

The Case Against New Orleans Reprints

By Francis J. Crown Jr.

(Editor's Note: The Second Quarter The Confederate Philatelist featured an article by Justin Poklis titled, "New Orleans Postmaster Provisional Stamps: Were There Reprints?" A number of CSA specialists did not agree with Poklis' conclusions and Frank Crown has consolidated their concerns in this response.)

The Second Quarter CP included an article by Justin Poklis asking a very interesting question: "New Orleans Postmaster Provisional Stamps: Were There Reprints?"¹

In a lengthy presentation, Poklis attempts to prove there were reprints of the New Orleans provisionals. The basis for his theory is two-fold.

First, the two-cent blue, two-cent red and five-cent brown from the third printing are primarily known as unused copies.

Second, in 1872, John W. Scott wrote that there were reprints of the New Orleans provisionals.² Poklis' conclusion is that "it is reasonable to assume reprints of New Orleans postmaster provisional stamps were produced as Scott stated and that George T. Hussey, starting in late 1863, sold these reprints as genuine stamps."³

Poklis' theory is rather radical, as it conflicts with the major 20th century studies and articles about the New Orleans provisionals, none of which mention reprints.⁴ This article will examine the evidence provided by Poklis to determine if his conclusions are realistic.

The Poklis article ends with seven points that lead to his conclusion that there were reprints. Each of the seven points is discussed here.

The first point, taken from the 1872 Scott article, is one of the bases for his theory. For this reason both the specific point, as well as related information provided by Poklis or in the Scott article, are discussed in detail.

1. "Scott stated that reprints were produced 'soon after the city (New Orleans) was occupied by the federal forces'."⁵

This is one of the two bases for the conclusion that there were reprints of the New Orleans provisionals. However, Scott provides no source for the statement, nor does he provide

any corroborating evidence that it is true. In fact, the point quoted above does not mention what Scott said about the critical issue of how the reprints came about. The full quotation from the Scott article is:

The stamps issued by Riddell were among the earliest of the provisional stamps known to philatelists, and were reprinted for collectors soon after the city was occupied by the federal forces. Soon after the surrender a New York dealer applied to Riddell for a quantity of his stamps, but he refused to sell them under the face value, which the party did not feel inclined to give, as he wanted a large quantity. Finding he could not obtain the desired stamps at his own price of Mr. Riddell, he resorted to other means to obtain his object: and it is but doing him justice to say that, being a strong Union man, he did not believe that the stamps really belonged to Riddell, as it was in his opinion an act of treason to issue them. To resume the story, he dispatched an agent to New Orleans who found out the printer, and learnt that he had the plates in his possession, and induced him to reprint a supply of the red and blue 2 cents and brown 5 cents stamps, but by some oversight, he neglected to reprint the 5 cents on blue paper. The stock of the 2 cents stamps has been exhausted for some time, but a few of the 5 are left. I have every reason to believe that the plates were afterwards destroyed.⁶

Poklis justifiably questions the "story" of how the reprints came about. He states:

It does seem unreasonable that in late 1862 or 1863 some unknown person would have "dispatched an agent to New Orleans," during the middle of the Civil War. Is it not more likely that Scott is referring to "forgeries" of the New Orleans Postmaster Provisional stamps that were documented as early as 1863 and not true reprints?⁷

This statement regarding forgeries and reprints appears contradictory and confusing because the basic premise of the Poklis article is that there were reprints and Scott was the source of this information. Yet Poklis sticks with the reprint theory.



The author opines that these are not reprints of New Orleans Postmaster Provisional stamps.

He infers that the reprinting of Scott's article about the New Orleans provisionals in various journals lends credence to reprint theory.⁸

It does not. Anyone familiar with philatelic literature in the nineteenth century knows that it was common practice for philatelic journals to reprint articles or abstracts of articles from other journals. This was not a confirmation of the validity of the contents of the original articles. Rather, it was a way of passing available philatelic news to different groups of readers. Reprinting of Scott's statement in the twentieth century was done as a matter of record, not of fact.⁹

In spite of rejecting Scott's "story" of the events that led to the reprints, Poklis makes the following statement regarding Scott's knowledge:

*It is known that in the late 1860s and 1870s Scott was one of, if not the best authority on Confederate provisional stamps. He attempted to thoroughly research the Confederate provisional stamps and establish the authenticity of those he could.*¹⁰

There is no doubt that Scott was one of the leading authorities on Confederate provisionals from the late 1860s to the mid-1870s. In fact, he did some excellent early work, particularly on the Madison, Florida, provisional.¹¹

But a study of Scott's writings during this period show his knowledge was observational: from what he observed by the examination of stamps and markings, information obtained from newspaper articles and by direct correspondence with prominent Southern citizens and former postmasters. His research was superficial and not the result of detailed examination of the design and printing of provisionals.

