

A Provisional Ferrarity

By Calvet M. Hahn

The finest stamp collection ever formed was that put together by Philippe Arnold de la Renotière von Ferrari (January 1, 1848-May 20, 1917). The most comprehensive holding of classic stamps formed, it included about 75 percent of the world's rarities. It was still being expanded when Ferrari died in 1917. Ferrari was the right man at the right time to amass this magnificent holding. He had the connections, the means and the motive, and he used them.

The Connections

Ferrari's family was deeply involved in the dynastic struggles between the Orleanist Bourbons and the Austrian Hapsburgs for control over post-Metternich Europe. There were family ties to the Orleanist royal family of France, the house of Savoy which became the Italian royal family, the present royal family of Spain, the family of Lord Acton in England and the Dalberg family in Germany. There may have also been a marital connection to the Russian nobility.

Ferrari's mother was the heiress of the Brignole-Sale family of Genoa and had married Raffaello Ferrari in 1843. Ferrari was apparently the child born of an illicit affair between his mother and an Austrian army lieutenant named Emmanuel de la Renotière von Kriegsfeld, probably during the 1847 Austrian occupation of Ferrara in Italy. Raffaello Ferrari did not learn of his wife's infidelity until 1868 when young Ferrari was 20. Young Ferrari learned of it at the same time, and it completed his estrangement from a dominating father.

Raffaello Ferrari was related to the Orleanist Bourbons. He was a close associate of Charles Albert

(king of Sardinia and head of the House of Savoy, as well as the father of the future king of Italy) and received from him the title of Duke of Galliera two years before young Ferrari's birth. This was a French Napoleonic title, and Raffaello had French citizenship. The Bourbon dynastic tie was so close that King Louis Philippe of France was young Ferrari's godfather. After Louis Philippe abdicated, his son, the Comte de Paris, the Orleanist pretender, lived with the Ferraris for many years. After the death of Raffaello Ferrari the title of Duke of Galliera, which the collector son repudiated, passed into the hands of a cousin of the current king of Spain.

Ferrari's English relatives were Lord and Lady Acton. Lord Acton, grandson of the admiral who headed the Neapolitan navy, was the collector's contemporary. Acton's wife, who became one of Ferrari's heirs, was the Countess Marie Louise Peline de Dalberg, heiress to the Duc de Dalberg of Bavaria. The Duc de Dalberg was a minister of state and peer of France at his death in 1833.



Philippe Arnold de la Renotière von Ferrari

Dr. Stanley M. Bierman has recently unearthed a record suggesting that young Ferrari was briefly married to a Russian Tartar princess so that there were ties to another country. We also know he had relatives in Belgium and present-day Yugoslavia. In sum, Ferrari had family connections throughout Europe that might aid him in ferreting out family correspondences with rare stamps.

The Means

Raffaello Ferrari was a buccaneer railroad, steamship and banking magnate who built one of Europe's great fortunes. He was apparently quite ruthless in

his business and financial dealings. In his role as banker he played a significant role in the *Crédit Mobilier Français*, while his railroad projects were responsible for the transportation net that served north Italy and south France and connected into Spain. His financial advice was often sought by the heads of the House of Savoy in their successful maneuverings to place Victor Emmanuel on the throne of Italy. Strong ties remained with Italy, although the Ferrari family moved to Paris when the collector was two. By the time he began collecting at age ten in 1858, his father was a French senator.

Funding for the collection came primarily through Ferrari's mother who was passionately devoted to him and saw that he had the necessary financial support for his hobby in his early days. Although Ferrari broke with his banker father at age 20, went to live the student/writer's life on the Left Bank in 1868, and moved to England as a war exile during the Franco-Prussian War, he had enough funds to hire stamp dealer Pierre Mahe as full-time curator

for his collection by 1874, two years before his father died.

