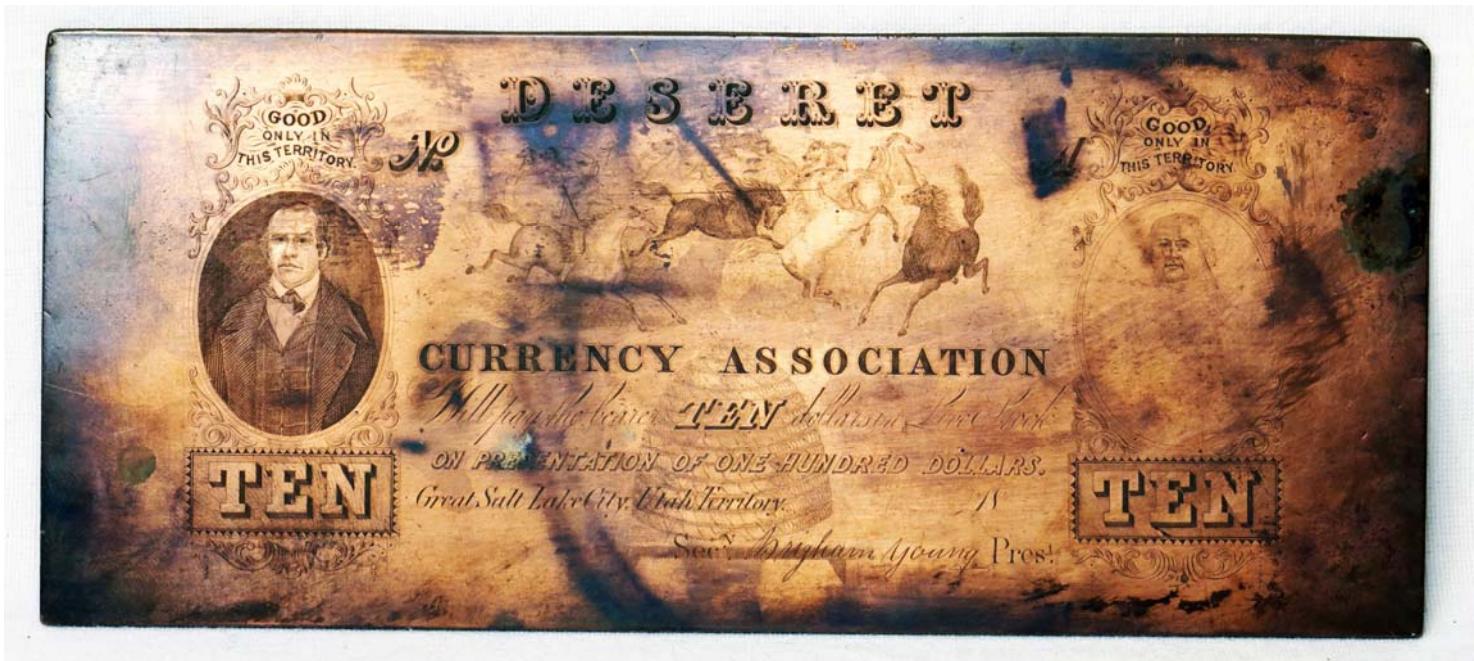


# “DESERET CURRENCY ASSOCIATION”

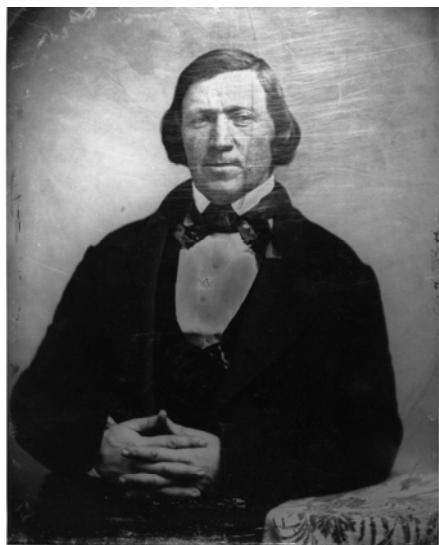
## DISCOVERY \$10 ENGRAVING PLATE

by Douglas Nyholm

I was recently contacted and received an image of a \$10 engraving plate from the Deseret Currency Association which was heretofore unknown. Presently printed notes from the second series of engraved notes were known only in the denominations of \$1, \$2, \$3, and \$5. There has never even been a rumor of any other denominations existing. Although this discovery item is the engraving plate, and no printed notes have yet come to light, it is a definite relic that at least plans were in place for a possible printing of this denomination.



