

**DR. ARTHUR K. M. WOO'S 1869 PICTORIAL ISSUE:
ANATOMY OF AN INTERNATIONAL LARGE GOLD EXHIBIT
(or, why more and more International Gold Medal winners
are deciding not to exhibit in the U.S.)**

This article has two purposes. The first is to give the average philatelist insight into the world of competitive exhibiting, using Dr. Arthur K. M. Woo's exhibit of the U.S. 1869 Pictorial Issue as an example. The second purpose is a cautionary tale of what can go wrong when an advanced collector chooses to share his collection with the philatelic world through the venue of exhibiting.

One way for collectors to share their passion with others is through the forum of exhibiting. This allows collectors to show others what they have acquired and how they have shaped the material into their own personal expression of collecting. Most stamp exhibitions have a competitive element. As in any competition, the expectation is that the competitors and judges will be friendly and fair-minded, and all exhibitors are playing on a level field.

There has always been an element of politics or inconsistency in philatelic judging. However, in recent years, particularly in the United States, the competitive process has been undermined by a confluence of trends: the focus on style over substance, the insular nature of judging with friends rewarding friends (and outsiders being harshly judged), and a disregard for the stature of a collection in worldwide philately, in favor of highly specialized studies of areas that have very limited general appeal.

Before delving into the case study of Dr. Woo's 1869 exhibit, an overview of the exhibiting process will be helpful.

National vs. International Exhibitions

The most prestigious international shows are accredited by the Federation International de Philatelie (FIP), which was founded in 1926 to promote philately internationally. The FIP is the "United Nations" of philately. Its membership comprises one member from each internationally recognized national society. Only one society per country is allowed to join. The American Philatelic Society (APS) is the recognized member from the U.S., as it has by far the biggest membership of the country's various organizations.

The largest international shows traditionally happen once each year. Every ten years an international show is held in the U.S. The last U.S. international was held in 2006 in Washington, D.C. The next will be World Stamp Show-NY, to be held May 28-June 4 in New York City.

In order to compete in an FIP International show, an exhibit must first qualify by winning a national competition accredited by the FIP national member. In the U.S., an exhibitor must win a Grand Award at one of the APS World Series of Philately (WSP) shows. These include Westpex, Napex, Nojex and others. Once an exhibit wins the top award in a WSP show, it cannot be shown again in a qualifying national exhibition during the same calendar year. The top award winners from all of the WSP shows go on to compete for the national APS Champion of Champions at the annual show held in August.

As an aside, national competitions are not restricted to the country's residents. Further, an exhibit that has been shown internationally can also be entered into a national competition. However, if it wins the top award internationally or receives three FIP Large Gold medals in a ten-year period, then it cannot

be entered into a national competition. It can, however, be shown in a special Court of Honor. These rules ensure that one exhibit does not dominate competitions over a long period and that everyone has a chance to win.

Returning to the entry point in FIP Internationals, the winners from different national competitions are allowed to apply for frame space in accredited FIP events. These international exhibitions are usually heavily oversubscribed, and not all national winners' applications are accepted.

Classes of Exhibiting and Awards

Once a collection qualifies for FIP International exhibition, it must first be shown in only five frames (80 pages). After reaching a certain award level, it can then be expanded to eight frames (128 pages). It is extremely rare for a five-frame exhibit to achieve international Large Gold status. An exhibit may be shown in FIP open competitions until it receives three Large Gold awards in a ten-year period, at which point it is moved to a different class, called the FIP Championship class.

In FIP Internationals, a collector must choose to display an exhibit in one of several different classes. These include General Class (with sub-classes of Traditional, Postal History, Aerophilately, Astrophilately and Postal Stationery), Revenue Class, and Thematics. The focus of each class is different, and an exhibitor must be careful to choose the appropriate one. Classes also evolve over time, as new areas are recognized as worthy of competition.

The different FIP awards are based on the number of points awarded by the judges. The APS system has avoided using points unless a special "FIP Option" is requested by the exhibitor. However, that is changing, and it seems inevitable that points will be used in national U.S. shows.

