

YOUNG SELMA ENTREPRENEUR MADISON JACKSON WILLIAMS AND HIS ALABAMA PAPER MONEY

by Charles Derby

Madison Jackson Williams was a renowned citizen of Selma during his brief life of 35 years. He was an editor and owner of a newspaper as well as a job printer in Selma, Alabama, during the 1850s-60s who, like other in his professions, also printed paper money during the Civil War. Williams established business ties with many highly interesting and influential associates and became wealthy and influential himself. This article chronicles his short life, his associates, and most importantly, the scrip that he produced.

His Life

Madison Jackson Williams was born on July 8, 1837, in Greenville (Butler County), Alabama, of modest means. His father, James Williams, was a farmer who died in the year of his birth, leaving Martha, his mother, to care for Jackson, as he was called then, and his six siblings. Madison moved to Selma in 1854 at the age of 17 and became a printer and newspaperman. He worked at the *Selma Reporter*, owned by Nathaniel W. Shelley. At the age of 21 (1858), he so impressed Shelley that he was invited to become co-owner and editor of the newspaper. An early publication by Williams with Shelley was a medical pamphlet in 1860.

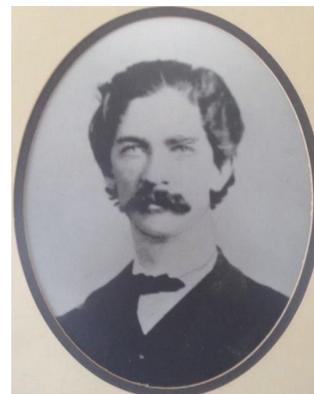


Fig. 1. Madison Jackson Williams, ca. 1865. Courtesy of Selma City Government.

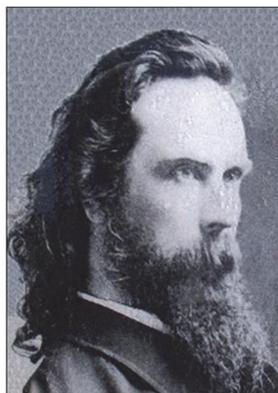


Fig. 2. John Cussons

Shelley died suddenly in 1860, and Williams became sole owner of the *Selma Reporter*. He soon partnered with John Cussons (Fig 2). Cussons was one year younger than Williams and quite an adventurer, moving from his native England to the USA in 1855 and spending four years in the West including living with the Sioux Indians on the Great Plains. He moved to Selma in 1859 and became co-owner and editor of *The Selma Reporter* and the job printing company with Williams. But this association was brief because Cussons enlisted in the Civil War early in 1861 while Williams stayed in Selma. Cussons went on to lead a full

life. During the War, he was scout and sharpshooter for the Army of Northern Virginia, captured at Gettysburg but released to fight with Nathan Bedford Forrest in the West. After the War, Cussons returned to publishing, but he did much more than that: he owned and operated a large hunting lodge in Virginia and was an officer of the United Confederate Veterans until his death in 1912 at age 74.

After Cussons left Selma, Williams became sole proprietor of the *Selma Reporter*, which he continued to publish until it closed at the end of the Civil War. Figure 3 shows the front page of the July 1, 1862, issue of the *Selma Reporter*.

From his modest roots, Williams rose to become a prominent and influential citizen of Selma during the late 1850s and 1860s. He translated his occupation as newspaper and job printer into a political life. He was elected and served as City Printer in 1862 to 1864 and on City Council in 1863 to 1867. On May 3rd of 1865, he was elected Mayor for a one-year term.

