

HOW TO DETECT FAKES AND FORGERIES ON WORLD COVERS



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Presentation dedicated to Mr. Paolo Comelli

Part of his work was also presented in Colombia & China

Paolo Comelli

- Roll of Distinguished Philatelists (2007) (RDP)
- Fellow Royal Philatelic Society London (FRPSL)
- Director of the *Association Internationale des Experts en Philatélie* (AIEP)
- FIP Director (2008-2012)

Also was a member of these philatelic associations:

- American Philatelic Society (APS)
- Centro Filatélico Del Paraguay (CFP)
- Câmara Brasileira de Filatelia – Brasil (CBF)
- The Collectors Club of New York (CCNY)
- Federação dos Filatelistas do Brasil (FEFIBRA)



Presentation contents

- Basic requirements for expertizing covers
- Personal skills needed as an expert
- Three different types of fake covers
- What to look for on suspicious covers
- Examples of fake covers:
 - from USA
 - from Brazil
 - from Canadian provinces
- Conclusions & recommendations

Basic requirements



□ Good knowledge of:

1. Post Office Regulations & Postal History of the country of origin.
2. Postal conventions, rates, routes and means of transportation of country of origin.
3. Mail System Procedures adopted by the Post offices of the countries of origin, transit and final destination for the period studied .
4. Good philatelic references and Postal History library.

Personal skills

- ❑ Excellent power of observation of **all details**
- ❑ Knowledge of **image analysis & microscopy**
- ❑ Acute vision for colors and perception of details.
- ❑ Critical sense
- ❑ Curiosity
- ❑ Open mindedness



Genuine or Fake cover ?

Three basic types of forged covers:

- ❑ Replacing defective or missing stamps by more valuable items on covers.
- ❑ Adding stamps and cancels to stampless covers to create franked letters of valuable interest.
- ❑ Making a completely new cover using paper, fake postmarks, and genuine or forged stamps!

Stamp replacement on covers

- Take all these aspects into serious consideration:
 1. A « replacement operation » usually leaves traces, often also on the other side of the envelope.
 2. The « replaced stamp » shows differences in appearance comparing to the other stamps already on the cover.
 3. Sometimes the added stamps or faked postmarks on the document are not coherent as a whole.
 4. Fakers usually look for stamps with a cancellation fully covering the stamp.
 5. Added stamps with a fraction of the postmark are in most cases placed at the edges or in the corners of the covers.
 6. In the case of pre-adhesive covers provided with a new set of franking, an excellent knowledge of Postal History is absolutely necessary for the expertise.
 7. Prepaid letters with stamps, without an 'insufficiently paid' marking, but showing taxing figures are always looked at by the experts as suspicious.

Cover from San Francisco to Paris (1857)



- Cover from San Francisco to Paris dated November 5th 1857 bearing a 10-cents American stamp cancelled with a closed circular lines postmark.
- This letter was sent under the French American Postal Convention of 1847 which is explained by the circular black postmark of 15 cents (rate for an unpaid letter to France).
- The New York Exchange Bureau has charged 3 cents postage due payable to USA according to the Postal Convention mentioned above.
- In Paris, the addressee was charged 8 décimes (manuscript inscription).
- Thus, the stamp does not belong to cover and the cancellation is a fake (P. Comelli).

Reconstruction of the original cover



Folded letter from Bahia to Saintes (1871)



- ❑ Folded letter from Bahia, Brazil to Saintes, France, bearing a French 80 centimes stamp and cancelled with an « anchor postmark ».
- ❑ The letter was sent under the French-Brazilian Postal Convention of 1860 and the addressee was charged 8 décimes on reception.
- ❑ Thus the stamp does not belong to cover and the « anchor postmark » is faked (P. Comelli).

Reconstruction of the original cover



Bisect on Rio de Janeiro mail



- For this period there was no bisects accepted in Brazil.
- But in this case, the address on the cover tells the whole story:
 1. Address on cover: Visconde Itaborahy, number 25
 2. This street did not exist before 1870. The former name was: Praia dos Mineiros street !
 3. Paolo Comelli's conclusions.

Cover from Rio de Janeiro to Paris (1876)



- Cover from Rio de Janeiro to Paris : 400-reis paying the single rate postage fee as per the Second Brazil-France Postal Convention of 1874 (in force on January 1st 1876).
- The PD French Postmark applied on board of ship confirms that the postage was correct.
- In 1876 the « anchor French postmark was no longer in usage.
- Thus the French stamps were fraudulently added to cover and postmark is faked (P. Comelli).

