

Sloane's Columns:

George Hussey

by George Sloane (From STAMPS Magazine, with images added)

February 10, 1940

George Hussey, Philatelist's Helpmate

George Hussey operated, for many years, an independent local post in New York City, and his numerous issues of stamps, and those of his successors, will be found listed and illustrated in the *Scott U. S. Catalog* among the local stamps. In addition, there are many other stamps of his which are not listed in the catalog, reprints and fakes, for example, such as his Providence 5¢ and 10¢ counterfeits, which he had made up after he was unable to locate the original plate for reprinting purposes. Some of these turn up frequently in collections.

Hussey was a versatile fellow and is said to have been a stamp collector himself. I have no information on what type of collection, if any, he chose for his personal diversion and contemporary accounts of the contents of this private collection seem difficult to discover. I am inclined to the belief that he acquired his sympathetic leaning toward philately on the instant he found that it also had commercial possibilities. Then he carried the banner.



Another Hussey design: Left, 1863 Hussey's Special Delivery with printed "5" denomination (Sc. 87LE1; right, 40¢ Black with Manuscript "40" denomination, believed to be unique. Unlisted in Scott although the 30¢ and 50¢ with manuscript denominations are listed (Sc. 87LE6 and 87LE7)



A sampling of Hussey's designs, left to right: 1865 2¢, Sc. 87L38; 1875 (2¢), Sc. 87L52; 1877 unstated value, Sc. 87L56, and a block of four of the 1880 unstated value in a Trial Color Proof, Sc. 87L74TC.



Henceforth his philatelic issues, in connection with his well-established local post, were frequent, and of wider variety. Many of these have been called reprints, but are recognized and licensed as collectible material for discriminating philatelists, since Hussey saw to it that they were always valid for their

franking power at his fleet-footed messenger warehouse. As soon as he was able to get locomotion, he showed the boys the way to the promised land. There was quite some interest at that time in the postmasters' stamps, the carrier's issues, and the locals. Then, as now, they had glamour in the vision of collectors, but unfortunately they were scarce. Hussey helped out and made acquisition of specimens easier. He bought up, wherever he could, dies and plates of the stamp issues of these old posts, defunct and otherwise. It is suspected, too, that where such were not obtainable, or could not be pried loose, he had them remodeled. He prevailed upon the American Bank Note Co., to reprint the 5¢ New York postmaster's stamp for his account, in the original color of issue, and in four new colors, which he lightly described as "essays."

He believed in the direct approach to the consumer and his advertising will be found in philatelic publications of the period. He even took space in stamp albums, the *Boston Stamp Album*, of 1866, was one. Here he called attention to his specialty, "Local and Express Stamps, Largest assortment to be found anywhere," also, "Many of the genuine Confederate stamps, at reasonable prices." Readers were asked to send for his catalog and a discount was promised to dealers. George Hussey was one, among many characters, who provided philately with color in its earlier, more amateur days.

* * * * *

September 10, 1949

Hussey's Greek Temple Design

George Hussey started operation of his Local Post business from an upstairs office at 82 Broadway, New York, in 1854. The first stamp he issued featured a Greek Temple design, prominently showing five supporting columns, and he used it again after he moved to 50 William Street, I believe it was a bank or public building in New York, Philadelphia or Washington, that was pictured, perhaps only the entrance or a section of a larger building. Can any reader familiar with our old landmarks identify the building?



Left, 1856 (1¢) blue, Sc. 87L1, with 82 Broadway address; right, 1862 (1¢) blue, Sc. 87L22, with 50 William St. address.

John Walter Scott in an article on U.S. local stamps, in 1871, described it as the Bank of America, a building which stood on the n.w. corner of Wall and William Streets, New York, completed in 1836, razed in 1888. Charles H. Coster repeated the statement in his first work on the locals, in 1879, and said it again in his French edition of 1882.

Research proves that it was not the Bank of America, whose building had but two columns and could not be confused with the building shown on Hussey's stamps. Hussey's Post was aimed to service banks and insurance companies and he is reported to have been employed by the Bank of New York for eighteen years before he embarked in the "mail" business, which explains another report that his stamps pictured the Bank of New York but research reveals that this bank never occupied a building of Grecian character. I have failed to tie up Hussey's design with any structure in the New York financial area of the period.

