

EXHIBIT SYNOPSIS

October 2020

The Fort Snelling Sesquicentennial Stamp and Its First Day Covers

Importance of the Issue

The United States stamp commemorating the 150th anniversary of Minnesota's Fort Snelling was issued in October 1970. Issuance of the stamp was the culmination of a campaign that began in 1959 by a group of prominent Minnesota stamp collectors and later included the highest levels of state and federal government. The stamp was twice rejected before the persistence of its promoters and political considerations made it a reality.

Scope of the Exhibit/Treatment

This is a traditional first day cover exhibit. The goal of the exhibit is to tell the story of the stamp, with an emphasis on the many first day covers that exist for this issue. As prelude to the FDCs, the stamp's history is examined, beginning with an original print of the 1959 design concept. The stamp's final design was unveiled in September 1970 (a month before the first day) and ephemera related to the unveiling are included, such as an invitation from Minnesota's governor to attend the ceremony. Other key items include a plate block signed by the designer, a scarce phosphor-omitted error on a FDC, and numerous production freaks that are visually striking.

Shifting to first day covers, examples range from mass-produced, mostly single color cachets from the likes of Art Craft and Artmaster to hand-painted gems (Maul, Dyer, Ulrich) produced in low quantities. ***Dorothy Knapp did just two Fort Snelling FDCs, and one of them is here.*** Promotional FDCs not aimed at collectors are well represented. Unusual and/or unique covers made by collectors for their personal collections, and ephemera postmarked on the first day also appear. The more significant items are in red borders.

The exhibit concludes with postal uses, both domestic and international. Highlights of the latter are two covers sent to the USSR and one to Nepal.

Difficulty of Acquisition

First Day Covers: Despite being a modern stamp issued 50 years ago, many cachets for this stamp are obscure (e.g., Upper Landing) and not often seen today. Also challenging are promotional FDCs used for advertising purposes and not marketed to collectors, several of which are here. The first cachet of the Minnesota Historical Society is present, with examples signed by the cachet designer and the governor of Minnesota. Also included is the unique original artwork stencil of Ralph Dyer, a premier producer of hand drawn and painted FDCs of the era.

Archival Material: From the Art Craft archives the exhibit includes the original artwork, the cachet mock-up and the steel printing plate. These items are unique. The cachet mock-up is particularly interesting, and did not come into the market until 2019.

Postal Usages: The stamp was issued at the first-class letter rate, and most postal use was for that purpose, albeit for only seven months before the first-class rate increased. Other uses are scarce and difficult to acquire because (1) being a commemorative, the stamp saw

limited use for other classes of mail or special services, and (2) postal use covers of a modern stamp are often of little interest to dealers and thus generally scarce in the marketplace. Despite these difficulties, a range of domestic usages are presented, as well as singles and multiples used to meet a variety of international rates.

Research and Personal Study

The Mellone catalog is the best general reference for first day cachets, but those volumes end in 1969. With no authoritative published work of cachets for 1970 and beyond, it's up to individual collectors to document designs. This exhibit is a comprehensive study of this issue and its FDCs, and is the first step in sharing that information with the philatelic community.

What You Won't Find in the Exhibit

- Die proofs (if they exist at all) and similar BEP archival materials are not known in private hands.
- The promotional #10 envelope first cachet of Snelling and Snelling (an employment recruiting firm) is still being sought. (The firm's #6¾ promotional FDC is included.)
- The exhibitor is still searching for pre-first day uses. None have been reported, but they may exist.

Exhibit History

A four-frame presentation of the exhibit had limited showings from 2013 to 2016 and was then retired. The exhibit was revived for the 50th anniversary of the stamp and is now at six frames, entirely rewritten and remounted. The scope of the exhibit is now more complete, with more paraphilatelic material, additional scarce FDCs (e.g., Knapp), and more varied postal usages.

Sources

- The definitive work on the history of this issue: "Fort Snelling 6-cent Commemorative Postage Stamp Issued Oct. 17, 1970 at Fort Snelling, Minn." Faries, Belmont, July 1973. *S.P.A. Journal*, pp. 671-683.*
- Another useful article, but not as comprehensive as Faries: "Birth of the Fort Snelling Stamp." Hassell, Wayne, 1970, in the show program for the Trans-Mississippi Philatelic Society's 37th Annual Convention & Exhibition.*
- "The Story of Fort Snelling." Galchutt, Dave, Nov.-Dec. 1973. *Topical Time*, pp. 20-21.*
- *Mellone's First Day Cover Photo Encyclopedia of First Cachets Revealed—Volume 4, 1970 thru 1979* by Richard A. Monty, Mark W. Goodson, Wendy L. Doyle and Norman L. Elrod (2005, FDC Publishing Co.). Errors in this flawed catalog are noted in the exhibit.
- Information on individual cachetmakers gleaned from various issues of *First Days*. The entire *First Days* archive is available for purchase at www.afdcs.org or can be reviewed on-site at the APRL.

* Download articles at: <http://tinyurl.com/snellingstamp>