

## Chapter 3: American Card Company

**A**merican Card Company was operated by Benjamin W. Hitchcock, owner of a music and publishing business at 14 Chambers St., New York. The business consisted of sheet music, books, musical instruments, printing presses, and type. The time frame that Hitchcock printed playing cards is questionable, but assumed to be between 1862 and 1864 based upon their boxes and dates found on tax stamps. The ace of eagles (Figure 3-2) clearly states that the American Card Company had offices at 14 Chambers St. and 165 William St. in New York City.

Three versions of the Union Cards were made especially for Americans. This was conveyed through the following message on the Union Cards box, “**THE AMERICAN CARD CO.** Confident that the introduction of **NATIONAL EMBLEMS** in place of Foreign, in **PLAYING CARDS**, will be hailed with delight by the American People, take pleasure in presenting the **UNION PLAYING CARDS**. As the first and only Genuine American Cards ever produced, in the fullest confidence that the time is not far distant

when they will be the leading Card in American market. **Explanation.** The Union Cards are calculated to play all the Games for which the old style of Playing Cards are used. The suits are **EAGLES, SHIELDS, STARS, and FLAGS, GODDESS OF LIBERTY** in



place of Queen, **COLONEL** for King, **MAJOR** for Jack. In playing with these Cards, they are to be called by the names the emblems represent, and as the Emblems are as familiar as household words, everywhere among the American people, they can be used as readily the first occasion as Cards bearing Foreign emblems.”

According to the tax stamp (Figure 3-3), this box of playing cards sold for between 19¢ and 25¢. The bottom of the box shows that Hitchcock had copyrighted the box design, “Entered according to Act of Congress in the year 1862, by **BENJ. W. HITCHCOCK**, In the Clerk’s Office of District Court of the United States for the Southern District of **NEW YORK.**”



Figure 3-1: Union Cards partially opened box.



Figure 3-2: Ace of eagles and back design for first Union Cards.



AmC.Co.  
 Dec 1863

Figure 3-3: 2¢ blue First Issue “Bank Check” stamp canceled AmC.Co. Dec 1863.