



# The Civil War Post

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## Confederate Issues With Often-faked Postmarks

Some collectors mistakenly assume that mint stamps are worth more than used examples. This is certainly not true with Confederate stamps, nor is it consistent. Some used stamps are worth substantially more than unused, while others are not.

The two most obvious examples are the 2¢ Andrew Jackson, Scott CSA 8, shown in Figure 1, and the 20¢ George Washington, Scott CSA 13, shown in Figure 2.

One of my favorite personal collecting areas is Confederate fakes and fantasies, both on and off cover. My CSA 8 and CSA 13 sections are full of fake postmarks, both on and off cover. Some are extremely deceiving, but others should be obvious if you know both your history and postal history.

### 2¢ Andrew Jackson

The 2¢ Jackson, also known as the “Red Jack,” has a catalog value of \$75 unused, but increases to \$350 when used. Printed by Archer & Daly of Richmond, Va., the earliest-known cancellation is April 21, 1863. It was issued to prepay the drop letter and circular rates. The regular mail rate was 10¢ regardless of distance. Strips of five of the 2¢ Jackson were also used to prepay the regular rate. Such a use currently catalogs \$4,500 in Scott.

If the Red Jack looks familiar to U.S. collectors, it is because the 2¢ Black Jack (U.S. Scott 73) bears the same portrait and denomination. The United States was slightly behind the Confederate Post Office in issuing it, as the earliest-recorded off-cover use is July 1, 1863, a bit more than two months after the Confederate issue.

With such a disparity in price between used and unused Confederate Red Jacks, it is no surprise that the Jackson issue is a target for the fakers in our hobby, both past and present.

A page from my collection of fakes, counterfeits and fantasies is shown in Figure 3. With the exception of some examples across the top, all the postmarks on this page are bogus. Of particular note are five New York “PAID” postmarks on the bottom row, every one of which bears a July 12 date with a “12” at the bottom. These phony postmarks are known in both red and black.

In the past, the bogus New York PAID postmarks have erroneously been attributed to master Italian stamp forger

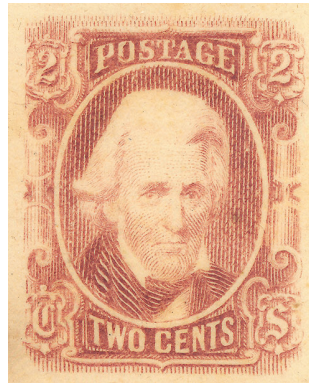


Figure 1 (top). An unused example of a 2¢ Andrew Jackson (Scott CSA 8).

Figure 2 (above). An unused example of a 20¢ George Washington (Scott CSA 13).

Giovanni (Jean) de Sperati (1884-1957), one of the most talented (read dangerous) fakers in philatelic history. Although born in Italy, he lived most of his life in France and thus was known as Jean.

Sperati created only two Confederate issues, the 10¢ rose Thomas Jefferson (Scott CSA 5) and the 10¢ blue Jefferson Davis “T-E-N” (Scott CSA 9). Because the bogus New York postmarks are found on those Sperati creations, as well as other stamps, some collectors mistakenly concluded that Sperati created the postmarks as well. But there is no evidence of this. He was a counterfeiter of stamps, not a producer of bogus postmarks.

Sperati always considered himself an artist, not a counterfeiter. He unsuccessfully argued in Parisian courts that he had no deceitful intentions in the sale of his work. The Parisian judiciary convicted him and sentenced him to a year in prison, as well as imposing a hefty fine. He did not serve his prison sentence on the grounds of age. He was already more than 64 years old when sentenced. Sperati died at the age of 73.<sup>1</sup> His is one of the most fascinating stories in philately.

Figure 4 shows two stamps from my fake collection compared side by side. The left stamp is a type 1 Sperati creation of the “T-E-N” with a black New York “PAID JUN 10” postmark, while the right stamp is a 2¢ Red Jack with the New York “Jul 12 marking,” which is more often seen.

Whoever prepared these postmarks was most likely European or not a student of American Civil War history and geography or a northern postmark would not have been chosen to create these uses. This is especially true for the 2¢ Red Jack, which was most often used as a local drop rate, e.g., locally from Richmond within Richmond, Charleston within Charleston, etc. The use of a 2¢ issue from New York is illogical. They are often found listed as genuine uses on eBay or similar venues in the stocks of those who don’t specialize in Civil War postal history.



