

Mobile, Alabama

Lloyd Bowers, Postmaster

Lloyd Bowers was the postmaster of this strategically important Confederate port city during the war. He was one of the first postmasters to issue provisional stamps, and his decision to use the lithographic printing process places him in the company of only two other postmasters: Alfred Huger of Charleston S.C. and Stephen W. Murley of Livingston Ala.

Bowers' stamps have been intensively studied over many years. The most recent work by Van Koppersmith has resulted in progress toward a complete understanding of the sizes and layouts of the lithographic stones used to print the 2c and 5c Mobile provisionals. Koppersmith's articles on the Mobile provisionals can be found in the *Collectors Club Philatelist* (September-October 2005) and the *Confederate Philatelist* (April-June 2010).

The Mobile 2c and 5c sheets have multiple imprints below the bottom row which read, "Eng. & Pri. by W. R. Robertson Mobile." William R. Robertson was an engraver and lithographic printer in Mobile, and current scholarship identifies him as the person solely responsible for creating the lithographic stones and printing the provisional.

A pair in the Tapling collection at the British Library has a large top sheet margin with part of an imprint which reads, "(exclus)ively at the Mobile Post Office." This wording is almost identical to the imprint on the New Orleans provisional sheet, "Usable exclusively in the New Orleans Post Office." Postmaster Bowers must have seen the sheets used by his colleague down river, Dr. Riddell, and adopted the same instructive imprint for his provisional issue.

The same design was used for the 2c and 5c denominations. The central design element is a five-point hollow star with the numeral value in the blank center. The areas between the points of the star feature figurative symbols of the South and Mobile's marine heritage: young sailors in hats holding oars, a woman holding a rope attached to a large anchor, another woman holding a sickle, and an anchor and plow below the star. Only two Confederate post offices, Livingston and Mobile, issued stamps with a figurative design specifically created for stamps (the Danville postmaster used a stock image for his provisional envelopes). It is almost certain that the same printer — William R. Robertson — was responsible for both the Livingston and Mobile stamps.

By identifying plating marks on sheet-margin stamps and vertical multiples, Koppersmith has determined that the 5c stone was five horizontal rows in height. He has speculated that the layout might have followed New Orleans: five horizontal rows by eight vertical columns.