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House Stuck With 18,000 Impeach Tickets

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More than 600 tickets for the House gallery, styled "Impeachment Proceedings," and dated Aug. 19, 1974, are locked in a safe in the office of Speaker Carl Albert D-Okla.). There's no word yet on what will be done with the tickets that were never issued for the presidential impeachment that never took place.

The Senate never authorized any ticket printings but at least one Washington area resident has come up with a gallery pass apparently printed with the same type the Government Printing Office had used when tickets were being designed.

And a cluttered storeroom in the Capitol still holds as many as 18,000 passes printed last summer on orders from

William (Fish Bait) Miller, the just-oustied doorkeeper of the House. The fate of these tickets, which played a minor role in Miller's downfall, is likewise undetermined.

A big question mark is the souvenir value, if any, of tickets for a non-event. The Senate's sergeant-at-arms, William H. Wannall, says the value to collectors of a valid ticket to the impeachment of Andrew Johnson is now in the \$200 to \$300 range.

So far there are no reported attempts to peddle Nixon impeachment tickets, real or spurious.

The tickets exist because both the House, where former President Nixon faced an impeachment vote on the floor in August, and the Senate, where he would have been tried, had to make a start on

spectator arrangements before Nixon resigned Aug. 8.

First Bait Miller, the veteran House factotum, felt he couldn't wait for the leadership to make up its collective mind on passes for press and the public. He told GPO to print 12 days' worth of conventional gallery tickets bearing his own signature.

Each day's printing order was for 1,500 tickets. Miller reasoned that they could be used on a rotating basis for the 600-odd spectator seats available. Later he was overruled on the tickets and other spectator arrangements by the ad hoc committee that laid plans, including extremely tight security, for the floor debate originally set for Aug. 19.

Was Miller criticized, as reported, for putting his own name on the tickets? "I get chewed out for everything," the doorkeeper replied with a big smile.

As the scheduled House floor showdown drew near, Speaker Albert's office set in motion the first day's printing. GPO delivered the 600-odd tickets, this time bearing Albert's signature, with only the planned sequential numbering missing. Mike Reed, the Speaker's legislative assistant, put them in an office safe, where he said they have remained.

Wannall, the Senate sergeant-at-arms, had more time to prepare. He had GPO set type and run off a proof of a proposed ticket. He said he chose the date of Oct. 7 for his model arbitrarily, based on predictions of a three-month Senate trial.

Ticket preparations never advanced beyond the proofing stage because of Nixon's resignation, Wannall said, but his office will preserve his preparation papers for some future possible impeachment.

However, a document looking very much like a Senate ticket is in the possession of Brian Judge, 26, a computer consultant who lives in Rockville. Judge's pass, like the GPO proof, bears the date of Oct. 7 and Wannall's signature.

In addition, Judge holds two House passes dated Aug. 19 and bearing Albert's stamped signature. One appears indistinguishable from the blue-on-white tickets stored in the Speaker's office safe. The other ticket, is yellow, a color never ordered from the GPO.

How could an outsider like Judge obtain all three tickets? He will say only that he obtained them indirectly from someone who works at GPO. A spokesman for GPO said no unofficial printing could occur there. "The men are strictly responsible for their time and materials," said special assistant David Brown.

Wannall said his prototype ticket material has been secure in his custody with one exception. He gave a copy of the printed proof to one individual as a memento. That individual had been kind enough to come forward with an Andrew Johnson ticket to help in designing the Nixon ticket, Wannall said. He declined to identify the individual but emphasized he does not suspect him of reproducing any Nixon ticket.