In U.S. national and FIP competitions, there are Gold, Vermeil, Silver and Bronze awards. In FIP competitions there is an additional Large Gold award level, which is awarded to an exhibit that achieves 95 or more points (96, 97 and 98 point exhibits are very rare, and there are no 99 or 100 point exhibits).

In FIP Internationals, the highest awards are the Grand Prix National (for exhibits displaying stamps or postal history from the host country), Grand Prix International (for exhibits displaying other countries) and Grand Prix d'Honneur (for Championship Class).

In U.S. national competitions, the Grand Award is given to one of the Gold-medal exhibits, and the runner-up is awarded the Reserve Grand. As mentioned earlier, the top award winners from all of the WSP shows go on to compete for the national APS Champion of Champions award in August.

Judging

The number of judges is generally determined by the length of the show and the number of exhibits. Judges work in teams to evaluate the exhibitors' synopsis forms, evaluate the exhibits and determine the medal awards and the top award winner. Special prizes are awarded by the judges, usually with sponsorship from specialist societies; for example, "Best Postal History" prize.

In the points system, points adding up to 100 are allocated to a set of criteria for evaluation. These are:

Treatment (20) and Philatelic Importance (10) of the Exhibit	30 Points
Philatelic and Related Knowledge, Personal Study and Research	35 Points
Condition (10) and Rarity (20)	30 Points

Presentation

5 Points

TOTAL

100 Points

From the categories shown above, it is obvious that *how* the exhibit is presented – treatment, knowledge/study and presentation (total 60 points) – counts for more than *what* is presented – philatelic importance, condition and rarity (total 40 points). This represents a significant departure from the judging standards that existed before the last twenty years or so, when the material mattered most, and collections could be shown with minimal write-up. Books that document some of the Grand Prix exhibit collections (for example, Kanai’s Japan and Mauritius) show how little concern there was for the criteria that now count for 60% of the points awarded.

One wonders if the pendulum has swung too far in the direction of treatment, research and presentation. Many exhibits read as if the exhibitor is presenting a book documenting the subject, and some of the statements about extremely narrow subjects (“the earliest use of this postmark in red”) seem designed to impress judges, but have little significance to anyone but the exhibitor or another specialist.

The Greatest Collection of the U.S. 1869 Pictorial Issue Ever Exhibited

The 1869 Pictorial Issue collection was started many years ago by Dr. Arthur K. M. Woo, who has been one of the most prolific exhibitors of all time. Dr. Woo has exhibited multiple collections in important and difficult areas. He has competed well over 100 times, both nationally and internationally, and achieved Gold or higher in almost every instance.

In order to determine what was needed for each of his collections, Dr. Woo followed the same steps described by John R. Boker Jr. in the forward to the series of his German States auction catalogs by Heinrich Koehler. He studied past auction catalogs, compiled information about the important items, read all of the reference books and articles on the subject, and corresponded with others to obtain information and guidance.

We should explain the title “greatest,” as it is used here, to show respect for others who have assembled outstanding collections of 1869 Pictorial material, Dr. Woo humbly acknowledges the great achievements of other current exhibitors and past award winners, such as Dr. Irvin Heimburger. In no way is the claim “greatest” meant to diminish their accomplishments. However, no other exhibitor has amassed a collection that includes the full range of material and so many important rarities. A comparison of Dr. Woo’s collection to any other 1869 exhibit collection will validate that claim.

Dr. Woo's 1869 Pictorial collection is a Traditional presentation, using the term that applies to exhibits that are expected to present essays and proofs, the major catalog-listed stamps and varieties, multiples and covers for all denominations. Rather than describe the entire collection in detail, it will be more instructive to focus on a few pieces, to show how Dr. Woo achieved balance, incorporated research from a variety of primary and other sources, and included items that have never been shown previously as part of an 1869 exhibit.

All exhibits start with a title page, which explains the plan and layout of the exhibit and summarizes what the exhibitor intends to accomplish. In this case, the exhibit is intended to explain how the issue was created, to show important items related to production, and to display covers to show how the stamps were used on mail.

