



## 1855 TEN-CENT WASHINGTON

WITH THE CALIFORNIA GOLD RUSH OF 1849 the nation's westward expansion progressed rapidly. Between 1850 and 1860 the center of United States population—a census statistic used to measure geographic shifts in population—moved dramatically from Parkersburgh, Virginia, to Chillicothe, Ohio. As this change occurred, it became necessary to improve postal service in California and western territories. In response Congress authorized another rate change, creating the 10c transcontinental rate for a half-ounce letter sent more than 3,000 miles. At the same time, prepayment of domestic postage was made compulsory. Effective January 1, 1856, the law further mandated the compulsory use of postage stamps for prepayment of domestic postage.

The Act of March 3, 1855, was approved on March 30 and became effective on April 1, 1855. Postmaster General James Campbell had little time to provide a 10c stamp for the transcontinental rate and immediately authorized Toppan, Carpenter & Co. to engrave and print a supply sufficient to meet the new demand. The 10c 1855 stamp, the third general issue to bear Stuart's three-quarter portrait of Washington, was hastily prepared and readied for use in early May (the earliest known use is May 12, 1855). Although the 10c 1855 stamp is quite attractively designed and printed in a striking deep green shade, close examination reveals slips of the engraver's tool and some poorly executed lines,

suggesting that the time pressure to complete the job resulted in lesser-quality work.

As in the case of the 1c stamp of the 1851-61 series, the 10c is classified by types, depending on the completeness of the design and presence of recut outer lines. Only two 10c plates were made, each comprising two panes of 100 with a centerline between the panes. Plate 1 was used to produce imperforate and perforated stamps (perforated eku 7/27/57), including Types I through IV (Scott 13-16 and 31-34). Plate 2, put into use in the Spring of 1859, produced only Type V perforated stamps (Scott 35, eku 4/29/59).

Most subjects on Plate 1 were either Type II or III (about evenly distributed). The bottom row of 20 was the only one entered with the full design at bottom and thus produced Type I stamps. Among the 200 positions, only eight initial Type II or III subjects were recut, and these furnished the scarce Type IV stamps, which can be distinguished from other types by the strengthened outer line at top, at bottom or, in the case of 64L, both top and bottom.

The most desirable items of the 10c 1855-59 Issue are multiples containing scarce types or type-combinations found on Plate 1. For example, there is the ex-Newbury strip of three Type I imperforate on cover, which comes from one of the earliest impressions and has superb color and margins. This cover is followed by the third largest block of the 10c 1855 — a choice used Type II-III block of twelve from the Caspary collection.



*10c 1855 Issue, Types III-III-IV, Positions 62-64L1, used with 12c Black  
Considered by many to be the finest known cover with the 1855 10-cent type IV  
Realized \$90,000 hammer in our 1999 sale of the Zoellner Collection*