

An Internet Adventure – How I Identified the Cuban FRCo Perfin

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The Cuban **FRCo** perfin was identified without a cover as belonging to **Ferrocarriles Consolidados** by Silvia Garcia Frutos in *The Cuban Philatelist*, 2002.⁽¹⁾ It was made as a statement of fact, but no proof was offered. Half a year later, it was identified as **Frank Robins Company** without a cover or other verification by Fernández and Díaz.⁽²⁾ Which is it? In the subsequent decade, no one has shown any proof for either conjecture.

I set about a search for the answer. Nobody had come up with a cover with a corner card of a company to prove who was right about the perfin ownership. Here is what got me started: Rudy Roy (#1124) emailed me indicating he had three apparently unauthorized uses of **FRCo** perfins on postcards. One of these is shown below in Figure 1. To see all three, go to: <http://www.cubafil.org/MemberPages/RRoy/FRCo.html>.

[Editor's Note: The highlights of this article are also reported on this web page for the benefit of the entire Cuban philatelic community.]

All three were written by a "R.W.C", "Dad", and "Ralph" to his sons and to his mother, Rachel Crain, in Augusta, Illinois. The postcards were dated from 1922 to 1924. My job, as I now saw it, was to see if there was any connection between Ralph W. Crain and either Ferrocarriles Consolidados or the Frank Robins Company.

Internet searches led me to a Ralph W. Crain who lived in Havana. One search led me to the fact of his death in Arlington, VA. I Googled "Arlington, VA, Ralph W. Crane" and hit pay dirt – his obituary. The part that helped me was:

After attending Gem City Business College in Quincy, Ralph accepted a position with the **Remington Typewriter Co.** in Salina, Kansas. On June 7, 1905 Ralph was married to Sadie Thelma Caddick of Quincy, Illinois. They made their first home in Topeka, Kansas. In 1906 Ralph was transferred to Mexico City where Remington was opening their first agency in a Spanish speaking country. Two years later, they sent him to Havana, Cuba, where he remained as representative of the company for 23 years. Since 1932 he has made his home in Arlington, Virginia . . .⁽³⁾

Then I Googled "Remington Typewriter Frank

Robins Havana" and found a 1921 *Printer's Ink* publication which stated the following:

An advertising agency has been organized at Havana, Cuba, under the name of the Cuba-America Advertising Service, Ltd. **Harold V. Rose** has been appointed director of this agency. He was recently advertising manager of the **Frank Robins Company**, importer, of Havana... The agency is handling the advertising in Cuba of the Burroughs Adding Machine Company, **Remington Typewriter Company** . . .⁽⁴⁾

Look at the picture side of Ralph's postcard. You will see where he drew an arrow pointing to a place in Havana stating "Mr. Rose lives here". They must have been close friends for Ralph to mention him in a letter to his sons.



Figure 1
Postcard from Havana, Cuba, with "FRCo" perfin.
(Approximately 70% of actual size.)

How I Identified Cuban FRCo Perfin (cont.)

This was a link, however tenuous, from the sender of the cards, Ralph W. Crain, to the Frank Robins Company. Would it end there? No. Now comes the good part.

In the course of the web search I landed on some genealogical pages which are maintained by distant relatives of Ralph W. Crain. I emailed the contact person. Within the hour I received a very nice reply from a gentleman who was indirectly related to Ralph. He enclosed a scan of a picture of Ralph, ca. 1910, with wife and two children whose ages appeared to be around 5 and 6 years old. Also included was a passport renewal application from 1918.

In that application, signed by Ralph W. Crain, he states that: "my legal domicile is in Huntsville, Ill. (P.O. Augusta), my permanent residence being at Havana, and I last left the United States on Sept. 1917, arriving at Havana, Cuba, on Sept. 1917, where I am now residing for the purpose of conducting business on behalf of **Frank Robins Co.** agents for Burroughs Adding Machine Co., Remington Typewriter Co, etc. of U.S.A" An extract of this document is shown below in Figure 2.

This document shows his ties to Augusta, IL, which was the destination of the postcards. We now know for certain that the writer of the three postcards using Cuban **FRCo** perfins worked for **Frank Robins Co.** This is the proof needed to establish ownership of the perfins just short of having a cover with a Frank Robins corner card and perfin stamp. Isn't the Internet great?!

References:

1. García-Frutos, Silvia; "The Consolidated Railroads Perfin (FRCo) / Los Perfins de los Ferrocarriles Consolidados (FRCo)", *The Cuban Philatelist*, Second Third, 2002.
2. Fernández López, Marta Rosa and Díaz Gámez, Alfredo; "Apuntes Para un Catálogo de Sellos Cubanos con Perforaciones de Empresas" (Notes for a Catalog of Cuban Perfins), *Revista de Filatelia*, April, 2003.
3. <http://schuyler.ilgenweb.net/Obituaries/obits/rw-crain-ob.html>
4. <http://books.google.com/books?pg=RA10-PA32&lpg=RA10-PA2&dq=Remington+Typewriter+Frank+Robins+Havana&sig=yVa4Gk0XWNyJfDu9fN7OtEHPc&ei=c-UZT5uROovkkgf594ieCw&id=HRfqBTIdIyoC&ots=UCEkxqG1X6&output=text>

that my legal domicile is in Huntsville, Ill. (P.O. Augusta), my permanent residence being at Havana, and I last left the United States on Sept., 1917 arriving at Havana, Cuba, on Sept., 1917, where I am now residing for the purpose of conducting business, on behalf of Frank Robins Co. Agents for Burroughs Adding Mach. Co., Remington Typewriter Co., etc. of U.S.A.

that I have resided outside the United States at the following places for the following periods:

<u>Philippine Islands (in U.S. Army)</u>	from <u>Dec. 24, 1905</u>	to <u>July 6, 1908</u>
<u>Mexico City,</u>	from <u>Oct. 15, 1906</u>	to <u>Nov., 1908</u>
<u>Havana, Cuba</u>	from <u>Dec. 15, 1908</u>	to <u>present</u>

and that I desire to remain a citizen of the United States and intend to return thereto permanently to reside and perform the duties of citizenship within 10 {months} or when retire from business

I have not applied elsewhere for a United States passport or for consular registration and been refused.

I desire a passport for use in visiting the countries hereinafter named for the following purpose:

<u>Cuba</u>	<u>Business</u>
(Name of country.)	(Object of visit.)
<u>Cuba</u>	<u>Business</u>
(Name of country.)	(Object of visit.)

OATH OF ALLEGIANCE.

Further, I do solemnly swear that I will support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic; that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same; and that I take this obligation freely, without any mental reservation or purpose of evasion: So help me God.

Ralph W. Crain
(Signature of applicant.)

American LEGATION at HABANA, CUBA

Figure 2
Extract from microfilm of Ralph W. Crain 1918 U.S. Passport Renewal Application