

VOLUME V, No. 3

JAN.-FEB., 1958

THE AERO
PHILATELIST ANNALS

* * A QUARTERLY MAGAZINE ON AERO-PHILATELY * *

This Issue Features:

- UNITED STATES
RF OVERPRINTS
(Part I)
- 1957 CONVENTION

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Vol. V



No. 3

THE PHILATELIST AERO ANNALS

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Henry M. Goodkind, Editor

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UNITED STATES

RF (French) Markings 1944-45

On Air Mail Stamps and Stationery

By HENRY M. GOODKIND



Preface

When this article on the RF overprints was originally planned, it was envisioned as one of not great length. The first thought was to take our 1946 and 1947 old articles in *"The Aero Philatelist's News"* and bring them up-to-date with information learned since that time.

This idea was mentioned to a number of good friends in the New York Chapter of AERO PHILATELISTS. At once all showed a most enthusiastic response, telling us that they had some material in their collections that should be examined before one word is put into print. Of course, we agreed. But we never realized what would ensue. Within a short time we found ourselves with more RF material than we had anticipated.

Consequently instead of writing a short article, revising what had been previously written, we saw our writings growing into a good-sized manuscript. For instance, when we originally thought of illustrations, that are so essential for proper understanding in philatelic writings, it was believed that perhaps 10 or 12 would be sufficient. Instead, the very minimum amount ran to over *seventy*. This also was after "pruning". There were more than 100 illustrations that we thought could prove useful. But costs and space limitations caused us to cut this down. We know that some collectors will be disappointed not to see some of their interesting covers with RF overprints pictured in this article, especially after they were kind enough to loan us such material for a considerable period of time needed for this study. We hope that they will understand the omissions because of the problems faced.

The developments when writing this article also caused us to modify another policy that we have tried to pursue in writing for this magazine. We try to avoid, if possible, the running of articles in parts. With a quarterly magazine, the long time gap between numbers inconveniences the reader, because often he forgets what the earlier parts had said. Unfortunately, this could not be avoided. This RF article has to be run serially. Upon its conclusion, this study will be re-issued as a handbook sponsored by The Steinway Memorial Fund of *The Collectors Club*.

Introduction

It is exciting for a stamp collector to become interested in a stamp and its postal use at the time that it is being born and to continue this interest throughout the life of an issue. This is what happened to the writer with the "RF" markings that appeared on air mail coming to the United States during the years 1944 and 1945 when World War II was in progress.

RF OVERPRINTS

"RF" is the abbreviation for "Republique Francaise." Except for a period during the last war under the Petain government, ever since France became a republic, the stamps of France and her Colonies bear the initials "RF." One can aptly compare it to "U. S. Postage" on the stamps of the United States.

In the late fall of 1944, the writer was given a few covers, obviously from French Naval personnel, that had a large handstamped "RF" hit either on the then current 6c. air mail adhesive (Scott C25) or the 6c. orange air post envelopes (Scott UC3-4-5 or 6). (See illustration). Speaking to a few other collector or dealer friends, only two were found, who had or knew a little about similar material.

All consulted agreed that it was most unusual to see U. S. postal paper overprinted or marked in any manner by a foreign country. In the long history of stamp collecting, another instance with U. S. stamps could not be recalled.

During the World War II years, one will find much published in the many stamp news columns about new issues that were appearing, except for those from enemy countries. However, a check of all the new stamp issue reports during 1944 and 1945 will disclose very little about these "RF" markings. War time security measures often made correspondence abroad difficult. This was true of philatelists seeking information on these overprints.

It was not until many months after V-E Day or about the time that Germany surrendered that fragmentary reports came to this country about these overprints. Then some collectors began writing about them, but these articles did not answer many questions interested philatelists had in their minds. The few articles written seem to have been more or less guesswork, because one could see that the actual philatelic material manifested facts different from those described in the early writings.

Consequently, late in 1946, this writer decided to put into print as much as he had learned about these "RF" markings. With all due modesty, the published article in *The Aero Philatelists' News*, Vol. I, No. 3 has been referred to over the succeeding years as the most authoritative article written. It was, however, far from complete. Further essential information began trickling in and as it became available, *The Aero Philatelists' News* published this in Vol. III, No. 14, and Vol. IV, No. 12.

One must appreciate the difficulties encountered in seeking authoritative information. These "RF" overprints were a military matter. They were not the doings of either the United States Post Office Department nor the French Bureau of Posts. One had to turn to various military departments, hoping to seek some one official, who could throw some light on the matter.

More years have now passed, finding an increasing interest among philatelists in collecting these "RF" markings. Many catalogs have listed and priced some of them. The primary stimulant that aroused greatest collectors' interest was when "The 1957 Scott Standard Postage Stamp Catalogue", Vol. I, listed six RF markings (Scott CM1 to 6) and three "RF" stamped envelopes (Scott UCM1-3) under United States.

This resulted in many wishing to learn about these RF overprints with many inquiries coming to the writer because of his 1946 and 1947 *Aero Philatelists' News* articles. Only a small stock of these articles remained, and this became depleted quickly because of the demand. Furthermore, having observed the recent philatelic interest in this RF material, the writer decided that the time had come to write again, adding much new information learned since 1947.

In doing this present work, the writer believes that without boasting, he can state that he probably has examined more RF material than anyone previously had. *It consisted of 353 covers, 140 unused copies, 81 used and 9 complete mint sheets.*

Also, the many acknowledgments appearing at the end of this article give evidence to the number of philatelists, who have cooperated in this work either with the loan of material, or with helpful suggestions.

The writer wishes to conclude this introduction with the following observation. The word "fact" as used by philatelic writers, often has been misused to a great degree. Most



All Photos by Boutrelle

Fig. 1. A cover with 3c U. S. postage from the "Battleship Richelieu" cancelled on board March 25th, and also a U. S. Navy March 26, 1943 cancel. (Stanley R. Rice collection).

of the times unsubstantiated personal opinions are offered as facts. Care has been taken by the writer to draw opinions in this article based upon available official documents. But much that could clinch a point as final, still has not become available. It may never be, although experience shows that an article like this does "smoke out" some essential missing links. It is only fitting to point out that some conclusions, although reached by conservative thinking, are based upon verbal reports or eyewitness accounts. Only those that have stood the test are used. And these are backed up by philatelic facts in the nature of the actual philatelic material itself. Yet, certain conclusions cannot be presented as factual, but represent instead the objective opinions of this writer after careful consultation with other acknowledged students of these issues.

The Historical Background, World War II

No one can properly understand or explain these RF overprints without knowing something about the history of the French Navy during the last World War. The temptation to detail this history is great. However, this writer believes that a philatelist should adhere mostly to stamps and their postal uses, interjecting history only as an essential corollary. For instance, the pride of the French Navy was her large battleship, the "Richelieu." The war story of this great warship could be related with fascination to gain many readers' interest. But only a few events will be referred to briefly, solely to fully explain the philatelic matter being discussed. But one must know this history of the French Navy during World War II. Thus, if one is not too familiar with it, he should do some collateral reading. Our many public libraries contain some fine books upon this phase of World War II. This article will only briefly touch upon this history.

It started with the fall of France to Hitler's Germany in May, 1941. France, although occupied by Nazi Germany, became divided between the Vichy Government under General Petain, and the Resistance, called the "Free French." When France surrendered to Hitler, a good part of her fleet was in southern France at the Naval Base, Toulon. Strife immediately ensued. Some wished to remain loyal to the new government, while many others wished to continue the fight against the Axis powers by joining the British. Some ships at Toulon were scuttled to prevent their escape. Others steamed out to join the Allies. Admiral Darlan of the French Navy typifies this situation. Some considered him a collaborator with the occupying enemy of France. Others think he played his dual role as a loyal Frenchman to help to eventually free France again.

Parts of the French fleet after the surrender of France in 1941 engaged with the British in combat, suffering damage. Later they underwent repairs in Great Britain, and

RF OVERPRINTS

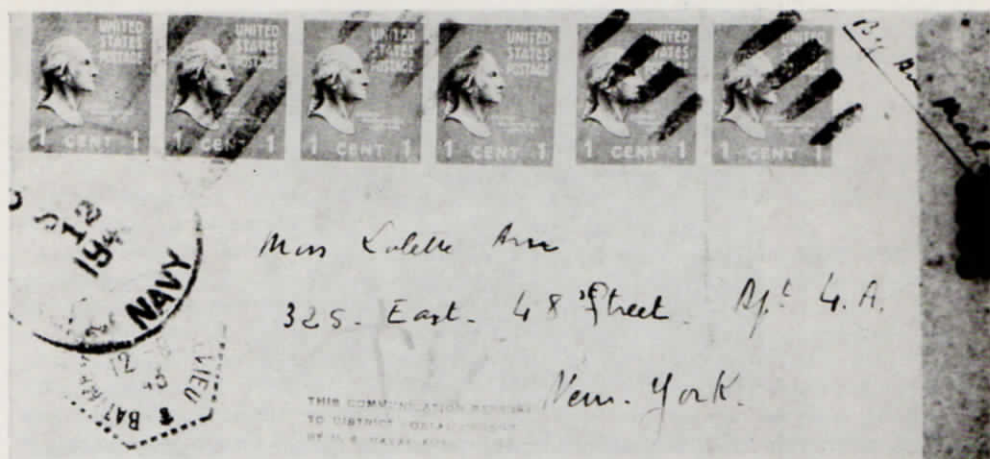


Fig. 2. Air mail cover from "Battleship Richelieu" with 6c U. S. postage for air post, both the Richelieu and U. S. Navy cancels are dated September 12, 1943. (Maurice Tripet collection).

after being refitted and repaired returned to fight Germany and Italy with the Allied Navy. Other ships were damaged by saboteurs in Toulon, but not sufficiently to prevent their escape. The battleship "Richelieu" was one.

