

Research Solves Identity Mystery



By Barbara A. Bither, Bank Note Reporter
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In 1869, Laban Heath, the publisher of Heath's Greatly Improved and Enlarged Infallible Government Counterfeit Detector...,¹ appeared before the Senate Joint Select Committee on Retrenchment as part of an investigation into the methods adopted by the Treasury Department in printing securities. During an inquiry by Sen. George F. Edmunds, the following interchange took place:

Edmunds: "I see that you have a very handsome frontispiece in your book containing the heads of Washington, Grant, Sherman, Johnson, McCulloch, Clark, and Colby, together with a perspective of the treasury [sic] building. How did you procure that, from whom, and under what circumstance?" – A. [Heath] From Mr. Clark [Spencer M. Clark, chief of the First Currency Bureau (the early Bureau of Engraving and Printing)]. Mr. Clark had the plate in his possession. It was something he had gotten up, I believe. He was showing it to me one day, and we suggested the idea between us that it might be a very fine thing for the book."²

Despite Edmunds' description, that frontispiece has over time posed questions as to the identity of the men pictured. Appearing only in the larger banking and counting house editions of Heath's book, it is labeled at the bottom, "Engraved & Printed at the Treasury Department" and consists of a grouping of seven small portraits surrounding an eagle about to take flight with a shield and the United States flag in its talons. Above the inscription is a depiction of the Treasury Department.

The gentlemen whose portraits encircle the eagle have been, for the most part, identified. In the past, clockwise from bottom left to bottom right, the portraits have been noted as: Spencer M. Clark, Chief of the First Currency Bureau, Sen. Stephen A. Douglas (incorrectly), Gen. Ulysses S. Grant, George Washington, Gen. William T. Sherman, Hugh McCulloch, Secretary of the Treasury from 1865 to 1869, and Francis E. Spinner, Treasurer (incorrectly).

Using as my source a copy of Heath's 1867 counterfeit detector located in the Historical Resource Center (HRC) collections in the Bureau of Engraving and Printing (BEP), I



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intend to clarify the identity of two of the portraits depicted on Heath's frontispiece. In addition, I will explore some of the background of the portraits and vignettes that compose this piece.

Appearing in the 1830s-1840s, bank note reporters (frequently also called counterfeit detectors) were periodicals designed to aid bankers and merchants in avoiding bad currency. The bank note reporter provided rates of discount for notes that would not be taken at their full-face value in a business transaction,³ and lists of counterfeit, altered, and defunct banks.⁴ In the late 1850s another type of counterfeit detector appeared, focusing on actual bank note engravings and focused on studying the engravings as a way to detect counterfeit bank notes. These books, first appearing in 1864, were a primary example of this type of counterfeit detector.

Five of the individuals depicted have been easily identified, including Spencer Clark, William T. Sherman, and Hugh McCulloch. These men were well known as military leaders, in the case of George Washington, "Father of the Country." Only "Douglas" and "Douglas" was identified by Eric P. Newman in his article, "Heath's Counterfeit Detector: A Comedy of Errors"⁶ and by Gene Hessler in his book, *An Illustrated History of U.S. Bank Note Portraits*.⁷ In the HRC collections, the identical picture was located with Andrew Johnson's record card for miscellaneous die number 237 confirmed Johnson's name.

At the time of the engraving Johnson was president of the United States, following a well-respected representative and later senator, did not have a direct relationship with the choice of his portrait for a book about counterfeiting doubtful. In addition, Douglas was the 1867 publication of Heath's book. Once compared with other depictions of Johnson at the National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, there was no question, it was

The small portrait at the bottom right in the frontispiece proved to be more difficult to identify in the HRC collections, although there are several copies of this particular engraving. It is possibly a portrait of Francis Spinner, Treasurer of the United States from 1861 to 1867.

Spinner was balding (as was this man), but that was the only similar feature between the two; and although his hairline receded in the same way, Spinner did not have the pointed nose of this man, and Spinner's head was much rounder. It was doubtful that

Searching for other possible individuals, I checked the acknowledgements in Heath's book. Spinner, Spencer Clark, William P. Wood (the Secret Service's first official detective) (assistant to the Secretary of the Treasury) were all mentioned.⁸ McCulloch, Clark and Wood were unknowns as far as their portraits were concerned. Were there any other individuals that could help solve this puzzle? After searching the Internet for portraits contemporary to the frontispiece, an image of Chandler was located. The gentleman with the mutton-chop beard, Chandler had a good head of hair, a closely cropped beard and glasses. He worked for the Treasury from 1865 to 1867.⁹

