

Detecting S. Allan Taylor Confederate Postmaster Provisional Fakes and Fantasies

By Col. Clifford J. Alexander

S. Allan Taylor forgeries of stamps issued by carriers and local posts, as well as his bogus post fantasies, have been well documented in Larry Lyons' *Identifier*,¹ as well as in issues of *The Penny Post*.

Taylor regularly listed the names of carriers, locals and bogus posts whose stamps he offered for sale. However, he only discussed or identified a few CSA Postmasters' Provisional stamps and did not advertise individual CSA stamps for sale.

There are a number of telltale signs that point clearly to Taylor as the source. This article discusses the characteristics from which we can infer that a stamp is likely one of Taylor's creations.

Background

Effective June 1, 1861, United States stamps were invalid to prepay postage in the Confederate states, and CSA post offices were no longer under the jurisdiction of the U.S. Post Office Department.

However, the first CSA general issue stamp was not available for use until October 16, 1861. During the interim, CSA postmasters used "provisional" handstamps and some also created their own adhesive stamps.

Taylor offered fake general issue stamps, but, except for unusual colors and paper, these do not exhibit the same types of creative characteristics as do his fake and fantasy Postmasters' Provisionals described in this article.

Taylor is credited with publishing *The Stamp Collector's Record*, the first philatelic journal in North America. He published 42 issues from October 1865 to October 1876, many of which included lists of the carrier and local post stamps offered for sale in his stamp packets. But Taylor only identified a few of the Postmasters' Provisional stamps. In the last issue of *The Stamp Collector's Record* he provided the most complete list of names:

Package No. 13 contains 50 varieties of

*fac simile (sic) Confederate State stamps, including Memphis, Mobile, Greenville, Madison, Richmond, Livingston, Lynchburg, Athens, Confederate Cross Roads, Pleasant Shade, Statesville and many other rare and curious specimens. Price 15 cents.*²

In some cases, Taylor included in his packets cheap, readily available genuine stamps and local post remainders. However, due to the scarcity and cost of CSA Postmasters' Provisionals, we can conclude that all of the stamps in "Package No. 13" were fakes or fantasies.

This advertisement contained the only Taylor reference in *The Stamp Collector's Record* to a "Confederate Cross Roads" stamp and it is not clear which Taylor creation it is.

There were five CSA adhesive stamps discussed in issues of *The Stamp Collector's Record*: the Blockade stamp (January 1865); two-cent CSA Scott 3 stamp (January 1865); Charleston ten-cent bogus (April 1865); Jackson "essay" (September 1867); and Sparta five-cent (February 1871).

I have only found one Southern city called the Confederate Cross Roads in literature—Friend, Kentucky, which does not have a Postmasters' Provisional adhesive or handstamp listed in any catalog.³

Taylor did create a bogus "C.S.A." flag stamp that does not have the name of a city or postmaster. By the process of elimination, this might have been the "Confederate Cross Roads" stamp referred to in Taylor's advertisement.

Taylor's Methodology

In order to better understand how to detect Taylor fakes and fantasies, it is helpful to know how Taylor created them.⁴ Taylor had carved a small wood block for each individual stamp. In many cases, wood blocks had an open center.

Taylor would insert into the center different types of vignettes, which were smaller wood blocks without frame lines. Many of Taylor's vignettes were numbers, of which he had more than a dozen different styles.

Taylor would tie together up to two dozen wood blocks. Philatelic writers typically call a tied group of wood blocks a *cliché*, a French word that refers to a printing plate consisting of movable type.

Taylor would ink the wood blocks and transfer the designs to paper using a small hand press. The same cliché might be used multiple times with different color inks and papers, creating what Sherwood Springer first characterized as a “form.”⁵

The clichés and paper must have been small, most likely no more than 50 square inches (six by eight inches, for example). To prevent the waste of paper, the blocks in a cliché were close together, often with only a few centimeters separating the designs. As a result, stamps typically have no more than two or three centimeters of margins and we never see Taylor fakes with four wide margins. Often, on one or more sides, the frame line is partly missing.

Taylor was cost conscious. He would use any type of paper he could find, often small scraps thrown away by printing companies. As a result, some of his fakes were printed on odd colored paper that never would have been considered appropriate for an official adhesive stamp.

