



The Civil War Post

Patricia A. Kaufmann

Spurious Confederate Essays

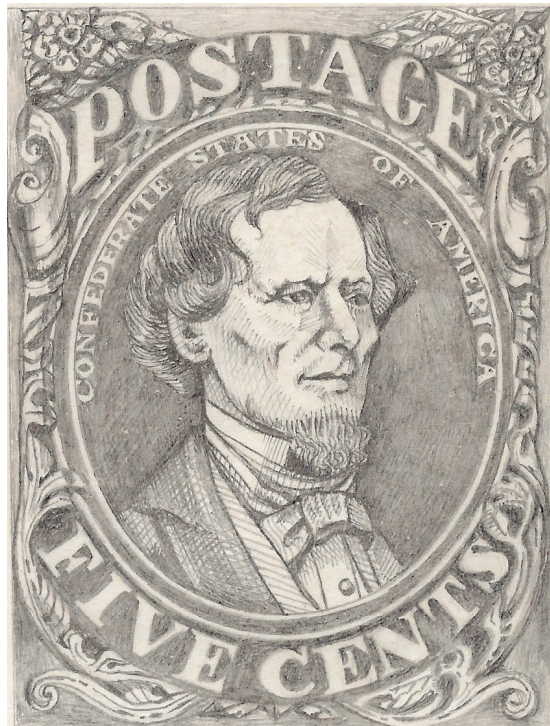
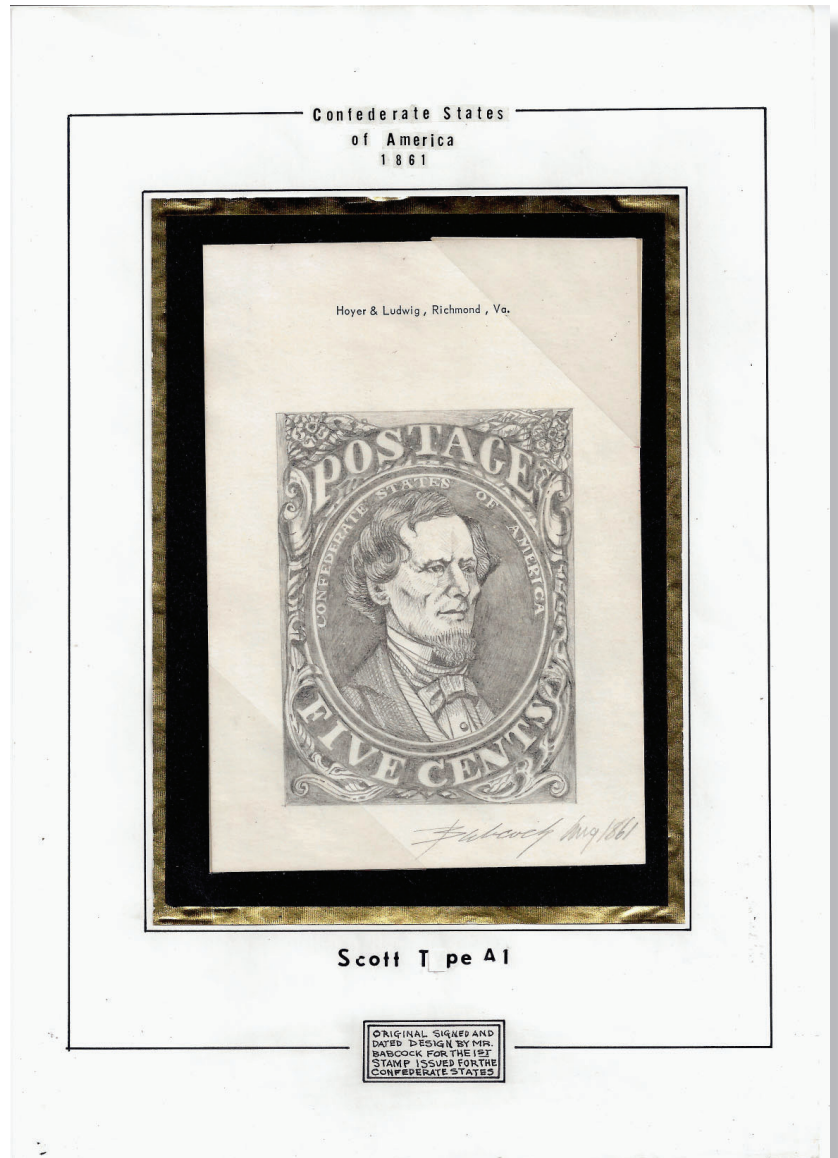
One of my favorite collecting areas is Confederate fakes, counterfeits, forgeries and fantasies – an assorted gallery of curious and potentially dangerous things, in a fiscal sense. I have an extensive collection to which I have added heavily over the years. I try not to directly compete with my clients, so I do not collect genuine Confederate stamps and covers, although I've been known to hold certain things for years – even decades – while I research them. It's not the same thing as collecting them.