Cover from Rio de Janeiro to Paris



- Cover from Rio de Janeiro to Paris conveyed by French packet mail under the Brazil-France Postal Convention of 1860.
- French tax was applied by the embarked postal agent on the ship indicating that the cover was sent unfranked and 80 centimes (8 decimes) should be charged to the addressee.
- The puckering seen on this letter also helps to identify that this cover was manipulated.
- Thus the letter was originally sent without a stamp and the cancellation is also faked (P. Comelli).

Cover from Brazil to Lisbon - 1



- The Portuguese tax of 800-reis is charged to the addressee (5th rate).
- This large wrapper was used to keep together five single letters sent to the same addressee.
- So this was only a wrapper and not a letter – that is the reason for such a high tax value !

Cover from Brazil to Lisbon - 2



- Close examination also shows that the 60-reis stamp is over the blue Portuguese arrival postmark !
- Thus, the wrapper was sent without stamps and the cancels are faked!
- Paolo Comelli's conclusion.

Cover from Caxias to Lisbon (1846)



- Originally paid using 2 X (60 slanted reis Numeral stamps).
- One of the 60-reis stamp is partly missing and a 30-reis Bull's eye stamp was added to enhance the cover!
- The reddish postmark on the 30-reis stamp also has a distinctive shade difference compared with the original postmark applied on the 60-reis stamps.
- The 30-reis Bull's eye stamp also has a manuscript mark, so the faker did not use an expensive mint stamp to produce his fake cover! (P. Comelli)

Cover from Caxias to Lisbon (1846) - 2



Cover from Larangeiras to Porto

- Cover from Larangeiras (Sergipe) via Bahia, to Porto, via Lisbon.
- The 90 Bull's eye stamp at right was added to the cover probably replacing a damaged copy.



Cover from Larangeiras to Porto - 2

- Part of the blue arrival postmark was fraudulently added to the margin of the 90-reis added stamp.
- This was done using a blue color wax pencil!!
- Each of the Bull's eye stamps has a different Larangeiras postmark!!
- Paolo Comelli's conclusion.



Cover from Larangeiras to Porto - 3

- The « Correio de Bahia » postmark was also badly retouched !



Cover from Rio de Janeiro to Porto Alegre



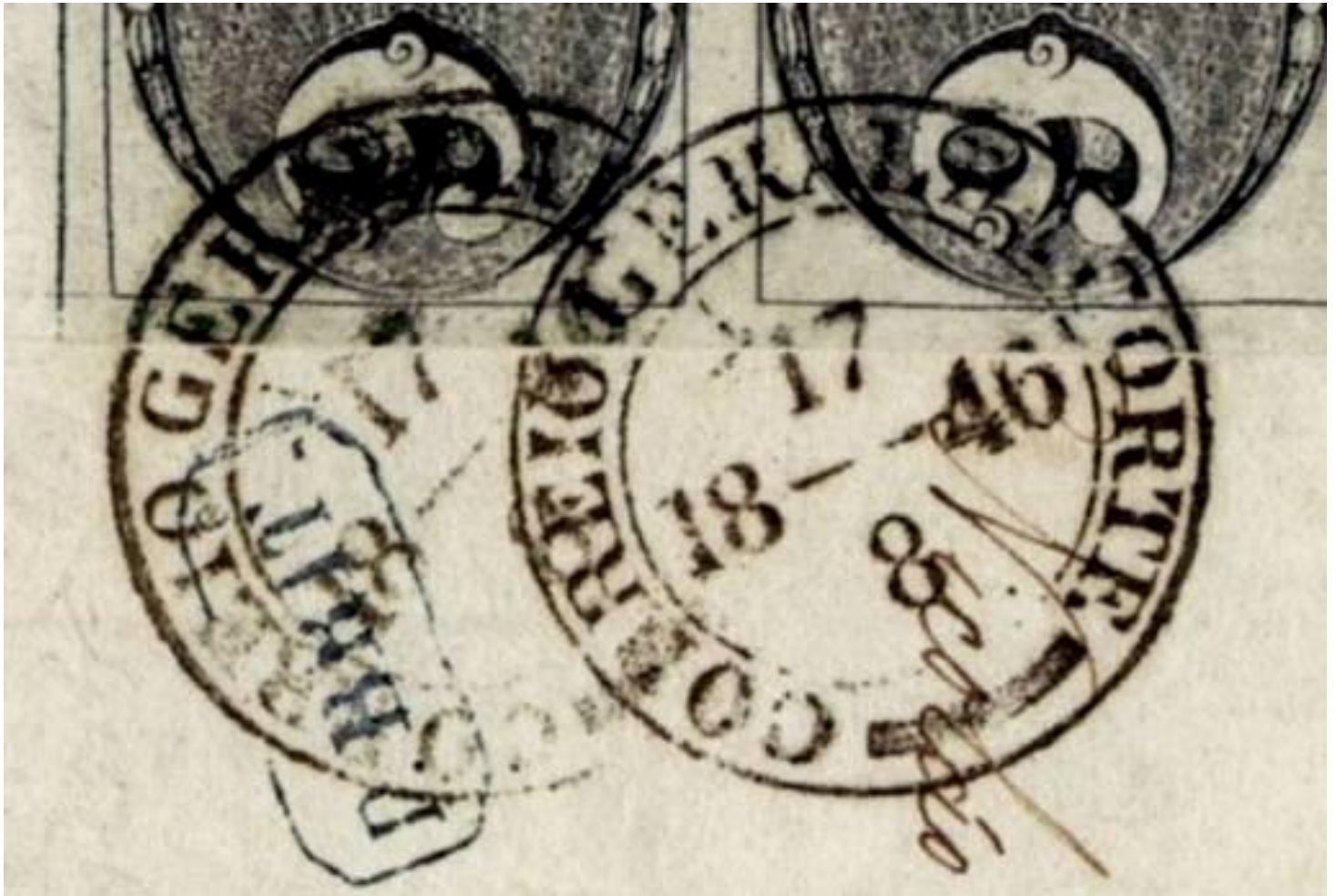
- At that time, the single maritime postage tax from Rio de Janeiro to Porto Alegre was 120 reis.
- The usage of red ink was not allowed at the Rio de Janeiro Post Office premises during all the period of the circulation of the Bull's eye stamps.
- Most probably this letter originally had no stamp; it never passed through the Brazilian postal system and was hand-carried from Rio to Porto Alegre.
- Thus the stamp was fraudulently added and the red postmarks are fakes (Paolo Comelli).

