

Viewing Collections:

Viewing The Vaquero Postal History Collection

by John F. Dunn

On March 4 the Robert A. Siegel Auction Galleries offered the Vaquero Collection, a fascinating holding of Propaganda Covers, Waterbury Fancy Cancels, Balloon & Flight Covers including some not-often-seen rarities. As always, the prices quoted here do not include the 18% Buyer's Premiums that are added on to these hammer prices.

The auction opened with Propaganda Covers and this cover to abolitionist Evelina M. Burleigh, Plainfield Conn., with an 1847 5¢ Red Brown (Scott 1), full to large margins, worn-plate impression, tiny margin tear, tied by a blue grid cancel, with matching "Philada. Pa. 5 Aug. 10" integral-rate circular datestamp [hereafter, c.d.s.] on top flap with "Anti-Slavery Office, Philada, 31 North Fifth St." red embossed oval seal of the Philadelphia Female Anti-Slavery Society, a Society associated with Lucretia Mott.



Slavery-themed covers with the 1847 Issue are exceedingly rare. The USPS 1847 census includes only four covers with printed references to slavery. Estimated at \$5,000-\$7,500, it drew a hammer price of \$5,500.

The highest realization in this section was garnered by this J. Valentine & Co. illustrated anti-slavery propaganda cover depicting a black person protected by Britannia supported by a lion at left and on the other side of the ocean slaves being flogged, with a 3¢ Claret, Type I (11 var), tied by an "Austinburg O. Jun. 15" c.d.s. circular datestamp, a phenomenal and rare example of a British Anti-Slavery design used in the United States.



By 1805 the British Atlantic slave trade was abolished in Great Britain. In 1834 slavery was abolished in Great Britain and her colonies. Abolitionists then turned to enforcing the ban, and also to expanding its reach to other countries. Four designs of anti-slavery propaganda covers were produced in England, including two by John Marshall of Leeds and two by James Valentine of Dundee. Very few were used in the United States.

Estimated at \$4,000-\$5,000 it soared to \$13,500.

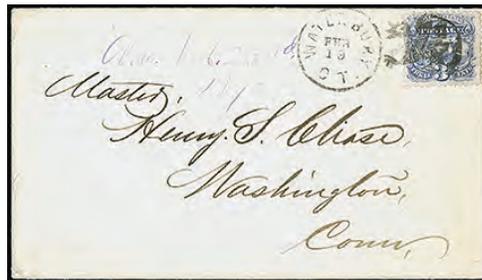
Next we view a grayish cover to New Britain Conn., with "Peace, the Parent of Prosperity, the Companion of Truth and Love" illustrated propaganda design, depicting Britannia surrounded by idyl-



lic images of peaceful trade and exchange, with a 3¢ Dull Red Type II (11A), stamp with extra frameline at right, cancelled by a blue grid, with matching "Worcester Ms. Feb. 20" c.d.s. Published in England and used in the United States, this is the only example of this design we have been able to locate.

Estimated at \$2,000-\$3,000, it sold for \$5,750.

A section of Waterbury Fancy Cancels opened with this cover to Washington, Conn., right edge of cover and stamp repaired with everything to the right of the "c" of "cents" and top right



corner added, the quality of the restoration work is excellent, the Running Chicken strike is original, the 1869 Pictorial 3¢ Ultramarine (114) tied by a clear strike of the Running Chicken fancy cancel, also with a mostly clear "Waterbury Ct. Feb. 19" (1870) c.d.s.

This fancy cancel is based on a popular return address imprint of the period showing a freshly hatched chick chasing a fly ("If you don't catch 'em in five days" etc.). Estimated at \$4,000-\$5,000, it realized \$7,500.

By far the highest realization in this section was garnered by this small cover to Aiken S.C., cover tear at left with an 1869 3¢ Pictorial (114) tied by a gorgeous strike of a Waterbury, Conn., Large Bee fancy cancel and a "Waterbury Ct. Mar. 13" c.d.s.



The Large Bee is considerably scarcer than the Small Bee. The design of the Large Bee does not fit entirely on an off-cover stamp, so on-cover is the only way to see the entire design. This is the only example on cover we have offered since keeping computerized records. It is also notable for the strength of the cancel.

Estimated at \$10,000-\$15,000, it fetched a top bid of \$47,500.

