

The Lahainaluna Money Forgeries

Peter Morse

January 8, 1844—The missionary faculty of the Mission Seminary at Lahainaluna held a special Monday morning meeting to deal with an unprecedented problem. “In view of the fact that our money has been counterfeited by Kahiona and George 2nd, Mr. Andrews’ engraver,” wrote the secretary, Rev. J. S. Emerson, “Voted to call in all our paper money and destroy it—and seek some other device by which to pay the Scholars. Voted to expell Kahiona for counterfeiting—and to send off George from Lahainaluna. That whatever goods they might have be taken from them in pay for the loss sustained by the School in consequence of their forgery.”¹

A forgery a century and a quarter old might seem of little interest today were there not collectors of Hawaiian money and of Lahainaluna engravings who would be seriously concerned about whether they owned originals or forgeries. A probable solution to the problem is presented here.

The Mission Seminary was founded in 1831, with the Rev. Lorrin Andrews as its first and only teacher. In 1834, Lahainaluna students first began the practice of intaglio engraving on copper plates, under Mr. Andrews’ guidance. The initial purpose of this engraving was to provide maps for study, not only at the Seminary, but at schools throughout the Islands. Within the following ten years the work was extended for use in book illustrations, landscapes, biblical charts, and all manner of pictorial material needed in quantity.²

In 1842, Lorrin Andrews resigned from the Mission in protest against their acceptance of funds from slave states of the United States. Though no longer an official member of the Lahainaluna faculty, he remained on good terms with his brethren, and for a while stayed in charge of the printing and engraving establishment at the Seminary.

In the 1840s commercial development in Hawaii—both trade and agriculture—began to assume significant proportions. As business grew, so did the need for money. At this time, the nation had no official currency of its own, relying instead on a variety of foreign coins and bills which circulated at an agreed rate of exchange based on the U.S. dollar. As early as 1836, private Hawaiian

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firms began to issue paper scrip of their own redeemable by the issuing company in coins or goods. In early 1843, apparently, the Mission Seminary first issued its own paper money. Its primary purpose was evidently to pay the students at Lahainaluna for "their work at *hoolimalima*," at hire for the Seminary in payment of their rent and tuition, at up to 25 cents per week.³

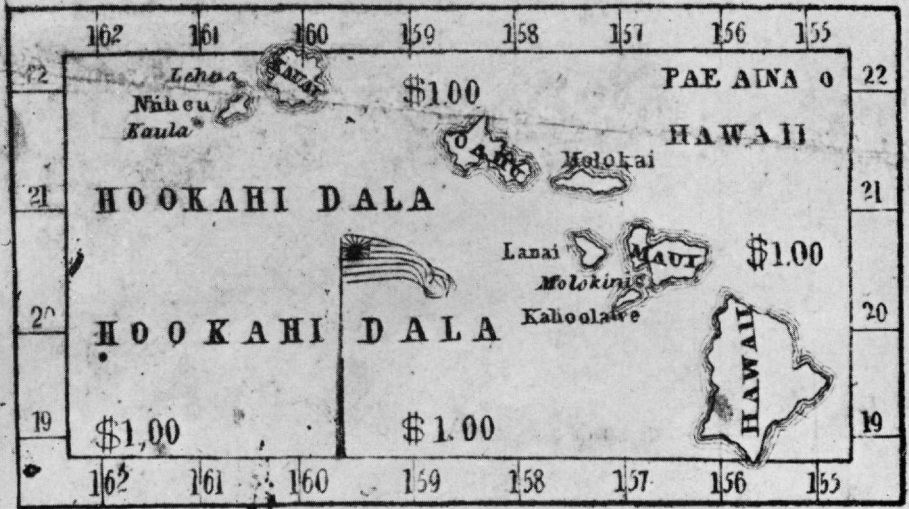
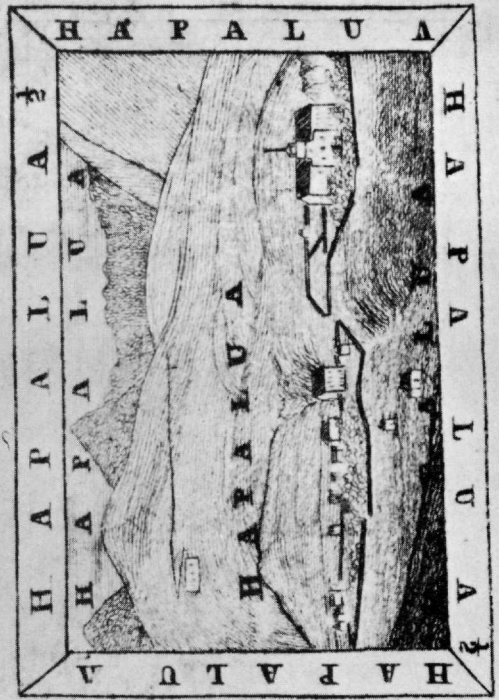
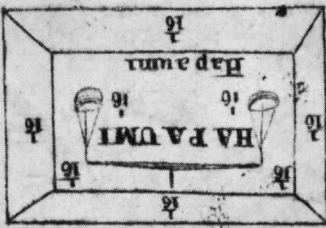
This Lahainaluna paper money is well known today. It was undoubtedly engraved by one of Mr. Andrews' trained men, perhaps even the same George 2nd mentioned in the present case, and exists in the six values illustrated here: *hookahi dala* (\$1.00), *hapalua* (50¢), *hapaha* (25¢), *hapawalu* (12½¢), *hapaumi* (6½¢), and *ekolu keneta* (3¢). The six designs were printed together from a single plate, and subsequently mounted on a dark-brown stiff pressed cardboard for permanency, and then cut apart (in most examples seen).

