



Figure 1: A Confederate cover franked with a five-cent blue lithographed issue tied with a red double-circle postmark from Camden, South Carolina. It is addressed to Swedish-born Paul Romaré.

Paul Romaré: A Swedish Mariner Fights for the Confederacy and Leaves an African-American Legacy

By Patricia A. Kaufmann

Thousands of immigrants and mercenaries served in the Confederate Army, which had an Irish Brigade, a Polish Legion and several German and Mexican divisions. Another notable volunteer division was formed in Louisiana from various European countries; it was under the command of French Maj. Gen. Camille Armand Jules Marie, Prince de Polignac.

Americans of Scandinavian descent during the Civil War period mainly lived in the North, thus the majority of them served in the Union army. Fiercely anti-slavery, for the most part, the freedom-loving Swedes, Norwegians, and Danes could not bring themselves to support the Confederate cause.

According to *civilwarhome.com*, extensive genealogical research has uncovered only about 1,000 Scandinavian-Americans living in states that joined the Confederacy and only 19 soldiers can be found who claimed Scandinavian descent among the Southern forces.

There were many more Scandinavians among Union forces, from a far larger population. Census

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figures for the decade between 1850 and 1860 show a jump of nearly 55,000 Americans claiming to have been born in Scandinavia.

It would be unusual for Scandinavians not to be attracted to the sea, given their Viking ancestry, and one of Scandinavia's most famous immigrant sons was John Ericsson, a Swede. He was the inventor of the propeller, so critical to naval maneuvering and designer of the Union ironclad *Monitor*.

Admiral John Adolph Dahlgren of the United States Navy was also the son of Swedish immigrants, and went on to fame as the inventor of the "Dahlgren Gun."

One of the exceptions to the rule was Paul Romaré (pronounced ROAM-a-ree), born in Torekov, Sweden in 1828. His father was a sea captain and Romaré's first service as a sailor was on board a ship to the United States. He also sailed to Mexico, the West Indies and ports along the eastern United States coast.

After taking ill in 1850, he settled in Chester, South Carolina, working as a bank clerk. When the

