

TASCO Prize Set Packets

If you have been a United States stamp collector for long, you have probably seen one or more of the TASCO Educational Booklets produced by Tatham Stamp & Coin Co. of Springfield, Mass. Owner Howard E. MacIntosh, who preferred to designate himself Tatham's manager, traded under the names "Tatham" and "TASCO" (Tatham Stamp & Coin Co.). Tatham was in business from 1928-58. MacIntosh died by suicide with a .32 gunshot to the head in 1958.

By its 20th anniversary, Tatham was employing 35-40 people in a store occupying more than 4,000 square feet. The company not only sold stamps and coins, but promoted stamp collecting with its educational booklets. The small pocket-sized guides helped collectors identify different difficult-to-classify stamps. MacIntosh was a master of mass marketing. Although he was well known in philatelic circles, he was even better known in the coin world. Edition 22 of the company catalog is shown in Figure 1.

The TASCO series of educational booklets included: *The One and Two Cent Issues of 1890-1898* T1 (1938); *The One Cent Issues of 1870-1888* T2 (1938, 1941); *The Three Cent Issues of 1870-1887 and 1870-1888* T3 (1939); *The Two Cent Issues of 1908 to 1920* T4 (1940); *The Three Cent Issues of 1908 to 1920* T5 (1941); *The Postage Stamps of the Confederate States of America* T6 (1941); *The Postage Stamps of the Confederate States of America Blocks of Four (Facsimiles)* T7 (1941); *The Two Cent Issues of 1922-1938* T8 (1941); *The Two Cent Columbian Exposition Issue of 1893* T9 (1941); *The Three Cent Issues of 1851-1860* T10 (1943); *Booklet Panes of the United States* T11 (1943); *The Paper Used for United States Envelope Stamps, 1853-1943* T12 (1943); *The Future Delivery Stamps of the United States, 1918-1938* T13 (1943); *The Potato Stamps of the United States* T14 (1943); and *Boy Scouts of America: Merit Badge Requirements on Stamp Collecting* T15 (1956).

The late Gayland Bird published a series of TASCO handbooks (copyrighted 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012) with complete listings and illustrations of all 15 booklets and their varieties, as well as all envelope varieties. He gave values for all varieties and updated them yearly. As heavily distributed as they were, one would think TASCO booklets would be easy to find, but not all are.

Familiar to most Confederate collectors is the booklet, *The Postage Stamps of the Confederate States of America*, with an introduction written by Roger W. Sargent. According to

