

A LARGER FAKE POSTMARK FROM EUTAW, ALABAMA

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Eutaw is the county seat of Greene County, Alabama. Of the 53 antebellum structures in Eutaw, 27 are listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The town's location, being almost surrounded by three rivers, saved it from destruction by the Union armies during the war.⁴



Figure 1. CSA 12-ADc, 10¢ greenish blue Jefferson Davis canceled by ARMY OF TENN 3-line field handstamp (CSA catalog type ATN-02a) on cover to Eutaw, Ala., where it was forwarded with a Eutaw double-circle postmark to Tomkinsville (sic – Tompkinsville).

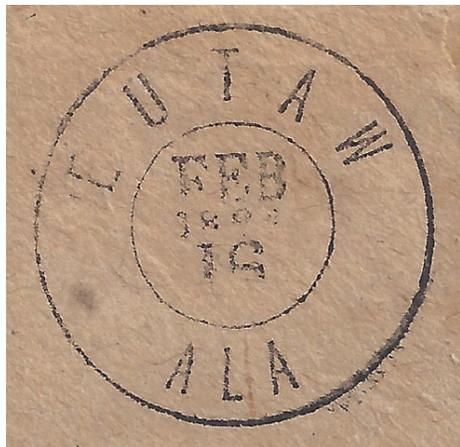


Figure 2. Close-up of the genuine Eutaw double-circle postmark, the only recorded marking used from Eutaw during the Civil War.

The only genuine Eutaw, Ala., postmark used during the Confederate period was a small double-circle datestamp, as shown on a forwarded Army of Tennessee cover in Figure 1. A close-up of the postmark is in Figure 2.

Recently listed for sale on eBay was a pair of 2¢ brown red Andrew Jackson stamps (CSA 8)⁵ with a large circular datestamp, as shown in Figure 3. The seller does not have a good working knowledge of Confederate fakes, but he immediately withdrew the lot when notified

it had a bogus postmark. He bought it from a source in Europe and hoped to get his money back.



Figure 3. Bogus mottled serif postmark of Eutaw struck on pair of 2¢ brown red Andrew Jackson (CSA 8).

Figure 4. Close-up of the larger fake Eutaw postmark with a millimeter gauge showing it measures 32 mm.



Fortunately, the image online was quite good. This larger fake Eutaw datestamp has the following characteristics:

A spongy or mottled appearance characteristic of John A. Fox's work.

Letters are in serif type. The genuine smaller Eutaw double-circle postmark is sans serif.

The fake circle datestamp (CDS) measures 32 mm as shown in Figure 4, kindly provided upon request of the seller.

There were two pre-war Eutaw postmarks. The state abbreviation in the 30 mm Eutaw postmark shown in Figure 5 reads as "Ala." It was used in the mid-1840s.