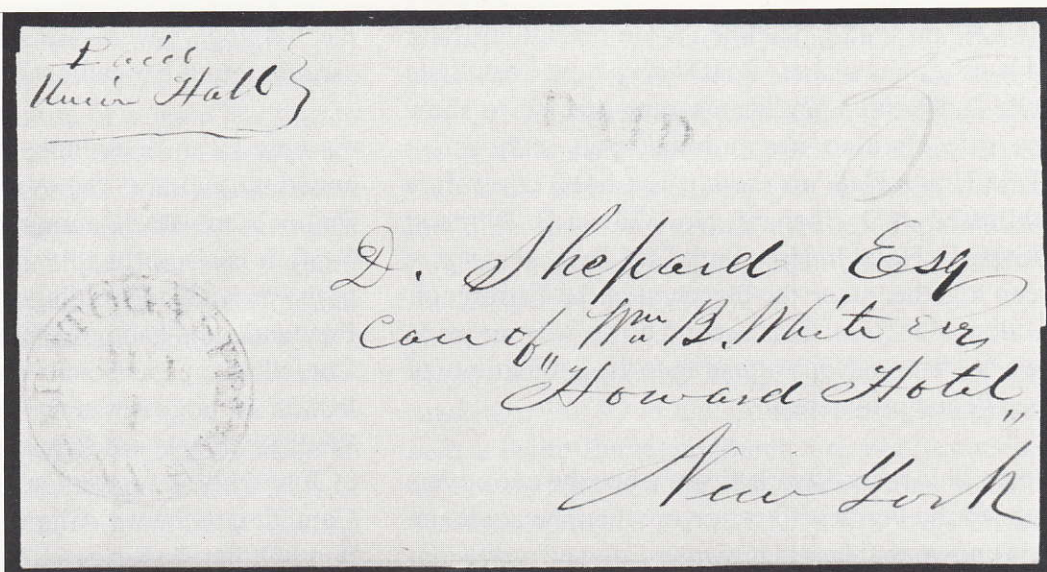
When Raffaello Ferrari died in 1876, the widowed duchess quickly gained a reputation as the wealthiest woman in Europe. When she died in 1888, she left young Ferrari some \$25 million. There was also money left in trust or directly to Ferrari upon his father's death. He repudiated it but later apparently claimed it. The fortune was large enough to equal the top American fortunes of the period, such as those of Astor and Vanderbilt.

We can be fairly sure that Ferrari did accept some of the money left him by his father, for a major period of expansion of the collection occurred right after 1876, about the time the estate was settled. He bought the Cooper Australia and the Bacon Japan collections in 1878, the same year he bought his first British Guiana "cotton reel" stamp and the British Guiana penny magenta. He added the Philbrick worldwide collection in 1882. Further major expan-



Fig. 1. A "Ferrarity" cover with a fraudulent Saratoga Springs, N.Y., postmaster's provisional stamp stuck on with sealing wax. This "adhesive" is really a postal marking cut from another cover from another town, according to the author's analysis.

Fig. 2. An 1846 Saratoga Springs, N.Y., "reference" cover that accompanied the "Ferrarity." The "Union Hall" Hotel manuscript marking is apparently only a notation of prepayment, with no bearing on the status of the "Ferrarity," according to the author's analysis.



sions followed his mother's death and his receipt of the \$25 million legacy.

The Motive

Ferrari set out to build the most complete collection of stamps ever formed. He moved similarly into coins, and his coin collection was equally fabulous, making up the nucleus of many of the subsequent famous collections. He aimed at owning all the rare stamps that came onto the market or that he could obtain privately. He expressed the view that he would rather acquire a hundred fakes than miss one genuine rarity. He also saw the dealer network as an important part of the stamp acquisition network and was willing to subsidize dealers by buying items he did not need or which he knew were fake just to keep them in business and searching for rarities for him. For a man of his wealth, this strategy made good sense, particularly in light of the comparatively limited knowledge of what did exist at the time.

Of course, what happened was that a number of people took advantage of Ferrari's willingness to spend; they supplied material made up to appeal to his desire for the unique. These items came to be called "Ferrarities" by some of his contemporaries and subsequent generations. Ferrari knew that a number of them were bad, but he wasn't sure about many more. He took the risk of acquiring them all to be sure he didn't miss a genuine rarity.

A number of the Ferrarities were included in the series of Ferrari sales held in the 1920's, particularly the 14 sales held in Paris for the benefit of the French government, which had seized the portion of his collection in France when he died. Based upon their provenance and the wealth of the purchasers at the sale, a number of Ferrarities have never received the critical examination they merit. Some still grace major collections, never having been challenged; others have been labeled for the fakes they were. A third group remains in limbo.

