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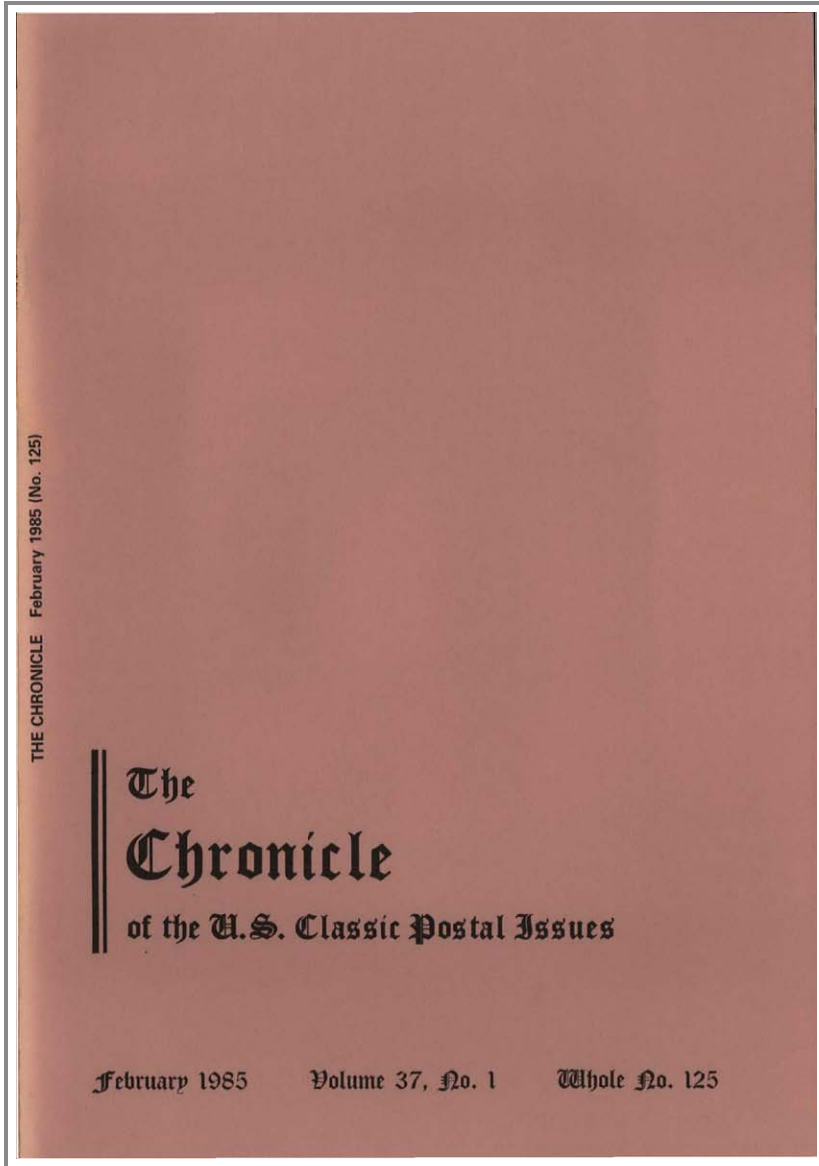


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Lot 58 was a cover front with two single 5¢ Bears on bluish pelure paper (11X7), both stamps tied to the cover by pen cancels, and one by a filing crease. At the time of the Caspary sale this cover front cataloged \$5,000 and sold for \$1,600. In the Pope sale it went to the eastern collector for \$2,000. Apparently the present market values cover front items at no premium over off-cover material.

One of the most interesting items in provisional philately was the last Bear lot - #59. This cover to Philadelphia bore a 10¢ stamp on bluish pelure paper (11X8) with the stamp barely cut into at the bottom and tied by pen cancels. The stamp had been lifted and hinged back in place revealing on the reverse side a good impression of the 5¢ stamp, 11X7 from position 1. This unique item is the basis for the catalog listing of 11X8a. The cover is postmarked Nov. 25 (1846) and is the earliest known use of a Bear stamp on bluish pelure paper. The normal 11X8 on cover catalogs \$6,500. The 11X8a is listed but not priced. The cover opened at an unbelievably low \$1,000 and sold to the eastern collector for \$6,000.