Along the way, I was happy to acquire part of the reference collection of the late eminent philatelic student George B. Sloane (1898-1958). Sloane was advisor to the philatelic estates of President Franklin D. Roosevelt and Alfred F. Caspary.

Sloane was a dealer and auctioneer who was well known for his *Stamps Magazine* column

Figure 1 (right). Page from the George B. Sloane reference collection (now part of the author's collection) with purported essay produced by Babcock for 5¢ lithograph (Scott CSA No. 1).

Figure 2 (below). Close-up of the bogus 5¢ lithograph essay (author's collection).



that began with its inaugural issue in 1932. A total of 1,350 columns were collected and published in 1961 as *Sloane's Column* by another philatelic legend, the late George T. Turner, as compiler and editor.

George Turner was one of the first people I got to know during my time as a young auctioneer in downtown Washington, D.C., in the 1970s. I still have a Delft Dutch pottery shoe he gave me while visiting him at his charming row house on Capitol Hill. I admired it and he insisted on giving it to me on the spot. I was surprised, but never forgot his kindness to a wet-behind-the-ears wannabe. I think of him every time I look at it. Sloane died in 1958 before I began my philatelic journey, so I never had that privilege.

Purported Essay of the First Confederate General Issue

One of my favorite pieces from the Sloane fakes is shown on an album page in Figure 1. At the bottom is a printed note declaring this to be an “Original signed and dated design by Mr. Babcock for the 1st stamp issued for the Confederate States.” Hogwash, I say.

Figure 2 shows this purported essay in more detail. It is allegedly signed by the unidentified Mr. Babcock and dated August 1861. To me, the signature and dating of Babcock appear to be done in modern handwriting trying to mimic Civil War-era script.

I contacted well-known Confederate lithograph student, writer and exhibitor Leonard H. Hartmann to inquire whether he had ever heard of a Mr. Babcock in connection with Hoyer & Ludwig, the small Richmond printing firm that printed the first Confederate general issue (Scott CSA 1, 5¢ lithograph), a genuine example of which is shown in Figure 3. He had not, nor had I, although we both felt we might have heard the name before. More likely, we were both thinking of Frank Baptist, who worked for Hoyer & Ludwig, printers of the first Confederate stamp.

I also thumbed through the 1929 Dietz postal history book¹, which is still invaluable today as a resource on the printers and printing methods used in the Confederacy, but I found no reference to Babcock.

In “why do you ask” mode, Leonard inquired in what context I was trying to find out about the mysterious Mr. Babcock. I sent him scans of the subject items. In our email conversation, he told me that a number of these drawings were made in the 1930s and he knew of at least two more of the 5¢ lithograph which were either similar or identical. He agreed with me about the one in my collection, corroborating “no question, not authentic!”

