



# The Civil War Post

Patricia A. Kaufmann

## 1932 Dietz Wallpaper Covers Still Deceiving

August Dietz did not intend to deceive when he created eye-catching commemorative souvenir covers for the 42nd Annual Reunion of Confederate Veterans. Dietz believed he had eliminated all possibility of fraud. But the bad guys are often one step ahead of the good

Dietz, revered as the “Father of Confederate Philately,” advertised these mementos in the May 1932 issue of the *New Southern Philatelist*, of which he was both publisher and editor. The ad stated:

*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, wallpaper 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”- wallpaper side out and any desired address added with indelible or soft pencil. Writing ink should not be used.*

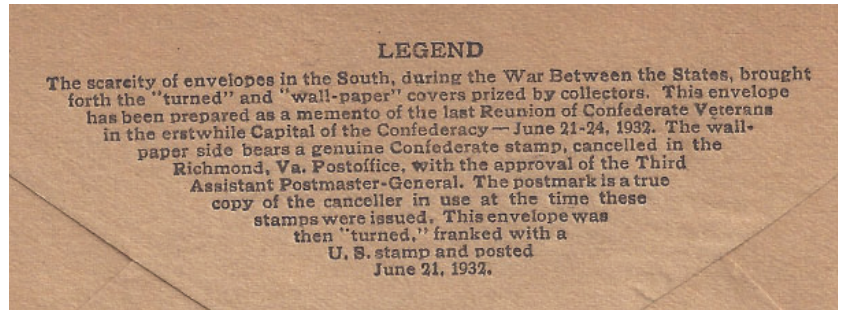


Figure 1. Dietz legend, as printed on the back flap of his 1932 Confederate Veteran souvenir covers.

*Do not overlook this offer. It is an occasion of a lifetime 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.*

To ensure these souvenirs would not be passed off as genuine uses, he printed a paragraph on the top back flap of the plain side of the envelopes, as shown in Figure 1. The legend clearly states the envelope was prepared as a memento in 1932 and that the Richmond postmark is a “true copy of the canceller in use at the time these stamped were issued.” It is a first-rate reproduction of the Powell type 5 Richmond postmark, although it has an obvious rubber-stamped appearance.<sup>1</sup>

The first Dietz advertisement stated the covers would be postmarked with a date of “Jun. 21, 1862.” His second and third ads changed this to “Jun. 21, 1862 (or 1863).” It is not known why this change was made.

Orders were taken for singles, pairs, and blocks of the 5¢ Jefferson Davis London print (Scott CSA 6), per cover, as well as singles, pairs and blocks of the 10¢ Jefferson Davis (Scott CSA 11 or CSA 12 – unspecified) per cover, with prices ranging from \$2.50 to \$10. At least one example has been seen



Figure 2 (front and back). A piece of a 1932 Dietz wallpaper memento cover masquerading as a genuine 1863 use in a 2022 eBay offering.

with a 2¢ brown-red Andrew Jackson (Scott CSA 8), according to Frank Crown, although it was not advertised by Dietz.<sup>2</sup> Doubtless, he did some made-to-order covers if someone wanted a more expensive stamp used.

Fast forward to present day, more than 90 years later. Although eBay frequently makes my blood boil, I check it daily. The piece shown in Figure 2 was offered in mid-October 2022 with a starting bid of \$200. It is a ratty example of the Dietz-produced 1932 souvenir wallpaper cover. Figure 2a shows the opposite side with a partial address.

The 1930s wallpaper is brittle and easily shatters into pieces, as can be seen from the edge chips of Figure 2. Civil War wallpaper was not nearly so delicate and is in generally better shape nearly a century later than more modern examples.

What Dietz did not foresee was that the unscrupulous in our hobby would either (1) remove the back flap with the explanatory legend, or (2) separate the front from the back, or (3) create an attractive stamp on piece, such as this item. I've seen each of these scenarios over the years; they continue to deceive through the generations.

I contacted the listing seller and explained the history of his listing. He wanted to know if I wanted to buy it for \$200. Thank you, no. He is from Poland. He said he inherited a large collection from his uncle in 2009 and he was certain the stamp was genuine because his uncle paid \$260 for it long ago. I explained that the stamp was indeed genuine but everything else about the item was modern. Regardless, the genuine stamp only catalogs \$20 in Scott and it is canceled with a fake cancel. I suggested he verify what I said with known Confederate specialists and gave him some names at his request. The cover is



Figure 3. A 1932 Dietz-created wallpaper cover franked with a genuine Scott CSA 11 tied by a fake 1863 postmark.

still listed on eBay as I write this. Predictably, he specifies “no returns” on the listing. Fortunately, no one so far has fallen prey to it.

