into the early 20th Century were totally unaware that both companies were involved in the printing of this stamp. In 1912, a bottom 1/2 pane Block of 50 with the full J. T. Paterson & Co. imprint was discovered. This discovery was a very significant Confederate philatelic event as it proved that both companies shared the printing of this stamp. Thus there are two major 10c Blue Stone Lithograph stamps (H&L and Paterson), but they share a common Scott Catalog number. The Paterson printed stamps were ready for use by late July 1862.

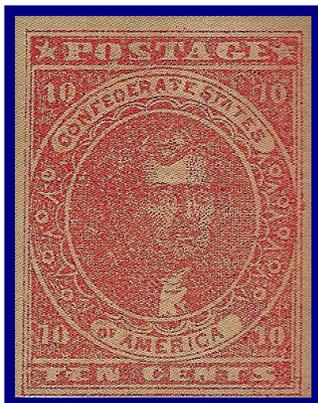


**2c Green Lithograph** -- The third and final stamp in the initial Hoyer and Ludwig contract was for a 2c value. The 2c rate for drop letters and circulars was not used nearly as often as the primary 5c and 10c letter rates. The production of the 2c stamp was therefore delayed. The 2c Green Lithograph bearing the portrait of Andrew Jackson did not make its appearance until late March 1862. It is not known why Andrew Jackson was chosen as the subject to be honored. Andrew Jackson as President of the United States (1829-1837) stood for a very strong federal government and came down hard on individual states who attempted to exercise anything approaching a “states-rights” doctrine. Had he been alive in 1860 (he died in 1845) Jackson would most assuredly have vehemently opposed secession. One can only

speculate that the reasons were political. Andrew Jackson (General, Hero of the War of 1812 and the Indian Wars, 7th President of the United States) was a Tennessee icon. By honoring Tennessee’s most revered political figure, this would help solidify the border state of Tennessee for the Confederacy. Andrew Jackson’s portrait would be used again on another Confederate stamp and was also used on the Union 2c Issue of 1863 known as the “2c Blackjack.”



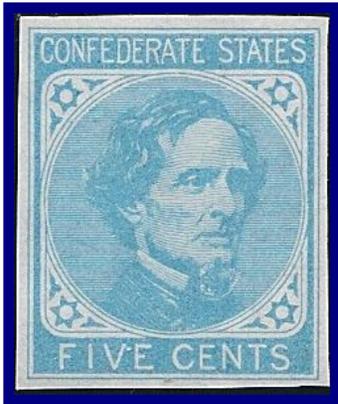
**5c Blue Lithograph** -- Coinciding with the production of the 2c Green Lithograph in early 1862, Hoyer & Ludwig changed the color of the 5c Green Lithograph to blue and the color of the 10c Blue Lithograph to rose. In order to print the 5c Blue Lithograph, Hoyer and Ludwig simply used the same transfer stone (Stone 2) that they were using to print the 5c Green Lithograph and just changed the color of the ink. It was not long before a completely new stone was laid down which is termed Stone 3. The new 5c Blue Lithograph stamps were ready for use by late February 1862.



**10c Rose Lithograph** -- As with the previous 5c Blue Lithograph, the 10c Rose Lithograph represents only a color change. The 10c Rose Lithograph was printed from the very same stone as was used to print the earlier 10c Blue Lithograph (H&L) with no change in the design. The 10c stamp with the new rose color saw its first use in March 1862.

## Typography

The next group of three Confederate general issue stamps was printed by typography using printing plates made in London, England by Thomas De La Rue & Company, the premier stamp printer of the day. The stamps are known as the 5c Blue London Print, the 5c Blue Richmond Print, and the 1c Yellow-Orange.