Scott's writings were not without errors. Poklis mentions several of these errors regarding the New Orleans provisionals that indicate a lack of information on the part of Scott.¹² However, he makes no mention of the more serious errors. The Scott article quoted by Poklis contains the following statement:

*The design is quite distinct from any other provisional, and is not altogether devoid of beauty when printed in the clean bright colours of the first impressions, but stones from which they were printed soon deteriorated, and fine copies are very scarce.*¹³

This statement points out a serious lack of knowledge on the part of Scott. First, the New Orleans provisionals were not printed from lithographic stones. The original die was an engraved woodcut from which stereotypes were prepared and laid out in a relief printing form.¹⁴

Second, if the printing "stones" or forms were worn, any subsequent printings would show this wear. They do not show appreciable wear. There are good to poor prints from all three printings. The poor impressions are attributed to poor printing and the quality of the paper used.¹⁵

An excellent example of this is the sheet from the third printing in the Skinner collection. The print quality of individual stamps in this sheet varies from good to poor.¹⁶

Without any explanation, Poklis states "the man behind the reprinting of the New Orleans Postmaster Provisional stamps was probably George T. Hussey."¹⁷

Poklis provides no evidence that Hussey or his printer, Thomas Woods, ever printed a New Orleans provisional stamp. Instead, Poklis uses the rationale that some of Hussey's reprints

were requested from a third party who actually commissioned the reprinting.¹⁸

Assuming Poklis is correct and Hussey had a third party request the reprinting the New Orleans provisionals, there is no explanation of how or where the original plates were obtained.

Poklis does not directly address the question of whether or how the plates may have survived the fall of New Orleans. The master dies and plates were prepared and paid for by New Orleans Postmaster John L. Riddell.

It was in his interest to insure that no unauthorized printings were made from the plates. If there were, he would be personally responsible for any loss to the New Orleans Post Office from their use. Rather than leave the plates in the hands of the printer, it is more likely Riddell either secured the plates himself or destroyed them once regular Confederate stamps were available.

As further "proof" there were reprints, Poklis states:

There were two printings of the two-cent New Orleans Postmaster Provisional stamps. One printing was in red and the other in blue. The two-cent reds were printed first, but the two-cent blues were used first. It is generally accepted that when the stock of two-cent blue stamps was used up, the two-cent red stamps were placed on sale.

*This theory does not account for the numerous unused two-cent blue stamps. The third printing of the five-cent stamps and both printings of the two-cent stamps are known primarily as unused copies. These stamps are thought to be unsold remainders, but they are very likely reprints.*¹⁹

Poklis gives no details about how he determined there are numerous unused two-cent blue, two-cent red and five-cent stamps from the third printing. A search of past auction sales on the Robert A. Siegel Auction Galleries website revealed no significant imbalance between used and unused copies of the two-cent blue and two-cent red stamps.²⁰

If there were reprints of the two-cent stamps, there should be many more unused copies, particularly in multiples.

There is a good reason that there are more unused than used examples of the five-cent stamps from the third printing.

Regular Confederate postage stamps became available in New Orleans by early December 1861.²¹ The earliest recorded date of

use of the five-cent stamp from the third printing is December 3, 1861.²²

The quantity of the print run for the five-cent stamp from the third printing is unknown. Whatever it was, it is doubtful if they would have been sold out since the regular Confederate stamps were introduced about the same time.

Under these circumstances it is natural that there would be remainders of the five-cent stamp on hand. Some would be in the hands of postal patrons who bought them for future postal use or for small change (shinplasters). Others would be in hands of the postmaster or in the post office as unsold remainders.

In his summary paragraph Poklis' makes the following statement:

*We do have...ample evidence that reprints were produced. Ultimately it may be extremely difficult to distinguish the reprints from the genuine unused stamps as the reprints would have been printed by the same printer, using the original plates and less than a year after the last of the genuine New Orleans provisional stamps were produced.*²³

What is Poklis trying to accomplish with this statement? Is this an attempt to make it almost impossible to disprove his theory?