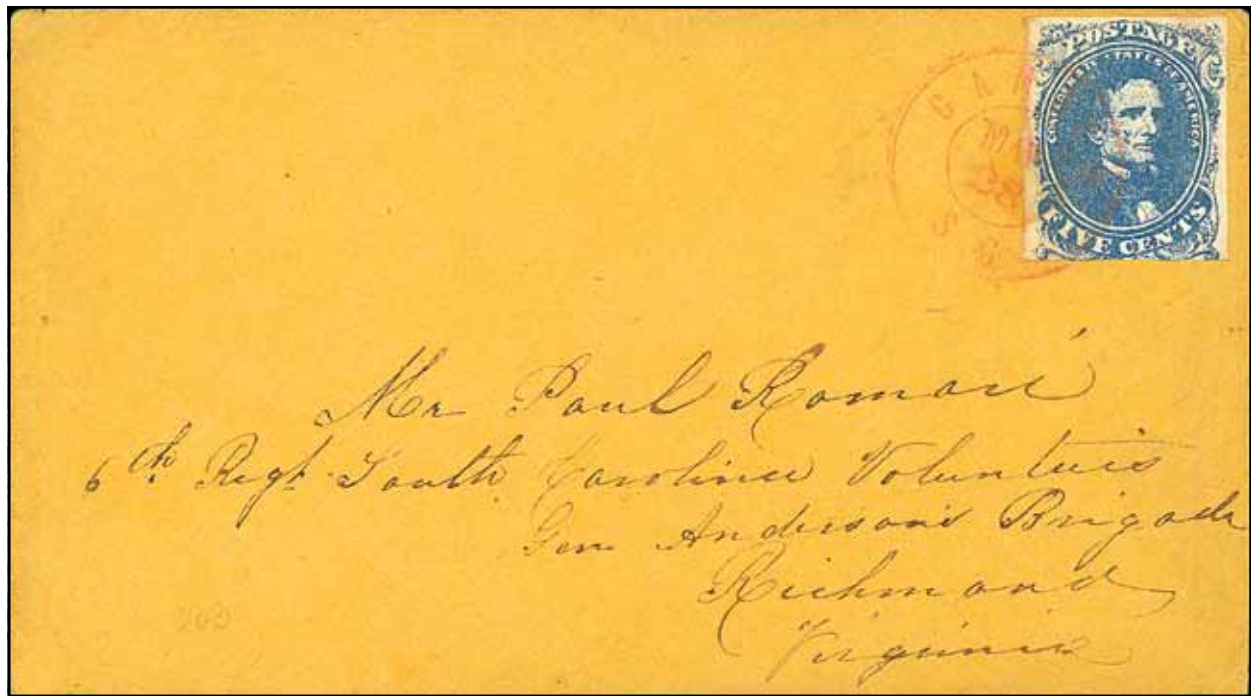


Figure 2: A similar cover from the same Figure 1 correspondence. (Courtesy Schuyler J. Rumsey Philatelic Auctions)



Figure 3: Paul Romaré as portrayed in a photo that accompanied the article “Seriously Ill is Paul Romaré,” which appeared in the February 8, 1904, *Atlanta Constitution*.

Civil War started, he volunteered for the Confederate “Chester Blues” and served in Charleston, experiencing the beginning of the war at Fort Sumter where the first shots of the war were fired.

Later, his company was transferred to the Sixth South Carolina Infantry Regiment. He was promoted to quarter master sergeant and fought in the Army of Northern Virginia until November 1863. He then transferred to the Confederate Adjutant and Inspector General’s Office in Richmond, Virginia, where he remained until the end of the war.¹

The covers in Figures 1 and 2 are addressed to: “Mr. Paul Paul Romaré, 6th Regt. South Carolina Volunteers, Gen. Anderson’s Brigade, Richmond, Virginia.”

The photo in Figure 3 is one of Romaré that accompanied the article “Seriously Ill is Paul Romaré,” which appeared on page nine of the February 8, 1904, *Atlanta Constitution*. He died that same day in Atlanta.

After the war, he was president of the Atlanta National Bank and was widely respected, becoming a prominent citizen of that city.

One of the most interesting things I found out about Paul Romaré, however, was that he fathered P. Fred Romaré with an African-American woman named Esther.

According to his 1920 passport application and the 1930 United States census,² Fred was born December 8, 1858, although his Missouri death certificate states he was born in 1860. These sorts of contradictions are common in genealogical research. My vote would be for the former. His birth is also noted as 1858 on his gravestone. Presumably, the “P” before “Fred” stood

P. FRED ROMARÉ.
 Manufacturer of **Harness** and Dealer in **Vehicles**
 907 MAIN ST. **JOPLIN, MO.**
 BOTH PHONES 922.

Figure 4: A contemporary ad listing for P. Fred Romaré, known as the “harness king” of Joplin, Missouri. Fred was the mulatto son of Swedish-born Paul Romaré.

for Paul, although that is speculation on my part, as I found no first name on any records.

When the war ended and Paul Romaré moved to Atlanta, he married a white woman and left his mulatto son, Fred, behind in South Carolina.

Between 1880 and 1910, P. Fred Romaré and his wife Rosa moved from South Carolina to Joplin, Missouri. As a youth, he worked as a carriage maker, and he continued that trade in Joplin.

Fred Romaré became a prominent member of the African-American community there, well known for his wide selection of carriages, buggies, and harnesses.

Figure 4 shows a contemporary advertisement listing for his company. He housed his business in a handsome two-story brick building and employed three white men as harness makers.³

African-American artist Romaré Bearden (1911-1988) was named after P. Fred Romaré, who was a friend of his great-grandparents.

Bearden’s early work focused on unity and cooperation within the African-American community.

After a period during the 1950s when he painted more abstractly, this theme reemerged in his collage works of the 1960s, when Bearden became a founding member of the Harlem-based art group known as The Spiral, formed to discuss the responsibility of the

African-American artist in the struggle for civil rights.

It is fascinating that two influential African-Americans can trace back to Swedish immigrant Paul Romaré. There is a story behind every cover, if you look hard enough.

Endnotes

- 1 Historic Joplin, More on the Early Joplin Black Community, <http://www.historicjoplin.org/?tag=paul-romare>, Accessed October 2014.
- 2 U.S. National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), Affiliate Publication Number: T626, Affiliate Film Number: 1205, GS Film number 2340940, Digital Folder number 004660797, Image number 00546, Accessed October 2014.
- 3 Historic Joplin, More on the Early Joplin Black Community, <http://www.historicjoplin.org/?tag=paul-romare>, Accessed October 2014.

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