

Civil War Philatelist

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Article: Charleston Fake Postmaster Provisional Entire

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- CHARLESTON FAKE POSTMASTER PROVISIONAL ENTIRE
- FATHER AND SON ANSWER THE CALL TO ARMS
- TWO 1861 LEXINGTON VA. COVERS

A New Confederate Find!
Magnolia Mills, Fla.

CHARLESTON FAKE POSTMASTER PROVISIONAL ENTIRE

Patricia A. Kaufmann

At first blush, the Charleston, S.C., postmaster provisional entire shown in Figure 1 seems authentic. The address appears genuinely penned in period ink to John A. Burns, Jacksonville, Fla (Florida). But genuinely addressed envelopes are not guarantees of genuine provisionals.



Figure 1. Charleston, S.C., Die C fake with bogus postmark.

To the right of "Fla" in the address panel is the distinctive tiny purple trefoil of **Philip Ferrari de La Renotière** (1850-1917), one of the most noted collectors of all time. His owner's mark is shown enlarged in Figure 1a. It is most often found on the front of covers, although occasionally on the back. It measures 3½ mm in diameter.

French-born of Italian heritage, his name is commonly seen as either Ferrari or Ferrar. He assembled perhaps the most complete worldwide collection ever formed, still holding that distinction more than a century after his death. Ferrary's collection included the famous 1856 1¢ British Guiana and 1855 Swedish Treskilling Yellow color error, as well as countless other unique rarities.



Figure 1a. Enlargement of the purple Ferrari trefoil at bottom right of subject cover.

He intended to donate his entire collection to the postal museum in Berlin, but his collection was confiscated by the French and auctioned off from 1921-26 to pay for war damages after World War I.

It is said Ferrary's "occupation" was collector – of both stamps and coins. Due to his extreme wealth and considerable appetites, dealers often took advantage of him. Thus, numerous fakes and forgeries also passed through his hands. He was famous enough to be featured on a 1968 stamp of Liechtenstein, Scott 448, shown in Figure 2.

As most collectors do, I flipped the cover over to see what else I might determine. The verso was backstamped with the small red owner's mark of Richard L. Calhoun, shown in Figure 3, although it is an unfortunate blurry strike. Most are perfectly struck or near so. It measures 3 mm high by 16 mm wide. Both the Ferrary and Calhoun owner handstamps were scanned at 1,200 dpi.

Richard (Rick) Calhoun is well known as the pre-eminent philatelic collector and student of Charleston, S.C. Thus, that owner handstamp might be a sign of genuineness, but not necessarily. In his studies, Rick also intentionally acquired many fakes and forgeries, as have I.

Additionally, the cover had the unmistakable pencil notations and price codes of the late Jack E. Molesworth, a prominent dealer and owner of Confederate Philately, Inc. I am privy to the price code and thus know he paid a substantial price for the cover many decades ago.

The subject cover crossed my path in a recently purchased collection. The first thing that struck me was the concave nature of the top of the "5" value, something that immediately stands out to me as bogus. The top cap of the "5" is nearly flat on the genuine. A second negative was the dot below the "CTS," which is a diamond rather than the round marking on the genuine.

Turning to the postmark, the circular datestamp has a spongy or mottled appearance – another negative cue for any marking. See Figure 4 for a closeup of the stamp and postmark scanned at 600 dpi.

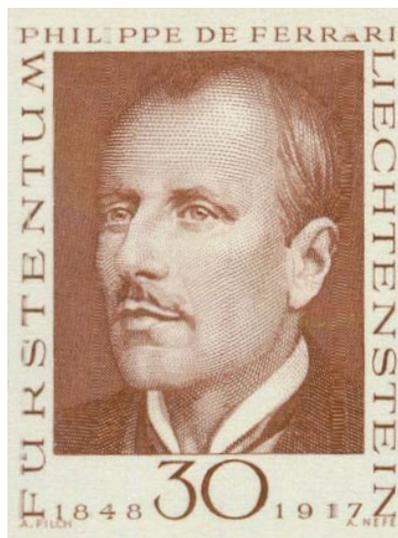


Figure 2. **Philip Ferrary de La Renotière** as shown on a 1968 stamp of Liechtenstein, Scott 448.

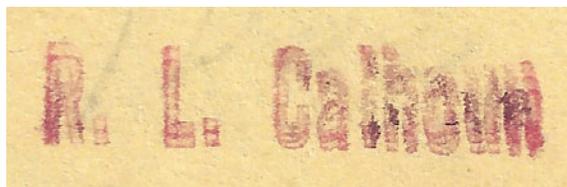


Figure 3. Red owner's backstamp of R.L. Calhoun on Figure 1 cover.



Figure 4. Closeup of the Figure 1 stamp and postmark.

While the subject envelope appears to be genuinely addressed, it is significantly reduced at left. After I determined the markings to be fake, I had to wonder why it was so significantly reduced. One theory is that there may have been docketing up the left end that showed it was hand-carried and/or dating that indicated antebellum or postwar use.

There are several publications to assist in confirming whether the provisional is genuine or not. The online resources on our society website are often overlooked. A search of the *Civil War Philatelist* and *Confederate Philatelist (CP)* easily brought forth “Counterfeit Charleston Provisionals” by Rick Calhoun in the July-August 1983 edition, at which time I was the editor. In the article, Calhoun noted that recently found counterfeits had unsuspectingly passed through major auction galleries and award-winning collections over prior years.