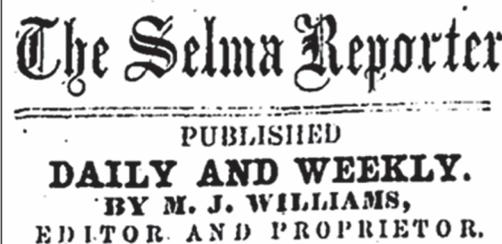
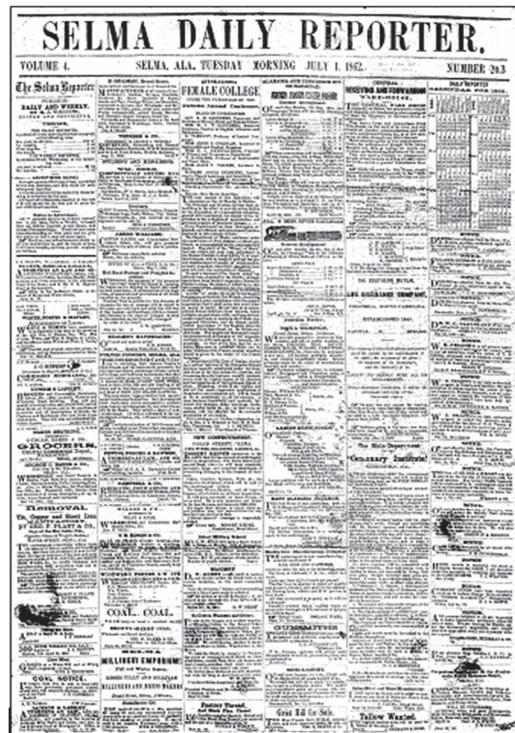


Fig. 3. *Selma Reporter* from July 1, 1862 (above), with an expanded view of the upper right corner, showing publisher (below). From US Newspaper Directory Search. Library of Congress/Chronicling America/Search/ Newspaper Directory

His personal life knew joy and tragedy. He married Sophia Philena Sturdevant (Fig 4), but she died in 1864, leaving Williams with two young children. Madison married Clara Elizabeth Haralson the next year.

Clara came from a prominent and wealthy family in Selma: the Haralsons were farmers with a wealth in 1860 (\$137,350) that is equivalent to ca. \$4 million in 2015. The marriage brought Williams financial advantages and personal happiness including three children.

His public standing in Selma is exemplified by his purchase in 1863 of Grace Hall (Fig 5). This mansion was built in 1857 at the then exorbitant cost of \$29,000. The mansion has a notable history in the Civil War. Brig. Gen. James H. Wilson (Fig 5) and his Union Army Cavalry Corps had orders to destroy Southern manufacturing facilities including those in Selma. Wilson was opposed by a much smaller force under Confederate Lt. Gen. Nathan Bedford Forrest. From the front porch of Grace Hall, Williams encouraged Confederate troops to resist the occupation. Two days later, on April 2, 1865, Gen. Wilson captured Selma, in “Wilson’s Raid.” Williams and most other men in Selma were briefly imprisoned in a wet stockade, after which they were paroled. General Wilson took over Williams’ house as his headquarters and Williams never returned.



Fig. 4. Sophia and Arthur, Williams’ first wife and son, ca. 1863. Courtesy of Anne Knight.



Fig. 5. Grace Hall, ca. 2000 (left) and Gen. James Wilson, ca.1865 (right).
Courtesy of <http://ahc.toursphere.com> and Library of Congress.

His Money

Williams was involved in the production of at least four sets of currency, listed in Table 1. These notes differ in many respects – different print dates, printer imprints, and so on – but they all have in common Williams playing a central role in their production.

Rail Road scrip, 1862

One set consists of 11 notes printed in January and June of 1862 and issued by two rail road companies based in Selma: the Alabama & Tennessee River Rail Road and the Alabama & Mississippi River Rail Road. They have the imprint of “Selma Reporter Print.” or “Reporter Print, Selma, Ala.,” referring to the *Selma Reporter* newspaper of which Williams was sole owner at that time. Some examples of these notes are shown in Figure 6. Williams had ties to the Alabama & Tennessee River Rail Road Co. since the 1850s through his job printing company with William Shelley and with the printing facility at the *Selma Reporter*. For example, in 1859 to 1860, Shelley & Williams Book and Job Office printed the annual report of the president and directors of the Alabama & Tennessee River Rail Road Co. to the stockholders of the operations of the company (Annual Report of the American Historical Association, U.S. Government Printing Office, 1898). Earlier annual reports (1850, 1852, and 1857) were printed by the *Selma Reporter* job office. Thus, it is not surprising that Williams and his newspaper printed this scrip for these rail road companies.