Consequently, most of the French ships that escaped Toulon were damaged and had to undergo repairs in Great Britain. When restored to fighting efficiency, they joined the British Fleet.

After Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, the United States came into the War. The French Naval ships posed difficulties on the British to repair them in England. First of all, Britain's repair bases were overcrowded. Secondly, all naval bases were being subjected to air raids by the Germans.

Therefore, it was decided as a more practical step to send some of the French naval ships to the United States for repairs under better conditions. Most came to the Brooklyn Navy Yard, New York, N. Y. A few were sent to the Philadelphia Navy Yard. This took place during the summer of 1943.

The French ships that came into the Allies' hands were attached to the Allied fleets. One will find them sometimes operating with the British Navy; other times they were a part of the U. S. Navy or with the combined Allied fleet.

The French Naval personnel during 1943, 1944, and 1945 had the same mailing privileges as our own forces. Thus, regular postage was sent "Free", (F. M. as the French noted it). But air mail required the special domestic rate of 6 cents per ounce, (the civilian air mail charge was 8c.). Mail from a ship like the "Richelieu" in 1943 or early in 1944 is interesting to examine. The following pieces are shown:

Fig. 1 shows a letter with the hexagon "Richelieu" cancel dated March 25, 1943 and the 3c. U. S. postage stamp cancelled "U. S. Navy, March 26, 1943." The return address on the back reads, "Battleship Richelieu/c.o. Fleet Post Office/New York, N. Y." Fig. 2 shows an air mail cover from the "Richelieu" with its September 12, 1943 special hexagon cancel and the U. S. Navy September 12, 1943 cancellation. This prepaid the air mail rate of 6 cents.

Fig. 3 is exceedingly interesting. The Richelieu cancellation reads "March 6, 1944." The front is franked with a combination of U. S. and British stamps. The British stamps paid 2/6 in postage. There are three 6c. U. S. air stamps cancelled on the front

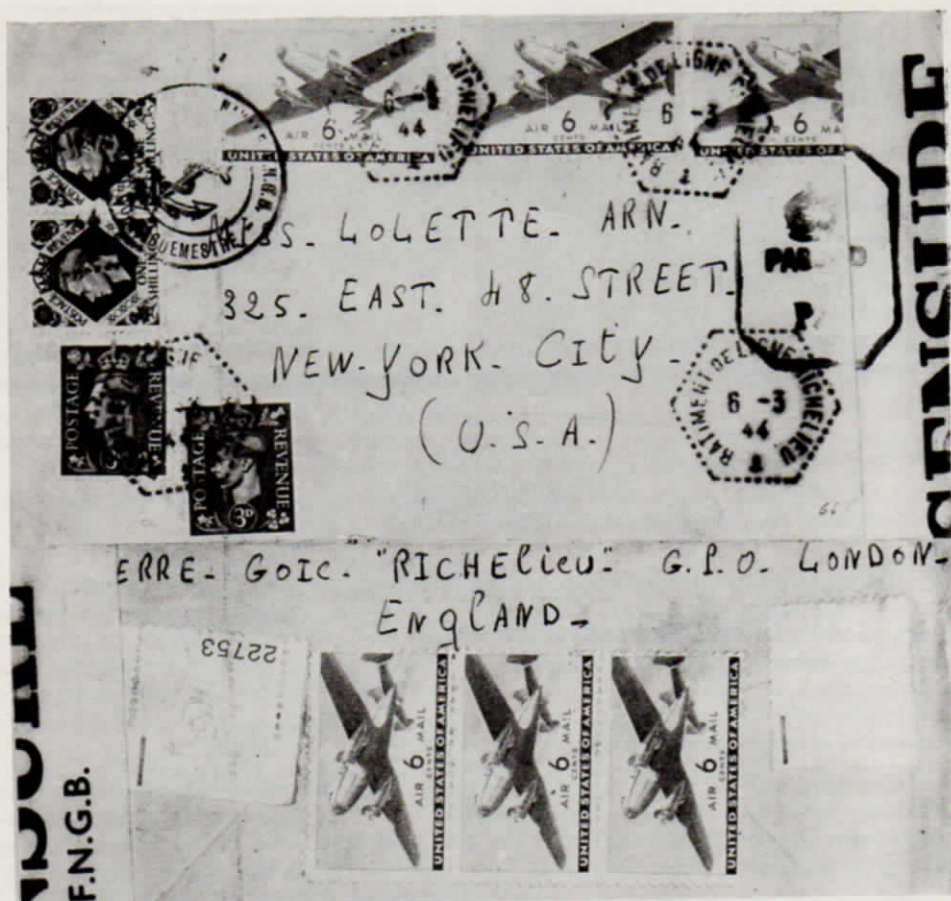


Fig. 3. Front and back of an air mail cover to the U. S. A. cancelled March 6, 1944 with both British postage and U. S. air mail stamps. (Maurice Triplet collection).

and three uncanceled on the back, totalling 36 cents in U. S. postage. However, the essential matter is to notice both U. S. and British stamps. Fig. 4 shows an air mail cover from England to New York just one day later—March 7, 1944—than the cover shown in Fig. 3. One should see that only British stamps were used to pay the air mail rate, whereas the day previous both U. S. and British stamps were affixed. Also, please read the address on Fig. 4. Mrs. Odette Descoubès' covers will play an important role when the RF markings appear.

Fig. 5 shows how postal regulations were ignored in wartime. Here is air mail stationery from England to the U. S. used by one of the French Naval Forces. This correspondence to Mrs. McKay (sic. Mackay) of New York, N. Y. will also appear later with the RF overprints. This cover has no stamp for air mail, only the manuscript "F. M." in the upper right corner. This is the "Free" marking for surface mail. But after British censoring, it flew to the United States without penalty.

In the spring of 1944, the Allied invasion and campaign in North Africa took place. The French Navy under Allied Command played an essential role. Thus, it is at this time that the story of the RF overprints commences.

RF OVERPRINTS

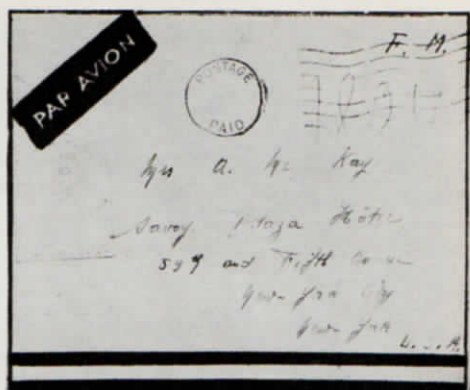


Fig. 4. Air mail cover from "Battleship Richelieu" cancelled March 7, 1944 with 1/3d in British stamps. It is addressed to Mrs. Odette Descoubès, New York, N. Y., an addressee well known to "RF" specialists. (Richard E. Samek collection).

Fig. 5. A letter from a nurse with the French Navy in England sent "Free" to New York, N. Y., although on air mail envelope. (Stanley R. Rice collection).

Usually when new stamps are issued, the official archives contain some essential information pertaining to a new issue. In the 20th century when postal administrations became so aware of revenue from philatelic sales, comprehensive advance publicity is usually sent out to the stamp papers giving the salient facts about a new issue. Consequently, if a collector at a later time wishes to study an issue of stamps, he can consult the post office notices plus other pertinent data as contained in official decrees, which many countries require for a new issue of stamps.

However, with these wartime RF markings, the interested collector finds that the customary postal administration records are lacking. This is because *no* postal administration ordered these RF overprints. The official directives for their creation and use came from the United States Navy, also known as the U. S. Fleet Post Office, (F. P. O.).

It was exceedingly difficult to secure any directives. During the time that the RF overprints were being used, few collectors knew of them. Those, who did, wrote to the U. S. Post Office Department in Washington, D. C. The first written record known to us is dated December 12, 1944. This letter is in the possession of Scott Publications, Inc., New York, N. Y. and a copy was given to us through the kind cooperation of Mr. James Hatcher of this organization. It reads:*

Division Of Stamps

(COPY)

In Your Reply Refer To
HSC:JC

POST OFFICE DEPARTMENT
Third Assistant Postmaster General
Washington 25, D. C.

December 12, 1944

Mr. Hugh M. Clark
Scott Publications, Inc.,
1 West 47th Street,
New York, N. Y.

My dear Sir:

* Originally published in "The Aero Philatelists' News" Vol. III, No. 1.

RF OVERPRINTS

FRENCH REPUBLIC	
POSTS - TELEGRAPHS - TELEPHONES	
Algiers, June 22, 1944	NATIONAL NAVY
<u>No. 523 PN/Ep</u>	General Headquarters
	Direction of the Naval Post
Memorandum for the Chief of the Naval Bureau of Oran	

Subject: Mail for the U. S. A. and Canada prepaid at 6 cents.	
Reference: My circular No. 737 PN/Ep of Nov. 9, 1943.	

