



Philatelic Terminology: It's all in how you say it

The examples in this column were all selected from eBay listings on the same day. These are but a few, although not a day goes by that there are not countless other offenders.

The stamp shown in Figure 1 was recently offered on eBay as a CSA No. 7. Scott CSA 7 is the 5¢ typographed (letterpress) local print, produced from De La Rue (London) printing plates that ran the blockade and were printed locally in Richmond, Va., either on London or local paper.

I sent the seller the following message:

“New York Counterfeit: This commonly encountered counterfeit was printed from an electrotype plate by J. Walter Scott for use in the Scott albums in the early 1900s or possibly even the late 1800s. The master die was photographically reproduced from a print from the ten-cent altered plate (subject of another treatise) and the value in the tablet changed from “TEN” back to “FIVE.” The first thing that jumps out at me personally is always the odd cloudy greenish-blue aqua color, which is nothing like the genuine stamp. There is NO genuine shade like this. The next most obvious and decisive difference between the counterfeit and the original is the shorter crossbars on the “F” and the “E” of “FIVE” in the value at the bottom. When you compare them to the genuine Richmond print, you will notice that they are always significantly shorter than the originals. Other things to notice are the lack of detail in the eye (very little white area) and a general lack of clarity and definition. The outer frame line is also thicker than on the originals. There are some other minor differences, but those presented here are more than enough for you to correctly determine genuine from counterfeit.”

I received a thank you and the seller indicated that the lot had been pulled. It was quickly relisted as “USA 1862 Confederate States 5¢ New York Counterfeit **Used**” (emphasis mine).

Now, before going further, a clarification is in order. The “New York Counterfeit” isn’t actually a counterfeit; it’s a forgery (please see-both terms in the mini-glossary that follows in this article).

However, The New York “Counterfeit” has been called that for well over a century, even though the legal and philatelic definition of “counterfeit” is different, as presented in the glossary. The editors of the 2012 *Confederate States of America Catalog and Handbook of Stamps and Postal History* (CSA catalog) decided to stick with the well-known designation of “New York Counterfeit,” so as not to muddy the philatelic waters, even though it was recognized as incorrect terminology.



Figure 1. So-called “New York Counterfeit.”

Although I did not bother to follow-up regarding the revised description of the eBay item, it still wasn’t correct. The counterfeit is not “used.” It is canceled with a fake cancel. The term “used” would indicate that it went through the postal system, which it did not.

You might consider this “semantics.” I consider it accuracy. Not surprisingly, the back of the stamp has European pencil markings. Many of these New York productions originate in Europe.

I save my description of the New York Counterfeit in my email drafts folder because I use it so often. Scads of these philatelic scourges are offered on eBay every day of the week. I also see them offered on stamp show floors in dealer stocks regularly. They fool even the most reputable dealers, if that is not their specialty. This is understandably the case with most dealers.

Another seller described a New York Counterfeit block of four as “U.S. Scott #7 Confederate States Block of 4 Stamps – Reprint.” It is listed as sound and “2020 Scott *Specialized Value*” is noted. Never mind that if it was a reprint – which it is not – it would not have a catalog value in Scott.

A reprint, by definition, is printed from original stamp printing plates. If it is a counterfeit, it is not a reprint. Furthermore, neither forgeries nor reprints are cataloged in Scott.



Figure 2. Altered plate.

Figure 2 shows another misdescribed stamp. It is the 2¢ Altered Plate, described as “United States CSA FANTASY DIETZ 9A VF.” No further description is offered – just the heading.

The Altered Plate stamps are not fantasies and I have utterly no idea where the stated “Dietz 9A” designation came from. It makes no sense as derived from any Dietz catalog I have, and I have them all.

Another seller with the same stamp shown in Figure 2 describes it as “U.S. Scott #14 Confederate States Stamp-Reprint.” I’m not quibbling with the “Buy it Now” price, which was a reasonable \$3.99. I am pointing out the differences in definition. It is also listed as sound and with “2020 Scott *Specialized Value*.”

Also, it is not a #14, which is a 1¢ value. The value has been altered to 2¢, thus it is not a #14 anything. As with the prior example, if it had been a reprint, it would not be valued in Scott.

Figure 3 shows another Altered Plate – this time a 10¢ value in one of the many colors in which it was produced for collectors. It is described by another seller as “US CSA Confederate (Facsimile) Block of 4 Stamps.” There is no further description other than the heading.

The Altered Plate stamps are not facsimiles, as stated in the case of Figure 3, nor reprints, as specified in the case of the listing in Figure 2.

Confederate Philatelic Mini-Glossary

Altered Plate. This describes a printing plate (as opposed to an original die) upon which the denomination was deliberately altered. It is commonly used to refer to the 2¢ and 10¢ De La Rue denominations created by altering the 1¢ and 5¢ plates. These were printed from genuine printing plates that were created, but never put into use by the Confederate Post Office Department.

