

THE DAWSON COVER

The Celebrated and Unique Hawaiian 2¢ Missionary Cover

Lot 11°

1851, 2¢ Blue (1) and 5¢ Blue (2). Both Type II—the righthand position in each setting of two—the Missionary stamps are free of any repairs and are essentially in Very Fine condition; the 2¢ has mostly ample to large margins with framelines complete all around except for a small nick in the upper left corner, where a tiny part of the line has been filled in on the lettersheet; the 5¢ has three mostly ample margins and is just barely in along frameline at left, there is a short closed tear at bottom and a small part of the frameline has been filled in at bottom right; each Missionary stamp is tied by the Honolulu 7-bar grid cancel on a bluish folded cover addressed in the hand of William C. Dawson to “Miss Eliza A. Dawson, Care Jacob H. Dawson, 273 Cherry Street, New York” with notation on back “Give my love to all”; to the left of the stamps is a clearly struck red “Honolulu * U.S. Postage Paid * Oct. 4” (1852) circular datestamp; the Hawaiian Missionaries are used in combination with a horizontal pair of **United States 1851 3¢ Brownish Carmine (11A)**, Positions 41-42L2L, 1852 printing from Plate 2 Late, ample margins to just slightly in at bottom left, tied by “San Francisco Cal. 27 Oct.” circular datestamp with “Cal.” in upper and lower case letters

THE ONLY KNOWN COVER BEARING THE HAWAIIAN 2-CENT MISSIONARY AND THE ONLY INTACT COVER WITH TWO DIFFERENT DENOMINATIONS OF HAWAIIAN MISSIONARY STAMPS. THE RAREST AND MOST FAMOUS OF ALL HAWAIIAN AND UNITED STATES COVERS, AND UNIVERSALLY RANKED AMONG THE WORLD’S MOST IMPORTANT PHILATELIC ITEMS.

Exhibited among “The Aristocrats of Philately” at Anphilex 1971 (New York City), Interphil 1976 (Philadelphia) and Anphilex 1996 (New York City). Shown by invitation in the Courts of Honor of 15 international philatelic exhibitions (last displayed at Washington 2006) and illustrated in the exhibition catalogues for London 1980 and World Stamp Expo 1989. Displayed in the “Gems of Hawaii: The Persis Collection” exhibit at the Smithsonian National Postal Museum in celebration of the museum’s first anniversary. Pictured on the United States Postal Service 2002 souvenir sheet designed by Richard Sheaff (Scott 3694).

Illustrated in *Rare Stamps*, L. N. and M. Williams; *Encyclopedia of Rare and Famous Stamps*, L. N. Williams; described and illustrated in Meyer-Harris *Hawaii, Its Stamps and Postal History*, and Gregory *Hawaii Foreign Mails to 1870* (Figure 15-28 and pictured on the front cover of Volume I); featured in *Life* magazine’s “The World’s Greatest Stamps” (May 3, 1954) and on the cover of *Esquire* magazine (October 1956).

Ex George H. Worthington (pencil “3/11/05 New Eng. S. Co. ISSS SS”), Alfred F. Lichtenstein, Alfred H. Caspary, Benjamin D. Phillips, Alfred J. Ostheimer III, Honolulu Advertiser (Thurston Twigg-Smith/Persis Corporation) and Guido Craveri/Tito Giamporcaro.

Siegel Census No. 1-II-COV-15. Gregory Census No. 2¢-1 and 5¢-2. With 1995 Philatelic Foundation certificate stating “it is genuine.” Estimate \$2,000,000-3,000,000

The Journey from Lahaina to New York City in 1852

This cover (with its letter, which is no longer present) was mailed by William C. Dawson from the town of Lahaina on the island of Maui in 1852. According to Fred Gregory, the cover was probably franked with all of the stamps when it left Lahaina (*Hawaii Foreign Mails to 1870*, Volume I, pages 281-282). Gregory theorizes that the 3¢ 1851 pair was affixed by Dawson, who paid 7¢ cash for Hawaiian postage and the ship letter fee to the Lahaina postmaster, George Gower (Collector of Customs and postmaster 1851-54). Gregory believes it was Postmaster Gower who affixed the 2¢ and 5¢ Missionary stamps to indicate

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to the Honolulu post office that 5¢ Hawaiian postage and the 2¢ ship letter fee had been prepaid. The Honolulu Postmaster, Henry M. Whitney, listed the letter as fully prepaid on his waybill to the San Francisco post office, where the 3¢ pair was cancelled and the 2¢ ship letter fee was transmitted through an accounting mechanism between post offices.

