

Granford 1116(9)

From *The Philatelic Record*, May, 1888.



Hill (Pearson)

## THE ORIGIN OF POSTAGE STAMPS.

[WE make no apology for inserting the following communications. Had we not received them, we should have felt it incumbent on us to have noticed the pamphlet recently issued by Mr. Pearson Hill, in which the pretensions raised by Mr. Patrick Chalmers are most effectually demolished. To add anything of our own would only be "slaying the slain," as they express our own conclusions, though in somewhat forcible terms.—Ed.]

*To the Editor of "The Philatelic Record."*

SIR,—It will perhaps be within the recollection of many of your readers, that more than six years ago I read a paper before the London Philatelic Society (published in the *Philatelic Record* of November, 1881) with reference to a claim that had been set up by a Mr. Patrick Chalmers, who asserted that his father, Mr. James Chalmers, of Dundee, had anticipated Sir Rowland Hill in the suggestion of adhesive postage stamps, and had been fraudulently deprived of all credit for the same. The worthlessness of the claim I then fully exposed.

As no serious attempt was ever made to refute the statements I then put forward, and as the London Philatelic Society, after a careful and prolonged investigation, extending over more than eleven months, unanimously pronounced judgment against the Chalmers' romance, I had hoped no further occasion would arise for my having to again take notice of this preposterous claim. But, just as in nature the lowest forms of animal life are the most difficult to destroy, so, in accordance perhaps with the eternal fitness of things, the lowest forms of misrepresentation are those which seem most unaffected by constant exposure.

There can, I think, be little doubt that Mr. Patrick Chalmers is suffering from a severe and perhaps permanent attack of postage stamps on the brain, and is upon this question a monomaniac; but your readers will have no difficulty in estimating his assertions at their proper value when I state that, in the *Dundee Advertiser* of 16th April, 1883, I publicly charged him with falsification of documents, and dared him to bring an action for libel, pointing out that, if my charges were untrue, he could not only obtain heavy

pecuniary damages, but would have the finest possible opportunity for establishing his father's claim, if it were genuine, by bringing it before a tribunal where every statement must be made on oath, and be subject to the severest cross-examination. This course he has never ventured to adopt, and as his misrepresentations still continue, I have thought it well, in answer to a request from some eminent philatelists, again to put on record the facts of the case, and to expose the worthlessness of the so-called evidence on which the claim seems now to be based.

This I have done in a little pamphlet entitled *The Origin of Postage Stamps. The Chalmers' Craze Investigated*, published by Messrs. Morrison, Son, and Mallett, 68, Leadenhall Street, E.C. (price 3d.), which may possibly interest your readers.

Already I have received several letters welcoming "the little stranger;" but amongst them is one to which I attach great value, coming, as it does, from one of the highest authorities on philatelic matters affecting the United Kingdom; viz., Mr. Westoby, a gentleman who can hardly be supposed to be influenced in my favour by personal considerations, as I have never yet had the pleasure of meeting him.

This letter, with his permission, I forward to you, thinking it may well merit insertion in your journal.

Yours very truly,

PEARSON HILL.

6, PENBRIDGE SQUARE, W., May 9th, 1888.

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DEAR SIR,—I have just received a copy of your pamphlet on the *Origin of Postage Stamps*, and though I have not the pleasure of knowing you personally, yet I feel sure you will excuse the liberty I take in writing to you a few words on the subject.

When, in 1878, the President of the London Philatelic Society and I undertook the work on *The Postage Stamps of Great Britain*, my first care was to make myself acquainted with the history of those stamps, and for that purpose I spent many days in the British Museum reading over and having extracts made from the various reports of the Committee of Post-office Inquiry, the journals of the period, the debates in Parliament, &c., and every other work that I could there find in any way bearing upon the subject, including a small volume containing the copies of the papers circulated by the Mercantile Committee, and the numbers of the *Post Circular*, with the various communications addressed to the editor. This I did to refresh my recollection of the postal agitation of 1837 to 1839, in which I had taken a great interest, having at that period just left the University, and had more time on my hands than I expected to have a few years later. These investigations showed me clearly that the employment of an adhesive postage stamp was, as I had always believed, first mooted by Sir Rowland Hill, who did so in the course of giving his evidence before the Committee of Post-office Inquiry on the 13th February, 1837. The enquiry at that period seems to have been mainly directed to the extension of the limits of the London twopenny post, and the partial adoption of

Sir Rowland Hill's projected reform by the establishment of a uniform rate within those limits dependent on weight, and by allowing the use of envelopes or covers for the prepayment of postage. It was chiefly to the latter point that the evidence of Mr. Dickinson, Sir Rowland Hill, Mr. Pressley, &c., was directed; and it was in the course of the examination of Sir Rowland Hill that he suggested the use of an adhesive label as an obvious mode of meeting a difficulty which had presented itself. With the knowledge of what Mr. Whiting had done in the manufacture of labels, an idea such as that put forward by Sir Rowland Hill must have readily developed in a brain so fertile as his.

