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Issues on Cover

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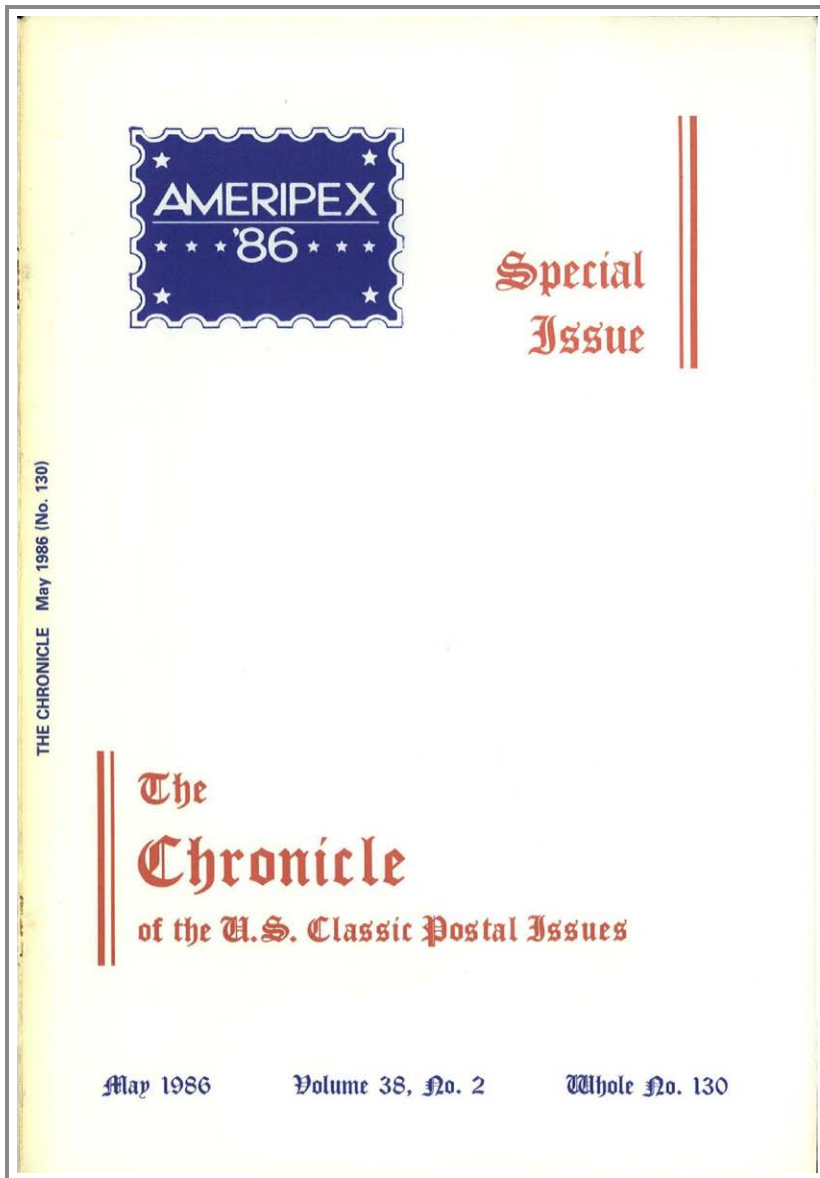


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THE AUGUSTINE HEARD FIND AND LIST OF 90¢ U.S. 1857-60, 1861 ISSUES ON COVER

STANLEY M. BIERMAN, M.D.

The Augustine Heard find in 1931 by Earl Hamilton and Joseph Silver much like the Carrol-Hoy¹ and Ludlow-Beebe finds² constitutes a major source of postal history rarities which good fortune and serendipity have preserved for the collector. While it is believed that the initial find of Augustine Heard covers by the dealers came from sources in the Orient, which material was offered by auction through Bertram Poole on February 17, 1932, it is clear that postal history gems bearing high values and known to be in the correspondence were not auctioned. Whether these 90¢ U.S. 1857-60 and 1861 issues on cover and other high value items were sold by the Heard family to stamp dealers, filched from sequestered records by individuals familiar with the potential for financial gain from sale to postal history collectors, or discovered in long-neglected niches in the Orient cannot be determined. Given that parties in this matter are now long dead, the true and unblemished facts relating to how these covers were acquired by the philatelic community are lost to inquiring historians. It will, however, become clear as this narrative unfolds that there may have been more than one source from which this correspondence worked its way into philatelic channels.