Table 1. Notes Associated with M. J. Williams

Name (Gunther & Derby ID) / Town	Date	Vignettes	Imprint
<u>Set 1 - Railroad Scrip</u>			
<u>Ala. & Tenn River RR (AO-412) / Selma</u>			
5 cents (AO-412-\$.05a)	January, 1862.	Justice (L), Train heading right (C)	REPORTER PRINT, SELMA, ALA.
10 cents (AO-412-\$.10a)	January, 1862.	Justice (L), Train heading right (C)	REPORTER PRINT, SELMA, ALA.
10 cents (AO-412-\$.10a)	January, 1862.	Justice (L), Train heading left (C)	REPORTER PRINT, SELMA, ALA.
25 cents (AO-412-\$.25a)	January, 1862.	Justice (L), Train heading right (C)	Reporter print, Selma, Ala.
25 cents (AO-412-\$.25b)	January, 1862.	Justice (L), Train heading left (C)	Reporter print, Selma, Ala.
50 cents (AO-412-\$.50a)	January, 1862.	Train (L), Train heading right (C)	Reporter print, Selma, Ala.
\$1 (AO-412-\$1a)	June, 1862.	Justice (L), Train headed right (C)	[SELMA REPORTER PRINT.]
\$2 (AO-412-\$2a)	June, 1862.	Justice (L), Train headed right (C)	[SELMA REPORTER PRINT.]
\$3 (AO-412-\$3a)	June, 1862.	Justice (L), Train headed right (C)	[SELMA REPORTER PRINT.]
<u>Ala. & Miss. River RR (AO-411) / Selma</u>			
25 cents (AO-411-\$.25a)	January, 1862.	Justice (L), Train heading right (C)	Reporter print, Selma, Ala.
\$2 (AO-411-\$2a)	June, 1862.	Justice (L), Train heading right (C)	[SELMA REPORTER PRINT.]
<u>Set 2 - Alabama Merchant Scrip</u>			
<u>J. M. Denson (AO-342) / Montevallo</u>			
5 cents (AO-342-\$.05a)	Feb. 1862.	Blue plant	Selma Reporter Print.
<u>Morgan & Worthington (AO-343) / Montevallo</u>			
10 cents (AO-343-\$.10a)	Jan. 1862.	Blue ship	Selma Reporter Print.
25 cents (AO-343-\$.25a)	Jan. 1862.	Blue eagle	Selma Reporter Print.
<u>Unknown Issuer (AO-344) / Montevallo</u>			
	(cut plate)		
5 cents (AO-344-\$.05a)	Feb 1862.	Red ship	Selma Reporter Print.
10 cents (AO-344-\$.10a)	Feb 1862.	Red flowers	Selma Reporter Print.
25 cents (AO-344-\$.25a)	Feb. 1862.	Red eagle	Selma Reporter Print.
50 cents (AO-344-\$.50a)	Feb. 1862.	Red dog with safe and key	Selma Reporter Print.
75 cents (AO-344-\$.75a)	Feb. 1862.	Red flowers	Selma Reporter Print.
<u>M. Pettibone (AO-148) / Claiborne</u>			
25 cents (AO-148-\$.25a)	Feb. 1862.	Blue ship	Selma Reporter Print.
<u>T. Lawrence (AO-404) / Randolph</u>			
5 cents (AO-404-\$.05a)	April 1862.	Red pineapple	Selma Reporter Print.
25 cents (AO-404-\$.25a)	April 1862.	Red eagle	Selma Reporter Print.
50 cents (AO-404-\$.50a)	April 1862.	Red dog with safe and key	Selma Reporter Print.
<u>N.P. Reeves (AO-163) / Columbiana</u>			
50 cents (AO-163-\$.50a)	Sept. 26th, 1862.	Blue train	Selma Reporter Print.
\$1 (AO-163-\$1a)	Sept. 26th, 1862.	Train heading right	(no imprint)
<u>McClanahan & Elliott (AO-162) / Columbiana</u>			
\$1 (AO-162-\$1a) [same as Reeves \$1]	Sept. 26th, 1862.	Train heading right	(no imprint)
<u>Set 3 - Charles Lewis Scrip / Selma</u>			
10 cents (AO-423-\$.10a)	July 12, 1862.	Ship (L), without "10" in red	(no imprint)
10 cents (AO-423-\$.10b)	July 12, 1862.	Ship (L), with "10" in red	(no imprint)
25 cents (AO-423-\$.25a)	July 12, 1862.	Ship (L), without "25" in red	(no imprint)
25 cents (AO-423-\$.25b)	July 12, 1862.	Ship (L), with "25" in red	(no imprint)
50 cents (AO-423-\$.50a)	July 12, 1862.	Ship (L), without "50" in red	(no imprint)
50 cents (AO-423-\$.50b)	July 12, 1862.	Ship (L), with "50" in red	(no imprint)
\$1 (AO-423-\$1a)	July 12, 1862.	Indian (L), Ship (C)	M. J. Williams, Selma.
\$1 (AO-423-\$1b)	Nov. 1, 1862.	Indian (L), Ship (C)	M. J. Williams, Selma.
\$2 (AO-423-\$2a)	July 12, 1862.	Indian (L), Sheaf (C)	M. J. Williams, Selma.
\$5 (AO-423-\$5a)	July 12, 1862.	Justice (L), Cotton plant (C)	M. J. Williams, Selma.
<u>Set 4 - City of Selma Scrip</u>			
5 cents (AO-416-\$.05a)	Oct. 1 st , 1865	Train	ABNCo (signed by M.J. Williams)
10 cents (AO-416-\$.10a)	Oct. 1 st , 1865	Steamboat	ABNCo (signed by M.J. Williams)
25 cents (AO-416-\$.25a)	Oct. 1 st , 1865	Farm implements	ABNCo (signed by M.J. Williams)
50 cents (AO-416-\$.50a)	Oct. 1 st , 1865	Commerce & Industry, State seal	ABNCo (signed by M.J. Williams)



