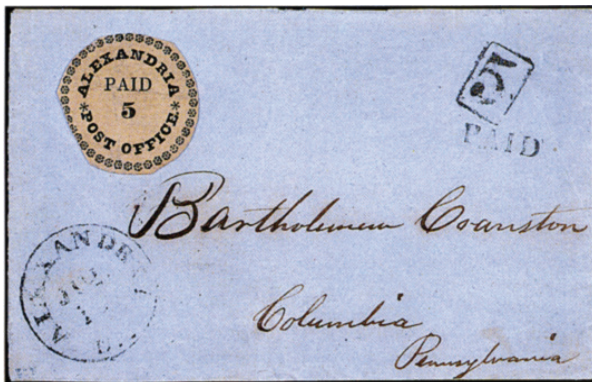


Yesterday in Mekeel's:

The Alexandria Postmaster Stamp

by B. W. H. Poole (From Mekeel's Weekly, December 12, 1938, with images added)

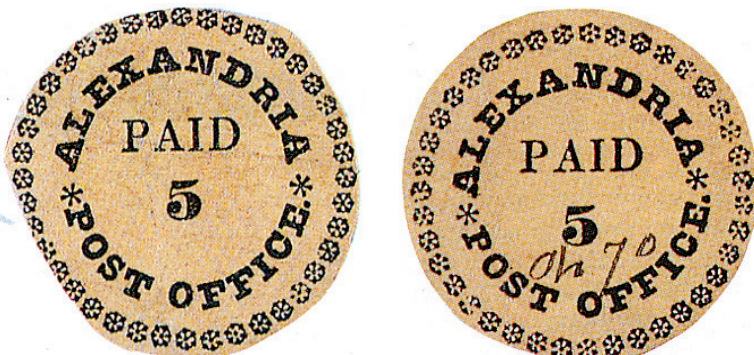


The Tiffany discovery copy, black on buff Type I, Sc. 1X1, cut to shape, uncanceled on an address panel to Columbia, Pa., with an Alexandria D.C. Jul. 10 circular datestamp and matching "Paid" and "5".

Most of the stamps issued by postmasters in various cities of the United States prior to the introduction of the regular government postage stamps issued in 1847 are of considerable rarity and interest. One of the most valuable of these is the 5¢ stamp issued by order of the postmaster of Alexandria, Virginia, in 1846.

The actual date of issue or period during which these 5¢ stamps were current is not known as there is nothing in the nature of any documentary evidence in existence. All the known copies that bear a date on the cover or letter accompanying such cover were used in 1846 or 1847. That the stamps are rare may be judged from the fact that only seven copies are known, six of these being printed on buff paper and the other on light blue paper.

The design is extremely crude and consists merely of a circle of asterisk-shaped ornaments in which ALEXANDRIA is curved at the top and POST OFFICE at the base, these two inscriptions being separated by asterisks. In the center is PAID / 5 in two lines, the 5, of course,



Left, Type I, Sc. 1X1, from the cover above left. In addition to having 40 rosettes—what Sloane called asterisks, another identifier is the position of the two actual asterisks, between the words "Alexandria" and "Post" on the left and "Office" on the right. On Type I, the asterisks are off center, closer to the P and E. Right, Sc. 1X1a, from the cover above right, with 39 rosettes and the two asterisks centered between the letters A in Alexandria and the P and E.



The 5¢ black on buff Type II, Sc. 1X1a, stated as "apparently die cut", with manuscript No. 70 below denomination. This is the stamp that was illustrated in the Sloane article. The cover, which is the earliest recorded use of the Alexandria provisional, also bears a red Alexandria D.C. May 9 (circa 1846) c.d.s. that just ties the stamp and matching "Paid" and "5" handstamps.

indicating the facial value of 5¢.

There are two types differing chiefly in the number of asterisks in the circular frame. Type I has forty of these asterisks and Type II only 39. It was at first thought that the stamps were printed from a roughly engraved wood-block but it is now agreed that the design was set up from ordinary printer's type. But how they were printed—whether singly, in pairs of the two types, or in small or large sheets, there is nothing whatsoever to indicate. Daniel Bryan was postmaster at the time these stamps were issued, but who had the honor of printing them is one of those interesting historical facts that will probably never be discovered.

The stamp was unknown to collectors until 1873 when the late Mr. John K. Tiffany found a specimen among his family correspondence. The stamp was not stuck on the envelope in the ordinary way but was attached by means of a wafer. The stamp itself was uncanceled but on the face of the letter were three postmarks

- (1) an ordinary date mark inscribed "Alexandria, D. C." with the date July 10;
- (2) the word "PAID", and
- (3) a large figure "5" enclosed within a rectangular frame.

