

The Elusive Double Transfer on Dr. Kennedy's "Family Medicines" U.S. Private Die Proprietary 2¢ Revenue Stamp RS155dt

Brief History & Examination

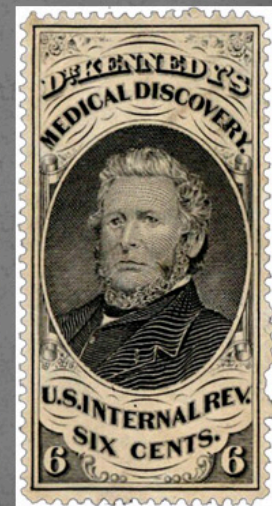
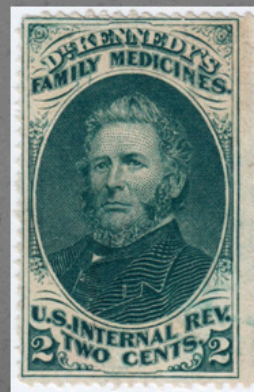
© Charles J. DiComo, PhD | charlesdico@gmail.com

2025



Brief Overview of Dr. Kennedy's Family Medicines & Medical Discovery

- Dr. Donald Kennedy offered Dr. Kennedy's Hair Tea, Kennedy's Salt Rheum Ointment, Kennedy's Scrofula Ointment and Kennedy's Prairie Weed, recommended for bronchitis, pleurisy, asthma, pneumonia, etc.
- Kennedy's 2¢ green stamp RS155 was issued first, from 1870 until February 21, 1883. 275,625 were printed on old paper, 511,699 on silk paper and 706,062 on pink and watermarked papers.
- The 6¢ black stamp RS156 was issued from May 1874 until March 31, 1883. 1,769,094 were printed on silk and watermarked papers.



Listed by *Scott Catalogue* in 1941 and *The American Revenuer* in 1979; yet has not been seen – Until now!

752 PRIVATE DIE PROPRIETARY STAMPS

The extraordinary demands of the Civil War upon the Federal Treasury resulted in Congress devising and passing the Revenue Act of 1862. The Government provided revenue stamps to be affixed to boxes or packages of matches, and to proprietary medicines, perfumery, playing cards – as well as to documents, etc.

But manufacturers were permitted, at their expense, to have dies engraved and plates made for their exclusive use. Many were only too willing to do this because a discount or premium of from 5% to 10% was allowed on orders from the die which often made it possible for them to undercut their competitors. Also, the considerable advertising value of the stamps could not be overlooked. These are now known as Private Die Proprietary stamps. The face value of the stamp and its material was determined by the number, i.e., 10 for each 100 matches or playing cards. Medicines and perfumery were taxed at the rate of 1¢ for each 25 cents of the retail value or fraction thereof up to \$1 and 2¢ for each 50 cents or fraction above that amount. Playing cards were first taxed at the rate of 1¢ for each 100 cards but subsequently the tax was 3¢ for a deck of 52 cards and 10¢ for a greater number of cards or double decks.

The stamp tax was repealed on March 3, 1863, effective July 1, 1863.

Dr. Kennedy	
RS155 2c green	
a. Old paper	60.00
b. Silk paper	9.00
c. Pink paper	40.00
d. Wmk 191R	6.75
As "d," dbl. transfer	—
e. Experimental silk paper	3,000.
RS156 6c black	
b. Silk paper	9.00
c. Pink paper	82.50
d. Wmk 191R	9.00

ISSN 0163-1608

October, 1979

Vol. 33, No. 8, Whole No. 318

THE AMERICAN REVENUER

Journal of the American Revenue Association

DESIGN DOUBLING ON U.S. PRIVATE DIE STAMPS

Richard F. Riley and W.R. DeKay

Copyright © by Richard F. Riley, 1979

82. RS155d. Dr. Kennedy. No example of this double transfer has been seen. It was first listed by Scott in 1941.

- The *Scott Specialized Catalogue* lists RS155dt with a dash, as this stamp has not sold over the years to ascribe a value.
- The seminal "Design Doubling" article by Riley & DeKay in the 1979 TAR lists "82. RS155d, Dr. Kennedy." and that "no example of this double transfer has been seen. It was first listed in Scott (Catalogue) in 1941."

RS155dt: showing downward doubling of top frame line, upper curved lines and letters in Kennedy's



Highlighting the Upper Left and Upper Right Curved Lines: Clear Downward Shifts



Double
Transfer



Normal
Transfer



Highlighting the Letters of “KENNEDY’s”: shifts in ‘K,’ ‘E,’ ‘N,’ ‘N,’ ‘E’ and ‘D’



Double
Transfer



Normal
Transfer

Odd Inking Above and Below “FAMILY” in upper left corner above Kennedy Portrait



There appears to be a number of distinct shapes atop “MILY” and to the left of “F”

Dots, dashes, lines, etc.



Might this be remnants of a foreign transfer?
More research required and a second confirmatory copy.

Normal Transfer

Conclusion



- After examining a few hundred RS155d stamps over the years, an example was recently identified that exhibits a clear downward shift and/or double transfer in the upper 1/3 of the design.
- The double transfer occurs in the upper left and upper right curved lines, and most of the letters in “KENNEDY’s”
- There also appears to be an area of odd inking within “FAMILY” composed of dots, dashes, lines and distinct shapes (might this be the remnants of a foreign transfer?)
- This is the first modern identification and visualization of an RS155d double transfer (possibly the one referred to in the 1941 Scott Catalogue and 1979 TAR.