

# A Tale of Two Halpins

By Col. Jeffrey Alan Hawkins

While pursuing background for a book I am writing about the scandal that almost (and should have) derailed Grover Cleveland's bid for the presidency in 1884, I was amazed to learn that Frederick Halpin, my great-great-great-grandfather, had apparently engraved postage stamps in Richmond for the Confederacy. This was quite a surprise to the family.

Our favorite Frederick Halpin work has long been his 1866 engraving of Abraham Lincoln, from a painting by F.B. Carpenter.

It did not seem probable that an engraver with an established business turning out portrait engravings for book publishers would uproot himself, leave his large family at home in Brooklyn, and take his chances on the other side of a war economy. There had to be something more to the story, and there is: it was John Halpin, not his younger brother, Frederick, who was engraving stamps and banknote plates in Richmond in 1861.

There can be no doubt that a Halpin engraved several Confederate stamps for an April 4, 1867, letter from H. St. George Offutt, former chief of the Contract Bureau for the CSA Post Office Department, noted particular stamps had been "engraved by Mr. Halpin, an Englishman, employed by Archer & Daly in Richmond."<sup>1</sup>

Offutt, however, did not provide Halpin's first name. In a letter dated April 14, 1868, sent from his New York office, Offutt sought to defeat an "attempt to foist upon stamp collectors a bogus stamp," and implied that he had spoken to Archer and Halpin:

*Mr. Archer and Mr. Halpin are both engaged in this city at this time, and neither of them have any knowledge of the stamp claimed to have been adopted and used by the department... .<sup>2</sup>*

Both Frederick and John Halpin were working in New York at the time Offutt wrote. Still, there is one more twist. At the time of Offutt's 1867 and 1868 letters, J.W. Scott and Company was advertising its stamp business, which was located at 34 Liberty during 1867-1868. So, Scott was in the same building at the same time that Frederick Halpin was busily



**Figure 1: Abraham Lincoln, engraved by Frederick W. Halpin, (1866), after a study sketch by F.B. Carpenter. (Library of Congress, <http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/pgs.01452>)**

engraving there. It would have been very little trouble for Scott to ask Frederick Halpin about Confederate stamp engravings.

Yet there appears to be no record that Scott ever availed himself of an obvious and close-by reference source. One may surmise that Scott learned that Frederick Halpin was not the Halpin who engraved stamps and banknotes in Richmond.

## John Halpin

Biographical information about engravers is scanty. According to *American Engravers on Copper and Steel* by David McNeely Stauffer and Mantle Fielding, John Halpin "was engraving in St. Petersburg, Russia, before he reached the United States by way of Halifax."

This was probably true, for John mentioned his time in St. Petersburg in a caption to his engraving of Nicholas I, published in 1851 by Harper and Brothers.



Figure 2: A cover with a “Greenwich N.Y. May 22” circular date stamp. (Jeffrey Alan Hawkins)



Figure 3: The reverse of the Figure 1 cover with ‘Answered May 31st 1865.’ (Jeffrey Alan Hawkins)

Harper and Brothers had also used several of John Halpin’s engravings in J. Ross Browne’s 1846 *Etchings of a Whaling Cruise*.

About 1852, John Halpin engraved Thomas Cole’s intricately detailed “Voyage of Life” landscapes for a pamphlet, establishing his “chops” as a miniaturist.<sup>3</sup>

It is not a difficult leap to believe that a man

who could engrave Cole’s images to fit a small page could also excel as a stamp engraver.

Halpin’s penchant for the small illustration is shown in his miniature watercolor of a character in the *Merry Wives of Windsor*, dated “New York 1860” and recently sold by Skinner Auctions. The date of this painting coincides with Halpin’s 1860 census occupation, “artist.”

American Tea Tray Works,  
Greenwich, Washington Co.,  
New York, N.Y. May 1862

Theodore

I received your letter, stating that you had returned to New York, having been unsuccessful in obtaining employment in Long Island, and adding that you would like to stop in New York & make more out of you could get something to do, you do not know what ever will become of you.

