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William N. Wright: Watercolor Artist of the 1940s and 1950s

by David S. Zubatsky

Like so many other pre-1970 cachetmakers who handpainted their cachets, Wright's covers have been admired and collected for many years. Little has been known about his life and philatelic activities. (Figure 1. William N. Wright at age 75).



Figure 1.

With the encouragement of AFDCS member Mark Goodson, who has important computer and manual files of information about cachetmakers and their covers, I undertook the challenge of discovering what I could of Wright's life and cover production.

Because of many years of experience undertaking genealogical projects, I was able to search quickly the various vital data packages and other resources that are now available online. In addition, contact was made with Wright's only living child, Ruth W. Wanless of Salt Lake City, UT.

William Nelson Wright was born December 22, 1882, in Ogden, UT, the oldest of six children of William Henry (1860-1914) and Harriet Alfaretta Herrick Wright (1860-?). According to the various available U.S. censuses, Wright's father held a number of jobs, including being a

butcher and a laborer.

On October 7, 1907, Wright married Edna Buel Wright (1887-1979) in the Salt Lake City Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter-Day Saints (LDS) Temple. They had seven children. At William Wright's death in Ogden on February 5, 1968, after a long illness,

the obituary mentioned that two sons, three daughters, 21 grandchildren, and 19 great-grandchildren survived. (Ogden *Standard-Examiner*, Feb. 5, 1968, p. 5B).

Although William Wright held a number of jobs early in his career, including being a glazier at an Ogden paint company (Wright's 1918 World War I Draft Registration card), the bulk of his working life was spent as the Weber County auditor and deputy clerk, retiring around 1944. (July 15, 2009, Ruth W. Wanless phone interview).

Wright was very active in church activities, including being a member of the 7th LDS Ward and high priest in the Lorin Farr Stake (February 6, 1968 obituary). He and his wife were very active in local Democratic Party activities, including having voting polls at their home. ("Local Woman Will Observe 90th Birthday," Ogden,



Figure 2.

June 19, 1977, p. 14D).

When William Wright was young, his missionary responsibilities were undertaken from 1904 to 1906 in New Zealand, where, according to his daughter, his arthritic condition began to develop. Because of this, Wright became more and more disabled, using crutches and canes until he eventually was confined to a wheelchair. Even with this affliction, Wright, who was known to his

friends as "Gus," enjoyed camping, fishing, and painting to the best of his ability. His family and friends received his paintings as gifts. His daughter emphasized, however, that it was his various stamp collections that gave him his greatest enjoyment. (July 15, 2009, interview with Ruth W. Wanless).

In an article entitled "Philatelist Proud of His Collection," which appeared in the April 22, 1944, issue

of the Ogden *Standard Examiner*, it was mentioned that Wright began collecting stamps when he was in grade school, but became a serious collector only when he became afflicted with arthritis and could no longer enjoy his fishing hobby as much. Wright collected stamps from Australia, Canada, Great Britain, New Zealand, and the United States. Furthermore, he "still gets a kick out of scavengering [sic] through the waste boxes for that extra stamp to add to his collection" (Figure 2). Wright was member No. 15 of the Ogden Philatelic Club.

The newspaper article listed a number of local collectors who were looking forward to the new railroad stamp (Scott 922) which was to have a first day in Ogden. A number of these names were to appear on Wright cacheted First Day Covers throughout his productive years.

This enthusiasm for stamp collecting never waned, as evidenced by a 1951 newspaper photo "A Good Hobby Shortens the Hours," with a caption reading "William N. Wright, former Weber County deputy auditor, who has been a shut in for seven years, shows some of the stamps he has collected and water color enlargements of migratory bird stamps, he has painted." (Ogden *Standard Examiner*, June 3, 1951, p. 12 E). The photo also pictures some of Wright's handpainted covers.

Although Mrs. Wanless could still picture her father painting covers, especially on the weekends, she could not recall how he advertised or distributed these covers other than to members of the Ogden Philatelic Club.

She also had no knowledge of why or when he began his cachetmaking career. As far she knows, her father had no formal artistic training. He stopped all painting activities in the late 1950s because severe arthritis in his hands did not allow him to continue. Mrs. Wanless did remember that after Wright's death, his stamp collection was either sold or donated to their next door neighbor and fellow club member, Dean C. Brown (1920-1993). If there were any remaining covers in this group, Mrs. Wanless had no knowledge. (July 15, 2009 phone interview with Ruth W. Wanless). The last known Wright cachet was for Scott 1136/1137.