Enter Another Pencil Drawing of the 5¢ lithographed issue

Leonard kindly pointed me to part II of a Roger Brody article published in the August 2003 issue of the *United States Specialist* (USS, journal of the United States Stamp Society, USSS)². While Roger primarily discussed 16 pencil drawings of the stamps of the U.S. Series 1902, he also illustrated pencil drawings of a U.S. 10¢ 1847 issue and a Confederate 5¢ lithographed issue (Scott CSA No. 1).

In his article, Roger noted that the 1972 Fall issue of the *Essay Proof Journal* (EPJ) issue (Vol. 20, No. 4, Whole No. 116, pp. 179-180) reported on a May 19, 1972, sale of essays by Detroit auctioneer Roger Koerber. The Confederate example was described as an original artist’s pencil sketch, proclaimed it to be a great rarity and presumably unique. It was offered as ex-Baughman and sold for \$470.

I contacted Roger Brody to see if he could add anything more to the tale of the CSA 1 in Koerber’s sale after a span of almost two decades. He could not. But he kindly shared with me the image shown in Figure 4, illustrated in the auction catalog he used in his article 20 years ago. It is decidedly unlike the pretenders in my collection. On the Koerber lot, Jefferson Davis is facing in the opposite direction from the illustration shown in Figure 1, as well as substantial differences in the portrait, frame and lettering.

Roger’s two-part article in the 2003 *Specialist*, although mostly a tale of U.S. drawings, is a fascinating tale punctuated with the names of well-known philatelists, most of whom have passed on. He kindly sent me a .pdf of the entire article – an excellent read – that provided information pro and con, as well as provenance. In the investigation of these pencil drawings, he included references to George W. Brett, Ezra D. Cole, Falk



Figure 3 (above). Genuine issued 5¢ green lithograph (Scott CSA No. 1).

Figure 4 (below left). Alleged pencil essay of CSA No. 1 sold in a Roger Koerber sale in 1972 (Courtesy Roger S. Brody).

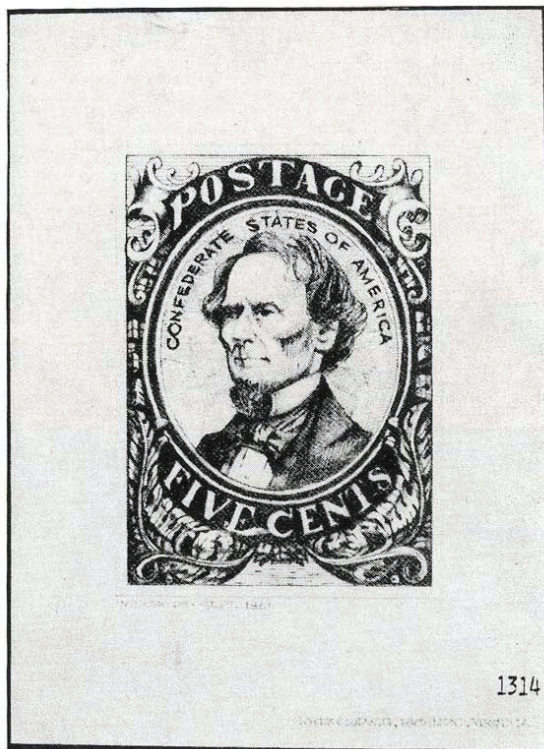


Figure 5 (right). Purported 5¢ De La Rue essay, a flight of fantasy (author's collection).

Figure 6 (below right). Genuine 5¢ blue typographed (letterpress) issue by Thomas De La Rue & Co. Ltd. (Scott CSA No. 6).

Finkleberg, William A. Fox, Gary Griffith, Alexander Holland, Charles W. Holland, Robert Markovits and Barbara Mueller, as well as extensive documentation from the U.S. Treasury Department, Bureau of Engraving and Printing.

The referenced *EPJ* article indicated at least the U.S. 10¢ 1847 issue was reminiscent of other so-called essays of European classic stamps with the observation, "It is extremely likely that these are latter-day productions made for philatelic purposes."