Fig. 6. Alabama rail road scrip; clockwise from top left: \$2, 50 cents, and 25 cents notes from Alabama & Tennessee River Rail Road, and \$2 note from Alabama & Mississippi River Rail Road. From Heritage Auctions.

Alabama merchant scrip, 1862

The second set consists of 14 fractional notes printed in January, February, April, and September of 1862 and issued by merchants in four towns in Alabama, all within 80 miles of Selma: Claiborne, Columbiana, Montevallo, and Randolph. These notes have the imprint of Williams’ newspaper at the time, “Selma Reporter Print.” Examples of these notes are shown in Figure 7. Another note is likely part of this series, though it lacks the “Selma Reporter Print.” imprint. This note, shown in Figure 8, is similar to the Reeves & Wallace 50 cent note shown in Figure 7, in being signed by Reeves (though not Wallace), is from Columbiana, is dated September 26th, 1862, and has the same text (“will pay the bearer ___ in current funds, when the amount of ___ is presented”). It is also similar to Williams’ Alabama & Tennessee River Rail Road notes, shown in Figure 6, in bearing the same black “train heading right.”

MYLAR-D® CURRENCY HOLDERS
BANK NOTE AND CHECK HOLDERS

SIZE	INCHES	50	100	500	1000
Fractional	4 ^{3/4} X 2 ^{1/4}	\$33.00	\$60.00	\$273.00	\$490.00
Colonial	5 ^{1/2} X 3 ^{1/16}	\$30.00	\$54.00	\$253.00	\$454.00
Small Currency	6 ^{5/8} X 2 ^{7/8}	\$30.00	\$56.00	\$257.00	\$470.00
Large Currency	7 ^{7/8} X 3 ^{1/2}	\$36.00	\$64.00	\$303.00	\$594.00
Auction	9 X 3 ^{3/4}	\$36.00	\$64.00	\$303.00	\$594.00
Foreign Currency	8 X 5	\$43.00	\$78.00	\$355.00	\$627.00
Checks	9 ^{5/8} X 4 ^{1/4}	\$44.00	\$81.00	\$375.00	\$667.00

