

New Hebrides

Fakes, Forgeries, Imitations, Phantoms and Leaps in the Dark

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The Alavoine Type 5CU

Quoting the PISC Cancellation Study:



TYPE 5CU. {9U} PORT VILA/NELLES HEBRIDES

A Sydney jeweller, Alavoine, is credited with having made forgeries of No 5, sold through a dealer some 50 years ago. It has a malformed "P" in "PORT" and other discrepancies such as small "N" and "S" in NELLES and joined letters. It was used in N. Hebrides stamps, also those of Fiji, N.S.W., Victoria, Queensland and on the locals.

A very good means of recognising this forgery are the little dashes at the LA of VILA. They do not follow the circle of the inner dashes but are bent inward a little. Of course the malformed "P" is the main attribute of this cancel.

Here are two examples:



The comparison of the P of PORT VILA is the easiest way to distinguish the correct cancel (P at left) and the Alavoine cancel (P at the right side).



Here is another example:

Fiji 1d decorated with the Alavoine fake.

This "cancel" can also be found on stamps of New South Wales, Queensland, Victoria and France.



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If the collector does not know this fake it can be dangerous. Here, Maison Ballande was a well-known house of commerce in the South Seas, so covers like this one seem to have all the signs of authenticity.



This is a rare example of the Alavoine forgery on a larger piece of paper. Most examples of this forgery are recorded on single stamps.

Addendum from Martin Treadwell: Note the care he went to here. The handwriting is of the right style for the period and the stamp is 'carelessly' placed over the name, as if the cover-maker was simply putting together a routine letter. Of course, the ANHCo stamp (11 years too late) and the Alavoine fake cancel expose the whole cover as a forgery.

We hesitated to call this forgery the "Alavoine forgery". This designation has been used since the times of Hals and Collas' (1) publication but we were not able to locate a Sydney jeweller named Alavoine in Sydney archives. Sometimes information was passed on from one publication to the other and was never carefully checked. Remember the total quantity of the inverted 1d and 5d overprints noted in auction catalogues. Perhaps one of our Australian members has the chance to put this Alavoine information to the acid test.

(1):

The New Hebrides
Their Postal History and Postage Stamps
Nathan Hals, New York
Phil Collas, Melbourne
Collectors Club Handbook No. 20, New York, 1967

Fakes of the French 1910 Overprint

The reason why one should fake the cheap values of the 1910 French series is not clear. Maybe someone did this for training reasons – maybe Alavoine himself. Evidently, he often attempted to place the cancel so that the malformed P was not so evident.



Here are six other versions of the 1908 or 1910 version of the overprint. We think they are not dangerous for the collector who knows how the originals appear.



Martin Treadwell added: The sure way to spot these fakes is to look closely at the "D" of HEBRIDES. It has a little spur protruding into the centre. For the fakes with the word CONDOMINIUM, the final "M" is also missing the serif at top right.

We want to thank Martin Treadwell for kindly giving us these images.