



Lot 42

## LOT 42°

**One of the most beautiful 1851-56 Imperforate Issue covers extant, with a perfect sheet-margin block of five of the 12¢ 1851 paying the double rate to Württemberg via the Prussian Closed Mail route**

**ESTIMATE \$50,000-75,000**

## DESCRIPTION

**12¢ Black (17)**, Positions 71/81-82/91-92R1, block of five from the lower left corner of the right pane of Plate 1 with large part of inter-pane margin at left, large to ample margins all around, intense shade and proof-like impression on bright white paper, lightly cancelled by grids and tied by “Wheeling Va. Feb. 4” (1857) circular datestamp on buff cover **to Württemberg, Germany**, addressed to the district court in Horb am Neckar, double 30¢ Prussian Closed Mail rate with sender’s route directive “*Per Prussian Closed Mail*”, red “N. York 14 Am. Pkt. Paid Feb. 7” 14¢ credit datestamp—carried on the Havre Line’s *Arago* from New York on February 7, arriving in Southampton on February 20—entered Prussian mail system at Aachen with red “AACHEN 21/2 FRANCO” (February 21) framed transit datestamp, back of cover with Stuttgart (February 23) and Horb (February 24) transit and receiving datestamps, additional part strike of German transit backstamp (February 23)

## PROVENANCE

No record of this cover has been located prior to 1983, when it was acquired from a European source by Duane B. Garrett and certified by The Philatelic Foundation

Christie’s Robson Lowe sale, 10/30/1986, lot 329, to Zoellner

Robert Zoellner, Siegel Auction Galleries, 10/8-10/1998, Sale 804, lot 92, to William H. Gross

## CENSUS, LITERATURE AND EXHIBITION REFERENCES

ANPHILEX 1996 Invited Exhibits (Zoellner)

## CERTIFICATION

The Philatelic Foundation (1983)

## CONDITION NOTES

Extremely Fine block and flawless cover; small scissors-cut between two stamps

Small red “ALCURI” backstamps (Paul J. Alcuri, Great Britain)

## HISTORY AND COMMENTARY

**The 12¢ 1851 Württemberg Cover Returns to America**

Collectors are acutely aware of the rarity of blocks and large multiples of the imperforate stamps issued from 1847 through 1857, when perforated issues replaced them. The rarity increases significantly for blocks used on cover. We are currently aware of six blocks of the 12¢ 1851 Imperforate on cover. The largest is a block of six in the Charles A. Hirzel collection at the Swiss Museum of Communications in Berne, Switzerland. There is also a strip of six on cover in the James Allen collection. The block of five on the cover offered here is the second largest on cover and regarded by specialists as the finest in terms of quality.

The Württemberg cover was apparently unknown in the philatelic world until it entered The Philatelic Foundation for certification in 1983. Its first appearance in the American market was in the Christie’s Robson Lowe sale in New York on October 30, 1986 (lot 329), where Robert Zoellner bought it for his developing collection. The realization of \$65,000 hammer set the tone for the first sale of the Louis Grunin 1851-57 collection, which was held five months later.



Robert Zoellner (1932-2014)

Bob Zoellner, a highly-regarded investor, together with his wife Victoria, formed the investment firm Alpine Associates in 1976, focusing on merger arbitrage, bankruptcy and other investment strategies. By the time of his death in 2014, the firm had \$1.7 billion in assets under management.

As a collector, Zoellner became the first person to actually complete a United States stamp collection, despite claims that Benjamin K. Miller or Wilbur H. Schilling, Jr., achieved that goal first (they never did). In the 1998 Zoellner sale at Siegel, the 12¢ block on cover sold to Mr. Gross, who outbid Joseph Hackmey and others for the privilege of owning the finest block on cover. ■