

Synopsis

AMERICAN HEROIC AGE POLAR EXPEDITIONS

BACKGROUND: The Heroic Age of Polar exploration (up to 1924) is the earliest and most important of polar expeditions' three eras. It is significant because of establishing the foundation for all the polar expeditions that would follow. Their techniques development, motives, basic geographical understandings, principles, style of leadership, funding sources, structure, understood hazards, etc., were formed in this initial period.

Most of Polar exploration's foremost dramatic events occurred during its formative Heroic Age (thus its name). Many of its more captivating personalities, incidents and outcomes happened during the Heroic Age. Polar exploration's Heroic Age unquestionably is the dominant polar exploration period for both tragedy and triumph.

"Americans" (from North and South America) were not as significant a force in Heroic Age polar expeditions as were those polar explorers from Europe. However, they allowed the development of a polar exploration heritage that laid the foundation for a much more significant American contribution to polar exploration during the Ages that followed.

Polar America (Arctic and sub-Antarctic) is one of the more significant polar spheres for polar exploration during the Heroic Age. The North American Arctic and lower South American sub-Antarctic provided much exploration experience, geological, cultural and scientific information that guided the manner and progress of polar expeditions into other polar locales and Ages.

Much of the polar philatelic material exists from the last (1955-present Modern Age) of the three polar Ages. Less can be gleaned from the Mechanical Age (1924-1954). However, it is the Heroic Period (up to 1924) that yields the least in quantity and the most of a classic, usually "archival" nature. Very few Heroic Era polar expeditions have any extant material. That which does survive may not be readily identifiable and hardly ever was originally intended for philatelic (retention) purposes.

PURPOSE: To display material that shows the progression of various types of Arctic and Antarctic expeditions through all three periods of the physically and philatelically challenging **Heroic Age** (pre-1924) of polar expeditions, using only material associated with polar regions (Arctic & Antarctic) expeditions by **Americans**, *as well* as those of expeditions by others to polar America, that together solidified this portion of our polar exploration heritage.

"AMERICAN" here has two parameters: (1) Polar expeditions (to either the Arctic or Antarctic) that were led, highly influenced or sponsored by those from the Americas (North or South). (2) Polar expeditions by *others* during the Heroic Age to

Arctic North America or Patagonian (sub-Antarctic) South America.

The examined expeditions will have at least a measure of geographic exploration and/or scientific investigation.

CONDITION: Most extant Heroic Age material survived accidentally, saw normal (for its time and purpose) handling use and abuse. It is a rare occurrence not only to find such material, but especially to find it in other than visibly used condition.

This material often qualifies as historical artifacts and thus frequently is described as "archival." It mostly has been used for normal communications. Later they could be reused as notepaper or coffee cup coasters, tucked into garments, drawers, become journal bookmarks, etc., or simply discarded -- until somehow were found and subsequently retained as a collectible long after their original creation.

Attempts to find "better" conditioned material rarely are possible. In many cases, this is all that exists to postally document that phase of an event or even the event itself. Besides, it probably would be better to look at the appearance of this material as being a part of the pieces' historical evolution. This is how "commercial" communications was opened and later handled. Its historical nature includes this "patina," if you will.

Types of Polar Communications: Polar philately accepts a broader range of communication instruments than do some other philatelic specialties. Joining posted and courier-delivered (i.e., personally handled outside the postal system) mail are telegrams (especially with official seals), expedition related stationery, relevant postcards and other forms of communications, such as air dropped leaflets.

Exhibit Character: There are no ordinary pieces in this exhibit. Many of the unique pieces are identified on their exhibit page. Even where one or more other pieces may exist from a certain expedition, a shown piece most likely still is one of a kind, because of what it portrays.

Additionally, some of these pieces are "**discovery**" items. The exhibitor was first to find and reveal them. Amazingly, in some cases the discovery of the piece(s) also is a rediscovery of the expedition or event that (up until then) unfortunately had been lost to historiography.

