

PACIFICA

New Hebrides

The Alavoine forgery of the 1910 French provisionals

by Martin Treadwell

It is well-known that a Sydney jeweller, one Alavoine, made a fake canceller in about the 1930s, mimicking the French PCH Type 5 cancel. Hals and Collas illustrated a partial strike as *Type 9u* (p.158). Oddly, little else seems to be known about Alavoine and I have, as yet, found no mention of him in Sydney records.

The cancel he made is usually dated 16 November 1911, and it is easily recognised - particularly by the malformed "P" of "Port". Compared with the genuine strike of the same date, one can see:



Examples of the Alavoine fake

Genuine

Note the deformed "P", the stubby "N" of "Nelles" and the small (and out-of-true) dash next to the "s" of "Hebrides". Such bogus strikes are found on various stamps, including (incredibly) the 1897 ANH Co locals and stamps of Victoria.

Sheryl Ruecker has kindly provided a copy of a strike dated ?? Nov 21, illustrated here. Of course, even a 1921 cancel is suspicious when it appears on a 1924 stamp.



Recently, some new Alavoine fakes have come to light. Instead of cancels, however, they are forgeries of the 1910 French provisional overprints. It is reasonable to attribute them to Alavoine because they are accompanied by strikes of his fake cancel. If he did not make them himself then, at the very least, they were made in collusion with him.

The overprint is poor and the ten examples I have acquired suggest that he may have been trying to make 'varieties'. Certainly, two of them have curious 'extra lines' of illegible overprint and others have the word "Condominium" almost completely missing.



Fake overprint...



... and fake cancel...



... and only a trace of
"Condominium"

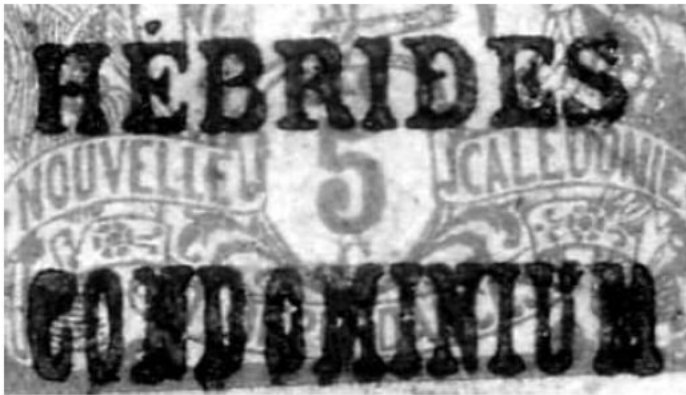


Extra 'lines' of overprint

The technical wizardry of Roland Klinger enables me to demonstrate the genuine overprint (the darker one) superimposed on top of the fake, to illustrate the heaviness of the fake.



The fake overprint is easily distinguished with the aid of a magnifying glass. Apart from the thickness of the letters and the poor quality, consistent differences include:



1. "H" - the cross bar of the "H" is a circular blob, not a straight line.
2. "É" - the acute accent is much shorter than on the genuine overprint.
3. "D" - the "D" has a flaw which protrudes into the centre of the letter.
4. "M" - the final "M" is missing the serif at the top of the last leg.

I know of five covers dated 16 November 1911. Three are genuine, with two addressed to England and one to Australia. Another is addressed to "Maison Ballande, Noumea" and bears the ANHCo 1d. It is so ridiculous a contrivance that Jim Crompton has quite properly stamped it as a fake, so as to remove it from circulation. The fifth cover is mentioned by Hals and Collas at p.55 - recorded as bearing the entire SFNH set. Given that they were issued in 1903, the probability of it being another Alavoine fake is high.

I have not seen the fake 1910 overprints on cover yet but one suspects they are out there ...!



The ANHCo cover certified by Jim Crompton as a fake.