SHEET HOLDERS

		10	50	100	250
Obsolete Sheet--end open	8 ^{3/4} X 14 ^{1/2}	\$25.00	\$110.00	\$191.00	\$447.00
National Sheet--side open <small>Note--to be discontinued when sold out.</small>	8 ^{1/2} X 17 ^{1/2}	\$26.50	\$120.00	\$205.00	\$459.00
Stock Certificate--end open	9 ^{1/2} X 12 ^{1/2}	\$23.00	\$110.00	\$182.00	\$415.00
Map & Bond--end open	18 ^{1/2} X 24 ^{1/2}	\$104.00	\$470.00	\$863.00	\$2011.00
Foreign Oversize	10 X 6	\$28.00	\$107.00	\$180.00	\$384.00
Foreign Jumbo	10 X 8	\$36.00	\$142.00	\$239.00	\$510.00

You may assort note holders for best price (min. 50 pcs. one size).
You may assort sheet holders for best price (min. 10 pcs. one size).

SHIPPING IN THE U.S. Orders Under \$100.00 total add 10.00
Orders Over \$100.00 (parcel post) free of charge

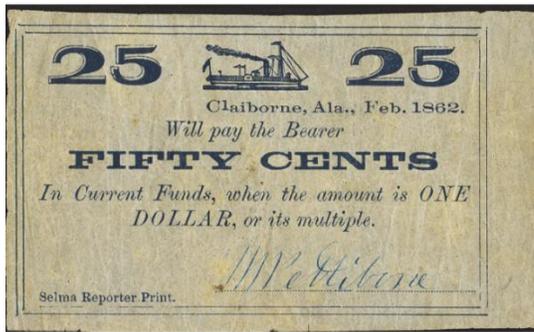
Mylar D® is a Registered Trademark of the Dupont Corporation. This also applies to uncoated archival quality Mylar® Type D by the Dupont Corp. or the equivalent material by ICI Industries Corp. Melinex Type 516.

DENLY’S OF BOSTON
P.O. Box 29, Dedham, MA 02027 • 781-326-9481
ORDERS: 800-HI-DENLY • FAX-781-326-9484
WWW.DENLY’S.COM

State Bank of Iowa

Wanted: For a census of these obsoletes:
Need information on your issued notes, proofs, counterfeits, etc.
Confidentiality assured.
Contact Jim Ehrhardt for details
ra-sbi1859@uiowa.edu
Partially funded by the EPNNES

Claiborne



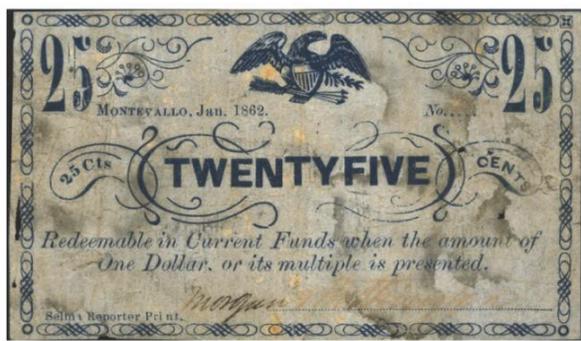
Columbiana



Montevallo



Montevallo



Randolph



Randolph



Fig. 7. Alabama merchant scrip, 1862. From Heritage Auctions.