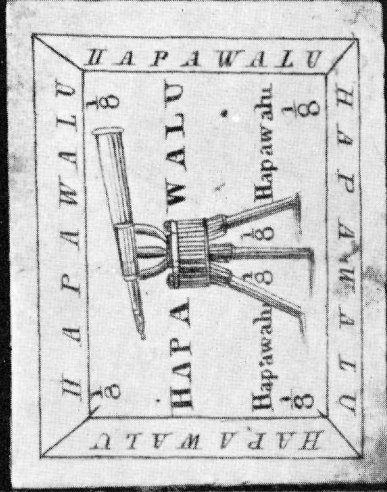
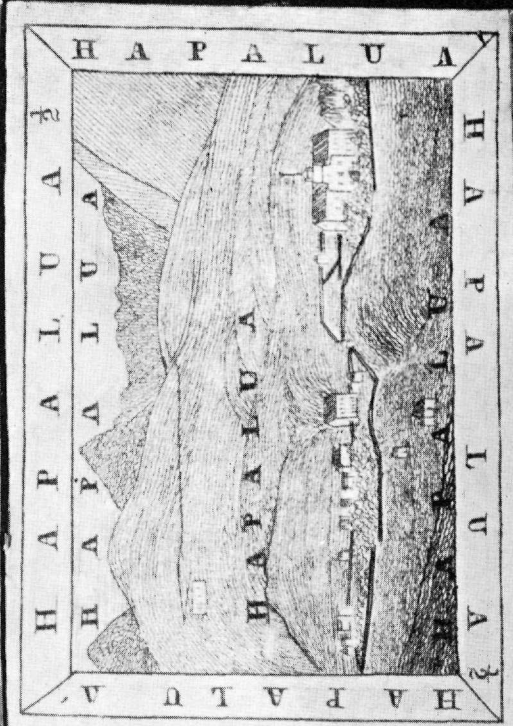
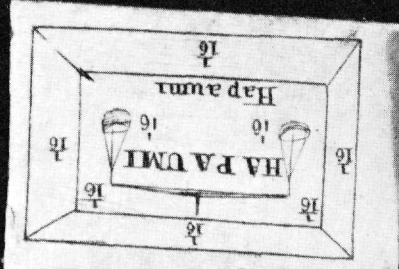
In addition to the faculty record of January 8, 1844, quoted above, only two other contemporary references to the forgery have been found. On the evening of the same day, the faculty met again and "Voted that a statement of the reasons for expelling Kahiona from school be sent to Mr. Lyman by the Secretary." The Rev. David B. Lyman, the founder and director of the Hilo Boarding School for Boys, might be presumed to be interested in all school problems. Possibly, too, Kahiona may have been a student at Hilo before coming to Lahainaluna. In any event, no actual letter to or from Mr. Lyman on this subject has been discovered. Secondly, in the hand-written report, dated May 1844, to the General Meeting of the Mission, there is the brief comment: "Three others have been expelled from the Seminary; one, for repeated acts of theft; one, for counterfeiting our paper money; and one, for general disregard of the laws. . . ." This specific reference was omitted from the subsequent printed minutes.