DISCOVERY \$10 DESERET CURRENCY ASSOCIATION PLATE (IMAGE REVERSED)

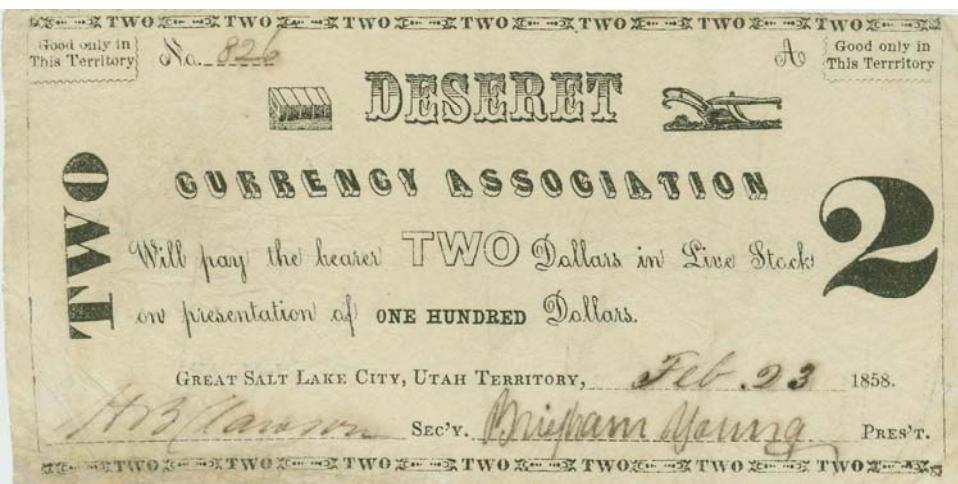


BRIGHAM YOUNG

To begin with, a bit of history about the Deseret Currency Association should be discussed. The “State of Deseret” was formed about two years after the arrival of the “Saints” into the Great Salt Lake valley in 1847 with their leader, Brigham Young. The Mormons were continually active with the issuance of currency beginning in Kirtland Ohio, then from Nauvoo Illinois, and finally from Salt Lake. The “Deseret Currency Association” was organized in January 1858. Its primary purpose was to relieve the lack of circulating currency in “Deseret” and to fund the defense against the U.S. Army which was enroute to Salt Lake. Brigham Young was sure that the army’s intentions were to remove himself as Governor, halt the practice of polygamy, and end the Mormon’s dominance over economics and political affairs in the territory. Capitol was desperately needed as there were no banks in the territory and the only circulating specie was a small amount of

circulating U.S. money in addition to a few remaining re-issued Kirtland banknotes and a small number of Mormon gold coins available.

Thus, the first issue of The Deseret Currency Association's currency was consisting of typeset denominations hastily printed in the denominations of \$1, \$2, \$3, \$5, \$10, \$20, \$50 and \$100. These were printed uniface on very thin paper issued with the notation "Good Only in this Territory." This issue was later a target for the now infamous counterfeiter Mark Hofmann in the early 1980's who researched records to determine the denominations which were issued. Presently only the \$1 and \$2 denominations plus a unique \$3 are known to have survived as authenticated genuine specimens. Hofmann created forgeries of all the higher denominations. These typeset original Type 1 denominations were issued quickly due to the urgent need and the higher quality engraved examples were planned but the copper plates



### PRINTED TYPE CURRENCY / HAND SIGNED

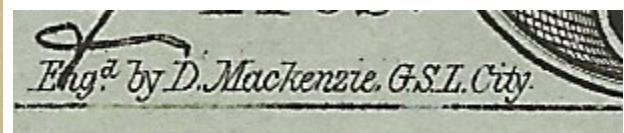
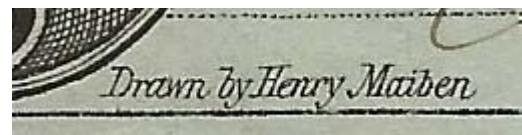


### ENGRAVED \$5 / VERY RARE

"drawer," or designer was Henry Maiben and the "engraver" was David McKenzie as noted in small font at the lower edge. It is also well documented that plates for denominations of \$1, \$2, \$3, and \$5 were prepared as well as surviving known printed notes of all four denominations. This recently discovered copper printing plate for a \$10 denomination for the Deseret Currency Association is therefor an extraordinary find. Up to this time there has not been any information that such a denomination was contemplated let alone a printing plate created.