The Dawson cover was probably carried from Honolulu to San Francisco on the *Mary A. Jones*, which cleared customs on October 4, 1852 (*The Friend*, October 8), and sailed the following day. The ship arrived in San Francisco on October 26, after a reported journey of 21 days (*Daily Alta California*, October 27). The San Francisco post office applied its datestamp with the October 27 date, probably in anticipation of sending the letter to Panama on the *Northerner*, an 1,102-ton wooden sidewheel steamer operated by the Pacific Mail Steamship Company under the command of Captain J. B. G. Isham. The *Northerner* ran the San Francisco-Panama route as an extra steamer.

SAILING OF THE STEAMERS.—On next Saturday, the steamer *Northerner*, Capt. Isham, will leave for Panama from Long Wharf. The steamer *New Orleans*, Capt. Edgar Wakeman, leaves on the same day for the same port, touching at San Juan del Sur. The *Brother Jonathan*, Capt. Baldwin, of Vanderbilt's Independent Line, leaves on Monday, Nov. 1st; and the steamer *California*, Capt. R. L. Whiting, leaves the same day, with the U. S. Mails and the treasure. The *California*, the pioneer of steamers on the Pacific, left New York for this port, four years ago this month. She has been in continual service ever since, and has plied with remarkable regularity and promptness. She has lately been thoroughly overhauled, painted, and refitted, and now presents as beautiful an appearance as when she was launched. Her last trip to Panama has proved her to be a very swift steamer, and excelled by but few anywhere.

Daily Alta California, Oct. 27, 1852, reporting scheduled departures for Panama of the *Northerner* on Oct. 30 and *California* on Nov. 1

We cannot know with certainty if the Dawson cover was in a mail bag on the *Northerner* when it sailed on October 30, or if it was part of the mail carried by the *California* on November 1, which most likely included the two other Missionary covers. The *Northerner* arrived in Panama on November 15. The *California* arrived on November 16. All of the mail was carried across the isthmus to Aspinwall, and from there it left on the United States Mail Steamship Company's *Georgia*, which departed Aspinwall on November 18 and arrived in New York on November 28, after stopping at Kingston, Jamaica.

According to the *Weekly Herald* report, the *Georgia* arrived in New York with the largest load of California gold ever transported. The *Georgia* was under the command of the famous American naval officer, Admiral David Dixon Porter, who at the time held the rank of lieutenant and worked as a civilian for the United States Mail Steamship Company.

Cleared.

- Sept. 11.—Fr sh Vesta, Scobry, for Sydney via Tahiti.
- Am bg Zoe, Richards, for San Francisco.
- 25.—Br sch Catherine, Matheson, (into Kaukoanli.)
- 26.—Am sch Gazelle, Stoddard, for Ladrono Islands.
- 28.—Am sh John Wells, Cross, cruise.
- Oct. 2.—Haw. brig Wallace, Crowell, for San Francisco.
- 3.—Haw. brig Harriet, Webster, Sydney.
- 2.—Brit. brig Palermo, Morlarty, Sydney.
- 4.—Am. brig M. A. Jones, Newell, San Francisco.
- 5.—Am. wh. sh. Mary and Martha, Stocum, cruise.
- 6.—Haw. brig Elizabeth Newell, Smith, San Francisco.
- 6.—Am. ship Caroline Read, Tibbets, Calcutta.