Wood was more elusive as an image of him available in the book *Illegal Tender* by D. Wood. It was a poor choice for the purposes of comparison, but the portrait depicted with a relatively good head of hair, a square face and no whiskers. I asked Chandler for assistance with early bank note engraving for assistance. He was also puzzled, but searched his

Finally, while looking for images related to President Abraham Lincoln, a small oval portrait was located. Later, a coupon with the same portrait was found. This coupon was for six months' interest on a \$50 bond and was signed by Register of the Treasury Stock. The coupon included keeping accounts of receipts and expenditures of public money, and of all other business in the 1860s with the Federal Government beginning to make its own currency, signifying the register's duties. It then would make sense for his image to appear on coupons, and he, too, would have concerns with the counterfeiting of securities. In addition, in the 1860s coupons were also signed by Colby. A visit to the Still Picture Branch of the National Archives records of the War Department, Office of the Chief Signal Officer.¹² In this collection of persons photographed in the Mathew Brady Studio, four images of Colby were located. In addition, the date of the publication of the counterfeit detector matched C

During the course of Edmunds' investigation, Heath answered more questions, including Heath's response:

"I do not recollect. I think I heard him say something about them [the frontispiece] but I did not pay much attention to what he said. I know he said it was some

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Whether or not Heath was being honest, Newman points out that the frontispiece “Treasury officials whose cooperation was needed to prepare Heath’s publication,”¹ Treasury Department it makes perfect sense that Colby’s portrait would be include

Historically, images engraved for use on a bank note are often reused on another note. Engravings are done in advance of a future need and thus considered stock.

Portraits and vignettes frequently appear multiple times and in multiple formats. In the frontispiece, I noticed that the Consol of 1867 used several of these same portraits. This raises the question of when these portraits were engraved and for what purpose. Were they engraved for the Consol or for the frontispiece?

In the HRC is a volume titled “Record of Dies” in which lists of dies that were held in the Treasury. The layout consists of a column with dates, descriptions of the dies, and engraver’s names. The dates cover the period from February 1863 to May 1869. In red ink are notes that the First Currency Bureau was preparing for the House of Representatives “Report to the Secretary of the Treasury on the Condition of the Engraving and Printing Bureau of the Treasury.”¹⁶ In the section titled “Record of Dies” there are numbers written in black and in red. Those written in red correspond to the report. Pieces that make up the Consol appear in the listing for miscellaneous stock. At least 10 identifiable dies used on the Consol are recorded and are enumerated below (report, date, and a description of the die):

- 180, October 9, 1864, Vignette Eagle and shield.
- 237, January 15, 1866, Head of Pres. Johnson with Legend of \$1,000 Coupon Fund.
- 247, January 24, 1866, Head of Gen. Grant with Legend of the \$500 Coupon F. Bond.
- 261, February 20, 1866, Head of Reg. of the Treasury, S. B. Colby and Legend of \$500 F. Bond.
- 268, February 20, 1866, Imprint Eng & Printed at the Treas. Dpt.
- 276, March 13(?), 1866, Head of McCulloch, Sec of the Treas. & Legend of \$100 F.B. coupon.
- 282, March 22, 1866, Vignette Soldier, drawn by Darley.
- 283, March 22, 1866, Vignette Treasury Building.
- 291, April 6, 1866, Head of Gen. Sherman F.B. coupon.
- 294, April 9, 1866, Vignette Sailor, drawn by Darley.¹⁷

Given these dates are in winter/early spring and the descriptions include legends for the dies, it is likely that the dies were first created for the Consol. In Heath’s testimony to Sen. Edmunds, Heath states that the dies were first created in 1866:

“Q. [Edmunds] Which of you suggested that idea?—A. [Heath] I think it was Mr. Claiborne. I said ‘I will make a size for your book,’ and I said ‘Yea, just the thing.’ He said it would be a good frontispiece.”

Q. At what time was that?—A. About the time he sanctioned it.

Q. Can you fix the date?—A. I cannot. I came here in the first place in the spring. I think it was in the spring.

Q. What year?—A. Two years ago last fall—1866.”¹⁸

The portraits that appear in the sample coupons beneath the bond illustrated in Table 1 are of President Andrew Johnson, Secretary of the Treasury Hugh McCulloch, and Gen. William T. Sherman. As has been noted, the frontispiece of the \$500 coupon for the \$50 bond with Colby’s portrait. Of the five individuals selected, Reginald D. Colby might have had the least public recognition. Colby was appointed to the position of Secretary of the Treasury in September 1867. Johnson and McCulloch were in office from 1865 to 1869. Grant resigned in July 1869. Sherman was well known for his campaign through the South in late 1864/early 1865. The substitution of Sherman’s portrait on it is also for the \$50 Consol. The substitution of Sherman could very well

In designing the frontispiece, a model with proofs arranged and pasted together might have been used. Then, rolls would be used to transfer the individual images from the dies to a plate, and the text at the bottom stating that the print was “Engraved and Printed at the Treasury Bureau of the Treasury.” To identify those individuals who did the individual engravings. During this period much of the work of the Treasury Bureau was done by private bank note companies, and therefore, it was easy to specify where the engravings were engraved elsewhere.