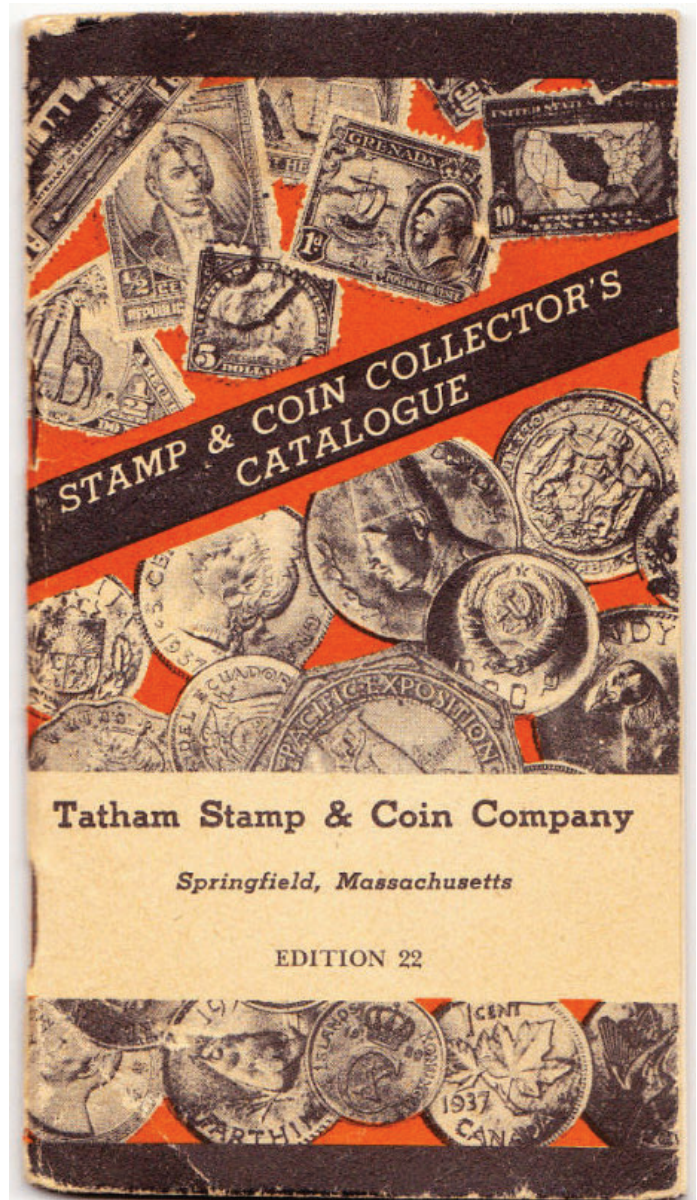


Figure 1. Tatham Stamp & Coin Collector's Catalogue, edition 22.

the inscription below the title, the booklet is "a brief historical and philatelic research on the general issues of the Confederacy, containing facsimile reproductions of the fourteen stamps in color."

Both the booklets and their envelopes are collectible. The numbered facsimile backstamps are also collected by type.

Volume T6 was filled with Springfield facsimile singles. T6 Type II is shown in Figure 2. There are six types, ranging from variations of the TASCO company name, Avalon Stamp Co.,