The three most important "American" expeditions (1838-42 "Wilkes," 1881-84 "Greely" and 1908-09 "Peary" are accorded the most display attention. Even so, hardly anyone else has a "Wilkes" piece. Nobody ever has had any other "Greely" material. Any other pieces from or to the Peary NP expedition are unknown. More display space also is given to the premier British expedition to Arctic North America at this time (1875-76 "Nares").

THIS EXHIBIT'S FIRSTS: It earned gold (pre LG period) at a StampShow over a decade ago when shown as just three-frames. Though impossible then, subsequent diligence has produced amazing finds enabling it now to resume showing as a greatly expanded nine frames.

Even now, this still is the first philatelic exhibit ever to attempt this

extraordinarily challenging subject. It is the only possibility for many of these extraordinary pieces to be seen in any philatelic exhibit. It will be the initial awareness for many (even polar philatelists) of some of the more obscure, less known (or virtually unknown) expeditions that can be documented by their mail (e.g., 1860 Williams College and *Bulldog* expeditions, 1898-99 US Army Exploring Expedition No. 3 [yes, that was its official name], *Miranda* expedition and its Labrador offshoot, 1853-55 USN North Pacific Surveying Expedition, 1912-13 brig *Daisy* Antarctic Expedition). It's the first philatelic exhibit not only to show something from both of the premier USA Heroic Age expeditions at the same time ("Wilkes" 1838-42 and "Greely" 1881-84), but to have sufficient material shown from both to actually tell a reasonably complete story of each.

Shown Philatelic FIRSTS: FIRST (earliest) polar expedition mail (Ross 1818); FIRST polar aerial communications (Austin 1850-51); FIRST (and only) mail to transit Northwest Passage (1853); FIRST official mail service to an ongoing polar expedition ("Nares" 1876); FIRST (only examples) polar traverse mail ("Greely" 1882); FIRST USA polar expedition aerial communications (Baldwin-Ziegler 1902); FIRST USA expedition cancellation and "stamp" (Fiala-Ziegler 1905); FIRST (earliest) Antarctic mail (Winship 1821)... and much more.

PRESENTATION METHOD:

Organization: (a) Chronological approach is used because of the various expeditions' lack of significant relationship to each other. Although some can be related in this period or are one in a sequence, most cannot. What IS common to all is their unique nature from occurring during a period in the challenging Heroic Age of polar expeditions.

(b) The chronological divisions recognize periods of increasing advancement of polar expeditions' conduct and objectives. They also allow for a balance in the presentation.

Compositional Style: Most viewers are unfamiliar with this material and the expeditions they document, requiring more explanation be given on most of the exhibit's pages. However, some prefer less copy to read, though still needing fundamental information to understand what is shown. So exhibitor has devised a captioning system to address this:

Captions embed an abbreviated explanation that enables hurried readers to gain a minimum necessary understanding. This is done by providing the option for just reading **bold face highlighted textual segments** that can be *visually* extracted into concise, minimally explanatory sentences. These more succinct extractions are not distractions for those who will be reading the full captions. This is because the extractable (bold faced) segments are part of the syntax of the full caption.

So a reader has the choice of either reading the entire captions on each page or just that part of them that is bold faced. Those who select the abbreviated caption option (explained at the top of the title page) will find that the extracted (bold faced)

portions still read as complete, understandable sentences.

Reading the entire captions will enable a fuller understanding and appreciation of what is being shown. However, rushed viewers, using the "abbreviated" choice, still will be able to have a basic understanding of what is displayed. This is the first exhibit to attempt this presentation style.

Structure: The main chapter is stated at each pages' top left. To the extreme right on that line is the subchapter. Below this is the page's headline that situates that page into the exhibit's story. Many of the headlines include some whimsy for better enticing the reader toward the following paragraphs.

