



Lot 1
Front and Back

Alexandria, District of Columbia (or Virginia)

Lot 1

5c Black on Buff, Type II with 39 Ornaments (1X1a). Uncancelled (no gum), cut to circular shape as are all recorded examples of the Alexandria provisional stamp, rosette ornaments are complete or mostly complete, signed on back “*L. W. Durbin/ July 1879*” by Leonidas W. Durbin, the Philadelphia stamp dealer who bought this stamp from the discoverer in July 1879, small “W.H.C.” handstamp applied on back by Warren H. Colson, completely sound

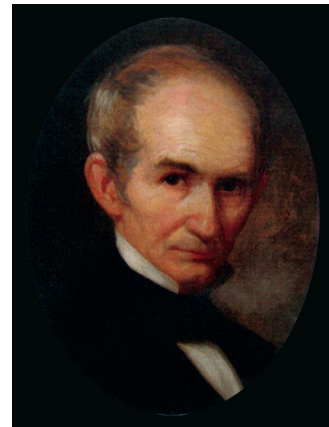
VERY FINE. ONE OF SIX RECORDED EXAMPLES OF THE ALEXANDRIA POSTMASTER'S PROVISIONAL ON BUFF PAPER, OF WHICH THREE ARE TYPE I (SCOTT 1X1) AND THREE ARE TYPE II (SCOTT 1X1a). THIS UNCANCELLED STAMP IS THE BASIS OF THE SCOTT CATALOGUE LISTING FOR AN UNUSED ALEXANDRIA PROVISIONAL. ONE OF THE GREAT RARITIES OF UNITED STATES PHILATELY AND OFFERED AT AUCTION FOR THE FIRST TIME SINCE THE 1922 FERRARY SALE.

Census No. 1X1a-COV(UNC)-01. Ex Pickett, Durbin (signed on back “*L.W. Durbin/ July 1879*”), Ferrary and Lapham. Small “W.H.C.” backstamp (Warren H. Colson). With 2011 P.F. certificate. Scott values are \$100,000.00 for an unused Type II and \$200,000.00 for Type I or II on cover. Estimate \$75,000-100,000

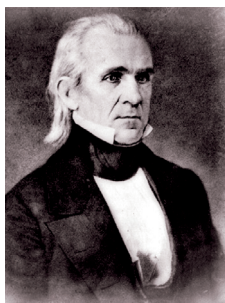
History of Alexandria and Its Postmaster

Alexandria postmaster Daniel Bryan was born in Virginia around 1789 (reports vary) and died on December 22, 1866. Bryan served briefly in the Virginia Senate and was subsequently appointed postmaster by President James Monroe, commencing his term on April 1, 1821. He served as Alexandria's postmaster for 33 years under seven administrations and nine presidents. Bryan was re-appointed in 1853, but resigned his position in April to become Librarian of the Treasury Department.

The major Potomac River port city of Alexandria was originally part of Virginia, but became part of the District of Columbia in 1791. During the period when Postmaster Bryan's provisional stamps were in use, Alexandria was ceded back to Virginia. Retrocession took effect in three steps between July 1846 and March 1847. The first step occurred when the legislative campaign by retrocession advocates resulted in a favorable vote by the U.S. Congress on July 9, 1846. According to Post Office Department records, Alexandria technically became a Virginia post office on this date, although Bryan continued to use the “D.C.” postmark, and two further steps were required to complete the retrocession. On September 1 and 2, 1846, retrocession was voted upon by the white male citizens of Alexandria County (insane persons and paupers excluded), and they voted 763 to 222 in favor. On September 7, 1846, President



Daniel Bryan (c.1789-1866)
Alexandria Postmaster 1821-1853
Courtesy The Lyceum, Alexandria, Virginia,
Gift of Peter Lawrence and Family



President James K. Polk

James K. Polk proclaimed the retrocession in full force and effect. However, it was not until March 13, 1847, that the Virginia General Assembly formally accepted the territory of Alexandria (<http://alexandriava.gov> and May Day Taylor, “The Alexandria Blue Boy,” *The American Philatelist*, May 2006). Examples of the Alexandria provisional are dated from May 1846 to November 1847, during the three-step process of Alexandria’s retrocession from the District of Columbia to Virginia.