I inform you that, at the request of the American naval post in Casablanca, correspondence for the U. S. A. and Canada should meet the following conditions:	
a) - be wholly censored. If the censorship service for outgoing mail can't put the censorship slip or seal on all the letters, non-examined letters should be put together in bundles bearing the notation: "U.S.A. and CANADA" "Uncensored letters"	
b) - on letters prepaid at 6 cents, the stamp or the equivalent embossed imprint should be covered with a stamp bearing the impression "R. F."	
c) - the 6-cent stamp affixed on the envelopes should be cancelled by the office of mailing by means of the anonymous date stamp "POSTE NAVALE" (Naval Post).	
The naval offices are therefore urged:	
1) - to have a stamp "RF" made up by the local navy.	
2) - to censor all letters prepaid at 6 cents or not which are delivered to them or to place together those which could not be censored prior to the departure of the mail.	
3) - to affix their date stamp "POSTE NAVALE" (Naval Post) on all letters of this kind.	
The foregoing instructions replace the instructions given by my memorandum No. 737 PN/Ep mentioned in the reference in so far as it relates to the procedure to apply to letters prepaid at 6 cents, according to which the naval bureau of Casablanca was alone charged with affixing the impression of the date stamp intended for authenticating the origin of the articles.	
The Director of the Naval Post	

Fig. 6. Directive No. 523 PN/Ep enclosed in letter dated May 11, 1948 from U. S. Post Office Department. (Richard E. Samek collection).

Reference is made to a letter received from Miss Jean G. Koor, under date of October 10, concerning the initials "RF" recently noted on 6c air mail embossed stamped envelopes enclosing letters from French sailors.

The Navy Department has recently advised that air mail envelopes were treated in this manner by Free French Forces located in North Africa as a result of a Navy Department directive providing for the emergency use of U. S. postage by the French.

Further details on the subject are lacking.

Very truly yours,

Ramsey S. Black

Third Assistant Postmaster General

This letter offers an important clue. The U. S. Post Office wrote that, "a Navy Department directive" provided for the use of the RF markings. Thus a few collectors, Mr. Richard E. Samek in particular, began writing to the Navy Department in Washington, D. C., at first, with discouraging results. However, persistence did pay off as will be shortly shown.

The only other contemporary information that came to our attention was the following that was published in the regular weekly stamp news column of the now defunct "New York Sun" of December 15, 1944. This said:

RF OVERPRINTS

"THAT 'RF' ON AIR MAIL

"Stamp collectors have been interested in the receipt from overseas of mail in 6c embossed stamped air mail envelopes overprinted with the initials 'RF'. These letters appear to have originated with members of French naval forces judging from the cancellations, though investigation at the time of their receipt failed to disclose the significance of the overprint.

"A communication had been received at the Post Office Department from the Navy Department advising that the printing was no doubt performed by Free French forces located in Casablanca under authority of a directive reading as follows:

"Where no French postage is available and cancellation is made by a French post office, United States postage stamps may be used with the letters 'RF' overprinted thereon in accordance with International Postal Convention agreement. French postage affixed must be cancelled by French postmark, and United States postage by United States Navy postmark, unless such United States postage has been overprinted as described above."

The above should be analyzed carefully. Reference is made to a *communication* received by the U. S. Post Office Department from the U. S. Navy Department. We can only speculate that the U. S. Post Office Department had originally written inquiring about these RF overprints and a reply was received. But it is essential to point out that *no* Navy directive was enclosed. Furthermore, the reference to the U. S. Navy Department order as quoted leaves much to be learned as will be shown later.

By 1945, the war in Europe had ended. The RF overprints had been discontinued. But now they had become interesting to philatelists, with only fragmentary official information known about them. Starting in 1945, various articles were published here and abroad. (See bibliography). All articles in our files followed the same pattern. The writers itemized the many different types of RF overprints known to them, but not one article referred to any official directive nor tried to satisfactorily explain why the RF markings were used. Of least reference value were the writings from France. Upon reflection this is understandable, because the RF overprints are American by order and postal use. The only source for authoritative information could be Washington, D. C.

Now who would have, or where would there be a record of the Directive that called for the use of the RF overprints? Was it buried in the U. S. Navy's wartime records, never to be made available to stamp collectors? Did the U. S. Navy Department have more important work than answering the bothersome letters of stamp collectors about an unimportant event that happened several years before? Once again we can be grateful to Richard E. Samek, whose persistence was remarkable. He began writing to Washington in 1946, and finally on May 11, 1948, the following—the most important letter ever written about the RF markings is quoted:

POST OFFICE DEPARTMENT
THIRD ASSISTANT POSTMASTER GENERAL

HSC:EMB
May 11, 1948

"Mr. Richard E. Samek
New York, N. Y.

"Dear Mr. Samek:

"Reference is made to your inquiry of April 29th, with regard to the overprint 'RF' used by French Naval Forces during the recent World War.

"It is noted that Naval authorities have been unable to offer much assistance in this regard and this office finds it is in a similar position.

"We have in our files a copy of a directive headed 'FRENCH REPUBLIC—POSTS—TELEGRAPHS—TELEPHONES. National Navy, General Headquarters, No. 523 PN/Ep and dated Algiers, June 22, 1944.' A copy of this directive is being enclosed for your information.

RF OVERPRINTS

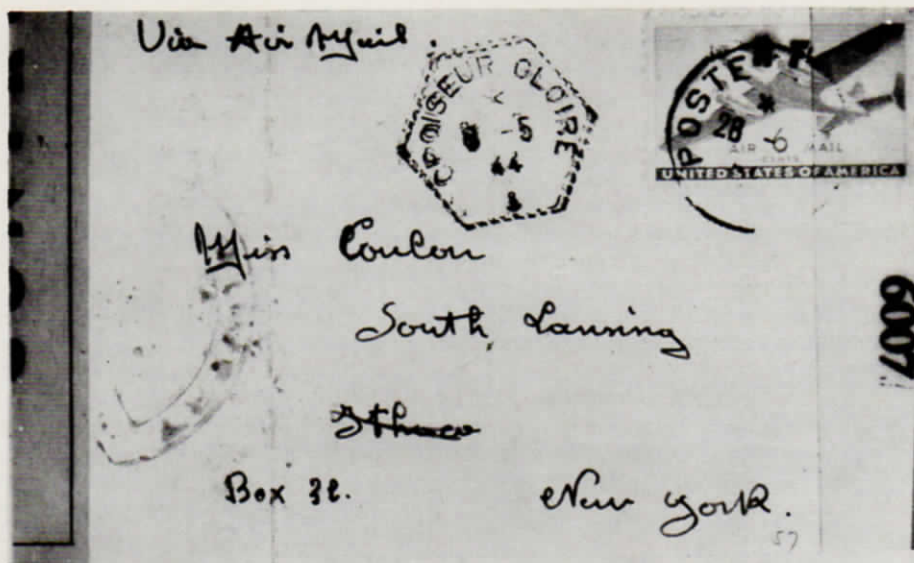


Fig. 7. The earliest date—May 8, 1944—found with RF overprint. It is from the "Cruiser Gloire". The type 1 RF is the commonest by far. (William J. Hassan collection).

"Under date of December 1, *The Navy Department*, in response to an inquiry from this office, refers to a directive issued March 13, 1943, reading as follows:

'Where no French postage is available, and cancellation is made by a French post office, U. S. Postage stamps may be used with the letters "R.F." overprinted thereon in accordance with the International Postal Convention Agreement. French postage affixed must be cancelled by French postmark and U. S. Postage by U. S. or U. S. Navy postmark, unless such U. S. Postage has been over-printed as described above.'

"The efforts of this office to determine where the authority originated have been unsuccessful thus far.

Very truly yours,

JOSEPH J. LAWLER,
Third Assistant Postmaster General"

Enc.

Here is the Directive No. 523 PN/Ep dated Algiers, June 22, 1944 (See Fig. 6) that the U. S. Post Office Department enclosed:

FRENCH REPUBLIC
POSTS TELEGRAPHS TELEPHONES
Algiers, June 22, 1944
No. 523 PN/Ep
NATIONAL NAVY
General Headquarters
Memorandum for the Chief of the Naval Bureau of Oran

Subject: Mail for the U. S. A. and Canada prepaid at 6 cents.
Reference: My circular No. 737 PN/Ep of Nov. 9, 1943.

I inform you that, at the request of the American naval post in Casablanca, correspondence FOR THE U. S. A. AND CANADA should meet the following conditions:

RF OVERPRINTS

a) be wholly censored. If the censorship service for outgoing mail can't put the censorship slip or seal on all the letters, non-examined letters should be put together in bundles bearing the notation:

U. S. A. and Canada

Uncensored letters.

b) on letters prepaid at 6 cents, the stamp or the equivalent embossed imprint should be covered with a stamp bearing the impression "R.F."

c) the 6 cent stamp affixed on the envelopes should be cancelled by the office of mailing by means of the anonymous date stamp "POSTE NAVALE" (Navy Post).

The Naval offices are therefore urged:

1) to have a stamp "RF" made up by the local navy

2) to censor all letters prepaid at 6 cents or not which are delivered to them or to place together these which could not be censored prior to the departure of the mail.

3) to affix their date stamp "POSTE NAVALE" (Naval Post) on all letters of this kind.

The foregoing instructions replace the instructions given by my memorandum No. 737 PN/EP mentioned in the reference in so far as it relates to the procedure to apply to letters prepaid at 6c, according to which the naval bureau of Casablanca was alone charged with affixing the impression of the date stamp intended for authenticating the origin of the articles.

The Director of the Naval Post

This Directive is the first evidence that offers significant information for a philatelist. The writer has examined closely 353 covers with RF markings. The earliest date found is May 28, 1944 (Fig. 7). The date of this French Navy Directive is June 22, 1944. Now let us comment upon Directive No. 523 PN/Ep in detail.

