

# THE SMOKY MOUNTAIN PHILATELIST

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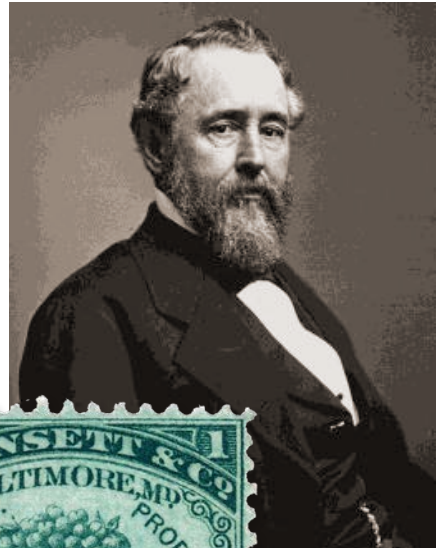
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Thomas Kensett II

## A Brief History of T. Kensett & Co., Food Packers & the U.S. Private Die Proprietary Canned Fruit Revenue Stamp they Briefly Issued in 1867

by Charles J. DiComo, PhD  
charlesdicomo@gmail.com  
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Thomas Kensett (1786-1829), an Englishman born in Hampton Court, was an engraver who emigrated to America and settled in New Haven, CT before 1806. He began canning food in New York City in ~1810. His son and namesake was one of the first to process “Fresh Cove Oysters” in Baltimore beginning in 1849. “Cove” refers to Cove St., a lane in Baltimore where several oyster houses were located.

- In 1813, Thomas Kensett married Elizabeth A. Daggett, a sister of engraver Alfred Daggett (1799-1872).
- In 1814, Thomas Kensett II (1814-1887), their first child was born in Cheshire, CT.
- In 1819, Thom. Kensett Sr. went into partnership with his father-in-law Ezra Daggett in New York City where they processed salmon, lobsters and oysters in glass containers (expensive & prone to breakage).

- In 1825, Kensett & Daggett were awarded a U.S. Patent for preserving food in “vessels of tin”
- In 1825, Ezra Daggett retired and Kensett Sr. continued the business until his death in 1829.

In 1849, Thomas Kensett II partnered with his brother-in-law Mr. Ira B. Wheeler and expanded the NYC company to Baltimore, MD which afforded far greater facilities for procuring oysters and fruits. He established a canning plant on York St., near Light St., on the waterfront and as the business prospered, built two factories, one for packing fruits and the other for manufacturing the tin canisters or “cans” for their expanding “hermetically sealed” oyster & fruit trade.

Before the Civil War, the company processed large quantities of oysters, fruit (peaches), and vegetables (corn, green peas, tomatoes). In 1857, Wheeler died and Thomas ran the business alone until 1864, then his son Thomas H. Kensett & nephew H.N. Vail took control.

Imperial Brand, Fresh Cove Oysters Can Label, T. Kensett & Co.



Kensett Packers Token ca. 1865



*Thomas Kensett & Co. Oyster & Fruit Packers, Baltimore, MD circa 1861-62*

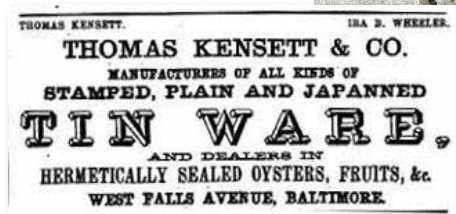


*Oyster Houses with Shells, Crisfield MD 1890s*



*Crate of Fresh Cove Oysters and Tin Cans, illustrated in *Treasure in a Cornfield*, by Greg Hawley on the discovery and excavation of the steamboat *Arabia*, sunk in the Missouri River in 1856. Kansas City: Paddle Wheel Publishing, 2005.*

*Thomas Kensett & Co advertisement, circa 1850's*



*Kensett Man with multiple crates of unlabeled oysters*

Prior to the Canned Fruit Stamp being Issued, Kensett & Co. used First Issue R3c 1¢ Red Proprietary Revenue Stamps



Horizontal pair of 1¢ Red Proprietary stamp R3c, used improperly as documentary revenue stamps, cancelled by black d-c "THOS KENSETT & CO Baltimore DEC 30 1867" handstamp. (#5148)

Care of Dan Harding

[www.revenue-collector.com](http://www.revenue-collector.com)



Provisional Canned Fruit Stamp, R3c surcharged in black, Type II: two vertical lines reading up, Roman type, undated.

Care of Mike Morrissey



Provisional Canned Fruit Stamp, R3c surcharged in black, Type I: three horizontal lines reading across, Roman type, dated.

Care of Mike Morrissey

References:

1. W.H. Waggoner, "Mr. Kensett's Revenue Stamp," *The American Revenuer*, Volume 40, Number 5, pp. 98-100.
2. "An Historical Reference List of the Revenue Stamps of the United States," G.L. Toppan, H.F. Deats, A. Holland, Boston Philatelic Society, Boston, Mass., 1899.
3. Aldrich, Michael E., *A Census of United States Match and Medicine Stamps*, Aldrich Publishing, Saint Paul, MN, 1997.

## Revisiting the Census of Known Copies of #RP1a

The Kensett Canned Fruit stamp has been one of the more popular U.S. Private Die Proprietary Revenue stamps due to its design, the limited quantity issued (528,000) and its narrow use over a two month period in early 1867 before the tax on meats, shellfish, fruits and vegetables was repealed on March 1, 1867. In 1997, Michael E. Aldrich published his seminal work entitled "A Census of United States Match and Medicine Stamps" which built upon earlier censuses from 1934 and 1987; referred to as the "1994 Aldrich Match and Medicine Census." This 1994 Census consists of 227 items with a full population of 4,630 stamps. At that time, only 27 known copies of #RP1a were available to collectors, of which 20 were faulty. Quality of extant RP1a's is usually quite poor in that they were used on steel cans of canned fruit, often torn off; exhibiting tears, thins and rust stains.

For the 2022 Census, I have thus far identified 42 copies. What follows are the best representative digital images I could obtain from the internet and colleagues.



*It is worth mentioning that this montage puts a "face" on the phrase "most are faulty", so often attached to many Private Die Proprietary stamps. In effect, most of the 42 copies illustrated are faulty to some extent.*

If you own (or have access to) one of the RP1a's depicted in this census and would like to submit a high-resolution digital image, please contact me. If you own an RP1a that is not represented here and would like submit to the Census, please contact me. All inquires shall remain confidential.