

Viewing Collections:

A Study of the First Postmaster General

by John F. Dunn

Last June Robert A. Siegel Auction Galleries conducted a single-owner auction of the Benjamin Franklin Bailar Collection of what Bailar—himself a former U.S. Postmaster General—described as “Basically,...anything that had Benjamin Franklin’s name or likeness and an interesting story.”

Not that the collection and the auction consisted of just “anything.” For example, the first lot offered was this large

part of a folded cover with the free frank, “Free G. Washington” written by Washington as a private citizen

and addressed in his hand to Benjamin Franklin as “His Excellency Doctr. Franklin, Presidt. of the State of Pennsyla, Philadelphia”. This would have been two years before Washington was elected President and while Franklin was serving in a position that today would have been Governor.

The letter, with an intact black wax seal on the back embossed with the Washington family coat of arms, was estimated at \$20,000-30,000 and was hammered down for \$15,500. (All prices quoted here do not include the 15% Buyer’s Premiums that are added on to these hammer prices.)

Next we have the famous “B Free Franklin” free frank, as Deputy Postmaster General of the Colonies, described as “presumably from London” and addressed in his hand to Mrs. Franklin in Philadelphia, also endorsed in his hand “via N York pr. Packet”, with a red “FREE” in circle handstamp. The piece, with the sides missing, was estimated at \$15,000-20,000 and went for \$14,500.

Demonstrating the extent to which Bailar went to obtain things Franklin, we view this legal memorandum with a contemporary reference to the State of Franklin (Frankland), which was formed in August 1784 by inhabitants who wished to establish independence from North Carolina—in what now part of Tennessee. Per the auctioneers, “the only State of Franklin covers Mr. Bailar was

able to locate are institutionally held, this is the closest thing to a cover he was able to acquire in the collector market.” Estimated at \$750-1,000, it realized \$900.

No surprise, the collection contained the 1847 5¢ first issue, with Benjamin Franklin’s portrait. One such example

is this folded letter with the 5¢ and 10¢ (Sc. 1 and 2) tied together by red square grid cancels, also with a matching “New-York

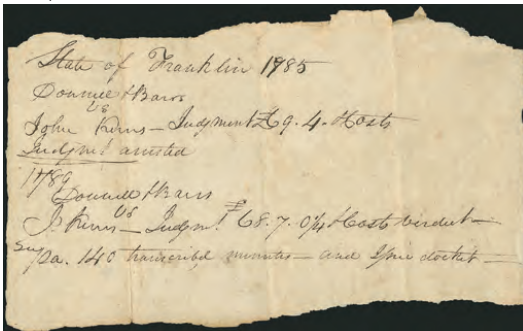
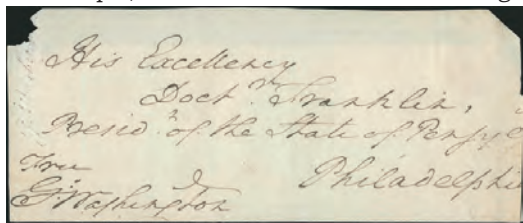
May 13” circular datestamp and 1848 docketing on the back. It is addressed to Millard Fillmore as Comptroller of the State in Albany N.Y., with the stamps paying three times the 5¢ rate for under 300 miles. Per the lot description, “fewer than 20 combination covers with the 5¢ and 10¢ paying the triple rate are recorded. This is the only one used from New York....”

Estimated at \$20,000-30,000, it fetched \$37,500.

Next up is a folded cover with the 5¢ 1847, used with a Swarts’ City Dispatch Post, New York N.Y., (2¢) Black on Light Green Glazed (Sc. 136L1), cancelled by a red “Paid” straightline, both stamps tied by a red square grid cancel, the cover also with a matching “New-York Jun. 12”

(1849) circular datestamp, red “Post Office, Swarts, Chatham Square” oval handstamp, sender’s “Paid” notation, and Swarts’ red oval promotional backstamp, “Letters for New York City, Direct To Chatham Square Post Office”. Estimated at \$20,000-30,000, this lot soared to \$55,000.

The 1851 One Cent Blues, with Franklin’s profile, were represented by this Type II (Sc. 7) tied by a “Philadelphia Pa. Nov. 10” circular



datestamp, also secured to the cover by a metal grommet. The cover is addressed to "Robt. T. Knight, Patentee Safety Envelopes, No. 251 Market St. Phila." and has an embossed "Knight's Safety Envelope, Patented 1856" on the top flap.

This unopened cover—which would have been damaged had it been opened—was accompanied by an unused envelope with a similar grommet attached to an advertising flyer for the safety envelope. Estimated at \$5,000-7,500, the lot sold for \$2,600.