Bogus. The term bogus describes stamp-like items from real or imagined countries, usually created by those who hope to sell them to unwary collectors as genuine postal issues. Some bogus stamps can bear a very close resemblance to real issues, whereas others are pure fantasy. There are many bogus CSA items in existence – both old and modern.

Counterfeit. By legal definition (as well as philatelic), these are non-genuine items that mimic a genuine stamp, but were intended to be used as a substitution for the genuine specimen during the period of time when the genuine specimen was in legitimate use, thus defrauding a postal administration. No cases are known in which such specimens were created to defraud the Confederate Post Office Department. Some Confederate collectors define counterfeits as a likeness of an existing stamp, cancel, marking or other item made to defraud collectors, but that is not the correct definition by law, nor the one used in the CSA catalog. These are considered forgeries.

Facsimile. This describes a likeness or imitation of a genuine stamp, sometimes marked to denote it is an imitation. In Confederate circles, this most often applies to the Springfield facsimiles produced by Tatham Stamp Co. of Springfield, Mass., in 1934 by Howard McIntosh. Subsequently, there were Swiss-produced “knock-offs” of the Springfield productions, which are similar, but with discernable differences. In 1919, August Dietz Sr. produced his self-described “Fac-Simile Die Proofs” from which the Springfield products were copied. The primary difference between a facsimile and a counterfeit is that a facsimile is not created for postal fraud and (usually) is created much later.

Fake. Of the three commonly used terms for similar items (fakes, forgeries and counterfeits), fakes are arguably the least desirable, other than from a reference standpoint. Faked stamps are usually genuine, but with alterations. These alterations include removing or adding design elements, adding or removing cancellations, trimming or adding perforations, regumming, altering or adding overprints or surcharges and many other repairs or alterations. Almost without exception the creating of fakes is meant to simulate a more valuable variety to deceive the unwary collector.



Figure 3. Altered plate, block of four.

Fantasy. This is a fabricated stamp, cancel, marking or other item of a design that never existed. There are hundreds of Confederate fantasies, also called Cinderellas (this term is used mostly in the United Kingdom, while the United States seems to favor the term Fantasy). While many such stamps are common, others were privately produced in limited numbers, are little-known and can be quite rare. They are not listed in most stamp catalogs and – if they are – they are usually in a separate section.

Forgery. A forgery is an unmarked (usually) reproduction or fabrication of a real stamp (usually scarce) that is intended

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What do you collect?



to fool collectors. The intent can be as benign as a practical joke or as sinister as fraud. Numerous common forgeries also exist. These were created to fill large demand for supposedly common stamps for use in packets and mixtures. Forgeries can be very realistic or very crude and would fool very few collectors. These were generally intended solely for the purpose of filling spaces, such as Scott's so-called "New York Counterfeit."

Proof. This is an impression of a stamp printed directly from the original die, printing plate or lithographic stone in advance of production, often in colors different than that of the production stamp. Proofs may be pulled at any point in the stamp designing or manufacturing process, including years after a stamp issue has been produced (posthumous proofs). These can further be broken down to die proofs, progressive proofs (die or plate), plate proofs and trial color proofs.

Reprint. Stamp reprinted from the original printing plate or stone used to produce war-era stamps after the stamp is no longer valid for postage. These are usually created as philatelic souvenirs.

Unofficial Printings. These are stamps printed from genuine original printing plates by private individuals. This most often refers to the Philip Ward (AKA Philadelphia) printings from the printing plate that was ordered by the Confederate Post Office Department but was never put into use because it was captured after having run the blockade. The plate languished in Philadelphia for years before being purchased by the Smithsonian National Postal Museum in 2011, where it is

now on display in the William H. Gross Gallery.

Final Thoughts

The problem with the misuse of terms is that it has a snowball effect. Buyers note the incorrect descriptions and the stamps are passed on to the next generation of collectors as such. The incorrectly designated "New York Counterfeit" is a perfect example. And it is never likely to change.

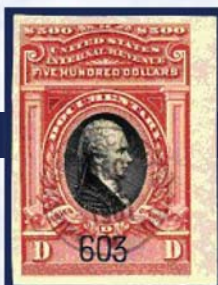
The obvious protection from such misinformation is to do your own research and properly label your purchases. In the case of Confederates, having the latest Confederate catalog at hand – and using it – is the obvious. Major stamp catalogs have glossaries of terms. Refer to them. Understand what you are looking at and buying.

If you can't find that unlisted stamp in either the CSA catalog or the Scott catalogs, there is probably a good reason. A description of "unlisted" likely doesn't make it rare, it more likely makes it bogus. While you may be the lucky collector who finds a valuable unlisted whatever, you would be the exception to the rule. ☐

Patricia (Trish) Kaufmann was first introduced to Confederate postal history in 1965. She became heavily engrossed in organized philately in 1969 and became a full-time dealer in 1973. She specializes solely in Confederate States stamps and postal history. She was editor-in-chief of the 2012 CSA catalog. Trish enjoys hearing from readers at trishkauf@comcast.net

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