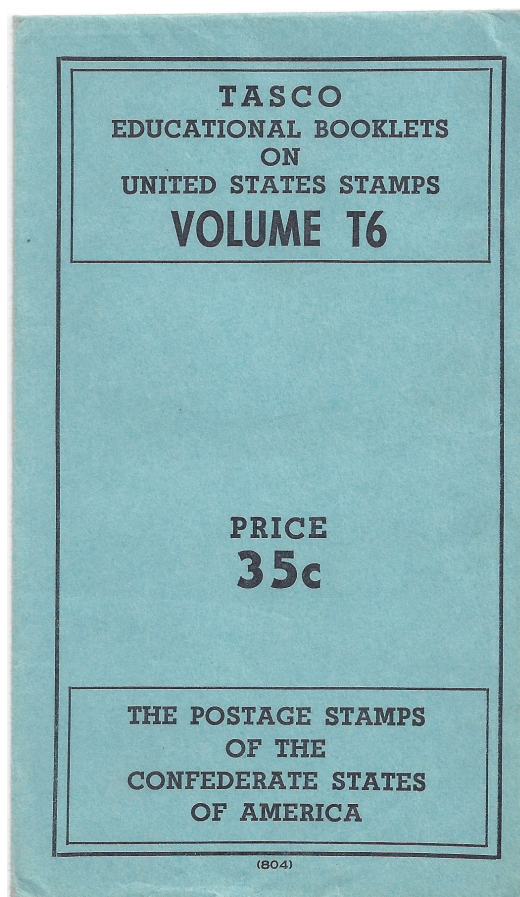
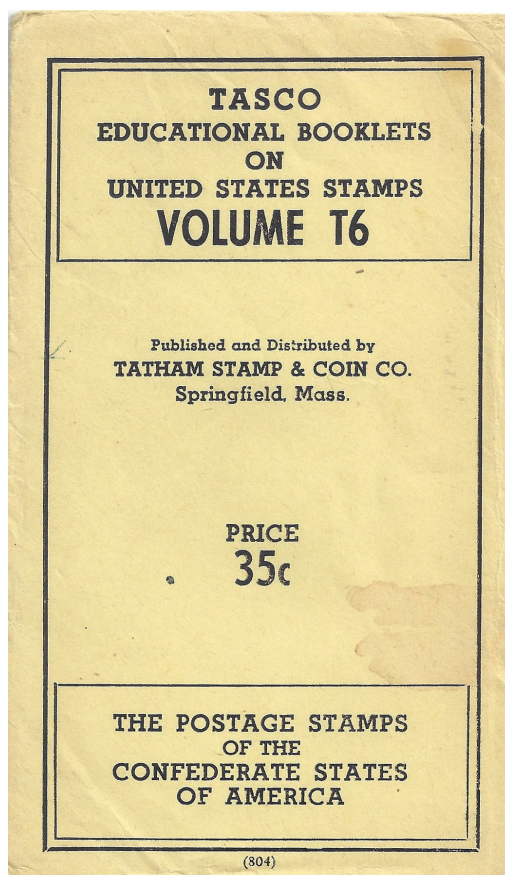
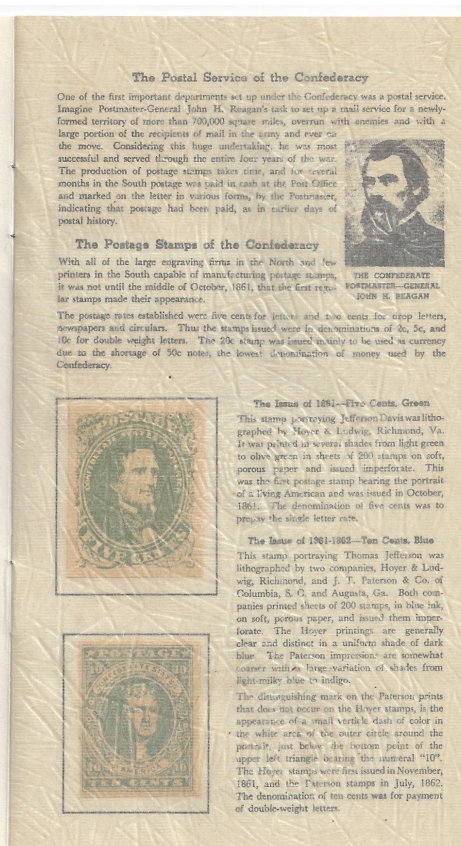
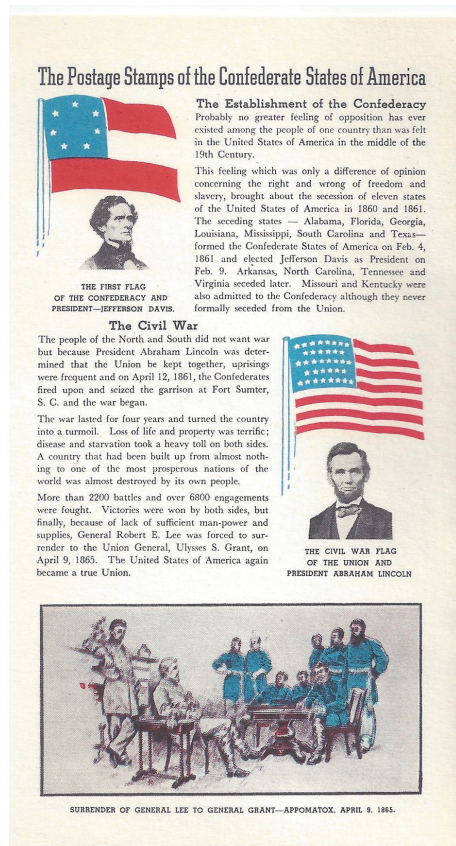
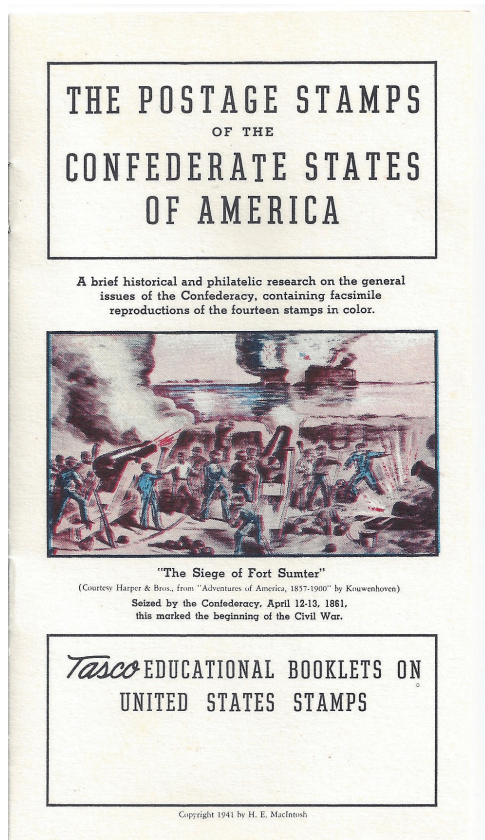