We find Taylor fakes with surface colors and white backs, as well as paper colored through. Generally the paper is woven but sometimes it is horizontally or vertically laid.

Because of Taylor’s methodology, there are a number of characteristics that can help identify Taylor as the creator of a CSA Postmasters’ Provisional fake.

In addition to small margins and the rare impression of an adjoining stamp, we often see the characteristics in Taylor’s fakes discussed and illustrated here:

- (1) distinctive colors of stamps and papers
- (2) the way stamps were cut
- (3) lack of pairs
- (4) fancy overprints
- (5) use of the same wood blocks for more than one issuer.

Colors of Stamps and Papers

Because Taylor printed stamps using clichés of up to 24 different wood blocks, the same ink colors and types of paper are found on different stamps. As a result, there are many distinctive colors of stamps and papers that can point to a stamp as having been made by Taylor.



Figure 1: Examples of distinctive Taylor ink and paper colors.

Figure 1 shows examples of some distinctive ink colors and papers used by Taylor to print CSA provisionals.

How Stamps Were Cut

Taylor’s daughter said that he would sit at length in his room cutting stamps from sheets.⁶ Because the wood blocks were different sizes and the edges of stamps close together, some fakes have oddly shaped corners and sides. Sherwood Springer bought a large group of fakes from Taylor’s daughter and reportedly, based on their sides and corners, was able to piece together stamps printed on the same sheet like a jigsaw puzzle. Figure 2 shows examples.

Taylor was very careful to stay within the small spaces between wood block designs when cutting stamps from a sheet. In rare cases, however, his scissors strayed and the frame of a different adjoining stamp is visible.

Figure 3 shows one of Taylor’s Gahagan & Howe City Delivery forgeries with a piece of the adjoining stamp at the left. It probably was



Figure 2: Examples of unusual ways that S. Allan Taylor scissor cut his bogus stamps.

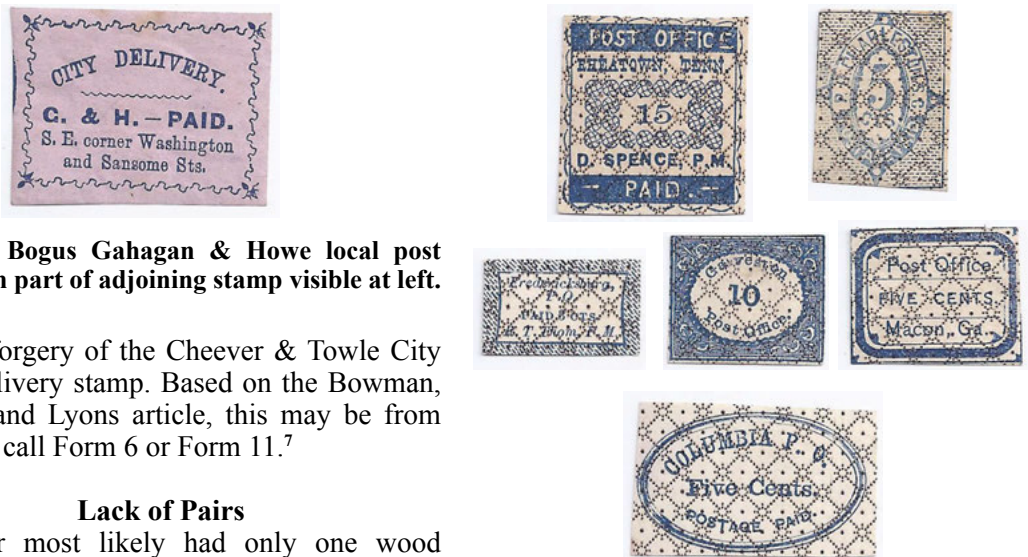


Figure 3: Bogus Gahagan & Howe local post stamp with part of adjoining stamp visible at left.