I confess I am somewhat disappointed, that a young man of your age and perfectly well in health should be so disheartened and dejected.

What in the world would you do if you had a wife and 10 or 12 children depending on you for support.

If you have made up your mind that you are not sharp enough to be a clerk, in the name of all that is

By 1866-67, John Halpin was one of the early members of the American Society of Painters in Water Colors. He is shown in the 1870 census as an engraver living in Rahway, New Jersey.

A few months after that census was taken, Geo. A. Leavitt & Co. was advertising for sale the "Books, Paintings, Water-Colors, Etchings, Engravings, Art, &c. belonging to the late Mr. JOHN HALPIN, OF NEW YORK." Where he was buried remains a mystery.

But what was John Halpin doing during the war years? On May 3, 1862, the *New York Daily Tribune* reported:

*The artists of the country have almost all evinced the highest patriotic feelings since the outbreak of the rebellion, but*

Figure 4 (Left): The front page of a letter from George L. Jones, mailed to 'Mr. Halpin Engraver' for Theodore Jones. (Jeffrey Alan Hawkins)

Figure 5 (Below): A portion of the letter from George L. Jones to his son, Theodore Jones, 'Give my best respects to Mr. Halpin...and your Uncle Alfred... .' (Jeffrey Alan Hawkins)

you can do by something else. It is especially distressing to me to see such apathy, and want of energy as seemingly exists in all my boys.

You will see by the wording of this that I am very nervous, that my system is out of order, and so it is. I do not know that during the day that you have been absent I have spent scarcely one hour without thinking of you, and so it has been in some degree during the night.

It is but a day or two since I told your Mother that I thought she looked 10 years older than when you left home, some 10 weeks ago.

Expected you will find another 10 dollar bill, which will make 55 dollars you have had in about 10 weeks, and as you must know yourself that this state

good deal sharper, or you see some to meet with the same. So best as before.

With the exception of myself we are all well, and shall await with some anxiety to hear from you when we shall hope to hear a letter, and tell me at the same time, who told you about the New Tray factory and whether or not you have seen Mr. Ordman.

Give my best respects to Mr. Halpin (I don't know his Christian name) and your Uncle Alfred, and let me hear from you in a week at furthest and oblige

Yours as ever  
Geo. L. Jones

*we are sorry to be compelled to announce the treachery of one. A well-known water-color painter and bank-note engraver of New-York, John Halpin, greatly scandalized the profession of which he was a member, by sneaking off to Secessia, by way of Kentucky, some four months since and is now in Richmond giving aid and comfort to the rebels by engraving the plates for their currency.*

The *Tribune's* report rings true in a few details. Halpin was working in watercolors in 1860, and he was listed under "Engravers, Bank Note" in *Wilson's Business Directory* for 1856-57.

The time given for John Halpin's departure is very close to the start of the Richmond efforts.

### Frederick Halpin

Examples of Frederick Halpin's engraving work support that he was present and working in the city of New York during the years of what was called up North, "the Rebellion."

Frederick Halpin's engraving of Lincoln after F.B. Carpenter, bears an 1866 copyright, but a December 4, 1866, letter from Carpenter to Lincoln's former law partner, William H. Herndon, provided the time-frame for the engraving:

*You ask if my 'study' portrait of Lincoln is being engraved? I am happy to say that it is, and nearly completed.—The engraver Mr. Halpin (the best engraver in the style Known as stipple and line, in this country) has had the original portrait in his hands for the last eighteen months and has spared no pains to reproduce it faithfully.*

From this, we can deduce that Frederick Halpin was physically present at 34 Liberty Street, New York, at the beginning of June 1865.

Eighteen months seems like a long time to make the Lincoln engraving, but the production time may have been affected by the illness and eventual death from consumption of his first-born son, whose passing left behind a wife, a son of about three or four years of age, and a baby daughter.