Figure 3 shows a cover discussed by Frank Crown “From the Authentication Files” in the 4th Quarter 2011 issue of the *Confederate Philatelist*. It was given certificate

05679 as not genuine. It bears the advertised JUN 21 1863 Richmond circular datestamp, and ballpoint pen was used to address the cover.

The cover shown in Figure 4 is one I own that has the same dated postmark on a 10¢ Davis Type I, although the cover has not been turned and addressed. The plain side was addressed to Albert Horwitz in Richmond, Va., and posted June 21, 1932, with a 3¢ U.S. stamp (Scott 718). It was a gift to me more than 50 years ago from a special Washington, D.C., area collector.

I have a section on my website called “Rogues Gallery from eBay – Caveat Emptor!” For years I was registered as an eBay buyer and seller but stayed away from it because the flagrant misrepresentations and misidentifications annoyed me to the point of not participating at all. Some from the professional philatelic community tried to officially police the stamp section of eBay with the support of the American Philatelic Society. But they resigned in disgust when their solicited advice was totally ignored on such obvious things as frame lines drawn in on Scott 12s – a totally different design than the actual Frame Line (Scott CSA 10) it was purported to be. One

colleague calls this page my “wall of shame.” Indeed. It drives most serious students crazy.

It is not surprising that the 1932 Dietz creations show up on eBay as genuine. I have one in my Rogues Gallery, but the image is so poor that it can't be shared here in



Figure 4. Another 1932 Dietz memento showing the plain side; the wallpaper with the Confederate stamp and 1863 postmark are inside.

print. It's hard enough to see online. It was offered as item number 182339350814 by the GSC Foundation under the eBay handle *dac4autographs*. When this was offered Nov. 2, 2016, the seller had a 100% approval rating and 1,998 sales feedback.

The 2016 eBay seller stated his cover cataloged \$800 and, yes, that was true for a single CSA 11 on a wallpaper cover if genuinely used in 1863, although this was a full block of four. The other side of the "cover" was shown with a blurry image of a 1932 stamp and cancel. It was a cover front only, not the full cover as advertised. The printed legend on the back flap that explains it is a commemorative memento was conveniently missing and the edges of the cover front were severely frayed.

The exact description, in all caps and with lack of most punctuation, was: "YOU ARE BIDDING ON A USED BLOCK OF 4 1863 10 CENT CONFEDERATE STATES OF AMERICA STAMPS ON A WALLPAPER COVER THE STAMPS HAVE A BEAUTIFUL POSTMARK JUN 31, 1863 RICHMOND, VA THE BACKSIDE HAS AN ADDITIONAL 1932 U.S. 3 CENT STAMP SCOTT CATALOGUE VALUE \$800.00"

Dietz's advertisement indicates the date was Jun 21 (not Jun 31) 1863 circular datestamp, although the miniscule blurry photo made it impossible to verify. Had the item been genuine, it would have been worth a lot more than \$800 for a block of

four if genuinely used on a wallpaper cover. Nothing remotely like that is cataloged, of course.

It is no wonder this seller had a 100% approval rating. Under eBay's "Ask a question," that option had been removed on his listings. You can't communicate with the seller about the item, so the description can never be corrected. Likely, this seller had already been told this or other information he did not want to hear. This was coupled with a NO RETURNS policy – always a danger sign. Neither of these things is unusual for eBay listings. Did I mention that flagrantly inaccurate eBay listings drive me crazy?

In the words of Sergeant Phil Esterhaus from the hit 1980s TV series *Hill Street Blues*, "Let's be careful out there!"

#### Endnotes

1. Peter W. W. Powell, *Confederate States of America, Markings and Postal History of Richmond, Virginia* (Louisville, Ky., L.H. Hartmann) 1987.
2. Francis J. Crown, Jr., "The Unintended Forgery," *The Confederate Philatelist*, Fourth Quarter 2011, pp. 33-34.

Patricia A. (Trish) Kaufmann was first introduced to Confederate postal history in 1965. She became actively involved in organized philately in 1969, became a dealer in 1973 and today specializes solely in Confederate stamps and postal history. She enjoys hearing from readers and may be reached at [trishkauf@comcast.net](mailto:trishkauf@comcast.net).



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