

World Rarities and Uniquities

The idea for this assemblage came several years ago as I was idly reviewing some of the exciting items I have accumulated over the course of 55 years of stamp and cover collecting. Some were obtained with a specific purpose in mind – usually to include in one of my exhibits, or to illustrate articles for Linn's Stamp News. Others were random discoveries, costing next to nothing, and having nothing to do with a specific collection. I just liked them. A few come from collections my father, Howard Hotchner, put together over his 60 years of joyful collecting.

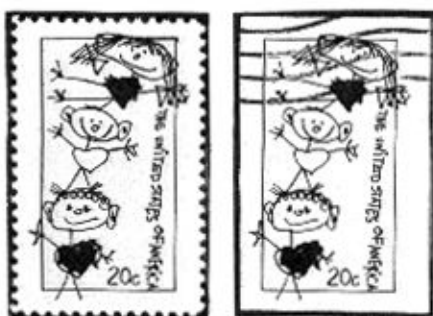
On these pages you will see the smallest recorded cover in U.S. philately, one of only ⁷ known surviving covers of the Pan Am 103 disaster over Lockerbie, Scotland, examples of early foreign pre-perforation separations, reflections of American history, the first self-sticks released by the US Government (for use as Customs baggage stickers), the 15c John Paul Jones perf 12x12 (a modern rarity), the first cacheted first day cover, Confederate States unofficial perforations, and more – much more. If you have seen this exhibit before, this showing has over 30 new pages!

Some of the material in these frames has become far more expensive than I could afford today. I'm grateful I got them when I did! Other stamps and covers remain inexpensive – costing much less than \$100 per item in many cases – but I would wager you won't find a dozen similar examples of those items in all of philately, including museums, no matter how long or hard you look. I include them here because I'd like to redefine "scarce" material to include that which is near impossible to find, not just material that has a big price tag!

I hope you enjoy looking at the stamps and covers, and the history (both philatelic and general) they represent half as much as I have enjoyed collecting and doting over them.

– John M. Hotchner

Trash and Treasure: U. S. Printer's Waste Escapes - 1984 and 1987



Family Unity - 1984
Normal and imperf single



William Faulkner - 1987
Normal and imperf single

These stamps were printed by the Bureau of Engraving and Printing, which had a waste paper contract with a firm that was to haul away incomplete and defective waste. However, employees of the firm found printed waste, which they tried to sell as errors, or for use as postage. They were caught and most of the waste was recovered. Some few examples did escape. Family Unity is tagged. Faulkner is not. Scott notes the existence of both as waste.

1914 --The First American Compound Perforations - An Error!

In 1914, the Post Office Department responded to complaints about the then current, too-easy-to-separate, perf 12x12 regular issue by replacing it with the same designs, perforated 10 x 10 on all sides. The change in perforating wheels was done gradually, one machine being changed at a time. A small quantity of sheets were perforated in one direction with old perf 12, and in the other direction with the new perf 10.

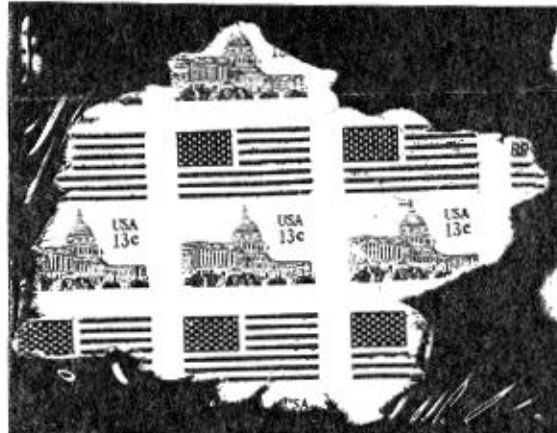


There are 35 reported copies of the 1 cent 12 x 10. Eight to ten of these have the inverted "Chicago, Illinois" precancel. Approximately 60 copies of the 1c 10 x 12 have been reported; most of which are precancelled "Dayton, Ohio". Shown is the only reported copy precancelled "Buffalo, New York". The 2 cent 12 x 10 is the 6th example reported.

Part Perforated and Unperforated U.S. Waste



Not perforated horizontally
Issue of 1875 - Printed by the Continental Bank Note Co.