### DESERET CURRENCY PRINTING TIME-LINE

The Deseret Currency Association in a meeting with Brigham Young on January 19, 1858 was organized with Brigham Young as President, Daniel H. Wells as Treasurer and Hiram B. Clawson the secretary. Two days later Brigham Young gave directions to David McKenzie to engrave printing plates. The plates would take some time to



### ENGRAVED SIGNATURES

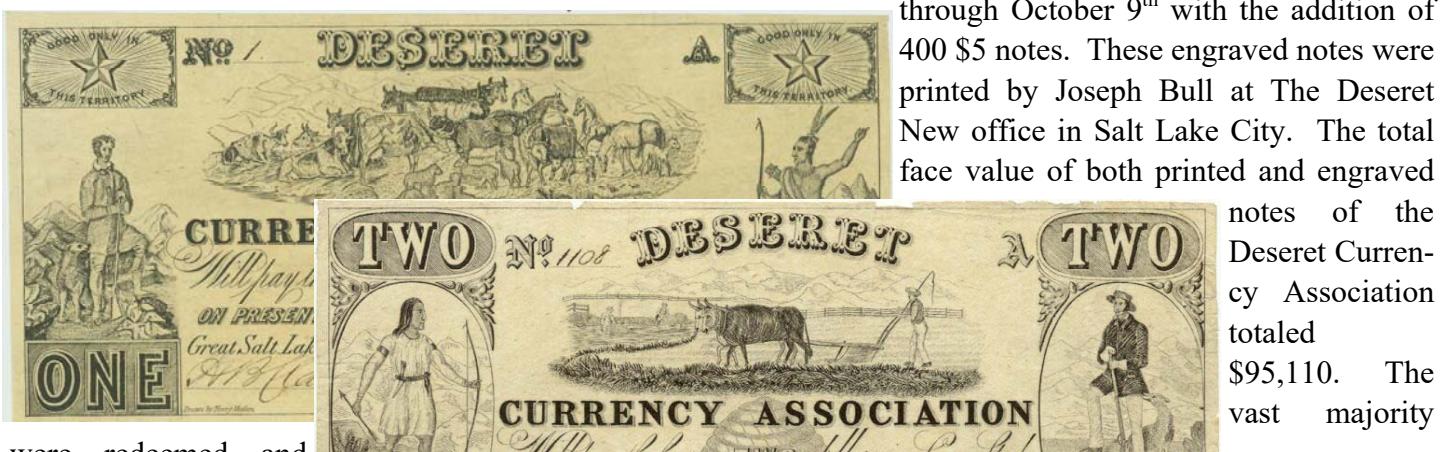
would not be available for several months. Later in the year the engraved copper plates were prepared. The plates indicate that the



### DESERET NEWS OFFICE 1858

finish and Young felt the urgency to have a circulating currency printed quickly. It was back in July of 1857 that they learned that the government had dispatched Johnston's army with over 5,000 troops. Thus, currency was urgently needed for defense spending. These first notes were printed at the Deseret News office in Salt Lake on February 19<sup>th</sup>, 1858. On February 19<sup>th</sup> there were 200 \$1 notes, 200 \$2 notes and 200 \$3 notes printed. The next day on February 20<sup>th</sup> \$5, \$10, and \$20 notes were printed along with additional \$1, \$2's, and \$3's. The printing of notes in Salt Lake occurred sporadically until March 27<sup>th</sup> after which the printing press and operations moved south to the city of Fillmore. Printing resumed there on March 31<sup>st</sup> and continued thru July 17<sup>th</sup>. Most of these first printed notes were signed personally by Brigham Young with the additional signature of H.B. Clawson. The printing at sometime in this process was enhanced to include the printed signature of Brigham Young and both signed and printed signature types are available to collectors today. Printing continued thru March which included all denominations totaling \$40,146 face. The printing in Fillmore commenced and between March 31<sup>st</sup> and April 26<sup>th</sup> over 10,000 notes were printed with a face value of \$26,753. This would indicate that the majority of notes were of smaller denominations. After the printing in Fillmore ended which brought an end to the printed issues, operations then moved in late summer of 1858, moving back to Salt Lake City where the now completed engraved plates were ready for use. The first engraved notes were printed on September 9<sup>th</sup> and consisted of 600 \$1, 200 \$2, and 350 \$3 notes. Subsequent printing occurred