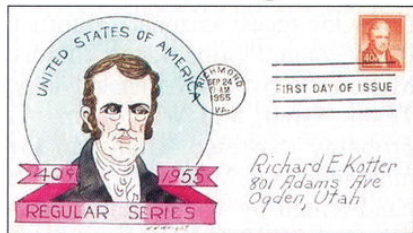
After examining various philatelic journals of the time, I was not able to find any ads or other information about Wright's prices, production and distribution of his covers. I also did not find any inserts in Wright covers of my own. Perhaps readers can provide such evidence. The only evidence I found concerning contact with other cachetmakers was through James T. McCusker's Sale No. 206 auction (March 31, 2005), lot 823. This lot contained 37 handpainted Hiram Swindall covers, most of which were addressed to Herman Maul or William Wright.

From examples obtained from different sources, Wright had "customers" in at least the following states: Arizona, California, Connecticut, Florida, Idaho, Illinois, Missouri, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Texas, Utah, and Wisconsin. As probably expected, Utah had the most addresses. Most addresses were handwritten by Wright, although a



few “customers” did send him their address labels or typed envelopes. A number of covers that have been advertised as unaddressed really have erased addresses. With few exceptions, his covers are all signed W.N. Wright. In some instances, Ogden, UT, is also included on the cover.

After more than 50 years, the multicolor, watercolor Wright cachets on First Day Covers and event covers remain bright and vibrant. Ruth Wanless’ reaction to the photos of her father’s covers that I sent her was also the same. She had not seen any of them in more than 50 years, and could not believe how well they have survived. Wright also used good envelope stock. In my opinion, however, the quality of Wright’s artwork was not on the same professional artistic level as Dorothy Knapp, Ralph Dyer, or Ross Knoble/Paula Bogert collaboration, although it was actually much better than the other handpainted cachetmakers of the 1940s and 1950s. Major characteristics of Wright’s cachets



are the enclosing of the subject represented within a circle, semi-circle, or an arch, and the use of lettering within ribbon-like banners or rectangular box designs below the main part of the cachet. The portrayal of historical personages’ faces within his cachets was a major design weakness. Most of the time they are not accurate.

Known Wright Cachets Not Listed in Planty Catalogs and Mellone’s Specialized Cachet Catalogs of First Day Covers of the 1940s and 1950s

I would greatly appreciate receiving color photocopies or scans of any additions to this listing. It is based on the collections of Mark Goodson and this author, as well as various auction catalogs, especially those of James T. McCusker, Inc.

- Scott 645 add-on: Washington in prayer and his horse beside him. West Chester, PA, known
- Scott 657 add-on: Colonial soldier facing front; Sullivan Expedition in ribbon banner. Canajoharie and Horesheads, NY, known.
- Scott 680 add-on: Three colonial soldiers in battle scene. Maumee and Perrysburg, OH, known
- Scott 681 add-on: Dam and scene of Ohio River and Hills. Evansville, IN, known
- Scott 688 add-on: Colonial soldier kneeling in front of stone wall in shooting position. Braddock, PA, known.
- Scott 689 add-on: Von Steuben in circle. New York City, known.

- Scott 904 add-on: Farmer with rifle in front of fence. Similar to Scott 941.
- Scott 922 first cachet: “First Transcontinental Railroad” above a cachet of 19th century locomotive on track. Omaha, NE, known.
- Scott 924 known to exist, but need description
- Scott 929 U.S. flag; Marines storming beach in circle; “Iwo Jima” below.
- Scott 934 variety: “Air Borne Division” above same cachet as M59; and United States Army in ribbon banner below.
- Scott 935 “In Commemoration of” above sailing ship and boat dock scene; U.S. Navy below cachet.
- Scott 938 Flag above cowboys and longhorn cattle within circle; Texas Statehood, 1845-1945 in ribbon banner.
- Scott 940 U.S. flag; honorable service button; and “For Honorable Service” below.
- Scott 941 “150th Anniversary of” above farmer with rifle in circle; Tennessee Statehood, 1796-1946 in ribbon banner below.
- Scott 943 Tablet having Smithson quote; books; and papers.
- Scott 945 Edison in circle; Thomas A. Edison in scroll; early electric lamp on a.m. border.
- Scott 946 Statue of Liberty; sun rays; “Our Republic and Its Press Will Rise or Fall Together”; Joseph Pulitzer within a scroll arrangement.
- Scott 949 “Honoring”; two doctors examining a patient within circle; “Doctors of America” in ribbon banner.
- Scott 950 “Utah, 1847” in scroll in UR; man leading wagon and oxen; “Arrival of Mormons” within ribbon banner below.
- Scott 953 variety: Carver in circle
- Scott 954 “Discovery of Gold”; miners panning gold; “In California” in square cachet format
- Scott 955 variety: Large steamboat approaching dock.
- Scott 956 variety: Different portrait views of four chaplains and no banner in upper right.
- Scott 960 variety: “Editor, Publisher” under picture of White.
- Scott 961 variety: Niagara Falls and “Century of Friendship United States-Canada” in ribbon banner below.
- Scott 962 variety: U.S. flag; Francis Scott Key in oval; Francis Scott Key in ribbon banner below.
- Scott 963 variety: Similar design as M33, but tree is larger and “Honoring American Youth” in ribbon banner below.
- Scott 964 variety: Smaller trees; larger wagon; and different lettering in ribbon banner below.
- Scott 965 variety: Cachet does not have either an olive branch or words “Justice and Supreme Court” under picture of Stone.
- Scott 966 variety: “Observatory”; picture of Palomar Observatory; and “Palomar Mountain” in banner ribbon below.
- Scott 967 variety: Two different ribbon banners below picture of Clara Barton.
- Scott 968 variety: Different type of house in background and different style of lettering in