Clearance of *Mary A. Jones* reported in *The Friend*, Oct. 8, 1852

According to the *Daily Alta California* (October 27, 1852), the PMSC *Northerner* and *California* were brought down from Benecia in “newly painted” condition on October 26 and 27, respectively. The *Northerner* was scheduled to depart on Saturday, October 30, and the *California* on Monday, November 1. Two other Missionary covers with the October 4 Honolulu datestamp have San Francisco November 1 datestamps (Siegel Census Nos. 2-I-COV-70 and 3-I-COV-142). These two other Missionary covers did not have United States stamps affixed, so they required an extra step to account for United States postage and the ship letter fee. After making the necessary accounting entries, they were datestamped and bagged for the Panama departure. The November 1 date was inserted into the San Francisco datestamp to correspond with the sailing of the *California*, but the actual application of the marking could have occurred days earlier.

The U. S. mail steamship *Georgia*, Capt. Porter, also arrived Saturday at noon, via Kingston. The *G.* left the former port in company with the *Northerner* Light.

The *Georgia* brings an enormous amount of gold dust—the largest shipment ever made from California. Adams & Co. alone have over six hundred thousand dollars. Annexed is the

Arrival of USMSC *Georgia* reported in *New York Weekly Herald*, Dec. 4, 1852



Admiral David D. Porter, USN

David D. Porter was the son of Commodore David Porter and adoptive brother of Admiral David Farragut. A decade after Porter steamed into New York harbor with the mail bag containing the Dawson cover, he participated in the U.S. Navy's Civil War Mississippi River campaign and later was put in command of the North American Blockading Squadron.

The Correspondents—William C. Dawson and Eliza A. Dawson

William Craig Dawson, who addressed this cover to his sister, Eliza Ann, was born on December 28, 1829, and died of typhoid in Newark, New Jersey, on March 10, 1859. William and Eliza were two of eight children born to Jacob H. Dawson (1800-1882) and his second wife, Hannah. Eliza was born on

April 8, 1835, and in May 1858 she married Theodore Macknet in Newark (Eliza died there in 1894). The Dawson cover is addressed to Eliza in care of her father, Jacob, who had an office at 273 Cherry Street in New York City. He is listed as a cabinet maker and lumber dealer in New York City directories in the 1820's and 1830's. In 1851 Jacob joined his eldest son, Thomas Williams, in the tannery and leather goods business in Newark, where they had a factory located at 123-125 Ferry Street.

In 1851 William sailed from San Francisco to the Hawaiian Islands on the American schooner *Samuel Roberts*, which departed on March 10. His first letter from Hawaii (see Honolulu Advertiser, Siegel Sale 769, lot 2073) was written from Lahaina on April 19, 1851, in which he remarks, "I have cast my anchor on this Island & settled down in peace after having been tossed on the tumultuous Waves of Life for Thousands of Miles & have come to the end of my journey." Another cover from the Dawson correspondence is dated February 20, 1852, and bears a strip of three of the 13¢ "Hawaiian Postage" Missionary (Honolulu Advertiser sale, lot 29). After a few years in Hawaii, William returned to the States, married his wife Amanda in 1854, and entered the saddlery hardware business as a partner in Sturges, Wade & Dawson, located at 45 Mulberry Street in Newark. (Source: Dawson family history, Charles C. Dawson, 1874, at <http://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/moa>).

The Dawson Find—Saved from Fire

The Dawson cover's provenance is given in *The Life and Adventures of a Philatelist* (pages 81-82), written by Alvin Good, who was George H. Worthington's philatelic secretary. According to Good's account, which contains some factual errors, during the summer of 1905 a defunct tannery was being cleaned for conversion to a Morocco leather factory. Good states that the tannery was located in Bridgeport, Connecticut, but other accounts give the location as Newark, New Jersey, or New Bedford, Massachusetts. K. David Steidley proved conclusively that the old Dawson factory on Ferry Street in Newark was the location of the furnace find ("The Provenance of the Dawson Correspondence," *The Collectors Club Philatelist*, March-April 2011).