Figure 3. A page from the author's collection of fakes that shows many bogus postmarks on the 2¢ "Red Jack."

The example shown in Figure 5 is from my digital files of fakes. It shows a contrived cover mounted on an Italian auction house page that describes it as rare and fascinating. The problem is that it is a 2¢ Red Jack “used” from the northern city of Boston to another northern town in New Hampshire. A Confederate stamp would have been illegal, and it would be the incorrect rate in the United States in any case as it is not a drop use.

The item shown in Figure 6 is a very dangerous creation and might fool even experienced Confederate students. The cover is from the late Billy Matz collection and is franked with a genuine strip of the 2¢ Red Jack used with two



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| N° Catalogo: <i>Confederati 8</i> | Simbolo:          |
| Quotazione: <i>5000</i>           | Netto:            |

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Emissione Confederata: 2 c. rosso-bruno, effigie di Andrew Jackson su deliziosa valentina in partenza da "BOSTON SEP 13", c.s. in rosso. L'esemplare è annullato mediante circolare a 6 sbarre con il "PAID" al suo interno. Francobollo molto fresco, ottimamente marginato, per insieme raro e di indubbio fascino.

Figure 4 (top right). Comparison of bogus New York PAID cancellation used on Scott CSA 9 at left and CSA 8 at right.

Figure 5. Bogus Boston, Mass., PAID cancellation on a Confederate 2¢ Red Jack; mounted on an Italian auction house page describing it as a rare use.

Figure 6. A genuine strip of the 2¢ Red Jack postmarked with a dangerous fake Charleston, S.C., double-circle cancel on cover; this is a production of the late John A. Fox.



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Figure 7. A page from the author's collection of fakes that shows many bogus postmarks on the 20¢ George Washington.

strikes of a bogus Charleston, S.C., double-circle datestamp on cover. It is a product of the late John A. Fox, a shady but very knowledgeable dealer and auctioneer based in Floral Park, N.Y. He created rare but bogus Civil War covers from both North and South as well as rare U.S. covers of other periods, such as the 1847 issues, pony express covers and more. He was a well-known and successful dealer during the 1950s and early 1960s. As with the Sperati creations, John Fox fakes sell for substantial sums as fakes.

I began my professional philatelic career in 1973, so I had the chance to meet the charming Mr. Fox. Not long after, in January 1974, Fox's stock was sold in a sheriff's sale on behalf of his creditors. All material was sold "as is." That brought major scrutiny of his nefarious creations and a scandal within the hobby.

A biography on John Fox (1911-87) was published in the *Chronicle*<sup>2</sup> of the United States Philatelic Classics Society (USPCS) in 2008 that brought together separate biographies on Fox by Varro Tyler and Michael Laurence.

The Stamp & Cover Repository & Analysis Program (SCRAP) was an exceptional effort by USPCS to get philatelic fakes, frauds, and forgeries off the market while retaining them for study and reference. The SCRAP Reference Collection consists of more than 1,000 stamps, covers, and documents that have been donated over the years by society members and non-members alike. Stamp and cover collectors no longer have to worry about these bogus philatelic items finding their way into unsuspecting collector holdings. Charles J. DiComo was the archivist and keeper of this resource for well over a decade. He scanned each cover, document, stamp and monograph and made all available on the USPCS website for educational purposes.

In 2016, the Classics Society donated the SCRAP Reference Collection in its entirety to the Philatelic Foundation for its study and reference. The John Fox Fake covers are a sub-section of SCRAP. USPCS reserved the right to make future use of the SCRAP Reference Collection<sup>3</sup> by any manner of communication. Examples of Fox's work are posted online at the Classics Society website as well as that of the Philatelic Foundation (PF).<sup>4</sup> The PF continues to add new collections



**Figure 8. Fake New Orleans postmark used on a 20¢ George Washington stamp.**



**Figure 9. A 20¢ green (Scott 13) tied on piece by a fake Princeton, Va., Apr 19 postmark.**



**Figure 10. The modern ink used to create the bogus Princeton postmark shown in Figure 9 soaked through to the back of the piece – an indication it is a fake marking.**

of fakes and forgeries to its website as time permits. Examples of most of the Fox creations are also listed in *Confederate States of America Philatelic Fakes, Forgeries, and Fantasies of the 19th and 20th Centuries* by Peter Powell and John Kimbrough.<sup>5</sup>

## 20¢ George Washington

There is an even wider difference between used and unused values on the 20¢ Washington, Scott 13. It has a catalog value of \$45 unused, but increases to \$400 when used – nearly nine times the unused value. In the *Scott Specialized Catalogue of United States Stamps & Covers*,<sup>6</sup> this issue is listed with a warning that forged cancellations exist. They most certainly do, and many are extremely dangerous.

