

# THE 9-CENT ALAMO STAMP AND ITS FIRST DAY COVERS

## SYNOPSIS

November 2017

### KNOWLEDGE AND RESEARCH:

Gillis King was appointed chairman for the Alamo 9-cent stamp's first day ceremony by the United States Post Office Department (USPOD). He also represented the Texas Heritage Foundation, Inc.

The first day of issue for the Alamo stamp was June 14, 1956 in San Antonio, Texas.

Included in the exhibit are some letters from the USPOD giving King planning details for the first day event. On issue day he received a Commemorative Stamp Album, ceremonial programs, and some other memorabilia.

The Alamo 9-cent stamp was issued to pay the first class rate on three-ounce letters. It is generally shown in this presentation making up the required postage on mail. Some material has late usage as the stamps were used until supplies ran out.

A pre-dated cover or a first day cover from a place other than San Antonio has not been found. Unofficial towns have not been located. A Dorothy Knapp cachet has not surfaced. The earliest usage is June 21, 1956 to West Germany (Chapter 20, Page 5). The latest use found is January 28, 1977 (Chapter 21, Page 1).

### PENN FDC DESIGNER QUESTIONED



Mark Learner saw this FDC in the exhibit at AMERICOVER 2015 and contacted me about the designer. The cover was identified as a “William S. Penn, Jr.”

The James T. McCusker, Inc. auction catalogue had the artist identified as “William Penn,” and on the sleeve when I received the cover, “Mrs. William S. Penn, Jr.” Notes on reverse are McCusker’s lot number “629,” and “ZYOS.”

Mark, having doubts about the artist, researched “Penn” for definitive information..

He found William S. Penn’s son (born in 1949) by the same name. Mark telephoned and e-mailed him. Penn acknowledged that his father collected FDCs.

Penn said he was very young when the covers were produced and he had no knowledge of them. He was sure that his father could not “draw a crooked line.” His mother was more artistic and a more likely possibility—Penn had no firsthand knowledge that she had ever produced a FDC. Penn’s sister does not remember either of their parents producing the covers; and noted the address is not her mother’s handwriting.

Penn concluded that neither his mother nor father was the artist behind these covers.

With a third party cachet maker likely, this FDC has been designated “Designer Unknown” (Chapter 12, Page 27).

More information about the designer of this FDC was sought in Alan Warren’s “Question Box” in *First Days* (January-February 2016).

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**CONDITION AND RARITY:**

There is stunning paraphilatelic material that can only be found in this exhibit. A selection of the letters regarding the ceremony from the USPOD to King is some of this material.

Buck Winn's original artwork for the official cachet is shown. He was designer of the 1945 Texas Statehood Centennial stamp (Scott number 938). Displayed are the photographic production steps for the official cachet.

At the ceremony, 11 dignitaries received USPOD Commemorative Stamp Albums. Fifty programs were printed for the ceremony participants (14) and for give away that day (12). San Antonio Postmaster Daniel Quill and Gillis King were given the remaining programs. The number of albums and programs given away that day explains why they are elusive.

Condition of the first day covers is generally good. Some have been carried in the mail.

Shown are outstanding usages. Postal history is in good condition. Some legal-size envelopes often held multiple pages, and are distressed at the edges.

**PRESENTATION:**

The first heading in each chapter is in a lilac strip. Pages are headed with the chapters and page numbers. There are 21 chapters. The chapters are not equal in length in order to better follow the story. Items of special interest have dark lilac borders.

**MEDAL LEVELS:**

The material was first shown in AUSPEX 1982 and received a local third award. A SESCOAL 1991 bronze. The Alamo was awarded a TEXPEX 2001 gold, followed by four World Series of Philately golds. Then an AMERICOVER 2015 Grand Award; and Champion of Champions gold. A ROCKY MOUNTAIN STAMP SHOW 2017 large gold with a George Brett gold.

**REFERENCES:**

Ansink, Hal and Monty, Richard A. *Mellone's First Cachets*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition. FDC Publishing Co., Stewartsville, NJ, 1983.

Beecher, Henry W. and Wawrukiewicz, Anthony S. *U.S. Domestic Postal Rates, 1872-1993*. Shawnee-Mission, KS: The Traditions Press, 1994.

Fohn, Jane King. "Alamo 9-Cent Stamp: First Day of Issue." *First Days*, October 15, 1989, pp. 859-861.

Fohn, Jane King. "Alamo 9-Cent Stamp: First Day of Issue." *First Days*, December 1, 1989, pp. 1019-1022.

(Continued)

Fohn, Jane King. "The 9-Cent Alamo Stamp and its First-Day Covers." *The Philatelic Exhibitor*, April 2001, cover, pp 11-15.

Fohn, Jane King. "The 9-cent Alamo Stamp: The Development of an Award Winning First Day Cover Exhibit." *First Days*, January 15, 2003, pp. 9-18.

Lawrence, Ken, Eeles, C. David and Wawrukiewicz, Anthony S. *The Liberty Series*. Bellefonte, PA: American Philatelic Society, 2007.

Lerner, Mark. Telephone and e-mail contacts with William S. Penn, Jr.'s son regarding designer "Penn" FDCs. Approximately December 9, 2015 to March 25, 2016.

*The Alamo, founded in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, known as Misión San Antonio de Valero, is part of the San Antonio Missions World Heritage Site in San Antonio, Texas. The Alamo and three other missions were designated by UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) July 5, 2015.*