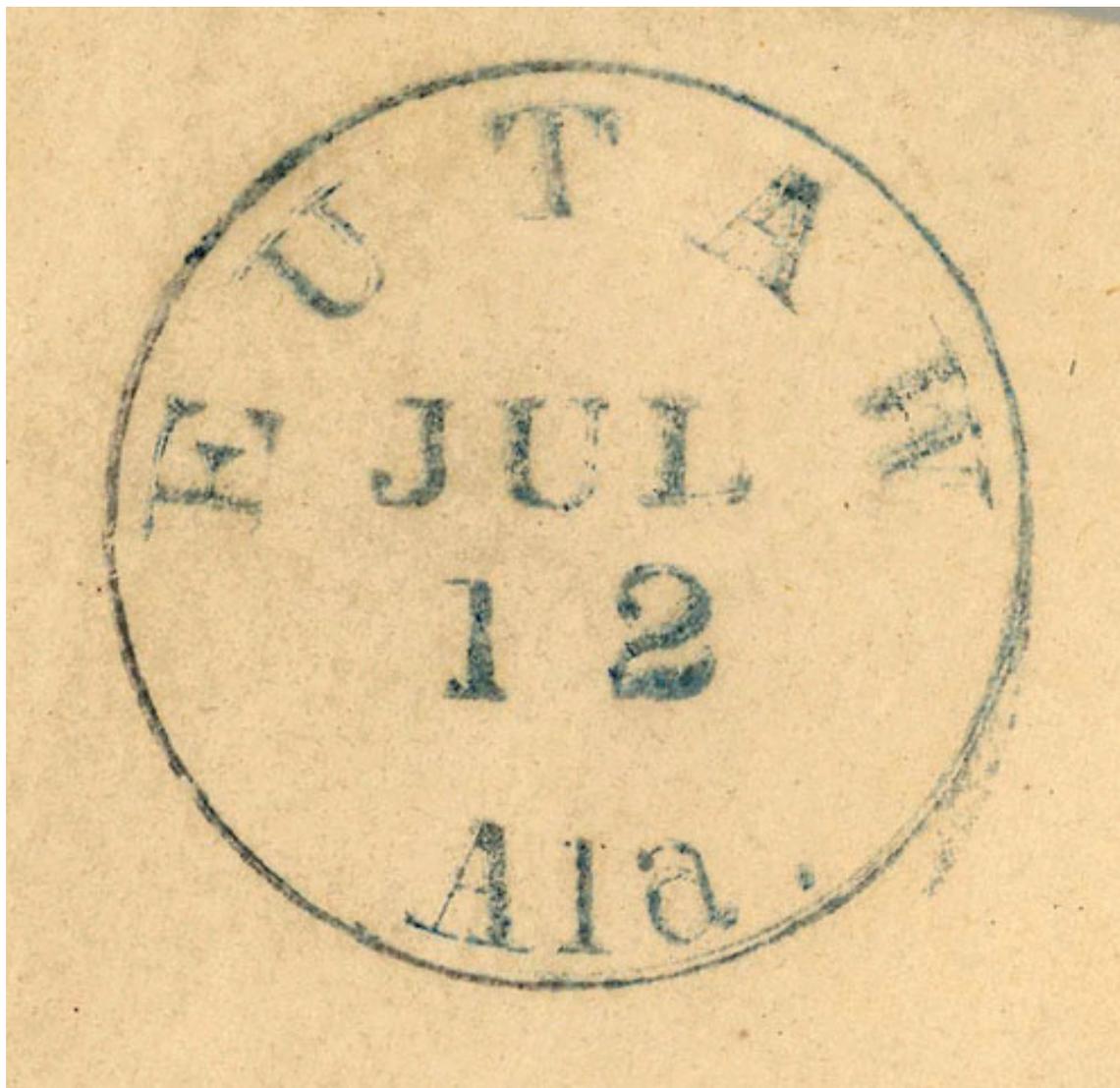


Figure 5. Pre-war 30 mm Eutaw postmark from an 1846 folded letter.

The 32 mm Eutaw postmark, used in 1855 and later, is shown in Figure 6. It has the state abbreviation in all caps "ALA" with the "LA" in a smaller font. Without a cover or larger piece for the bogus marking, we can't be sure of the state abbreviation, but it appear to be based on this marking.



Figure 6. Pre-war 32 mm Eutaw postmark used 1855 and later.



Figure 7. Double strike of a fake Eutaw double-circle postmarks added to a cover originally handcarried outside the postal system to which a block of 4 and a single of the 2¢ green Andrew Jackson lithograph (CSA 3) were added.

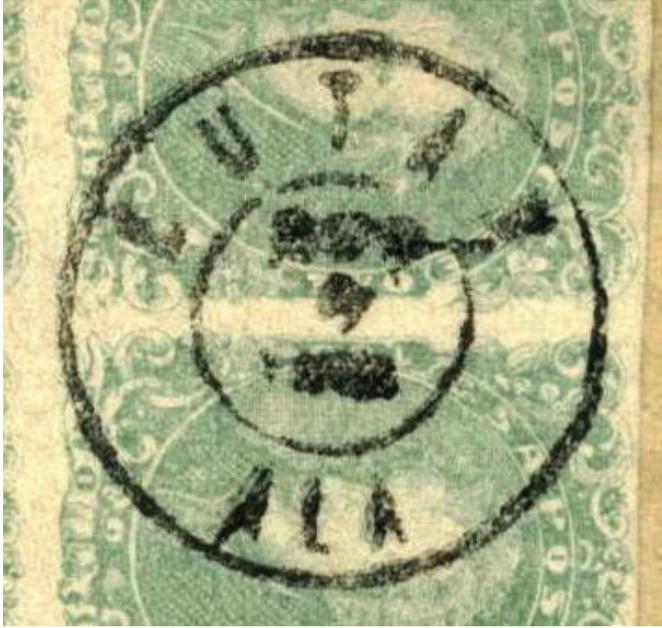


Figure 8. Close-up of the smaller fake Eutaw double-circle attributed to John A. Fox.

