

Yesterday in U.S. Stamp News: **The 1901 Pan American Expo Issue, Pt. 1**

by John F. Dunn

(From *U.S. Stamp News*, March 2001-February 2003)



A complete set of the Pan Am Expo stamps, Sc. 294-299 on First Day cover, tied by Boston, Mass., oval Registry cancels, the 2¢ entire envelope also bearing a boxed "Registered, May 1 1901, Sub-Station No. 33, P.O. Boston Mass." handstamp.

The Pan-American Exposition set was issued to celebrate the Pan-American Exposition that was held May 1-November 2, 1901 in Buffalo in 1901. The stamps were not intended to promote the show in advance of its opening. They were issued at many post offices across the country on the opening day of the Pan-Am Expo, and bear the inscription "Commemorative Series 1901" in place of the title suggested, "Pan-American Series 1901", the latter being construed by the Assistant Attorney General as an advertisement on a postage stamp and as such prohibited by law.

Meanwhile, as early as the spring of 1899 the Pan-American Exposition committee distributed large quantities of lithographed poster stamps or labels to advertise the Exposition. One of these was used as the basis for



Above, the 2001 Pan Am Expo Centennial issue, Sc. 3505, with altered reproductions of the 1¢, 2¢, 4¢ Invert and one of the promotional poster stamps.

Right, a cover with a November 27, 1899 machine cancel that ties a 2¢ Bureau issue and a Charging Bull label, also with a diamond shaped red label, lower right on which the 2001 reproduction is based.



the four 80¢ diamond-shaped stamps that are part of the 2001 Pan-Am sheet, but with “1901” in the tablets to the left and right, where “USA” and “80” appear on the new stamps.

Leading up to the Exposition, there was considerable concern about, and objection to, another exposition commemorative set on the order of the Columbians of 1893 and the Trans-Mississippi of 1898. But writing from

Washington, D.C. in the April 25, 1901 edition of *Mekeel's Weekly*, J. M. Bartels wrote:

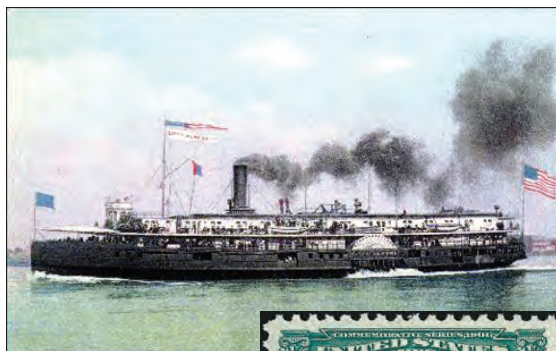
“It will not be necessary to say very much about the new Pan-American stamps in the special edition...prepared in honor of the opening of the exposition and the new issue of postage stamps, which no doubt will be considered the most beautiful set ever issued by this country, if not by the world.

“...Much as has been said against the issuing of commemorative stamps, and though the practice of issuing such stamps is to be deplored on general principles, this set will be received with open arms by collectors and the public throughout the country. Each of them had one main objection, both of which have been overcome. There will be no high denominations in the set to break the small collectors' purse and the size of the stamps is not so objectionably large as to cause much inconvenience to those whose duty it will be to affix them to mail in large quantities....”

The Designs

The set recognized advances in transportation, with each stamp featuring a different aspect of that theme.

The 1¢ stamp, Scott 294, features Fast Lake Navigation, an appropriate theme for the City of Buffalo, which is situated on Lake Erie. The design was based on a photograph of the steamer City of Alpena, which in 1901 was being operated on the Great Lakes by the Detroit and Cleveland Navigation Co.



The vignette of the stamp shows the port bow of the steamer, formerly operated on the Great Lakes by the Detroit and Cleveland Navigation Co. Note that the steamer had but one funnel, the pilot house placed well forward

and the vessel propelled by side wheels.