Taylor's forgery of the Cheever & Towle City Letter Delivery stamp. Based on the Bowman, Stimmel and Lyons article, this may be from what they call Form 6 or Form 11.⁷

Lack of Pairs

Taylor most likely had only one wood block for each stamp or vignette. There are no reported examples of any pair of the same stamp printed by Taylor. Of course, pairs or other multiples of stamps issued by unrelated companies would immediately raise a serious genuineness question. As a result, if a pair or other multiple of a forgery has been reported, we can safely conclude that, although it might have been copied from a Taylor design, it was not printed by Taylor.

Fancy Taylor Overprints

In rare instances, Taylor used a fancy overprint to brighten up his fakes.⁸ All of the CSA Postmasters' Provisionals printed by Taylor with an overprint have, to my knowledge, the same overprint design—a series of small gold circles in the middle of a criss-cross of gold dots (Figure 4).

Figure 4: Bogus Confederate Postmasters' Provisionals with the unique Taylor crisscross overprint.

Use of the Same Blocks For More Than One Issuer

In at least ten instances, Taylor used the same wood block stamp design or vignette for CSA Postmasters' Provisional fakes and bogus stamps, as well as local post fakes. The following is a list of 26 stamps that share border or vignette designs.

- Athens, Charleston and Bouton's frame. The same checkerboard square frame design was used by Taylor vertically for the Athens bogus stamp and horizontally for both the Charleston bogus provisional and his bogus version of Bouton's Manhattan Express Local Post (Figure 5).



Figure 5: Bogus Athens, Georgia, and Charleston, South Carolina, Postmasters' Provisionals and Bouton's Manhattan Express local showing the same frame design.



Figure 6: Bogus Augusta and Savannah, Georgia, Postmasters' Provisionals with the same vignettes.



Figure 7: Bogus Bradley, Calloway, Memphis, and Wilmington Postmasters' Provisionals with the same frame design.



Figure 8: Bogus Confederate Blockade Postage to Europe stamp and Walton's & Co City Express local with the same frame design.

- Augusta and Savannah vignette. Taylor used the same shield vignette for a bogus Augusta stamp and two different Savannah bogus stamps (Figure 6).

- Bradley, Memphis and Wilmington frame. The same wood block frame was used for the Bradley bogus stamp and Taylor's version of the Memphis and Wilmington provisionals. Taylor's background is distinguishable from other fakes by the x-shaped lines and diamond nearly perfectly centered between the "A" and "T" of "PAID" (Figure 7).

- Confederate Blockade and Walton's & Co. frame. Taylor used the same frame vertically for his Confederate Blockade bogus stamp and horizontally for his bogus version of the Walton & Co. Local Post (Figure 8).

- Fredericksburg and Bentley's frame. The Lyons *Identifier* lists two similar Taylor bogus stamps of the Bentley's Despatch Local Post. They appear to be an early and later stage of the same wood block, and are distinguished by the piece missing from the inner frame line at 9:00. Taylor used the same wood block frame in his Fredericksburg bogus stamp, and the recurring flaw is found in some copies (Figure 9).

- Greenville and Madison frame. These two bogus provisional stamps have the same outer frame lines and cross hatch pattern at the top and bottom (Figure 10).

- Houston and Weldon frame. Taylor used the same oblong design for his bogus Houston and Weldon provisionals. Note that the Weldon "PAID 5c" design is upside down compared to the other two. This is obvious from the horizontal zigzag lines in the middle. In addition, the doubling of the outside frame line is at the top right of the Weldon "PAID 5c" stamp but bottom left of the Houston and Weldon "Five Cents" stamps (Figure 11).

- Macon and Barr's Frame. Taylor's Macon Georgia, and Barr's Penny Despatch bogus stamps have the same three outer frame lines (Figure 12). In addition, Taylor printed five versions of his Macon fantasy with the same frame line design but different vignette wording and type.

- Pleasant Shade and Rheatown frame. These two versions of provisional stamps printed by Taylor have the same outer frame lines and the same top and bottom designs (Figure 13).

- Bucks and Sparta Number 5 vignette. Taylor's bogus Bucks Richmond Express stamp and version of the Sparta provisional have the

same number “5” vignette. This is obvious from the horizontal shading lines, as well as the “bulge” at the center top of the cross bar (Figure 14).

