

## Chapter 5: Geography, Maps and Boundaries

“Without geography, you’re nowhere.”

Jimmy Buffett, *A Pirate Looks at Fifty* (1998)<sup>1</sup>

I love a good map. When I was a little boy my father gave me a wall map of the United States and another one of the world. Mercator’s projection, but what can you do? I studied those maps until I had learned them thoroughly and the images burned into my mind. I can still see them there.

These were political maps, meaning that boundaries were shown, but not natural relief. I became fascinated with boundaries, and still am. Was this because of the maps? Would my life have been noticeably different if they had been physical maps, showing mountains and watersheds but no boundaries? Maybe, but I doubt it. I think there were other, psychological reasons for my interest in boundaries. As discussed in Chapter 7, my personal autonomy was one of the main concerns of my life as a child, and the notion of boundaries has a natural resonance there. One of the core aesthetic delights of the study of heraldry, which I began as a young child (see Chapter 6.A), is the sharp, unshaded division between one color field and the next, also found on political maps. I was a stamp collector (see Chapters 3B.7 and 29.A) and the separateness of political units (countries, colonies, whatever), and the clear inclusion of territory in one rather than another, and the choice to collect one rather than another, are among the main organizing principles of stamp collecting.

My early interest in boundaries foreshadowed the later law studies (see Chapter 14) which trained my faculty of binary discrimination to a high pitch. The study of law is a lot about boundaries – the elements of a criminal offense, for example, and the rules of civil procedure, and the careful division of future interests in property. This binary way of thinking – something is on one side of the boundary or the other – has advantages and disadvantages. I have since learned that the world is not all that sharply divided, but still it is the sharp divisions that I like most. A library classification manual is fascinating reading to me – the whole universe is divided into a million infinitely refined classes, and you can pick just one main one for any book.

I had other reasons for an interest in geography, too – I read the newspapers at an early age, and still remember the thrill of visiting England and France in 1952, aged 8, and perhaps as important for this chapter, airport stops in Canada and Ireland on the way there (for more on this trip see Chapter 30.D). I became a whiz at geography, which I still am, and always won when I played the children’s game called Geography –

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<sup>1</sup> Jimmy Buffett is an American singer-songwriter. He was quoting a bumper sticker he bought in a map store in Washington DC.

sometimes it was me against everyone else in the school bus, including the adults. I still won.<sup>2</sup>

Whatever the reason, I was fascinated. I remember quite clearly studying the intricate borders of what was then the new state of Israel on the world map, and the intriguing phrases “Under Jordanian administration” (for the West Bank) and “Under Egyptian administration” (for the Gaza Strip). What did that mean exactly? Were borders not all the same? Were some less absolute than others? Here is one way Scott’s Standard Postage Stamp Catalogue, one of the most influential books in my life, helped me understand the world. Scott’s was full of special cases – occupation issues, for example, and plebiscite issues (what’s a plebiscite? I had to find out), and transitional overprints, and issues for territories under the ephemeral control of warlords. For an example, see Document 5-1. By learning about these things to understand the stamp catalogue, I began understanding the wider world of politics and history and events.

I still have an deep interest in political anomalies, such as the irregular border between Egypt and Sudan, and the former Saudi-Kuwaiti Neutral Zone, and the Oe-Cussi and Ifni and Cabinda and Livia and Ceuta enclaves (I have actually been to Livia and Ceuta), and the demilitarized frontier in the Golan Heights (been there too), and the former Panama Canal Zone (been there too), and many others I could mention from memory.

As I grew in knowledge and sophistication, my interest in boundaries did not diminish. To the contrary, I discovered more resources. For example, the basic atlases I had then did not show internal provincial and district boundaries for every country in the world. But I found the Map Room at the Main (42nd Street) Branch of the New York Public Library, where maps and atlases did show these boundaries. I remember spending hours in that room, studying maps which showed, for example, Australian county boundaries as of about 1930, and copying the counties down in lists. The lists were useless, but finding the Map Room and learning how to use its resources weren’t.