A letter "for Theodore Jones," postmarked May 22, 1865, and mailed to "Mr. Halpin Engraver &c 34 Liberty Street New York," closes with:



**Figure 6: An undated cabinet photograph of Engraver Frederick Halpin. (Jeffrey Alan Hawkins)**



**Figure 7: John Archer's business card. (Courtesy, John Moschioni)**

*Give my best respects to Mr. Halpin (I don't know his christened name) and your Uncle Alfred and let me hear from you in a week at furthest and oblige.<sup>4</sup>*

An engraving of Lyman Beecher, having an 1863 copyright, places Frederick Halpin in New York around 1863.<sup>5</sup>



### City Directories and Other Sources

I checked city directories for New York and Brooklyn on the theory that a Halpin moving to Richmond for a length of time may not list a home or work address. Here is what I found for the years 1850 through 1872:<sup>6</sup>

Year	Frederick home	Frederick work	John home	John work
1850		34 Liberty		
1852-53			h. Flatbush Rd., n. Prospect Hill	Engraver, 80 Nassau N.Y.
1856		34 Liberty		“Engravers, Bank Note.” 381 Broadway
1857				Engraver, Broadway c. White N.Y.
1859		34 Liberty		62 Fulton
1860	126 Remsen Brooklyn	34 Liberty	Brooklyn	62 Fulton
1861	126 Remsen Brooklyn	34 Liberty	Brooklyn	62 Fulton
1862	Long Island	34 Liberty	Eighth, Brooklyn	167 Broadway
1863	126 Remsen Brooklyn	34 Liberty		167 Broadway
1864	126 Remsen Brooklyn	34 Liberty		
1865	126 Remsen Brooklyn	34 Liberty		
1866	48 Montgomery Jersey City	34 Liberty	“artist, h Douglass n. Vanderbilt”	
1867	h J.C.	34 Liberty	“engraver, h Douglass n. Vanderbilt av.”	
1870	“Picture Engraver” 1st Ward of Jersey City		Engraver, 4th Ward of Rahway, Union County, NJ	
1872	h. J.C.	34 Liberty		

The results are only suggestive. If John Halpin removed to Richmond at the tail end of 1861, he may have continued his 1862 listing based upon uncertainty around how long the work would last.

What about his listing in 1863? Did the *Tribune* story cause a backlash that prompted John Halpin to drop his home address from the directory? Was the address, “167 B’way,” provided by a fellow engraver for John Halpin to use as a mail-drop, or was John legitimately employed at that location?

We can do a few more things with the directories. First, we can look for John Archer, the Northern banknote engraver who formed half of Archer and Daly, later, Archer and Halpin:

Year	John Archer Home	Work
1853	Franklin n. Myrtle Ave. Brooklyn	
1859	1 Clinton Pl., B’klyn	Archer, John & Company, Engravers 62 Fulton
1860		Archer, John & Company, Engravers 62 Fulton

Year	John Archer Home	Work
1861		
1862		Archer, John, engraver 99 Beekman
1863		
1864		
1865	“JOHN ARCHER, Bank-Note Engraver, care of Messrs. Davies & Sons, Booksellers, Richmond, Va.”	
1866		
1875	h. 99 Franklin av.	

From this, we can note the proximity of John Archer and John Halpin, both working at 62 Fulton in 1860.

The directories tell us that John Archer & Company, Engravers, was located at 62 Fulton for the years 1859-60.

After 1860, the company no longer appears in Trow’s directory, though John Halpin still works at 62 Fulton in 1861.

In 1862, however, John Archer, engraver, is listed at 99 Beekman, while John Halpin

is working at 167 Broadway. Crosschecking these addresses shows involvement with other engravers: William R. Smith at 99 Beekman and Robert Martin at 167 Broadway.

One further item possibly ties the Halpins to John Archer, and that is John Archer's business card (Figure 7), an example of which was recently put up for sale on e-Bay.

