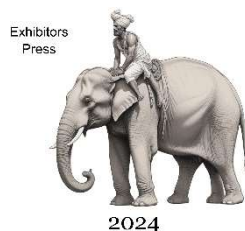




FIRST DAY OF ISSUE

First Day Cover Philatelic Exhibiting: A Master Class

Andrew McFarlane



First Day Cover Philatelic Exhibiting:

A Master Class

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A quick word about wanting the autograph to have a relationship with the stamp. In another of my exhibits, I only have two autographed covers; one signed by the designer, the other signed by the actor Ed Asner (best known as TV's Lou Grant from the "Mary Tyler Moore Show"). Not unsurprisingly, I haven't been able to determine any sort of relationship between the stamp and Mr. Asner. I must go with the assumption that unless he happened to be in Atlantic City in April 1973 by chance, the cover was signed sometime after the fact. Has that stopped me from including it in the exhibit? Well, no. But I do note that I don't believe that there's any known relationship between him and the stamp – and I'm still looking for an answer.

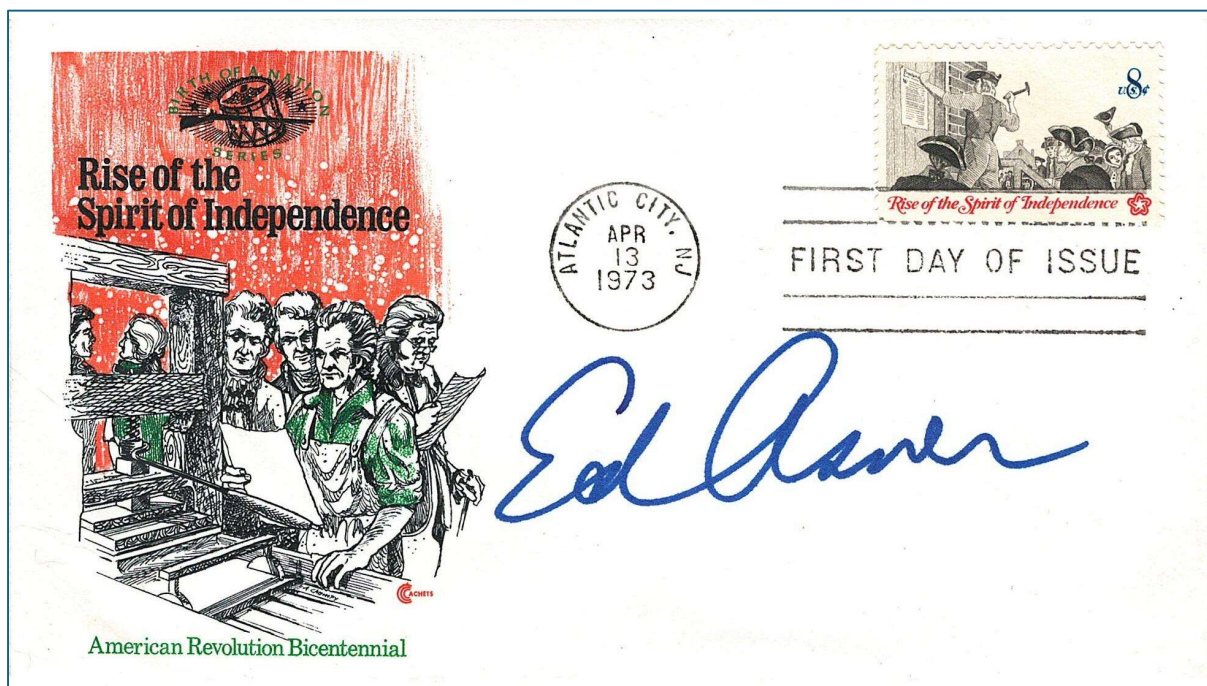


Figure 165: Cover autographed by actor Ed Asner. If anyone knows of a connection between him and the stamp, please let me know

To be clear, everything I've said here only applies to autographed covers. Ceremony programs, which are typically seen with attendee autographs, should be displayed as a part of the Issuance (or whatever you've named it) chapter.