The central design of the 2 Cent stamp is a picture of the Empire State Express, which was operated by the New York Central and Hudson R.R. The photograph was taken by P. Yates of Syracuse, while the train was going sixty miles an hour. It depicts a train of four cars drawn by a four wheel drive locomotive. Note that there are five cars in the photograph, the stamp shows only four. (Note: for a closer view, use the pdf magnifier tool. JFD.)

The Empire State Express was selected by the Post Office Department after urgent solicitation on the part of G. H. Daniels, General Passenger Agent of the New York Central Railroad. He argued that more had been written about it than all other trains ever placed in service, and the resultant advertising had been one of the greatest factors in bringing before the world the superiority of American machinery and manufacturers. He further explained that as the Pan-American Exposition was to be held in Buffalo and the New York Central being primarily a New York institution, the Empire State Express was a logical subject to be used.

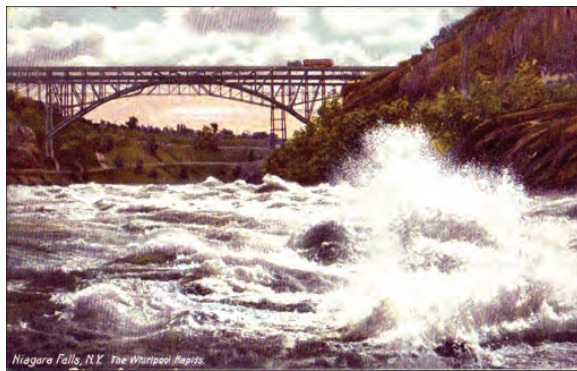
The form of transportation selected for the 4 Cent stamp was the automobile. At that time the most common type of auto was the storage battery carriage, and the one chosen for the stamp was a reproduction of one of the first electric automobiles formerly used in Washington by the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad for passenger service. The photograph shows a chauffeur on the box with Samuel P. Hege, who was Passenger Representative of the B. & O., in Washington, D.C.



"Empire State Express"—Most famous train in the world, making the daily run from New York to Buffalo (440 miles) in 495 minutes, including 4 stops and 28 slow-downs



The automobile is of the closed coach type and the background of the picture shows a part of the United States Capitol (also seen in the stamp). The illustration also had appeared in the *Royal Blue* of September 1900, a publication of the Baltimore & Ohio.



ids. This is from an actual photograph (a photo other than the one shown here) and the picture presents the largest single span steel bridge in the world. Two trolley cars are seen upon it and a view of Niagara Falls is shown in the background, with the graceful swinging bridge arch as a frame. The Canadian and American shores appear on either side.

Although it was advanced for its time, on January 27, 1938, the bridge came crashing down into the Niagara Gorge as the result of an ice jam that reached the height of 65 feet.

The 8 Cent stamp carried a view of the great ship canal locks, including their immediate surroundings, at Sault Ste. Marie, not far from Buffalo. A tug and two ore boats

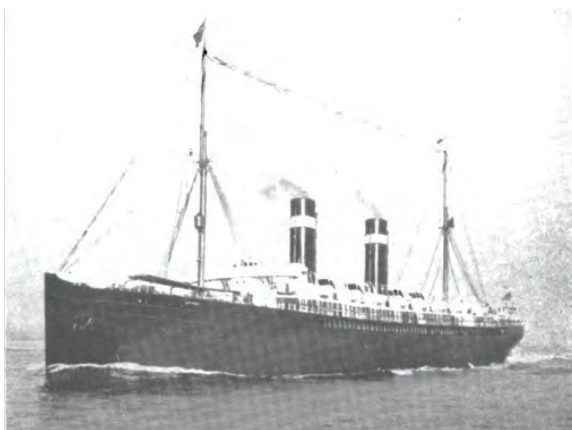


are shown in the lock. The photograph on which the stamp design was based pro-

vides a much wider view of the area.

An ocean steamship to depict fast ocean navigation was selected for the 10 Cents design. Many of the early records described the photograph on which the stamp design was based as picturing either the New York or the Paris of The American Line. But philatelic columnist Beverly S. King, who did considerable research and writing in the field of stamp designs, stated, "In checking this matter over with officials of the International Mercantile Marine Company we found that the reproduction on this stamp could not have been either the Paris or the New York as both of these liners had [angled] clipper bows and the ship on the stamp has a straight bow. In addition, both of these boats were foreign built and naturally would not have been used on a commemorative stamp of this sort to depict fast ocean travel.