Another popular Waterbury Fancy Cancel is the Bridgeport Fireman, which was inspired by the annual Bridgeport firemen's parade through Waterbury in April 1866. It is seen here on a cover



to Windsor Locks, Conn., on a 3¢ Rose (65) tied by "Waterbury Conn. May 8 '66" double-circle datestamp, few small edge tears at top, a Fancy strike that is without doubt one of the finest examples.

Estimated at \$4,000-\$5,000, it went for \$4,000.

On page 17 we view a cover to Woodbridge Conn., with a perfect strike of the Old Woman in Bonnet Waterbury fancy cancel on a 3¢ 1869 Pictorial (114), the cover also with a Waterbury Ct. Mar. 7" (1870) c.d.s. Surprisingly,

although estimated at \$15,000-\$20,000, it could do no better than an \$8,000 realization.

Next we view a wonderful example of the design and carving skills of Waterbury Postmaster

John W. Hill, a perfect strike of a Rose Blossom fancy cancel on a 3¢ Pictorial (114). Several of the different Waterbury designs carved by Hill are noteworthy for their elaborate designs, such as the Running Chicken, Bee, Eagle & Shield and some of the human faces. This Rose Blossom design is certainly one of Hill's finest floral creations. Estimated at \$4,000-\$5,000, it sold for \$2,500.

Next is a cover to Warren, Conn., with the 3¢ 1869 (114) tied by a clear and complete strike of the Waterbury Three-Leaf Clover fancy cancel. Also noteworthy is the "Waterbury Ct. Dec. 25" (1869) Christmas Day c.d.s.

Estimated at \$4,000-\$5,000, it realized \$5,500.

Here we see a locally addressed cover with an embossed return address for White & Wells Wholesale Paper Warehouse, with the 3¢ Pictorial (114) tied by a perfect strike of a Buttonless Shoe Waterbury, also with a "Waterbury Ct. Mar. 21" (1870) c.d.s.

The auctioneers noted, according to Wikipedia, this style of buttonless shoe was invented for Queen Victoria in 1836, utilizing stretchable rubber (a new invention) at the sides in place of laces but still keeping the profile of lace-ups. Its feminine image was soon lost and was adopted by male wearers, at which time it was dubbed the Congress Gaiter or Boston Boot in the United States.

Estimated at \$3,000-\$4,000, it went for \$1,800.

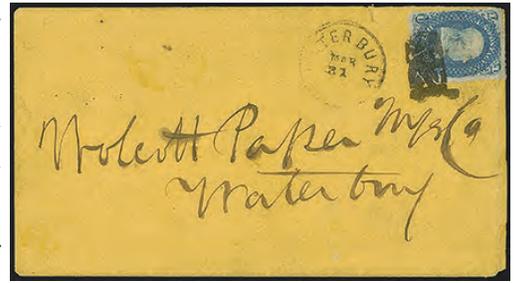
Still another famous Waterbury, this 3¢ 1869 Pictorial displays a perfect strike of a Skull & Crossbones fancy cancel of Waterbury Conn., also with a "Waterbury Feb. 11" c.d.s., 1870 docketing at top.

Estimated at \$4,000-\$5,000, it sold for \$4,750.

Concluding our viewing of the Waterbury Fancy Cancels section, we come to a cover to the Wolcott Paper Company with a 1¢ Blue "F"



Grill (92) tied by a bold "AJ" (Andrew Johnson) Tombstone with Skull & Crossbones fancy cancel, also with a "Waterbury Ct. Mar. 31" (1869) c.d.s., small tear at top, stamp with small faults.



For historical perspective the auctioneers tell us Andrew Johnson assumed the presidency after Lincoln's assassination in April 1865. After nearly three years of a troubled presidency, impeachment proceedings against Johnson were instigated by Radical Republicans, and the House of Representatives agreed to the articles of impeachment on March 2, 1868. President Johnson was acquitted on May 16, 1868. The "AJ" Tombstone cancel was first used in Waterbury in 1869, and it probably reflects Postmaster Hill's sentiments about the end of Johnson's term of office and his political future. Grant was elected in 1868 and inaugurated in 1869.

Estimated at \$2,000-\$3,000, it sold for \$2,400.

The Balloon Flights section opened with a 3¢ Dull Red Type II (11A), Position 37L3, showing part of adjoining stamp at bottom, tied by a blue "Akron Ohio Aug. 10" (1852) c.d.s. on a cover with an illustrated manned



balloon in flight, produced by famed aeronaut John Wise addressed in his hand to Charles R. Frailey in Lancaster, Pa., address slightly faded, some faint stains at left and slight wear.