The letter itself was dated July 10, 1847. These postmarks gave practically the same information as that conveyed by the stamp itself and it is hardly surprising that most of the leading philatelists of that time were very dubious of the status of this label. This stamp is Type I on buff paper.

In 1879 another specimen was discovered, which resembled Mr. Tiffany's in every respect except that it was Type II. It was uncanceled and the cover bore similar postmarks with the date of September 10th. The letter bears the date of Sept. 9, 1846, and proved the provisional had been issued some time earlier than was indicated by the Tiffany copy.

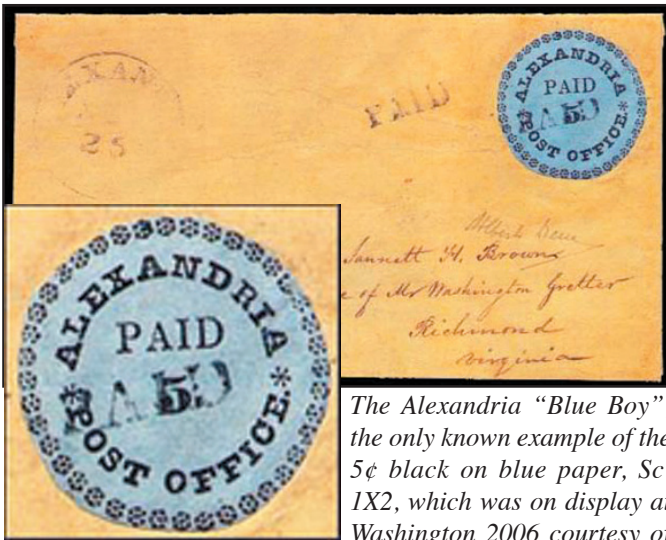
In the early 'nineties two more copies were recorded one being acquired by a T. J. Shylock and the other was reputed to exist in a well-known European collection. Both were cut round

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The Alexandria "Blue Boy", the only known example of the 5¢ black on blue paper, Sc. IX2, which was on display at Washington 2006 courtesy of

the unidentified Swiss owner, and a magnified view of the stamp. The stamp is cancelled by a "Paid" straightline handstamp that is repeated to the left of it on the cover, plus an Alexandria Nov. 25 c.d.s.

and on buff paper, one being uncanceled and Type II and the other (Type I) showing a portion of the postmark and, in addition, "No. 45" in manuscript.

Not until November, 1907, did another copy come to light and this made quite a sensation in philatelic circles for it was on light blue wove paper. The stamp is Type I and is on a cover postmarked Nov. 25th, while the letter inside is dated 1847. The stamp itself is cancelled PAID though it is not tied.

This is the only specimen known to exist on blue paper. This rarity owes its preservation to sentimental interest. The letter was a proposal of marriage from a young man, in Alexandria to a young lady in Richmond. It was preserved on account of its sentimental association until in the course of time it became the property of a Mrs. H. G. Fawcett of Alexandria.

How this lady imagined her possession might have some value is not clear but, so the story runs, one day she wrote to a Boston dealer, a native of Alexandria, minutely describing the stamp and relating the history of the letter. The dealer was not slow to realize that a rarity of the first importance had been unearthed and he at once offered \$3,000 for the letter. In the meantime Mrs. Fawcett had been advised not to be too precipitate in disposing of her rarity and she finally placed it in the hands of a relation in Philadelphia. Though not a philatelist, this man had some knowledge of stamp matters and, through the medium of a local dealer, the stamp soon passed into the collection of an Ohio philatelist in exchange for the nice little sum of \$4,000. At the time this was said to be the highest figure ever paid for a single stamp in the United States.

A sixth copy was found in April, 1926, this being Type I on buff paper and it was on a folded letter dated 1846. The stamp is uncanceled but on the cover is the usual town postmark dated August 25th.

A seventh copy is also known to exist, this being Type II on buff paper. The stamp is cancelled "No. 70" in manuscript. Thus of the six known specimens on buff paper there are three of each type while the unique specimen on blue paper is Type I. This would seem to indicate the probability that the stamps were printed two at a time.