**5c Blue London Print** -- In October 1861, Major Benjamin F. Ficklin sailed for Europe and successfully ran the blockade arriving in England a few weeks later. Major Ficklin was a purchasing agent for the Confederate Government and was sent to England to arrange for the purchase of military supplies. He also carried instructions from Postmaster General Reagan to purchase items for the Post Office Department particularly printing plates for 5c and 1c stamps. The story of the typograph stamps and of how the printing plates were made, transported to the Confederacy, and their post war history as well as the later 10c and 2c alterations that took place is extremely complex and very interesting. But that is a story for another time. De La Rue and Co. constructed the plates as per the

contract. The portrait of Jefferson Davis believed to have been engraved by Jean Ferdinand Joubert De La Ferte, a De La Rue employee, was taken from a photograph supplied by Major Ficklin. The 5c printing plates along with a supply of stamps printed in London were shipped through the blockade to Richmond, Virginia. The London printed 5c stamp, the only stamp used on American soil in the 19th Century printed in another country, was first used in April 1862.



**5c Blue Richmond Print** -- When the De La Rue plate successfully arrived from England sometime during the late spring or early summer of 1862, the contract for printing the typograph stamps locally from this plate was awarded to the new printing firm of Archer & Daly in Richmond, Virginia. John Archer was a skilled engraver and a steel plate printer from New York City who relocated to Richmond and went into partnership with Joseph Daly, a prominent local Richmond businessman and politician. The local 5c Blue Richmond Print stamp was ready for use by mid July 1862. The Archer & Daly firm will figure prominently in the next phase of the Confederate general issue stamps which is the development and production of the steel engraved

stamps. Archer & Daly was the only printing firm to produce the local typograph prints from the De La Rue plate. Archer & Daly continued to print these stamps through 1863 into the spring of 1864 overlapping their printing of the typograph stamps with the new engraved stamps. The workers at Archer & Daly were not nearly as good as the professional printers in London. The printing quality soon deteriorated to such a degree that the stamps produced in Richmond were far

inferior in quality to those produced in London even though they were printed from the London constructed plate. The London Print and the Richmond Print are actually the same stamp but are considered by Confederate philatelists to be two separate major stamps because they were printed by two different printers and vary greatly in the quality of the printing.



**1c Yellow-Orange** -- The second stamp printed by De La Rue & Co in London was the 1c Yellow-Orange with a portrait of John C. Calhoun. The basis for the portrait was again a photograph supplied by Major Ficklin. The engraving is believed to have also been done by Jean Ferdinand Joubert De La Ferte. Prominent in national politics, John C. Calhoun of South Carolina served as Secretary of War under Monroe, as Vice-President under John Quincy Adams and Andrew Jackson, and as Secretary of State under John Tyler. It was while serving as Jackson's Vice-President that he developed his strong theories of nullification which were in direct conflict with the views of Jackson. Calhoun was subsequently elected to the United States Senate from South Carolina where he was the great champion

of the South with regards to "States-Rights." Although he died in office as a Senator in 1850 more than a decade before actual secession, he was regarded by many in the South as the "Father of Secession" for his very fiery political views. At the same time De La Rue & Co constructed the 5c typography printing plate, they also constructed the 1c typography printing plate and delivered the plate with 400,000 1c stamps to the Confederacy. The 1c plate and the stamps were successfully sent through the blockade to Richmond. It is not known precisely when the plate and the stamps arrived in Richmond as neither the stamps nor the printing plate were ever placed into service.