The Alexandria Provisional Stamps

The Alexandria provisional stamps were printed from a two-subject typeset form on Buff and Blue papers. The two settings differ slightly and are catalogued as two types: Type I has 40 ornaments (called rosettes or stars) arranged in a circle, and Type II has 39 ornaments. Type I (40 rosettes) shows gaps between the asterisks and the two letter A’s at the beginning and end of “Alexandria.” Type II (39 rosettes) does not have these gaps. The six recorded stamps printed on Buff paper are evenly divided into Type I (Scott 1X1) and Type II (Scott 1X1a). Only one example on Blue paper has been recorded — the famous Alexandria “Blue Boy” provisional on cover — and it is Type I (40 rosettes).



Type I at left has 40 ornaments in circle and gaps between the asterisks and two letter A’s
Type II at right has 39 ornaments in circle and no space between asterisks and letters



Edgar Snowden (1810-1875)
Publisher of *The Alexandria Gazette* and believed to be the printer of the Alexandria provisional stamps

The identity of the Alexandria stamps’ printer has not been documented, but is presumed to be Edgar Snowden (1810-1875), publisher of *The Alexandria Gazette*, whose office at 310 Prince Street was just a short distance from Bryan’s post office at 400 Prince Street. The *Gazette* was founded by his father, Samuel Snowden, a native of New Jersey who moved to Alexandria in 1800. Samuel published the paper until his death in 1831, when his sons took over, but Edgar eventually assumed control. Trained as a lawyer, Edgar was a Whig and an advocate for an industrialized South. In 1836, while still editor of the newspaper, he was elected to the City Council.

He was elected mayor of Alexandria on March 6, 1840, and served until 1843. Edgar used the family newspaper to advocate many causes, especially retrocession of Alexandria back to Virginia in 1846. After retrocession Edgar was elected as a Whig to represent the city in the Virginia House of Delegates (Michael Lee Pope, October 17, 2005, at <http://www.connectionnewspapers.com>).



The Alexandria Gazette

Discovery of Frelinghuysen's Alexandria Provisional Stamp

The Alexandria in this sale is the second example of an Alexandria provisional to be discovered. In 1872, while searching through family papers, John K. Tiffany (1843-1897) found the first Alexandria (Type I on Buff) on the cover-front addressed to Bartholomew Cranston (Census No. 1X1-COVF[UNC]-01). Seven years after Tiffany's discovery, the stamp offered here was found by Theodore J. Pickett and



John K. Tiffany (1843-1897)
First to discover an
Alexandria provisional



Leonidas W. Durbin
(1849-1887)

Courtesy Herbert A. Trenchard

reported by him in a letter to the editor in the August 1879 edition of *The Philatelic Monthly*. This journal was published in Philadelphia by Leonidas W. Durbin (1849-1887), an early dealer in stamps and postal stationery. He was partnered with Rudolphus R. Bogert (1842-1907) in the firm of Bogert & Durbin, but Durbin died young at age 38. A glowing contemporary description of Durbin's business was published in the 1886 *Pennsylvania Historical Review Gazetteer, Post-Office, Express and Telegraph Guide: City of Philadelphia: Leading Merchants and Manufacturers*:

To the admirer of the unique, to the antiquary, the student and the historian, no place in Philadelphia possesses more interest than the admirably-conducted establishment of Mr. L. W. Durbin, importer of foreign stamps and publisher of albums, books, etc., Fifth and Library streets. Here the collector of stamps, and the student of works on philately, can find stamps gathered from the four quarters of the planet, among which are the rarest and most varied selections to be found in one collection, perhaps, anywhere. Mr. Durbin also publishes books relating to stamps, and albums to mount them, besides importing postage stamps and cards from all nations, for collections and commercial purposes. This



Advertising card for L. W. Durbin, "Foreign Stamp Importer and Publisher" in Philadelphia

keen intelligence, close discrimination and tremendous energy which have always characterized the management of the business being among the chief elements contributing to his well-deserved and unequivocal success. The premises occupied are spacious and commodious and very tastefully fitted up, and an exceedingly fine and admirably assorted stock is carried. Personally, Mr. Durbin, who is a native of Indiana, is a man of courteous and pleasing manners, of wide and extensive knowledge of men and things, and of the highest integrity, and all who can fully appreciate the patience, assiduity, foresight and intelligence essential to produce such results will heartily congratulate him on the eminent success that has attended his ability and enterprise.