The Franklin stamps on this cover are less important than the Hawaii, 1857 5¢ (Sc. 8), the U.S. 10¢ 1851 Issue, and the unusual arrangement (the stamps also having been trimmed to add to the artistry) on this small envelope to Berlin, Mass., with a small "Paid" in the sender's hand. Estimated at \$7,500-10,000, it went for \$5,250.

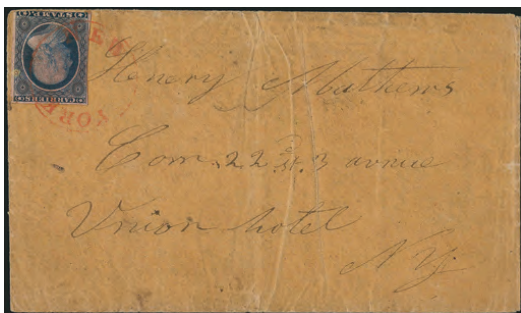


A Franklin design of another sort is found in this Toppan, Carpenter, Casilier & Co. (1¢) Black Franklin Large Die Essay on India of the Franklin Carrier (Sc. LO1-E variety), with the outer border of the design in an unfinished state, and the lathework just impinging on the portrait, also with a pencil notation, "For U.S. Carriers Stamp, Vignette 1851, Toppan, Carpenter Casilier & Co"



This unique essay, not listed in Scott or in the Brazer book, was estimated at \$7,500-10,000 and realized \$7,500.

And now for the stamp (Sc. LO1), here on a cover to New York tied by a red "New York" dateless circle with the original enclosure, a printed invitation to "A COMPLIMENTARY BALL FOR THE BENEFIT OF WILSEY M'GINNISS, Who was unfortunately run over by Engine 46...". Also enclosed is an admission ticket.



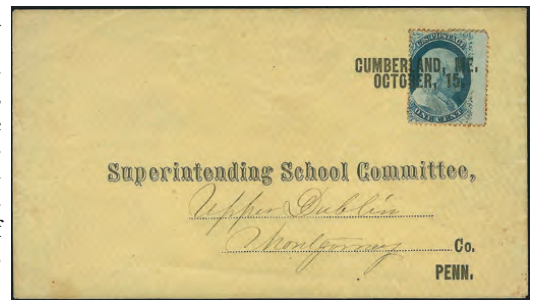
One of only three 1851 Franklin covers from New York City—one of which is in the Miller Collection and not available to collectors—it was estimated at \$20,000-30,000 and brought a top bid of \$17,500.

Here's another instance where the Franklin stamp is not the key to the value of the lot. It is an 1857 1¢ Blue Type V (Sc. 24), well off center, but tied by a printed "CUMBERLAND, ME./OCTOBER, 15" two-line precancel on a part-printed address cover. One of three recorded One-Cent Blue covers with the

Cumberland Precancel, it was described as "One of the greatest rarities of Precancel collecting and of United States philately.

Estimated at \$20,000-30,000, it realized \$19,000.

The next Franklin design is the 30¢ Orange (Ac. 38) tied by a brilliant red "Boston Br. Pkt. Paid Aug. 22" circular datestamp on and 1860 folded letter to Hong Kong with a manuscript "6/6" British due marking, indicating six-times the 5¢ prepaid rate. Estimated at \$5,000-7,500, it brought \$12,500.



Next we view the 1861 1¢ Blue (Sc. 63) tied by an "Old Point Comfort Va." double-circle datestamp to an adversity cover made from a paper shirt collar by a Union soldier, with the contents written inside the collar, datelined "Head Quarters 2nd Regt. P.R.V.C., Banks James River, July 4, 1862." The message includes "We have fought five battles & won five victories...Genl. McCall is a prisoner, Genl. Reynolds ditto and wounded, Adj. Genl. Biddle and Simmons and a host of other officers killed." Per the auctioneers, "This inventive use from a Union soldier is extraordinarily rare, not only for its raw material, but also for the fact it was used in the United States mails. Most adversity covers were sent though the Confederate mails due to paper shortages in the South." Estimated to bring \$2,000-3,000, it realized \$3,250.

Another 1¢ Blue (Sc. 63) is seen here with a straddle-pane margin at right used with a 3¢ Type III (Sc. 26) tied by a "Philadelphia Pa. Sep. 26, 1862" c.d.s to a "One Flag and One Government" Patriotic cover, also with "OLD STAMPS/NOT RECOGNIZED" and "Due 3" handstamps, the 1857 3¢ having been demonetized. Estimated at \$15,000-20,000, it fetched a top bid of \$37,500.