Dr. Woo's exhibit begins by explaining how the first “commemorative” and first bicolored stamps issued by the United States came into existence. This starts with essays related to the competition

among printing companies for the contract to print the stamps.

Included for the first time in an 1869 exhibit are the bicolored 5c Jefferson essays. They are now recognized as extremely rare essays for the 1869 contract, produced by the National Bank Note Co. in 1868 to show what bicolored stamps might look like. They are included to demonstrate the full story of the competition for the contract.

Dr. Woo then continues with a showing of essays, proofs, singles, multiples, covers and varieties for each of the denominations – the ten that were issued and the unissued 5c essay.

The final part of Dr. Woo's exhibit is devoted to post-production items, such as the 1875 Re-Issues and proof impressions made years after the issue was current, usually in conjunction with an event or government philatelic program.

With an issue comprising ten denominations, it is inevitable that some stamps will be more readily available than others, especially the lower denominations. This is where balance is important, and the judging category Treatment does consider whether or not the exhibit is balanced. It would be easy to fill pages of an exhibit with 3c 1869 stamps and covers. Judges would mark the exhibit down for such imbalance in favor of more common material.

Dr. Woo's exhibit displays the following number of pages for each denomination:

Introduction	
Archival	4 pages
1c	10 pages
2c	14 pages
3c	15 pages
6c	10 pages
10c	16 pages
12c	13 pages
15c	11 pages
24c	9 pages
30c	12 pages
90c	7 pages
Post-Production	7 pages

Quite remarkably, the exhibit presents seven pages of the 90c 1869. Of this top denomination, there are only a half-dozen different essays, limited proof material, almost no fancy cancels, very few multiples, and only one cover is known. Dr. Woo includes the unique proof sheet of 100 (shown below), which has plate variations such as short transfers clearly identified. There is a reconstructed unused block of eight made from two blocks of four and a used block of four. Of course, the ultimate 90c 1869 item is Dr. Woo's unique "Ice House" cover, the only cover known with the 1869 top denomination. This is the only time such comprehensive treatment of the 90c has been shown in an exhibit.



90c Lincoln - Essays

The only recorded complete sheet of plate proofs on India paper
Ex Earl of Crawford & Kapiloff

As the two pages below show, for the 6c there is one page with proofs, including a block of 50 with imprint and plate number. The page also displays shades seen on the proofs, as well as the imprints from the plates that were used to print the issue. The page that follows shows the issued stamp, with a block of six with part imprint and a block of sixteen, the largest recorded unused multiple. Information on the source of the design, the engravers, and other uses of the portrait is included. The 6c continues with the largest recorded used multiple (on cover) and other unusual covers.

6c Washington - Proofs



Bright blue on India paper

Grey-blue on card
Inverted 'Specimen' overprint

Issued colour on card

6c Washington - The Issued Stamp



A block of sixteen is the largest recorded multiple

The 6c value was also issued in ultramarine but in a deeper shade than the 3c value. They were printed in sheets of 300 stamps divided into two panes of 150 each. A total of 4,293,100 stamps are believed to have been issued

The origin of the vignette is a from a Gilbert Stuart portrait of Washington painted in life in 1796. The stamp was designed by E. Picher. The vignette was engraved by William E. Marshall, originally for the 1861 24c value before being reworked slightly for this issue. The frame was engraved by William D. Nichols and the lettering by J.C. Kenworthy



Grey-blue shade on card showing printer's imprint and Plate number 'No.14'
Two different plates (numbered 13 and 14) were used to print this value

Most other denominations also show the largest recorded multiples, including the 15c Type II, the 90c proof sheet, the 90c reconstructed block of eight, and others.

A comprehensive exhibit of one issue is expected to show varieties and errors, especially for the 1869 Pictorial Issue, which was the U.S. government's first attempt to print bicolored postage stamps. Naturally, the three inverts – 15c, 24c and 30c values – are the most significant errors, and they rank among the world's most desirable stamps. Dr. Woo's collection contains used examples of all three, as well as an unused example of the 30c (one of seven recorded).