through October 9<sup>th</sup> with the addition of 400 \$5 notes. These engraved notes were printed by Joseph Bull at The Deseret News office in Salt Lake City. The total face value of both printed and engraved



were redeemed and burned especially the earlier printed types as they are quite rare today.

The lower denominations of the engraved notes bore allegorical figures of Indians and pioneers with the central vignette of various animals. This changed with the issuance of the \$5 denomination which depicted portraits of Millard Fillmore on the left and George Washington on the right. The \$10 plate depicted Mormon leaders with Parley P. Pratt on the left and

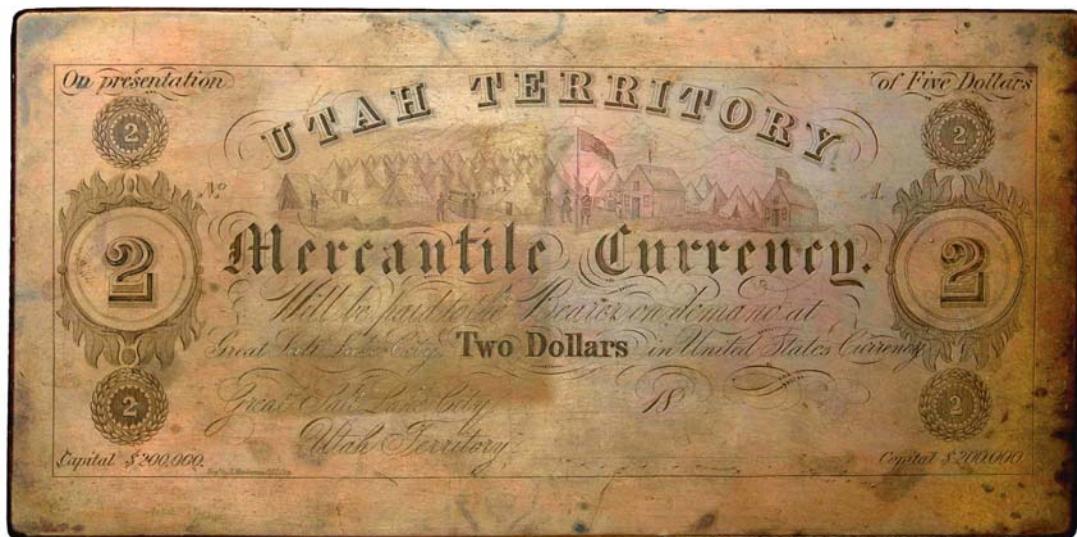
Willard Richards on the right. Willard Richards served as second counselor to President Brigham Young from 1847 until his death in 1854, Parley P. Pratt was an early convert to the Church and leader holding many positions until his death in 1857. It may be possible that this plate was intended to be a sort of commemorative or tribute to these two Church leaders. It appears that this plate was not completely finished as the portrait of Willard Richards as first glance appears to be worn but its engraving is shallow and incomplete. The engraved signature of Brigham Young is strong and intact and also matches similar signatures on the other known en-



### ENGRAVED \$1, \$2, and \$3 NOTES

graved denominations. The engraving also mimics the exact wording on the other denominations. The Plate Letter which is present on the other denominations is not immediately visible on the plate. Possibly it is hidden to the right of the T in Deseret where there is a large dark spot, or as the plate appears to be unfinished it may not have yet been applied. Finally, the engraved signatures of Maiben and McKenzie are not visible or present at the lower edge of the plate.

First, a little history of copper printing plates which were created during this time in Salt Lake. Prior to the discovery of this \$10 plate no other copper engraving plates were known to exist except for a \$2 plate created for the "Utah Territory Mercantile Company" presumably by the same engraver, David McKenzie, as his signature appears at the bottom left of the printed \$3 note of this type. Approximately 10-15 years ago a copper plate was sold at auction for a \$2 denomination from the Utah Territory Mercantile Company. This brings to two, the number of Utah copper engraved plates known today. There are also no known printed notes known to have been printed or have survived from this \$2 plate.