The Augustine Heard Co. of Shanghai and Hong Kong, China, was established in 1840, and its business correspondence relating to the Chinese tea trade was received from its New York and Boston offices.³ The letters traveled to China via London aboard ships of the Cunard and other lines including *America*, *Saxonia*, *Asia*, *Persia*, *Hansa*, *Africa*, and *City of Baltimore*, and then via Southampton or Marseilles by P. & O. Line. The founder of this great Chinese-American trading firm, Augustine Heard, was born in Ipswich, Mass., on March 30, 1785, as the fifth of eight children of John Heard and Sally Staniford, his father's second wife.⁴ Heard's father was a ship owner and merchant who plied trade with the West Indies and China. The young Augustine Heard entered Phillips Exeter Academy in 1799 but was a poor scholar. He was, however, an enthusiastic seaman like his father, and at age 18 was apprenticed as an employee of Ebenezer Francis, a prominent Boston merchant. Two years later he sailed to Calcutta as a supercargo aboard a sailing ship. In time he mastered the intricacies of navigation, and at age 32 became master, being both captain and supercargo, of the brig *Caravan*. He was entrusted with \$80,000 worth of merchandise on his maiden voyage, and his success in selling his wares at trading centers in the Orient won him widespread respect and admiration. He soon became one of the most prosperous ship captains in the East Indian trade.

Heard was able to build a sizable fortune, and in 1829 decided to end his profitable career as a sea captain and devote his energies to local Ipswich business and civil enterprises; he never married. Heard's retirement was short-lived for on June 7, 1830, in his forty-sixth year, he sailed to Canton to become partner in the trading firm of Samuel Russel & Co. in which he had a three-sixteenth interest. The latter firm had grown from the defunct Perkins and Co., and Heard's financial infusion into the struggling company set it on a firmer financial base. His enterprise was quickly marked with success, but ill health forced Heard to return to America in 1834. He settled in Boston to direct his business enterprises and investments. When Russell and Co. underwent financial reversals in 1840, the new firm of Augustine Heard and Co. was established with Joseph Coolige, formerly of the parent company, as active partner in the Canton firm which had offices in Hong Kong, China, and Siam.

1. S.M. Bierman, "Philip H. Ward, Jr.," *Chronicle* 124:224-233, 1984.

2. S.M. Bierman, "Ludlow-Beebe Find," *Chronicle* 123:154-157, 1984.

3. H.J. Baker and J.D. Baker, "Augustine Heard and David Baker," *Stamps* 126:41, (Feb 8) 1964.

4. Anon, "Augustine Heard," *Dictionary American Biography* IV:482-83, 1931, Chas. Scribner and Sons, N.Y.

In 1841 Heard returned to China to assume charge of business, bringing with him his nephew John Heard who was to assume management responsibilities. The Augustine Heard Co. which was already established as a major trader in tea and fine silks, extended itself into banking and shipping. Heard's return to Canton was, however, marked with political turbulence as the Chinese Opium War was well in progress. During this period of hostilities his place of business was attacked by frenzied mobs of xenophobic Chinese. Heard was later to receive compensation by the Chinese government for losses incurred in the rioting. A financially strong and admired business firm, the Augustine Heard Co. was important in shaping the Far Eastern policy of the United States government which came to see major ports of economic opportunity in the Orient.

Augustine Heard sailed back to America in 1844, never to return to China, but his business was carried on by four nephews including a namesake, Augustine Heard (1827-1905), who was later to become American minister to Korea from 1890-93. Augustine Heard, the founder of this great Chinese-American trading company, died at Ipswich on September 14, 1868. The company continued after Heard's death but fell upon hard times, as did other Chinese trading firms, following the American Civil War, and went out of business during the 1870-72 period.

The business records and correspondence of the Augustine Heard Co. were gathered together and returned to the Heard family in America for safekeeping at an undetermined date. Some time in 1931 the voluminous records of the Augustine Heard Co. were donated by the family to the Baker Library of Harvard University. A second portion of the Heard correspondences was also acquired by Harvard University in 1945. The collection as it presently exists is quite enormous consisting of 800 volumes, 270 boxes and 100 record center cartons filling some 261 cubic feet of space in the Baker Library. Florence Bartoshesky, the current curator of the collection, claims that the papers were carefully culled of stamps and covers some time prior to its receipt by the University in 1931.