"Further investigations proved that the vignette was engraved from the photograph, shown here, of the *St. Paul* of the old International Navigation Co., which had absorbed both The American and Red Star Lines. O. G. Reichelt, who as well as being connected with the International Mercantile Marine Co., is a member of the Collectors Club,





kindly furnished this photograph and upon checking the matter up for us with R. M. Hicks, Manager of the I. M. M. Washington office, received the following from him under date of April 25th, 1930:

“Referring to your letter of April 24th, regarding the 10 Cent stamp of the 1901 Pan-American Commemorative Issue, the Steamship *St. Paul* was used as a model for the engraving appearing on this stamp, but it is not an exact copy of this ship, a few minor changes having been made.’

“This was also verified through A. W. Hall, Director of the Bureau of Engraving and Printing. In addition to this David Lindsay, of the I. M. M. recalls securing this photograph for Mr. Baldwin, of the Bureau, who engraved the vignette.” [We show above a different photograph of the *St. Paul* docked, but which has a closer resemblance to the stamp design than the photo, page 6, that was described by Beverly S. King. JFD.]

The *St. Paul* was built and launched in the United States in 1895. It was taken over by the government during the Spanish-American War and was the first to go into commission as an auxiliary cruiser of the United States Navy, on April 21, 1898, one day before war was declared by the United States.

Production & Printing

All of the Pan-American Expositions stamps were designed by R. Ostrander Smith of the Bureau of Engraving and Printing. In addition to the central designs, consideration also was given to a variety of frame designs.

Shown in the left column (page 8) are examples of origi-

nal pencil sketches done for each denomination by R. Ostrand-Smith. In the right column, we have added the vignettes to give you the effect that would have been achieved with these frames.

(Note that we do not show the *St. Paul* photo from pages 6 or 7 within the oval frame of the 10¢ preliminary frame because neither of those photos would fit within that small oval. Instead, we inserted an image with a sharper angle, from an American Line poster featuring the *St. Paul*.)

In no instances were the frame designs shown here used for the stamps for which they were considered; however, with minor modifications the 2¢ frame design was adopted for the 4¢ stamp as issued.



One of the design essays for the 10¢ Pan-Am would have been a considerable departure from the rest of the set. Shown on page 8, it contained an eagle in an oval frame surrounded by American flags. According to Johl, in *The United States Commemorative Stamps of the 20th Century*, this essay with what is commonly called “American” flags was rejected because Latin and South American nations were sensitive to our use of “American” for things relating only to the U.S., and the Pan-American Expo was intended to foster goodwill among the American nations.

The Pan-Ams were the first bi-colored stamps issued by the Bureau of Engraving and Printing. As we shall see in a subsequent discussion, the same problems that previous printers had encountered with bi-color printings surfaced again with the Pan-Ams. For the moment, however, we will discuss the bi-color printing without reference to the varieties that resulted from that process.

To Be Continued

Yesterday in U.S. Stamp News: The 1901 Pan American Expo Issue, Pt. 2

by John F. Dunn (Continued from SNO January 6, 2012)
(From *U.S. Stamp News*, March 2001-February 2003)