Pickett's August 1879 letter describes his discovery of two rare provisionals. The first was a Baltimore 5c, which he found in a "dusty pigeon hole in an old desk." The second was the Alexandria, about which Pickett wrote:

It, too, was permitted to lie hidden in dust and cobwebs until brought to light by accident. It was on a document similar, in respect to size and color, to the Baltimore one. The letter is dated 'Near Alexandria, Sept. 9th, 1846.' It is post marked in red ink 'Alexandria, Va.,' but the date of the post mark cannot be made out. The stamp was affixed to the letter on the upper right hand corner within an inch and a quarter of the edge. Between the stamp and the edge is printed in red ink the word 'Paid,' and is a large figure 5 enclosed in a rectangular frame. The stamp is black on brown paper. T.J.P.

Pickett mis-read the postmark as "Va."; in fact, it is "D.C." Also, the article creates some confusion by showing a facsimile image of the Type I Alexandria, but this reproduction was not made from Pickett's stamp, which is a Type II. It is an image made from the only other Alexandria known at the time, the Tiffany Type I stamp.



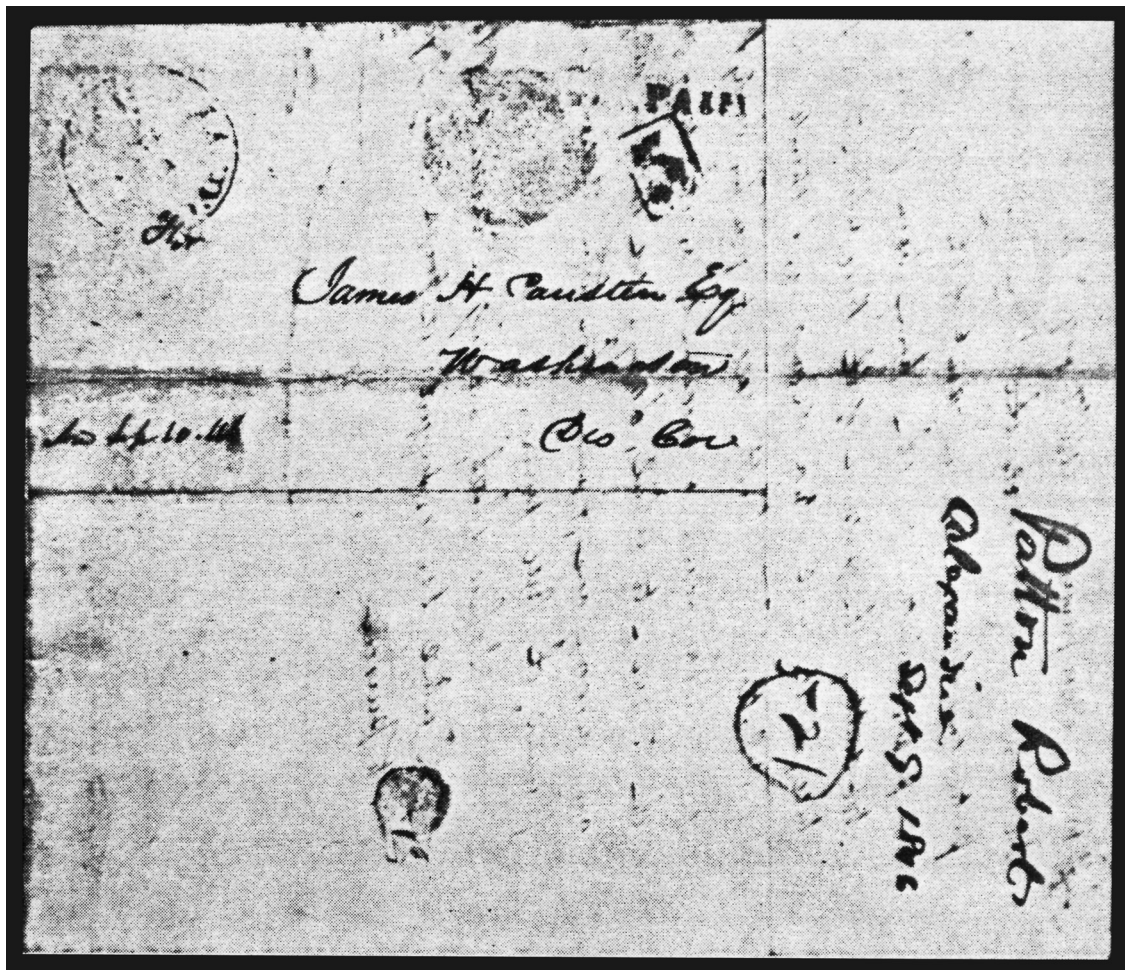
Philippe la Rénotière von Ferrary
(1850-1917)