Cover from Rio de Janeiro to Lisbon via Gibraltar

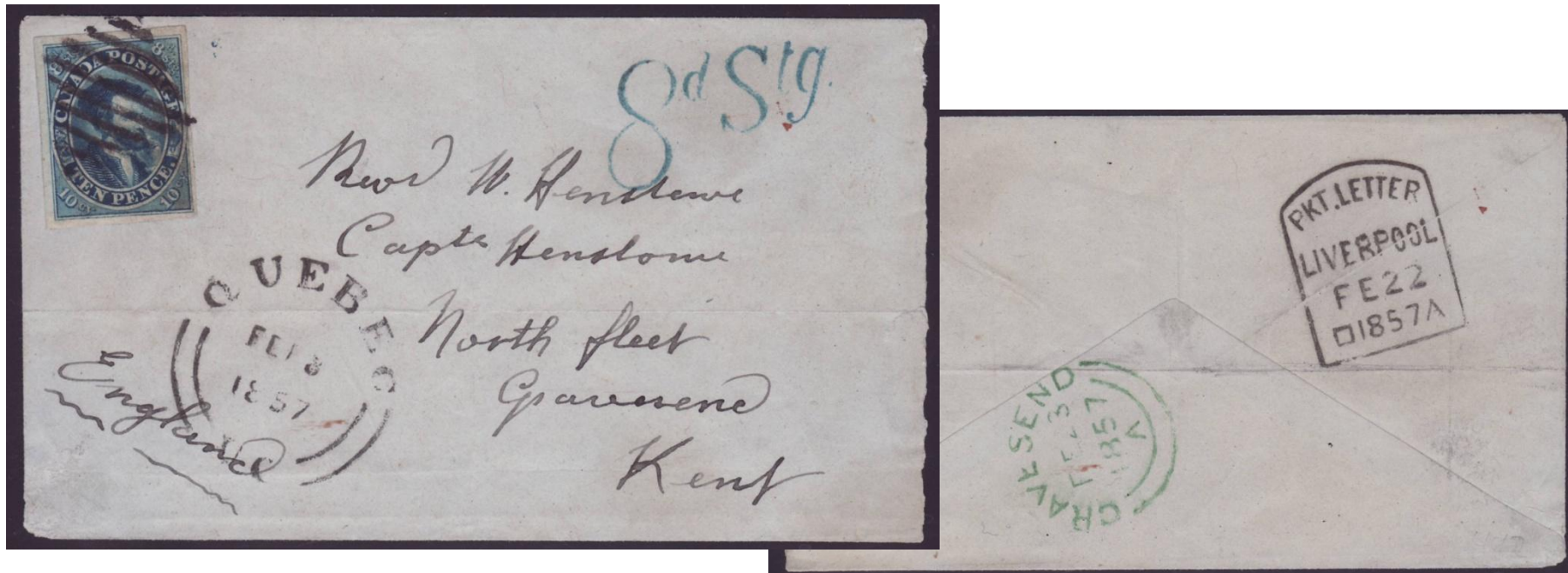


- The Portuguese tax of 800 reis was charged to the addressee (indicating the fifth rate (5 x 160 reis)).
- This large wrapper was used to keep together five single letters sent to the same addressee (system commonly used at that time).
- The black outgoing postmark is over the blue British Consular postmark (P. Brit) applied in Lisbon!
- The pair of bull's eyes and the postmarks were subsequently added to the wrapper in order to produce a rare cover (Paolo Comelli).