The Plate Configuration

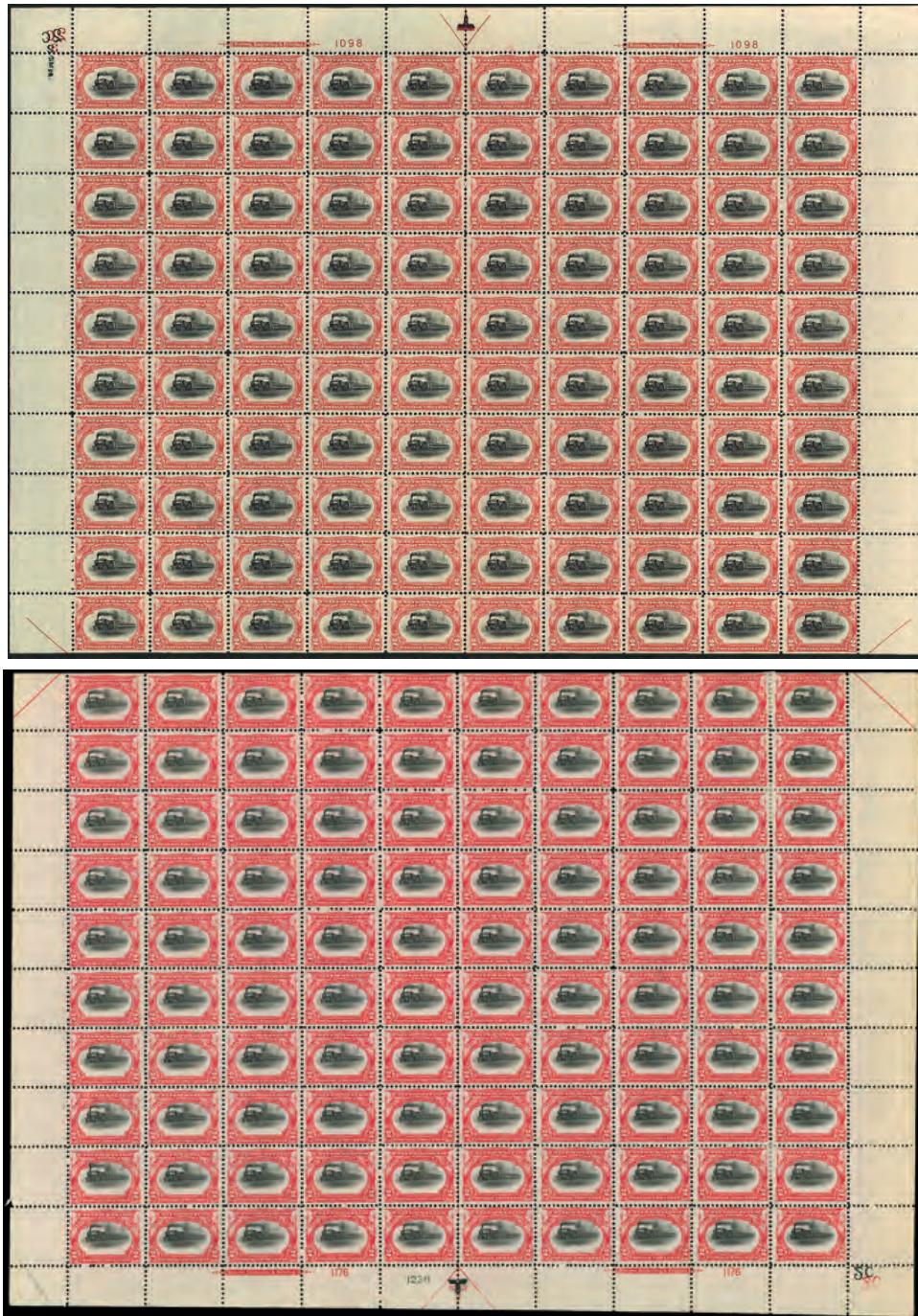
Two plates were used to print each of the Pan-Ams, one for the colored frame and the other for the black vignette. The vignette was printed first, the frame second, in a separate pass through the printing press. Plate blocks can be collected in a variety of sizes, the traditional size being a plate block of six,

which occurs two times each at the top and the bottom of the full sheets; however, the black plate number appears only once, in position 95 on the bottom pane, so the most desirable presentation is a bottom plate block of ten showing both plate numbers and the bottom arrowhead, which was printed in both colors and served as a guide in registering, or aligning, the two-color printings.



The full sheets of 200 (20 horizontal rows of 10 stamps each) were cut in half horizontally, and distributed to post offices in panes of 100 (10 x 10). The stamps are perforated 12, and no imperf errors were discovered.