Dr. Woo is fully aware of the existence of unused 15c and 24c inverts, and a used block of four of the 24c. While the addition of these items would be a welcome enhancement, they would only increase the depth of representation, not its completeness. The invert errors will be found in the exhibit, and judges do not usually penalize an exhibit for lacking a few special and valuable pieces.

When covers are shown in a Traditional exhibit, it is important to show the intended use, such as a 3c for the domestic rate or a 15c paying the registry fee. If the covers displayed have unusual features, such as advertising designs or rare markings, they are considered more significant than the basic usage

or rate. In fact, rare and unusual covers can make an exhibit truly outstanding and appealing to the viewers.

Among the covers in Dr. Woo's exhibit are covers *originating in* Japan, Cuba, Hawaii, Mexico (Wells, Fargo use to Germany) and Peru, and covers *to* a wide range of destinations. The colors and exotic nature of these covers are great attributes of Dr. Woo's 1869 Pictorial collection.

One of the most important 1869 Pictorial Issue covers is shown below. It is a three-country franking originating in Peru and sent to Ohio. The Peruvian stamp paid a compulsory one-dinero (10c) foreign mail tax. The Great Britain one-shilling stamp paid the rate from Callao to Panama. Finally, the 10c 1869 stamp paid the inbound steamship rate in the U.S.. There are only three genuine three-country, mixed-franking covers with the 1869 Pictorial Issue. The other two are in institutions, so this is the *only* such mixed-franking cover in private hands.

10c Eagle & Shield - Combination usages on Cover
Overseas Origination



Used from Peru

1870 - Cover from Callao in Peru to Springfield, Ohio endorsed 'via St. Thomas' with single 10c plus Peru 1868 1d green and Great Britain 1/- green Plate 4 with the latter two stamps tied by barred oval 'C38' (Callao) British PO cancel. Small circular 'PANAMA' British PO transit cds (4 Oct) alongside. The U.S. 1869 10c is cancelled on arrival in the U.S.A. with 'N.YORK/STEAMSHIP' cds (27 Oct). *Illustr. 1982 Register (p.100) & Laurence (p.92). Ex Hessel*

The Peruvian stamp paid a compulsory 1 dinero (10c) foreign mail tax and the British 1/- paid the rate from Callao to Panama. The U.S. 10c paid from Panama through to the destination. There is no evidence that the cover travelled via St. Thomas as per the original routing endorsement

There are just three undisputably genuine recorded triple combination frankings with the 1869 issue, one with a 10c is in the U.S. National Postal Museum and another with a 30c is in the Swiss Postal Museum. This is the only one in private hands

Dr. Woo considers balance to be very important in an exhibit. He feels strongly that one should show roughly the same number of covers for each denomination. Not everyone approaches exhibiting this way. Of course it is impossible for the 90c 1869, but Dr. Woo's exhibit includes nine 24c covers with destinations such as Peru, Singapore and Germany, and nine 30c covers, including domestic uses, two of eight known covers bearing two 30c stamps (one domestic use, one to France), a 10c and 30c *to* Cuba, and a 10c and 30c *from* Cuba.

Post-production issues are also strongly represented in Dr. Woo's collection. The 1869 Pictorial stamps were re-issued in 1875, and there were also proofs made in the late 19th and early 20th century. All of the re-issues and proofs are represented, including a set of blocks of four of the Atlanta Trial Color proofs prepared for the 1881 International Cotton Exposition, which is believed to be unique.

1881 Atlanta Colour Trials



Extract from the only complete set of Atlanta colour trials in blocks of four still extant
Ex Earl of Crawford

This attractive and colourful array of proofs were prepared for a display at the International Cotton Exhibition held in Atlanta, Georgia from 5 October to 31 December 1881. This fair was held alongside the Western and Atlantic Railroad tracks a short ride from downtown and was attended by an estimated 250,000 people

Five different colours were used to print the proofs - vermilion, green, blue, brown and black. The monocolour lower values from 1c to 12c exist in all five colours. For the 15c to 90c bi-colour higher values, the use of five colours could have given rise to a possible 20 different two colour combinations for each stamp. However just 12 combinations were produced for the 15c and 24c values, 14 combinations for the 30c value and 10 combinations for the 90c value. A total of 78 different proofs were produced in all. Just the 30c and 90c values are shown here

Awards Received by Dr. Woo's 1869 Exhibit

Now that the reader is familiar with Dr. Woo's 1869 exhibit and his approach, it is time to review how the exhibit has been received by judges in various exhibitions.