Whatever the reason for the statement it would have been extremely difficult, if not impossible, to perfectly match the ink color and paper of the three different reprints (two-cent blue, two-cent red and five-cent brown) to the originals.

This is particularly in the case of the five-cent stamp, as they were originally printed in three different colors on three different types of paper.

Finally, anyone doing research about Confederate provisionals should recognize that for the 20 or 30 years after the end of the Civil War, the field was in an embryonic state. New discoveries were being made and false information and fakes abounded. The wheat had to be separated from the chaff. It wasn't until near the turn of the century that Confederate provisionals began to be cataloged with some accuracy and detail.²⁴

The Final Six Points

Poklis' final six points are directed at offerings of Confederate New Orleans provisionals in an attempt to prove that some of the offerings were actually reprints.

2. "Hussey's pricelist contained two types of New Orleans provisional stamps, one listed as genuine (these are the stamps I believe are reprints) and facsimiles produced by Upham"²⁵

The problem with all the pricelists noted in the Poklis article is that there are no illustrations of the stamps. Fakes from Upham, Taylor, Moens and others were in plentiful supply at the time. Without illustrations, we don't know what was being sold as a genuine stamp or as a facsimile. Hussey was a known faker. As such, it is difficult to have much faith in what was offered in his lists.

An interesting passage from the Poklis article is the following:

"The New Orleans stamps listed on Hussey's pricelist, and the stamps sold by other dealers Hussey supplied, fit the descriptions of the reprints that Scott described in a 'History of the Confederate States Post Office,' published in the *American Journal of Philately* in 1871."²⁶

There is nothing in the 1871 issues of the *American Journal of Philately* that describe New Orleans reprints. There is a reference to reprints in the May 1872 issue article by Scott that Poklis quotes at length.²⁷

The 1872 article states that there were reprints and gives a very general description of the New Orleans provisionals and illustrates two examples of both the two-cent and five-cent provisional.

The illustrations are reproductions (facsimiles) and were used in Scott's catalog as early as 1879, if not earlier.²⁸

The New Orleans stamps listed in Hussey's pricelist are not illustrated or described other than by town name. Thus, no comparison is possible and there is no basis for Poklis stating they, "fit the descriptions of the reprints that Scott described."

3. "Hussey sold as 'genuine' the New Orleans two-cent red and blue, and five-cent brown provisional stamps but not the five cent brown on blue paper in 1863 (according to Scott the five-cent brown on blue was not reprinted.)"²⁹

The problem with this statement is that Hussey's pricelist is not detailed. While it does list the number of colors of individual stamps, it says nothing about paper types.³⁰ Thus, in the case of the Hussey-listed five-cent New Orleans provisional, the paper could be white, off white

or blue. Early catalogs list the five-cent stamp only on white and blue paper. It wasn't until 1897 that the two types of white paper (white and yellowish white) were recognized in a catalog.³¹

Poklis neglects to address the prices asked for the "genuine" New Orleans provisionals in the Hussey pricelists. For the five-cent brown, he asked five-cents. For the two-cent blue and two-cent red, he asked three-cents.

If Hussey actually had genuine two-cent blue and two-cent red stamps, how could he sell them for less than the five-cent brown, as they are scarcer? Further, the price of the facsimile stamps in the same pricelist were only one to three-cents cheaper.³²

The minimal difference in price is an indication that the "genuine" New Orleans offerings were also likely fakes or facsimiles.

Were the "genuine" New Orleans stamps offered by Hussey reprints as theorized by Poklis? This is very doubtful. If they were reprints, there should be many more of the two-cent blue, two-cent red and five-cent brown third printing available to collectors. The unused five-cent brown third printing is more common than the other two five-cent printings, but this is to be expected. As noted in the comments under the first point above, there were probably remainders.

4. "At the same time Hussey sold the Upham facsimiles. He had a supply of facsimiles and did not need to produce his own facsimiles or forgeries."³³

The purpose of this point is not clear and not worth speculation. Whatever Hussey was selling does not bear on the issue of reprints. As noted above, without illustrations we cannot be certain what Hussey was selling as genuine and facsimile.

5. "Hussey only advertised the New Orleans provisional stamps as genuine. If he was selling the Upham facsimiles as genuine it would make sense to advertise the other Upham facsimiles as genuine not just the New Orleans provisional stamps. He would have also included the New Orleans five-cent printed on blue paper in the list of genuine stamps."³⁴

Actually the Hussey pricelists included both genuine and facsimile New Orleans provisionals.

