

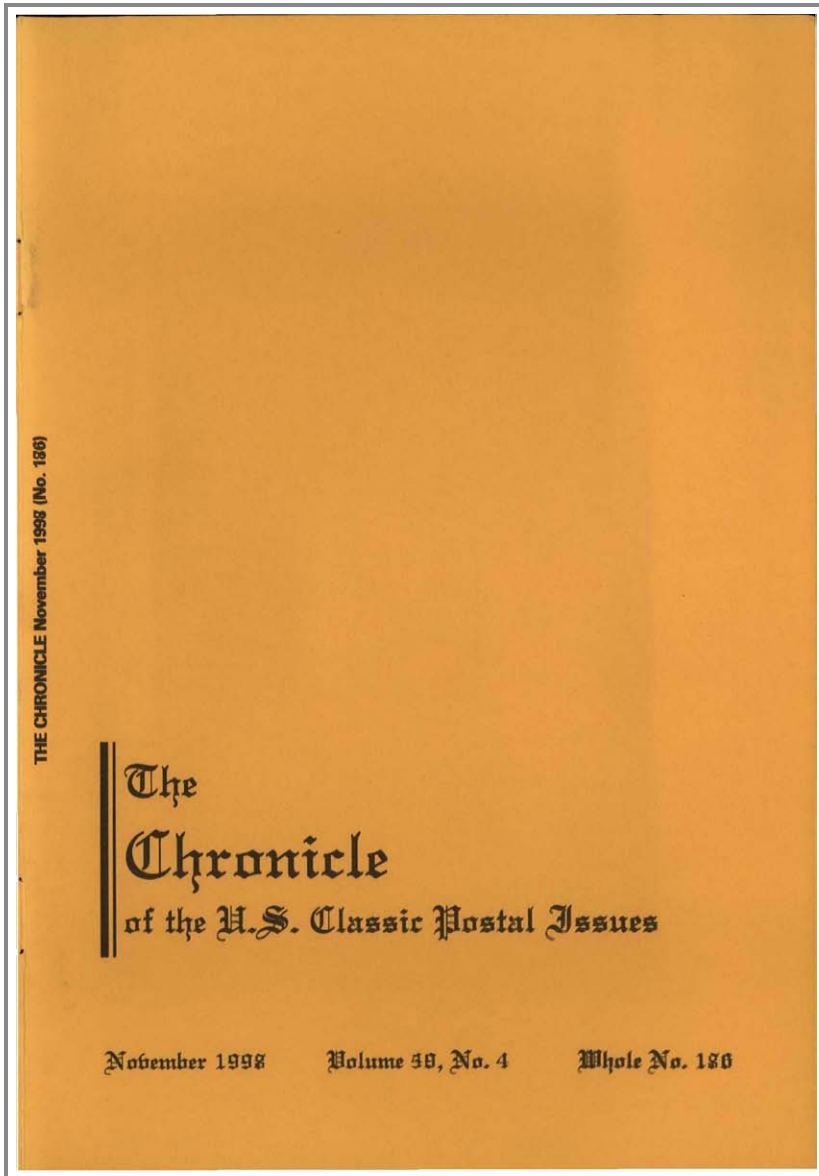


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## **ARE THERE REALLY BOGUS LOCALS?**

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A problem that has haunted collectors and students of locals, carriers, expresses, etc., is how to define or classify what they collect. The catalogs have for years mixed together the intra-city locals with the intercity independent mails and the express companies. More recently even forwarders have been included by some writers on the subject. A second definitional problem is between genuine items, counterfeits to deceive postal authorities, and forgeries to bilk collectors. In this latter class are items termed “fantasies” or “bogus posts,” dreamed up by philatelic exploiters, as well as adhesives with a similar origin. There are also the “reprints” made from original plates or stones.

Back in the mid-1970s, the late Herbert Bloch, dean of the experts in this country, and I worked over a two week period to develop a series of definitions for the Scott catalog that would fit all the material they were listing in this area. Only part of these definitions survive in the edited catalog today.

One basic problem is the use of the word “bogus” in an excessive and indiscriminating fashion all the way from the 1860s to the present. For many the terms “fantasy” and “bogus” are the same, while the word “cinderella” is applied to stamp-like objects that have nothing to do with handling the mails as well as to allegedly imaginary labels of allegedly imaginary posts.

The problem of what is bogus goes back to three of the first students in the field. One of them is known as one of the first collectors in the field, S. Allen Taylor. Taylor began in 1857 to collect the field systematically and is also the father of locals and carriers scholarship, as Henry Abt told the Collectors Club of New York in a presentation in March 1953. Well known as one of the major villains in the field, Taylor is less well-known as its first investigative student. Taylor was apparently drawn to collect the field at the age of twenty by viewing the holding of John Appleton Nutter, the 10-year old scion of a Montreal banking family who had put together an early local collection. Both soon turned to forgery, and both usually if not always had a genuine local behind the adhesives they produced. Nutter soon quit but Taylor went on to generate a plethora of “just-as-good-as” items over the next decades. All have been denounced as “bogus” locals, an incorrect designation.