I now have a huge collection of historical and specialized atlases – around 850 titles (see Chapters 4.D and 29.B). I eventually became an advanced enough collector that I only bought atlases when the new title added information I didn’t already have, and pretty much stopped buying atlases in 2008. I have learned a lot about maps and their virtues and limitations – how the purpose of the map, the selection of data, the chosen projection and the graphic presentation can shape and even distort the map’s information and effect.

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<sup>2</sup> Note for future scholars: to play Geography, someone names a place. A player on the other team must then name a place that begins with the same letter the first-named place ended with. Thus: PariS – South DakotA – AfghanistaN – New BrunswicK – KeralA and so on. Easy at first, but then you run out of places beginning with E. Or more likely, the other side runs out first. I knew about Eritrea, which no one else had ever heard of, because it was on the map and because the Italians used to issue stamps for Eritrea.

David Greenwood's *Mapping* (Chicago, 1964), which I studied in the map librarianship course in library school (see Chapter 20.B), helped me a lot with this. But the first thing I look for when I inspect a new atlas is: are there boundaries?

A good example of what I'm looking for is found in Eric Walker's *Historical Atlas of South Africa* (Cape Town, 1922). Unlike the Australian atlases I studied in the NYPL Map Room, this is a book of some bibliographic importance. It was derived from original sources, and all serious later works since have used it as a source. I knew it from bibliographies in the backs of other historical atlases and was glad to find a copy on the Internet. The thrill here is seeing graphically the changing political boundaries as the British and the Boers encroached on the lands of the indigenous peoples, as ephemeral colonies and protectorates were set up and superseded, and as the British in their turn destroyed the independence of the Boers.

I know now that history is not defined by boundaries, and too much concentration on boundaries gives an unnaturally neat impression of what really happened. For example, atlases of the history of antiquity (especially those published in the 19th century) show with great confidence the boundaries of Roman provinces, Persian satrapies and similar divisions. The same is true of Albert Herrmann's absorbing *Historical Atlas of China* (Chicago, revised ed. 1966), which does the same thing for the shifting Chinese kingdoms and fiefdoms back to 1100 BCE.

But how accurate are these boundaries, presented with such assurance? Do the authors have sources for them as firm and comprehensive as the lines they draw on their maps?

Usually not, unless the boundary was a natural one like a river course, and even those change over time. Were these boundaries as detailed and exact as those on the maps accompanying modern treaties, which are the source materials for atlases of later history? Again, almost certainly not. How much did boundary lines really mean in the ancient and medieval