RESEARCH: The exhibitor is responsible for much of the published knowledge about "American" Heroic Era polar philatelic material. A significant portion involved primary, original research. Sources include (all available from APRL):

Hal Vogel with Serge Kahn, *Ahead of the Pack* (2015). Many of the exhibit's pieces are shown and explained in this reference. More detail on some of the items and their expeditions can be found in:

Ice Cap News (journal of the American Society of Polar Philatelists), issues: Mar-Apr 1979 (pp.84-5), Nov-Dec 1984 (pp. 266-7), Oct-Dec 1992 (pp. 180-9), Oct-Dec 1996 (pp. 136-9), Apr-Jun 1997 (pp. 52-4), Apr-Jun 1999 (pp. 28-36), Oct-Dec 2004 (pp. 100-06), Apr-Jun 2005 (pp. 36-43), Jan-Mar 2009 (pp. 4-13), Jan-Mar 2010 (pp. 4-10), Jan-Mar 2013 (pp. 4-11).

Hal Vogel, "A Double Extraordinary Polar Expedition," *Congress Book* 1992 (pp. 149-77). In-depth study of "Greely" 1881-84 material.

Hal Vogel, *Essence of Polar Philately* (2008). This delineates polar philately and explains "Heroic Age."

EXHIBIT HISTORY: StampShow'09 Gold, Adelaide (Australia) 2010, Gold + Polar Class Grand (pre-LG era). LG: GASS'21 +Reserve Grand, Sarasota'22, ARIPEX'22 + Reserve Grand; St. Louis'22, Philatelic Show'22; NAPEX'22 + Grand; MILCOPEX'22 + Grand.

American Heroic Age Polar Expeditions

In A Hurry? Just read the BOLD FACE text for minimum understanding.

PURPOSE

Show **progression of material from polar expeditions (involving entire Arctic and Antarctic) by Americans, -- as well as expeditions by other than Americans -- to just the American polar regions, through** all three periods of the physically and philatelically challenging **Heroic Age (-1924)** of polar expeditions, that solidified this portion of our polar exploration heritage.

BACKGROUND

The **Heroic Age (before 1924) of Polar exploration** is the **most important** of polar exploration's three eras. The oldest of Polar exploration's periods is significant, **because it established the foundation for all the polar expeditions that would follow**. This phase also contains the core of polar expeditions' legendary heritage. Polar exploration's Heroic Age unquestionably is **the dominant polar exploration period for both tragedy and triumph**.

"Americans" came late to the polar sphere, **but quickly became** entwined and **influential** in its historical fabric that eventually evolved into a major polar presence. As with **"Americans," Arctic North America (Alaska and Northern Canada)** and sub-Antarctic **South America (lower Patagonia)** also **evolved into major polar expeditionary sectors**.

SCOPE

The exhibit shows material from **polar expeditions with geographic and/or scientific exploration components** that were **led, sponsored or significantly influenced by "Americans"** (residents of North or South America), **as well as by any national to Arctic North America (Alaska, Canadian far north) or lower sub-Antarctic South America (Patagonia) during** all three phases of the **Heroic Age** (i.e., up to 1924) of polar exploration.

RARITY AND CONDITION

This was an extraordinary time that yields equally remarkable material. Few Heroic Era polar expeditions even have extant material. That which does exist may not be readily identifiable and hardly ever was originally intended for philatelic purposes. **Most is "archival-like" material that survived accidentally** and saw normal (for its time and purpose) handling and abuse. It is **challenging to find such items, regardless of condition**.

HIGHLIGHTED MATERIAL

Although all this material shares a similarly extraordinary challenge factor, **especially scarce and unique items have this explained in RED text**.

EXHIBIT PLAN

1. **Early** Period: To 1878
2. **Middle** Period: 1879-1902
3. **Late** Period: 1903-1924

Scans

Scans and copies of items are noted.
All "image" scans are from originals
in the exhibitor's collection.



29 December 1851 New York City stampless 3c prepaid (up to 3,000 mile inland rate) **mailing to American sealer captain and "discoverer" (1820) of Antarctica, Nathaniel B. Palmer, to his Stonington, Connecticut, residence.**

No mail known from Palmer's earlier, Antarctic exploratory period.