The late Barbara Mueller, an authority on essays and proofs and for years editor of the *Essay Proof Journal*, wrote a series of eight articles published 1977-81 about questionable or fraudulent essay drawings with the title "Essays Which Are Not What They Seem."

The Essay-Proof Society (disbanded in 1993) defined an essay as, "Any design or part of a design essayed to or produced by a government or established mail carrier for a stamp and differing in design in any particular from an officially issued stamp. There are die essays, plate essays and forms of experimental essays, as well as unfinished or incomplete designs that may form part of a finally approved design."

Some students put essays in the category of errors, freaks and oddities. Others consider essays and proofs to be cinderellas or fantasies. I believe they are properly their own category, when genuine. When not actually produced during the period of use prior to stamp production, I personally put them in the category of fantasies.

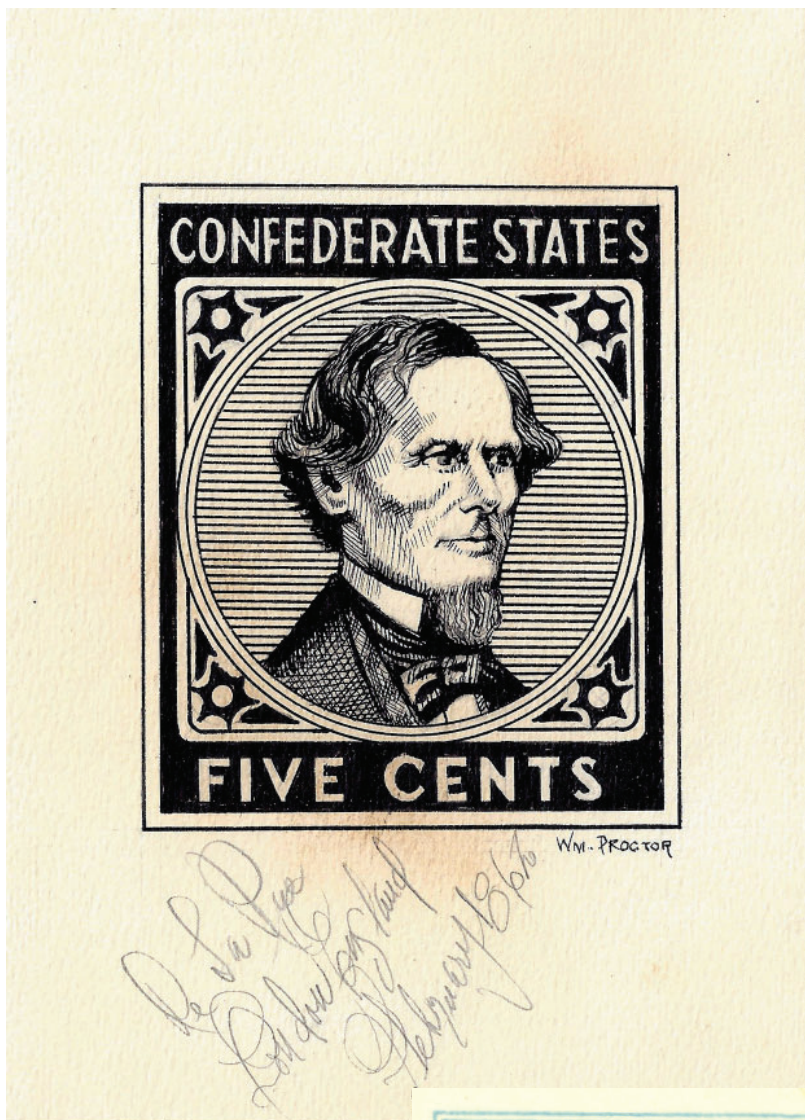
But it might be genuine, they said...