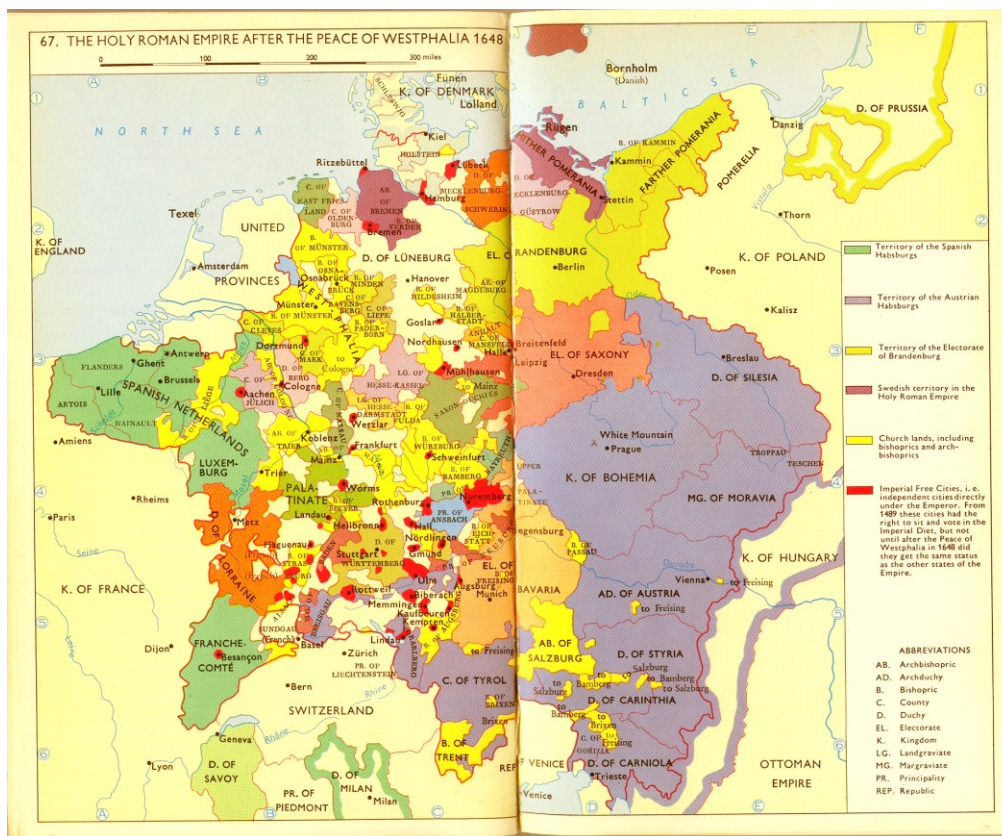


worlds, with their differing methods of measurement and administration, where no one had actual maps in the modern sense, and there was no way to reproduce identical copies of the maps they had? Above, for example, is a map of ancient Central Asia, at an

unstated time, taken from an atlas popular before World War I.<sup>3</sup> On the map these boundaries look as regular as modern survey-based township lines, but really they weren't. Even today precisely surveyed and demarcated international borders in those areas (for example between Afghanistan and Pakistan) don't mean as much as they seem to on the map.

Still, following boundaries and their changes is one way to learn – why, for example, was the boundary set (even approximately) just there? Why did it change just then, and in that particular direction? I really like that way of learning, despite its limitations. After 60 years of studying them both, history and geography have almost merged for me, as I have come really to understand why you can't know one without the other.

Here, taken almost at random from my collection, is an example of the kind of map I really like, showing (as it happens) the territorial settlement of Central Europe made at the Peace of Westphalia in 1648, ending the Thirty Years War and laying the foundation of the modern nation-state system.<sup>4</sup>



<sup>3</sup> *Everyman Atlas of Ancient and Classical Geography* (London, 1907).

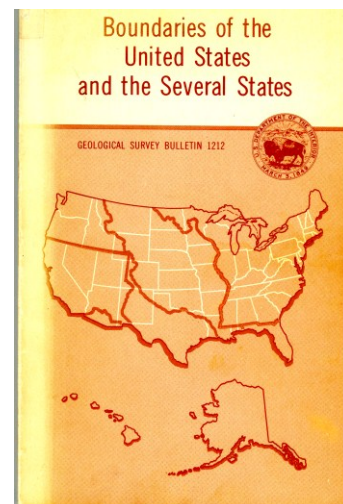
<sup>4</sup> From Barnes & Noble's *Historical Atlas of the World* (New York, 1970), based on a Norwegian original of 1962.



It doesn't really matter if these boundaries are of any use to me. For example, in my *National Atlas of Kenya* (Nairobi, 3d ed. 1970), there is a superb color map showing the country's provincial boundaries and the district boundaries within them, according to the statute of 1968. I studied that map carefully, although I have never been to Kenya and there is no particular reason for me to know its district boundaries even as they are now, let alone as they were in 1970. There's a wonderful map of police districts in that atlas also – it is intriguing to track how these vary from the political district lines. I'm not completely sure *why* this is intriguing – it doesn't seem to intrigue anyone else. Also fun is *Atlas Histórico de Portugal e do Ultramar Português* (Lisbon, 2003), by A. H. de Oliveira Marques and João José Alves Dias, in which an interested observer can track every change of internal district boundaries in now-defunct Portuguese colonies. I realize this sort of thing is not for everyone – in fact it is for almost nobody. But I mention these books, among many many others in my collection, to show what interests *me* – that is the purpose of this chapter, and in large part of the whole memoir.