ribbon banner.
 Scott 969 variety: Similar cachet to M36 but no climbing plants in scene.
 Scott 969 variety: Woman looking at photo of soldier; Gold Star flag in upper right corner; "Gold Star Mothers" in ribbon banner below.
 Scott 970 variety: Several soldiers in circle approaching Ft. Kearney on a.m. border.
 Scott 970 variety: Different view of fort from M28 within a semi-circular cachet format.
 Scott 971 variety: Different type of house on fire; volunteer firemen; and horse drawn fire pumper.
 Scott 973 variety: No tall trees in background
 Scott 974 Juliette Low in circle; bird on branch; "Founder of the Girl Scouts" in ribbon banner.
 Scott 976 variety: "Fort Bliss" in ribbon banner format below cachet.
 Scott 978 variety: Different pose of Lincoln in a square format design.
 Scott 979 variety: Different type of trees in back of dancer.
 Scott 983 variety: Ribbons under man; ballot box instead of legislative buildings.
 Scott 985 variety: "Final Encampment of the GAR"; soldier in circle; U.S. flag.
 Scott 986 variety: Poe in circle; books and papers; "Edgar Allan Poe" in ribbon banner on a.m. border; also without a.m. border.
 Scott 987 1. Bank; factory; barn; fields. 2. Bank teller and customer; factory; house; and different

lettering.
 Scott 990 variety: "National Capitol Executive"; 1800-1950; White House; "Sesquicentennial"; ribbon banner with stars.
 Scott 991 variety: U.S. Flag; "Justice"; Supreme Court and surrounding area.
 Scott 993 "Honoring American"; Train behind Casey Jones in circle; "Locomotive Engineer" in ribbon banner below.
 Scott 994 1. Wagon; oxen; horserider; "Gateway to the West" in ribbon banner below. 2. "Kansas City Centennial" in ribbon banner above cachet.
 Scott 995 Picture of Boy Scout.
 Scott 996. 1. First Governor William Henry Harrison in circle above 1st capital building. 2. First Governor but more buildings in circle; rectangle design format.
 Scott 997 "100th Anniversary"; wagon; horseman; "California Statehood" in ribbon banner.
 Scott 998 "Reunion"; Confederate officer; cannon; "United Confederatate Veterans" in ribbon banner.
 Scott 1000 variety: Scene of Cadillac meeting Indians; "The Landing of Cadillac, Detroit Michigan."
 Scott 1001 Scene of pioneers; legislative buildings; "75th Anniversary of Colorado Statehood" in ribbon banner.
 Scott 1002. 1. "Seventy-Fifth Anniversary"; chemist; lab equipment; American Chemical Society logo; "American Chemical Society" in ribbon banner. 2. American Society logo; chemist in lab; "75th Anniversary

American Chemical Society" in ribbon banner.
 Scott 1003 Washington on horse; drummer, piper, flag bearer to right of cachet; "Battle of Brooklyn."
 Scott 1010 variety: "175th"; U.S. flag to right of Lafayette in smaller circle; "Anniversary of Arrival of Lafayette" in scroll.
 Scott 1012 variety: Similar to M31, but "Civil Engineers Centenary" in ribbon banner.
 Scott 1018 1. Similar to M38, but has all blue lettering. 2. Similar to M38, but no banners; different arrangement of the lettering; different design in the second "O."



