

Confederate Collectanea

A Wolf in Sheep's Clothing – Fake Frame Line Stamp

By Patricia A. Kaufmann

Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.
(Gospel of Matthew 7:15, from Jesus' Sermon on the Mount)

I recently bought a small Confederate collection in which the “best” stamp in collection – or at least the one for which the collector unfortunately paid the most money - was purported to be a Frame Line, CSA-10. The collection belonged to a recently deceased CSA member and was offered to me by the heirs. A son-in-law initially contacted me online and sent a scan of the stamp which I immediately recognized was bogus. The long-time CSA member paid \$850 for it about twenty years ago; it was still on the dealer stock page. The dealer, also now deceased, was not a specialist in the field but he was a respected member of the professional philatelic community at large.

What makes this stamp unusual is that it exhibits the characteristics of three completely different issues – CSA-10, CSA-11 and also CSA-12 – simply not possible.

Back to Basics

Most new collectors struggle to tell the difference between CSA-11 (type I) and CSA-12 (type II). While the designs are very similar, there are numerous distinctions. Sometimes heavy cancellations cover up tell-tale signs, but there are so many differences that it is virtually always possible to tell one from the other with close examination if you know what to look for. The following characteristics are numerous but are by no means all of the differences in these two types.



Figure 1. CSA-11 – type I



Figure 2. CSA-12 – type II

Type I Characteristics

1. The horizontal lines under the portrait and above the "EN" of "CENTS" are broken
2. The stamp does not have an added outer line following the contour of the stamp, as with Type II. Scroll projections are not connected.
3. There are two incomplete horizontal lines in the oval frame below the "P" in "POSTAGE"
4. The left-most scroll to the left of "P" in "POSTAGE" appears turned toward the viewer
5. The letter "n" in "Confederate" appears as a "u"
6. The top serif on the letter "A" in "America" is long
7. There are 44 vertical background lines
8. The vertical and horizontal background lines are equal in thickness
9. The hair on extends below the level of the ear. The bottom of the neck hair and the top of the beard align.
10. Just below the point of the chin, the beard has a small tuft of beard ending in line with the back of the lips.
11. There is a bit of a "forelock" above Davis' forehead which has been trimmed back on type II.

Type II Characteristics

1. The horizontal lines under the portrait and above the "EN" of "CENTS" are complete
2. The stamp has an added outer line following the contour of the stamp, however, this line may only appear in part or may not appear at all depending on the printing. Scroll projections are connected, filling in the design and making the stamp appear wider than type I.
3. There are no incomplete horizontal lines in the oval frame below the "P" in "POSTAGE"
4. The left-most scroll to the left of "P" in "POSTAGE" appears flat
5. The letter "n" in "Confederate" appears normal
6. The top serif on the letter "A" of "AMERICA" has a short serif
7. There are 43 vertical background lines
8. The vertical background lines are thicker and the horizontal lines are thin
9. The hair ends on the back of the neck at just about ear level. The bottom of the hair on the neck and the curve of the lower lip align.
10. The beard appears as a single entity without the small extra tuft of beard in type I.
11. The "forelock" on type I has been trimmed back to almost straight in line with the forehead.

The 10¢ type I master die was engraved on steel by John Archer. The original engraved die was used for the Frame Line, CSA-10, and subsequently for the type 1 engraved stamps, CSA-11-AD and CSA-11-KB. All three issues were produced by intaglio printing. The same plates used by Archer & Daly were later used by Keatinge & Ball to produce more type I and type II stamps. There are many differences between those two printings as well, but they are not the focus of this article.

The break in the lines under the portrait, characteristic 1 in the preceding table for type I (CSA-11), is evident in many Frame Line positions and is constant in all of the later type 1 stamps. The copper plate and the small number of subjects on the Frame Line plate suggest this issue was produced as a trial or experiment. The quantity printed was rather small and distribution was limited, with current estimates put at 500,000. This is in contrast to printing estimates of 47,610,000 for CSA-11-AD and 12-AD and 15,125,000 for CSA-11-KB and 12-KB, based on incomplete records.