I have a number of historical atlases of individual American states, and the first pages I turn to are those which detail the changing of county lines. The pages which contrast broccoli production in 1928 with that in 1958 are also useful, no doubt, but not as fascinating as the pages which show how county lines changed between 1848 and 1912. One of the biggest thrills for me atlaswise was discovering Michael Cribb's superb *Historical Atlas of Indonesia* (Honolulu, 2000). This documented the ascendancy of Dutch power over hundreds of small native states throughout the area which became the Netherlands East Indies. Unlike British colonial progress, which I had studied in great detail, this was new territory for me. The stamp catalogue did not cover it, as the Indonesian native states did not issue stamps. I had some detailed material for India, for example the government's *Memoranda on the Indian States* (Delhi, 1940), one of my favorite books, which describes in detail every one of the more than 600 vanished native states, and helped me track them on later maps with difficulty but some accuracy. Cribb's atlas let me see these Indonesian states, until then with a few exceptions quite unknown to me, as entities on a map (which gave them a sort of reality), and to follow their rise (sometimes) and fall (always).

I could go on like this for quite a while, discussing especially interesting historical maps and atlases. I'm not sure how useful that would be. I can't help mentioning two more titles, though. One is another of my favorite books, the endlessly entrancing *Boundaries of the United States and the Several States*, by Franklin K. Van Zandt (U. S. Department of the Interior Geological Survey Bulletin 1212 (1966)). This explains the historical origin and development of every American state (and of course national) boundary in deeply



satisfying detail. I browse through it often. And Sir Edward Hertslet's magisterial *Map of Europe by Treaty* (4 volumes, London 1875-91) not only details every boundary change in Europe since 1648, but includes the text of the relevant treaty provisions. I have similar volumes for Africa and Central Asia, although the supplemental maps, kept in a special pocket in the original edition, are missing from my reprint of the Africa series. Reading these treaties, which are of course the original sources for boundary changes, provides me with intense satisfaction and some learning as well.

I have a good sense of direction, but if I need to get from one place to another please don't give me directions – they just confuse me. Give me a map instead – no, wait, don't bother, I already have a map.<sup>5</sup> For the United States, for example, I have DeLorme topographical atlases, supplemented by a CD which shows every alley and farm-to-market road in the whole country. These are helpful in plotting journeys across county lines (see Chapter 30.B for more on why I do this, and 30.H on how). On top of that, for many states I have the state's Department of Transportation (DOT) highway engineer atlases of individual counties, or Shearer or Sportsman or Puetz atlases based on them. These show every track and arroyo and dry well and often even structures. Once I went off an unpaved road in rural Nebraska in a rainstorm and had to call 911 to get rescued. I had better maps than the local sheriff and was able to direct him precisely to my location with the coordinates on the DOT atlas page for that county. When I travel abroad I try to get touring maps at a scale of 1:100,000 – these allow me to know precisely where I am and to know which unmarked road is the way through the village. Knowing precisely where I am at all times is really important to me – are juvenile control issues showing through here? I don't care if they are – I still like to know where I am.

Reading this over now I am reminded of my Underground adventure in London in 1952. When we went to London my Aunt Louise's Scottish maid Watts was detailed to look after me – I was 8 years old and looking after me themselves would have interfered with my parents' trip. Riding on the London Underground was one of my favorite activities, and one of the things I liked most about it was the route map on the inside walls of the trains. We were staying at the Berkeley Hotel in Berkeley Square, Mayfair, and so were on the Piccadilly Line – Green Park was our home station. I could not help but notice from the route diagrams displayed in the cars that one end of the Piccadilly Line was in a place called Cockfosters and the other at Uxbridge. I campaigned to be taken from Cockfosters to Uxbridge. I got half of what I wanted – Cockfosters was out, but Watts took me to Uxbridge, where we had tea. Of course my only interest in either place was the route map, and the idea of checking off every one of the stops. Probably the most interesting thing about Uxbridge was that it was the terminus of the Piccadilly Line.

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<sup>5</sup> Although on a trip to Boston in 2010 I did try a GPS – global positioning system – in a rented car. No map, no worries, no need to know where you are – just do what the nice lady says. It was a thrill.