Not perforated
13c+6c Booklet of 1977

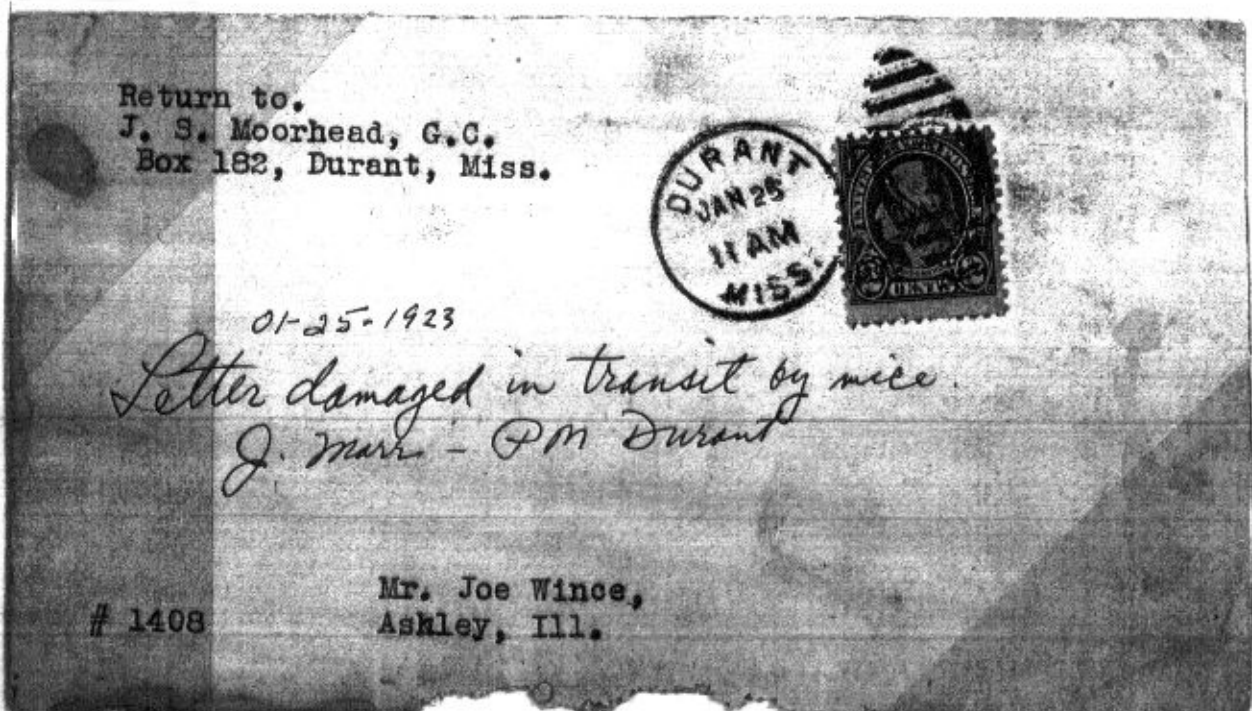
No legitimate imperforate material is known for this issue. This piece is from an 832-subject sheet prepared in booklet format, so it contains parts of two, maybe three, booklet panes. It has both colors and the tagging, but no gum or perforations. At this time, waste material was partially destroyed in the Bureau, then carried away to another site to be burned. This piece was picked up in the street outside the Bureau; having fallen out of a dumpster.

Postal Handling Anomalies

Of all the problems that can occur to damage and delay the mail, these take the cake:



All mail leaving Honolulu from early December of 1899 to late April of 1900 was fumigated for bubonic plague through clipped corners. This was done at the Main Post Office by exposure for three hours to sulphur dioxide fumes.



"Letter damaged in transit by mice. J. Marr, PM Durant"

John Paul Jones - Where Are The Rest? - USA 1979

15c John Paul Jones sheets were among the commemoratives perforated by the American Bank Note Co. under contract to the U.S. Postal Service, on a McAdam L-Perforator, with perf 12 wheels. When the perforating wheels began to wear, ABN ordered replacements. It was not noticed that perf 11 wheels were received. They were installed on the perforator as needed; first the horizontal wheel, then the vertical.