Roughly a decade ago, I showed my reference collection to two serious Confederate students who thought the purported essay for the first general issue in my collection might be a genuine 1861 essay. I never believed it was, although it would have obviously been a providential twist of fate had it been so authenticated.

The CSA Authentication Service (now the Civil War Philatelic Authentication Service) declined to examine the alleged essay, as it was outside its area of expertise (drawings, as opposed to issued stamps). I was not in the least surprised nor disappointed. I never would have submitted it but for the encouragement of those two vocal and respected students. How does one authenticate something for which there is no catalog listing that is claimed to be the only one known?

Harry G. Brittain, PhD, FRSC³, is a forensic philatelist well known for "Solving Philately's Puzzles through Science"[™] – the trademarked tag line of the Institute of Analytical Philately, Inc. Using instrumentation at the Center for Pharmaceutical Physics, of which he is the founder and director, Harry pursues a deeper understanding of the ink and paper used in postage stamps of the 19th century by means of the forensic technology of solid-state science.

The purported essay shown in Figure 1 was sent to Harry in March 2014. His plan had been to analyze the clay component in



the graphite to see how that clay matched up with modern clays. There was so much kaolin in the paper on which the drawing was made that he could not come up with a trace of the pencil clay.

Lest you think the pencil a modern invention, it is traced back hundreds of years to the discovery of a large graphite deposit in Borrowdale, England, in 1564 according to "The History of the Pencil" at www.pencils.com. Pencils were standard issue for Civil War soldiers (Figure 6), often used to write letters in lieu of ink.

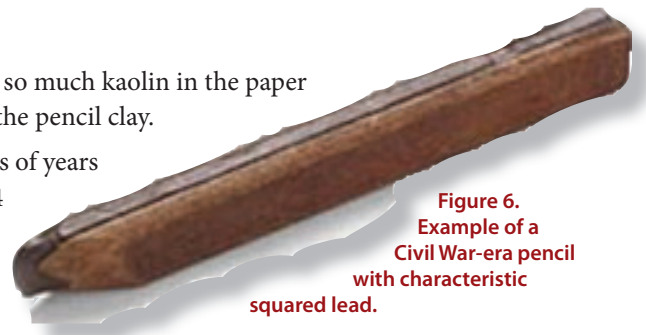


Figure 6. Example of a Civil War-era pencil with characteristic squared lead.

I am a big fan of oblique light and a good magnifying glass for close examination. Using these, it's apparent to me that the drawing was first sketched with pencil but then drawn over with silver ink of some description – the type often seen in modern gel pens. The paper (a stiff card) also looks more modern than that used during the period, although that is difficult to accurately judge. It measures 6 by 4½ inches.

I asked Harry Brittain if he had ever seen anything like this silver ink used during the Civil War. He told me he had not. Nor have I.

Charles Ludwig of the firm of Hoyer & Ludwig of Richmond, Va., has always been identified as the preparer of the single master engraving from which the various iterations of CSA No. 1 evolved. The engraving was used to prepare three different transfer stones, designated Stone AB, Stone 1 and Stone 2. A detailed explanation is available in the 2012 CSA catalog,⁴ as well as in the 1929 Dietz postal history book.

If there was a Babcock who worked for Hoyer & Ludwig, why have serious students never heard of him? If genuine, would the work of Charles Ludwig and Mr. Babcock – if an independent agent – be so similar? If a genuine essay, wouldn't Babcock's work be expected to be totally different, perhaps even a different topic than Jefferson Davis?

Logic would dictate that "Mr. Babcock" copied the well-known issued design of Charles Ludwig. It is more likely the work of a talented artist and philatelist, possibly with no nefarious motive other than self-gratification. Or perhaps it is a made-to-order collectible. It is likely we will never know.

5¢ De La Rue Essay Pretender

Figure 5 reveals another essay imposter. I first saw this specimen on eBay roughly a decade ago. It was being offered for several thousand dollars. I remember an outrageous price of \$6,500, although that may be inaccurate. Suffice it to say, it was a lot of money and offered as a genuine Confederate essay by De La Rue. Really?