The Ferrarity in Question

Figure 1 is a cover bearing a blue 32 mm. "SARATOGA SPRINGS/AUG/10/N.Y." circular date stamp on an outer leaf addressed to Mrs. Leonard Lawrence at Smithtown in Suffolk County, N.Y. There is a small double-bordered blue 20x16 mm. oval "UNION HALL/SARATOGA/SPRINGS." A magenta "5" in manuscript gives the rate. Superimposed on this leaf with red sealing wax is a small white paper cut roughly to chamfered rectangular size, with a blue "5" and boxed 16x5 mm. "PAID." This affixed piece is a purported provisional stamp. Inside is a note in modern typeface stating "ex-Ferrari" and "believed by Colson to be a Postmaster's provisional." Warren Colson was a well-known Boston dealer and assembler of U.S. provisionals who bought at the Ferrari sales.

Accompanying this cover is a stampless hotel cover, Figure 2, bearing the same 32 mm. c.d.s. but reading

"JUL/1" on a letter datelined at Union Hall in 1846. This cover has a blue "PAID" (my New York State style "pd") and a similar magenta pen "5" to show the rate. It also has a black pen manuscript "Paid/Union Hall" to show it is a hotel cover. It is addressed to D. Shepard, c/o William B. White at Howard's Hotel in New York City. Both items have been together since the dispersal of the Ferrari collection at auction. This second cover was meant to be a confirming copy attesting to the authenticity of the alleged provisional.

There is no record available on when the two covers entered the Ferrari collection or where he got them. It is known that he did buy many alleged provisionals from Dr. James Petrie, a well-known early forger, as well as from other dubious U.S. sources. However, unlike most of the other Ferrari provisionals or items that might be provisional Ferrarities, this was not recorded by John Luff in his 1902 work on the U.S. provisionals. Notice of it is also absent from the 1937 "revision" done by Hugh Clark based upon Luff's notes and other sources. This lack of information suggests that the items entered the collection either very early or very late. If they had been acquired in the 1880's or 1890's, Luff probably would have heard of the potential provisional.

Both items were included in the 4th Ferrari sale held June 14, 1922. In that sale was a mixed lot (90-1) consisting of ten items beginning with the letter "S" that were provisionals or stampless covers. M. Gilbert, who handled the Ferrari Paris sales, had a practice of making group lots by alphabet for U.S. stampless covers and miscellaneous provisional candidates, both postmaster and Confederate. Lot 90-1 sold for 500 francs, about \$100, plus premium.

Lot 90-1 in the Ferrari 4th sale comprised the two covers shown here as well as a group of Confederate handstamp provisionals and stamps, including single items from Sparta, Salisbury, Smithfield and Spartanburg and four from Savannah. The buyer, who may well have been Warren Colson, was most likely more interested in the Confederate pieces than the two Saratoga, N.Y., items. There is nothing to indicate that Ferrari or the describer ever thought

the Saratoga covers were Confederate. It was an association of convenience in description.

As best I can determine, the two Saratoga items ended up as part of the Weill stock, coming via the Philip Ward stock acquired by the Weills about 1950. It is also probable that both covers were part of the provisional holdings of the Reverend Paul B. Freeland, who had been interested in both U.S. and Confederate provisionals and whose reference collection of bogus material sold as lot 1820 in the Weill stock sale at Christie's on October 13, 1989, to John Hill and Scott Gallagher for deposit in the Confederate Stamp Alliance archives at the Wineburgh Philatelic Research Library in Texas. The two Saratoga items were separated out quite recently to become part of a New England dealer's stock. At that point a Philatelic Foundation certificate was sought for the Ferrarity. The opinion on this item, on certificate No. 233,593, was given in December 1990, saying the cover "is a genuine unpaid outer address sheet to which a paper with 'Paid 5' has been fraudulently attached." I concur in the opinion. Subsequently the items came into my possession.

Saratoga Springs Postmark

Saratoga Springs, N.Y., is a famous mineral water resort area near Lake Champlain. The word "Saratoga" is from the Indian "Serachtague" which translates into "hillside country of the swift water." The town obtained a post office on April 8, 1802, and has had one ever since. Thomas J. Marvin became postmaster around June 1, 1843, and was still postmaster in 1849, so his postmastership covers the period of use of these covers.