Figure 2 (top left). Volume T6, Type II, of the Confederate Springfield facsimiles booklet.

Figure 3 (above). T6 booklet open to display text on the left and stamps on the right, covered with a glassine insert.

Figure 4 (far left). T6 envelope Type I, yellow.

Figure 5 (left). T6 envelope Type VI, blue.

Figure 6 (right). Outer page of T7 with block of 4 of the first Confederate general issue facsimile bearing portrait of Jefferson Davis.

Figure 7 (far right). T7 envelope Type I, dark pink.

or no name at all. All were marked "Copyright 1941 by H.E. MacIntosh."

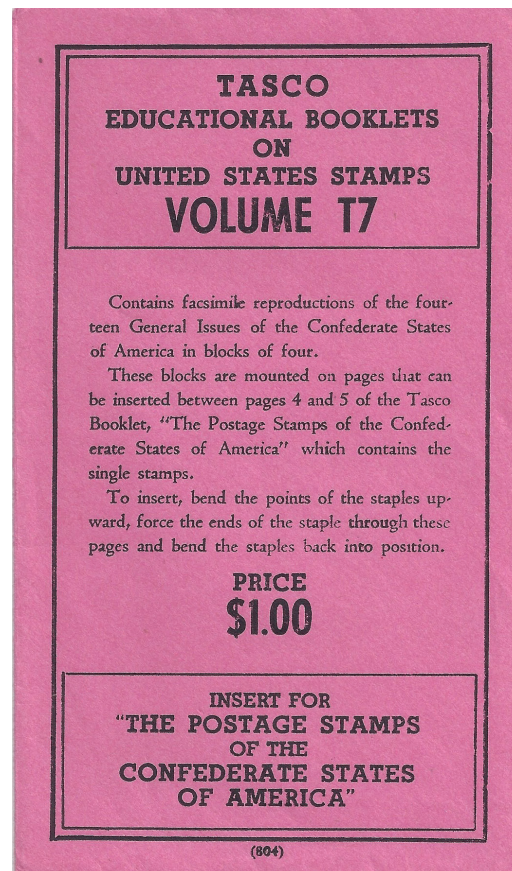
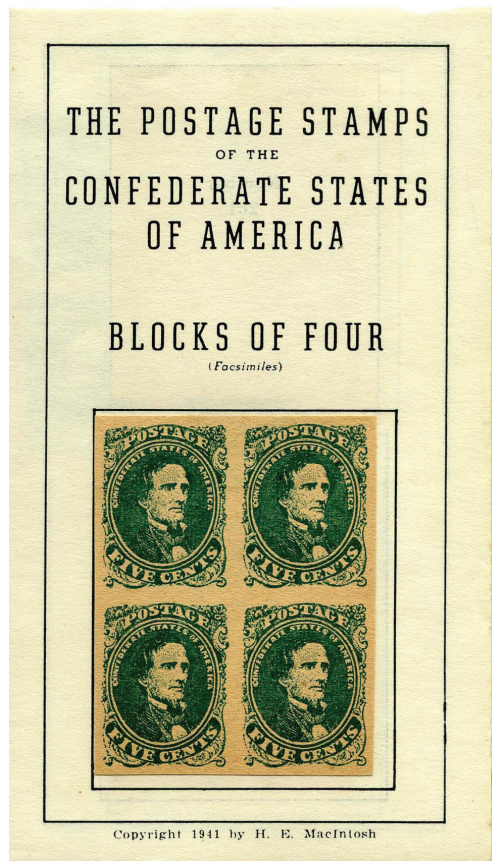
Figure 3 shows the T6 booklet opened to display the text on the left with the stamps visible at right, covered by a thin glassine insert to protect the stamps.