**MERCANTILE CURRENCY COPPER PLATE** (Image reversed)

The above mentioned \$2 plate was auctioned by Stacks on October 16th, 2007. Their auction description for Lot 3201 is reprinted here verbatim.

**Mercantile Currency, Great Salt Lake City, Utah Territory, Single Impression Copper Plate to Print Two Dollars Notes. Ca. 1858-1862. Extremely Fine.** Uniface copper plate Single impression with wide borders and slightly beveled edges. Impression surface, standard banknote size. 172mm b 72mm. Outside plate dimensions 188mm by 94mm. Fairly thick copper and strongly engraved intaglio with imprint of David McKenzie, G.S.L. City at bottom left. The design for this Two Dollars impression plate is similar to the known (and very rare) reprints taken from the Three dollar denomination plate (whereabouts unknown to us), Custom vignette for series of an army encampment with headquarters, flagpole, and several tents for the "Grunts". Soldiers and officers in the foreground. Identical end panels with "2" counter at the center and each corner with smaller "2" counters. At the top, large "UTAH TERRITORY" with smaller "On Presentation-of Five Dollars" split by text. Across the center and under vignette, "Mercantile Currency" with obligation below: "...Two Dollars in U.S. Currency." Engraved city lower left and space to right for date "18\_\_" and one signature. Capitalization of "\$200,000" in both bottom corners, Similar in style to Rust Figure 105 (page 93). **An awe inspiring copper plate and absolutely unique to our knowledge.** Obviously, the Three Dollar plate existed (still extant?) since pulls were once taken from it. We can conjecture a One Dollar note on this series was

proposed as well. **We and no one else have seen issued notes of contemporary remainders from this series.** This is a sensational piece of Utah Territory numismatics and **one of the first copper plates engraved in the American West.** Interestingly, Alvin Rust assigns this plate and series as a non-Mormon issue. However, it appears logical that this may be Mormon created. Since McKenzie was arrested for the Deseret Currency Association note engraving he did in 1858 and Johnston's Army in Utah was there to fight a potential war against the Mormons, it would seem unlikely for McKenzie to engrave for the Federals. The "Mercantile" title is more "Mormon" in philosophy than as a Military note issue. The vignette is unusual with the American flag and encampment though and is similar in style to some of the fancy Northern Sutler issues (see Ford X). Obviously, the series is worthy of great study. The plate itself is **superb condition.** It is exceptionally clean with wonderful surfaces. The only trivial discolorations are on the far perimeter of the margin surfaces and a patch at the right center. **This museum piece might very well be the highlight of the Ford XX Sale.** The fact that it is priceless is a point that will never be in dispute.

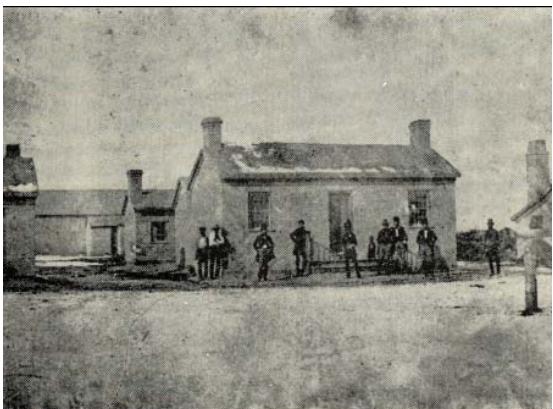
A notation at the end of the above description states: "Ex. Lawrence Falater, January 25, 1962"

The price realized for this plate was \$27,600.00.