**The 1c Yellow-Orange stamp was never issued and never used and does not exist in a legitimately postally used condition.** There was no 1c rate ever put into use so the Confederate POD saw no need for this stamp and therefore shelved it. There is no record that the Confederate Government ever printed any stamps from the 1c plate as all the stamps available in the collector's market today are from the known De La Rue printing. At the end of the war, the stamps were discovered in Richmond and eventually passed into the collector's market as the sheets of unused stamps were looted by Union soldiers as souvenirs. Like the 5c Blue London Print, the 1c Yellow-Orange is a very well executed stamp. However, the choice of an orange ink for printing was a very poor choice indeed. Wide ranges of colors are seen in this stamp from a light yellow-orange where the portrait is barely discernible to a very deep orange color. It is likely that the stamps were all printed in a uniform orange color, but this color fades with time and exposure to light. It is therefore most likely that the range of color shades is due to various degrees of fading over time and light exposure rather than to the actual printing itself. At 400,000 copies, the 1c Yellow-Orange has the lowest printing of any of the general issue stamps, but it is not the rarest CSA stamp seen today. Quite the contrary as the stamp was never issued and never used so that almost all of the 400,000 stamps from the original printing are still in existence in the collector's market today. The real challenge is to find one that still shows the near original deep orange color.

## Line Engraved (Intaglio)

The final group of general issue stamps was of high quality produced using the method of line engraved recess printing also known as intaglio printing.



**10c Blue Frame Line** -- The first of the engraved stamps known as the Frame Line is the rarest and most difficult of the general issue stamps for the collector to acquire. John Archer was a master engraver who had worked for the American Bank Note Company in New York City. Archer's first design was line engraved on steel using a side view bust of President Jefferson Davis as the central vignette. A transfer relief was made from the original die, and 100 units were transferred to a copper plate which had previously been ruled with incised lines to form a 10 x 10 box grid pattern. The purpose of the grid was to aid in lining up and centering the transfers. The firm proceeded to print a quantity of these stamps and to deliver them to the Confederate Postal

Service. All this was done before Archer & Daly had a contract to print and deliver engraved stamps. So technically the Frame Line stamp was a sample stamp with no official standing at the time it was printed. By actually designing and printing the stamps, Archer & Daly proved to the Confederate POD that they were equal to the task and were quite capable of supplying the Confederacy with engraved stamps. They won the contract and would be the sole supplier of Confederate engraved stamps through late 1864 when the responsibility for printing these stamps would shift to the Keatinge & Ball firm of Columbia, South Carolina. Archer brought with him all his engraving tools as well as steel blocks for the master dies when he left New York, but the machinery needed to actually transfer and print the engraved stamps did not exist in the South and could not be imported from the North. The equipment all had to be constructed locally in Richmond using Archer's designs. All this took time. It was not until April 1863 when the first engraved stamps appeared at the post offices and were ready for use. It is not known for certain exactly how many copies of the Frame Line stamp were printed, but the estimate is approximately 500,000. Since this was a sample stamp using a copper printing plate, this stamp was never designed for a large printing as copper plates wear out quickly. Besides, the frames used for centering were not particularly helpful and would be discarded with later stamps. However, the Post Office Department found the stamps to be quite acceptable and distributed for use those that were already printed. With the low printing and since all the stamps were distributed for use, there are relatively few that remain in existence today. Most of the Frame Line stamps that remain today are used. The usual Frame Line stamp will show portions of the lines only on two sides. Copies with all four complete lines are a great rarity.



**10c Blue T-E-N** -- John Archer's second engraved stamp is considered by many to be his best work and the most attractive of all the CSA general issue stamps. It differs greatly from his first Frame Line design by utilizing a completely different rendering of the Davis bust and by changing the value tablet to express the denomination in lettering and not with numerals. This stamp, like the Frame Line, was engraved before Archer & Daly had a firm contract with the Confederate POD and also has a very low printing of approximately 1,000,000. After the Frame Line, the T-E-N is the second rarest of the Confederate general issue stamps. Again, this was a stamp that utilized copper printing plates. There is an unusual story that has been told for

many years about this stamp. The story is that a number of important people in the Confederate Government including Varina Davis, the wife of the President, did not like the appearance of the Davis bust portrait on this stamp as they felt that it looked too much like Abraham Lincoln. Like all stories, there is undoubtedly an element of truth to it. Whether this was the sole reason for limiting the printing of this stamp is not known. More likely the copper plates used for printing simply wore out, and this stamp was retired when the later steel plate stamps were ready.