Saratoga Springs used the blue 32 mm. c.d.s. at least as early as August 1842 and until August 1850 or later, with a black c.d.s. coming into use in July 1851 with the rates changes. The earlier dates are known in both light blue, as seen on these covers, and dark blue, without a clear difference of period of use. An example of a black c.d.s. has been reported in July 1843, but I have been unable to confirm it.

There are two "PAID" styles used at Saratoga Springs during this period (my New York State

styles "pd," seen on these covers, and my style "pf," which is a smaller spaced-out straightline mark.) There is *no record* of the use of a "paid" similar to the one found on the Ferrarity, although a *somewhat* similar one has been recorded from another New York town. Based upon my own fairly extensive sample of New York State "paid" strikes, I would have to state I cannot match the type of "paid" found on the Ferrarity with that on any other New York State stampless cover.

Postmaster Marvin commonly employed a magenta ink "5" rating mark which is known on dozens of covers handled by him, but he also used a black/brown ink "10" which is known with accompanying pencil "10." The only handstamp rate known from Saratoga Springs prior to 1851 is a blue "2" found in late 1849.

The blue handstamp "5" found on the Ferrarity is what I call New York State style "wd" and is probably the most common stock style used in the state. The "5" used at Saratoga Springs in the 1851-55 period is my style "wb," a thinner version of the "5."

Based upon the known authentic postmarks of Saratoga Springs, I would conclude that the Ferrarity is a genuine cover postmarked there by Postmaster Marvin insofar as the c.d.s. and magenta "5" are concerned. There is no evidence to support the use of the two markings on the attached piece of paper at Saratoga Springs; the evidence is negative.

Saratoga Springs was a favorite summer camping ground of the Mohawk Indians long before whites settled in the area. The first hotel was built in 1771, and the town has been a resort ever since. It is the site of a famous race track as well as the locale which originated "Saratoga chips," more commonly known as potato chips. Other than serving as a resort area, the primary business of the town for many years has been bottling its famed mineral water.

Union Hall Hotel

Union Hall Hotel was built by Gideon Putnam around 1802 as "Putnam's Tavern" and run by him and his heirs under the Union Hall name until 1849.

Ownership changed at that point, and a third management group under Major Leland took over in 1864, renaming it the Grand Union Hotel. In 1876 the hotel was enlarged and modernized to become the largest and best-equipped hotel in the world at the time, with more than a mile of promenade porches, mostly around a garden court. It survived for 150 years--until 1952!

There are a number of examples of Union Hall hotel markings. Lot 99 in the 3rd Edward S. Knapp sale held at Parke-Bernet on March 5-6, 1942, contained 43 covers and 91 reference pieces from hotels in Saratoga Springs. Five were from Union Hall Hotel, including both red (purple-brown) and blue small oval, double-lined handstamps such as the one on the Ferrarity cover. Examples are also known from the Siegel collection offered by that firm through private treaty and subsequently sold through the Frajola auction No. 1 on June 13, 1981. Other examples are in the Ben Newman collection. An example in blue on a 5-cent 1847 cover dated August 11 sold as lot 3283 at the March 5, 1991, Kelleher sale of Rust material offered as the "Sierra Madre" collection.

The reference example accompanying the Ferrarity bears a manuscript "Paid/Union Hall." It is a July 1, 1846, cover, and the manuscript was applied by a clerk bearing the initials "A.S.," as confirmed by a cover in the same hand with a July 7, 185-, postmark, a handstamp "PAID" and a manuscript "3" from the 1851-55 period (Figure 3). That cover, from the Siegel collection, sold as lot 456 in the first Frajola sale. It establishes that manuscript notations exist from 1846 into the 1850s, applied by the same person.