Shown below is a top pane of 100 of the 2¢ value with two carmine plate numbers (1098) and no black plate



number; and a bottom pane of 100 with two carmine plate numbers (1176) and one black plate number (1230).

Note as well the full arrows at the top and bottom center; also, the half arrows at the left and right, where the full sheets of 200 were cut horizontally into top and bottom panes. Also, as a result of that cut, there are straight-edge stamps across the *bottom* of the *top* pane and across the *top* of the *bottom* pane.



Other collectible margin markings include those with the initials of the siderographer and other craftsmen who worked on the plates (above); and corner margin singles or multiples with the denomination markings in both colors.

Plates Used

A total of 22 black vignette plates and 11 green frame plates were used to print the 91,401,500 1¢ Pan-Ams (Scott 294) that were issued. The reason for this disparity is that the frame plates were engraved more deeply than the vignette plates and the fine lines of the vignette engraving broke down more frequently than the frame plates.

For the 209,759,700 2¢ Pan-Ams (Sc. 295), 36 plates were used to print the black vignette, while only 12 were needed to print the carmine frame.

Only two plates were used to print the 5,737,100 4¢ Pan-Am stamps (Sc. 296). Plate 1145 printed the brown frame and plate 1142 produced the black vignette.

Two plates were used to print all of the 5¢ Pan-Ams (Sc. 297). Plate 1140 printed the ultramarine frame and plate 1141 produced the black vignette. The BEP printed a total of 7,201,300 5¢ Pan-Ams.

Two plates were used to print all of the 8¢ Pan-Ams (Sc. 298). Plate 1150 printed the brown violet frame and plate 1143 produced the black vignette. The BEP printed a total of 4,921,700 8¢ Pan-Ams.

Two plates were used to print all of the 10¢ Pan-Ams (Sc. 299). Plate 1151 printed the yellow brown frame and plate 1144 produced the black vignette. The BEP printed a total of 5,043,700 10¢ Pan-Ams.

The Major Varieties

As noted above, the Pan-Ams were the first bi-colors since the 1869 Pictorials, and as with that previous issue, the two-pass process led to some very collectable Pan-Am varieties.



The most valuable errors are the inverts—in this instance on the 1¢ (Sc. 294a), 2¢ (Sc. 295a), and 4¢ (Sc.



296a and 296a-S with Specimen overprint) values. No inverts were discovered on the 5¢, 8¢ and 10¢ Pan-Ams.

The vignette was printed first, then the frame was later printed in a second pass through the printing press. Some collectors therefore point out that the proper description should be “inverted frames”. However, the more dramatic presentation being with the center displayed upside down, the popular terminology is “inverted centers”, and that is how they are displayed here.

While there was no question about the 1¢ and 2¢ Inverts, the major story surrounding the 4¢ Inverts is their distribution outside regular stamp issuing channels. While these inverts are listed in the General Issues section of the Scott catalogue, if they reached the public today in the same manner as in 1901, they would be regarded as proofs.

Here is how the tale was told by George Sloane in the February 27, 1937 edition of *Stamps Magazine*:

“This invert was never issued through a post office, but was created, and the first copy to reach the philatelic

market was secured early in 1902 by a New York dealer from an official of the Bureau of Engraving & Printing. It was placed in an auction and brought \$310. That auction was held on April 29, 1902 by J. M. Bartels Co. in Boston. At the time, only four stamps without 'Specimen' overprint existed; thus the \$310 realization at a time when very fine o.g. 1¢ Pan-Am Inverts were being advertised for sale at \$25.



"The stamp came about when an erroneous report reached the Post Office Department that the 4¢ had been discovered with the center inverted. On receipt of this report, the Department felt that inasmuch as the error 'already existed' it would not be amiss to have copies of the errors themselves for specimen purposes and according to the official report to President Theodore Roosevelt, issued later...two sheets (400 stamps) were printed and delivered to Edwin C. Madden, Third Assistant Postmaster-General.