We know that the Confederate content of the pricelists published by Hussey did not change much over time. These pricelists show that stamps were being sold based on color, not the type of paper on which they were printed. Thus, the “genuine” five-cent New Orleans provisional offered by Hussey may have been on white paper, blue paper or off-white paper.³⁵

6. “Taylor, like Hussey, sold the Upham facsimiles and Taylor produced a forgery that Pemberton described as genuine. There is no evidence that Hussey was selling Taylor product, or vice versa, as their pricelists do not match. So, we can conclude that Hussey was not selling Taylor’s New Orleans forgery described as genuine by Pemberton.”³⁶

Poklis does not include an illustration of the Taylor pricelist. Copies of two different 1864 Taylor pricelists are illustrated in an article in the October 1996 issue of *Penny Post*.³⁷

These pricelists clearly show that Taylor’s offerings were different from Hussey’s, but they did include several facsimile Confederate provisionals, including New Orleans. Thus, it is quite possible Hussey was selling the Taylor New Orleans facsimiles or fakes.

7. Pemberton describes the genuine “third printing” of the five-cent New Orleans as a forgery. He likely did so because of its source, Hussey, a known forger.³⁸

It is true Pemberton’s description is of a genuine five-cent stamp from the third printing. However, what is the purpose of the statement? Whatever the reason, it has absolutely nothing to do with Poklis’ reprint theory. Pemberton probably had multiple sources for copies of the New Orleans provisionals. The facsimiles and fakes of Upham, Taylor, Hussey, Moens and others were readily available in England by 1863.³⁹

It should be noted that the records of forgeries and bogus stamps made for, or by, Hussey do not include references to any Confederate stamps or provisionals. As far as is known, Hussey made fakes and fantasies of only U. S. locals and fantasy local posts.⁴⁰

Conclusion

Poklis’ theory that the New Orleans provisionals were reprinted is based entirely on undocumented sources, baseless assumptions,

the selective use of source material and failure to consider the historical background. Yet, at the end of his article Poklis notes that “Fourier transform infrared spectroscopy (FTIR) and X-ray diffraction . . . may be able to distinguish the reprints from the genuine stamps.”⁴¹

One must ask why Poklis did not conduct these tests? To present a radically new theory on New Orleans provisionals without following through with tests that could actually prove or disprove the theory is unprofessional. Certainly the Confederate Stamp Alliance Authentication Service would be willing to assist Poklis in conducting the necessary tests to prove or disprove his theory.

In conclusion Poklis’ theory that the New Orleans provisionals were reprinted should not be accepted as no real proof was presented to support such a theory.

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Endnotes

1. Justin Poklis, “New Orleans Postmaster Provisional Stamps: Where There Reprints?” *Confederate Philatelist* 60, No.2 (Second Quarter 2015): 4-17.
2. John W. Scott, “History of the Confederate States Post Office,” *American Journal of Philately* 5, No. 53 (May 1872): 58.
3. Poklis, “New Orleans Provisional Stamps,” 16.
4. The major studies are: E. S. Knapp, “Confederate States: the New Orleans 5¢ Provisional,” *Philatelic Gazette* 8, No. 3 (March 1918): 68-71; 8, No. 4 (April 1918): 108-110; 8, No. 5 (May 1918): 147-149; E. S. Knapp, “The New Orleans Provisional,” *Philatelic Gazette* 8, No. 12 (December 1918): 390-391; Edward Stern, “New Orleans—Confederate 2¢ Red—Provisional 1861,” *Collectors Club Philatelist* 14, No. 1 (January 1935): 1-8; and Hubert C. Skinner, “Notes on the New Orleans Postmaster’s Provisionals: Plating and History,” in *The Congress Book* 1978 No. 44 (n.p.: American Philatelic Congress, 1978), 104-160. The major articles are: Leonard V. Huber and Clarence A. Wagner, “John L. Riddell and the New Orleans Provisionals (1861-1862)”

