

The United States Philatelic Classics Society, Inc.

Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Rare Natal Cover Found Among S.C.R.A.P. Sharp-eyed collector spots misclassification

January 3, 2005...The U.S. Philatelic Classics Society (USPCS) today announced that a rare postal history item – the front address panel of an 1857 folded letter from the British colony of Natal – was discovered misclassified among the Society's S.C.R.A.P. collection of fake or fraudulent items. The front has received an expert opinion of "genuine" from a British expertizing service and will be offered for sale in an auction in London this Spring.

The Natal cover front, (SCRAP #93-100-02) dates from 1857 and was mailed from Durban on the East Coast of South Africa, to Pietermaritzburg, approximately 40 miles inland. It is franked with two copies of the unwatermarked 3d rose embossed stamp of 1857-61. Each stamp is cancelled with a small "x" in pen. The receiver of the letter noted on the face that it was received on April 5, 1857. At the time, Natal was a separate British Crown Colony.

The item was originally donated by long time and now deceased USPCS member Scott Gallagher in 1993. Gallagher was the first Administrator of the Stamp & Cover Repository & Analysis Program (S.C.R.A.P.), serving in that capacity from the program's inception in 1978 until 1993.

The cover resided undisturbed in the S.C.R.A.P. reference collection until September 2003 when a collector living in Atlanta, Georgia, saw it on the USPCS web site as a result of a web search for Natal covers and stamps. The collector contacted the Society, as he was familiar with this particular correspondence and believed our cover might in fact be genuine. He suggested the Society send it to B.P.A. Expertising Limited in the UK for an opinion.

After getting permission from the then Society President, Pat Walker, the cover was submitted to this organization. In February 2004, the B.P.A. gave it a clean opinion and issued certificate number 61,862 so stating that it is genuine. Walker reported the matter at the Society's 2004 annual meeting and agreement was reached to place the item back in the philatelic community.

Eventually, Tim Hirsch of the well-known British auction house of Spink agreed to sell it on behalf of the Society at its upcoming March 2005 British Empire auction. The cover was forwarded to them to execute its sale. The cover is conservatively estimated at £500 to £700. Information about the auction is available from Spink at www.spink.com.

About the Classics Society

The U.S. Philatelic Classics Society, Inc. is the premier organization for the study of the postal issues and postal history from the Stampless Era up to the Bureau Issues of the late 19th century. The society is the successor of "The Three Cent 1851-57 Unit" (Unit Number 11) of the American

Philatelic Society. Our members include both collectors and students. Many have written articles that have been published in our award winning quarterly magazine, *The Chronicle*, and in other publications. Information about the USPCS, membership, its publications, and articles of interest to collectors and students of the classic period of U.S. philately, can found at the society's website at www.uspcs.org.

High resolution color scans of the Natal cover front and the B.P.A. Expertising Certificate are available at the following links:

<http://www.uspcs.org/publicity/9310002.jpg>

<http://www.uspcs.org/publicity/9310002C.jpg>

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