The subject is not mentioned in any of a number of extant letters from the Lahainaluna faculty members at this time, nor would one expect it to be. First, the faculty would surely have had a regard for the future reputation of the guilty men. Having imposed their punishment of expulsion and confiscation, they would probably not have wished to chastise them further by making the offense public. Furthermore, public knowledge of a forgery would certainly have debased the value of the Lahainaluna money and brought the entire Seminary into some disrepute. Despite the few references, however, there can be no doubt that there was a misdeed of some sort involving the money.⁴

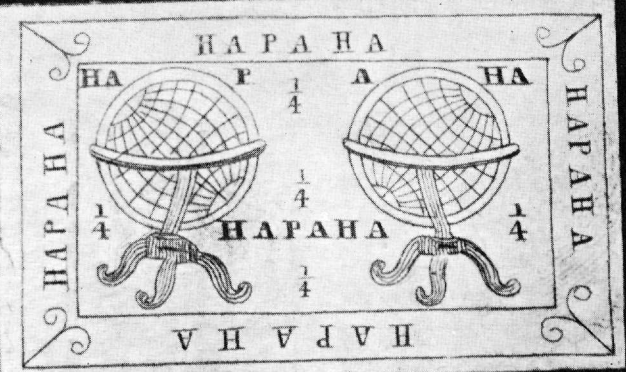
In the faculty record book, dated January 19, 1844, there is a direct reference to the money again in use: "That any class or classes who might support themselves . . . should be paid a premium of 50 cts paper money to each boy . . . and that those who might require 50 cts worth of food to be bot [bought] for them should be taxed 50 cts paper money [if the boys consent]." Within those eleven intervening days, therefore, a workable solution must have

Lahainaluna paper money. Proof sheet in the first state, before the addition of secret marks. Collection of Alfred J. Ostheimer III. Photo by courtesy of Gordon Medcalf.





	162	161	160	159	158	157	156	155	
22	Lehua Niheu Kaula		KAUAI	\$1.00	Molokai	MAUI	PAE AINA O HAWAII,		22
21	HOOKAHI DALA								21
20					Lanai	Molokini	\$1.00		20
19	\$1.00			\$1.00	Kahoolawe	HAWAII			19
	162	161	160	159	158	157	156	155	



been found for the forgery problem. In the absence of other documentary evidence, one must look to extant examples of the money itself for both the forgery and solution.

The words "counterfeiting" and "forgery," both used in the faculty records, traditionally mean an imitation or copy of an original, accurate enough to be deceptive. This definition, however, does not seem to apply here. One factor, hardly conclusive in itself, is that no such close copies have yet been discovered.⁵ More persuasive is the fact that the "counterfeiting" was done by Lorrin Andrews' employee and one of the students—men who would presumably have had easy access to the copper plate from which the genuine money was printed. It seems most reasonable, therefore, to assume that the "forgery" was actually a further printing from the original plate—money created by the two men for their own use, but technically indistinguishable from the originals.

The evidence of the money itself gives every indication not only that this was the nature of the "forgery" but also that a very ingenious solution was found to the problem presented. It appears that the faculty, in accordance with their vote of January 8, 1844, did indeed call in and destroy all the paper money they could find. Then, it seems clear, they authorized the addition of secret marks to all six values of the currency and re-issued it. (The engraving of an entire new plate would have involved considerable work and might well have aroused public suspicion of the money in general.)

Fortunately, a complete proof sheet still exists of the money in its first state, before the secret marks. It is said to have been discovered among the pages of an old book, perhaps forgotten and missed both by its original owner and the authorized destruction by the Lahainaluna faculty.⁶ All other presently known examples of the money, and also the original copper plate, contain today clearly identifiable additions, which qualify as secret marks.⁷ They are in each case instantly recognizable to one who knows the secret, yet quite inconspicuous to one who does not.

These special marks which were added to the money are as follows:

Hookahi Dala. A wedge-shaped comma, pointing straight down, has been added after the word, "HAWAII," in the upper right corner of the design.

Hapalua. A short diagonal stroke has been added in the extreme lower right corner, bridging the gap between the right frame line and the lower right corner diagonal.

Hapaha. Strong horizontal lines have been added on the bases of both globes, just below the point where the side brackets meet the base.