5.13 Cachet Forgeries

Including cachet forgeries, or forgeries in general in an exhibit, is a topic that can produce strong emotions on both sides of the debate. Some believe that forgeries have no place in an exhibit and usually feel that way for one of two reasons – or possibly both. The first is an ethical argument that they were created to fool or take advantage of collectors in a blatant attempt to make money. The second is many judges feel they don't move the exhibit's story forward.

Then there's me. I'll state upfront that I think they should be included in an exhibit – but only if it's not at the expense of genuine cachets; they are clearly labeled as forgeries; and most importantly, they move the story forward.

In 2004 a large group of first day covers appeared at auction¹¹⁶, and many first day cover collectors, including me, were very excited as many scarce cachets were included in the sale. However, many of us did have some doubts about some of the cachets as the designs were familiar, but some of the colors and production methods were "just not right." When the items were received by the high bidders, it turns out that we were correct to be dubious about the legitimacy of the cachets. Many were just rubber-stamped copies, and usually poor ones at that.



Figure 166: Two exhibit pages from my George Rogers Clark exhibit with genuine cachets (left) and forgeries (right)

Eventually, it was revealed that an estimated 70,000 to 100,000 of these fake cachets were part of a large sale out of Iowa. They were legitimate first day covers but had forged cachets added.

The auction house that held the original sale accepted the return of any lots that were in question and handled the situation as best as could be hoped for. Most collectors and exhibitors I know returned their covers. I came to an arrangement with the auction house to keep the covers I won, but at a substantially reduced price. I believe that the bulk of these fakes have since been destroyed, but I am sure that there are others still in the marketplace.

¹¹⁶ Nutmeg Stamp Sales, Mail Sale #80, April 15, 2004.

I include the forgeries in my exhibits for two reasons. First, like it or not, these fake cachets are now a part of the stamp's first day story. Second, I like to think of it as a chance to help educate FDC collectors and exhibitors who may be unaware that forgeries could, and do, exist.

If you're interested in more information on what happened, I recommend reading Carol Shelton's article that appeared in Linn's.¹¹⁷

5.14 Cachet Add-Ons

The use of add-on cachets in a first day cover exhibit has led to me having contentious conversations with exhibitors and judges alike. I think there are two reasons for this. First, there is no definitive definition as to what constitutes an add-on cachet. Second, are add-ons appropriate in a first day cover exhibit at all?

Let's address the first question; what makes an add-on an add-on? Some exhibitors go to the extreme and categorize any cachet that was added after the cover was serviced as an add-on.¹¹⁸ Others go to the opposite extreme and set no time limit as to when the cachet could be added.

I like to think that any cachet added to the envelope within a year of the stamp's release is a contemporary cachet. Those after a year, to be add-ons. That's my rule – and who's going to judge me for that? Oh yeah, the Jury will. Well in that case I should probably make sure I explain my reasoning in the synopsis.

As to the second question, *do they belong in a first day cover exhibit?* Well, I feel that they can be, but I do tread lightly. I ask myself, are they interesting and do they add to the story? If the answer to either part of the question is no, then I won't include them. Otherwise, I might. At that point, it comes down to the available space in the frames. If I do include them in an exhibit, I will create a section just for add-ons and not include them within the rest of the exhibit. Unless (of course there's an "unless") the cover has some other reason that justifies its use elsewhere in the exhibit. These reasons may include a scarce rate or destination that I have no other examples that could be used.

¹¹⁷ Carol Shelton, "Fake Cachets Discovered in First-day Cover Hoard", *Linn's Stamp News*, August 9, 2004, 1.

¹¹⁸ Note that using this extreme definition means that any cacheted piece of postal stationery is an add-on. Make of that what you will.