

## Author's Notes and Comments on *Usage History of the Pumpkin Envelopes*

### Introduction:

Stamped envelopes have long been one of the most overlooked areas of US philately, however, they are the only other postal issues that serve the same purpose as regular adhesive stamps.

Please refer to the Title Page for a brief history of these envelopes.

This exhibit focuses on usage. The 10c 1861's were specific purpose while the other high denomination envelopes were more general purpose. The common threads being design, and the continuum of use from 1861 through the early 1870's.

The author has been gathering census data for the high value envelopes for over 15 years. 10c California rate examples are relatively common, likely several hundred exist. 10c steamship rate examples including all destinations and origins are somewhat less common but likely number 150+. By contrast, total known Bi-color use examples number around 50 for all four denominations combined, and for the 1865 9c & 12c-40c 1865 used examples likely number 150-200 for all 6 values combined.

Paste-up's are a usage peculiarity unique to stamped envelope express usage. The express companies were required by law to use stamped envelopes, not stamps, for any mail that they carried. Essentially, complete envelopes, usually with express franks, were used as large stamps to pay the postage and express fees. In many cases, multiple envelopes were pasted together, with only one being addressed. When later separated, we find canceled envelopes with no address - the common unaddressed paste-up.

### EEF line item specific notes and comments:

#### Treatment: Title, plan, development, balance, comprehensiveness:

The exhibit follows a traditional plan for a usage exhibit as applied to stamped envelopes entires.

Organization is by usage rather than by denomination, as detailed on the Title Page. Categories may include both postal and express uses. Secondary organization is by point of origin. With very limited use, where the envelopes were used can shed light on distribution.

Major usage categories are as follows: **Frame 1:** 10c Domestic Rate for 3000+ mi. ("California" rate); **Frames 2&3:** 3c Domestic Rate; **Frame 4:** Transatlantic and Transpacific Mail; **Frame 5:** Pan-American Mail. Each frame is one 36" x 48" page, some with group boundary lines. Within each group, it is not necessary to follow any specific order. Each sub group tells an independent piece of the story. Certain groups use colored borders and text to tie the group together.

No areas have been omitted for lack of material. Not all denominations are represented in each usage category. In many cases, no examples exist. Generally, 9c, 12c, 18c and 24c were used for multiple 3c rates, while 20c, 30c and 40c covered multiple 10c rates. The 20c Bi-colors are an enigma. The census currently lists (4) used examples. When issued, they would have paid 2x the 10c California rate, yet only two examples are known, both westbound Wells Fargo (one shown here), with no eastbound known, postal or express. This in contrast to the companion 10c 1861 envelopes which saw extensive eastbound use. Many of the 30c & 40c examples are Wells Fargo 3x & 4x 10c steamship rate, again with numerous 10c 1861's extant, but no 20c Bi-color Wells Fargo steamship uses are known. The mystery is compounded by the fact that more 20c's were issued than the other Bi-color denominations. Is there a hoard tucked away somewhere?

#### Importance: Subject and Philatelic:

To the best of the author's knowledge, this is the first exhibit to focus solely the on the "Pumpkins". Very little has been written on these envelopes. I would venture to say that many who view this exhibit have never seen some of these envelopes before. Attention is called to the under appreciated rarity of this material. Once again, these are regular postal issues, valid to this day for postage. I know of no other postal issues which are this rare and less recognized.

One of the purposes of this exhibit is to raise awareness of these and other Classic Era US Stamped Envelopes. The innovative presentation methods, which often cause viewers to stop for a look, indirectly

draw attention to the material.

The importance of *Unused Printed Address examples* where very few used examples exist is noted. The printed addresses imply at least moderate quantities, and thus, these illustrate potentially significant uses of which no survivors exist, adding to the usage history.

**Knowledge: Selection. Correctness:**

**Personal Study and Research: Analysis, evaluation, study, research**

The author has been collecting, studying, and gathering census data and images of high denomination envelopes for the past 15 years. This is an ongoing effort which will be published in the future. The Use Categories (Outline) and the *Census and Rarity* notes at the top right of frame 1 are drawn from the authors census.

The author also discovered a previously unpublished letter in the National Archives from George Nesbitt dated Feb 1861 which established that 12¢ - 40¢ envelopes were in development at that date, and would have been part of the 1860 “Star Die” issue if not for Civil War demonetization. He has also studied the design progression which ties directly to the Star Dies. This will be covered fully in upcoming full traditional exhibits, but was summarized in his “The 30¢ Nesbitt Envelopes of 1865” single frame exhibit.

