

## The Gentleman From Pennsylvania

### EXHIBIT SYNOPSIS

*This is a special study, not display class.* In this case a study of the fifteenth President of the United States, James Buchanan. Dealing with both the people and events impacting Buchanan during his long public service career, the exhibit is as much a story of the times as it is a biography.

#### STRUCTURE & CONVENTIONS

Each piece in the exhibit relates philatelically to the theme and only pieces "of the time" are displayed. Each item reflects a small fragment of nineteenth century United States history. By stringing these bits and pieces of history together, the larger story is told. At a minimum, the relationship of the cover to the story is established by the date of the postmark. In most instances the date and place of the postmark are integral. The envelope in some cases is also significant but in no case is an envelope design used without a relevant postal marking. In the case of free franks and addressees, it is the person rather than the date that is important. Some covers carried letters of historical significance. A couple of examples of the conventions:

- On July 4, 1861 Lincoln delivered a speech blaming Buchanan for the lack of readiness of Union troops. This is illustrated by two July 4, 1861 covers from Confederate Virginia and South Carolina.
- Buchanan's father arrived from Ireland to Philadelphia in the summer of 1784. This is illustrated by an August 1784 cover postmarked in Philadelphia.

This is not unlike finding a cover dated December 7, 1941, all the better if from Hawaii, or September 11, 2001 from New York.

The story is told from the perspective of Buchanan so text is in the first person with actual words of Buchanan liberally used. Buchanan's words are in ***boldface italics***.

#### ORGANIZATION

Organization is chronological. Major periods in the career of Buchanan are identified and then specific events illustrated which occurred during that particular era.

#### SCARCITY OF MATERIAL

Much of the exhibited material would be considered scarce. Difficulty of acquisition is compounded because most material must be date related. As an example, Washington state territorial usages are scarce. For purposes of this exhibit, it must be specific to the time of occupation of the San Juan Islands by U.S. troops (spring 1860). Events of statehood are illustrated by territorial and statehood usages that bracket the date of admission as closely as possible (late territorial, early statehood).

#### CHALLENGES OF THE EXHIBIT

Unlike most exhibits in this class, the exhibit does not tell a philatelic story. It tells a political history with philatelic materials. The fundamental challenge of the exhibit is to bring a balance of history and postal history, to bring to life the events occurring as these letters passed through the mails and the feeling of history they convey. Another dimension of balance is to tell the story with varied "philatelic formats"- free franks, letters, date-related postal history, so that it does not appear a collection of autographs or historical documents. To tell the early part of Buchanan's life, there is little choice but to use date-related material. Since the exhibit concerns political history it becomes a significant challenge to demonstrate philatelic knowledge. Routes and rates are covered only as they pertain to the story.

*Since each depicted event requires some historical perspective, the exhibit tends to look copy heavy. For time-pressed judges, the story is told with relative clarity by reading only section headings, cover captions and the time line at the bottom of each page.*

#### OMISSIONS

There are three important periods of Buchanan's life for which no material has yet been found - the courtship and death of Buchanan's fiancée, Ann Coleman, Buchanan's inauguration and the Dred Scott Decision.

#### SIGNIFICANT PIECES

The exhibit will always be a work in progress. As there is no specific philatelic material listing for a study such as this, the exhibit expands as new items are located and existing material replaced with better examples. Among the philatelically interesting (and in some cases significant) items are free franks of 10 U.S. Presidents and a Queen (Adams, Jackson, Polk, Van Buren, Pierce, Fillmore, Monroe, Buchanan(5), Lincoln, Johnson, Queen Victoria); slavery advertising cover; Jefferson Davis free frank; Confederate patriotic with Union stamp; early Pony Express; 1851 issue to Nicaragua (only known piece of extant mail from the Walker Wars). There are Buchanan franks and/or letters from each elective office- Representative, Senator, President and retirement.

Significant covers are surrounded by a second box.