The second of the philatelic “patriarchs” of the locals and carriers was George Hussey. A respectable banker, Hussey formed a bank messenger and local delivery service in 1854 when he was 42. Around 1860 he, together with his carrier, James Brennan, developed a sideline of selling stamps. With the flowering of philately, Hussey began to make stamps of other locals in 1862, using plates and stones he had been able to acquire. He had lithographic copies made by Thomas Wood, his printer, of those locals he couldn’t obtain either by buying remainders or acquiring the printing forms. Today, we don’t know what items attributed to Hussey may be remainders he bought or reprints from stones he acquired. We have the Wood’s memorandum book of what Wood printed, but even that has indications of genuine items reprinted by him from plates received from Westcott, an express company associated with Alvin Adams.

The third “patriarch” was another banker—J.P. Morgan’s financial partner, Charles Coster. Coster began collecting stamps as a teenager in the mid-1860s and wrote the first major work on the field in 1877, still a basic guide today. It was Coster’s holding and Coster’s assistance that enabled the 23-year-old J. Walter Scott to author his 1868-70 articles identifying the characteristics of genuine locals. Coster was only fifteen at the time,

but, unlike Scott, was well-situated financially to acquire a good holding in the field.

In August 1871, Coster authored a list of 220 locals and carriers, "omitting all bogus manufacturers and colors which are not authentic." This list included the C&W Bridge, International Letter Express, J.- H. Prince's steamboat local, Rodman's, Snow's, and Winans locals. At this point he also had a holding of 1,200 forgeries which he placed on exhibit at the office of William P. Brown.

In 1874, Coster began the serial publication of his history of U.S. locals. When this work, now expanded, was published in book form in 1877, Coster was only 25. A more complete, revised and updated version in French was published by J. B. Moens in 1882, for Scott had not given Coster the opportunity to edit and update the original English language book.

Coster had become part of the firm of Drexel, Morgan at the beginning of 1876 and was crucial to the financial success of that firm over the next two decades both by his "Costerization" or Morganization of railroad companies that put the firms on a sound basis and his approach to industrial reorganization as seen in the creation of General Electric. By 1878, Coster realized that his business career would prevent further philatelic work so he sold his fabled collection in Paris. It became the core of the Ferrari locals and carriers holding.

Coster did some minor philatelic writing in the locals area as late as 1881 and planned to do more, but never did. His personal copy of his *magnus opus* had bound into it correspondence about the work, including a letter from a deputy postmaster in 1891 suggesting an error in one of the entries. Bound with the letter is a refutation of the criticism by Coster and other extensive notes.

The additional notes were reported by George Wheeler in his 1973 Prentice Hall work, *Pierpont Morgan and Friends*. The corrections, emendations and additions do not appear to have been examined by anyone in philatelic circles subsequently, for they are not mentioned by his philatelic biographer, Dr. Herbert Trenchard, in his 1998 *Penny Post* article on Coster. Consequently, we don't know exactly the basis of Coster's conclusions on bogus posts in his book or the modifications he planned to make in them.

A basic problem with the Coster work is the belief it is complete and definitive. For the most part, subsequent students have blindly followed the 25-year old Coster's lead. If he condemned an item, it was banished from philatelic sight and frequently destroyed. His working research notes have never been examined and reviewed. His key sources were older dealers such as George Hussey, William P. Brown and S. Allen Taylor, most of whom were not active when the original locals operated. We already know that a number of Coster's judgments were wrong.

Reviews of over a dozen allegedly bogus locals show that *in every case* there was a real operation behind each. The most important early producer of "bogus" material was S. Allen Taylor. In *Byways of Philately*, an 1966 publication by Elliott Perry of H. Warren Hale's studies, several allegedly "bogus" Montreal locals are discussed. First taken up is Baldwin's locomotive express. This first surfaced in 1865 and was denounced by George Stewart, Jr. on March 1, 1866 in his *Monthly Gazette*. Ironically, it was Stewart who showed the local was *not* bogus. He found that an H. Baldwin ran an express office on the European and North American railway running out of St. John, New Brunswick. Although Stewart denounced the adhesives as fakes, we don't know if Baldwin ever did issue an express label or adhesive. If one did exist, it was probably destroyed at an early date.