In summary, this was the most important sale of U.S. Postmaster Provisionals in several years and the most outstanding sale ever held of provisionals used on covers with foreign destinations. Many covers were unique, and, on the whole, prices were strong.

HIRAM E. DEATS: THE PHILATELIC FARMER FROM FLEMINGTON

STANLEY M. BIERMAN, M.D., F.A.C.P.

Hiram E. Deats was, during his long and fruitful life, variously dubbed "The Dean of American Collectors," "The Philatelic Farmer," and "Sage of Hunterdon." He assembled in a brief period from 1890 to 1905 one of America's finest collections of General Issues, Postmasters' Provisionals, Proofs, Revenues and Envelopes, disposing of his creations in an equally brief period from 1905 to 1912. He retained for most of his lifetime his greatest treasure, his philatelic library, with which the Deats's name is most indelibly associated. While the biblical injunction instructs us to beat our swords into plowshares, it may be stated metaphorically that Deats was to beat his plowshares into postage stamps and books. He was born in Brookville,¹ or Stockton, New Jersey, according to another biographer.² The Deats's family fortune was established by his grandfather who held the patent on the Deats plow. The agricultural business enterprise was successfully managed for 60 years by his father, during which time the family's financial base was broadened into real estate and banking.

Hiram Deats was reared as an only child, and moved at age 12 with his family to a large farm near Flemington Junction in Hunterdon County, New Jersey. With the death of his father during his adolescence, Hiram Deats inherited the family business enterprise and the Minneakoning Farm, but, being too young to assume charge, arranged for a cousin to take over management responsibilities. Deats enrolled in college at Peddie Institute in 1887 at Hightstown, New Jersey, which institution had been largely endowed by his father's beneficence.³ Deats graduated with honors in 1891, writing his college thesis on "The Development of the Postal System." Upon graduation, Deats was quick to discover the seductive influence of leisure, the lure of a life untrammled by the pressing demands of business, and the exciting pursuit of collectables. With his financial underpinnings secure from his family-run business enterprises, large real estate holdings, and directorship of the Flemington National Bank, his initial plan to enter Brown University in Rhode Island⁴ for an advanced degree in business was understandably derailed. Likewise a remarkable series of fortuitous philatelic events had intervened, or were about to transpire, that would profoundly influence the young Hiram Deats's life.

1. F. Melville, "Hiram E. Deats," *Stamps* 4:81-82 (July 15), 1933.

2. A. Dietz, "Hiram E. Deats," *Virginia Philatelist* 3:203-204, 1900.

3. Anon., "Prominent Stamp Collectors," *Phil. J. Amer.* 8:379, 1892.

4. Anon., "Prominent Philatelists," *Rhode Island Philatelist* 2:25-26, 1890.

Deats first became enamored with philately as a child of nine with the chance discovery of a newly minted Dom Pedro stamp of Brazil on a post office floor;⁵ the mythological telling of finding a Brazilian stamp on a post office floor also curiously appears in John Seybold's biography. Deats's more serious stamp collecting career began in 1884 with the discovery of a number of revenue issues on old government documents stored in his father's office. With this fledgling interest in philately aroused, he began to purchase a large number of unused envelopes from the local post office, buying, as well, plate numbers in strips and blocks, of newly minted government issues.

Deats's true entry into "high philately" came in January 1888 while still a college student, when he purchased the celebrated Carpenter and Goodall Revenue collections for \$7,000 from E. B. Sterling, a stamp dealer from Trenton, New Jersey.⁶ The latter sale excited considerable comment in American philatelic circles, as the transaction represented the largest private treaty sale made to that date. The purchase entailed a special dispensation from Deats's guardian who questioned the wisdom of such an extravagant acquisition for an 18-year-old youth. Having thus achieved a substantial degree of philatelic pre-eminence, Deats was allowed into the inner circle of the burgeoning American Philatelic Association (forerunner of the American Philatelic Society) of which he was number 36 of the founding members. His showing of the unique Goodall Revenues was critically acclaimed at the fifth APA Convention held in August 1890 at which time he was awarded a seat on the credentials committee. Deats was later to serve as Vice President of the Association in 1894 and its President in 1905.