"Some of these stamps were hand-stamped 'Specimen' in small type, and many copies, with and without 'Specimen' were distributed gratis to Madden's friends in the Department and elsewhere. A sheet of 100 of the stamps without the overprint went into the files of the Post Office Department for the Government collection, and 194 copies were destroyed, leaving a balance of 106 given away. The sheet of 100 retained by the Post Office Department was broken up about 1916-17, and 97 copies distributed in philatelic quarters in exchange for other material needed in the Government collection.



"In Max Johl's *The United States Postage Stamps of the 20th Century*, a letter from J. M. Bartels is reproduced, in which he states 'In reply to your inquiry regarding the sheet of inverted Pan-American 4¢ stamps...on several occasions I saw in the Stamp Division of the Post Office Department a volume containing numerous sheets of

stamps, among these was a full sheet of the inverted 4¢ Pan-American. These were stuck firmly to the pages of this volume, which is designated as part of the ‘archives of the department.’ It was stated that...they had been stuck down...to avoid the possibility of their being extracted by anyone.

“This entire volume was later turned over to the National Museum and all duplicates including the entire sheet of 100 of said 4¢ inverted were used for exchange purposes with stamp dealers and collectors. (The fact that the stamps had been stuck down explains the presence of disturbed gum on almost all of the 4¢ Pan-Am Inverts without the Specimen overprint.)”

Other Varieties

There are no other major errors. The stamps were all perforated 12 and no imperfs were discovered. Despite the two-pass printings and the inverts, there also are no color omissions—but there are vignette shifts that are sought after by collectors.

On the 1¢, the ship can be found shifted toward the



top (empty ship), bottom (full cargo, or sinking), left (fast), or right (slow). Similar shifts are found on the 2¢ (above: high, low, fast, slow) and, to a lesser extent, on the other values. (Shown, high auto.)



Other varieties include shades. These are particularly plentiful on the 2¢ because of the large number of stamps printed to meet the domestic rate.

There also are minor double transfers with minimal premium value, including a noticeable one on the 2¢ that shows a doubling of the telegraph poles.

Usages

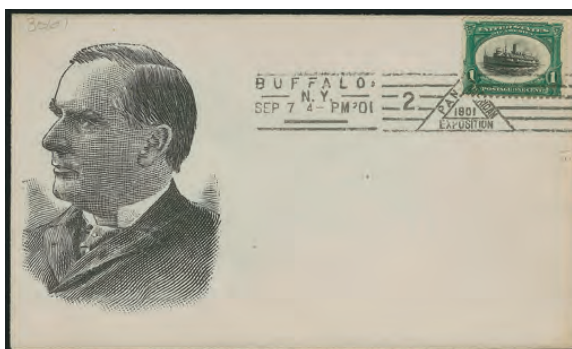
The most desirable usages are the First Day Covers. For the general collector, covers with Pan-Am Expo cancels are attainable. Even more affordable, but still scarce, are nice commercial usages, particularly singles showing the proper use for which they were primarily intended.

See page 1 (Part 1, Jan. 6, 2012) for a rare complete set FDC. Shown below and on the pages that follow are other examples of appealing Pan-American issue covers.

One of three known covers (one of which is a 1903 philatelic creation) with the 1¢ Pan-Am invert, Sc. 294a. (Note that the stamp is placed on the cover with the center inverted.) The stamp is tied by a "Bessemer Ala. Aug. 29 AM 1901" circular datestamp with duplex oval grid, to a cover addressed locally. This is the only known cover from Bessemer, which is where the first 1¢ Pan-Am inverts were discovered.



Unaddressed envelope with William McKinley cachet bearing a 1¢ Pan-A tied by a "Buffalo N.Y. Sep. 7 4-PM 1901" exposition cancel—the day after Pres. McKinley was shot and while he was still in an unsuccessful fight for his life.



1¢ Pan-Am tied by “Buffalo N.Y. Oct. 13, 1901” exposition machine cancel on McKinley picture postcard to Syracuse N.Y., with a “Held for Postage/Pan-Am. Station” two-line handstamp. A Syracuse cancel also ties the stamp.



