

Confederate Treasury Notes held by the S.C. Department of Archives & History

Chartered on 19 December 1812 by Act 2021 of the General Assembly and capitalized with the assets of the state treasury, the Bank of the State of South Carolina provided a stable currency for the state through much of the bank's fifty six year history. Ruined by the general economic collapse at the end of the Civil War, the bank was formally closed by Act 17 of the General Assembly passed on 15 September 1868. Among the worthless assets in the bank's vaults when it closed was approximately \$65,000 in Confederate Treasury notes.

The Confederate notes were part of the seventh and final issue of currency produced by the Confederate government and were authorized by "An Act to Reduce the Currency and to authorize a New Issue of Notes and Bonds" passed by the Confederate Congress on February 17, 1864. The act called for the new notes to be "payable two years after the ratification of a treaty of peace with the United States" and the new notes to be exchanged for old notes at the rate of \$2.00 new to \$3.00 old. It is estimated that approximately \$470 million of notes were issued under this act.

The notes were engraved by the firm of Keatinge and Ball. Edward Keatinge, formerly an engraver for the American Bank Note Company of New York City, joined with Thomas Ball to form the company in Richmond, Virginia, in 1862 and became the primary engravers and producers of Confederate Treasury Notes. The firm soon moved their operations to Columbia, South Carolina, due to the constant military threats to Richmond. The Confederate Treasury Department would also relocated to Columbia in 1864. The \$5.00 and \$10.00 notes are clearly marked as being printed by the firm of Evans and Cogswell and it is likely most of the other notes were also. Evans and Cogswell had a large printing plant in Columbia that produced currency, bonds and other documents for the Confederate government. The building, better known as the Confederate Printing Plant, still stands at 501 Gervais Street, Columbia.

These Confederate Treasury notes were found bundled among 40 cubic feet redeemed currency notes of the Bank of the State of South Carolina. The bank notes had been redeemed and cancelled in 1879-1881 and were to have been destroyed. However, legal issues kept the notes bundled and stored in the basement of the South Carolina State House until they were transferred from the custody of the State Treasurer to the State Archives in the early 1960's. In 2007, the Archives began a project to assess the large quantity of bank notes and it was during this project that the Confederate notes were discovered.

The sale of these notes is authorized by the General Assembly under Section 60-11-102 of the South Carolina Code of Laws. All funds realized through the sale are to be used solely for the improvement of access to and the preservation of the archival collection held by the SC Dept. of Archives and History. Past auction proceeds have been used to purchase more efficient shelving for the collection, upgrade online access software and to purchase conservation materials for safeguarding the archival collection.