When Russia created Facebook profiles of fake Americans to influence the 2016 American election, it could make up the names and biographical details. But it needed photos, too.

Now a salesman in Brazil has stepped forward to say that his own family photos were stolen to concoct the profile of “Melvin Redick,” one of many American impostors involved in the spread of Russian propaganda on Facebook and Twitter.

Last week, The New York Times featured Mr. Redick’s Facebook profile as an example of fake social media accounts that were used to attack Hillary Clinton,
promote leaked emails obtained by Russian hackers and propagate the Kremlin’s political views.

The supposed Mr. Redick was an early promoter last year of a website, DCLeaks.com, that American officials believe was created by Russian military intelligence. But The Times could find no American who fit the details he provided on Facebook.

There was no such person in Harrisburg, Pa., where Mr. Redick said he lived. The high school and college he listed had never heard of him. And when The Times asked Facebook about him — as well as other profiles that appeared to be the work of Russians — the company concluded that they were impostors and removed them from the social network.

The Times article noted that one of the Redick photos showed him sitting in a bar in Brazil. In another, a bedroom seemed to have a Brazilian-style electrical outlet. G1, the online news operation of Globo, Brazil’s biggest media conglomerate, noticed the puzzle and crowdsourced it, asking readers for help.

On Saturday, the site reproduced images The Times had taken from the Facebook page, including pictures of the man and his daughter. “Do you know these people?” the headline said.

A reader spotted the photos and recognized her son-in-law, Charles David Costacurta, 36, of the city Jundiaí in southeastern Brazil. Mr. Costacurta was suspicious at first, said Carlos Dias, a G1 reporter, but eventually agreed to meet at a television station.

The photos, Mr. Costacurta told the site, were 2014 shots of himself and his daughter, then 3, now 6, that he had posted on Facebook. He was particularly disturbed that the images had been stolen, he told G1, because he used the privacy settings on Facebook to limit access to his profile.

“I was scared, and I asked my girlfriend to take a look because I do not understand much about social networks and the internet,” Mr. Costacurta said.

Before publishing the photos, The Times tried to find their source using Google’s image search function, but nothing turned up. This suggested that they
might belong to a Brazilian Facebook user because Facebook blocks image searches of its profiles. The company declined to say whether it had searched internally and found the photos before Mr. Costacurta came forward.

For Mr. Costacurta, his cameo role in Russia’s information war appeared to be a harsh lesson in the fragile nature of privacy in an age of social media.

“We’re totally vulnerable,” he told G1. “You wonder how much security you have, right?”