According to Good's account, some 35 years earlier (circa 1870) the building had been abandoned, and, in feeding old papers and records into the furnace before leaving, the previous occupants had choked out the fire, leaving bundles of half-burned papers in the stove's belly. The workman now given the job of cleaning out the boiler and furnace knew something about stamps and became intrigued by the presence of old stamps on folded letters and envelopes scattered among the charred papers. When he noticed the partly burned envelope with a strip of the 13¢ Missionary, he dug deeper and found the folded cover bearing the 2¢ and 5¢. Fortunately, the 2¢ cover escaped an incendiary fate, showing nothing more than a faint spot at left where the lettersheet was licked by the flames.

The Dawson Missionary covers were sold in 1904, soon after their discovery, to Albert W. Batchelder of the New England Stamp Company and William O. Wylie, an editor at *Mekeel's Weekly Stamp News*. The firm featured the 2¢ cover on their season's greetings card of 1905-06 as "The Rarest Cover Known to Philately." It was sold to the leading American

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George H. Worthington
(1850-1924)

collector of the time, the Cleveland chicle magnate, George H. Worthington. Good's pencil source code, "3/11/05 New Eng. S. Co. ISSS SS", indicates that Worthington paid \$5,000 (BULFINCHES=1234567890) to New England Stamp Company on March 11, 1905 (not \$6,000 as reported by Good).

Worthington owned the Dawson cover for the next decade and displayed it in his Hawaii collection at the 1913 International Philatelic Exhibition in New York (Exhibit 20). Along with his cover to Bombay bearing two rare One-Penny "Post Office" Mauritius stamps, the Dawson cover was renowned as Worthington's greatest philatelic possession.

Portions of the Worthington collection were sold privately by Warren H. Colson in 1915, at a time when Worthington's financial position was beginning to falter. In 1917 the entire

balance of the collection was sold privately to Alfred F. Lichtenstein, another titan of 20th century philately. Lichtenstein consigned portions of the Worthington collection to J. C. Morgenthau & Co. for sale by auction. The Dawson cover was offered as lot 1001 in Part IV of the Worthington sales, held in New York City on December 10-12, 1917. It was



Alfred F. Lichtenstein (1876-1947)

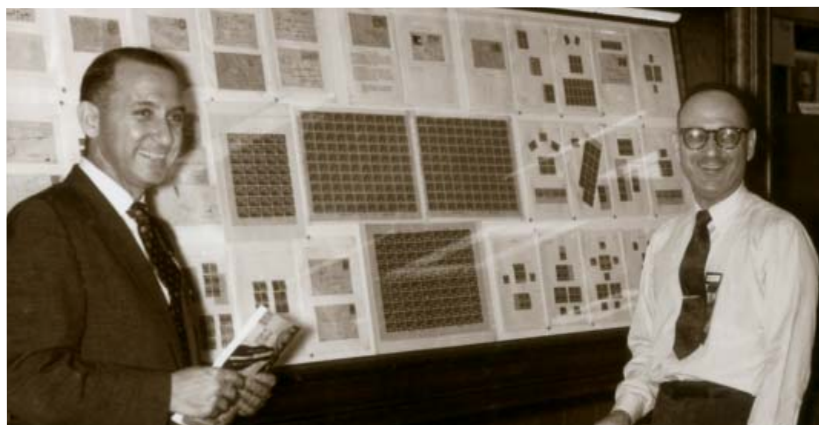
acquired in the auction by Alfred H. Caspary, who was quickly emerging as one of the greatest collectors of classic worldwide stamps. Caspary paid \$6,100 for the Dawson cover, and for the next four decades it was a cornerstone of his collection until his death in 1955.



Alfred H. Caspary (1868-1955)

Caspary's Hawaii collection was sold by H. R. Harmer in New York on October 8-9, 1957. The Dawson cover, described by Herbert J. Bloch in the Harmer sale catalogue as "one of the most outstanding and extraordinary philatelic items in existence," sold for \$25,000. The buyers of record were Raymond H. and Roger Weill of New Orleans, who were acting as agent for their secret client, B. D. Phillips.