The County Project – my attempt to visit every one of the more than 3100 counties in the United States, discussed at more length in Chapter 30.B (I am about 2/3 done by now) – is just a more ambitious version of the same game. I keep track of my progress on a county outline wall map of the United States (and an Excel spreadsheet that does all the sums automatically). True, the map is not the territory, but that doesn't mean the map doesn't have a lot of interest of its own, or (as with Uxbridge) that some aspects of the map might be even more interesting than the territory.

I maintain similar progress maps of the provinces of Canada, the departments of France, and the states of India. For India I have a supplementary atlas showing the districts within the states – an observer with a good enough knowledge of the background can trace the ghostly outlines of the old princely states behind these district lines. When I travel in India now I keep this atlas handy and try to enter as many of these districts as I can.

Of course boundaries aren't everything in geography, which is a rich and subtle study and a path to understanding the world. As I explored the field and traveled and studied history I became aware of the many other factors which matter even more – relief and water and soil and vegetation and climate and culture and so on. A more sophisticated understanding of boundaries revealed many insights, including (1) that boundaries are just another cultural pattern on the land; (2) that they come in many different degrees of precision and porosity; (3) that they are ephemeral; (4) that “natural” boundaries like rivers can, depending on cultural and historical context, be unifiers rather than separators, and perhaps most important (5) that they are abstract man-made constructs, without (usually) any physical mark on the land – you can't see them from the air. Except you can, sometimes, as for example between the United States and Canada, when clear-cut zones are hacked in straight lines through the forest so the boundary markers can remain visible. But even that reveals their artificiality.



Document 5-1: A complex page from Scott's Standard Postage Stamp Catalogue

RUSSIA—Offices in China

381

**Wenden (Livonia.)**  
(vën'dän [li-vö'ni-ä])

A former district of Livonia, a province of the Russian Empire, which became part of Latvia, under the name of Vidzeme.

Used prices for Nos. L2-L12 are for pen-cancelled copies. Postmarked specimens sell for considerably more.



**1862 Imperf. Unwmkd.**  
L1 A1 (2k) blue 5.00  
a. Tête bêche pair 25.00  
No. L1 was never put to use.



**1863**  
L2 A2 (2k) rose & blk 150.00 150.00  
a. Background inverted 275.00 275.00  
L3 A3 (4k) bl grn & blk 75.00 75.00  
a. (4k) yel grn & blk 280.00 280.00  
b. Half used as 2k on cover 2.000  
c. Background inverted 150.00 150.00  
d. As "a", background inverted 275.00 275.00

The official imitations of Nos. L2 and L3 have a single instead of a double hyphen after "WENDEN".



**1868-71**  
L4 A4 (2k) rose & grn 30.00 15.00  
a. Yellowish paper 50.00 50.00  
b. Grn frame around central oval 1.000  
c. Tête bêche pair 75.00 50.00  
L5 A5 (2k) rose & grn ('64) 20.00 20.00  
L6 A6 (2k) rose & grn

Official imitations of Nos. L4b and L5 have a rose instead of a green line around the central oval. The first official imitation of No. L6 has the central oval 5 1/2 instead of 6 1/2 mm. wide; the second imitation is less clearly printed than the original and the top of the "f" of "Briefmarke" is too much hooked.



**1872-75**  
L7 A7 (2k) red & grn 25.00 20.00  
Perf. 12 1/2

L8 A8 2k yel grn & red ('75) 5.00 5.00  
a. Numeral in upper right corner resembles an inverted "3" 30.00 30.00

Reprints of No. L8 have no horizontal lines in the background. Those of No. L8a have the impression blurred and only traces of the horizontal lines.



**1878-80**  
L9 A9 2k grn & red 5.00 5.00  
a. Imperf. pair 30.00  
L10 A9 2k blk, grn & red ('80) 4.00 4.00  
a. Imperf. pair 30.00

No. L9 has been reprinted in blue green and yellow green with perforation 1 1/2 and in gray green with perforation 1 1/2 or imperforate.