Pickett's account of his Alexandria discovery identifies neither the writer's nor the addressee's name. He does not say exactly where he found the two provisional stamps, other than "it became necessary to look through the old desk in search of some legal documents." The Alexandria provisional stamp discovered by Pickett was removed from the letter and purchased by Durbin, who signed and dated the back of the stamp. Durbin and Bogert sold numerous rarities to the famed French collector, Philippe la Rénotière von Ferrary (1850-1917), and it is quite probable that the uncanceled Alexandria went directly to Ferrary. No mention of its whereabouts between 1879 and its appearance in the 1922 Ferrary sale has been found.

Discovery of the Long-Lost September 9th Letter

Since Ferrary preferred stamps to covers, the September 9th letter was left behind by Pickett and Durbin. Quite remarkably, in 1960 — 81 years later — the letter was found "during the course of cleaning the basement of a home in Alexandria... among dust-covered papers..." Its discovery and possible connection to the unused Alexandria stamp was reported by Charles B. Tebbs in an article titled "Who Has the Stamp?" published in the *S.P.A. Journal* (May 1964). Tebbs did not disclose who owned the letter, but he reached out to locate the stamp's owner. Nothing ever came of this effort.

Herbert A. Trenchard, an authority on the history of philately, has been kind enough to provide information about the former owner and fate of the September 9th letter with his usual razor-sharp memory. At the time Tebbs published his article, the letter was owned by George T. Turner (1906-1979). Turner's collection of District of Columbia postal history was donated to the Washington Philatelic Society, and it remained in the group's possession for years until the collection was sold at auction in 2006. The letter with a circular shadow of the removed Alexandria stamp was apparently not recognized for what it is, and it was grouped with other lesser-value stampless items. Efforts to locate the September 9th letter and reunite it with the stamp have not succeeded.



September 9, 1846, letter from Robert Patton to James H. Causten, from which the uncanceled Alexandria provisional stamp was removed in 1879 (the letter was rediscovered in 1960)

Reproduced from *S.P.A. Journal*, May 1964

The September 9th letter from which the uncanceled Alexandria stamp was removed is shown above. It was written and signed by Robert Patton, and it is addressed to "James H. Causten Esq., Washington, Dis. Col." The side panel shows Causten's receipt docketing. The circular shadow of the removed stamp is in the exact position described by Pickett and precisely matches the Ferrary-Lapham-Frelinghuysen stamp. The "L.W. Durbin/July 1879" notation on the back of the stamp eliminates any doubt that it originated on the Patton-Causten September 9, 1846, letter.

Near Alexandria
Sept. 9th 1846.

Sir,

I wrote you some days ago acknowledging the receipt of your letter dated 4th of August, (printed) directed to Mr James Patton, Alex^a. The letter was handed to me by the Postmaster, being the only relative of the late James Patton, at present in this part of the country, I have now to acknowledge John M Clayton's speech, with my thanks for the same, & will you be kind enough to write me the amt of Mr Patton's claim, and what steps you think are necessary to ensure the adjustment of the same, I shall immediately upon the receipt of it communicate with the heirs who reside in different States to act conformably with their respective obligations.

I am very Resp^{tly}
Yours Obedt Serv^t
Robert Patton
Alexandria

Direct Sept

September 9, 1846, letter written by Robert Patton
Reproduced from *S.P.A. Journal*, May 1964

The writer of the September 9th letter, Robert Patton, is probably a member of the Fairfax County family, whose descendants include General George S. Patton. The addressee, James H. Causten (1788-1874), was a member of a prominent Baltimore merchant family that traded in flour, coffee, tobacco, rice, logwood, cigars and spices. James enlisted in the U.S. Navy in the War of 1812 and served on the U.S.S. *Constellation*. After his service he became an attorney, practicing in Baltimore and then in Washington D.C. His obituary in the *Evening Star*, October 29, 1874, reads:

He was consul for the republics of Chili and Equador for a considerable period, and has been widely known for many years as the agent for the French Spoliation Claims, the payment of which he urged with eloquence and indefatigable energy, but which, just as they undoubtedly are, the country never found it convenient to pay, and he died without seeing the fruition of his long labor. Mr. Causten served as a soldier in the war of 1812, and he was one of the staunchest Union men in feeling during the late rebellion. His memory will be held in respect by all who knew him.

