

Nashville, Tennessee

William D. McNish, Postmaster

William D. McNish was postmaster of Nashville during the turbulent period in May-June 1861 when Tennessee seceded and joined the Confederacy. Torn between his sworn oath as a U.S. postmaster and his loyalty to the Southern cause, McNish resigned but was careful to settle his U.S. post office accounts in full. McNish had anticipated the problems that would arise from the C.S.A. government's delay in issuing postage stamps, and he took the initiative in preparing his own provisional stamps.

According to information contained in an article by Earl Antrim (*Confederate Philatelist*, June 1963), which Antrim stated "came from a memorial pamphlet put out by the Nashville Post office in March 1896," Postmaster McNish ordered a local Nashville engraver named Dan Adams to make three plates from which 3c, 5c and 10c stamps could be printed. The 1896 publication also states that the stamps were printed at the offices of the *Nashville Daily Gazette*. This information is confirmed in an article by Jerry Palazolo, based on archival material in the Knoxville Public Library ("Insight into the Postal Operations of Nashville," *Confederate Philatelist*, November 1969).

The U.S.-rated 3c stamps were printed in Red from a typeset form of five, and they were probably ready shortly after June 17, 1861. Since the new C.S.A. rates were already in effect, McNish's 3c stamps were never used. The 5c and 10c engravings were made in wood, from which stereotypes were created to build up the printing plates.

Powell's study of the 5c Nashville ("Plating the Nashville Provisional," *Confederate Philatelist*, January-March 2008) reached the conclusion that the stereotypes were made in groups of six units, three wide by two tall. Working with photographs of the ex-Caspary tête-bêche blocks of twelve (lots 313 and 314) and the strip of five on cover (Siegel Sale 874, lot 116), Powell determined that the printing plates had to have been built up from 3-by-2 stereotype groups. Based on plate flaws unique to specific positions, Powell also concluded that the plate size was no less than 18 subjects, made from at least three six-unit stereotype groups, and that more than one plate was made. The pair offered in lot 1065 is proof that the stereotype "positions" determined by the ex-Caspary blocks were shuffled during the creation of additional stereotype groups, because this pair shows "Position 2" above "Position 1," not to the right of it, as in the ex-Caspary block (lot 313). The tête-bêche arrangement in printed sheets occurred when one impression was made, then the sheet was turned 180 degrees, and a second impression was made.

The 5c and 10c provisionals were placed on sale on July 19, 1861. The 10c stamps are found in a fairly uniform shade of Green (always deep or dark). The 5c stamps come in a wide range of colors: a distinctive and rare Fiery Orange Red (lot 1064 in this sale); Brick Red (slightly orange); Carmine (lipstick red); Violet Brown (purplish brown with significant variation from light to dark); and Gray (with a slight bluish or brownish cast), which is as rare as the Fiery Orange Red. General Issue stamps reached Nashville in the late Fall of 1861, and Nashville fell to Federal forces at the end of February 1862 and continued to be occupied by the U.S. forces through the end of the war.