**1884 Perf. 1 1/2.**  
L11 A9 2k blk, grn & red 3.00 3.00  
a. Grn arm omitted 30.00  
b. Arm inserted 30.00  
c. Arm double 40.00  
d. Imperf. pair 40.00

**1901 Engraved**  
L12 A10 2k dk grn & brn 3.00 3.00  
a. Tête bêche pair 15.00  
b. Imperf. pair 15.00

**OCCUPATION STAMPS.**  
Issued under  
Finnish Occupation.

Finnish Stamps of 1917-18  
Overprinted **Aunus**  
**1919 Perf. 14.** Unwmkd.  
N1 A19 5p green 15.00 15.00  
N2 A19 10p rose 15.00 15.00  
N3 A19 20p buff 15.00 15.00  
N4 A19 40p red vio 15.00 15.00  
N5 A19 50p org brn 125.00 125.00  
N6 A19 1m dl rose & blk 135.00 135.00  
N7 A19 5m vio & blk 300.00 300.00  
N8 A19 10m brn & blk 875.00 875.00  
Nos. N1-N8 (8) 1,695. 1,695.

"Aunus" is the Finnish name for Otonets, a town of Russia. Counterfeits exists of overprints on Nos. N1-N8.

Issued under  
German Occupation.

Germany Nos. 506 to 523  
Overprinted in Black **OSTLAND**  
**1941-43 Perf. 14.** Unwmkd.  
N9 A115 1pf gray blk 5 5  
N10 A115 3pf lt brn 5 5  
N11 A115 4pf slate 5 5  
N12 A115 5pf dp yel grn 5 5  
N13 A115 6pf purple 5 5  
N14 A115 8pf red 5 5  
N15 A115 10pf dk brn ('43) 20 15.00  
N16 A115 12pf car ('43) 20 15.00

**Engraved.**  
N17 A115 10pf dk brn 30 35  
N18 A115 12pf brt car 30 35  
N19 A115 15pf brn lake 5 5  
N20 A115 16pf pek grn 5 5  
N21 A115 20pf blue 5 5  
N22 A115 24pf org brn 5 5  
N23 A115 25pf brt ultra 5 10  
N24 A115 30pf ol grn 5 10  
N25 A115 40pf brt red vio 5 10  
N26 A115 50pf myr grn 5 10

N27 A115 60pf dk red brn 5 10  
N28 A115 80pf indigo 10 15  
Nos. N9-N28 (20) 1.85 4.85

Issued for use in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania.

Same Overprinted in Black **UKRAINE**

**Typographed.**  
N29 A115 1pf gray blk 5 5  
N30 A115 3pf lt brn 5 5  
N31 A115 4pf slate 5 5  
N32 A115 5pf dp yel grn 5 5  
N33 A115 6pf purple 5 5  
N34 A115 8pf red 5 5  
N35 A115 10pf dk brn ('43) 15 15.00  
N36 A115 12pf car ('43) 15 15.00

**Engraved.**  
N37 A115 10pf dk brn 35 50  
N38 A115 12pf brt car 35 50  
N39 A115 15pf brn lake 5 5  
N40 A115 16pf pek grn 5 5  
N41 A115 20pf blue 5 5  
N42 A115 24pf org brn 5 5  
N43 A115 25pf brt ultra 5 10  
N44 A115 30pf ol grn 5 10  
N45 A115 40pf brt red vio 5 10  
N46 A115 50pf myr grn 5 10  
N47 A115 60pf dk red brn 5 10  
N48 A115 80pf indigo 10 25  
Nos. N29-N48 (20) 1.85 5.25

Army of the Northwest  
(Gen. Nicolai N. Yudenich)  
Russian Stamps  
of 1909-18  
Overprinted  
in Black or Red

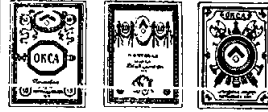
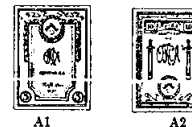
On Stamps of 1909-12  
**Perf. 14 to 15 and Compound.**  
**1919, Aug. 1**  
1 A14 2k green 3.50 5.00  
2 A14 5k claret 3.50 5.00  
3 A15 10k dk bl (R) 4.00 6.00  
4 A11 15k red brn & bl 4.00 6.00  
5 A8 20k bl & car 7.00 9.00  
6 A11 25k grn & gray vio 12.00 15.00  
7 A8 50k brn vio & grn 7.00 9.00