Obviously, there were more plates created and several of these are mentioned in research into the ongoing problems Brigham Young was having with the Government in 1858. Marshall Peter K. Dotson who was installed in the territory arrested David McKenzie on



July 9, 1859 for counterfeiting and supposedly confiscated a number of copper engraving plates and other material. They were taken from the Deseret Store which was a tithing office operated by John T. Caine. Marshall Dotson later attempted to return the plates to Brigham Young who refused them stating that they had been damaged. Young, filed suit and was awarded \$1,668 for the damage incurred



The Commanding General's Quarters,  
from the East looking West,  
Camp Floyd, Jan. 1859

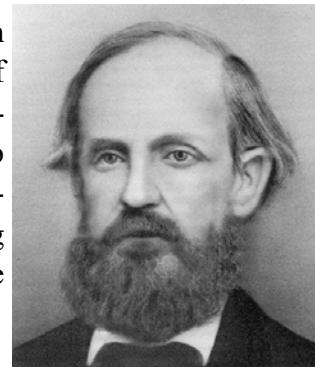
### David McKenzie

and an additional \$648.66 in court costs. This judgement was not paid, and Marshall Dotson's home was confiscated in lieu of this. It is unknown and undocumented whatever became of the plates and property which was seized. This was not the end of the accusations and counterfeiting woes for Brigham Young and David McKenzie. Also, in the fall of 1859 a conflict between the citizens of Utah and the army at Camp Floyd developed. A group of men at Camp Floyd which included prominent men named M. Brewer and J.M. Wallace conspired to counterfeit quartermaster order(s) on St. Louis and New York. They supposedly employed David McKenzie to create the plates which was quickly done. Their plot was soon discovered, and M. Brewer was arrested and implemented Brigham Young from whose workshop was used by David McKenzie to accomplish the work. These plates were also seized by Dotson along with the Deseret Currency plates. Brewer's plan was to get both Young and McKenzie arrested but ultimately only David McKenzie was arrested and found guilty. He was sentenced to prison for two years. What these St. Louis



and New York orders were exactly is unknown but it does lead one to believe that the copper plate entitled the Utah Territory Mercantile Currency showing a picture of Camp Floyd on it may have been involved. It is speculated that this Mercantile Currency was intended to circulate as counterfeit currency among the Army troops to cause problems with Johnson's army.

Enter Judge John Cradlebaugh, who served in Utah during 1858 and was an outspoken critic of the Mormons. He made a speech in Washington D.C. before the house of Representatives on February 7, 1863. During this speech he outlined the above details regarding the seizure of the material (Plates) from Brigham Young's workshop and the involvement of David McKenzie. He also mentioned the counterfeit quartermaster plates also involving McKenzie and produced and waived in his hand during his speech the two copper plates which he stated were produced in Utah to promulgate forgery and counterfeiting against the U.S. Government.



**John Cradlebaugh**

This plays directly into the discovery of at least the \$10 Deseret Currency Associations printing plate which was discovered at a location in Washington D.C. As far as the other Mercantile plate there is no provenance to trace as to its discovery or whereabouts but since there are only two copper engraving plates known to exist from Utah and Cradlebaugh displayed two copper plates before congress in 1863 the association is strong that these could very well be the two plates.

How did this discovery plate come to be found? To begin with, it was found in the basement rafters of a house located at 10<sup>th</sup> St. SW in Washington D.C. It appeared at a small local auction in the area in early 2020 where it was purchased by the present owner. The consignor obtained it from her grandfather who was living in the house until 1954. He passed it on because she was interested in history. The house was built in 1909 on a vacant lot purchased in that same year. The house functioned as a boarding house with residents employed in the Washington D.C. area and is located about 1 mile from a local Mormon Church. The ability to trace who may have placed it into the rafters is probably impossible since from the speech in 1863 to at least 1909 with the house was built there is an untraceable gap. It seems to possibly have had some connection either with some Mormons or a political figure who may have been connected to Cradlebaugh who was the last person to be traced to the plate.

## **SUMMARY**

The importance of this discovery cannot be overstated. It is a significant remnant of a tumultuous time in the history of the Mormons early history in the Salt Lake valley. It also ties this newly found copper engraving to the first copperplate engraving of the Mercantile Currency which was completed in the western territories of the fledgling United States. Although not 100% verified it is certainly strong evidence of the illegal counterfeiting efforts to undermine the U.S. Army troops sent to Deseret. It is also an amazing artifact from the second type of the Deseret Currency Association, which was the only currency ever issued in the United States to be backed by livestock and a denomination that was never known to have been documented or even planned. I am pleased to be able to bring this part of history to light not only to historians but collectors alike. It is one more instance that with history, not everything is known, and new discoveries are still waiting to be brought to light.