MINT			USED		
# & condition	'18 SCV	Net	# & condition	SCV	Net
344 F NH vert.pr w.			220,220a,220c, Fine, Caps on 2 show		
horiz. line	22.00+	8.00	SCV 48.20		12.00
496 JF NH	7.00	1.50	233 Just Fine, moderate ccl.	9.00	1.25
496 Fine+ og	3.25	1.25	234 JF, neat dble oval ccl	9.50	1.95
504 Fine LH	8.00	3.00	290 Avg, wavy line ccl	35.00	3.50
548 JF NH	9.25	2.50	305 Avg., face free ccl, fresh	5.75	1.25
549 FVF NH	12.00	6.00	307 Fine, wavy line ccl	3.25	.75
549 Fine LH	5.00	1.50	325 Fine, light flag ccl	27.50	9.50
550 VF hinge remn.	30.00	9.00	326 Fine+, light ccl	25.00	5.25
644 Fine NH	5.50	2.25	326 Fine, light ccl	25.00	4.00
647 Fine NH	7.25	3.75	327 Fine, blot ccl	27.50	9.00
647 Fine o.g.	4.00	1.50	328 F+, very light ccl	5.00	1.25
649-50 Fine NH	9.00	5.00	330 Fine, light ccl	30.00	9.00
649-50 Fine LH	5.60	2.75	340 JF, light ccl	6.50	1.00
668 FVFLH (appears NH)	22.50	7.50	341 Avg, bold numeral ccl	20.00	2.00
753 Fine NH CenterLine			343 F, very light ccl	5.50	1.10
Block	75.00	15.00	344 F+, light ccl	3.25	.95
C4 Fine NH	40.00	19.00	399 JF, extremely light ccl	10.00	1.95
C10 Fine NH	12.50	3.95	399 Fine, straight line ccl	10.00	1.25
CE1-2 Fine NH	1.65	.65	420 Fine, heavy ccl	19.00	1.50
O16 Fine No gum	NG 30.00	5.00	421 Fine, blot ccl	30.00	6.00
O84 Avg, large part og	260.00	15.00	438 F+, dbl oval ccl	6.00	1.50
O90 F+ wide bot, no gum	30.00	9.00	518 Fine, extremely light ccl	1.50	.95
O91 Avg No gum	NG 30.00	3.00	572 Fine+, light ccl	9.00	2.00
O93 JF No gum	NG 80.00	14.00	634A Fine+, shows all Type II		
Q1 Fine+ NH	11.00	3.50	identifiers	13.50	7.50
Q5 JF NH	67.50	19.00	1053 Fine, moderate ccl	6.75	1.25
QE1 Fine NH	4.25	1.25	2544A Fine	9.00	2.25

USED		
# & condition	SCV	Net
114 Fine, wedges ccl, fresh	17.50	4.95
114 Fine, cork ccl, fresh	17.50	4.50
146 F+, geometric face ccl	20.00	3.95
179 Fine, light blot ccl	25.00	6.50
186 Fine, diamonds grid	22.50	6.50
206 F, light ccl, wide left	17.50	3.25
211 Fine+, light ccl	27.50	5.00
211 Fine, neat ccl	27.50	4.25
220a Fine, Caps clear of ccl	12.50	4.50

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MINT			USED		
# & condition	'18 SCV	Net	# & condition	SCV	Net
155P3 FVF LH Proof, small margin tear	45.00	19.00	73 FVF used, blue ccl, small corner crease	70.00	19.00
Stamp SCV \$1,900			159 XF, unobtrusive ccl, trivial back crease	VF 18.00 XF 75.00	17.00
237 FVF LH, gum wrinkle	90.00	26.00	220,220a,220c, Fine, faults, Caps on 2 show	SCV 48.20	4.00
319 Fine NH Plate # sgl light gum creases	15.00	4.25	288 VF-XF, wavy lines ccl, repaired fault	25.00	5.00
405 VF LH, sm gum crease	6.50	1.60	328 XF, wide margins, wavy line ccl, trivial back adherence	5.00	3.25
489 Fine NH, pencil mark on gum	(LH 4.50) NH 10.00	2.00	750 S/Sheet, sm mgn tear	27.50	5.50
493 F LH slight back print offset	14.00	5.50	E10 Fine, small faults	50.00	5.00
550 VF hinge remnant	30.00	9.00	87L63, faults, sm. piece out	100.00	6.00
833 Fine, light gum offset	17.50	4.00	Lakins Nedake Kolone, Boston, light creases	--	9.00
C4 FVF NH nat. gum bend	40.00	11.00	1 Oz. Tobacco Act of 1915, 1917, 1924 (3 stamps)	--	15.00
E2 Fine+ glazed gum	500.00	125.00			
E2 Avg.regum,pulled perf. og	SCV 500.	25.00			
O17 JF NG, possible thin	35.00	2.00			
O89 Avg NG, sm. thin	NG 110.00	6.00			

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