From an image of the card, in magnificent script, it reads:

*John Archer*  
*Writing Engraver*  
*American Bank Note Compn'y N.Y.*

*Residence,*  
*99*  
*Franklin Avenue,*  
*East Brooklyn.*

On the lower right corner of the card, in handwriting, appears the address, "34 Liberty St." That address was also the work address of Frederick Halpin from at least 1851 to 1872.

The *Brooklyn City Directory* for 1853 shows on page 26, "Archer, John engraver Franklin n. Myrtle av."

### Summary

In summary, a contemporary newspaper story places John Halpin in Richmond engraving banknotes in early May 1862.

John Halpin was once listed in a city directory as a banknote engraver. Frederick was never listed as a bank note engraver.

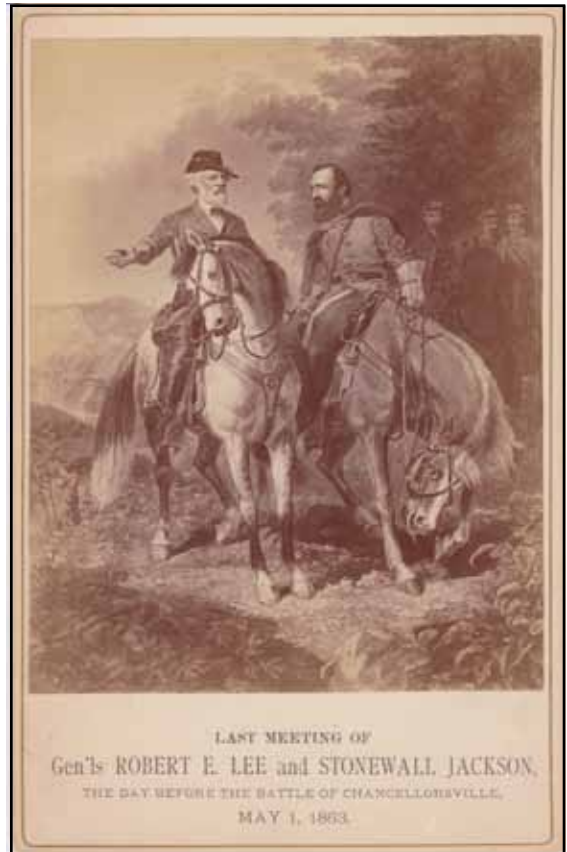
John shows multiple work addresses during the war years, but Frederick's work address is consistently reported as 34 Liberty.

John Halpin and John Archer worked at the same address, at the same time, in part.

For at least part of the time the CSA work was going on in Richmond, Frederick Halpin was busy engraving in New York, and dealing with a dying son.

In light of all of the above, while both Frederick and John Halpin probably knew John Archer, it was John Halpin who joined Archer in Richmond.

I suspect, as did August Dietz, that the firm of Archer and Daly, later known as Archer and Halpin (John, in my estimation, Frederick for August Dietz) began engraving banknotes in Richmond with the covert cooperation of



**Figure 8:** A cabinet photograph of Frederick Halpin's 1872 engraving of "The Last Meeting" by Everett D.B. Julio. According to the July 18, 1936, *Schenectady Gazette*, August Dietz proposed a four-cent Army stamp using this engraving as its central design.

American Bank Note Company. In setting out to do so, in the words of August Dietz, they may have taken with them:

*"...very likely (in fact, almost certainly), a selection of transfers of vignettes and portraits on small steel plates. Even if they only brought proofs of their former work, these could serve them in their work in Richmond. It is common practice of skilled engravers to preserve patterns and proofs of their work...."*<sup>7</sup>

### Acknowledgements

My thanks to Patricia A. Kaufmann and Leonard Hartmann who reviewed the initial manuscript and provided helpful suggestions.