Per the auctioneers, John Wise, a resident of Lancaster, Pa., is well-known to historians as the aeronaut who flew the first official U.S. "airmail" in his balloon *Jupiter* from Lafayette, Indiana, in 1859. Wise was also involved in the Union army's balloon reconnaissance operations in the Civil War. In the summer of 1852, Wise flew his balloon *Ulysses* in a series of flights in Ohio. Starting on June 3 from Portsmouth, located on the north side of the Ohio River, Wise in the *Ulysses* drifted over the border into Kentucky and attracted the unwanted attention of a hunter, who fired a rifle ball into the car (basket).

Wise continued his ascensions, recording flights in Chillicothe (June 10), Circleville Pa., Newark (July 4), Mansfield (July 17), Wooster (July 24) and Massillon (July 31). On August 14, 1852, Wise made his 141st lifetime ascent, from Ravenna, Ohio, which he documented two days later in an account published in the *Cleveland Plain Dealer* (August 20, 1852). According to Wise, he rose to an altitude of 10,000 feet, where he could see the shore of Lake Erie and the city of Cleveland.

In conjunction with his ballooning exploits in Ohio, Wise had envelopes printed with a balloon illustration, probably by P. S. Duval, a Philadelphia lithographer who provided the illustrations for Wise's 1850 book. Only one example of the envelope is recorded. The cover was addressed by Wise to Charles R. Frailey, who was then a clerk in the mayor's office at Lancaster and later served as the town's first chief of police. The stamp is tied by a blue Akron, Ohio, circular datestamp dated August 10 (1852). Akron is 21 miles from Ravenna.

This cover is the earliest recorded illustrated American balloon cover by years. Most of the illustrated balloon covers were used by Wise and other aeronauts in 1859 and later years.

Estimated at \$7,500-\$10,000, it sold for \$21,000.

On page 18 we view the 1877 5¢ Deep Blue Buffalo Balloon Air Post Semi-Official in a Tête-Bêche Pair (CL1a), one Schoendorf Type

II, other Schoendorf Type III, 5.5mm spacing between stamps, large margins, Type II (top stamp in photo) Mint N.H., other with natural fiber inclusion at upper right and usual margin thin spot.

The Buffalo Balloon stamp, designed by John B. Lillard and engraved by John H. Snively, was printed by Wheeler Brothers Printers in Nashville, Tenn. Only 300 were printed in tête-bêche arrangement from a single die. The stamps were intended for use on a balloon flight from Nashville to Gallatin, Tenn., which took place on June 18, 1877. Of the 300 that were printed, Lillard wrote that only 23 were used.

Based on previous examples we have handled, at least some of the Buffalo Balloon stamps were exposed to moisture around the time they were printed. This accounts for the fact that only three of the tête-bêche pairs certified by The Philatelic Foundation are potentially sound. The others are mostly thinned or scuffed in one corner where they were stuck together.

With a \$20,000 Scott value without premium for the one Mint N.H. stamp, this pair went for \$6,000.

Next, the lot with the highest realization in this auction, a corner card of Dr. Blackie's School for Girls and Young Ladies in Nashville, with an 1877 5¢ Deep Blue Buffalo Balloon Air Post Semi-Official (CL1), Schoendorf Type II, large margins, tiny crease at tip of lower left corner not noted on certificate, pinkish-red cancel likely applied by recipient, used with slightly overlapping 1¢ Ultramarine (156) and 2¢ Vermilion (178), tied by cork cancels, also with a "Gallatin Tenn. Jun. 18" (1877) c.d.s. and part of same cork cancel at lower left of cover to E. F. Gambs in St. Louis Mo., also with blue "St. Louis, Mo. Received Jun. 19 9 P.M." backstamp, diagonal manufacturing foldover in cover (partially split at bottom), small opening faults at top, faint waterstain at bottom right.

One of three recorded covers flown by the Buffalo Balloon and posted with U.S. stamps, of which only two are available to collectors, according to the *St. Louis Philatelist*, June-July 1877, the original letter mailed in this cover, which is no longer present (although a piece of it is adhering to the back), stated: "My dear Gambs: I send you this letter by Balloon Postage and my greetings from the clouds. The stamp will be a label of great value in a few years. Very truly, your friend, George S. Blackie".

With a Scott Value of \$100,000 and a pre-sale estimate of \$75,000 - \$100,000, this rarity sold for an \$85,000 hammer price, or \$100,300 with the 18% Buyer's Premium.