The 1869 exhibit has been shown in three different kinds of competitions: 1) national non-FIP shows in countries other than the U.S.; 2) FIP-sanctioned Internationals, which are the largest and most prestigious shows; and 3) nationally, in U.S. shows sponsored and judged by the APS.

For overseas non-FIP shows, it won a Large Gold in 2009 at London's Stampex, a show that is highly competitive. As a result, it qualified for international exhibitions.

It next received a Large Gold in 2011 at Hannover, another national level competition.

In 2014, it was shown again at London's Stampex, where it won a Large Gold and the Grand Prix, the top award.

Again, in 2015, it won a Large Gold and the Grand Prix at Gotha in Germany.

All of the above were non-FIP events. In every case it won a Large Gold medal. In two events it received the Grand Prix.

It has been shown just once in a fully accredited FIP International exhibition, Brazil World Stamp Exhibition in 2013. As a first-time FIP exhibit, the collection was limited to five frames (80 pages), but even in this shortened presentation, the exhibit won an FIP Large Gold medal. Winning a Large Gold (95 points or more) with an exhibit of five frames is exceedingly difficult, especially for a collection of one issue, rather than an entire country.

So, in U.S. shows, how did the exhibit in eight frames (128 pages) perform?

One year after Brazil, it was exhibited at Westpex 2014, where it was awarded a normal Gold medal. Curiously, the Westpex 2014 show's top award was won by an exhibit of "Imperial Postmarks of the Trans-Siberian Railroad from Chelyabinsk to Manchzhyriya."

Referring to the point made earlier about specialized collections, it is remarkable, and difficult to explain, that such a highly specialized subject should receive the top award, especially when the same exhibit of Trans-Siberian railroad postmarks (in eight frames) received 90 points and a normal Gold in the Australia 2013 World Stamp Exhibition.

Dr. Woo's 1869 exhibit was next shown nationally at the 2014 APS show in Hartford. It was again awarded a normal Gold. Significantly, the judges deemed it not to be worthy of the Grand Award. It pointedly was given the Reserve Grand, bested by an exhibit of covers and markings related to the Austrian Lloyd Steam Navigation Company from 1839 to 1914.

Thus, what is arguably the greatest collection of an important classic issue of one of the world's major countries lost to a display of material from a chapter – possibly just a paragraph – of European postal history. The APS judges defended their decision, but there really is no rational justification of this choice. The study of one company's mail service is fascinating and certainly worthy of accolades. However, the validity of competitive judging is called into question when a collection of such modest standing in the international exhibiting world prevails over a Large Gold exhibit of U.S. 1869s.

Reflecting on Dr. Woo's experience, it is very surprising that the U.S. 1869 exhibit has received so many accolades at non-U.S. shows, even winning a Large Gold at FIP in five frames, yet has never won

the top prize at a show in an APS show on U.S. soil. One would expect that American judges would appreciate the material more than their international counterparts, but evidently this is not the case.

This experience demonstrates that philatelic judging can be arbitrary, especially in the awarding of the highest awards. Unfortunately, it is not an isolated experience. Several prominent international exhibitors have encountered the same degree of judging inconsistency in APS shows, and they have decided to curtail exhibiting in the U.S., which is sad for philately.

Today, the greatest 1869 Pictorial collection is hidden from public sight. It will not be shown at World Stamp Show-NY 2016 and probably will never be shown in the U.S. again. For Dr. Woo, it is a source of great sadness and regret that his enthusiasm and hard work in assembling this collection were met by the judges' indifference, if not outright insult. Hopefully, judging at APS shows will change to become more consistent and fairer to the participants. As of now, the field feels quite tilted.