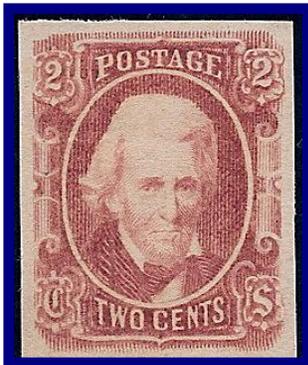


**10c Blue Archer & Daly (AD) Type I** -- The pending contract with the Confederate Post Office Department for the delivery of engraved stamps by the Archer & Daly firm was finally closed on February 20, 1863. The experimental period with the Frame Line stamp and the copper printing plates was now over. With a finalized deal, John Archer proceeded to use his relief roll from his first engraving (the Frame Line stamp) to transfer the same design to steel plates **WITHOUT** the frame lines. Thus was born one of the real workhorse engraved stamps of the Confederacy, the 10c Blue AD Type I. This stamp is exactly the same as the first engraved stamp but without the frame lines and **DOES NOT** represent a new master engraving.



**10c Blue Archer & Daly (AD) Type II** -- The fourth stamp in the series of Archer & Daly engraved stamps is very similar to the Type I but is an entirely new engraving. Frederick Halpin was another master engraver from New York City who in late 1862 or early 1863 arrived in Richmond and found employment with the Archer & Daly firm. It is very probable that Archer enticed Halpin to join him in Richmond as the job was waiting for Halpin when he arrived. Upon his arrival in Richmond, Halpin was immediately put to work on the engraving of the Type II stamp. Using Archer's first engraving as a model, Halpin engraved another master die of the Jefferson Davis bust. Many consider Halpin's finished product to be superior in craftsmanship to that of Archer's initial engraving. When examined closely, there are numerous differences between the Type I and the Type II stamps. For purposes of easy practical identification, the one major difference which is

very clear is the appearance of the scrolls in the lower corners left and right. In the Type I stamp, the scrolls are open. In the Type II stamp, the scrolls are filled in.



**2c Red-Brown** -- Frederick Halpin's next task was to design a new 2c engraved stamp with a completely different portrait of Andrew Jackson. This is the same portrait design used on the contemporary USA 2c stamp but in a different rendering. This stamp was not heavily used as it paid a rate not much in demand. Consequently, there were a great many unused examples left over at the end of the war which have found their way into the collectors' market. Unused copies of this stamp are relatively common while genuine postally used stamps are scarce. This stamp and the four engraved 10c stamps were all distributed at the same time in late April 1863.



**20c Green** -- The final Confederate general issue stamp is an engraving masterpiece. Frederick Halpin's third and final CSA stamp engraving followed very closely after the 2c Red-Brown. George Washington was chosen as the subject of the final stamp. There had been much discussion in 1861 concerning using Washington's portrait on the first CSA stamp, but Jefferson Davis was chosen instead. So it is only fitting that Washington, a Virginian and the Father of the Country both North and South, would appear on the final stamp. The 20c Green stamp would pay a double weight rate and is the only 20c stamp issued by the Confederacy. But that was not its main purpose. The Confederacy had no coins for small change. The smallest banknote issued by the

Confederate government was a 50c note issued in 1863 and 1864. Stamps were therefore used as small change in many transactions. A major function of the 20c Green stamp was to circulate as fractional small change in money transactions as well as to pay postage. Because there was not much call for the postal use of a 20c stamp, very few of them actually saw postal use. The stamp was distributed for use in late May and early June 1863.