**Rarity: Challenge, difficulty of acquisition:**

Rarity can take many forms. Arguably, at the top of the list, especially for a traditional collection, is *Visual Rarity*. For an item to be a *Visual Rarity*, it must be instantly recognizable without tools or specialized knowledge, solely by major visual features such as design, denomination, etc. *Visual Rarities* can generally be spotted from a distance. *Visual Rarity* extends to ‘rarity of use’ if we add the qualifier *used* to an item which fits the above description. As we go down the rarity scale, more and more qualifiers are needed, (the only *something* used from *somewhere* to *somewhere else* in *some year* etc), until we eventually reach the level of *Contrived Rarity*.

All envelopes in this exhibit are of major catalog numbers (U40-U45 & U66-U73), distinguished solely by design and denomination. Aside from the 10c’s, the surviving quantities easily qualify as *Visual Rarities of Use*. The only descriptors necessary are for example, *Used U43*. Rarity is then compounded with use category – postal, foreign, etc.

Referencing the Bi-colors, as a point of comparison, consider a similar regular issue, the 1861 90¢ adhesive stamp, ignoring the rare variants, and looking only at the more common #72. *Used, off cover* #72's are available by the dozens, but *on cover* #72's are iconic rarities. Note that (351,150) #72's were issued as compared to (33,150) 1861 Bi-colors, and that the Herzog and Starnes census (Chronicle, Nov 1988) lists (65) #72 covers - a similar number to used examples of the entire Bi-color issue. Both are regular postal issues, and both are visual rarities of use, one well recognize, the other not. Will the (50-60) in a relatively young census increase with time? Probably, but not substantially. Will the Bi-colors ever attain the same status as the #72's? Unlikely. Long standing preferences are hard to change, and the exotic destinations and rates associated with the #72's add a big wow factor. Still, the used Bi-color entires, and their high denomination companions, are truly some of the greatest unrecognized rarities of US philately.

**Condition: in light of quality attainable:**

Condition issues exist on some of the material shown. Given the wide variety of uses shown and the rarity, few options exist related to condition. Several items were cleaned or repaired. These are marked.

**Presentation: Layout, free from distractions:**

The exhibit consists of (5) 36 x 48” pages. The large page size offers far more flexibility of layout, especially important for large envelopes. A banner type title page (4” x 36”) is used which is less disruptive to the subject area.

Red boxes are used for exceptional items along with red rarity notes in captions.

Since our eyes are drawn to contrast and vivid color, dark shades are used to avoid distraction. 80% gray is used instead of black to lower contrast. 70% gray text is used for supplementary information to further de-emphasize.

# Usage History of the “Pumpkin” Envelopes

## How and Where They Were Used

**The “Pumpkin” Envelopes:** The Civil War demonetization necessitated new designs for US 3c, 6c, and 10c stamped envelopes. In addition, 12¢, 20¢, 24¢, and 40¢ values were issued featuring a horizontal oval design printed in two colors with positive lettering. Commonly referred to as the “Bi-colors”, these were the first US stamped envelopes greater than 10¢, and the first US multi-color “stamp” designs of any kind. These were in development before the start of the Civil War, and would have been part of the 1960 Star Die issue but for demonetization. The new 3c and 6c envelopes took a rather utilitarian design. The 10c however took the more elaborate design of the Bi-colors but in green only. All were issued on Aug 7, 1861

In 1865, 9c, 18c, and 30c denominations were to be added. As a cost saving measure, new, single color dies were produced for the 9c, 12c, 18c, 24c, 30c, and 40c values. These retained the horizontal oval design, slightly larger than the 1861 issues, and with conventional, negative text. These were issued in December of 1865.

The 1861 & 1865 9c-40c envelopes are commonly referred to as the “Pumpkin” envelopes for their pumpkin like appearance, which is unique to this group. The 10c's were issued in letter size only, while the others were official size only.

**Usage:** The 10c's were issued for the over 3000 mi rate and discontinued when that rate ended on July 1, 1863. They were then re-issued in 1865 for the 1864 “blanket” steamship rate. In addition, the 10c's saw limited use for transatlantic convention rates.

The official statement of purpose for the other high values was for ‘larger items and foreign mail’. It is commonly believed that they were issued at the request of the express companies who were required to use stamped envelopes and regularly carried larger items. Most usage was commercial, with low survival rates. Indeed, quantities extant of most used high denomination entires are less than 30, some less then 10.