Scott 1019 variety: "100th Anniversary"; wagon; mountains; trees; "Washington Territory" in ribbon banner.
 Scott 1020 variety: Similar cachet to M34, but second portrait is in upper right.
 Scott 1023 variety: "Sagamore Hill" lettering in straight line to right of portrait of Theodore Roosevelt.
 Scott 1026 variety: Same cachet design as M24, but placed in circle; portrait of Patton more lifelike, however.
 Scott 1028 variety: Cachet of man and cacti are outside frame.
 Scott 1029 variety: Similar cachet to

M29, but without "Bicentennial" below Columbia University banner.
 Scott 1063 variety: Similar cachet to M35, but enclosed in square format design.
 Scott 1074 variety: Similar cachet to M22, but smiling Booker T. Washington within circle.
 Scott 1077 variety: cover with dual unofficial cancels from Fond du Lac, WI.
 Scott 1079 variety: M32 with a.m. border.
 Scott 1082 variety: M25 with a.m. border
 Scott 1084 variety: M23 with a.m. border
 Scott 1086 variety: M24 with a.m. border
 Scott 1087 variety: M26 with a.m. border
 Scott 1089 variety: M23 with a.m. border
 Scott 1090 variety: M22 with a.m. border
 Scott 1091 variety: M20 with a.m. border
 Scott 1092 variety: M26 with a.m. border
 Scott 1093 variety: M19 with a.m. border
 Scott 1094 variety: M26 with a.m. border
 Scott 1095 variety: M22 with a.m. border
 Scott 1097 variety: M27 with a.m. border
 Scott 1098 variety: M31 with a.m. border
 Scott 1099 variety: M24 with a.m. border
 Scott 1107: "International"; Earth surrounded by rocket ship, moons,

planets, and stars; "Geophysical Year" in ribbon banner.

Scott 1113-1114 on 1114M24 is known.

Scott C24 add-on: Eagle over letter carrier walking toward house

Scott C25-C29 add-ons: Denomination of stamps in circle above plane facing east over ocean and seagull in a large circle; ribbon banner below. Scott C26-C29 are on a.m. borders.

Scott C34 Plane facing east over picture of the Pan American Union; ribbon banner below

Scott C35 Plane facing east over New York City skyline in front of passenger ships; banner ribbon below.

Scott C36 Plane facing east over San Francisco's Golden Gate Bridge; banner ribbon below.

Scott C34-C36 might be add-ons.

Scott C37 5c in ribbon banner above plane facing east above flying duck over water in rectangular cachet format.

Scott C38 Varieties: 1. "Airmail"; Plane facing east above New York City skyline in circle; New York City Golden in rim around the circle; "Anniversary" on ribbon banner below. 2. "Airmail" above landing plane facing east; Statue of Liberty in circle; The City of New York on rim around circle; "1898-1948 Golden Anniversary" in ribbon banner below.

Scott C39 1. Plane facing east over mountain above lake on a.m. border. 2. "1949" above plane flying east and over mountains, lake, and fir tree; 6c Air Mail within red/white/blue bars.

Scott C40 Varieties: 1. "Airmail"; plane facing east flying over Gadsby's tavern; red/white/blue rectangular block below. 2. Same as 1, but on blue cover. 3. "Alexandria Virginia"; plane facing east; "Bicentennial"; pictures of Gadsby's tavern and Carlyle House in circles; ribbon banners below.

Scott C42 Airmail; 10c; plane facing east; globe with longitude and latitude; Universal Postal Union within ribbon banner.

Scott C43 1. Same type cachet as C42. 2. Airmail; 15c; small plane flying east over globe without longitude and latitude; Universal Postal Union within ribbon banner below.

Scott C44 variety: Airmail; small plane flying east within 25c; western and eastern hemisphere globes; 1874 Universal Postal Union 1949 within ribbon banner; mountains; bird and water.

Scott C45 Varieties: 1. Similar to M29 but "Wright Bros. Plane" under cachet. 2. Similar to variety 1 but "Honoring" within ribbon banner above cachet and "Wright Bros." below cachet.

Scott C46 Plane flying east over mountain with palm trees, ocean and bird.

Scott C47 1. Red and blue lines down left side of cover; plane flying west; biplane; 50th anniversary of aviation within ribbon banner. 2. Red and blue lines down left side of cover; "50th Anniversary"; plane flying east; "Aviation"; biplane. 3. Large plane flying west; clouds in upper left of

cover; biplane in lower right of cover.