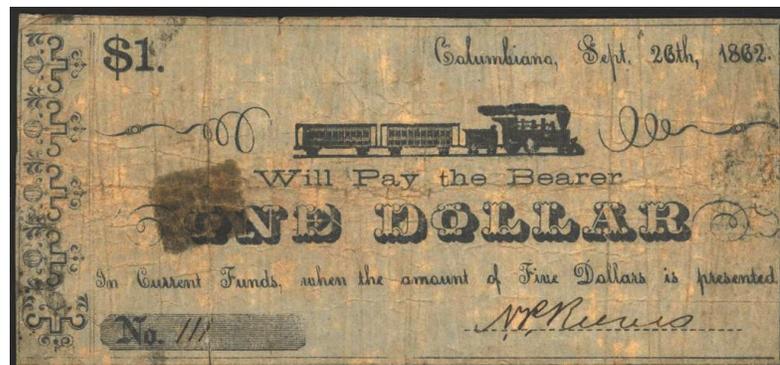


Fig. 8. Note likely printed by Williams but without the "Selma Reporter Print." From Heritage Auctions.

Charles Lewis & Co., Bankers, scrip, 1862

A third set, shown in Figure 9, is a series issued by Selman banker, Charles Lewis. The \$5, \$2, and \$1 notes differ from the previously described sets by having the imprint “M. J. Williams” rather than his newspaper name. Most of these are dated July 12, 1862, but some \$1 notes are dated Nov. 1, 1862. Apparently, the \$1 notes were popular and a second printing was made. The fractional notes lack a printer’s imprint, but given the same print date and other similarities as the other notes, Williams likely printed these. Examples of the fractional notes have a red protector, as shown in Figure 9. The issuer of these notes, Charles Lewis, was born in 1806 in Culpepper County, VA, and became a wealthy banker and influential citizen of Selma. Williams and Lewis must have known each other well in business, politics, and personally. Lewis served on Selma City Council when Williams was City Printer and just before Williams joined the Council. He was Cashier for the Bank of Selma from its establishment in 1857 to July 1859. Just before the war, according to the 1860 census, Lewis owned \$42,000 in real estate and \$77,500 in personal estate. In that census, his occupation was listed as retired banker, but this changed by 1862, when he had his own company, Charles Lewis & Co., Banker, which yielded these notes.