I told the well-known seller it was bogus, but I was ignored despite his knowing my credentials as a Confederate postal historian. I'd known him for nearly 50 years; he often asked my opinion on things Confederate. But he didn't want to hear that bit of bad news and turned a deaf ear.

That dealer recently died, and this item was within a large balance lot of material sold at auction. I did not acquire the lot. I never expected to see it again, but it again showed up on eBay with a far more reasonable price, offered by a Canadian dealer. I explained why it was not genuine. The second dealer was far more receptive than dealer number one. We negotiated a mutually fair price as a fantasy and objet d'art.

The facts: The genuine 5¢ typographed (letterpress) issue (Scott CSA 6) shown in Figure 6 was engraved by Jean Ferdinand Joubert de la Ferté (1810-84) on steel and printed by Thomas De La Rue & Co., Ltd. in London, England. Joubert was a noted French engraver, photographer and inventor.

The purported De La Rue essay has the name Wm. Proctor clearly printed at lower right. This alone leads me to believe there was no fraudulent intent, since the history of the De La Rue engraving is well documented in the files of the De La Rue company, the world's largest commercial banknote printer, with more than 200 years in business.

There was a collector named William Proctor who was

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an industrial engineer and a member of the American Philatelic Society. He died in 2016. But this is not the most unusual of names so it could be most anyone by that name, or a pseudonym.

The penciled inscription of “De La Rue/London England/ February 1862” bears a distinct resemblance to the script on the CSA No. 1 example. Similarly, the CSA No. 6 design is executed in pencil with highlights in silver ink; the main fill is black ink. It measures a bit smaller than the CSA No. 1 at 5¾ by 4⅞ inches, but is done on similar card-paper stock that does not appear to me to be of 19th-century origin.

Final Observations

If genuine essays, what is the likelihood – if supposedly done a year apart for different companies on opposite sides of the Atlantic Ocean – the CSA No. 1 and CSA No. 6 drawings would have so many similarities? This is especially true of the unusual silver ink, which unfortunately does not show in scans, nor even with casual in-person inspection. It is only in oblique light examining these specimens with a loop that the inking details become so obvious. The facial portraits of Davis also look remarkably similar one to the other – to my eye, anyway.

Thus, I conclude my contemplations on two favorite items from my personal reference collection. I believe the subject essays are fantasies, proven not by philatelic forensics, as I

initially sought to do, but by knowledge of printing methods and the people responsible for stamp designs, coupled with deductive reasoning. We don't always need philatelic forensics to come to a concrete conclusion, although it can be useful.

I recently wrote the magnifying glass is a collector's friend. I repeat that. A good library and a strong network of allied students is also helpful. Logical thinking skills are invaluable. Philatelic problem-solving abilities can and should be developed. It's part of the fun of collecting.

Endnotes:

1. August Dietz, Sr., *The Postal Service of the Confederate States of America* (Richmond, Va., Press of the Dietz Printing Company, 1929).
2. Roger S. Brody, “Raymond Ostrander Smith Pencil Drawings – Series 1902, Part II,” *United States Specialist* (Vol. 74, No. 8, 2003), pp. 347-356.
3. Fellow of the Royal Society of Chemistry
4. Patricia A. Kaufmann, Francis J. Crown Jr., and Jerry S. Palazolo, *Confederate States of America Catalog and Handbook of Stamps and Postal History* (Sumter, S.C., Confederate Stamp Alliance, 2012).

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Patricia A. (Trish) Kaufmann was first introduced to Confederate postal history in 1965. She became actively involved in organized philately in 1969, became a dealer in 1973 and today specializes solely in Confederate stamps and postal history. She enjoys hearing from readers and may be reached at [trishkauf@comcast.net](mailto:trishkauf@comcast.net).

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