Scott C48 1. Postcard scene of Washington, Blvd., Ogden, UT with plane flying west over mountain, trees, lake; 4c airmail in rectangular block cachet. 2. Postcard scene of The Mormon Battalion Monument. Similar cachet to no. 1, but barber pole cachet border. 3. Similar cachet to no. 2 but on plain grey card. 4. Plane flying west above eagle flying over water within circle on 2c UX 38 postal card.

Scott C49 "Fiftieth Anniversary" above two jet planes within circle; "U.S. Airforce" within ribbon banner.

Scott C50 Plane flying east over eagle whose talons are on "5c air mail" rectangular box. Cover includes a single Scott 1031 stamp.

Scott C51 Similar to C51a-M13, but different colors used.

Scott C52 Similar to C51a-M13, but colors are like Scott C51.

Scott C53 "Air Mail" above dog sled team and drivers; "Alaska Statehood" within rectangular box.

Scott C54 Jupiter Balloon above water with bird; "Air Mail" within ribbon banner.

Scott C55 Palm tree; mountain; surfer within circle;

"Hawaii's Admission to Statehood" within ribbon banner.

Scott C56 "Pan American"; woman and man tennis players and net within circle; "Games" within rectangular box below cachet.

Scott C58 Plane flying east; Statue of Liberty with sun rays; 15c air mail within rectangular box.

Scott E20 20c above letter exchanging hands.

Scott E21 1. 30c; "Special Delivery"; letter exchanging hands with a.m. border. 2. Also without a.m. border.

Scott U536 Benjamin Franklin and the famous lightning and kite scene.

Scott UC17 "CIPEX" over plane flying east within circle over globe.

Scott UC18 Plane flying east over mail carrier approaching house; postal rider in circle center in cover.

Scott UC25 Plane flying east over mountains and water; "FIPEX Air Mail" in rectangular box below.


Scott UC26 7c; Plane flying east over western hemisphere map; "Air Mail Envelope" in ribbon banner below.

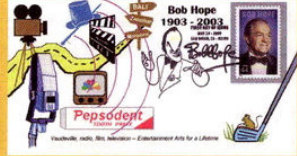
Scott UC33 Plane flying east over houses and boat; "Stamped Air Mail" in ribbon banner below.



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Scott UX43 Head of Lincoln and ribbon.

Scott UX44 "Fifth International"; eagle in flight; "Philatelic Exhibition."

Scott UX45 Hummingbird feeding on flowers.

Scott UXC1 1. Plane flying east over eagle in flight within circle. 2. Plane flying east over mountains, lake, and fir trees within a circle.

UY16 Eagle with wings spread in front of circle above ribbon "In God We Trust."

The only event covers I have seen were done for the Christmas Season. I have seen covers for 1949, 1952, and 1957.

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Canadian Cachets

The Responsible Government Issue of 1948

by Gary Dickinson

A 4-cent stamp was issued by the Canada Post Office on October 1, 1948, to mark a century of responsible government. The stamp design (Scott 277) included the Parliament Buildings in Ottawa at the center with two monarchs shown facing each other from each side. Queen Victoria, who reigned from 1837 to 1901, was on the left opposite King George VI, who reigned from 1936 until his death in 1952. Thus, the time span represented by the Queen and King included the 100 years that had elapsed from the advent of responsible government in 1848 until its centenary in 1948. The color of the issue was a drab grey and the theme was abstract, with the apparent result that FDC cachetmakers appeared generally to have difficulty enlivening their products. The 64 different cachets documented for this issue were as a whole somewhat less varied and colorful than was the case for most of the other Canadian issues of the era.

This article reviews the variety of cachets produced for Canada's responsible government issue and highlights some of the more interesting examples produced by U.S. cachet makers.

Previous Studies

As was the case for other early

Canadian FDCs, the study of cachets for the Responsible Government issue was initiated by Melvin L. Baron, who reported 20 different cachets in his *First Days* article (1982). A year later, Pierre Dorval (1983) identified 26 different cachets, while Bruce Perkins listed 39 in 1992. Gary Dickinson's monograph (2007) documented 58 different cachets and the total has since increased to 63.

Organizing the Cachets

With the appearance of an ever-increasing number of cachets for Canada's Responsible Government issue, the need arose to develop a way of organizing and cataloguing them efficiently. Categories were developed and applied as has been reported in earlier articles in this series with the results shown in Table I. The largest number of cachets (13) featured Queen Victoria and King George VI while 11 showed maps of Canada, five highlighted coats of arms, and seven had miscellaneous themes. A dozen different FDCs used general purpose cachets that were also used for other issues around that time.

Some Highlights

The number of cachets produced for this issue exceeds their ability