Before they made their careless statements, Scott, and later Coster, might easily have determined whether it was the Bank of America modelled for Hussey's stamps. The building was standing in their time and Scott should have known better since he was, in 1871, located at 75 & 77 Nassau Street, only a few blocks away from Wall and William Sts., a district he must have passed through frequently. Coster says in his own writings that he visited many places about the city looking up various local posts yet in this instance he obviously made no investigation himself when he copied Scott's erroneous identification.

September 16, 1950

Hussey's Local Post Covers

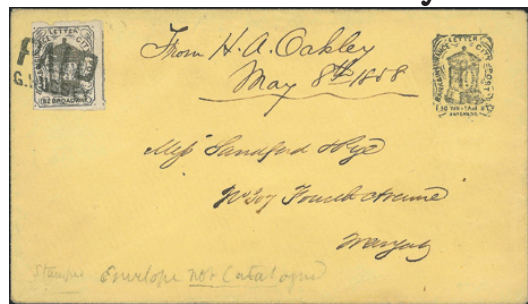
George Hussey reprinted, and where he couldn't reprint for lack of original printing stones or plates, he imitated many of his earlier stamps. In order to meet philatelic requests for his various stamps, he let it be known that any of his reprints or imitations would be good for prepayment of delivery fees on letters sent through his post, thus these stamps became acceptable for collections and recognized for listings in *Scott's Catalog*.

For some time I have been making a study of Hussey's issues and I have learned a great deal about "covers" with Hussey's numerous stamps. Many of them recently have been bringing comparatively high prices at the auctions....I have not yet seen a Hussey "reprint," or a Hussey "imitation" legitimately used on a cover that transited his post. I have, yes, seen many of them "on cover," but these were things postmarked to supply collectors and I do not believe they were so postmarked in the lifetime of George Hussey. No collectors, it would seem, used one of his reprints or imitations on a cover that went through his post in regular delivery, or

if they did the occasion must have been extremely rare and few have survived philatelically.

He issued many stamps, few of which were required or necessary in his post. Most of these stamps, and those discussed above, when seen on "covers," were actually affixed to envelopes and "cancelled" after the post was out of existence. Most of them, if not all, do not bear genuine postmarks, that is, they are imitations of postmarks once in use in the Hussey post, or types of postmarks I have not as yet been able to find in commercial correspondence delivered through his facilities. Many of these covers are "addressed" to one or two people or firms, or a few others once customers of the post. Frequently they are written by the same hand, and often the stamps are issues which were out of use, and the rates are wrong. This latter comment applies in particular to covers with the "Special Delivery" stamps picturing the circus horseman. It is a disappointing state of affairs but it is a story that sooner or later will have to be published.

A Selection of Genuine Hussey's Covers



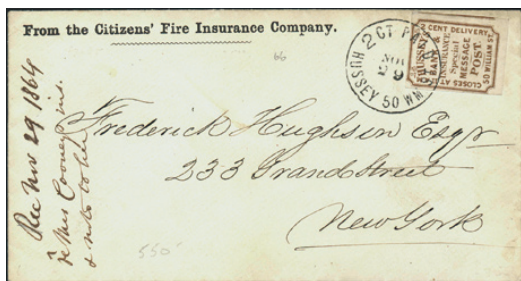
Hussey's (1¢) 1857 Black "82 Broadway" stamp (Sc. 87L2) tied by "Paid/G. Hussey" two-line handstamp, used in combination with Hussey's Post, 1858 "50 William St." black handstamp (Sc. 87LUP2) on cover to local street address with insurance company address on the flap, docketed May 8, 1858. Hussey moved to William St. in mid-1857.



Hussey's 1¢ Brown Red (Sc. 87L4) tied by "Paid/G. Hussey" two-line handstamp on cover to Brooklyn street address, with an insurance company address on the flap.