### Endnotes

- 1 *The Stamp-Collector's Magazine*, August 1, 1867, pp. 113-114.
- 2 *The Stamp-Collector's Magazine*, July 1, 1868, pp. 107-108.
- 3 Cole's "Voyage of Life" paintings can be explored on You-tube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vikXYhBQHjU>. John Halpin's engravings of them can be found at: <http://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=nyp.33433068177090;view=1 up;seq=10>
- 4 In *Wilson's New York City Directory, 1856-7*, Alfred Jones is listed under "Engravers-Seal." Frederick Halpin is listed under "Engravers- Portrait, Historical, and Landscape."
- 5 Autobiography, Correspondence, Etc. of Lyman Beecher, D.D., Harper and Brothers (1865)
- 6 Information sourced from the following directories and census records: *New York Mercantile Union Business Directory, 1850*; *Hearn's Brooklyn Directory* for 1852-1853; *Wilson's Business Directory of New York City, 1856*; *Smith's Brooklyn Directory*, for the year ending May 1st, 1857; *Trow's New York City Directories*, 1859, 1861, 1862, 1863, 1867, 1872; *Brooklyn City Directories*, 1864, 1865; *Wilson's Business Directory of New York City, 1865*; *Gopsill's Jersey City and Hoboken Directory*, for the year ending 30th April, 1867; *Lain's Brooklyn City Directory* for the year ending May 1st, 1866; *Brooklyn Directory, 1867*; *1870 Census Series M593 Roll: 866 Page: 21: 1st ward of Jersey City N.J.* as of June 28, 1870; *1870 Census: 4th Ward of Rahway, Union County, N.J.* as of August 27, 1870; John Archer's advertisement in *Richmond Daily Dispatch*, March 10, 1865, "PLATE PRINTERS WANTED"; *The Brooklyn City and Business Directory*, for the year ending May 1st, 1875, Lain and Company.
- 7 April 22, 1939 letter from August Dietz to Anthony C. Russo, quoted in "The Confederate States Two-Cent Red-Jack Intaglio Stamp" by Brian M. Green, 1983, The Philatelic Foundation, p. 7.

(Col. Jeffrey Alan Hawkins earned his law degree at Temple University Beasley School of Law, where a professor once observed that he had a very 19th century frame of reference. He took that to be a good thing. E-mail him at [jeffhawkins1884@yahoo.com](mailto:jeffhawkins1884@yahoo.com).)

**Comment by the Editorial Review Committee** — Frederick Halpin has been credited with engraving the later Confederate stamps since the beginning of Confederate philately. The source of the attribution comes from August Dietz Sr. who, on pages 232+ in his 1929 book *The Postal Service of the Confederate States of America*, cites as his main source Frank Baptist, who was the head printer at Archer & Daly at the time. According to Dietz, Baptist identified the engraver as Frederick Halpin. The firm of Archer & Daly (later Archer & Halpin) went out of business in late 1864 when they lost their printing contract to Keatinge & Ball. This article certainly raises many questions by proposing the possibility that the long held attribution is not true. Dietz personally knew Baptist, having apprenticed with him in the late 1800s, and used him as a source for much of the material in his book. It is difficult to ignore the attribution of a major primary source such as Frank Baptist without further examination. Look for a follow-up to this subject in a future issue of *The Confederate Philatelist*.

## Next CSA Mid-Year to be Held October 9-10, 2015, in Asheville, N.C.

On August 28, 1937, August Dietz and a hand full of other Confederate collectors met for the first time and formed the Confederate Stamp Alliance in Asheville, North Carolina. The CSA will return to its birthplace for its mid-year meeting in 2015.

The meeting is being hosted by Gen. Tony Crumbley and Col. Maurice Bursley.

**Dates:** October 9-10, 2015

**Location:** Comfort Suites Biltmore, 890 Brevard Rd., Asheville, NC 28806

The hotel phone number is (828) 665-4000. The CSA room rate is \$130 for reservations made before September 8, 2015.

Additional information to follow from Gen. Tony Crumbley. Contact him by e-mail at: [Tcrumbley2@bellsouth.net](mailto:Tcrumbley2@bellsouth.net).

Mark your calendar and be there.