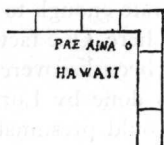
Hapawalu. The corner diagonals at both the upper left and lower left have been extended inside the inner frame line, into the design area.

Hapaumi. The corner diagonal at the lower right has been extended inside the inner frame line, into the design area.

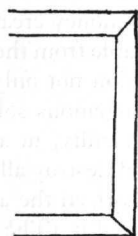
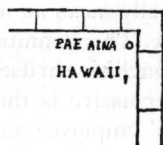
Lahainaluna paper money. Second state, with secret marks, the six values arranged in the position of the original plate. HMCS, gift of Mrs. S. E. Bishop and Carl B. Andrews. Photo by Raymond Sato.

FIRST STATE

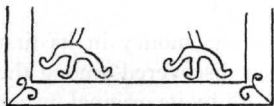
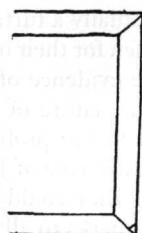
SECOND STATE



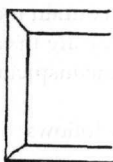
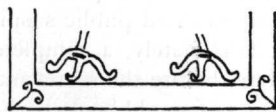
HOOKAHI DALA



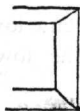
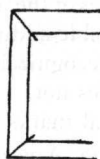
HAPALUA



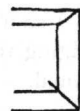
HAPAHA



HAPAWALU



HAPAUMI



EKOLU KENETA



Drawing by the author, showing the secret marks added to the Lahainaluna paper money after the unauthorized printing.

Ekolu Keneta. A tenth diagonal line has been added at the right side of the group of nine in the upper left corner, touching the numeral, "3," and extending slightly beyond the upper frame line.

These engraved lines, absent in the first-state proof and present in all known second-state impressions of the money, are in each case so strongly cut and so carefully placed that they can only be deliberate additions, not accidental scratches. (Some additional scratches do, of course, appear on the later impressions. They are not noted here, to avoid confusion.) Otherwise, the two states of the money are identical.

The evident pattern of "forgery" and solution now becomes clear: 1) the unauthorized printing of money from the original plate by one of Mr. Andrews' engravers and one of the Lahainaluna students; 2) the discovery and punishment of the miscreants; 3) the recall and destruction of all obtainable pieces of the money; 4) the engraving of identifiable secret marks on the original copper plate; and 5) the re-issue of quantities of the revised money.⁸

This deduced story meets every test of probability. The original plate would have been readily accessible to the "forger," who was Mr. Andrews' engraver. The added marks are clear and strong enough to have been instantly recognizable to the Lahainaluna faculty members responsible for redeeming the money—very likely the only men to know the secret. (Any of the old money, without the marks, brought in at a later date, would be presumed to have come from the illegal issue.) Yet the new lines are inconspicuous enough to remain unnoticed by anyone not aware of the secret, thus retaining general confidence in the money.⁹ Such confidence can be renewed today, for collectors may now be reassured that known examples of the money, whether in the first or second states, are all originals.

Thus, from a single entry in the Lahainaluna faculty records and from the evidence of the engraved money itself, we can reconstruct the story of Hawaii's first "counterfeit" money—125 years old—and the apt and honorable solution that was found to the problem it created.

NOTES

¹ "Lahainaluna Faculty Records 1835-1877," HMCS, a bound volume of manuscript minutes. This passage was first mentioned by George T. Lecker, *Lahainaluna 1831-1877*, University of Hawaii master's thesis, unpublished, 1938, pp. 239-240, and first published, in part, by Larry Windley, "Lahainaluna Engraving," *Hawaii Historical Review*, II (April, 1966), 293. Kahiona had entered the Seminary as a student in 1840, a native of Kailua, Hawaii, and later lived in Honolulu, with no known occupation (*He Papainoa . . . o ke Kulanui o Lahainaluna* (Honolulu, 1846), p. 9). No other reference to George 2nd has been found.

² The author of this article is presently engaged in writing a book devoted to the subject of the Lahainaluna engravings, to include a complete *catalogue raisonné* of all the prints. He would be most grateful if any reader with examples of the engraved pictures, maps, charts, money, book illustrations, or pertinent original letters and

documents could contact him at the Honolulu Academy of Arts. He wishes also to express his particular thanks to Mrs. Marvell Hart, Mrs. Elizabeth Larsen, Miss Margaret Titcomb, Miss Janet Bell, Miss Anges Conrad, Larry Windley, David Forbes, Joseph Feher, and the many others who have been of such assistance to him in his continuing research.