1. It was put out by the French Republic, Posts, Telegraphs, Telephones, National Navy.

2. It has instructions for *French Navy* air mail to the *U. S. A. and Canada only*. There is no mention of air mail to other parts of Africa or Europe. Nor is civilian mail mentioned.

3. Reference is made to a previous circular of Nov. 9, 1943, which no doubt gave instructions for air mail to the U. S. A. and Canada. This circular has not become available to philatelists.

4. The Directive was released from Algiers, a naval base in North Africa.

5. It commences . . . "*at the request of the American naval post in Casablanca.*"

Here is the vital key to the explanation of the RF overprints.

Air mail to America from North Africa flew to and from Casablanca. The air mail facilities there were overtaxed. There was more mail to transport than plane space available. Because many of the French Naval ships had been in America for repairs, the French sailors and other naval personnel had made many friends in the United States. Later on when many covers are listed and illustrated, one should notice the addresses. Most all are to women. "L'amour" (an appropriate French word) enters the picture. Some French sailors were writing to their "girl friends", whom they had courted while their ships were being repaired in America. Many others corresponded with those, who had entertained them during their stay in New York or Philadelphia. The volume of air mail from French ships coming to Casablanca in 1944 was very large. So a practical solution had to be devised.

Air mail from the American personnel must receive priority. U. S. Armed Forces air mail to and from home was all-important. French air mail correspondence only would be transported by the U. S. planes if there was sufficient space remaining. To easily solve this, French air mail had to be marked for identification.

RF OVERPRINTS

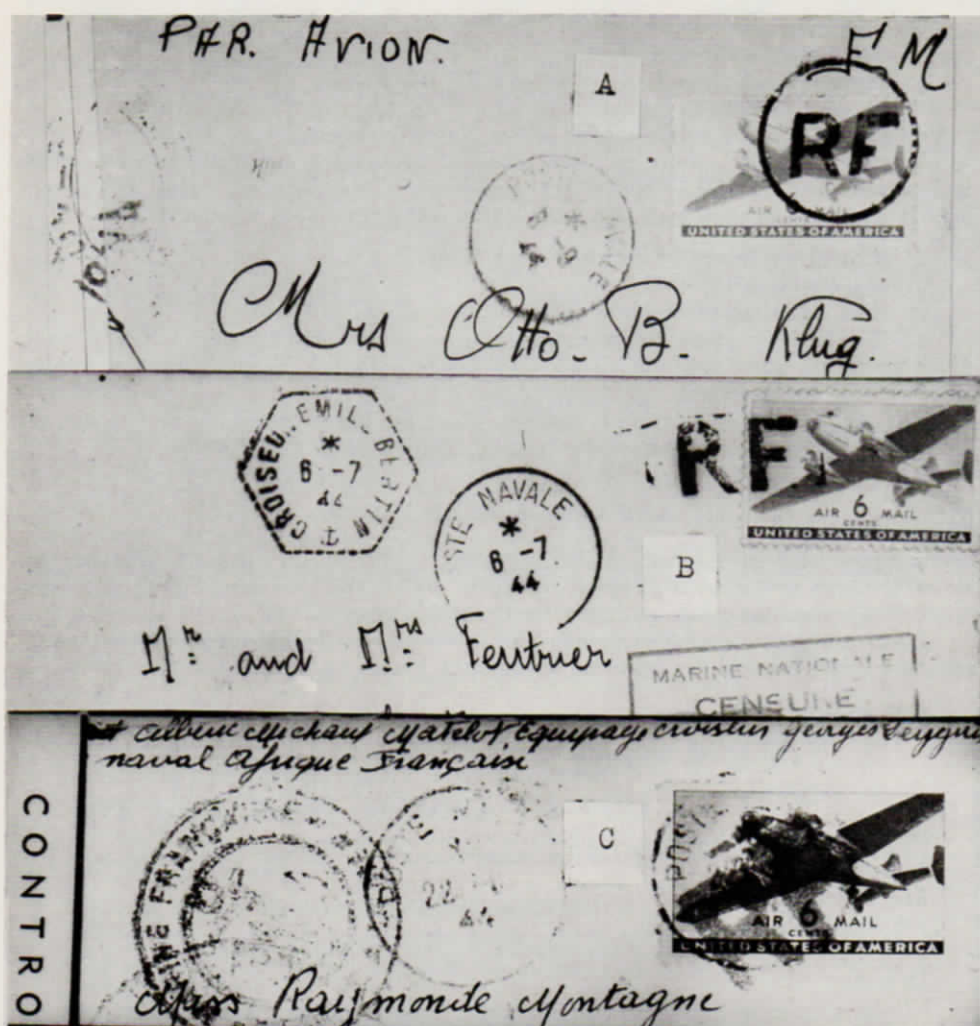


Fig. 8. Three examples of RF markings showing a portion of the imprint on the cover, indicating that the RF initials were applied after the air mail stamp was affixed to the envelope.

- A. Type 2 FR on cover from "La Toulonnaise." (Richard E. Samek collection).
- B. Type "9" from the Cruiser "Emil Bertin." (Stanley R. Rice collection).
- C. Type 8 from the Cruiser "Georges Leygues." (A. Boutrelle collection).

It may be remarked at this point that other writers in past articles* have offered different explanations for the RF overprints that this writer disputes. The French P. T. T. in North Africa was not responsible for the Directive, except to issue instructions at the order of the U. S. Navy. Nor were civilians concerned. As Mr. George A. Mary wrote in 1948* so sensibly disputing this claim:

"There are very few Algerians, Moroccans or Tunisians in the United States, and I wonder to whom natives could write in America (provided that they could write)."

*"Sanabria Air Post News", Vol. 13, Nos. 1 and 2.

RF OVERPRINTS

6. This Directive of June 22, 1944 specifically stipulates three things to do with the French air mail. They are:

- a) have the local (French) navy make a RF stamp device.
- b) see that all mail is censored.
- c) have it cancelled with a special "Poste Navale" marking.

Later on when RF covers and other material is discussed, we shall cite many pieces as legitimate and genuine, while others are alleged to be doubtful, bogus or outright counterfeits. The criteria used to a large extent will depend upon whether it is:

- a) air mail for America from the French Navy.
- b) properly censored.
- c) cancelled in accordance with the postal regulations.

7. The final paragraph throws some light upon the earlier Directive of Nov. 9, 1943, which must have stipulated that all air mail from the French Navy to America will be cancelled only at Casablanca.

The new Directive of June 22, 1944 permitted the French naval air mail to be cancelled at other North African naval bases or on board ship, as will be shown.

Application of the RF Marking

A mystery has existed with the RF overprint. When was it applied? Were the 6c. air mail stamps or the air mail postal stationery sold to the French sailors already overprinted? Or were the markings done after the mail was posted?

In an attempt to seek some authoritative word, Mr. Samek continued his persistence, and finally received the following letter dated March 14, 1944:

1759 R Street NW
Washington 9, D. C.

AMBASSADE DE FRANCE
AUX ETATS-UNIS
L'ATTACHE NAVAL
NO. 69 AN/O

March 14, 1949
Mr. Richard E. Samek
136 Madison Avenue
New York 16, N. Y.
Dear Sir:

In answer to your letter of December 22, 1948, requesting some information about American Air Mail stamps overprinted by the French Naval Forces "R.F.", and authorized and used during 1944, I wish to inform you that I have received from my Department the following information:

The utilization by the French Navy of 6 cents American Air Mail stamps was authorized March 13, 1944 by the American authorities (instruction Cp. W. O. M. ff serial 861620 Commandant in Chief Naval Operations, par. 2 b).

The postal offices in North Africa bought these stamps from the American Postal authorities (Navy) and turned over to these same authorities the mail thus stamped, after having printed on said stamps the initials "R.F."

When the American Naval Post Office left North Africa, all said stamps still in the hands of the French Postal authorities were returned to them.

Yours truly,
CAPTAIN PIERRE LANCELOT
French Naval Attache

This letter is important because of the mention of the date of authorization—March 13, 1944. One should notice that both the U. S. Post Office and Navy Department in let-

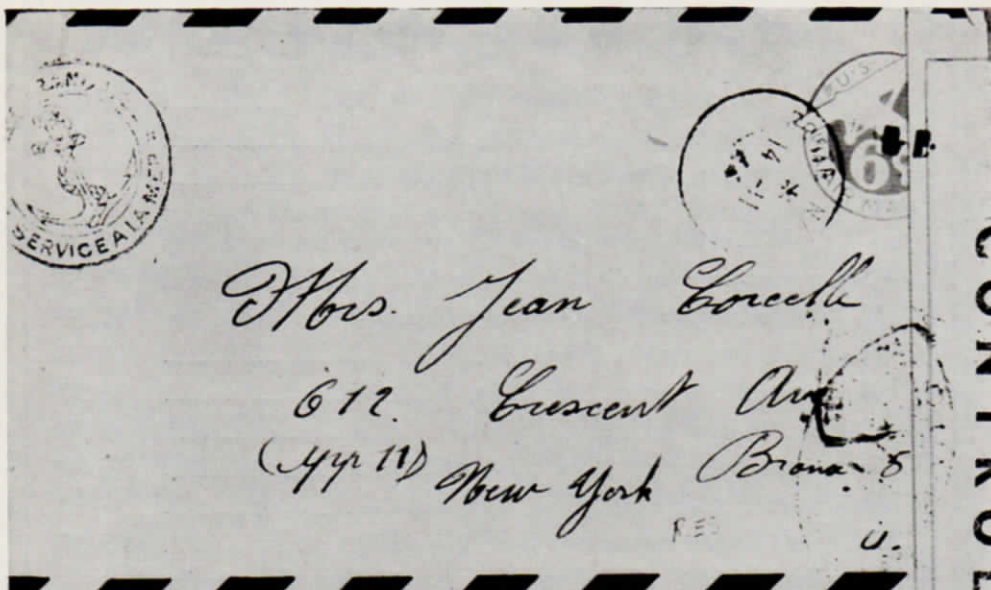


Fig. 9. The "F" of "RF" was hit upon the censor tape, also giving further evidence that the overprint was applied after mailing. (Richard E. Samek collection).