To Be Continued

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We pick up where we left off last month in our viewing of the Robert A. Siegel Auction Galleries sale of the Benjamin Franklin Bailar Collection of Benjamin Franklin postal history and ephemera with this folded letter with the 1¢ Blue Type II (Sc. 7) in a single and horizontal pair, tied by two strikes of “Canton Ga. Apr. 9”

(1863) Confederate post office circular date stamp with 1863 docketing to Spring Place Ga. Written on behalf of a Confederate widow, there is no indication of postage due, making this a “probably unique” CSA use of the One-Cent 1851 issue. Estimated at \$4,000-5,000, it was hammered down for \$3,000. (All prices quoted here do not include the 15% Buyer’s Premiums that are added on to these hammer prices.)



Next up is this multicolored chromolithographed advertising cover with the 1¢ Blue and 3¢ Rose (Sc. 63, 65) paying the 3¢ regular postage plus 1¢ carrier fee to the mails, both stamps tied by a “New-York (month?) 7, 1862” double-circle datestamp and duplex target cancel. Described by the auctioneers as “widely regarded as the most beautiful Classic American Advertising Cover in existence, it was estimated at \$20,000-30,000 and fetched \$35,000.

This Kirkpatrick & Gault, New York, 30¢ Orange Encased Postage (Sc. EP119) was described as “one of the few 30-cent encasements in an sort of collectible quantity”. The stamp is well centered within the encasement and there are only a few small mica flaws, so with an SCV of \$3,500, it went for \$4,000.



One of the most important pieces in the Collection was a cover with a 1¢ Blue (Sc. 63) tied by a perfect strike of the Waterbury, Connecticut, Man with Hat fancy cancel, along with a “Waterbury Con. Apr. 22 '66” double-circle datestamp., paying the 1¢ drop rate. , diagonal cover crease thru datestamp but clear of stamp and fancy cancel, one side flap removed. One

of only two 1861 One-cent covers with this Fancy Cancel, it was estimated at \$30,000-40,000 and soared to \$57,500.



Another great cover is this one, with a 30¢ Orange (Sc. 71) tied by a perfectly struck cog-wheel cancel, also with

a “San Francisco Cal. Jun. 12, 1865” double-circle datestamp on cover, originating in Hawaii and addressed to the Postmaster of Saxony, Germany, also with a perfect strike of a red “Honolulu U.S. Postage Paid May 18” (1865) circular datestamp, a red “N. York Am. Pkt. 7 Paid Jul. 8” credit datestamp, and a Jul. 21 receiving backstamp.

The comprehensive lot description notes that this is “by far the finest of three recorded 30-cent 1861 Issue uses from Hawaii and the only one to Germany; also that the 30¢ stamp correctly prepays the 28¢ rate from the U.S. to Germany by Prussian Closed Mail plus the 2¢ ship captain’s fee. Estimated at \$20,000-30,000, it brought a top bid of \$35,000.

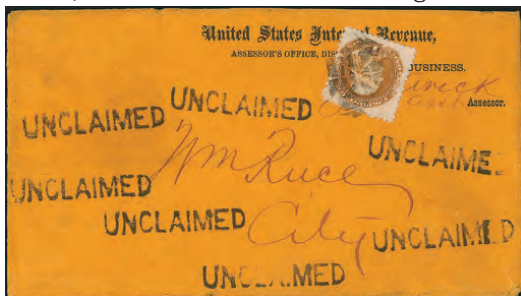
Topping that was a \$125,000 realization—against a \$30,000-40,000 pre-sale estimate—for this folded open cover to Hong Kong with a 30¢ Orange (Sc. 71), 3¢ Rose (Sc. 65) and horizontal pair of 10¢ Yellow Green (Sc. 68), tied by New York City grid cancels, the cover also with a red “London Paid 20 FE 67” transit



datestamp, bold red “1d” British Colonial credit handstamp and magenta “32” credit, backstamped with a red “Consulate of the United States of America Hong Kong” three-line circle and a “Hong Kong AP 8 67” receiving backstamp. The cover

was forwarded to Shanghai where a blue "U.S. Consulate General/Shanghai" two-line handstamp and pencil "4/23/67" date were applied on back. It was then forwarded to Yokohama, Japan, with a manuscript June 7, 1867 receipt docketing on the back. The lot description notes that this is a unique double-forwarded use from the U.S. the American Consulates in Hong Kong, Shanghai and Yokohama, and that the Shanghai Consulate two-line handstamp is extremely rare.