Cover from Rio de Janeiro to Lisbon via Gibraltar



Fake cover from Province of Canada



- ❑ Cover from Québec city, Lower Canada (Feb. 3, 1857) to Gravesend, Kent, England
- ❑ Rate was 8 pence sterling (paid in blue at top right corner)
- ❑ Sent via USA by British Packet mail (Cunard steamship lines) (Arrival Liverpool on Feb 22)
- ❑ Faker added a nice 10-pence currency Jacques Cartier stamp to enhance the cover!
- ❑ A stampless cover is worth 400\$ while a stamped letter in VF condition is worth 10 times more !

Fake cover from Province of Canada - 2



Fake cover from Nova Scotia (1861)



- ❑ Cover from Nova Scotia to St. John's, Newfoundland with bisects and cork cancel.
- ❑ The 2-cents stamp was not issued before 1863!
- ❑ The correct rate for a single letter from NS to NL was 8.5 cents and not 3 cents!
- ❑ The cork cancellations are unrecorded in the philatelic literature!
- ❑ The Halifax circular date cancel is a Raoul de Thuin production (BNA 18-c).

Fake cover from Nova Scotia (2)



- ❑ Cover from NS to Paris (France) with bisect and cancelled with a closed oval bar cancellation.
- ❑ The correct rate to France was 17 cents and not 13.5 cents (8.5 + 10 bisect)!
- ❑ The cancels are Raoul de Thuin productions (BNA 1-C & BNA 18-C)

Fake cover of Nova Scotia (3)



- ❑ Cover from NS to the Mexican Delegation Secretary in Paris with a bisect.
- ❑ The correct rate was 17 cents and not 7 cents as shown!
- ❑ All the cancels on the cover are from Raoul de Thuin (APS reference book).

Fake cover from PEI (1872)



- ❑ Cover from PEI to London via Southampton
- ❑ The correct rate to London was 6 cents and not 3 cents!
- ❑ The London reception hand stamp was doctored to read 1872!
- ❑ The barred oval cancels are de Thuin productions (BC 1-C)

Fake cover from PEI to New York.



- ❑ Cover from PEI to New York with bisect and US postage-due hand stamp.
- ❑ The correct rate to US (via New Brunswick) was 6 pence and not 4 pence!
- ❑ The New York postage-due hand stamp (Feb. 14) is a rubber hand stamp!
- ❑ The barred oval cancels are de Thuin productions (BC 1-C)

Fake cover from Newfoundland



- ❑ Cover from Newfoundland to Mexico with a rare bisect...
- ❑ The correct rate to Mexico was 10 cents and not 13 cents.
- ❑ The 24-cents stamp has never been recorded as a bisect!
- ❑ The black '2' hand stamp & oval barred cancels are Raoul de Thuin forgeries.

Fake cover from Newfoundland



- ❑ Cover from Newfoundland to London (1863) with a bisect
- ❑ The Liverpool reception mark on back is showing: 1868 !
- ❑ The 6-pence rate (one shilling bisect) is correct for 1863 but in 1868 it was 12 cents !
- ❑ The bisect was added with two fake black postmarks on front of the cover.
- ❑ A genuine bisect on such a piece catalogs at 20,000 \$

Fake cover of Newfoundland



- ❑ Cover from Newfoundland (1880) to Paris with a 10-cents Prince Albert bisect.
- ❑ The correct rate was either 5 or 10 cents (double weight) but not 13 cents!
- ❑ The cancels tying the stamps together are different one from another!
- ❑ The stamps were added to a stampless cover – notice the puckering around them!

Fake cover of Newfoundland - 2



Conclusions & recommendations



- ❑ Always have a critical look at all covers.
- ❑ Examine cancels under high magnification.
- ❑ Know how to distinguish fake rubber cancels & metallic ones!
- ❑ Be very suspicious – especially for rare & beautiful covers!
- ❑ Learn postal routes and regulations.
- ❑ Ask other philatelists for their opinions.
- ❑ Build a good reference library.
- ❑ Examine and study covers in auction catalogs.
- ❑ On rare covers, get at least two different expert opinions!
- ❑ Publish your discoveries to share them with others!



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