While it is not fully known how the Augustine Heard correspondence worked its way into philatelic channels, what facts are recorded⁵ relate that at some time in 1931 Earl Hamilton and Joseph Silver of the United States Stamp Co. of San Francisco came into possession of a large cache of stamped correspondence from the Augustine Heard Co. Stanley Ashbrook quotes Hamilton's remembrances of the event: "Two boys, whose father was in the utility business in China, as kids resurrected this lot of correspondence. The older brother soaked off from the various covers one of each kind of stamp that was on the various covers and the balance he left on the covers. He has since advised me that he and his brother removed the 90¢ and trimmed it themselves. The younger soaked *all* of the stamps off the covers he got and we eventually bought his collection." The latter quote is a curious observation for when Hamilton brought the Augustine Heard find to Bertram Poole for inclusion in his 45th auction held in Los Angeles on February 17, 1932, the 57 lots consisted almost entirely of letter sheet covers most of which had been folded through the address side to preserve the stamps. (A list of these 57 lots will be published in the next issue.)

It is quite clear that the Hamilton-Silver acquisition did not contain the whole of the stamped letters for only two of the 18 known covers from the Heard correspondence bearing the 90¢ U.S. 1857-60 and 1861 issues appeared at auction (see list). By reference to this list it is apparent that a number of these rare covers were to be found in the possession of great collections formed during the 1920-30 era such as those of Alfred Caspary, Nicholas Waterhouse, Sidney Hessel, and Joseph Steinmetz. Stanley Ashbrook's account⁶ of 90¢ U.S. 1860s on covers does not, in fact, contain reference to most of these listed covers. It is more than likely that stamp dealers other than Poole had access to the high value Heard letters

5. S. Ashbrook, "The Heard Covers Sold by Poole," *Special Services* (75:606, (June 1) 1957.

6. S. Ashbrook, "The United States Ninety Cent Stamp of 1860," *American Philatelic Congress* 17:100-113, 1951.

and arranged for placement of these rarities in their clients' collections. This fact can be readily confirmed given that lot 205 consisting of a 90¢ (S.E.) and a 24¢ U.S. 1861 not tied to cover, present at the Joseph Steinmetz sale by Eugene Klein on March 21, 1929, is identical in description with the Heard New York to Shanghai cover pictured in the John Fox sale of March 31, 1957; the Klein sale preceded the Poole offering by three years. Likewise lot 51 of the January 15, 1925, sale by Frank P. Brown of Boston contains a 90¢ U.S. 1857-60 described as follows: "90¢ on cover to Hong Kong via Marseilles. Three other stamps unfortunately have been removed. Stamp tied to cover by black star in circle. Cover bears forwarding pmks and 96 in Mss. ECV \$150." While auction catalogues in the 1920-30 era rarely, if ever, carried photographs, and the description does not designate this a Heard cover, there are few other China-based correspondences (Nixon and Archer) bearing high value U.S. issues. Finally, in the 1932 period a number of covers bearing 24¢ and 30¢ U.S. 1857-60 issues from Boston via London to Hong Kong appeared at J.M. Bartel auctions, though, again, not pictured or designated as Heard correspondence.



Heard cover with two 1861 90¢, ex-Waterhouse.

The source of Heard correspondence whether by sale through family members to stamp dealers, by theft from unguarded Heard files, or by serendipitous discovery cannot be determined. However Poole recalls in his reminiscences⁷ that, "[the] remarkable lot of old covers . . . had lain dormant in the orient for many years and after some negotiations the owner empowered them [Hamilton-Silver] to have us [Poole] dispose of the material at auction."

Heard covers have appeared at European auctions such as a 90¢ U.S. 1861 issue along with a 10¢ and two 3¢ stamps (72,68,65 + 65) offered at a Harmer, Rooke London sale in 1946. During the 1950s a number of Heard covers appeared at Shanahan Stamp Auctions (Dublin), albeit none bearing the 90¢ U.S. 1857-60 issue. Paul Singer, owner and proprietor of the firm, had recently burst into the philatelic scene, and had yet to acquire his unsavory reputation for philatelic skulduggery and deception. The fascinating story of the rise and fall of the notorious Shanahan Stamp Auctions has been previously documented.⁸ Whether the Heard lots were from European sources, or were received by Singer on consignment from American vendors cannot be determined, but Shanahan sales #56 (November 16, 1957) and #71 (July 19, 1958) include prime Heard covers.

