

TEXTILE MARKS VARIETY...NOT LAID PAPER

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The subject of laid paper on Confederate general-issue stamps has been written about for years – at least as early as 1929 by August Dietz. At one time, the Scott catalogs had listings for laid paper varieties on the CSA 11 and CSA 12 engraved issues,¹ but they are no longer so listed. Today, Scott notes that “the so-called laid paper is probably due to thick streaky gum,”² as students continue to debate the matter. But even with gum completely soaked off, these lines are visible.

The visible lines on these Confederate issues are not laid lines in the true sense, as they would have to have cross-chain lines showing. What these examples do have is an unquestionably distinct “laid-like” pattern that has been incorrectly asserted to be laid paper by different authors in various publications.

Such a laid pattern consists of a series of wide-spaced lines (chain lines) parallel to the shorter sides of the sheet, running in the machine direction, and more narrowly spaced lines (laid lines), that run at 90 degrees to the chain lines. Many worldwide stamp issues display laid lines created by the papermaking process, but chain lines are not present on any Confederate issues. The lines run only in one direction, conclusively proving they are not laid lines.

Most recently, Kevin P. Andersen wrote an article on this controversial topic for the *Confederate Philatelist* in 2009, asking whether laid paper lines were fact or fiction and acknowledging that it was a controversial subject. For me, personally, the problem was not that such a variety existed but that it was still incorrectly called laid paper, which it cannot be.

In his 1929 seminal work, August Dietz³ likely began the almost century-long firestorm on this topic. No one wanted to take an opposing view to Dietz, who stated:



Figure 2. CSA 12-KB, 10¢ dark blue block of four with textile marks.



Figure 1. CSA 12-KBa, 10¢ bright blue with textile marks.

It appears that a small quantity of laid paper was used in one of the printings, and stamps of this variety are considered rare. There has been some controversy concerning these stamps on laid paper, but a strip in my reference collection, as well as others coming under my observation, tend to prove the existence of the variety. Claims of a ribbed paper have been advanced, but these can not be definitely established. It is a well-known fact, that Confederate soldiers carried strips of stamps under the “sweat-bands” of their hats, and this lining, being of a coarse, corrugated material, produced, after time, the appearance of ribbed paper.

One of the paragraphs in Kevin Andersen’s article quoted Albert J. Valente, a student of paper and stamp printing processes:

*Felt Press (3rd stage where laid paper can be created)
After the paper passes the dandy roll it continues between two couch rolls and is fed onto a felt belt for removal of about 90% of the remaining moisture. The felt belt (known simply as “felt”) is actually comprised [sic] of two layers, or plys:*

the under-ply and the upper-ply. The underply is made of twill weave, resembling corduroy, and gives the belt strength. The upper ply is a much finer material so that the finished paper will be smoother.

Valente presents a compelling argument that the twill pattern on some Confederate stamps is the result of worn felts that were continued to be used because of the inability to replace them. The inability to replace them, he posits, was because the felts were manufactured in England and “due to the deprivations of war the Richmond, Va., paper mill kept these belts in service much longer than they would normally.” If worn felts were being used then, as the paper sheet resting on the felt belt was passed through the press rollers, it certainly seems logical that the texture of the felt would be embellished into the paper product, in this case a twill pattern of horizontal lines.

In 2016, Valente published a new book, *Paper History of Classical American Stamps and Stationery*, published by Paper Antiquities.⁴ It was dedicated “To the Collectors Club of New York in celebration of New York 2016 International Philatelic Convention.”

In Chapter 10, Valente thoroughly explains the process that resulted in what he calls “textile marks,” which I believe is a more accurate catalog designation. It should not be called laid paper, nor ribbed paper.

Valente goes into more detail than Andersen. I bought his book for the information on paper and was delighted to find an entire chapter addressing the topic of “laid paper” on Confederate general-issue stamps. Valente logically explains this Confederate paper variety via the worn felt theory. Press felt is still in use today in manufacturing paper, playing an important role in removing the water from the paper.



Figure 3. CSA 11, 10¢ blue top sheet margin gutter block of four with textile marks.



Figure 4. CSA 11-KB, 10¢ dark blue upper-left corner margin block of 10 with textile marks (with characteristic dark original gum).

Most examples I have seen with textile marks appear to be the product of Keatinge & Ball (KB), including scarce bright blue shades. Few others appear to be in lighter shades with greater detail of the cross-hatched lines behind the Davis portrait, these are more often Archer & Daly (AD) printings, although no conclusive determination can be made without forensic testing. It is likely that both printers had worn machinery and produced stamps with such textile marks.



Figure 5. CSA 12a, 10¢ bright blue gutter block of 4 with textile marks.

Of note, all examples seen have been in a horizontal pattern. The haphazard brush strokes of the applied gum by the printers make no difference in the lined appearance. On some examples, there is also a noticeable “twill” pattern to each line, explainable as the felts became disproportionately worn on the water-removal belts in the papermaking machinery. As the underlying belt exposed more of the corduroy layer, the lined effect in the paper became more pronounced.

I generally prefer scanning stamps and covers on a white background, but the best way to scan these varieties to full advantage is with a black background. They can be difficult to scan in such a way as to best see the textile lines, which are much more discernable when viewed in person.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Kevin and I have collaborated on several interesting Confederate “fly-speck” philately topics. They continue to capture our imagination; they are wonderful detective stories.

We discussed the Valente textile marks explanation and agree that the term “textile marks” is more appropriate to recognize this distinct paper type, which has never gotten proper catalog acceptance because of earlier red-herring descriptions improperly characterizing it as laid paper.

I put forth that future catalogs – both the CSA catalog and Scott – should list textile marks for the scarce varieties they are and cease to relegate them to footnotes, mistakenly attributing gum as the possible cause of these scarce visible lines.

Acknowledgments: I thank Kevin Andersen for our always interesting exchange of information and ideas.

ENDNOTES:

1. Patricia A. Kaufmann, Francis J. Crown, Jr., Jerry S. Palazolo, editors, *Confederate States Catalog and Handbook of Stamps and Postal History*, 2012, Confederate Stamp Alliance, www.csalliance.org. Catalog numbers used in this article are from the CSA catalog.
2. Scott 2019 *Specialized Catalogue of United States Stamps & Covers*, Sidney, Ohio, Amos Media, Page 1056.
3. August Dietz, *The Postal Service of the Confederate States of America*, Richmond Va., Press of the Dietz Printing Company, 1929.
4. A. J. Valente, *Paper History of Classical American Stamps and Stationery*, 2016, Paper Antiquities, ISBN 978-1-4951-4, pp. 138-149.