The first publication of the suggestion of Mr. James Chalmers is contained in his communication which appears in the *Post Circular* of 5th April, 1838, and is dated 8th February, 1838, accompanied by specimens of what he proposed; and in a reprint of the same in 1839, he states that he first propounded his suggestion in November, 1837. On Mr. James Chalmers' own showing (and *his* evidence *must* be better than that of his son or any one else) the publication could not be carried back earlier than that date. I need not remind you that his suggestions were utterly impracticable as a solution of the question of employing an adhesive stamp for postal purposes. I look upon Mr. Bacon as the person who, by his invention for producing exact *fac-similes*, and so preventing forgery, really succeeded in solving this part of the difficulty.

I, in common with other philatelists who take an especial interest in English postal matters, read the first pamphlet of Mr. Patrick Chalmers, and I have considered it to be my duty—a very irksome one it is true—to read his many subsequent ones. In the investigation of the question raised by him, as brought before the Philatelic Society of London, I took no part, not being able to be present at any of the meetings; but I was made acquainted with the evidence, and formed my own opinion on it. The result was that I regarded the proceedings of Mr. Patrick Chalmers as very much akin to *chantage*. His father appears to have been an honest and honourable man, but unfortunately these good qualities are not always hereditary, or we should not find so many distortions of facts and suppressions of evidence on the part of his son. The evidence since produced, by which he attempts to prove that the idea of an adhesive stamp was matured in his father's mind as early as 1834, is utterly worthless, as it depends for any validity on a state of things which did not then exist. Prepayment of letter postage was in those days a practical impossibility, and no change in a direction to facilitate prepayment was at that time contemplated by any one.

Looking at the kind of person one has to deal with, I have refrained hitherto from expressing my own personal opinion on the question. Mr. Patrick Chalmers evidently belongs to that class of persons who—

"Destroy his fib or sophistry—in vain!  
The creature 's at his dirty work again."

You have certainly destroyed his fib, but I doubt whether Pope will not prove to be right after all. To any unprejudiced mind, the facts you have adduced are a complete answer. But when one sees the amount of nonsense

that has been talked and written about this claim, one is driven to the conclusion that *mind* is just the one thing that is most wanted in the discussion, and that ignorance has it nearly its own way. Some noodles—great and distinguished philatelists no doubt in their own eyes—actually asserted that Sir Rowland Hill owed his success in extinguishing Mr. James Chalmers to having been a titled aristocrat, to whom the tuft-hunting English naturally bowed down.

When such utter ignorance is shown of the notorious facts, that title, honours, and everything that Sir Rowland Hill possessed of worldly goods was due to his own merits, and won by his own efforts, is it to be wondered at that others are to be found who presume to pronounce a verdict on a question in which they have never examined one iota of the documentary evidence? As Mr. Patrick Chalmers is so hard to please, let him accept your invitation to a morning entertainment at the courts of justice before a jury. Depend on it, however, his modicum of sense is sufficient to convince him that a quarter of an hour's cross-examination of him and his three old men would suffice to demolish these preposterous claims, and prove that he is nothing more than a wind-bag.

I am, yours truly,

W. A. S. WESTOBY.

FOLKESTONE, May 7th, 1888.

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Brawford 1116(10)



Hill (Pearson)

## MEMORANDUM.

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The following recent correspondence will help to show what value should be placed on any statements put forward by Mr. Patrick Chalmers.

[PARAGRAPH.]

*The DUNDEE ADVERTISER, May 17th, 1888.*

THE ORIGIN OF POSTAGE STAMPS.—Mr. Patrick Chalmers has for years been assiduously propounding certain opinions as to the invention of postage stamps. These opinions are by no means universally entertained, and Mr. Pearson Hill, son of Sir Rowland Hill, has issued a pamphlet for the purpose of enlightening the world as to their worth. He writes in a succinct fashion, and no one can pretend to be informed on the subject who has not read this work. (London: Morrison & Sons & Mallett.)

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[CORRESPONDENCE.]

*The DUNDEE ADVERTISER, May 21st, 1888.*

### THE ADHESIVE POSTAGE STAMP.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "DUNDEE ADVERTISER."

SIR,—A copy of your issue of 19th inst. draws my attention for the first time to a pamphlet just published by Mr. Pearson Hill, entitled "The Chalmers Craze Investigated," with respect to which it will be a relief to your readers to find that the compiler does not now claim the invention of the adhesive postage stamp for Sir Rowland Hill. It would have saved editors and writers all over the world much trouble and racking of brains had this important admission been made sooner, and before I had shown this long-standing pretence to be wholly untenable. But the object of this pamphlet, the pretensions set up for Sir Rowland Hill being at last out of the way, is to draw certain red herrings across the path of Chalmers—"anybody but Chalmers" is the motto. My reply to this is—Having now disposed of the Hill delusion, let that anybody else stand up and I am ready for him. What is his name? Let him prove his case as I have proved mine, prove his invention and the date, produce his plan as I have produced that of James Chalmers, and show that the same was officially proposed for adoption in the reformed postal system prior to December 1837. That is what is wanted; not a string of vague assertions of which nothing was heard as long as the Hill delusion lasted or could