12 x 12

150 copies reported
from A0001-05 only



11 x 12

120,000,000 estimated
from both sets of plates



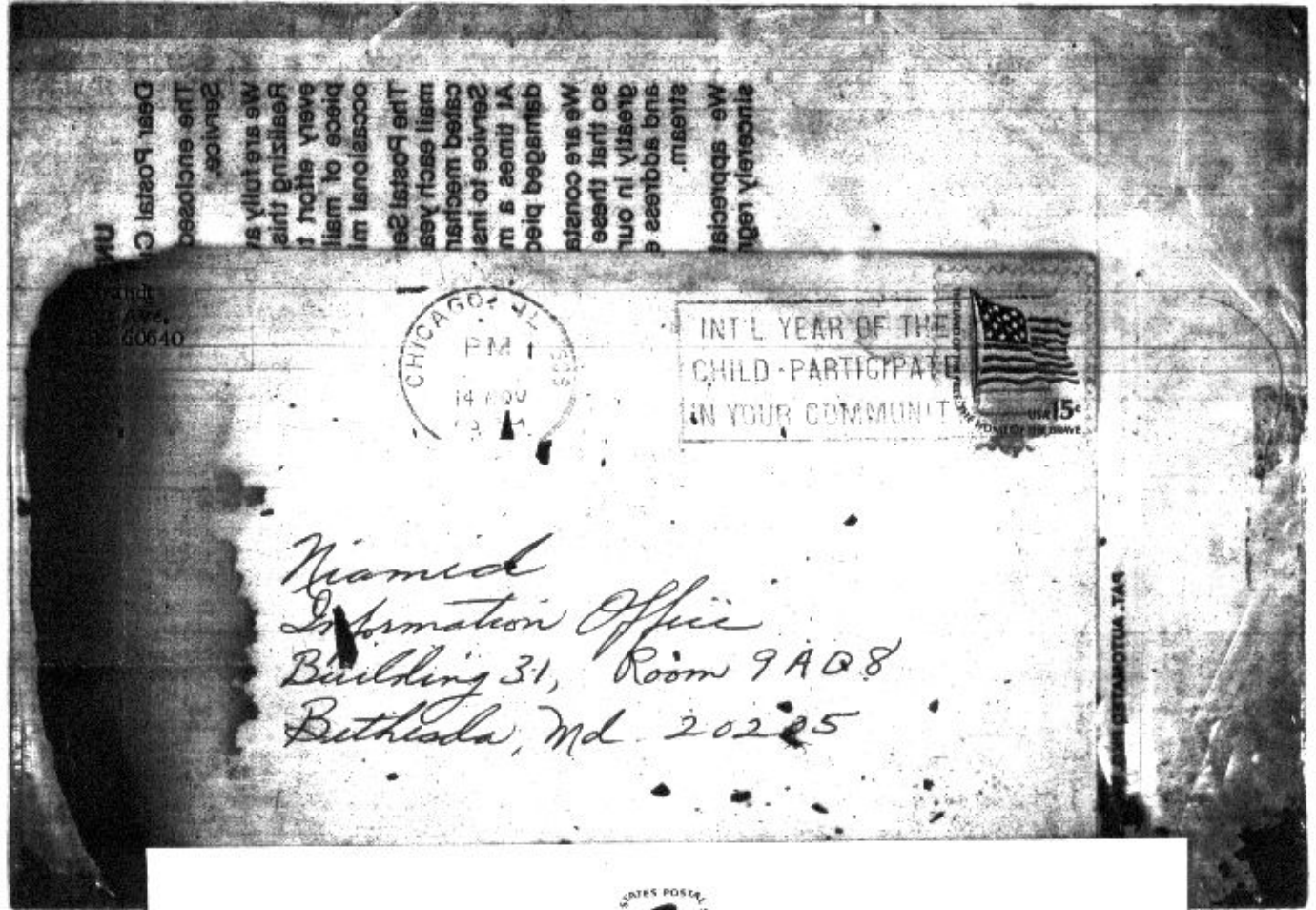
11 x 11

40,000,000 estimated
from A0006-10 only

Of the 150 12 x 12 copies known, 100 copies were found as two full lower left panes, and 10 more in one upper left plate block. Initial reports from American Bank Note Co. were that 30% of the run had been produced as 12 x 12. This was later reduced to 12.5% or 21.8 million stamps. WHERE ARE THEY?

The Unabomber Tries to Bring Down An Airliner

In a series of nearly 20 incidents between 1978 and 1997, the Unabomber became the longest running serial bomber in U.S. history. Early in his rampage, on November 15, 1979, a mail bomb he sent exploded and ignited a fire in the cargo compartment of American Airlines flight 444 from Chicago to Washington, DC. There are three reported pieces of mail surviving from that incident; of which this is the first reported.



INSPECTOR IN CHARGE
Washington, DC 20013

November 19, 1979

Dear Postal Customer:

The enclosed mail was damaged as a result of an explosion aboard an aircraft enroute from Chicago to Washington, DC. Investigation by Postal Inspectors is continuing to identify those responsible.

We regret the inconvenience this may have caused.