**Perf. 13 1/2.**  
8 A9 1r pale brn, dk brn & org 15.00 17.50  
9 A13 10r scar, yel & gray 45.00 60.00

On Stamps of 1917  
**Imperf.**  
10 A14 3k red 2.00 3.00  
11 A12 3.50r mar & lt grn 25.00 35.00  
12 A13 5r dk bl, grn & pale bl 20.00 25.00  
13 A12 7r dk grn & pink 110.00 150.00

No. 2 Surcharged  
**Perf. 14, 14 1/2 & 15.**  
14 A14 10k on 5k cl 3.00 4.50  
Nos. 1-14 (14) 261.00 350.00  
Nos. 1-14 exist with inverted overprint or surcharge. The 1, 3 1/2, 5, 7 and 10 rubles with red overprint are trial printings (price \$40 each). The 20k on 14k, perforated, and the 1, 2, 5, 15, 70k and 1r imperforate were overprinted but never placed in use. Prices: \$80, \$30, \$40, \$40, \$40, \$40 and \$60.  
These stamps were in use from Aug. 1 to Oct. 15, 1919.  
Counterfeits of Nos. 1-14 abound.

Army of the North



**1919, Sept. Typo. Imperf.**  
1 A1 5k brn vio 25 1.00  
2 A2 10k blue 25 1.00  
3 A3 15k yellow 25 1.00  
4 A4 20k rose 25 1.00  
5 A5 50k green 25 1.00  
Nos. 1-5 (5) 1.25 5.00

The letters OKCA are the initials of Russian words meaning "Special Corps, Army of the North". The stamps were in use from about the end of September to the end of December, 1919.

(General Miller)



A set of seven stamps of this design was prepared in 1919, but not issued.

**RUSSIAN OFFICES ABROAD.**

For various reasons the Russian Empire maintained Post Offices that handle its correspondence in several foreign countries. These were similar to the Post Offices in foreign countries maintained by other world powers.

**Offices in China**

100 Kopecks = 1 Ruble  
100 Cents = 1 Dollar (1917)

Russian Stamps  
Overprinted  
in Blue or Red



On Issues of 1899-92.  
Horizontally Laid Paper.

**1899-1904 Perf. 14 1/2 x 15 Wmk. 168**  
1 A10 1k org (B1) 75 1.00  
2 A10 2k yel grn (R) 75 1.00  
3 A10 3k car (B1) 75 1.00  
4 A10 5k red vio (B1) 75 1.00  
5 A10 7k dk bl (R) 2.00 3.00  
6 A8 10k dk bl (R) 2.00 3.00  
7 A8 50k vio & grn (B1) ('04) 6.00 7.00

**Perf. 13 1/2.**  
8 A9 1r lt brn, brn & org (B1) ('04) 30.00 30.00  
Nos. 1-8 (8) 43.00 47.00

**1901-08**  
On Issues of 1902-05.  
Vertically Laid Paper.

**Perf. 14 1/2 to 15 and Compound.**  
Overprinted in Black, Red or Blue.

9 A8 4k rose red (B1) 2.00 2.00  
10 A10 7k dk bl (R) 12.00 15.00  
11 A8 10k dk bl (R) 900.00 800.00  
a. Groundwork inverted 2.00 1.000  
12 A11 14k bl & rose (R) 3.00 3.50  
13 A11 15k brn vio & bl (B1) ('08) 5.00 6.00  
14 A8 20k bl & car (B1) 1.50 2.00  
15 A11 25k dl grn & lil (R) ('08) 7.50 7.50  
16 A11 35k dk vio & grn (R) 3.00 3.50  
17 A8 50k vio & grn (B1) 65.00 70.00  
18 A11 70k brn & org (B1) 9.00 13.00