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C4b	20c/15c double surcharge (San. 4b, \$50.)	25.00
C7a	double impression (San. 7a, \$25.)	7.50
C7a	Same stamp, fine used (San. \$10.)	7.00
1930	Aerogramme, San. 1, fine unused, propaganda sheet of POD with Scott type of C7 and other similar values	5.00
—	Same aerogramme, fine flown used	7.50
C13a	double overprint, perfs slightly clipped at R (San. 14a)	15.00
C14a	double impression (San. 15b, \$15.)	10.00
C14b	inverted overprint (San. 15a, \$7.50)	4.50
—	Same fine used	5.00
C16a	double overprint (San. 17a, \$60.)	35.00
C21a	inverted surcharge (San. 22b, \$40.)	7.50
C25	faint double overprint (San. 26a, \$50.)	25.00
1936—	Zepp flight, NYC-Frankfurt, originating Guatemala, pair C62 tied on by Hindenburg cachet, regd.	20.00
1936—	Same flight, C62, C64 tied by cachet, not regd.	25.00
1938—	regd. cover, GC-Brownsville, NINE used examples C83	25.00
1945—	San. 145C, \$60., similar to Scott C133 with DATE	20.00
—	Same, plate # block of four	100.00
1945—	As Scott C135/135A, San. 147/147A, die impression in turquoise on 1946 New Year's Card of POD	12.00
C138	Imperf corner block of four (San. 151a, \$400.)	120.00
(Or will split into two pairs pro-rata)		
1947—	As Scott C143, San. 156, die impression on New Year's Card of POD	7.50
C155/56	with MUESTRA opt. (San. AS168/69, \$20. each), each \$5.00	10.00
C163/65	with plume & genitalia (San. 177a/79a, \$60.)	25.00
C166/70	with SPECIMEN opt. (San. AS180/84, \$50.)	10.00
C177	double frame impression (San. 191a, \$50.)	20.00
C181a	unsevered pair provisional bisect (San. 204a, \$35.)	13.50

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RF OVERPRINTS

ters previously reprinted stated, "the date of authorization" as March 13, 1943. In the writer's view, this was simply a careless slip. One mentioned the date "1943", which others repeated. *All evidence shows that the date of authorization is March 13, 1944.*

However, much philatelic evidence in our hands shows clearly that the RF overprint was stamped *after* the stamp was affixed to a cover. Figs. 8A-8B-8C-8D show four different types of RF overprints, each on part of the stamp and part on the cover. Fig. 9 shows the 6c. air mail embossed envelope with the "F" stamped upon the censor tape, proving that the RF was applied after mailing.

This casts serious doubt upon all *unused* RF stamps or postal stationery, which will be analyzed in detail later on.

The Stamping Devices

The Directive of June 22, 1944 specified "to have a stamp 'RF' made up by the local navy." This was done. Most all of the types of RF overprints seem to be handstamps. Unless one knows a French officer, who in 1943 or 1944 had actually applied the overprint, he could not exactly state the process of manufacture used for each stamping device. Careful inspection of hundreds of markings on covers gives evident signs of being applied by a rubber stamp. However, it has been verbally reported that an obscure base or small ship did not have a marking device, and so had to improvise one. Figs. 10A-B-C-D show four slightly different RF markings that are said to have been made by carving the initials into a stale potato. These markings are so very crude that there might be some credence to this report.

As for the rubber stamping, one finds good evidence to support this. Fig. 11 shows how Type 1 "RF" often smudged. After considerable use, a rubberstamp deteriorates. There was in our possession while preparing this study, 68 covers from "The Battleship Richelieu" sent to Mrs. Odette Descoubès. The first one is cancelled September 28, 1944 and they continued through March 9, 1945. Fig. 12 shows the Type 1 "RF" marking cancelled October 10, 1944. This is an early use. Notice how well formed the two initials are. Fig. 13 shows the same type overprint used on January 23, 1945. The initials around this time begin to show clear evidence of wear. Less than a month later, the rubber-stamp had deteriorated so much, that the RF hardly shows, so that a new type RF overprint appears on "Richlieu" mail in the middle of February, 1945. Fig. 14 shows an "RF" marking, where the small initials have registered so poorly.

Also, there was evidence in our possession showing, that a few smaller bases or ships resorted to a manuscript RF marking. Fig. 15A shows a cover from Agadir cancelled "U. S. Navy October 20, 1944", while Fig. 15B shows a cover with a regular RF marking plus a manuscript one. This piece is cancelled "U. S. Navy/Oct. 23, 1944." The dates of cancellation are important, because October, 1944 is comparatively an early one for the hundreds of covers examined. The significance to us is that the Directive for overprinting RF was known to the French Navy, but some remote places had no device for the overprinting, so for a short period of time, they resorted to manuscript marking.

Place of Manufacture

During the North African campaign, it required time until the June 22, 1944 Directive of Algiers was distributed to every base, and particularly to ships out at sea. Did each French ship have its own distinctive RF overprint? Also, there were a number of naval bases in North Africa. Did each one use a special type of marking?

The answer is "no". The appendix offers a listing of all the covers examined. There were five Naval Bases—Algiers, Casablanca, Toulon, Tunisia, and Agadir. Using the 13 types listed and illustrated in "The Sanabria Air Post Catalogue" (Fig. 16), for example we found San. Type "c" used at Casablanca, Agadir and Toulon. Type "g" appears from Casablanca and Toulon.

RF OVERPRINTS



Fig. 10. Four Type 6 RF overprints that were alleged to have been carved out of a stale potato. All have a very crude appearance.

A. From Tunisia. (Sam Rodvien collection). B. Also from Tunisia. (Stanley R. Rice collection). C. Also from Tunisia. (William J. Hassan collection). D. From "Le Malin" to Canada and has a November 23, 1944 backstamp. (Richard E. Samek collection).

As for covers from French naval ships and submarines, there are 19 different ones, as listed in the appendix. For instance, the Battleship Richelieu used three different types, 1, 2 and 5 (Sanabria type "c", "g", and "i"). Each of these types of overprint also appear on covers from the Naval Bases—Algiers, Casablanca and Toulon. There are six different RF overprints found on the mail from "The Cruiser Gloire". Four of these are found also used from the Naval Bases—Algiers, Casablanca and Toulon.

RF OVERPRINTS

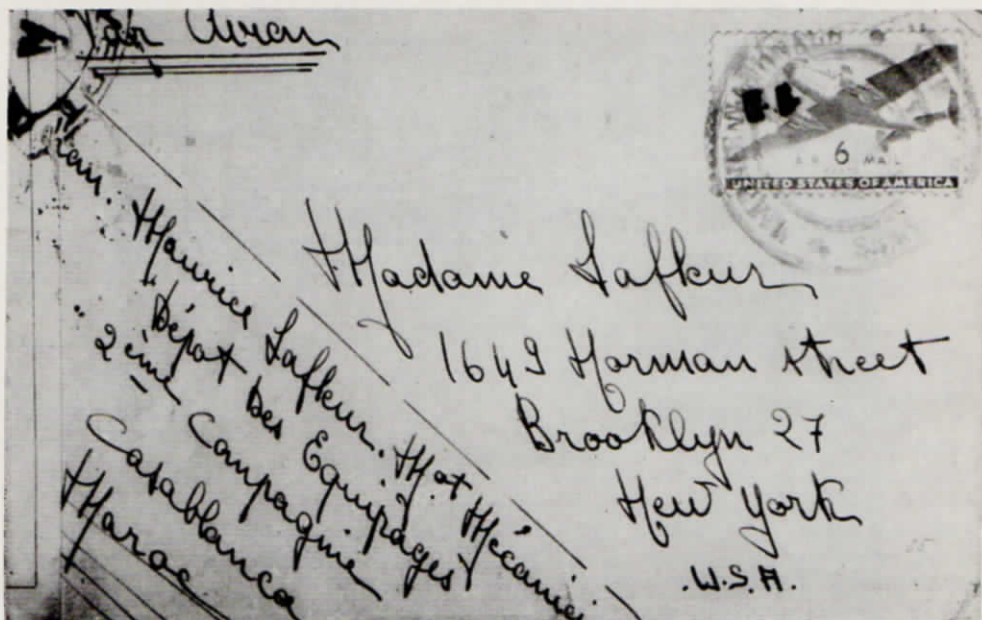


Fig. 11. An early cover from Casablanca with the Type 1 "RF" heavily smudged. (Author's collection).

Lacking actual official reports from French naval personnel, who were in charge of the mail during this RF period, one can only speculate to arrive at a reasonable conclusion, as to how the marking devices came to hand. As the ships came into a port like Algiers or Casablanca, some RF stamping devices were given at the Naval Base to those in charge of the mail on ships. The duplication of various RF types indicate this.