Sincerely,

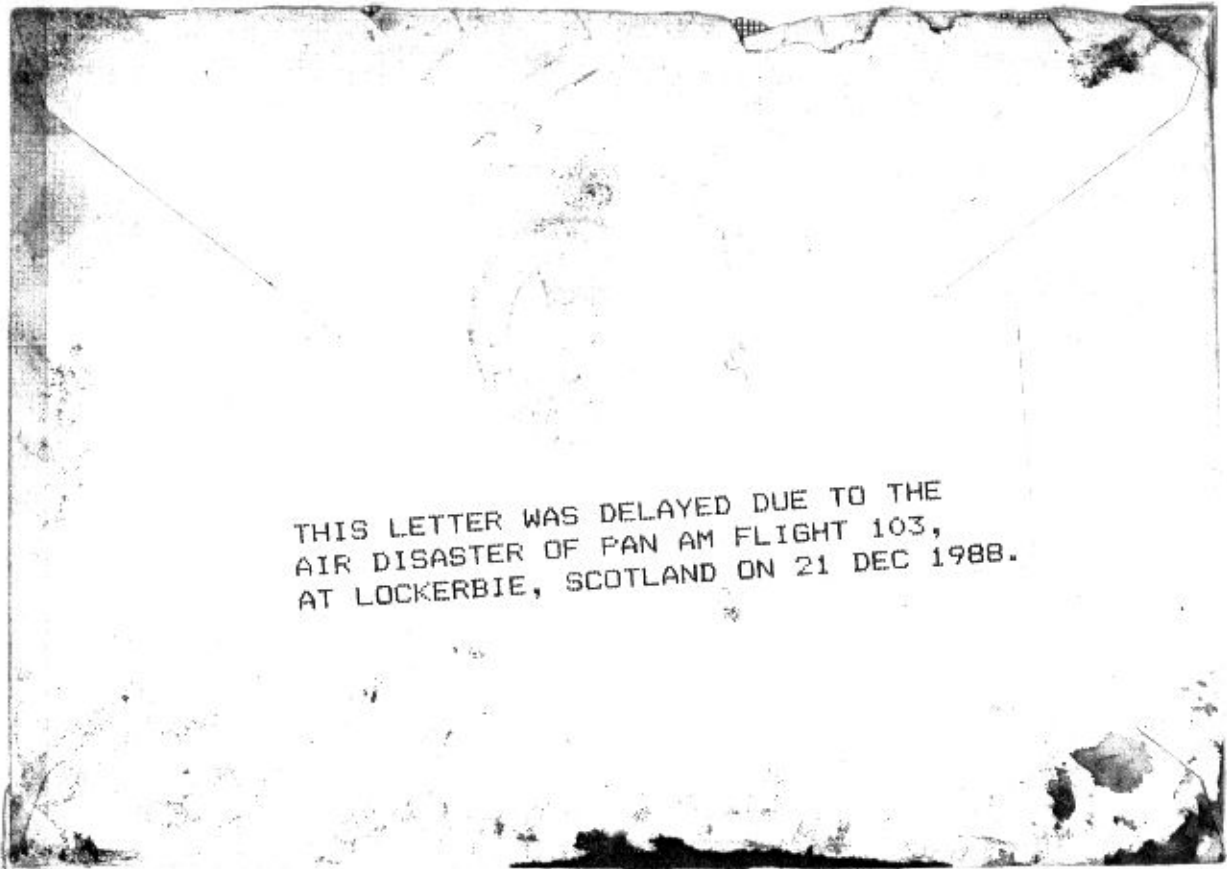
T. J. Koerber

T. J. Koerber
Postal Inspector in Charge
Washington, DC

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Pan Am 103

Crash - 1988



This is one of three reported surviving covers from the most celebrated plane crash in American history, Pan American Flight 103, which was blasted out of the sky by a terrorist's bomb over Lockerbie, Scotland, on December 21, 1988, with the loss of all 259 passengers and crew and 11 on the ground. More covers may turn up, but it's been 15 years, and investigators searched for more than 100 miles around the site. By comparison, 150 pieces of mail survived the 1936 Hindenburg crash; and 84 stamps still exist from the 1918 24c Jenny invert.

The envelope was retained as evidence by crash investigators, and when released, it was given (as APO mail) to the military postal authorities. The Fleet Post Office at New York placed the label on the back, nearly three months after the crash; and the Christmas card from a serviceman in Germany was duly delivered.

mgp
F2 1708
A15 NY
09719-5365

photocopy of
the front

Midland mpo Robert Briggs
1903 W. Louisiana
Midland, TX

79707