Having now been "blooded" by his exciting philatelic acquisition, Deats was easy prey when an apparently financially strapped E. B. Sterling chose to sell his entire collection of proofs, stamps, coins and paper currency, the latter of which included 4,000 pieces of Colonial, Confederate and early bank bills.⁷ This is a curious biographic citation given the fact that the E. B. Sterling collection of U.S. Postage and Revenues was sold by George A. Leavitt in New York as catalogued by Edward Frossard in six sales from December 1887 to September 1888. Nevertheless, the sorting, mounting and arrangement of the 10,000 proofs and 10,000 stamps acquired from the E. B. Sterling private treaty sale was to occupy six months' time. An 1890 philatelic publication⁸ notes that the twenty year old Deats's collection of U.S. Revenues and Match and Medicine was as complete as could be, and included many sheets of issues. Deats was to sell unwanted portions of the Sterling acquisition, consisting of American coins, medals, paper money, and numismatic literature, at a January 9, 1892, sale held by George A. Leavitt.

In 1890 with a Deats-Sterling hegemony as financier and dealer well established in U.S. philatelic circles, the two were to accomplish a nearly incredible philatelic coup.⁹ In 1889 the Registrar of the U.S. Treasury Department advised the Secretary of the Treasury that stub books of stamps used by the Internal Revenue Service since its inception in 1863 had accumulated to such an extent that the government could not find sufficient space for the 200 tons of material which occupied some 4,000 cubic feet and was costing the government \$20,000 a year in storage fees. The government records were so voluminous that they filled the corridors of the fourth floor of the Treasury Department, overflowing to nine rooms of the adjacent Winder Building, and spilled into the basement. A special act of Congress was required to condemn the government material, as well as a separate act to authorize its sale to the public. A notice was placed in government papers where it is presumed that a keen-eyed E. B. Sterling perceived the potential philatelic profit that such a grand acquisition might

5. Melville, *op. cit.*

6. A. Harlow, *Paper Chase*, Henry Holt, New York: 1940, pp. 145, 290.

7. Anon., "Prominent Philatelists," *loc. cit.*

8. *Ibid.*

9. Anon., "Sterling's Speculation," *Phil. J. Amer.* 6:254, 1890.

present. Sealed proposals were mailed by Sterling and Deats to the U.S. Treasury Department where their \$5,000 bid was accepted for 200 tons of so-called "government waste." Following the financial transactions, ten carloads of government records (working out to 1.25 cents per pound) were delivered to a New Jersey storage facility, where Deats and a staff of four, and later eight youths, toiled for two years to assemble the material.

The Department of Treasury sent two observers to oversee the sorting, and before completion of the work, a sizable quantity of material including rare and desirable stamps was culled from the Deats acquisition and seized arbitrarily by government officials who alleged that the material was too recent to allow dispersion from the records. Deats and Sterling filed suit in U.S. Court of Claims for return of the disputed material but their case was never heard. Nevertheless in the great mass that constituted this enormous philatelic hoard, Deats was able to mine fifteen books consisting of the complete printers' order books, signed approved die proofs and proof sheets which covered the period 1862 to 1875 during which time Messrs. Butler and Carpenter were employed at their government tasks. Also found were the 24¢, 30¢, and 90¢ Department stamps on official covers.

With the final sorting of this record acquisition, E. B. Sterling announced that he then had the stub of every revenue stamp issued in the United States from 1863 to 1885. These were grouped into 350 varieties including issues with face values of \$150 to \$5,000. The material as then assembled consisted of the official records, books, accounts, correspondence and records of the Butler & Carpenter, and Joseph R. Carpenter firms and was to serve as the foundation for the monumental book, *An Historical Reference List of Revenue Stamps of the United States Including Private Proprietary Stamps*. Written by George T. Toppan, and co-authored by Hiram E. Deats and Alexander Holland, the book was published in 1899 by the Boston Philatelic Society and was to become the "bible" of fiscal collectors.