Figure 7 shows another page from my fake collection. It would be nice if they were all genuinely used 20¢ Washingtons; they are not. Some you can determine as bogus from watery markings that seep through to the back of the stamps. Others have mottled cancels that have an unusual spongy look. And others just don't match up with genuinely recorded postmarks or cancellations.

The genuine 20¢ stamp image in Figure 8 was sent to me by Confederate student Bob Rufenacht who was suspicious of the cancel, noting: "The thinner serif font does not look correct and all of the genuine ones I've found have the day above the month in the postmark." But, more importantly, he nailed

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the bogus nature of the postmark with his knowledge of both American history and postal history. The stamp is the yellow green shade, Scott 13a.

The earliest-known cancellation recorded on the 20¢ stamp is June 1, 1863. New Orleans fell to Union troops almost a year earlier on April 25, 1862, confirming this as a bogus postmark.

The 20¢ green shown in Figure 9 is tied on piece by a Princeton, Va., April 19 postmark. Princeton was in the part of western Virginia that would be incorporated into the Union State of West Virginia in June 1863.

Princeton was a well-established post office before the war (1838)<sup>7</sup> and a number of genuine prewar covers are known. There are also some genuine Confederate uses until January 1862. In May 1862, Confederate troops evacuated the area and burned the town to prevent supplies from falling into Union hands. Early collectors believed the canceling device must have been lost at that time. But in the 1920s, a large number of items – mostly the two stamp issues of discussion in this article – made their way into the philatelic market. Study of the prewar postmark determined the spurious Confederate uses were made with the prewar canceling device.<sup>8</sup>

Even if you did not know the background of Princeton or its canceling device, the evidence of foul play is on the back on the piece shown in Figure 9. The modern ink heavily soaked through to the back, as seen in Figure 10.



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**What do you collect?**

## A Word to the Wise

Research both your history and your postal history. Something as simple as checking the earliest-recorded date of use and historic activities in the area during the purported time of use can save you time trying to verify whether a cancellation or use on cover are genuine. ☑

### Endnotes

1. Robson Lowe and Carl Walske, *The Work of Jean de Sperati II Including Previously Unlisted Forgeries* (London: Royal Philatelic Society, 2001)
2. Varro Tyler and Michael Laurence, "John Fox: His Life and Works," *Chronicle*, May 2008, pp. 147-163
3. The Stamp & Cover Repository & Analysis Program (SCRAP), U.S. Philatelic Classics Society, [www.uspcs.org/resource-center/the-stamp-and-cover-repository-and-analysis-program/](http://www.uspcs.org/resource-center/the-stamp-and-cover-repository-and-analysis-program/) (Accessed Jan. 5, 2023)
4. Fakes and Forgeries, The Philatelic Foundation, [www.philatelicfoundation.org/educational-resources/fakes-and-forgeries/](http://www.philatelicfoundation.org/educational-resources/fakes-and-forgeries/) (Accessed Jan. 5, 2023)
5. Peter W. W. Powell and John L. Kimbrough MD, *Confederate States of America Philatelic Fakes, Forgeries, and Fantasies of the 19th and 20th Centuries* (self-published, Peter Powell and John L. Kimbrough MD, 2015)
6. Jay Bigalke, James Kloetzel, Donna Houseman, Charles Snee, Martin J. Frankevicz, *Scott Specialized Catalogue of United States Stamps and Covers 2023* (Sidney, Ohio, Amos Media, 2022)
7. Robert L. Lisbeth, *Virginia Postal History Society Catalog of Virginia Postal Markings and Postmasters' Provisionals: Colonial – 1865* (Virginia Postal History Soc., 1984), page 354
8. Powell, page 311

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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