However, there are many covers from ships with RF overprints of a type that were not used at any Naval Base. For instance, the submarine "Archimede" used a type that only is found on mail from other ships. This is the type 2, which also appears on "Cruiser Emil Bertin", "Cruiser Gloire", "La Toulonnaise", "Submarine Le Centaure", "Submarine Le Glorieux", "Destroyer Marocain" and the "Escort Gabier". One finds other types duplicated from two or more ships.

This is an exceedingly interesting study to which we hope some day to have the authoritative answer from someone with an understanding of philately, who handled the French naval mail.

Types of RF

A tabulation of all the RF covers inspected totals 353. It is not an idle boast to state that probably never had so much material been assembled for examination and study.

At this point, the reader understands—the reason for the use of the RF overprints; how and where they were manufactured and overprinted; and how the mail with them was used and handled. It has been previously stated that the great majority of the RF overprints were handstamped, probably done by a rubberstamp. Also, in discussing a rubberstamp, it was shown how this wore through constant use.

This creates a problem for the philatelist in seeking to work out a tabulation for the convenient use of all interested stamp collectors and dealers. All the handstamps examined are not exactly uniform. There are slight variations in what upon first inspection appears as the same type. The most common is our Type 1.

RF OVERPRINTS

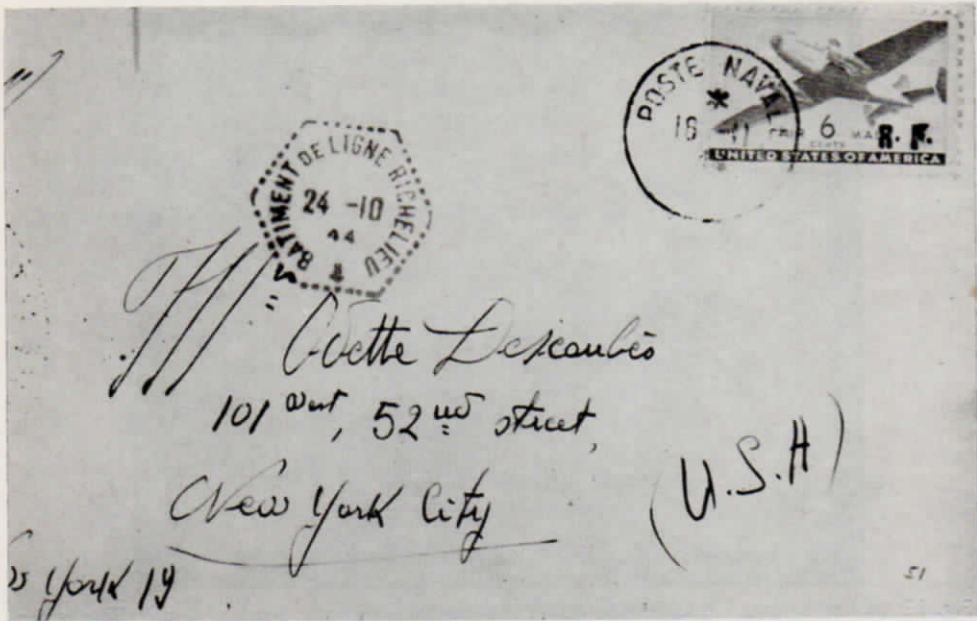


Fig. 12. An early "Richelieu" cover with the Type 1 "RF" very well formed. (Richard E. Samek collection).

However, inspection of the type 1 "RF" on many covers shows slight differences in both the "R" and the "F". For instance, in our type 3, a number of similar RF overprints are grouped under the same type. But, here again, there are slightly different variations. A technical philatelist probably would list all that the writer has classified as type 6, as separate ones, so that instead of a total of 9 basic types, the high-powered specialist would list many more. This would result in a very long listing that in the end would tend to confuse and discourage the interested collector rather than aid him.

The slight variations in RF overprints can be clearly shown. The pair in Fig. 18A (from the Dispatch-boat "Le Capriseuse") differs from the one shown in Fig. 18B (from the Escort "Gavelot"). But since from the general appearance, they appear similar, we have treated them as one type.

The next step followed in tabulating the many types of RF overprints was to separate "the wheat from the chaff." Of the 353 covers inspected, 178 showed proper use by the French Navy on air mail to the U. S. A. and Canada; 155 were eliminated as questionable for various reasons that will be studied in detail later on.

The 13 Sanabria types shown in Fig. 16 were used as a start. As we came across each RF overprint with genuine usage, we first tried to classify it according to those shown in Fig. 16. But each type as illustrated in "The Sanabria Air Post Catalogue" is far from an exact drawing, which often makes it difficult to classify the actual RF overprint found on certain covers with the Sanabria handdrawn illustrations. Nevertheless, since the Sanabria illustrations are the most comprehensive, references to these types was the best method to use in the beginning.

As for the following tabulation, the first column is the San. type, the next a reference from which naval bases or ships this type was seen, while the last column shows how often the type was found. Remember only definitely genuine covers from French Naval personnel were used. These totalled 178.

RF OVERPRINTS



Fig. 13. Notice by Jan. 23, 1945 The RF initials are showing some signs of wear. This is the 44th out of the 68 "Odette Descoubès" covers from the Battleship "Richelieu".

Table 1

SAN. TYPE	FOUND ON COVERS FROM	NO. SEEN
a*	(none)	—
b*	(none)	—
c	Casablanca, Agadir, Toulon, Richelieu, Gloire, La Toulonnaise, Archimede, Touralhaut, Gabier	21
d	Gloire, Georges Leygues, Montcalm, Emil Bertin, La Toulonnaise, La Capricieuse	18
e	Gloire, Emil Bertin	3
f	Gloire, Emil Bertin	2
g	Casablanca, Toulon, Richelieu, Gloire, Annamite, Marocain, La Toulonnaise	80
h	Emil Bertin, Gloire, La Toulonnaise, Archimede, Le Centaure, Le Glorieux, Marocain, Gabier	28
i	Tunisia, La Toulonnaise, Le Malin	6
k*	(none)	—
l	Algiers, Richelieu, Gloire, Montcalm	14
m*	(none)	—
n	Le Centaure, Toulon	6
Total		178

* Types a, b, k and m not seen on genuine covers.

RF OVERPRINTS

The 9 Types of Genuine "RF" (See Fig. 17)

The compilation of Table I used the 13 types (Fig. 16) as listed by the Sanabria catalog, showing that in the lot of 178 genuine covers assembled from many collections and then closely studied—only 9 out of the 13 appeared.

Furthermore, the trouble faced with the illustrations of the types as printed in catalogs and past articles is that most all were not taken from actual overprints, but are hand-drawn imitations. Thus, the actual appearance of the "RF" overprint is distorted.



Fig. 14. The "RF" overprint has greatly deteriorated from the strike shown in Figs. 12-13. In order to show this happening by Feb. 17, 1945 an enlarged filtered photograph was taken. (Richard E. Samek collection).



Fig. 15A. The "RF" initials are manuscript. This cover came from the Naval Base Agadir. (Richard E. Samek collection).

RF OVERPRINTS

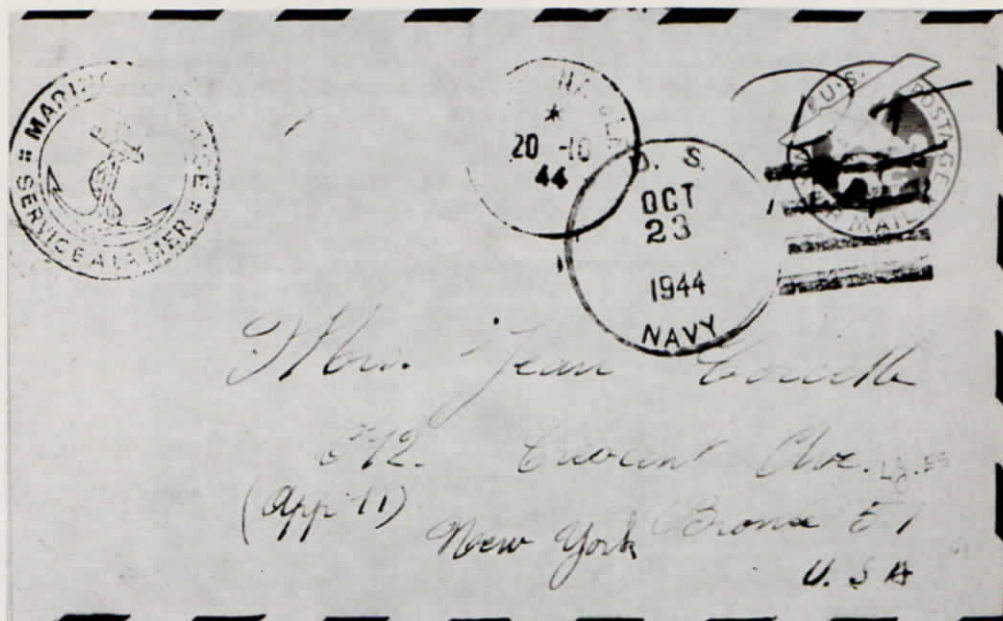


Fig. 15B. An unusual cover with both the Type 1 "RF" plus a large manuscript marking. The "Corcelle" covers are from the Cruiser "Gloire". (Richard E. Samek collection).