- in *The Great Mail* (n.p.: American Philatelic Society, 1949), 142-157; and Raymond H. Weill, "J. L. Riddell and the New Orleans Civil War Provisionals," *American Philatelist* 48, No. 12 (September 1935): 609-613.
5. Poklis, "New Orleans Provisional Stamps," 16.
 6. Scott, "History of the Confederate Post Office," 5, No. 53 (May 1872), 58.
 7. Poklis, "New Orleans Provisional Stamps," 7.
 8. Ibid., 6-7.
 9. Charles J. Phillips, "Confederate States Postmaster's Provisionals Stamps," *Stamps* 13, No. 12 (21 December 1935): 447; and Francis J. Crown, Jr., *Surveys of the Confederate Postmasters' Provisionals* (Lawrence, MA: Quarterman Publications, 1982), 260.
 10. Poklis, "New Orleans Provisional Stamps," 8.
 11. John W. Scott, "History of the Confederate States Post Office," 5, No. 50 (February 1872): 29-31.
 12. Poklis, "New Orleans Provisional Stamps," 8.
 13. Scott, "History of the Confederate Post Office, 5, No. 53 (May 1872), 58-59.
 14. Hubert C. Skinner, "Notes on the New Orleans Postmaster's Provisionals: Plating and History," in *The Congress Book 1978* No. 44 (n.p.: American Philatelic Congress, 1978), 112.
 15. Ibid, 113. Factors affecting print quality include the inconsistency of the ink, its non-uniform application to the plate and variations in the porosity of the paper.
 16. Robert A. Siegel Auction Galleries, *Dr. Hubert C. Skinner Collection of New Orleans Civil War Postal History Sale 832* (New York: Robert A. Siegel Auction Galleries, November 16, 2000), lot 3141.
 17. Poklis, "New Orleans Provisional Stamps," 9.
 18. Ibid, 9-10.
 19. Ibid, 5.
 20. <http://www.siegelauctions.com/>
 21. Hubert C. Skinner, "The New Orleans Post Office in the Civil War Period: I. Prior to the Federal Occupation," in *The Congress Book 1980* No. 46 (n.p.: American Philatelic Congress, 1978), 117.
 22. Schuyler J. Rumsey Philatelic Auctions, *United States Postal History Sale 55* (San Francisco: Schuyler J. Rumsey, 10-12 March 2014), lot 2277; Raymond H. Weill, "J. L. Riddell and the New Orleans Civil War Provisionals," *American Philatelist* 48, No. 12 (January 1935): 612. The cover in the Rumsey sale is dated December 3, 1861. The Weill article states the New Orleans Post Office received the government postage stamps in early November 1861. There is no recorded use that supports this date.
 23. Poklis, "New Orleans Provisional Stamps: 17.
 24. C.H. Mekeel, ed., *Mekeel's Standard Catalogue* (St. Louis: C. H. Mekeel's Stamp and Publishing, 1896), 442; and Henry Collin and Henry L. Calman, "A Catalogue for Advanced Collectors," *American Journal of Philately* 2nd Series 12, no. 6 (June 1899): 239-250.
 25. Poklis, "New Orleans Provisional Stamps," 16.
 26. Poklis, "New Orleans Provisional Stamps," 10.
 27. Scott, "History of the Confederate Post Office, 5, No. 53 (May 1872), 58-59.
 28. J. Walter Scott, ed., *A Revised List of the Postage Stamps and Stamped Envelopes of All Nations* (New York: Scott & Co, 1879), 85.
 29. Poklis, "New Orleans Provisional Stamps," 16.
 30. Ibid., 11.
 31. Henry Collin and Henry L. Calman, "A Catalogue for Advanced Collectors," *American Journal of Philately* 2nd Series 12, No. 6 (June 1899): 240.
 32. Poklis, "New Orleans Provisional Stamps," 11.
 33. Ibid., 16.
 34. Ibid., 16.
 35. Three Hussey pricelists were reviewed. An 1863 Pricelist in: Trenchard, "Deceit and Dispersal, 20; an 1865 pricelist in: "Trenchard, "Deceit and Dispersal – Part II", 11; and a circa 1866 Pricelist in: Poklis, "New Orleans Provisional Stamps," 11.
 36. Poklis, "New Orleans Provisional Stamps," 16.
 37. Herbert A. Trenchard, "Deceit and Dispersal: Hussey and Taylor and Their Products – Part II," *Penny Post* 6, No. 4 (October 1996): 7, 9.
 38. Poklis, "New Orleans Provisional Stamps," 16.
 39. Herbert A. Trenchard, "Deceit and Dispersal: Hussey and Taylor and Their Products," *Penny Post* 6, No. 3 (July 1996): 22.
 40. Herbert A. Trenchard, "Collecting Carriers and Locals in the 1860s – George Hussey and His Reprints and Imitations." *Chronicle* 50, No. 1 (February 1998): 52-53.
 41. Poklis, "New Orleans Provisional Stamps," 17.
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