



The D.K. Collection of Southern Postmasters' Provisionals of The American Civil War

The hastily-organized Confederate States postal system was inaugurated on June 1, 1861, but postal officials were unable to print and distribute stamps for general use until months later. Even after General Issue stamps became available, problems with distribution often resulted in shortages at many Confederate post offices.

Postmasters in Southern states who suddenly found themselves without government-issued postage stamps resorted to various methods of accommodating the prepayment of postage in their towns and cities. The revival of pre-stamp era handstamped markings to indicate postage paid or due on mail brought to the post office was the easiest and least costly way to deal with the problem. This method created the category of C.S.A. stampless covers known as *Handstamped Pairs and Dues*. Some postmasters handstamped envelopes in advance of use and sold them to local patrons; these are the so-called *Handstamped Postmasters' Provisionals*, and they are distinguished from the ordinary stampless covers by the presence of control markings or postmasters' signatures.

The third means by which postmasters facilitated prepayment was the issuance of adhesive stamps or press-printed envelopes. The adhesives and envelopes were produced in a variety of styles and methods. At one end of the spectrum are simple pieces of paper with nothing more than a numeral handstamped on them (for example, Oakway S.C.—see lot 1107). At the other end are the elaborate engravings printed by typography or lithography (there are no provisionals printed from intaglio plates).

Many of the stamps were printed at the offices of local newspapers, which also functioned as job printers. Some of the designs were embellished with the name of the post office or postmaster (or both). Others stated nothing more than the denomination. Whatever the design or method of manufacture, all of the Southern postmasters' provisional stamps served the basic purpose of facilitating prepayment. A stamped letter could be prepaid and dropped at the post office, eliminating the need for the sender to pay postage at the post office window during office hours.

The D.K. collection comprises only the adhesive stamps and press-printed stationery issued by Southern postmasters. In forming his collection, D.K. focused special attention on the multiples and production varieties that reflect the methods used to print stamps. Rare shades and bi-colored stamps, typographic and color errors, largest recorded multiples and tête-bêche multiples convey the philatelic significance of the postmasters' issues. The wartime conditions and Southern experience are reflected in the covers in the D.K. collection, which include rare frankings, unusual combinations, advertising and patriotic envelopes, and covers carried by steamboat or on "Special Routes" across the lines of war.