Fig. 17 shows the 9 types as listed according to our Table II. They are placed in order as tabulated. In the case of types 3, 4 and 6, there are two illustrations, because although the overprints are similar, yet there are some slight differences, not enough, in the writer's opinion, to justify a separate classification.

It is the writer's hope that this illustration (Fig. 17) will be put to good use. The types are taken from genuine covers, and outside of some slight strengthening needed for proper illustration, they accurately depict the various genuine overprints.

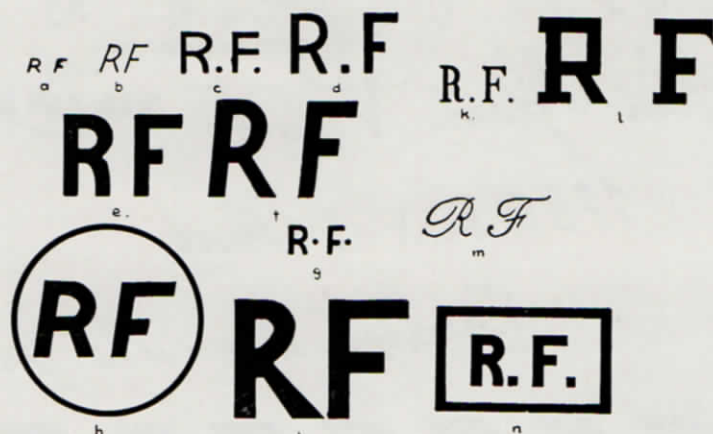


Fig. 16. The original artist's sketch used for the 13 "RF" type illustrations in "The Sanabria Air Post Catalogue".

RF OVERPRINTS

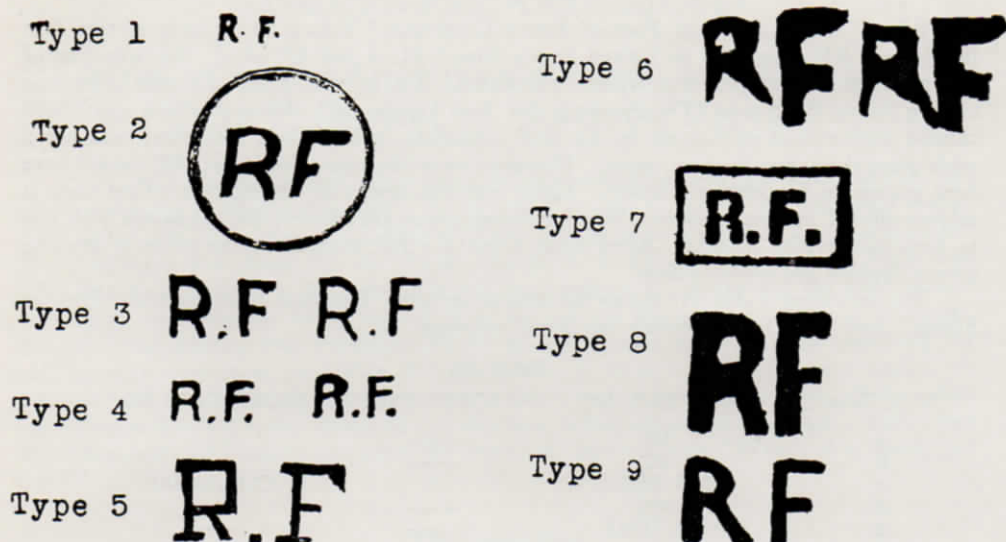


Fig. 17. The 9 "RF" types that appeared on genuine covers from French Naval personnel during 1944 and 1945. Types 3, 4 and 6 have two varieties. (Author's collection).

The lot of 178 covers examined may not be too indicative of the scarcity of the various Types of "RF". It is not unreasonable to believe that there may be correspondence with "RF" covers that is now unknown, but that will come on the market at some future time. Each collector must evaluate for himself if a certain type is worth more than another. The writer will not attempt to do this. All that was done, involved a conscientious effort to corral as much material as possible, study it all closely and record the results.

For instance, Type 7 may be scarcer than Types 8 or 9. However, it does seem that Types 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5, that were used at the large bases like Casablanca and Algiers, or on "the Battleship Richelieu" with a complement of over 1,000, are the ones found more often. Logically, the scarcer types emanate from smaller bases or ships that had a lesser mail.

Along with the illustrations of the nine types (Fig. 17), it seems to be proper to also refer to the actual covers from which each type was taken, as follows:

Table II

TYPE NO.	WHERE ILLUSTRATED
1	Figs. 11-12
2	Fig. 8A
3	Figs. 18A-B
4	Figs. 19A-B
5	Fig. 20
6	Fig. 10
7	Fig. 21
8	Fig. 22
9	Fig. 8C

RF OVERPRINTS

Catalog Listings

When "Scott's Standard Postage Stamp Catalogue," Vol. I, in its 1957 edition first listed these RF overprints as United States Nos. CM1-5 and UCM1-3, the collecting of RF material in America was widely stimulated. Up to that time, the only American catalog listing them was "The Sanabria Air Post Catalogue." Since this is a specialized catalog used almost exclusively by air mail specialists, it is obvious that there was not a wide general interest in these issues. However, over the years since 1944, RF covers have been proven to be relatively scarce. Little material comes on the market. One finds it seldom offered at auction sales. When genuine covers are offered, the prices are high due to keen competitive bidding. After Scott listed the RF overprints, the price of genuine covers doubled and often tripled.

The following Table III shows the listings in both "The 1958 Scott Standard Postage Stamp," and "The 1957 Sanabria Air Post" catalogs.

Table III

SAN. Type	SAN. CAT. NO.	SCOTT TYPE	SCOTT CAT. NO.
a	M1	—	—
b	M2	—	—
c	M3/SEM1	b	CM2/UCM1
d	M4	—	—
e	M5/SEM2	—	—
f	M6	—	—
g	M7/SEM3,a,b	a	CM1
h	M8/SEM4,a	f	CM6
i	M9	—	—
k	M10	c	CM3
l	M11/SEM5	d	CM4
m	M12	e	CM5,5a/UCM2,3
n	M13	—	—

RECAPITULATION:

SAN. TYPES	SAN. STAMPS	SAN. STATIONERY	SCOTT TYPES	SCOTT STAMPS	SCOTT STATIONERY
13	13	5	6	6	3

Previously it was shown where only 9 out of the 13 Sanabria types appeared on the 178 genuine covers. Thus, the Sanabria air mail stamp listings of M1, M2, M10, and M12 are subject to question. However, all five types of RF on air mail postal stationery listed in Sanabria have been seen properly used.

As for Scott, its types "c" and "e" did not appear on any French naval covers. Thus, out of the 6 types in Scott, only 3 can be accepted without question. As for the 6 air mail RF stamps, Scott CM3 and CM5, 5a do not appear. Of the 3 Postal Stationery items, listed, only the RF overprint on Scott UCM1 was found in the 178 covers. UCM2 and 3 did not appear.

On page 44 of "The 1958 Scott Standard Postage Stamp Catalogue, Vol. I" are the illustrations of the 6 types of overprints this catalog lists Scott Type "a", "b" and "c" are assigned to "Casablanca", Type "d" to "Algiers", Type "e" to "Toulon" and Type "f" to "Oran". Consultation with our Table I shows that such information runs contrary to the "RF" overprints found on covers. Furthermore, no RF mail has been found from the Naval Base at Oran. Covers from only five Naval Bases were found. Omitted from Scott are the overprints from Tunisia and Agadir. Evidently the Scott catalog did not include some of the profusely used "Ship" RF overprints such as Sanabria Types "d", "e" and "n", for the reason given in the Scott catalog's textnote preceding the listing.

However, one must remember that a certain type of overprint was not exclusively used at one particular naval base, or on a certain ship. A study of Table I shows this frequent duplication.

(To Be Continued)

SWEETNESS AND LIGHT

A report of the Annual Convention and Dinner of Aero Philatelists on November 23, 1957

It has been the custom for many years, when planning conventions, fairs, jubilees and other gatherings of the clans to coin a phrase which sets the theme for the individual events. Thus the theme of the New York World's Fair of 1939-1940 was "World of Tomorrow". More recently, the theme for the Ninth Annual A. S. D. A. show in New York was "Wildlife Conservation." If any words can best express the theme for the 1957 annual convention and dinner of AERO PHILATELISTS, they are, in my opinion, *sweetness and light*. For, from the moment that President *Stanley R. Rice* banged down his gavel signalling the start of our convention until Past President *John J. Britt's* melodious voice trailed off into the limbo of forgotten orations to rest undisturbed in partnership with all the other memories at Luchow's, the theme of the day was indeed *sweetness and light*. And when the convention and dinner were over, the universal comment was, "Wasn't it a wonderful day?"

The Convention

At the 11th Annual Convention held once again at 2.30 P. M. at the Collectors Club, New York, N. Y., the assembly first stood for a moment of silence in memory of four departed members in 1957, *Max Bloch, Sam Brown, Theodore E. Steinway* and *George B. Wray*. We shall remember them not only for their work in philately, but as warm

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1957 CONVENTION

friends who have passed from this vale of tears to what we hope is a rich reward.

The secretary read the minutes of the 1956 convention. Then, Treasurer *Bernard Fink* read his report, surprising those in attendance that we have a few dollars in the bank. For a philatelic specialty society, we compare favorably by our financial status.