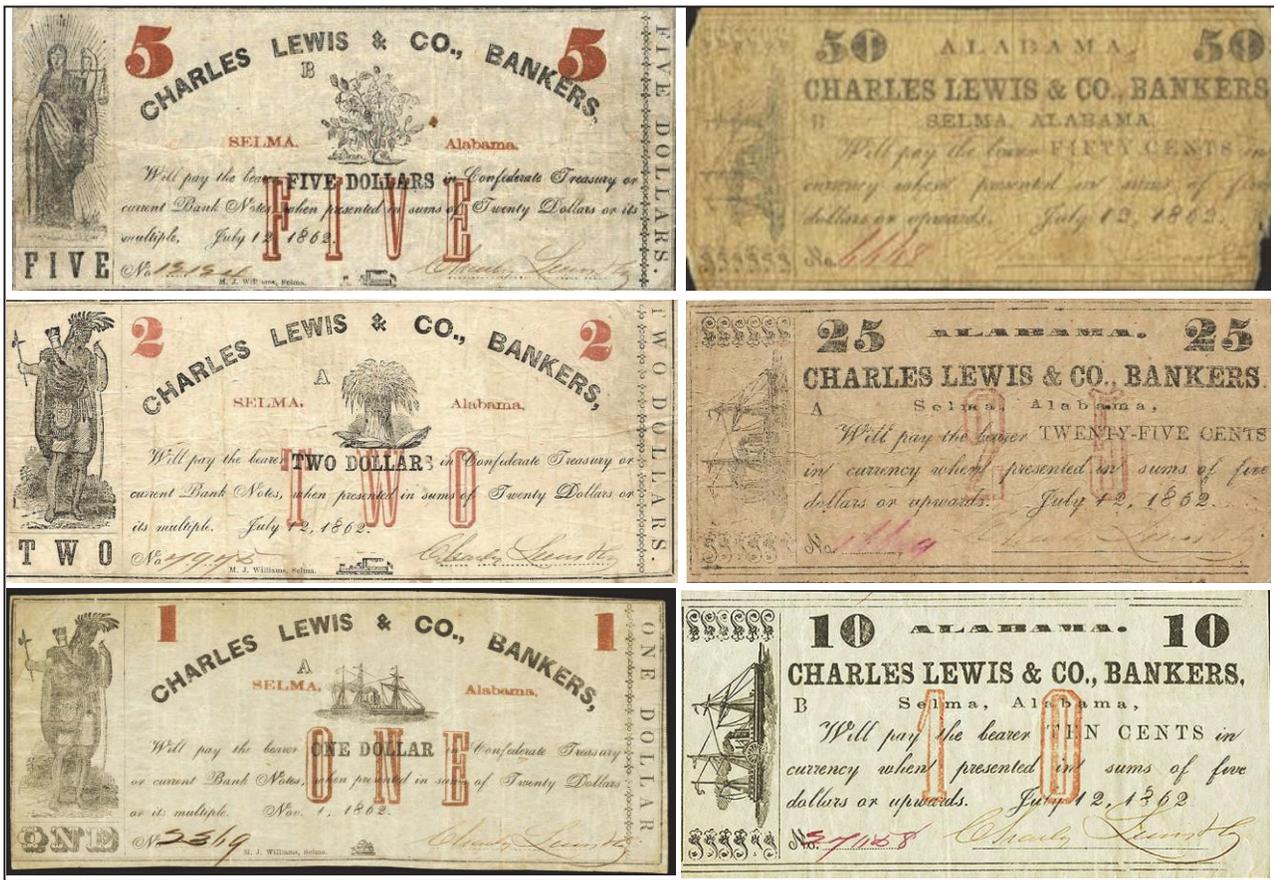


Fig. 9. Charles Lewis & Co., Banker, scrip 1862. From Heritage Auctions.

City of Selma scrip, 1865

The fourth set, shown in Figure 10, is a four denomination series of post-war fractional scrip from the City of Selma. These were 5, 10, 25, and 50 cent denominations, printed by the American Bank Note Company on Oct. 1st 1865. These bear the imprinted signature of “M. J. Williams” as post-war mayor and a blank line for adding the serial number. Hardy’s 1879 book on the history of Selma tells the origin of these notes, mostly through reports of the City Council. In May 1865, as Williams became mayor of Selma, the city was in dire financial condition. The city’s coffers consisted of \$9,253.20 in Confederate \$5 bills and \$10,000 in Confederate bonds. But this was worthless, as the war was over, the city was under federal occupation, and the city officers were instructed not to receive anything but U.S. money in payment of city dues. City officials devised a plan to secure fractional currency for city business, and U.S. officials approved the plan. They ordered a total of \$20,000 in notes of 5, 10, 25, and 50 cent denomination to be printed by the American Bank Note Co. in New York. If an equal number of each

denomination were printed, this would be 22,222 sheets or 88,888 individual notes. They paid John M. Parkman, former Cashier of the Bank of Selma and President of the First National Bank of Selma, \$1050 to travel to New York, secure the necessary plates, and have the notes printed. When Parkman returned with the notes, he had them deposited in equal amounts with three financial institutions – the Planters and Merchants Insurance Company, Keith & Co. (M.J.A. Keith, Banker), and the First National Bank of Selma – and subject to be drawn upon by the city. Records indicate that by November 1865, all of the shiplasters were in circulation. We have seen only one note (in Rosene 1984) with a serial number. It is reasonable to conclude that after receipt of the notes, city officials concluded that the task of numbering and tracking this many notes was so expensive and overwhelming that serial numbers were not assigned. It is also worth noting that a number of cities were allowed to issue scrip after the War, and while most notes had printed “By Authority” or “By Military Authority,” these from the City of Selma did not.



Williams’ printed signature as mayor of Selma.
Courtesy of Heritage Auctions.

Checks from the Bank of Selma

Williams, through his *Reporter* job print company, printed other numismatic material, including checks for the Bank of Selma. Figure 11 shows an example.



Fig. 11. Check printed by MJW and his “Reporter Print.” The check is dated May 2nd, 1862, in the amount of \$300, to Mr. J. E. Partridge, from the Shelby Co. Iron Manufacturing Company (aka Shelby Iron Works), A. T. Jones, President.