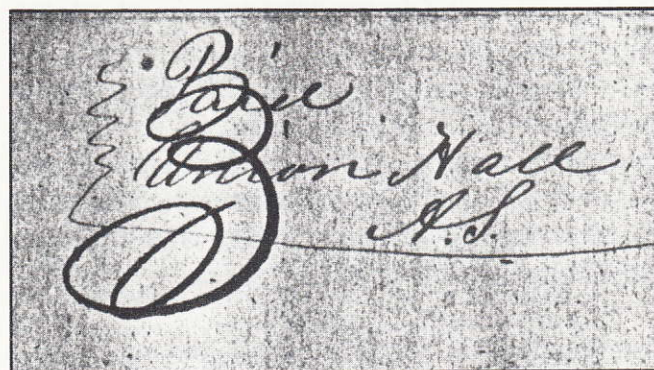


Fig. 3. A manuscript notation on a Union Hall Hotel cover from the early 1850s, by a clerk with the initials A.S., confirming the nature of a similar notation on the 1846 cover in Figure 2.

The purple-brown hotel handstamp, 15 x 20 mm. double-bordered oval (sometimes reported as "red" in descriptions), is recorded on covers between September 6, 1847, in my collection (the earliest known use), and July 19, 1848. A July 1848 example on a green cover sold as lot 66 in the Robert Kaufmann sale of September 1980. I have no record of the day date. The July 19, 1848, example is addressed to Troy, N.Y., and was lot 455 in the Siegel holding sold in the first Frajola sale.

The same handstamp, in slightly darker blue than is typical of the Saratoga Springs markings of the period, is recorded between July 28, 1848 (lot 454 in the first Frajola sale, ex-Siegel, and now in the Ben Newman holding), and sometime in 1849. The strike on the Ferrarity is dated "AUG/10," one day before the "Sierra Madre" cover, and would seemingly date from 1848, based upon the sequence of uses. I have been unable to document a blue example used prior to the purple-browns and can't even find an overlapping date copy.

Analysis

The only literature reference I can find on the subject of a possible Saratoga Springs provisional stamp is an article by Robson Lowe in the August 1989 *Chronicle of the U.S. Classic Postal Issues* (No. 143). On pages 172-3 he reports the two Ferrari items and terms the one a postmaster provisional. (The accompanying typed insert regarding Warren Colson gives a second major authority as supporting the possibility.) Mr. Lowe's line of reasoning has three elements: 1) the shade of the blue on the "adhesive" is the same as that of the Saratoga Springs c.d.s.; 2) if the hotel handstamp arrived after July 1, 1846 (the date of the manuscript "Paid/Union Hall" piece accompanying it), there was time for a provisional use; and 3) the stampless cover is addressed to someone at Howard's Hotel in New York, which is known to have had a receiving station for the New York City Despatch Post, which did carry mail from Troy down to New York.

In examining the Ferrarity under ultraviolet light, I cannot agree with Mr. Lowe that the shades of the

"PAID" and "5" are the same as in the c.d.s. To my eye they are distinctly different colors with the one on the "adhesive" being closer to the darker blue of the hotel handstamp. Regarding the second point, while it is true that if the hotel shifted from manuscript to handstamp, there might be time for a provisional Saratoga Springs cover in 1846, the existence of the manuscript hotel marking in the same hand used in the 1850's shows that the notation was not regarded as a typical hotel origin mark, but as a notation by a hotel clerk to the recipient that the cover had been prepaid.

The Union Hall manuscript cover addressed to someone at Howard's Hotel in New York is the only example I record of this type of use. Neither the Ferrarity nor any of the other Union Hall covers are used in such a fashion. I regard it as an interesting use and interesting observation but without weight in evaluating the genuineness of the Ferrarity.

The negative evidence which leads me to condemn this Ferrarity stems from the fact that 1) Saratoga Springs is not known to have used a handstamp rate mark before late 1849, 2) the earliest documented (and previously unlisted) hotel handstamp from the Union Hall Hotel is from the fall of 1847--after the period of possible provisional use, 3) the date sequence of Union Hall handstamps indicates that the blue followed the purple-brown rather than preceded it, and 4) there is a lack of a shade match between the markings on the paper stuck on the Ferrarity by sealing wax and the c.d.s. The key element is the dating. My conclusion is that someone took an unusual stampless cover (particularly unusual at the time Ferrari was buying) and cut out part of a postmark from another stampless and applied it using sealing wax. The cut-out was not from Saratoga Springs and probably not from a New York State stampless cover. The style is actually one associated with the late stampless era. ❖

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