It thus seems clear that Augustine Heard covers present in the philatelic community came from a number of different sources.

The author is indebted to Leon Hyzen, and Florence Bartoshesky of the Baker Library for help in the preparation of this manuscript.

7. B.W.H. Poole, "United States 90¢ 1857," *Mekeel's Weekly Stamp News* LVI:114, (Feb 17) 1941.

8. S. Brady, *Doctor of Millions*, Anvil Books, Ireland, 1965.

LIST OF 90¢ U.S. 1857-60, 1861 ON COVER FROM AUGUSTINE HEARD CORRESPONDENCE

<i>Sale</i>	<i>Auction</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Lot</i>	<i>Price</i>	<i>Date Mailed</i>	<i>Scott #</i>	<i>Remarks (sold to)</i>
J. Steinmetz	E. Klein	3/21/29	205	\$280	Sept. 9, 1862	72,70	J. Fox (161) 1/31/57 lot 172 @ \$475,SE left.
Hamilton find	B. Poole	2/17/32	13	\$810	Sept 11, 1860	39	Gibson sale 6/14/44 by Ward lot 184 @ \$3,000. Acquired by Y. Souren.
Hamilton find	B. Poole	2/17/32	14	\$375	Nov 9, 1860	39,38,35, 30a,26	Kleeman to Needham to Costales. HRC sale 525 (12/49) lot 151 @ \$360 to W. Cheney.
?	Harmer Rooke(L)	10/31/46	165	\$350	July 25, 1863	72,65 + 65,68	Hall sale (RL 1847) 1959 lot 286 @ £400. London pmk Aug 7.
N. Waterhouse	Harmer(L)	6/28/55	535	\$1,671	Nov. 27, 1861	72,58,67,65	Earliest known use 90¢ 1861 on cover.
N. Waterhouse	Harmer(L)	6/28/55	536	\$560	Nov 24, 1863	72,68,65 + 65	Krug sale (RAS 210) 1958 lot 584 @ \$1,000.
N. Waterhouse	Harmer(L)	6/28/55	537	\$812	Mar 28, 1865	72a + 72a, 69, 68 + 68	Krug sale (RAS 210) 1958 lot 588 @ \$2,400.
A. Caspary	Harmer(NY)	11/19/56	186	\$2,700	July 29, 1862	72,70	Haas sale (SG 5560) 1980 lot 179 @ \$65,000.
A. Caspary	Harmer(NY)	11/19/56	187	\$2,000	Dec 11, 1862	72,70	NY pmk Dec 13.
A. Caspary	Harmer(NY)	11/19/56	188	\$1,000	Sept 12, 1863	72,65 + 65,68	
S. Newbury	Siegel	5/17/61	506	\$1,600	July 20, 1866	72	Baker sale (RAS 526) 1978 lot 165 @ \$10,500.
S. Newbury	Siegel	10/17/61	523	\$2,400	Oct 14, 1865	72 + 72,71,73	Baker sale (RAS 526) 1978 lot 167 @ \$50,000.
Rarities	Siegel	3/25/69	77	\$4,500	Oct 25, 1862	72,70	
?	Kelleher	10/19/73	104	\$7,500	Feb 9, 1863	72,70a	
S. Hessel	Harmer(NY)	6/ 8/76	499	\$7,500	Apr 10, 1863	72,78	NY pmk Apr 11.
Rarities	Siegel	4/10/80	107	\$18,500	Feb 12, 1862	72,70a	Ex-Krug. Stamp not tied.
Rarities	Siegel	4/24/82	212	\$13,000	Oct 10, 1863	72,68,70	Re-offered 1985 Rarities @ \$11,000.
?	Lea(GB)	3/ 1/86	278	?	June 13, 1866	72	Used on piece with Heard name.
	?	?			Jan ?, 1864	72,70	Listed in <i>Chronicle</i> 58* — can any reader supply details?

*J. David Baker, "The 90 Cent Stamps of 1860, 1861, and 1867," *Chronicle* 48:36-37; Frank S. Levi, Jr. and J. David Baker, "Additions to the Listing of Known 90¢ 1861 Covers," *Chronicle* 58:66. These lists record some 47 covers with 90¢ 1861 stamps.