A pair of the 1¢ Pan-Am tied by Buffalo Oct. 18, 1901 circular date stamp and grid cancels to a cover picturing the Manufactures and Liberal Arts Building at the exposition.



1¢ Pan-Am tied by a “1901” undated Exposition Flag machine cancel to a Larkin Soap Co. advertising cover.



2¢ Pan-Am (Sc. 295) with vignette shifted upward, tied by Buffalo N.Y. May 1, 1901 Pan-American Expo First Day machine cancel on a multicolored Exposition cover picturing Buffalo atop the western hemisphere. The cover also bears three different expo labels, one of which is tied to the cover by the FD cancel.



May 1, 1901 FDC cancelled in Seattle, Washington, with National Association of Letter Carriers cachet and manuscript "This first letter cancelled in Seattle office with Pan American stamp".



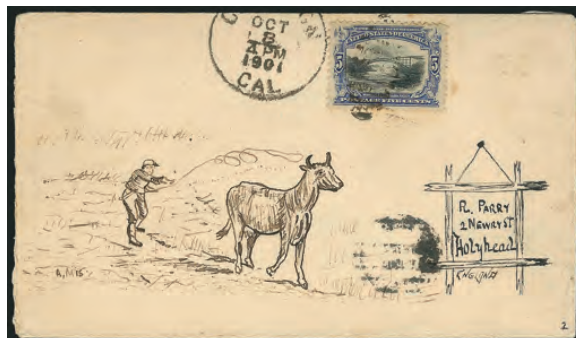
2¢ Pan-Am tied to a cacheted cover created by the Albright Art Gallery and printed by the Niagara Envelope Manufactory. The beacons from the Electric Tower are directed to "Aug 22 1901 Pan-Am Sta., Buffalo, N.Y." cancels.



Pan-Am 4¢ diagonal half used as 2¢ (296 var, not listed in Scott catalogue), tied by a "New Haven Conn. Sep. 5, 1901" waving-flag cancel on a cover to Leetes Island, Conn., declared by the Philatelic Foundation to be a "genuine unofficial usage".



A hand-illustrated cover with the 5¢ Pan-Am, Sc. 297, paying postage to England, tied by an Oct. 8, 1901 California cancel. The cover shows the artist's conception of a cowboy lassoing a cow.



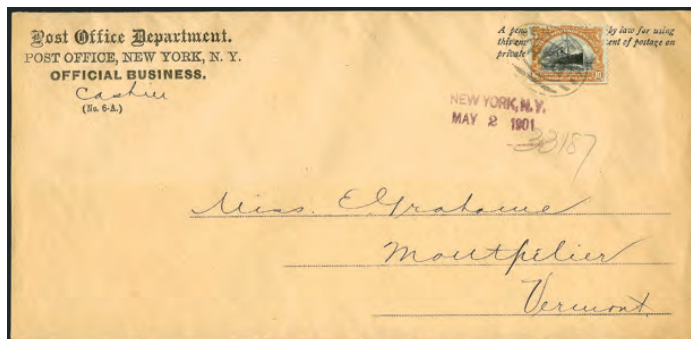
5¢ Pan-Am tied by “Buffalo N.Y. Aug. 21, 1901” exposition machine cancel on multicolored U.S. Government Building exposition cover to Germany.



8¢ Pan-Am, Sc. 298, used along with 2¢, Sc. 295, tied by Washington D.C. oval “Sub-Station No. 37, Wash. D.C. Registered May 1, 1901” First Day circular datestamp on a cover with the corner card of Washington, D.C., stamp dealer J. M. Bartels.



10¢ Pan-Am, Sc. 299, tied by New York registry cancel, the cover also with a purple “New York, N.Y. May 2, 1901” datestamp. The oversize Post Office Department



penalty cover, addressed to Montpelier, Vt., is a rare Second Day usage, even more so given that all May 1, 1901 usages of the 10¢ are in sets on May 1 first day covers, so this is the earliest use of the 10¢ alone.