As you can tell, I selected this cover for viewing because of the seven "Unclaimed" handstamp strikes. The 1¢ 1869 Pictorial (Sc. 112) is tied by an unusual segmented cork cancel on this buff cover with



"U.S. Internal Revenue, Assessor's Office, District of Utah, Official Business" corner card and addressed locally, also with a rimless "Salt Lake City Utah Feb. 21" datestamp on the back. The key to the value is the scarce Utah territorial use. Estimated at \$1,000-1,500, it realized \$850.

This unusual item is a 32-page booklet, "The Postal Service Book", a guide produced in 1885 by the Meriden Conn. postmaster, E. D. Hall, the front cover in blue and red on blue paper, with a 1¢ Gray Blue (Sc. 206) tied by a bold segmented cork cancel. Estimated at \$2,000-3,000, it went for \$1,200.



The value of many of the lots in this "Franklin" Collection is not in the Franklin stamps, but in other aspects of the lot. A prime example is the souvenir card on our front cover. A common 1¢ Deep Green (Sc. 279) is tied by an "East Akron Sta., Akron Ohio, 1898" dateless duplex to an oversize illustrated "Monroe Doctrine" souvenir card to Pittsburgh Pa., the back of the card with an ad for the Akron Cereal Co. Estimated at \$200-300, this Spanish-American War Patriotic souvenir card realized \$400.

In similar fashion, the primary value of this lot is in the 1¢ Trans-Mississippi issue with "I.R./P.I.D. & Son" Daprix Overprint (Sc. R158B). The page from an Erie Canal steamboat receipt book with a July 16, 1898 entry, also

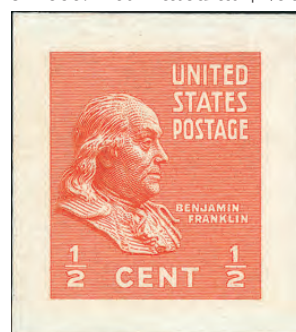


bears two examples of the 1¢ Franklin with overprint (Sc. R154), the back with an additional R154 and four copies of the rouletted "Battleship" issue (Sc. R163). One of only three recorded example of Scott R158B, "especially desirable on this original receipt page," per the auctioneers, the lot sold for \$16,500 against a \$30,000 SCV.

Next we view a 1929 flown Graf Zeppelin Flight cover to Tokyo with the \$2.00 Carmine & Black (Sc. 547) used with a 5¢ Beacon Air-



mail (Sc. C11) tied by a "Varick St. Sta. N.Y. Aug. 6 9-PM 1929" machine cancel with a receiving backstamp of Aug. 20, 1929, the stamps paying the \$2.05 rate for mail of one ounce or less. Estimated at \$200-300, it realized \$110.

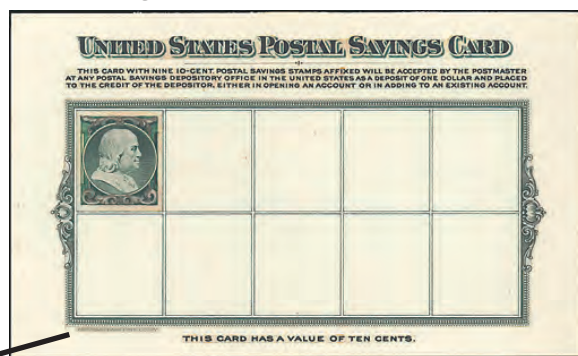


Of more recent vintage is this 1/2¢ Presidential Small Die Proof on Wove (Sc. 803P2) on wove paper—believed to be the only example in private hands (only two or three large die proofs are known). With an SCV of \$650, it fetched \$2,000.

And even more recent is a lot with six examples of the 1976 13¢



Benjamin Franklin, all printing varieties (Sc. 1690 variety), this example showing the dark blue Franklin image shifted upwards. Estimated at \$500-750, the lot brought \$425.



Finally, we view the (10¢) Franklin, Postal Savings Deposit Card First Essay (Sc. PS2-E1), with the original model on a 146mm x 86mm card comprising stock engravings and "wash" drawing around the Franklin vignette. The engraved card frame and imprint, with hand-drawn spaces in green for stamps and an "American Bank Note Co. N.Y." cut-out imprint at the bottom left (arrow), this model is further mounted on 253mm x 146mm heavy cardboard with a protecting sheet for covering when not in use, and is handstamped on the back "Checked Oct. 5, 1910"

A unique Postal Savings Essay model that pre-dates the other, different, PS2 essay, it was estimated at \$3,000-4,000 and realized \$2,900.