We now come to the Vin Fiz flight, the First United States Transcontinental Flight, a multi-stop, multi-crash adventure by Calbraith Rodgers., the first lot in this section being a Calbraith Rodgers Vin Fiz Flight, Middletown Crash, September 18, 1911 Photographic postcard depicting Rodgers and his mechanics picking through the twisted wreckage of his Wright Model EX with caption "Wreck

of Roger's [sic] Aeroplane, Middletown, N.Y. 1911", address side with 1¢ Green tied by "Middletown N.Y. Sep. 18 4 PM 1911" wavy-line machine cancel, no message but three different initials including that of James Dunn, the chauffeur, to C. Meekel [different spelling from Mekeel] of Armour & Co. at Chicago, Very Fine, the only recorded card postmarked on the day of the Middletown crash, which occurred as Rodgers attempted a take-off on the next leg (flight resumed Sep. 21). Estimated at \$750-\$1,000, it went for \$650.



In this next lot, from another flight leg, the auctioneers provide background information on the Vin Fiz flight.

1911, October 12, Calbraith Rodgers Vin Fiz Flight, Kansas City Mo. Leg (AAMC 2c) postcard depicting Rodgers in his Wright Flyer with an additional separate portrait, 1¢ tied by "Kansas City Mo. Oct. 12, 1911 4PM" machine cancel and purple "Carried by RODGERS' AEROPLANE VIN FIZ/Oct. 10 '11" three-line handstamped cachet, to Concordia Mo., message reads "Dear Alfred, I send you love by air this time, by Mr. Rogers" and signed, few creases and soiling.

According to the official log of the Vin Fiz and contemporary newspaper articles, on October 10 Rodgers took off from Springfield, Missouri, and ended the day in Marshall, Missouri, after landing for gas in a cemetery in Nebo. He was persuaded to stay in Marshall for the night after landing nearby due to a faulty spark plug. On October 11 he flew from Marshall to Kansas City, Missouri, with a stop in Blue Springs. Rodgers flew around Kansas City on October 12 in exhibition flights, which explains the Oct. 12 machine cancel and use of flight card (with the old October 10-11 dates). He was delayed another day in Kansas City on October 13 and announced he would not do any more exhibition flying. He departed Kansas City on the morning of October 14.

The handstamp on this card was struck from a device in a style used for later markings, but the wording is uniquely represented by this example. It was probably used by Mabel Rodgers after her alleged appointment as "postmistress" of the Vin Fiz flights.

October 10 was the expiration day for William Randolph Hearst's \$50,000 prize, which stipulated that the transcontinental flight must be completed within one year of his October 10, 1910, announcement. Hearst added the date stipulation after his original offer, and there was some controversy over whether the flight needed to be started or completed by the 10th.

A recent discovery, this card was listed for the first time in American Air Mail Catalog's 7th Edition as AAMC No. 2c, the number previously assigned to his later Pasadena crash mail, which is now AAMC 2d.

With an AAMC value of \$10,000, and estimated at \$5,000-\$7,500, it sold for \$4,500.

On page 19 we turn to Pioneer Flights by Female Aviators, the surprise being that an Amelia Earhardt flight is not included. Of the three lots in the section, the most interesting, for a variety of reasons, was this picture postcard with caption "Miss Katherine Stinson—The Youngest Girl





Flyer in the World” and showing close-up of her in her plane, with a 1¢ Parcel Post (Q1) tied by “Helena Montana, Sep. 25, 13 10—AM” machine cancel, also with a purple “Aero Post, Helena, Montana Sep. 23” duplex datestamp applied before the stamp was affixed.

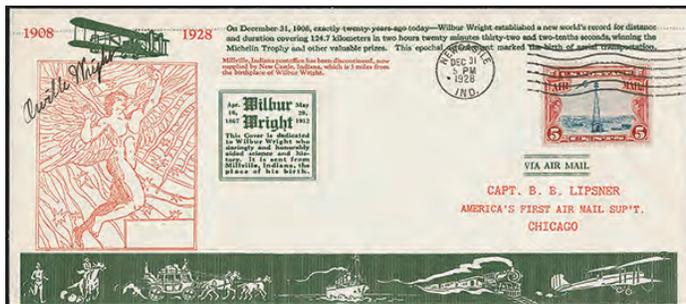
Of special interest, the Montana State Fair Aviation Exhibition marked the first official airmail flight by a female aviator. Katherine Stinson, one of the two airplane-flying Stinson sisters, flew mail from the post office station at the fairgrounds and dropped the bags to postal employees at a nearby race track. Of the 1,333 pieces of mail that were flown, fewer than ten are reported in the AAMC).