Yellow envelope Type I is shown in Figure 4. There are six T6 envelope types recorded. Figure 5 shows Type VI in blue. It is also listed in green. The T6 and T7 envelopes measure 3½ inches by 6 inches.

Volume T7 was filled with blocks of the same facsimiles, with instructions on the envelope how to insert them in the booklet. Figure 6 shows the first page of the T7 Confederate blocks of four, with an accompanying dark pink envelope, Type I, shown in Figure 7. There were two other types. Type II was in blue and Type III in gray under the name of Avalon Stamp Co., Springfield, Mass. Avalon is thought to have been under the Tatham umbrella.

The facsimiles replicated the genuine Confederate stamps cataloged as CSA 1 through CSA 14 in both the *Confederate States of America Catalog and Handbook of Stamps and Postal History* and the *Scott Specialized Catalogue of United States Stamps & Covers*.

Figure 8. Prize Set "C" envelope.



Some of the United States TASCO booklets were filled with genuine stamps, but the Confederate booklets were filled with facsimiles. Initially, these facsimiles were referred to as the "Tatham fakes" or "Tatham counterfeits." Only later were they referred to as "Springfield facsimiles," a reference to the town from which they originated, Springfield, Mass.

MacIntosh began backstamping the Springfield facsimiles with the word "Facsimile" in 1935. This was in response to criticism received in the philatelic press for selling fake stamps. There is no evidence he was trying to pass them off as genuine.

The concern was that the facsimiles could be placed on unused envelopes from the Confederate period, tied with fake postmarks and sold to unsuspecting collectors. And, indeed, they were and still are today. Almost not a day goes by that I don't see Springfield facsimiles offered as genuine stamps on eBay, at auction or in unsuspecting non-specialist dealers' stocks.

The Springfields, including their backstamps, have been copied over the years by various people. Fortunately, the late Rev. Paul B. Freeland classified and listed the various types of backstamps. He donated his collection of fakes to the Confederate Stamp Alliance (now the Civil War Philatelic Society) where it is used today by the Authentication Service.

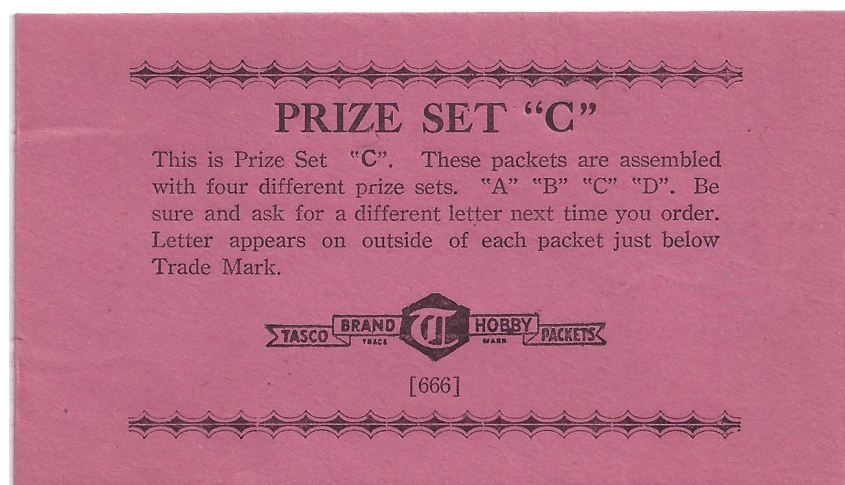




Figure 9. 2¢ green Andrew Jackson facsimile from Prize Set "C."