³ The paying and redeeming of paper money at Lahainaluna is first mentioned in the cited "Lahainaluna Faculty Records," the entry for April 4, 1843. The reference to the wages paid is from the entry for July 28, 1843. The approximate dimensions of the six pieces of money (the outer frame lines) are: *hookahi dala* 40 × 72 mm., *hapalua* 39 × 56 mm., *hapaha* 28 × 46 mm., *hapawalu* 26 × 34 mm., *hapau* 18 × 26 mm., and *ekolu keneta* 22 × 28 mm.

⁴ For the two references, see "Lahainaluna Faculty Records," *op. cit.*, January 8, 1844, Evening, and "Report of Lahainaluna May 1844," pp. 2-3, manuscript in the hand of Rev. J. S. Emerson, HMCS.

⁵ There are some highly deceptive illustrations in Gould, Maurice M., and Bressett, Kenneth, *Hawaiian Coins, Tokens, and Paper Money* (Racine, Wisc., 1960), pp. 10-11, which ought to be noted. These depict the Lahainaluna paper money, showing many small variations from examples of the genuine money. Though these appear to illustrate undiscovered forgeries, they are actually only the result of sloppy workmanship. The half-tone plates for these pictures were copied from half-tone illustrations in Bruce Cartwright's article, "The Money of Hawaii," *Numismatic Review*, IV, (April-October, 1947), 69-73, which are in turn copied from half-tones in the original publication of the same article in the *Hawaiian Annual for 1929* (Honolulu, 1928), pp. 70-77, which are taken from a photograph of the set of genuine money in the Bishop Museum. At each stage of making a half-tone from a half-tone from a half-tone, progressive errors appeared through photoengravers' retouching of the plates, until the final pictures diverged widely from the originals. The same deceptive half-tone printing plates were also used to illustrate the article, "The Money of Hawaii," *The Numismatist*, LXXIII (May, 1960), 547-556, and in the second revised edition of the Gould and Bressett booklet, 1961, pp. 10-11. The author is grateful to Mr. Gordon Medcalf of Honolulu for making available the publications which led to the discovery of this careless deception.

⁶ Collection of Alfred J. Ostheimer III of Honolulu. The author is most grateful to Mr. Ostheimer, not only for permitting the examination and reproduction of this proof sheet, but also for suggesting the line of thought which led to the story given here. The proof sheet was first reproduced in Medcalf, Gordon, and Fong, Robert, *Hawaiian Money and Medals* (Kailua, Hawaii, 1967), p. 44.

⁷ The original copper plate was formerly in the collection of Robert E. Van Dyke of Honolulu. Though it has not been possible to study the plate directly, Mr. Van Dyke, whose help in this matter the author gratefully acknowledges, says that he printed one proof sheet from it in 1960 or 1961. A photograph of this sheet, showing the present condition of the plate, was then used for the reproductions in the booklet, *Lahaina, Historical Restoration and Preservation*, prepared by Community Planning Inc. (Honolulu, May, 1961), p. 25. These line-cut illustrations show the presence of all the secret marks described here.

⁸ An estimate of the total quantity of the money printed is given in a letter from Lorrin Andrews to Dr. Gerrit P. Judd, then the Finance Minister, dated February 25, 1845 (FO & Ex). "You ask respecting the money I have struck off," he writes. "I made . . . for the Seminary at L'luna a plate and printed say four hundred and fifty ['dollars' is evident from the context]. I do not pretend to be accurate for I have no means. . . ." Since each impression from the plate had a total face value of \$1.96 $\frac{1}{2}$, Mr. Andrews' rough estimate shows a total printing of between 200 and 250 examples of each value of the paper money.

⁹ The use of secret marks in similar cases has been found in other circumstances, and should not be considered very unusual. A well-known example is that of the United

States postage stamps of 1870-1871, printed first by the National Bank Note Company. They were then re-printed in 1873 by the Continental Bank Note Company, with the addition of secret marks to distinguish them from the stamps of their predecessor (*Scott's Specialized Catalogue of United States Stamps* (New York, 1967), pp. 55-57). The present case, incidentally, should not be confused with the better known Torbert forgery case of 1848 (also on Maui), in which the Hawaiian judge, with the wisdom of Solomon, set free the forger and fined the issuer of the money for making it so easy to forge!