One of Causten's legal partners was John T. Pickett, whose son Theodore also worked for the firm. Theodore had access to its correspondence and sold the stamp to Durbin. The Causten-Pickett papers are held today by the Library of Congress.

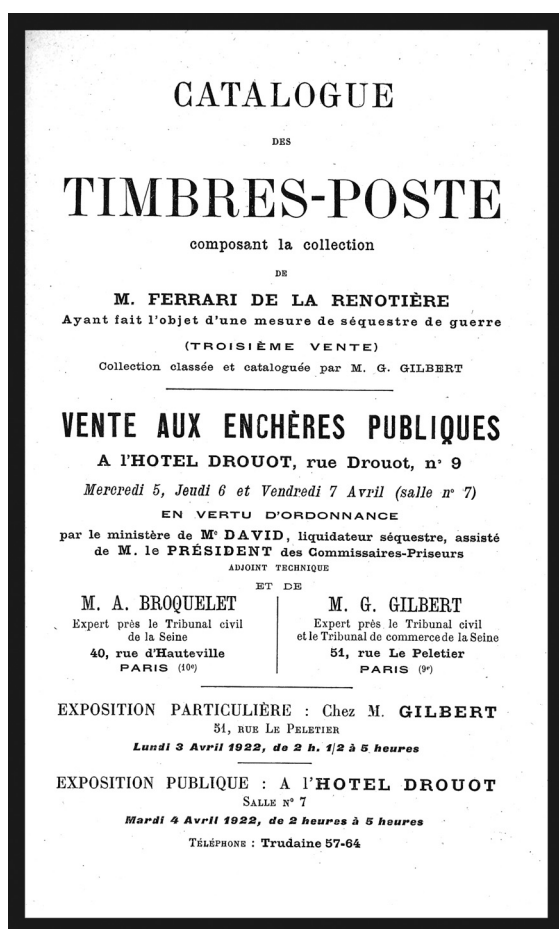


Digitally enhanced image of September 9th Patton-Causten letter with Alexandria stamp dropped into position and postal markings colored red—the current whereabouts of this letter is not known

In a remarkable case of six degrees of separation, this Alexandria provisional and one of the New Haven provisionals are both connected to James H. Causten. The New Haven entire dated October 21, 1845 (Census No. 8XU2-COV-02), addressed to Francis Markoe Jr. in Washington D.C., was contained in a group of eight letters written by Benjamin Silliman, a prominent 19th century Yale professor of science (see page 65). This group was offered and sold for ten cents to the New Jersey dealer, E. B. Sterling, in an auction held by Thos. Burch in Philadelphia on May 11-12, 1892 (lot 1435). Sterling reported his good fortune in the July 1892 edition of *The Metropolitan Philatelist*. As reported by Sterling, the Burch auction contained the autograph collection belonging to the estate of Dr. James H. Causten, Jr., the son of James H. Causten. The younger James Causten, who predeceased his father in 1856 at age 38, was a collector and translator of manuscripts. Therefore, by pure coincidence, James H. Causten Sr. received a letter in 1846 bearing a rare Alexandria provisional, which was found among the firm's legal papers by Theodore J. Pickett in 1879. At another point in time, his son James Jr. (or someone in his family) obtained a rare New Haven provisional entire during the course of collecting manuscripts. However, apparently none of the Caustens recognized the significance of their philatelic possessions.

Sale History of the Alexandria Stamp

The Alexandria stamp discovered by Pickett and sold to Durbin did not appear in public again until it was offered in the April 7, 1922, auction of Ferrary's collection (Gilbert sale 3, lot 536). In that sale it realized FFr 60,000 plus 17.5% government surtax, for a total of \$6,430 in U.S. dollars at the quoted exchange rate (one franc = 9.12 cents). This was the auction in which the unique British Guiana One-Cent Magenta sold for FFr 300,000 (\$32,148 with surtax). The Pickett-Durbin discovery stamp, Ferrary's only example of an Alexandria provisional, sold to Warren H. Colson, who acted as agent for Alfred H. Caspary and Henry G. Lapham in the third Ferrary



Title page from Gilbert auction catalogue for Sale 3 of the Ferrary collection, held in Paris on April 5-7, 1922

sale. Arthur Hind, the other major American buyer in the sale (and the buyer of the British Guiana One-Cent), was represented by Hugo Griebert.