Duplicates from Deats's revenue collection were sold on May 23, 1901, at Scott Stamp and Coin Co's 155th sale. They were purchased for 80 to 150 percent of catalogue value for a cumulative auction total of \$5,350. The bulk of the Deats revenue collection was offered intact to the government in 1905 for \$20,000, which sum represented half its philatelic market value. A bill was introduced in Congress on January 5, 1906 seeking to purchase this quintessential revenue collection for government archives, but the legislation was defeated by a fiscally restrained Congress which failed to grasp the historic significance of the acquisition.

During the 1890s Deats was Ferrary's chief rival for stamps of the Confederacy, although Deats's collection was acknowledged as the world's finest.¹⁰ Deats also acquired major collections of Postmasters' Provisionals and Carrier Stamps of New York, and purchased the W. H. Nienotedt Match and Medicine collection. Deats exhibited portions of his collection at the American Philatelic Association Postage Stamp Exhibition held in 1893 at the World Columbian Exhibition. An obvious attempt to promote and popularize the stamp collecting hobby, Deats's display at the Chicago fair was a tour de force in philatelic upmanship. Included in the Deats exhibition was a complete collection of U.S. Envelopes, portions of his Confederate States of America on original cover, along with 18 frames of handstamped Confederate States Postmasters' Provisionals from most every important southern township. There were frames of U.S. Postmasters' Provisionals including St. Louis, New Haven, Brattleboro, and New York on original cover. There were Carrier stamps, including two sheets of the Eagle Carrier. There was a magnificent display of U.S. General Issues including sheets of 100 of both the 1¢ and 3¢ stamps of 1857. Almost all the 1847 to 1869 issues were represented including the 1869 inverts, but the centerpiece of the exhibit must surely have been the mint block of 16 of the 90¢ 1869 issue, along with a companion used block of six of the issue. Also noted in the display were major Match and Medicine sections and British North American items.

10. H. L. Lindquist, "Hiram Edmund Deats," *Stamps* 125:5-7 (April 6), 1963.

It is a well traveled philatelic maxim that the search for collectables is more exciting than their acquisition, and given the fact that Deats had seemingly put together so many world class collections in such a brief period, it may be assumed that he tired of his treasures. It is recorded that Deats auctioned 270 lots of his U.S. collection at the April 25, 1905, sale held by the New England Stamp Company, which sale was highlighted by his three 1869 inverts. The Deats Collection of U.S. on Original Cover was sold at a February 23, 1906, sale by the same auction house, and included 587 lots of rare U.S., superb Revenue proofs and essays and fine British North America. His Match and Medicine collection was sold at the 21st and 22nd Frank P. Brown sales held in Boston on March 9 and May 11, 1909.

The Deats collection of proofs and essays of U.S. Documentary and Proprietary revenues came into the possession of A. W. Batchelder of the New England Stamp Co. in January of 1912. He advertised sale of its elements in *The New England Stamp Monthly* over the next two years. When the Clarence Eagle collection of U.S. Revenues was bequeathed to the government in 1912, it was acknowledged that Mr. Eagle had had first chance at the Deats dispersal to enhance his already superlative collection which included the finest Match and Medicine ever assembled.

In 1912 the Deats collection of U.S. Postmasters' Provisionals was acquired by Warren Colson for an undisclosed sum. Included in this sale was the unique Boscawen Postmaster Provisional which Deats had originally discovered in 1894, and had purchased for \$5.00. The rare Postmaster Provisional was subsequently sold by Colson to Ferrary, who exchanged the item for a used two pence "Post Office" Mauritius (ex-Rothschild).¹¹ Also included in the Deats sale to Colson were reconstructed plates of St. Louis Provisionals which are believed to have been sold by the Boston dealer to Henry C. Gibson for display at the 1913 New York International Philatelic Exhibition. Also undocumented is the belief that Deats sold his magnificent Confederate States collection to Senator Ernest Ackerman during this period.

11. S. M. Bierman, *The World's Greatest Stamp Collectors*, Frederick Fell, New York: 1981, p. 215.
(To be continued)

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