Benjamin Dwight Phillips (1885-1968) was the scion of the T. W. Phillips family, owners of a large natural gas and oil company in Butler, Pennsylvania. Phillips started his stamp collection in earnest in 1946, initially with purchases from Warren H. Colson. Within a few years the Weills had gained Phillips as a client and began



Raymond (left) and Roger Weill standing in front of their 1956 FIPEX exhibit

representing him in auctions. According to the three-volume inventory of the Phillips collection, many of the Weills' major purchases in auctions during the 1950's and 60's, including the Caspary sales, were made directly on behalf of Phillips.

In 1968 the Weills purchased the entire Phillips collection for \$4.07 million, evidently a record for any collection sold up to that time. Phillips died in 1968, and the Weills advertised the purchase as having been made from the estate of an anonymous collector. However, in a later personal recollection of the acquisition, Raymond Weill told this commentator that he and Roger spent several days at the Phillips home in Butler, valuing the stamps at his request, in order to make a cash offer. When the Weills presented their \$4.07 million offer, Phillips was attired in a hunting jacket and cap with a Purdey shotgun slung over his shoulder. Upon hearing the offer, Phillips responded "Sounds good, boys," and walked out of the room. If this account is accurate, the Weills acquired one of the greatest, if not the greatest, United States collections of all time, and the owner went off to shoot ducks.



Alfred J. Ostheimer III

The Weills did not hold the Dawson cover in inventory for very long. Almost immediately after acquiring the Phillips estate collection, the Weills sold the Dawson cover to Alfred J. Ostheimer III, an insurance executive and then one of the leading collectors of Hawaii. Raymond Weill recollected that the selling price was \$90,000.

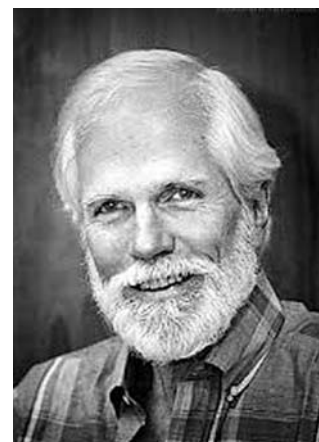
Thurston Twigg-Smith and Alfred Ostheimer were friends, and in January 1972 they concluded a transaction in which the entire Ostheimer collection was acquired by Twigg-Smith's family holding company, the Persis Corporation. With the Ostheimer collection and his personal holding combined, Twigg-Smith created the Honolulu Advertiser newspaper's corporate stamp collection, a fitting legacy for the family that traces its roots back to the first company of missionaries to arrive on the islands in 1820.

The phenomenal Honolulu Advertiser collection, which at the time included 26 Missionaries, was awarded a Special Prix d'Honneur at Interphil 1976. After an unsuccessful effort in 1993-94 to donate the collection to the Smithsonian National Postal Museum in exchange for a tax credit—a precedent set by the Josiah K. Lilly estate when it donated Lilly's coin collection—the Persis Corporation consigned the Hawaii collection to an auction conducted by Robert A. Siegel Auction Galleries, in association with Raymond H. Weill Company.

At the history-making Honolulu Advertiser sale held by Siegel in November 1995, the Dawson cover was acquired by the Italian-Swiss dealer, Guido Craveri, for \$2.09 million (\$1.9 million hammer plus 10% premium). Soon after the auction, Craveri sold the cover to another European, Tito Giamporcaro, for an undisclosed price.

In 2003 a privately negotiated transaction was completed, in which the Dawson cover and other Missionary covers were acquired by Steven C. Walske for his "Heart of the West" exhibit collection. However, the only time the Dawson cover was exhibited was in the Court of Honor display of worldwide rarities at the Washington 2006 international exhibition.

The Dawson cover—a survivor of two ocean crossings and near-incineration—has been described as "the most valuable and interesting of any early nineteenth century cover" by Alvin Good and "by far the most important item in Hawaiian philately [and] one of the greatest covers in the world" by Dr. Norman S. Hubbard ("Aristocrats of Philately," Interphil 1976 exhibition catalogue). Its claim to uniqueness remains undisputed.



Thurston Twigg-Smith