**KB Type I**



**KB Type II**



**10c Blue Keatinge & Ball (KB) Type I and Type II** –

In the fall of 1864, The Confederate Post Office Department transferred the printing responsibilities of the engraved stamps from Richmond, Va to the Keatinge & Ball firm in Columbia, South Carolina. Keatinge & Ball had already been printing banknotes for the Confederacy for some time. The reasons for the transfer were complex. Suffice it to say that with the transfer of the plates, Archer & Daly went out of business. Beginning in late 1864, Keatinge & Ball

continued to print the engraved stamps from the same printing plates (plates 1 & 2 for Type I and plates 3 & 4 for Type II). Distinguishing the AD stamps from the KB stamps can be difficult. All the KB stamps are in various shades of blue with no greenish component. The AD stamps show multiple blue to blue-green to green color shades. The KB background around the portrait tends to be dark and filled in while the AD stamps have distinct cross-hatching. These two KB stamps are considered major stamps because of the involvement of a different printer thus bringing the final count to 17 major Confederate general issue stamps summarized in the accompanying table. The Keatinge & Ball firm did not print any of the 2c Red-Brown or 20c Green stamps presumably because there were adequate supplies available. On February 17, 1865, General Sherman's Union army occupied Columbia SC which put an end to the printing of the Confederate stamps.

### Confederate General Issue Stamps

Stamp Name	Printer	Method	# Printed	EKU	Scott #	SG #
5c Green Lithograph	H&L	Lithography	9,250,000	10/16/1861	1	1
10c Blue Lithograph H&L)	H&L	Lithography	1,400,000	11/8/1861	2	2
10c Blue Lithograph (Pat)	Paterson	Lithography	4,650,000	7/25/1862		3
2c Green Lithograph	H&L	Lithography	750,000	3/21/1862	3	4
5c Blue Lithograph	H&L	Lithography	6,700,000	2/26/1862	4	5
10c Rose Lithograph	H&L	Lithography	1,150,000	3/10/1862	5	6
5c Blue London Print	De La Rue	Typography	12,000,000	4/16/1862	6	7
5c Blue Richmond Print	A&D	Typography	36,250,000	7/13/1862	7	8
1c Yellow-Orange	De La Rue	Typography	400,000	-----	14	17
10c Blue Frame Line	A&D	Engraved	500,000	4/19/1863	10	11
10c Blue T-E-N	A&D	Engraved	1,000,000	4/23/1863	9	10
10c Blue AD Type I	A&D	Engraved	23,800,000	4/21/1863	11	12
10c Blue KB Type I	K&B	Engraved	7,500,000	10/4/1864		15
10c Blue AD Type II	A&D	Engraved	23,800,000	5/1/1863	12	13
10c Blue KB Type II	K&B	Engraved	7,500,000	9/4/1864		16
2c Red-Brown	A&D	Engraved	1,650,000	4/21/1863	8	9
20c Green	A&D	Engraved	2,300,000	6/1/1863	13	14

Printers:

H&L – Hoyer & Ludwig (Richmond, Virginia)

Pat(erson) – J. T. Paterson & Co. (Augusta, Ga)

De La Rue – Thomas De La Rue & Co. (London, England)

A&D – Archer & Daly (Richmond, Virginia)

K&B – Keatinge & Ball (Columbia SC)

The Number Printed is only an estimate

EKU = Earliest Known Use

The Scott USA Catalog recognizes 14 major numbers while the Stanley Gibbons Catalog acknowledges all 17 general issue stamps with a separate major number.

John L. Kimbrough MD is a retired US Air Force Colonel (Military Surgeon) who is currently a full time dealer working exclusively with the stamps and postal history of the Confederate States of America. Dr. Kimbrough, a Life member of the Confederate Stamp Alliance, both actively collects and has exhibited Confederate material as well as authoring a number of articles for various publications. Dr. Kimbrough and co-author Conrad L. Bush published their award winning major book *Collector's Guide to Confederate Philately* in 2002 which will appear as a completely revised 2nd Edition in the near future. To learn more about the Confederate Stamp Alliance, please visit the CSA website at [www.csalliance.org](http://www.csalliance.org). To learn more about Confederate stamps and postal history, please visit Dr. Kimbrough's extensive website at [www.csastamps.com](http://www.csastamps.com).