In February 1922, just two months before the third Ferrary sale, the other titan of American philately, Henry C. Gibson (1885-1987), sold his Postmasters' Provisionals collection privately (Philip H. Ward, *Mekeel's*, March 11, 1922), which explains why he was not a contender for Ferrary's provisionals. The majority of Gibson's provisional items went to Lapham and Caspary (it was Caspary who acquired the "Blue Boy" cover at this point). The Pickett-Durbin-Ferrary Alexandria stamp in the Gilbert auction was bought by Lapham, who exhibited the stamp at the Collectors Club of New York on April 4, 1928, in his display of United States Postmasters' Provisionals. Henry Lapham later transferred ownership of his collection to his son, Raymond W. Lapham, who was the exhibitor of record at the 1936 Third International Philatelic Exhibition

(TIPEX) in New York City. Lapham's five frames of Postmasters' Provisionals, including the ex-Ferrary Alexandria, won the Grand Award at TIPEX, the first time a United States collection won an international grand award.

Sometime after Henry G. Lapham died on December 13, 1939, Colson started selling items from the Lapham collection. When Colson died in 1963 he still had Lapham items on consignment under the code name "Benson." The Alexandria and other Postmasters' Provisional rarities from the Lapham collection were sold to Frelinghuysen, but the identity of the buyer was kept secret, even from Colson's close friend and eventual philatelic executor, John R. Boker Jr. The fascinating history of Colson's career and Lapham's collecting legacy was told by Boker in his article, "Warren H. Colson of Boston — His Stamps; With Extensive Notes on the Henry G. Lapham Collections and 'Asides' About Alfred H. Caspary" (1989 *Congress Book*). However,



Henry G. Lapham (1875-1939)

Colson and his estate attorney took measures to protect the identity of Colson's past clients and what they sold or purchased. Even Boker was not privy to that information. Regarding the portions of Lapham's Postmasters' Provisionals sold by Colson to Frelinghuysen, Boker wrote (in 1989): "I do not know if this lot [New York provisionals] had been sold to one or two collectors, nor do I know if it contained the block of six on cover mentioned in an article I read [lot 86 in this sale]. I have no knowledge of the whereabouts of this block or the major portion of the collection." Colson, even after death, had successfully protected Frelinghuysen's identity. As Boker wrote, Colson "could keep confidences."



Warren H. Colson (1882-1963)

Another well-respected authority on Postmasters' Provisionals, Philip T. Wall, was also unaware that the Ferrary-Lapham stamp had been sold to Frelinghuysen after Henry Lapham's death ("The Alexandria Postmaster's Provisional Stamps," *Chronicle* 117, February 1983). Wall also disputed Tebbs' claim that the Ferrary-Lapham Alexandria originated on the Patton-Causten September 9th letter discovered by Pickett in 1879, on the basis that the August 1879 *Philatelic Monthly* article pictured a Type I Alexandria, while the Ferrary-Lapham stamp was a Type II ("The Alexandria Cover with the Missing Provisional," *Chronicle* 118, May 1983). At the time of writing, Wall could not have known that the Ferrary-Lapham stamp is signed and dated 1879 on the back by Durbin. Had he known this fact, Wall would have realized that the *Philatelic Monthly* facsimile was made from the only other Alexandria stamp known at the time, the Type I stamp discovered seven years earlier by Tiffany.

To clear up one last bit of confusion and misinformation about this example of the Alexandria provisional, the L. N. Williams census published in the *Encyclopaedia of Rare and Famous Stamps: The Biographies* pictures the wrong stamp under the Williams No. II listing for the Ferrary-Lapham copy. The stamp pictured is actually the one on the cover listed as Williams No. IV. Williams was also unaware that the uncanceled Ferrary-Lapham stamp originated on the Patton-Causten September 9th letter, and he reported incorrect information about its ownership history, since he did not know about the Frelinghuysen collection. Williams' 1968 and 1970 entries attributing ownership to Raymond H. Weill should be deleted.