Williams' Brief Life after the War

After the war, Williams was instrumental in moving the county seat from Cahaba to Selma. In 1865, he founded a new newspaper, the *Selma Times*, which was associated with the Democratic Party. Williams began as publisher and editor, with Richard H. English as associate editor. Soon thereafter and until 1868, Robert McKee and Col. Frank E. Burke became editors and in 1868, McKee was sole editor. By this time, Williams had acquired a national reputation, and he was offered a position at the *New York Times*. But he declined moving to New York, and instead, in 1870 he sold his *Selma Times*, and in February 1871, purchased the *Montgomery Mail*. In May 1871, the *Mail* was bought and consolidated within the *Montgomery Advertiser*, with Williams as co-owner/publisher with W.W. Screws. Williams' career was in its ascendancy, but his health was deteriorating. His descendants attributed this to a persistent illness he first contracted when he was imprisoned in the wet stockade during the Battle of Selma. He took out a \$10,000 life insurance policy in May 1871 from the Northwestern Mutual Life Insurance Co., with his wife Clara as the beneficiary. His health continued to decline. On August 29, 1872, he died at the health resort of Shelby Springs, at the age of 35. He was buried in Selma's famous Old Live Oak Cemetery, under a tombstone bearing the epitaph, "War Editor, Founder of *Selma Morning Times*."

Acknowledgments.

Anne Knight, historian for the Selma-Dallas County Public Library and great-granddaughter-in-law of M.J. Williams, was an invaluable source of information and inspiration. She provided documents and conversation that helped shape the research and presentation of ideas in this article. Bill Gunther also provided extremely helpful feedback during the research and writing of this article.

Literature

- Appleton & Co. 1873. *The American Annual Cyclopaedia and Register of Important Events*. Memorial Record of Alabama: Herbert, H.A. Alabama in Federal politics. Cochran, J. The medical profession. Clark, T.H. Judicial history. Screws, W.W. Alabama journalism. Clark, T. H. Religious history.
- American Historical Association. 1898. U.S. Government Printing Office:
<http://www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~alshelby/ShelbySprings.html>
- Clarke, Daniel. 2012. John Cussons. The Confederacy's Lincolnshire Scout. Daniel Clarke.
- Gunther, William, and Derby, Charles. 2020. *A Comprehensive Guide to Alabama Obsolete Notes 1818-1885*. Gunther & Derby, 286 pp. ISBN 978-1-64945-680-9.
- Hardy, John. 1879. *Selma; Her Institutions, Her Men*. Times Book and Job Office: Selma, AL.
- Hooper, Richard T. 1983. Railroad notes and scrip of the United States, the Confederate States and Canada. *Paper Money* XXII, No. 5, Whole No. 107, pp. 195-203.
https://archive.org/stream/selmaherinstitut00hard/selmaherinstitut00hard_djvu.txt
<https://archive.org/details/selmaherinstitut00hard>
http://blog.al.com/strange-alabama/2012/06/the_old_shelby_hotel_was_first.html
- Jones, James Pickett. 1976. *Yankee Blitzkrieg: Wilson's Raid Through Alabama and Georgia*. Lexington: University of Kentucky Press.
- Owen, Thomas McAdory, *History of Alabama and Dictionary of Alabama Biography*. Spartanburg: The Reprint Company Publishers, 1978 (1921), IV, 1515-1517.
- Rosene, Walter, Jr. 1984. *Alabama Obsolete Notes and Scrip*. SPMC.
- Rowell, George. 1870. *The Men Who Advertise: An Account of Successful Advertisers*. Nelson Chesman, NY.
- Thalimer, Carol and Dan. 1999. *Recommended Bed & Breakfasts the South*. Globe Pequot.
- The Shelby Guide*, Columbiana, Alabama, Thursday, September 5, 1872.
- The Shelby Sentinel*, Columbiana, Alabama. Thursday, August 17, 1882
- U.S. Censuses of 1840, 1850, and 1860.