Hussey's (1¢) Red (Sc. 87L25) tied by circle of wedges and used with 1869 6¢ Pictorial (Sc. 115) on cover to Ireland, with red "New York Jan. 29" circular datestamp.



Hussey's 2¢ Brown, Dated 1863 (Sc. 87L35) tied by "2 Ct. Paid Hussey 50 Wm. St. Nov. 29" circular datestamp on 1864 insurance company corner card cover to local street address.

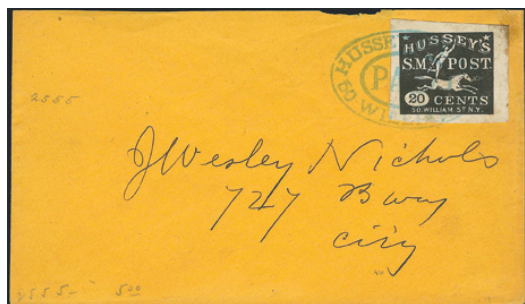


Hussey's Black on wove paper (Sc. 87L43). pair tied by purple "Hussey's Special Messenger Express Paid, 54 Pine St." double-line oval handstamp on cover to Wall St. local street address.



Hussey's 25¢ Gold on Blue Glazed paper Special Delivery (Sc. 87LE5) tied by "Paid/G. Hussey" two-line handstamp with "Answer by Bearer" straightline handstamp on cover to local street address.

And A Philatelic Creation

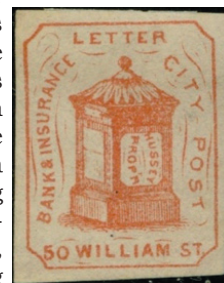


Hussey's 20¢ Black Special Delivery (Sc. 87LE4) tied by blue oval Hussey handstamp, thought to be a posthumous philatelic creation.

November 10, 1951

Hussey's "Letter Box" Stamp A British Picture on an American Issue

Those who endeavor to discover the original subjects used as designs on postage stamps come up with some interesting experiences, and it is always fun getting a lead on something, then trying to run it down. Often you are successful but many times you waste a great deal of effort in blind alleys, laboring unwittingly toward failure and frustration. Nevertheless most of us keep at it, always optimistic and hopeful of finding it the "next time."



George Hussey conducted an independent local post in New York City, which, according to his own statements, he organized in 1854....The designs of his first two stamps picture a Grecian temple on one, and a mail box on the other. The mail box stamp, issued in 1856 (Sc. 87L2; shown above the 1857, Sc. 87L8), was particularly intriguing, and its design mysterious, because there were no such street boxes in use in the United States at that time.

I knew Hussey could not have used them because, unlike many other private local posts, Hussey, so far as all research indicates, never maintained street boxes for the reception of miscellaneous letters deposited by the general public. Hussey's operations, primarily, were for the convenience of banks, insurance firms, and business houses, for whom he delivered commercial paper, insurance notices, business correspondence, etc. He would pick up this material in quantity at their offices, or they would place it with his office, and his carriers would distribute it, as addressed, throughout New York City.

But the letter box design. As I have said, it was a fascinating subject and it had the look of authenticity,—not merely an artist's impression of an imaginary design. But where did it come from? Where was it used? Hussey seemed to have been pleased with it because he continued to use it for more stamps in 1858.

The clue to its origin came from my friend; H. Warren K. Hale, of Montreal, who has long been interested in Hussey's Post. Mr. Hale had come across an advertisement in the *London Spectator*, of November 26, 1943. This was an illustrated advertisement by Chubb & Sons, century-old manufacturers of locks and safes. Their advertisement (detail below) pictured the first pillar-box set up in London by the British Post Office Department, at the corner of Fleet Street and Farringdon Street, early in 1855. Several of them had been placed about the city, and Chubb's connection was that they had made the rocks for the boxes, which were of cast iron.