Another of the Charleston Die C fakes in my collection is backstamped Hiram E. Deats, a contemporary of August Dietz. He was a founding member of the American Philatelic Society, as well as its president in 1904-05. Deats was also founding member No. 5 of the Confederate Stamp Alliance in 1935, until the membership roll was, inexplicably, alphabetized.

In 2012, Rick Calhoun published *Charleston, South Carolina and the Confederate Postmaster Provisionals*, in which he wrote about adhesive and printed provisionals and their fakes. It is the foremost work on the subject. At the time he wrote the 1983 *CP* article, Die A and Die B were previously recognized as fakes, but Die C (the subject of his article) had not yet been documented. He meticulously showed the characteristics of the newly discovered fake type in his 1983 article, his 2012 book and again as a contributor to the *Confederates States of America Philatelic Fakes, Forgeries, and Fantasies of the 19th and 20th Centuries* by Peter W.W. Powell and John L. Kimbrough MD, self-published in 2015.

It is not my intention to rehash the important work done by others. You have the ability to look it up yourself. When you know what to look for, it is easy to tell the difference between the genuine and the fake. Knowledge is power. The power, as collectors, is in your hands. These are readily available works.

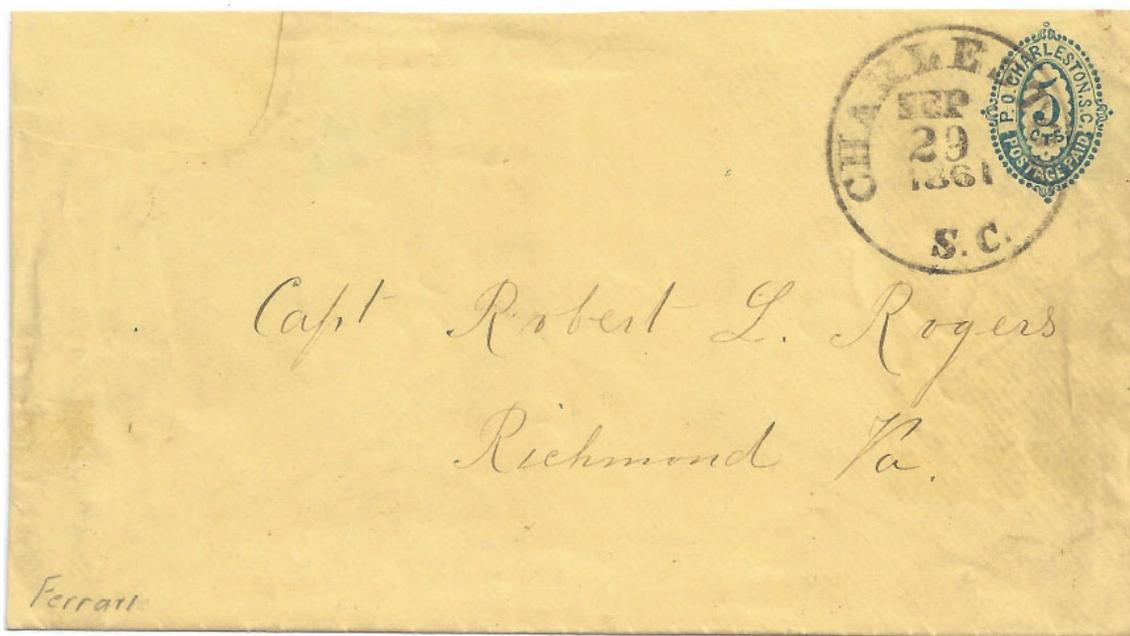


Figure 5. “SEP 29 1861” canceled Die C fake in author’s collection.



Figure 6. A genuine Charleston press-printed entire, Scott 16XU1

On page 138 of his 2012 book, Calhoun illustrates the subject cover as Figure 159 on page 138. He explains that, although there are several Die C fakes on unused envelopes, all the used examples are canceled with a fake Charleston type A-26 cancel. It is well done and has fooled many over the years. On the genuine cancel, the bottom of the letters in the month and top of the numeral in the year are incomplete due to the larger size of the day numeral. Since none of the Die C examples have genuine postmarks, this eliminates the concept that this was simply a different contemporaneous die.

Something I have not seen mentioned by others, but which I notice on the Figure 1 subject, is that the print edges do not appear crisp. They are fuzzy, which is particularly noticeable on the numeral 5. I have not seen that on other fakes, however.

I have numerous bogus Charleston fakes. Figure 5 shows a Die C fake from my reference collection on which the differences in the date are much easier to see than on the Figure 1 cover. One interesting sidenote is that it is marked at the lower-left corner as coming from the "Ferrari" collection. Figure 6, courtesy of Siegel Auction Galleries, shows a genuine Scott 16XU1 for comparison.

A good library is essential to every serious collector. These days, it is easier than ever to find what you need with online sources such as the many censuses, both Union and Confederate, on our society website and the ability to search past issues of the journal. There are also links to important collections, monographs, auction catalogs, old stamp catalogs, videos, exhibits, historic archives and so much more.

Thank you to the hard-working members of the website team who bring us these important assets: Frank Crown, Mike O'Reilly and Dennis King. Ours is not a static website. We are blessed to have these ever-expanding resources available. Let's use them.