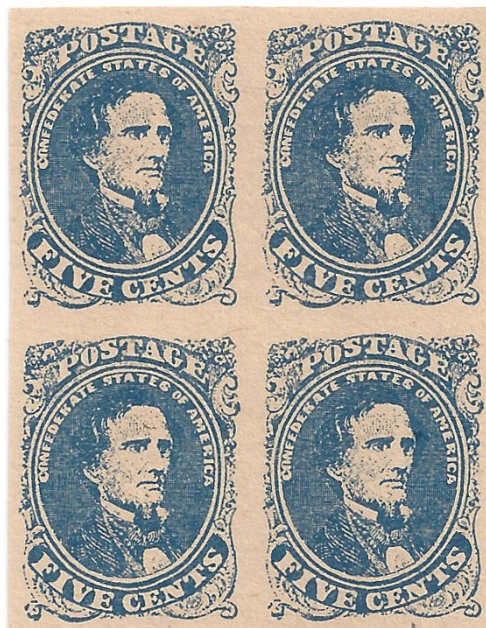


Figure 10. 5¢ blue Jefferson Davis facsimile from Prize Set "C."



Figure 11. 10¢ rose Thomas Jefferson facsimile from Prize Set "C."

Copies of Springfield facsimiles are often offered on the philatelic marketplace as genuine Springfields. With the advent of the computer, scanners and digital color printers, this was inevitable. Since the original facsimiles offered by Tatham had no backstamps, this makes pretenders difficult to identify unless you are a student of the Springfields.

As much as I've studied the TASCO products, I was recently thrown a curve ball. In a collection I bought, a T7 set had an unexpected addition – Prize Set "C" – a small pink envelope measuring 2½" by 4¼", as shown in Figure 8, with the opening at the end. It contained facsimile blocks of four of CSA 3, 4 and 5, shown in Figures 9-11. They have white Type

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Figure 12. An early "complete set" of 12 singles with a TASCO approval packet envelope.

E backstamps identifying them as facsimiles and with the old Scott catalog numbering system from the 1940s. Because they are white, they are very difficult to see, let alone scan, so are not included herein. Other, more visible, backstamps were done in gray and black.

An early "complete set" of 12 singles is shown in Figure 12, along with a small TASCO approval packet envelope. The CSA 7 and CSA 12 were not included, although the facsimile for CSA 6 more resembles CSA 7 than 6, the original stamp design done by De La Rue. By 1941, the missing facsimile designs were added to the set.

On the prize set envelope is printed a note that:

These packets are assembled with four different prize sets, "A" "B" "C" "D." Be sure and ask for a different letter next time you order.

I had never seen a Confederate prize set before and, in checking with others knowledgeable on the topic, they had not either. It is not listed in the *Springfield Facsimiles of Confederate Postage Stamps* by Steven M. Roth, Francis J. Crown Jr. and

Patricia A. Kaufmann. Nor is it mentioned in Gayland Bird's TASCO handbook. I have seen similar packets in the U.S. educational booklets, but not in the Confederate.

Doubtless, most prize set envelopes were thrown out after the blocks were mounted in personal albums. It is clear these were also early stamps because when the educational booklets came out in 1941, blocks were meant to be added to the T6 booklets.

Directions on the outside of the T7 envelope advise that:

These blocks are mounted on pages that can be inserted between pages 4 and 5 of the Tasco Booklet, 'The Postage Stamps of the Confederate States of America' which contains single stamps. To insert, bend the points of the staples upward, force the ends of the staple through these pages, and bend the staples back into position.

If you have a prize set or more information about them, I hope you will share with me and our readers. As ever, philately is a never-ending quest for information. I may be reached by email at trishkauf@comcast.net.