Nominations for directors for the class of 1960 were then brought in by a committee consisting of *John F. Rider*, Chairman and *Edward P. Bender*, *Harry A. Holman* and *Stanley Ross*. There were no nominations from the floor. By unanimous choice, the class of 1960 will consist of the following:

Bernard Fink
Henry M. Goodkind
Sam Rodvien
Maurice Tripet
Jules L. Wacht
Sol Whitman

The newcomer to the board is *Maurice Tripet*, and it is the feeling in this corner that he will become a valuable addition to a fine staff.

1957 was another banner year for AERO PHILATELISTS. Our membership increased from 277 to 307.

In reporting for the Editorial Board, *Henry M. Goodkind*, our Editor, noted that THE AERO PHILATELIST ANNALS had received recent acclaim from "The Stamp Lover" of England and "La Philatliste Belge." Our editor cited these as the latest instances of favorable notices for our publication. Practically every stamp paper in the United States, many South American journals, numerous British magazines and periodicals from Europe, Asia and Australia have mentioned our magazine. *Stanley R. Rice* also read a letter from *Francis J. Field*, veteran aero-philatelist of Great Britain. Mr. Field was most enthusiastic in his praise for our publication, pointing out the help it has been to him in his publishing. The thesis developed by our editor was that out of approximately 300 members there were only a handful who can or will write articles. While he did not expect that every air mail collector could write articles for the magazine, he felt that all of us should lend encouragement to those who do write, and let them know by words or deeds when something particularly good appeared in print.

1958 Exhibition

In every life a drop of rain must fall. The fly in our ointment was eloquently expressed by Messrs. *Higginbottom*, *Rider*, *Seebacher*, *Staub* and *Whitman*, among others, who, looking about, remarked upon the bare appearance of the frames in the Collectors Club meeting room. It was the general feeling among those present that we should revive an old custom and have stamps on display during the convention period. The point was taken to the floor by *Ira Seebacher*. He felt that we should have an annual members competition in conjunction with the convention. The idea being well received, Mr. Seebacher put it into the form of a motion which was unanimously carried. So, next year, the convention probably to be held on a date not conflicting with the annual A. S. D. A. show, will feature a competitive exhibit limited to members of AERO PHILATELISTS. The exhibition should be classified as in International Exhibitions for general collections, specialized, cancellations, covers, proofs and postal stationery. As proof of the enthusiasm with which the idea was received, the following donors have already promised trophies for the show:

Stanley R. Rice
Ira Seebacher
Louis N. Staub
Chapter No. 5 of Philadelphia

President *Rice* spoke at some length about our work during the past year. The highlight was the chapter currently being formed in Chicago.

1957 CONVENTION

Sweetness and light continued to be the theme of the convention as, with a pat on the back for a job well done, the directors unanimously re-elected the following slate of officers for 1958:

Pres. *Stanley R. Rice*
Exec. Vice Pres. *Sam Rodvien*
First Vice Pres. *Louis N. Staub*
Secretary *Philip Silver*
Treasurer *Bernard Fink*
Asst. Secretary *Frank Glanz*

The Dinner

The climax of the day, of course, was the dinner held at the famous, old Luchow's restaurant on East 14th Street. *John J. Britt* and *Stanley R. Rice* deserve a special citation for the wonderful planning and arrangements. About 80 people attended. Most all of the members came with their wives. There was the usual loyal contingent from Philadelphia. Most pleasing was the number of well-known philatelists who are not members. All in all, the list of those present read like a "Who's Who" of philately. If you like German cooking and the wiped-clean plates seemed to bear eloquent testimony to that, then a good time was a natural consequence. The saurbraten, potato pancakes and apple strudel were in the usual Luchow tradition. A special commendation for the chef might be in order at this point. And when the eating and drinking were over and done with and the guests had settled back comfortably in their chairs, *John J. Britt* took over. And

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take over he did lock, stock and barrel. For one-half hour John figuratively hopped from table to table introducing the guests, pointing up their virtues and studiously avoiding their vices. There were no brickbats, only bouquets. There were none who could take umbrage with our genial host. The wonder is that there was so much good in us to expose. And rather than wait for it to be interred with our bones, John shouted it from the rooftops and bared it to the blinding searchlight of publicity.

So the day ended on the theme upon which it had begun. And, at the risk of repetition, one could indeed inquire, "Wasn't it a wonderful day?"

Philip Silver, Secretary

Catalog Reviews

Scott's 1958 Standard Postage Stamp Catalogue Vol. I. Published by Scott Publications, Inc., New York, N. Y. 908 pp. Cloth Bound. Price \$5.00.

As anticipated in our review of Vol. II (*AERO PHILATELIST ANNALS*, October 1957, page 60), some new listings of air mails have appeared in this 1958 edition. Last year when commenting upon Scott listing for the first time the French Aviation and Scadta Companies air post stamps of Colombia, mention was made of the illogical exclusion of Ecuador's Scadta stamps. This is properly rectified in the newest volume. There are now 20 new Ecuador air mails, all Scadta issues. This causes a complete change in all Ecuador air mail Scott numbers.

Many collectors and dealers are happy to see the restoration of the controversial Nicaragua C13. Also Brazil's 1927, the 500r on 10r, that for years was a major Scott number with a space in the companion album, subsequently demoted to minor status C1b, now returns as a major Scott number C6A. Unfortunately nothing was done to change Salvador C1a.

Also the first issues of Mexico remained unchanged. Even in a general catalog, we cannot understand how Mexico C1a, so different from C1 and issued 7 years later, can be considered a minor variety of C1.

Although a slight start has been made with some Souvenir Sheets, the wholly inconsistent policy still remains. We believe that in the near future the competent editors of Scott will tackle this problem (actually one they inherited) and make the necessary changes throughout all the American countries. For instance, it baffles an air mail stamp enthusiastic to see Brazil's 1948 Vargas Souvenir Sheet listed as a major number, while the 1956 Santos Dumont Sheet is a minor variety. Incidentally, the date of issue of the latter as given by Scott is wrong.

In connection with Dates of Issue, Scott for years only listed the year. Commencing a few years ago, the month and day were added. This is fine, except what about the issues before 1955? Are they going to remain without month and day, while the newest ones are with year, month and day? Furthermore, making a random check of 12 recent dates with year, month and day in Volume I, and then comparing the Scott dates with those on First Day covers in our collection, we found only 7 in agreement with the actual cancellations on covers. This spot check may or may not be typical of the entire two volumes.

There is so much in the general Scott catalogs, that only unreasonable complainers (Oh, yes, philately has its good share) can expect everything as wished and done in a few years time. Once again we applaud the great improvements made so far, and feel confident that progress will continue under the present editorial guidance. But in our view, there is much more to be done with the American nations in Vol. I than with any other group. Having visited in South America, we witnessed the collectors' general reactions

CATALOG REVIEWS

down there. Scott still has not gained the status it should have. The Latin American collectors are pleased with the revisions made so far, but still many do not collect by this general catalog. We received the impression that they would like to see all the American collectors using the same catalog, and as Scott progresses this well could happen.

Catalogue Müller 1958: Switzerland and Liechtenstein, 8th edition. Edited and published by Ernst Müller, Aeschenvorstadt 21, Basel, Switzerland. 244 pp. with tip-in of matching Scott and Müller catalog numbers. Paper bound. Price: \$1.00.

This "little" but informative catalog will interest the collector of Swiss and Liechtenstein airmails. On pages 133 to 140 one finds a detailed listing and pricing of Switzerland air mail stamps, while pages 232 to 235 treat those of the principality of Liechtenstein.

Here is how Müller treats the stamps. Each is illustrated and numbered. Then in chronological order comes each set. The Müller catalog number corresponds to the illustration number. The column listing starts at the left with two blank spaces printed there for checklist purposes, a very handy device for a catalog user. Next is the catalog number, followed by the denomination, description and color, quantities issued and finally the prices. The latter generally have three columns for unused block of 4, mint and used single. These are totalled with a set price beneath each issue listing. Occasionally cover prices are given. This is the main item we believe missing. In a highly specialized catalog like this, every stamp should show a cover price.

After a number of the sets, one finds informative descriptive notes. For one dollar, an interested collector would find his money well spent.

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LATVIA

It's A Fake

In the last number of this magazine, an experiment was tried. A *counterfeit* copy of Latvia (San. 4, Scott C4) was shown by an enlarged illustration. For one to determine this, he need only examine the clear printing impressions on genuine copies and then contrast to the hazy, crude appearance of the copy illustrated.

This counterfeit copy was found in the Sales Circuit Book of a stamp society. There were other Latvia air mails of the same type in more books. Obviously, if this club uses examiners before material is circulated, they did not spot these counterfeited Latvia air mails. Although we have not personally seen them, reports reach us that such Latvia air mail counterfeits are going the rounds over here.

As for our "noble" experiment to see how many would identify this, the results were disappointing. Less than 5% of the membership responded. Far better had been anticipated. Furthermore, only two spotted this counterfeit, although one did not come right out but had certain reservations. We considered the latter a hedging rather than definite opinion.

Most all went astray, believing that they saw an error in the design or something wrong with the perforations. Incidentally the latter is a clue for counterfeit identification, because these copies' perforations gauge differently from the genuine.

How are your Latvia air mails (San. 3-4, 5-7, Scott C3 to 8)? Better check to see if you have any "album weeds".



The highest price

ever paid for a single airmail stamp, \$11,500, was paid in a 1957 Harmer Rooke auction for the 25c on 10c "Black Honduras" (Scott #C12, cataloguing \$17,500). The previous record price of \$5,300 was paid in 1939 for this very stamp.

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