THE ST. LOUIS POST OFFICE STAMPS
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To the Editor of the American Journal of Philately.

SIR – Through the columns of your valuable “Journal,” I beg leave to advance a few arguments in defence of the two stamps, which, next to my Reunions, (and a few others of the same class,) I prize most for their rarity. The St. Louis P.O. stamps, viz: 5 and 10 cents were engraved and used during the administration of Mr. John H. Hymer, but the exact date of their emission cannot be determined, as Mr. Hymer and his successor in office are dead, and the books of the engraver were destroyed during the late war.

The engraver, J.W. Kershaw, recognized the stamps the moment he laid his eyes on them, and remarked – “I have not seen one before in twenty years.” He told me he had engraved them by order of Mr. Hymer for the use of the St. Louis Post Office. The gentleman who officiated at the stamp window during Hymer’s administration and who still holds the same position, remembered distinctly of seeing the stamps, and seeing them on letters sent from this office. It is now difficult to get much information in regard to them but the above evidence is sufficient to establish the one and important fact that the stamps were sold to the public, and used by them for the purpose of pre-paying letters, and as such are as justly entitled to a place in our albums, as many others who official origin is not less obscure than the St. Louis stamps, but, nevertheless, are counted among the choice specimens of a good collection. Would any collector dare to refuse a wood-block Mauritius, because the order for its emission had not emanated from the British Home Office, but only from the Colonial Post Master? The large provisional 6 annnas India, converted from a revenue to a postal label by order of the Local Post Master during a temporary scarcity of the regular emissions, is accepted by all; and yet, I think, if the full history of the St. Louis stamps could be collected, it would show that they were issued under the same circumstances, i.e. – that the supply of the U.S. 5 and 10 cent stamps had become exhausted, or was not sufficient to meet the demand.* The St. Louis Historical Society desiring to place among the mementoes of the past history of St. Louis, the plate of St. Louis stamps, made an effort a short time since, to procure it, but without success. They, however, know that the stamps had once been in use at this Post Office. The engraver has made several efforts to find the plate; so far without success. All trace of it is lost after it left his hands, and it must either have been destroyed by the Post Master, or when the building which was then occupied by the Post Office Department was torn down. There is then no probable chance for a reprint, and might it not be from this cause that some Collector in St. Louis, has seen fit to through doubts upon these stamps, because he could not procure a set to adorn his own album? I only know of perhaps a dozen sets in existence. I have examined six of each denominations and could discover no difference between any of the 5 cents, but found two varieties of the 10 cents.** They are printed from copper plate on thin bluish paper, and cancelled with pen strokes. All of them were taken from letters that had passed through the St. Louis Post Office.

Mons. Moen, in the last edition of his beautiful album, has acknowledged them, and under the heading of United States inserted an engraving of each value. A description is therefore unnecessary, as any one can (if they have not the genuine) inspect the fac-similes in the above work. I have become very much interested in these two “bits of paper,” and if I can gain any more authentic information in regard to
them, will give it to your readers, but I think enough evidence has been produced to show that they have without doubt performed the duty of a postage stamp. And though they may not have been authorized by special act of Congress, we are n duty bound (as postage stamp collectors) to give them a place in our collections.

Yours very respectively,
LEON W. DURBIN.

*We differ from our correspondent in regard to the occasion of their use, as they were certainly used one year before any general issue for the United States ever appeared, and considered it more likely that the postmasters of the large cities of New York and St. Louis finding it nearly impossible to transact their business without stamps, caused them to be prepared for use in their cities, and they were recognized by all other postmasters as a receipt of payment.

**The difference in the 10 cent stamp consists in the flourishes surrounding the design; it is more noticeable under the name SAINT LOUIS, there being six dashes in one and only three in the variety.