I checked the die cards relating to these engravings and maintained by the BEP. The same numbers used in the House report, so identification was easily accomplished. The 1869 date written on them and the engravers were variously identified as Charles S.

exception to the die numbers matching was number 261 (head of S.B. Colby) which tobacco stamp. In addition, the head of Colby does not appear in any of the books of engravers as reference material. It is possible that this particular die was disposed of. In the same House report, there is a miscellaneous plate listed as “44. Vignette, treasury [sic]” whose description could very well apply to Heath’s frontispiece, but there is no correspondence.

The name of the engraver Charles K. Burt appears on most of the die cards for the period that came to the United States in 1842, and worked for several engraving companies including Edson; and the American Bank Note Co. For the bureau, Burt worked on a contract that is written on bureau die cards until about 1876. He died in 1892 in Brooklyn, N.Y.²¹ The vignette of the eagle. He began working for the Continental Bank Note Co. before 1878 when the two companies consolidated.²² There is no record that he worked during the name Hatch was written on the die card for the depiction of the Treasury building. In 1878, Hatch, by the time of this engraving, he was president of American Bank Note Co.,²³ more with managing that company than with engraving. It is doubtful that he was the engraver.

The Treasury Department “Record of Dies” assisted in pointing to another engraver: William H. Dougal. He was a picture engraver and had established a studio in New York. He did do work for the BEP, and is known to have made engravings for the Lt. Charles V. Smith and the Randolph Marcy Expedition to explore the mouth of the Red River.²⁴ I

Using engravings originally created for the Consol of 1867, Clark composed—for a fitting introduction to Heath’s book. The portraits and vignettes that were used on the book were in Spencer Clark’s possession by the spring of 1866. Heath’s testimony to Sen. William H. Seward, the depiction and, by inference, Clark’s political desire to promote the First Currency Bill and military heroes, the Father of the Country, and Treasury officials. By placing Colby’s portrait on the book, Heath ensured that as many people would see Colby’s portrait as would see William H. Seward, and this was all discovered by finding the identity of a portrait.

Note

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End Notes

1 Laban Heath, *Heath’s Greatly Improved and Enlarged Infallible Government Counterfeit Detector* (Heath, 1867).

2 Report of the Senate Joint Select Committee on Retrenchment, Report No. 273, 40th Congress, 1867, 431.

3 William H. Dillistin, *Bank Note Reporters and Counterfeit Detectors, 1826-1866* (Numismatic Society, 1949), 41.

4 *Ibid.*, 41. Arthur A. Smith, “Bank Note Detecting in the Era of State Banks,” *The Mint* (December 1942): 372-373.

5 See also Eric P. Newman, “Heath’s Counterfeit Detectors: An Extraordinary Success,” *Numismatic Association Centennial Anthology* (Colorado Springs: ANA, 1991). 6 *Ibid.*, 247.

7 Gene Hessler, *An Illustrated History of U.S. Loans 1775-1898* (Dover: Dover Lithography, 1978), 4.

9 Russell Bastedo, “Descriptions of Portraits at New Hampshire State Library,” *New Hampshire Historical Resources*, 2008, URL <http://www.nh.gov/nhdhr/publications/portsnhsl/chandler>

10 David R. Johnson, *Illegal Tender* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1976), 11.

11 An Act to Establish the Treasury Department, September 2, 1789, ch. 12, 1 Stat. 63.

12 Records of the Office of the Chief Signal Officer, 1860-1982, Record Group 111, St. Lawrence University Records Administration College Park.

13 Report of the Senate Joint Select Committee on Retrenchment, Report No. 273, 40th Congress, 1867, 431.

14 Newman, 247.

15 See *The American Bond Detector; and Complete History of the United States Government Sanction of the United States Treasury Department...* (Washington, DC: American

1869), n.p., for an image of the Consol of 1867. It was also another publication with I
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17 "Record of Dies," manuscript in the collections of the Historical Resource Center,
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