

Analysis of a CSA 10 Frame Line Stamp

By Patricia A. Kaufmann

At a recent show, a collector new to the study of Confederates brought me an inherited CSA 10 “Frame Line” on cover; he wondered if it was genuine. The quick answer was both “yes” and “no.”

From an initial examination under magnification and strong oblique light from my trusty True-Color Ott-Lite,[®] I showed him that the frame lines at the top, right and most of the bottom were genuine as evidenced by the frame lines that showed as raised ink lines on the paper.

The lower left corner frames, on the other hand, had been drawn in. They were flat, fuzzy and a slightly different color of ink, as well as inappropriately close to the lower left scrolls.

The subject stamp, shown in Figure 1 off-cover, was pen canceled and placed at the upper right corner of the cover, the most commonly found location. The postmark did not look to me to be of Confederate origin.

The stamp has since been removed from the now discarded cover and I do not remember the town name, nor is it relevant. The address panel looked of the general period but was either antebellum or, more likely, post-war.

There was also an unusual mark at the upper left of the stamp, still undetermined, near the “ate” of “Confederate.” The stamp was not tied to the cover by any markings save a slight stroke of this unusual marking at upper left.

I suggested that we look at the stamp from the inside of the cover (a big tip to you, my reader). From the inside, it was clear that there was a large thin in the stamp that convincingly indicated the stamp had been added to the cover. There was something else visible from the inside too, but we could not make out what it was.

The collector owned the cover with his brother, who was not at the show with him, thus he took it home for them to mutually ponder their next move.

The following week I received a phone call from him and we struck a deal for the stamp. He told me that he soaked off the stamp and it took over a half hour to part from the cover—



Figure 1: A CSA 10 Frame Line stamp with interesting condition problems.

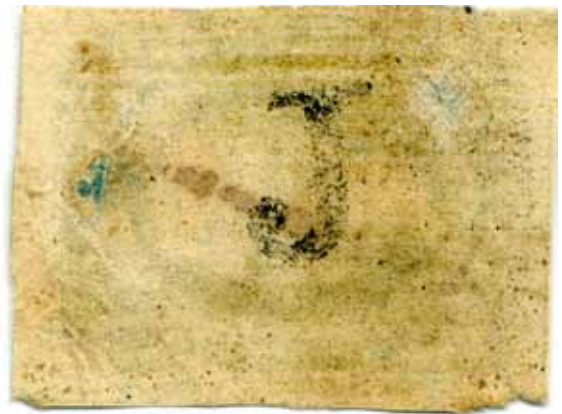


Figure 2: The handstamped ‘J’ on the back of the stamp, as well as very obvious thins at left and upper right.

Figure 4: When held to light, the stamp clearly shows thins at left in the ‘ST’ of ‘POSTAGE,’ as well as the ‘10’ and the lower left stamp edge (upper right when viewed from this angle from reverse).



another big clue something was seriously amiss. Had it been affixed with original gum, it would have taken under a minute to float free when immersed in water.

Not only were there two very evident heavy thins, there was a handstamped “J” on the back of the stamp, shown in Figure 2. That conclusively proved that the stamp was added to the cover in an attempt to defraud.

Once I received the stamp, I carefully examined it again in its off-cover state. As well as the two large thins, the lower left edge also showed as thinned (seen at upper right as the backlit image in Figure 3).

This is the area of the drawn-in frames in the lower left corner. Figure 4 is a close-up of that area from the front. The line across the bottom at lower left is likely a genuine line that has been scraped, thinned or flattened and then drawn over with blue ink.

TAKE-AWAY TIPS

- Use oblique light to determine if the frame lines on the CSA 10 you are examining are visibly raised. They should be. A caveat here, however. I have seen cleaned, soaked and pressed Frame Line stamps that were extremely hard to determine because they had been squashed practically flat in an effort to eradicate creases, thereby almost eliminating the evidence of genuine frame lines as raised engraved lines. If in doubt, have it professionally expertised.

- Check to see if the color of ink matches the basic design. Natural sunlight is best. Ott-Lite® True Color is helpful inside as your regular task light or on cloudy days.



Figure 3: Close-up of the bottom left corner showing drawn-in frame lines.

- If the frame lines are fuzzy and wavy, you can bet they were drawn in.

- If the frame lines are too close to the design elements of the stamp, they were also likely drawn in.

- **On any cover**, viewing from the inside of the cover with strong backlight can be one of the very best weapons in your examination arsenal. It can reveal not only a scenario such as that presented here, but help determine whether a cover has been rebacked, repaired, silked or otherwise tampered with. You also might find a turned cover or a wallpaper cover in that non-specialist dealer’s shoebox of cheap covers! Make this a standard practice – *Look inside*.

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