Although the larger fake Eutaw postmark does not appear in the Powell-Kimbrough book of Confederate fakes⁶, a small postmark posing a genuine use is attributed to John A. Fox (1911-1988), as shown on cover in Figure 7. A close-up of the right postmark on the cover is shown in Figure 8.

Before the newer large example, the small double-circle postmark was the only recorded fake Eutaw marking. It was used on a cover originally hand-carried outside the postal system to which a block of 4 and a single of the 2¢ green Andrew Jackson lithograph (CSA 3) were added. The fake cover is part of the U.S. Philatelic Classics Society (USPCS) SCRAP (Stamp & Cover Repository and Analysis Program) collection of John A. Fox fakes that the

society donated to the Philatelic Foundation (PF) in 2016. It is the only recorded example of the smaller Eutaw fake marking.

The characteristics of the fake Eutaw double-circle are:

The left leg of the first “A” of “ALA” has a line connecting it to the outer circle. This line is not on the genuine marking.

There is a line from the “W” of “EUTAW” that extends through the inner circle to the month logo.

Although not mentioned in the Powell-Kimbrough fake book, the inner circle of the double circle also has a large break below the “A” and “W.”

Also not mentioned in the fake book, the month logo is substantially larger on the genuine and the year is in the center, while the year is on the bottom on the smaller fake marking.

These characteristics are identical on both strikes of the fake postmark on the known cover but not on the genuine. The Fox strikes are also thicker and muddy compared to the thinner crisp strikes generally found on genuine Eutaw uses.

How Fox Fakes Were Made

John A. Fox has been the subject of more than one article over the years. In 2008, Michael Laurence wrote an outstanding article in the *Chronicle*,⁷ the quarterly journal of the Classics Society. The article included a biography written by Varro Tyler. Laurence is also the long-time editor of the *Chronicle*.

Laurence revealed that comparison of the Fox fake markings from the PF and the USPCS SCRAP websites enables us to make some informed guesses about how Fox created his fakes. It’s clear that the Fox marking devices were made by photo-engraving, a photo-mechanical process that produces a printing surface in relief, well suited for copying monochrome continuous-tone images, such as postal markings, onto metal. After Fox’s death, some of these marking devices

came into the hands of the Philatelic Foundation, where Michael Laurence worked for a time as Executive Director. The markings are engravings on zinc slabs about 1/8" thick that are mounted on hardwood blocks cut to fit.

A negative image could be created from the marking, either via camera or directly, using copy stand, masks, and light-sensitive papers. The negative image would then be transferred by photographic expose onto a soft metal plate coated with light-sensitive material.

With Fox-created covers, my instincts usually kick in with the "Fox" handwriting before the markings. Fox never did master the art of 19th century handwriting. These bogus covers may not have been personally addressed by Fox. It's unknown whether he employed others to create the addresses on his covers. The more dangerous creations are those where he used handcarried envelopes that never went through the mail.

There is much more fascinating and important detail in the Laurence article that is well worth searching out. The John A. Fox collection of fakes is available for viewing on the websites of both the Philatelic Foundation and the Classics Society. Reading Laurence's article and viewing the SCRAP collection of Fox fakes is an important education for any serious philatelist or postal historian.

Acknowledgement: I am grateful to Van Koppersmith for scanning his pre-war markings for this article and sharing his knowledge of Alabama postal markings.

Endnotes

1. Eutaw, Rural SW Alabama, <https://www.ruralswalabama.org/towns/eutaw/> Accessed November 24, 2023.
2. Patricia A. Kaufmann, Francis J. Crown Jr., Jerry S. Palazolo, Confederate States of America Catalog and Handbook of Stamps and Postal History. (Confederate Stamp Alliance, csalliance.org) 2012.
3. Peter W. W. Powell, John L. Kimbrough MD Confederate States of America Philatelic Fakes, Forgeries, and Fantasies of the 19th and 20th Centuries, p. 173.
4. Varro Tyler, "John Fox: His Life and Works," and Michael Laurence, "John Fox Marking Devices and Fake Covers," Chronicle, May 2008, Vol. 60, No. 2. Pp. 147-163.

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