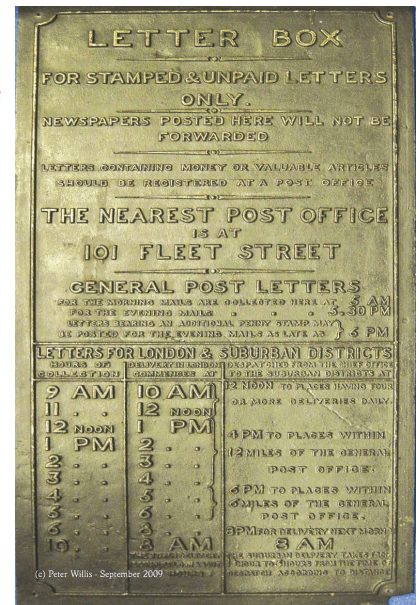
The letter box in the picture looked familiar to Mr. Hale, and comparison quickly showed it was the design used by George



Hussey for his stamps, but Chubb's advertisement was dated 1943, and Hussey had made use of the pillar-box design in 1856. Further research was required to find where Hussey had seen the original picture. Mr. Hale suggested the *Illustrated London News*, of the period, and so, one morning I went up to the New York Public Library and, on a good guess, decided to start with the file for 1855. I had not paged through it very far until I came to the issue of March 24th, and there it was, - an illustrated report on the "New Street Letter-Boxes," just installed in London.



There is little question that it was in this publication, with a wide circulation in America, that George Hussey, or the lithographer who print-

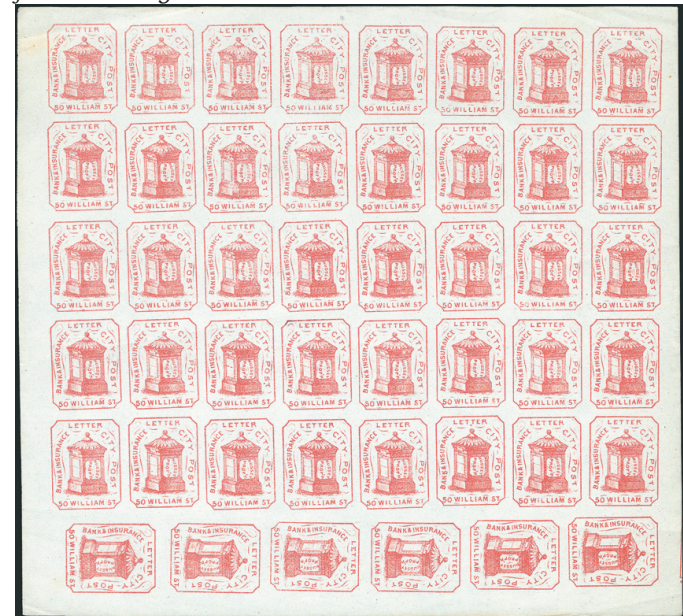


In conjunction with an article we did previously on this subject, we were able to obtain a photo of a small model of the original Letter Box and an actual panel from an early British Letter Box.

ed his stamps, first saw the box and adapted it as a design for one of his stamps. The Hussey stamp (Scott's No. 87L2, black), is illustrated, also the picture from the *Illustrated London News*. Hussey's reproduction shows little variation from the original except that he utilized the facing panel of the box to substitute his own name,—"Hussey Prop'r."



In Hussey's drawing the box is very slightly turned, but it is otherwise a faithful copy, even to the sketchy outlines of the postal notices and the letter slot, shown in the side panel at the left of the box.



A full sheet of 46 of the 1858 Letter Box stamp, Sc. 87L7, with the bottom row printed sideways. Per a footnote in Scott, this stamp saw little commercial use and was probably issued primarily for sale to collectors.



Another example of the *Illustrated London News* artwork, on a First Day Cover for the 2015 Letter Boxes issue; and a variation on the theme on a British Penny Black 175th anniversary issue.

I am still in search of the...temple design, used on Hussey's first stamp...I have done considerable digging since, but as yet I have been unable to tie up Hussey's design with any structure in New York at the time. The building shows an odd number of pillars,—five,—which I understand is exceptional since structures of the kind seem, invariably, to show an even number, and to make things more difficult, the center pillar obscures the front entrance and that, I am told, is something no self-respecting architect would ever countenance. Still I continue to believe that Hussey's artist modeled the design from an actual building but he may have given play to some of his own ideas, and on a whim, just added an additional pillar.