A second Taylor-Nutter item discussed in *Byways* was Bancroft's City Express. Here, young Nutter had a local adhesive printed up for Edward Bancroft, who was a family friend and owner of a genuine local, the City Express, a package delivery company at 43 Great St. James Street. Supposedly, Bancroft agreed and some of the profile portrait adhesives produced by Nutter are initialed "E.D.B.," whether by Nutter or Bancroft himself has not been proven. Nutter also arranged that some stamps would be used on Bancroft's

packages and at least one correspondent was able to obtain copies from Bancroft's office although he reported the stamp "had been gotten up by a boy on a lark." Taylor forged the Nutter essay.

*Byways* also refers to the "pseudo" labels of the Portland Express of Winslow & Co. Sterling Dow, in his 1943 *Maine Postal History*, reports that on August 8, 1853 ads of James N. Winslow's Original Portland Express had extended operations to Montreal over the Atlantic & St. Lawrence R.R. The operation, which had earlier absorbed Bigelow's Express, was merged along with Jerome & Co. into the Eastern Express Co. on May 1, 1857 while James Winslow became a U.S. steamboat letter carrier March 25, 1861. The allegedly "pseudo" labels are probably genuine express company labels reflecting Winslow's extension of operations into Montreal.

One of the more infamous of Taylor productions, termed "bogus" by everyone down through Elliott Perry, is the Ker local. It is known in three different forms—with feathers, arms and portrait. When researched it turns out that there was a genuine Ker's local located at 6 Old Slip, New York City. Further, this company existed under three different formats of ownership. First, it was operated by James Ker as Ker & Rowland Express, then it was Andrew Ker's Express, and finally, it was operated by Andrew and John Ker. All these from the same New York location. Is it not conceivable that one of the Ker family owners went to Montreal briefly to set up a branch operation on that city's waterfront?

The Ker adhesive portrait has been alleged to be that of S. Allen Taylor by most authorities. The grounds for attribution seem flimsy. The portrait seems to be of someone older than Taylor was at the time, someone with a different set of facial hair. Actually, the adhesive portrait is sufficiently vague it might just as easily have been attributed to Mr. Floyd of the Floyd Chicago local.

There definitely was a genuine Ker local operation in New York and possibly it had intercity connections. Was there possibly a rare genuine Ker adhesive that Taylor copied badly?

Another alleged "bogus" local is the International Express local whose stamps were reprinted by George Hussey. I have a broadside photocopy ad showing E.T. Hubbell as superintendent in 1854, as well as an International Express label on a Danville, Pa. cover. Further, the *Hollowbush Transcripts* report this company was merged into the well-known Howard & Co. express operation on May 31, 1856. This company was part of the Alvin Adams group of companies. Thus, there was a genuine operation.

Even more intriguing is the note regarding the International Express adhesive found in the Wood *Memorandum Book* of the work Wood did for Hussey. This notes that Westcott & Co. were paid \$2.25 in connection with this adhesive. Westcott was another Adams company.

The original Westcott operation was a baggage express called the Manhattan Express, founded in 1851 by Robert F. Westcott. He later joined with A.S. Dodd. By 1858, the company operated the most extensive baggage delivery operation in America. By 1853, the activity operated out of the new Adams Express building, built exclusively for Adams' operations. Later it operated from the offices of the Adams agent, Edwards, Sanford & Co.

There is a Westcott adhesive label on a Brooklyn cover carried by the company. The Westcott operation was another of the numerous Alvin Adams fronts used to control the express and local delivery business. It is not unlikely that either Westcott or Dodd operated the City Express Post local for Adams as well. The 1856 merger of the Pennsylvania International Express into Howard & Co. suggests that operation was also part of the Adams family. In either case, there was a genuine operation, with genuine labels, behind this allegedly "bogus" local as I reported in my *Collectors Club Philatelist* series on "The Incunabula of Philatelic Literature on Locals and Carriers" (May 1993-April 1994). It is

not unlikely that Hussey received the original International Express plate from Westcott and reprinted from it.

Another of Hussey's allegedly "bogus" locals is the Hourly Express. In his French edition of 1882, Coster reported,

Tradition tells us that this post was formed in 1858, and existed for about three weeks, which latter circumstance may account for the fact that no authentic specimens are known. Reprints (or rather what are supposed to be reprints) are common. . . .

The Hussey reprints were produced June 22, 1866 when 1,000 were printed by Wood. They are among the last items in the *Memorandum Book*. By the time Coster was revising his 1877 work for the 1882 French edition, George Hussey, one of his sources, was no longer alive and could not be interviewed. However, it seems likely that Hussey obtained an original plate which he had Wood use to print from. A three week operation would leave few authentic adhesives on cover, but could well leave a plate for the subsequent Hussey reprints.

Another often condemned "bogus" post is that of Page & Keyes of Boston, whose adhesives are known to be an S. Allen Taylor production. Even Elliott Perry condemned this local in his April 1945 *Pat Paragraphs*. Perry had a change of mind, for when two stampless Page & Keyes handstamped covers came onto the market he split them with me. He had no question about their authenticity. With a genuine operation, did this company also issue adhesives that were mimicked by S. Allen Taylor? Again, we just don't know. The adhesives we do know are Taylor productions, but was there a genuine adhesive as well?