**This Exhibit** illustrates the use of the “Pumpkin” envelopes. As seen above, the 10c's were issued for specific purposes, and saw significant use. For the other values, the purpose was less defined, and the very low extant population adds a certain mystery, begging the questions “How” and “Where”. Organization is first by usage (rate) to address the question of “How”, then by origin to address the question of “Where”. Postal and Express usage is intermixed so as not to distract from “Where”. In certain instances, special cases are added. All know usage categories are illustrated. Origins are roughly in proportion to extant population and illustrate that distribution was primarily to San Francisco (and the West Coast) and New York, with a small group seen from New Orleans and the deep south. Census data provides details of known quantities. In 1875, when forming the collection for the Centennial Exposition, any remaining old stock in Post Offices was called in, with an unknown balance destroyed.

### Outline:

- |                                          |                                                                                                                                                                                                             |                                  |                                                                                                  |
|------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| ● <b>Introduction:</b>                   | Design Progression (Frame 1)<br>1861 Designs<br>1865 Designs<br>Express Company Mail                                                                                                                        | ● <b>Domestic 3c Rate:</b>       | Nevada (Frame 3)<br>Montana<br>New Orleans and Deep South<br>Misc Origins<br>New York, Westbound |
| ● <b>Domestic 10c Rate over 3000 mi:</b> | California Eastbound<br>Eastbound Routings<br>Unusual Uses<br>Langton's Pioneer Express<br>Nevada Eastbound<br>Other Eastbound<br>Westbound<br>Pony Express (Frame 2)<br>Official use of 10c                | ● <b>Transatlantic:</b>          | Germany (Frame 4)<br>France, Convention<br>France, Non-Convention<br>Switzerland<br>UPU Rate     |
| ● <b>Domestic 3c Rate:</b>               | Postal, California Eastbound<br>Postal, Intra-California<br>Express, Intra-California<br>Express, Californai to Oregon<br>Express, California to New Orleans<br>Express, California to East Coast<br>Oregon | ● <b>China and Japan</b>         | Outbound<br>Inbound Transpacific<br>Japan<br>China<br>Express                                    |
|                                          |                                                                                                                                                                                                             | ● <b>British North Am.</b>       | Outbound (Frame 5)<br>Victoria to US<br>Victoria to Europe via US                                |
|                                          |                                                                                                                                                                                                             | ● <b>Pan-American Steamship:</b> | Inbound<br>Outbound                                                                              |
|                                          |                                                                                                                                                                                                             | ● <b>Ship Mail:</b>              | Inbound                                                                                          |

**Census & Rarity:** The author has recorded the following quantities of used 9c & 12c–40c entires. Certain data is still being compiled as noted.  
A full census of the 10c 1861 & 1865's is not practical. Known quantities of selected 10c entires are noted with the envelopes. WF = Wells Fargo

**Bi-colors:**

- **12¢ (29) = (8) Postal & (21) WF; Incl. (4) Transatlantic;** Issued Qty: 8,900, 3 printings
- **20¢ Not fully resolved, but certainly less than (10);** Issued qty: 10,850, 4 printings
- **24¢ (7) = (2) Postal & (5) WF; Incl. (1) Transatlantic;** Issued qty: 8,800, 2 printings
- **40¢ (8) = (7) WF & (1) WF / USPOD conjunctive;** Issued Qty: 4,600, 3 printings.

**1865 Issue:**

- **9¢ Under review;** Issued Qty: 83,000, 19 printings
- **12¢ Under review;** Issued Qty: 102,250, 16 printings
- **18¢ Under review;** Issued Qty: 31,600, 10 printings
- **24¢ Under review;** Issued Qty: 34,450, 9 printings
- **30¢ (20) = (7) Postal & (13) WF; Incl.: (2) Domestic; (4) Trans-Atlantic; (10) Pan American;**  
Issued Qty: 26,250, 8 printings
- **40¢ (6) = (2) Postal Transatlantic & (4) Wells Fargo;** Issued Qty: 21,000, 9 printings

An unknown qty was destroyed in 1875 when forming the collection for the Centennial Exhibition.  
By far, the largest surviving group of these envelopes is mint cut squares.  
Used entires are far more rare than mint entires.

## Notes:

1) The actual title page is a 4" x 34" banner across the top of frame 1. It has been reformatted here for convenience.

2) Final census data is being reviewed for certain items, and will be updated.