Conclusion

Confederate Postmasters’ Provisionals fakes and fantasies are an interesting field for collecting with a good amount of available material. The new *Confederate States of America Catalog & Handbook of Stamps and Postal History* has a short discussion about S. Allan Taylor.

Helpful information about a number of CSA general issue and Postmasters’ Provisional forgeries, including Taylor’s, also can be found on the following websites: www.rfrajola.com/csa/csa_index.htm (Richard Frajola); www.csafakes.com (Kevin Baker); www.jlkstamps.com (John L. Kimbrough); and www.csa_dealer.com/csa-fakes (Patricia A. Kaufmann).

Acknowledgements

I thank Steve Roth for his advice and assistance throughout the research and writing of this article. While a good deal of research has been done, there is much more to be learned about S. Allan Taylor’s fakes and fantasies.

Larry Lyons, who also provided assistance with this article, has been studying the forgeries of S. Allan Taylor with a goal of identifying his various clichés and forms.

As noted, a form is a multiple printing of the same cliché on different papers in different colors.⁹ So far Lyons has identified more than 360 different papers and ink colors used by Taylor. He has been continuing his research with the use of an X-ray spectrometer to help identify and catalog the works of this forger.

Endnotes

1. Larry Lyons, *The Identifier for Carriers, Locals, Fakes, Forgeries and Bogus Posts*, Vol. I-III (1998-2000).

2. S. Allan Taylor, *The Stamp Collectors Record* Issue 44 (October 1876), p. 4.

3. Robert M. Rennick, *Kentucky Place Names* (Lexington, Ky.: University Press of Kentucky, 1984), n.p.



Figure 9: Bogus Fredericksburg, Virginia, Postmaster’s Provisional and Bentley’s Despatch local with the same frame design.



Figure 10: Bogus Greenville, Alabama, and Madison, Florida, Postmasters’ Provisionals with the same design.



Figure 11: Bogus Houston Post Office and Weldon Post Office stamps with the same design.



Figure 12 (Right): Bogus Macon, Georgia, Postmaster’s Provisionals and Barr’s Penny Despatch local with the same design.



Figure 13: Bogus Pleasant Shade, Virginia and Rheatown, Tennessee, Postmasters' Provisionals with the same design.

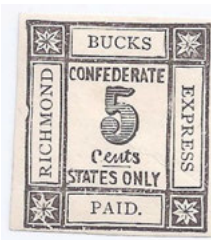


Figure 14: Bogus Buck's Richmond Express and Sparta, Alabama, Postmaster's Provisionals with the same "5" vignette.

4. Jan Kindler, "‘Caveat Emptor’ — The Life and Works of S. Allan Taylor," *Philatelic Literature Review* 15(2) (2nd Quarter 1966), pp. 59-89.

5. Sherwood Springer, *Springer's Handbook of North American Cinderella Stamps, Ninth Edition* (1980), 24; For a discussion and a description of 27 of Taylor's forms, see John D. Bowman, Gordon Stimmel and Larry Lyons, "S. Allan Taylor's 'Forms' Known Colors and Subjects," *The Penny Post*, 2:1 (January 2003), pp. 22-37.

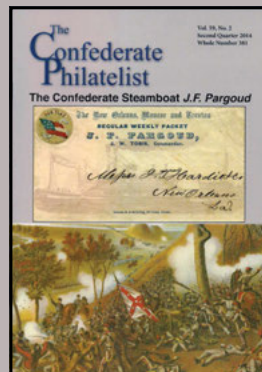
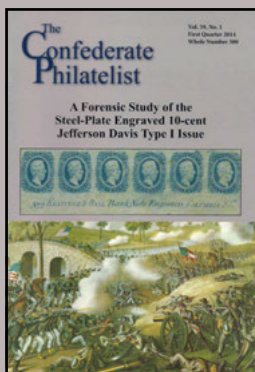
6. Kindler, "Caveat Emptor."

7. Bowman, Stimmel and Lyons, "S. Allan Taylor's 'Forms,'" pp. 27-28.

8. Clifford J. Alexander, "Fancy Overprint Forgeries of S. Allan Taylor," *The Penny Post*, 17:1 (January 2009), pp. 31-36.

9. Kindler, "Caveat Emptor."

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