The 10¢ type II (CSA-12) master die was engraved on steel by Frederick Halpin. This was a completely different engraving from that done by Archer. The designs are similar but there are distinct differences. The type II design was never used for the Frame Line stamps.



Figure 3. GENUINE Frame Line, CSA-10



Figure 4. FAKE Frame Line

The stamp in Figure 3 is a genuine unused Frame Line, CSA-10. The stamp in Figure 4, at first glance, appears to be a type II, CSA-12, because of the filled-in corners. This automatically renders it a fake. The obvious dark blue shade of Keatinge & Ball with its filled-in background lines also produced a visceral reaction in me as bogus. Intuitively, I knew that the frame lines had to be drawn in, thus rendering it a fake. But then the rest of the stamp characteristics struck me.

This “type II” oddball with drawn-in frames has type I characteristics as well as type II. I quickly noticed the key feature of the colorless line above the “EN” of “CENTS” below the portrait. Additionally, I noted the longer hair and forelock characteristics of type I. What was going on with this stamp? These were all reactions to a scanned image of the stamp. Unfortunately, scanners may not capture the true color of stamps well and the color also depends on the settings of the computer monitor in use. While I was absolutely certain the stamp was bogus, I had no idea why I was seeing characteristics of three stamps in one without examining the stamp in person.



Figure 5. Close-up of FAKE Frame Line with corners filled in with slightly lighter blue to replicate type II, as well as frame lines drawn in

When I finally had the actual stamp in my hands, my suspicion was confirmed. Under magnification, it was clear that the type II trait of the closed-in outer projections had been drawn in with dark blue ink very closely matching the nucleus of the design, although in a slightly lighter blue as shown in Figure 5. The bogus frame lines had, of course, also been drawn in with that lighter blue as well. The color difference is quite noticeable in sunlight or daylight replication such as produced by an OTT-LITE® TRUECOLOR™. This light is great philatelic investment if you don't already own one. The other two obvious line characteristics are wavy lines or spreading ink produced by pen application on porous paper. Ballpoint pen is usually very obvious and rarely matches the stamp color well.

Some Frame Line stamps do not exhibit the classic break in the lines below the portrait. Likely, the break was caused by the master die being damaged in the process of laying out the plate. There will be no filled-in corner ornaments or other telling signs of type II on any Frame Line issue. None the less, the type I and type II designs are similar enough to fool the unwary. Type II stamps with drawn-in frame lines have received good certificates from expertizing organizations over the years and been offered at auction by reputable firms. There are also "T-E-N", CSA-9, stamps with frames drawn around the design – even easier to determine as fakes since the value is spelled out instead of in numerals.

Unlike lithography, the ink on an intaglio print can be physically raised from the paper. This is because the ink comes from inside the recesses of the printing plate. To make dark areas of print, the printing plate is cut deeper to allow thicker ink. In the lighter areas of a print, the cut in the printing plate is shallow. This means that the physical height of the ink in an intaglio print is most easily detected in the areas of dark ink. Sometimes the ink can be felt by softly rubbing a clean finger across the printing or by looking very closely with the naked eye or a magnifying glass. Some students use aluminum foil rubbed gently across the surface to determine if the line is raised. In challenging cases, a microscope may be needed.

Thus, an overriding factor in determining the genuineness of a Frame Line stamp is whether the frame line is raised or flat. The ink on the designs of all three subject stamp types sits on top of the paper. With proper lighting falling across the surface of the stamp, held at eye level, you should see the ink of the

frame lines sitting on top of the paper. If the frame line is flat, it is suspect. Occasionally, this can still be inconclusive if the stamp has been pressed, thereby flattening the lines.

Clearly, the faker of the subject stamp had no basic knowledge of Confederate stamp designs. He needlessly created a type II stamp which made it immediately apparent to any serious Confederate student that the frame lines had to have been drawn in. For his task, he also picked a stamp printed by Keatinge & Ball when the Frame Line stamp was not produced by them; it was produced by Archer & Daly.

Your best protection is your own attentiveness. I urge you to study for both pleasure and awareness. Caveat emptor!

Acknowledgements: Frank Crown for peer review.

Published in the 2nd Quarter 2013 issue of *The Confederate Philatelist*.