The other nugget of interest was this, from the auctioneers:

Estimate \$4,000-\$5,000, AAMC value \$2,500 is far too low based on auction realizations.

And this from the bidders: Hammer price \$8,000.

Next, a wonderful piece of nostalgia, a cover commemorating the 20th anniversary of Wilbur Wright’s winning the Michelin trophy and establishing a new world’s record for distance. Among other things, the cover bears Orville Wright’s autograph, an illustration of Icarus at the left, and across the bottom are illustrations of evolving forms of transport from running to horse to plane, with a 5¢ Beacon tied by “Newcastle Ind. Dec. 31 5PM 1928” machine cancel. Also on the cover is a notice that Millville Ind., where the original flight took place no longer has a post office and Newcastle is the nearest.



Estimated at \$400-\$500, it went for \$500.

Here we view a flown Zepplin cover to Chicago Ill., backstamps of Friedrichshafen (May 6), New York (Jun. 18) and Chicago (Jun. 19), with proper cachets including one tying



the 65¢ stamp, the 65¢-\$2.60 Graf Zeppelin set arranged neatly in a row and tied by two strikes of “Washington D.C. Apr. 19 5PM 1930” First Day of Issue duplex datestamp and “5” in oval grid cancel.

First Days of the 1930 Graf Zeppelin issue on one cover are much rarer than sets of individually stamped covers. They are especially coveted in a small-size format that was actually flown, such as the cover offered here.

With a Scott value of \$10,000, it sold for \$4,000.

In the next column is an interesting little item, AAMC 3 376, the June 8,

1959 First Official Missile Mail, with a 4¢ Flag stamp tied by a “U.S. Barbero (SSG-317) June 8 9:30AM 1959” machine cancel on this cacheted cover to Mr. Paul C. Aiken in Wash-



ington D.C., with a Jacksonville, Fla. backstamp of the same day. The U.S.S. Barbero, a submarine fitted to carry two nuclear missiles, took part in this first and only experiment of delivering mail by guided missile, the idea being that mail could be delivered from New York to California in a matter of hours. Estimated at \$300-\$400, this cover realized \$300.

[Hours? As it turned out, this Missile Mail would have been terribly slow compared to today’s communications in seconds...via the internet...to the far reaches of the globe. This takes us to the next section, Space Flights, which as far as mail is concerned, also would ow be outmoded. JFD.]

Here we see the 1969, Apollo 11 “Life Insurance” Cover depicting the moon’s surface with two astronauts, a lunar lander and satellite dish, with the Apollo 8 stamp tied by a “Houston Tex. PM 20 Jul. 1969” postmark, signed by Neil Armstrong, Buzz Aldrin and Michael Collins.



A number of covers were produced prior to launch and signed by the three astronauts in pre-flight quarantine. The idea was that, if something should happen on the flight, these could be sold to raise money for the families. With this “life insurance” policy, the astronauts felt better about undertaking their trip to the moon. Some were postmarked on July 16, the day the flight took off, and most were postmarked on July 20, the day they landed on the moon.

Estimated at \$5,000-\$7,500, it went for \$2,500.

Finally, we have another U.S. Space cover, for the 1971 Apollo 15 Moon Exploration with two space issues (1396 and 1435a pair) tied by “U.S.S. Okinawa (LPH-3) Aug 7, 1971 AM” datestamp on the flown cover, the label



cachet showing phases of the moon and “First extensive exploration of the Moon”, “Launch July 26, 1971” duplex cancel, red “Recovery Aug. 7, 1971” c.d.s. on back, signed by the three astronauts—David Scott, Al Worden and James Irwin—NASA serial no. 353 on back.

According to the American Air Mail Catalogue, Pilot Alfred Worden was authorized to carry 144 covers on the mission. 16 were torn or destroyed and 60 were confiscated by NASA and eventually returned to Worden after litigation.

With an AAMC Value of \$13,000 and an estimate of \$2,000-\$3,000, it realized \$2,700.

This concludes our viewing of the Vaquero Collection of Propaganda Covers, Waterbury Fancy Cancels, Balloon & Flight Covers.

To view the complete auction, please visit the sale on the Siegel website, at <https://siegelauctions.com/auctions/sale/1345>.