The allegedly "bogus" Turner local adhesive is another instance where there is a core of a genuine operation behind it. These adhesives have been attributed to Walter Ginitty and placed as a bogus Baltimore operation. However, they may have been based on one of the four genuine local operations with the Turner name. One of these used handstamps at both St. John, N.B. and Boston, Mass. in 1860, three had offices in New York, while one was known as part of the Adams operation in New London, Ct. As the possessor of several genuine Turner covers, I am somewhat aggrieved by the "bogus" attribution given everything with the Turner name.

While all the allegedly "bogus" locals have not been researched, the selection above indicates that real operations lie behind most of them. One that is more dubious is the 5¢ Utah Mormon local. It was first recorded in the *English Stamp Collectors Review* in May 1864. The story was picked up by the semi-official *U.S. Mail and Post Office Assistant* the following month. According to the story, the stamp was authorized by Brigham Young on April 4, 1852 for the purpose of prepaying letters within Utah Territory and was in use until May 1853. It was stopped when Young despatched bags of letters bearing the adhesive to England as part of the "call-in" of Mormons living abroad. Several thousand letters were bagged and got as far as Washington on their way to the British steamers in New York. The bags were stopped after being opened by postal employees and Young had to pay about \$3,000 in postage.

The 5¢ stamp would have fit the U.S. portion of the British treaty rate as well as whatever internal Utah purpose was deemed appropriate by Utah authorities. It should be noted that U.S. troops had been stationed in Salt Lake City in the winter of 1854-55, again in 1857-58 and in 1862, so that there was hostility between the Mormon leaders and the government.

There are three allegedly "bogus" Mormon stamps. The most common is a product of S. Allen Taylor's manufacture and features a portrait inside an octagonal format. The face looks more like a young Prince Albert than Brigham Young. The other two items are rare. One is a Murr's Express, Utah adhesive with a 3¢ rate. This stamp was first chronicled after 1900 but is believed to have been produced prior to 1875. Richard Frajola, who

has exhibited the Sloane “bogus” reference collection, reports that less than three copies have been recorded. It is possible that it represents a genuine express company operation in Utah. No work has been done to research this possibility to my knowledge.

The other rarity is known as a unique 5¢ black on yellow adhesive with an encircled portrait that is quite close to pictures of Brigham Young, the Mormon leader. If there is a genuine stamp behind the 1864 story this would be the adhesive of choice.

The 1864 story makes little sense, inasmuch as there were some twenty Federal postoffices operating in Utah between 1852 and 1853, so it would be unlikely for a non-Federal adhesive to be used during the period. Further, Salt Lake City had been making Federal postal returns since June of 1850 and earlier stampless covers are known from there. Conversely, Young might have created a 5¢ adhesive when he organized the State of Deseret in 1849 intending it to be independent. In the “Sloane’s Column” of October 31, 1936, George P. Sloane reported that a collector contacted Young in 1864 about a Mormon stamp and that Young stated he had never issued nor ever thought of issuing a postage stamp.

The Young denial, if accurate, should have finished any speculation about a Mormon stamp. However, it must be remembered the time was one of very strong political feelings in the U.S. and the Mormons were seen as possible Confederate sympathizers. The date of inquiry was just about the time of General Early’s raid on Washington, D.C. that panicked the North and resulted in the peak rate of “depreciated currency” covers. It would have been treason or near-treason for Young to have admitted setting up his own postal system. Too, he may well have forgotten a minor event of sixteen years before. Similar forgetfulness has been recorded in the case of postmaster provisionals and the Confederate postal officials.

Turning from “bogus” locals where the evidence seems to support the existence of a genuine operation behind most, to “bogus” stamps, it is valid and easy to conclude those traced to certain of the infamous producers of forgeries (Taylor, Scott, etc.) are fake. But what about reprints from genuine plates or stones by men such as Hussey?

Some of the allegedly “bogus” adhesives are sufficiently close to known genuine items that they might represent different positions on a stone or plate, particularly if they are rare. We don’t yet know enough to conclusively condemn some items. It is necessary to plate the genuine items and show the fake doesn’t plate or to establish that the fake comes from the place of a known forger and that the plate is not one used by the forger for reprints but one that was wholly made up. For some locals this has been done. For many others, where the allegedly “bogus” item is rare and the genuine is unplated, it seems necessary to suspend judgment until more research has been done. Unfortunately, this type of research is not a well-established tradition in the locals and carriers field, and there has been an all too prevalent historic tradition of destroying an item not endorsed by prevailing authorities such as Coster. □