

From The Authentication Files



The Unintended Forgery

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Figure 1. Wallpaper cover with 1¢ Scott 11 tied by RICHMOND / Va. June 21, 1863 postmark. (From the CSA Authentication files – Certificate 05679)

The wallpaper cover illustrated in Figure 1 is a real eye catcher. It is a cover that many collectors would love to have in their collection. Unfortunately, it is not what it appears to be.

In commemoration of the 42nd Annual Reunion of Confederate Veterans, August Dietz came up with the idea for turned wallpaper souvenir covers. Details appeared in a full page advertisement in the May 1932 issue of *The New Southern Philatelist*:

In commemoration of this event the publishers of the New Southern Philatelist secured official permission from the Third Assistant Postmaster-General to prepare a limited number of historical covers. The envelopes will be of flowered wall-paper, similar to that of 1862, hand-made. They will bear a genuine Confederate stamp postmarked "Richmond, Va., Jun. 21, 1862" in imitation of the war-time cancellation, personally stamped by the Postmaster of Richmond. The covers will then be turned – semi-sealed, wall paper side in – addressed to each purchaser and, prepaid with a United States 2-cent (or 3-cent) stamp, posted, receiving the Reunion-day cancellation "Richmond, Va., June 21, 1932." Upon receipt, the cover may be again carefully "turned" – wall-paper side out – and any desired address added with indelible or soft pencil. Writing ink should not be used.

Do not overlook this offer. It is an occasion of a life-time and will not be repeated. As the number of covers is limited, orders should be placed as early as possible, and none will be accepted after June 18th. If orders exceed the number of covers prepared, amount will be returned immediately.

From the advertisement we know Dietz went to considerable effort to get the official blessing of the Post Office Department and the participation of the Richmond postmaster in this venture. Undoubtedly he prepared the imitation Richmond war-time cancellation and provided the wallpaper covers and Confederate stamps.

Dietz had no intention of creating forgeries that would part collectors from their hard earned money. The turned covers would have the imitation Richmond postmark on one side and the 1932 postmark

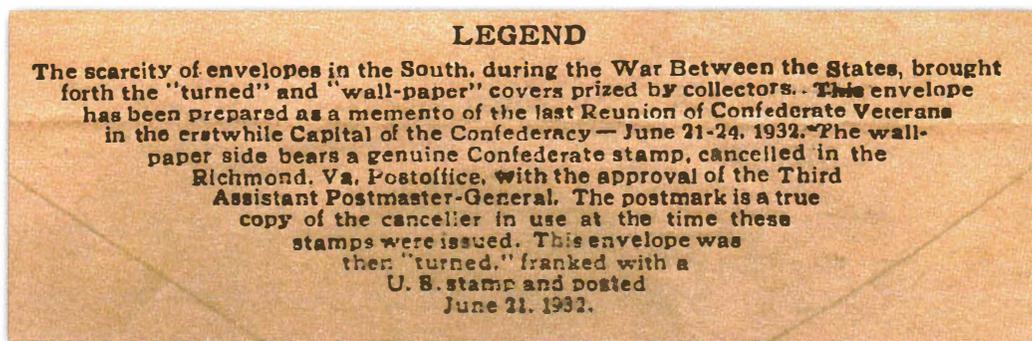


Figure 2. Imprint on the inside back flap of the souvenir wallpaper covers.

of Richmond on the other side. To further ensure these were not foisted on unsuspecting collectors he printed the paragraph at Figure 2 on the back flap of the plain side of the envelopes. Certainly this was sufficient to alert collectors that the turned wallpaper covers were souvenirs and not the real thing.

The first sign of a problem is contained in the June and July 1932 issues of *The New Southern Philatelist*. Both issues contain the same full page advertisement as the May 1932 issue but with slightly different final paragraphs. Apparently the souvenir wallpaper covers were not the big seller Dietz anticipated because the advertisements state:

...collectors may secure one of the most unique philatelic souvenirs in America — a regular Confederate — United States turned and double-franked wall-paper cover from the great Confederate Reunion in Richmond.

Do not overlook this offer. It is an occasion of a life-time and will not be repeated. As the number of remaining covers is limited, orders should be placed as early as possible.

Prices as follows:

<i>Single 5c. London, per cover</i>	<i>\$3.00</i>	<i>Single 10c, per cover . . .</i>	<i>\$2.50</i>
<i>Pair 5c. London “ “</i>	<i>4.00</i>	<i>Pair 10c. “ “ . . .</i>	<i>5.00</i>
<i>Block 5c. London “ “</i>	<i>10.00</i>	<i>Block 10c. “ “ . . .</i>	<i>10.00</i>

From this advertisement it is apparent there were a number of unsold remainders. Dietz was able to dispose of the remaining stock because they still appear from time to time. Unfortunately these covers are easy stock for the unscrupulous to turn into lovely looking wallpaper covers for the unsuspecting collectors.

The envelope in Figure 1 was split open and a sheet of opaque paper glued inside. This prevents the 1932 Richmond postmark (if there is one) and the paragraph printed on the inside of the back flap from being visible when the envelope is held to the light. In minutes the wallpaper cover souvenir is turned into forgery meant to defraud an unsuspecting collector.

There are two clues to the fraudulent nature of the cover. First is the Richmond postmark which is an excellent imitation of the Powell Type 5 Richmond postmark (Powell). Second is the paragraph printed on the inside of the back flap. While it cannot be seen when the envelope is held to the light the indentation of the individual letters in the paper can be seen when the back of the cover is viewed under oblique light.

From the advertisements we know that the wallpaper covers were franked with 5c blue London (Scott 6) and the 10c blue (Scott 11 or 12 or both). One example has been seen with a 2c brown red (Scott 8). There were at least three different types of wallpaper used for the covers and perhaps more.

There is one unanswered question regarding the wallpaper souvenir covers. It concerns the year date of the imitation Richmond postmark. The first advertisement stated the covers would be canceled with a date of “Jun. 21, 1862.” In the second and third advertisements this is changed to “Jun. 21, 1862 (or 1863).” Were the “real souvenir” covers canceled with the 1862 year date and the remainder wallpaper covers canceled with the 1863 year date postmark? Only the examination of more of these covers can answer this question. [Thanks to Peter Powell for images of other Dietz souvenir wallpaper covers.]