

## **The Evolution of Anon E Mouse Cachets**

First Cachets 1981

### Who Wants to Know?

Collectors who show their prized items at competitive philatelic exhibit venues must demonstrate what they know about their collection. In the specialty area of first day covers (classified as “illustrated mail”), exhibitors can choose to focus upon cachets: who made them, how they were made, how many were made, etc.

An exhibit focusing on the work of just one cachet maker (a “retrospective”) is improved and may win high-level awards if the collector knows everything about the whole line of cachets produced. This can be quite a challenging task, especially if the project is started many years after the cachet maker has retired or passed on. In most cases, artists are not concerned about keeping good records of their production efforts. If they have produced thousands (or even just hundreds) of cachets over many years, details are not easily remembered.

Certain pioneer cachet makers get a lot of attention in scholarly articles written for philatelic publications. Researchers for those articles face the same problems that exhibitors do: finding answers to their questions about identifying artists, quantities made, methods used, and so on.

### A Sense of Order

I don't pretend to imagine that I'll ever be regarded as a “famous” or highly-honored cachet maker. I just want to leave a clear record behind for those few collectors who do like my work and want to know more about it. Orderly record keeping also makes good business sense.

### Everyone Has A Story

Writing the great American novel is not a goal for me, but I do enjoy sharing my experiences with others. As of this writing, I have spent a good part of twenty-seven years (off and on) making cachets for first day covers and event covers. There are many other cachet makers who have been at it longer and who have produced many more covers. Each of us has a different perspective and story to tell. Ah, the spice of life known as variety. We can learn from each other, and we do.

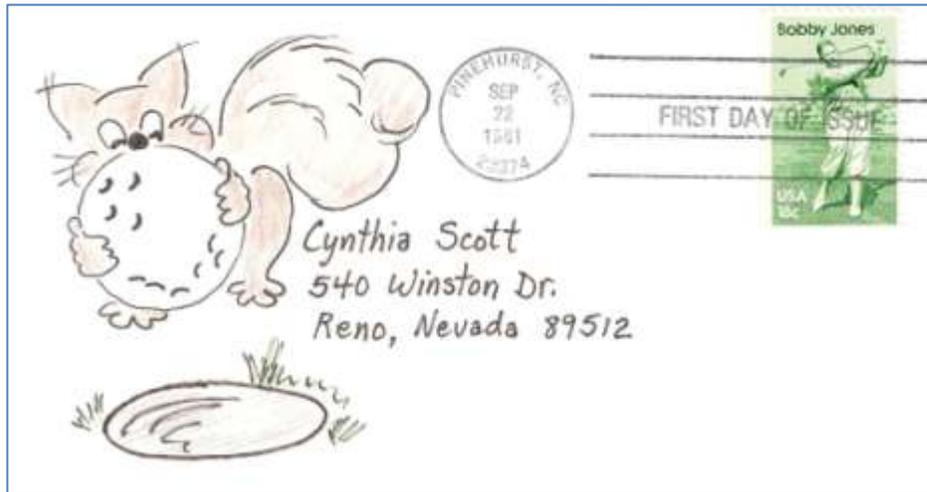
### In the beginning...

I first became intrigued by the world of stamp collecting (philately) when a co-worker at IBM kept bringing in fascinating bits of trivia to share every morning. This was in June of 1981, well before the Discovery Channel, the Internet, Google, or other manifestations of cyberspace. “Bill,” I asked, “where do you get this stuff?” Bill explained he learned it while collecting stamps. He invited me to attend a local stamp show the next week.

Like many people, I accepted the stereotype of stamp collecting. I imagined that it meant trying to find little squares of colored paper to fill empty squares in a pre-printed album. Boring and/or frustrating! But, when I visited the stamp show and examined the exhibits – my eyes were opened to a whole new vista of fascinating research, writing, and display possibilities. A person could learn about any topic under the sun or beyond the sun, by collecting and studying stamps. I was hooked immediately. I began collecting stamps about famous American writers and poets.

My First Cachet, Non-Commercial

At a meeting of the Nevada Stamp Study Society a few months later, our educational activity was an introduction to first day cover cachet making. Jack Barriage passed around blank envelopes and told us to address them to ourselves. Then he gave us each a new 18-cent stamp issued only the week before: either the Babe Zaharias or the Bobby Jones. With those on the table to inspire us, we were asked to draw a picture on the left side of the envelope related to golf. We could use pens, fine-tip markers, and/or colored pencils.



Jack gathered the envelopes and mailed them off to be canceled, explaining that they would come back to us in the mail. When my cover came back, I was tickled. This was fun! I wanted to make more.

My First Cachet, According to the AFDCS

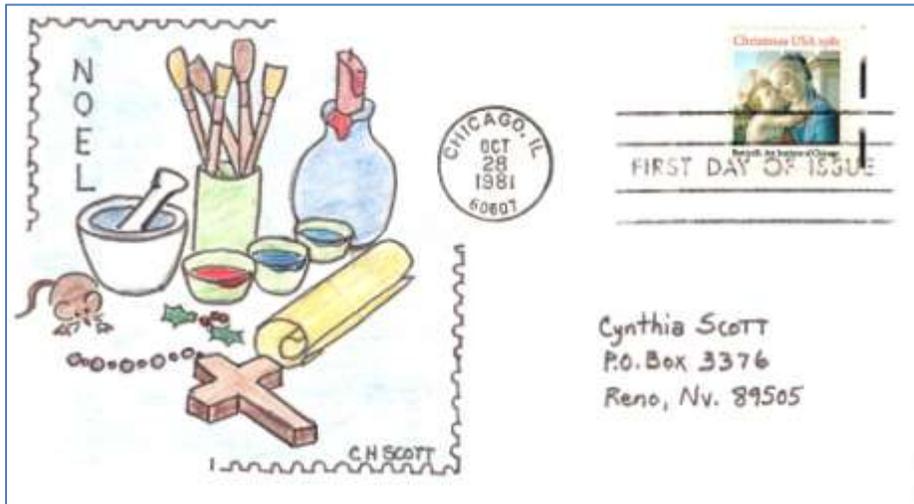
In November 1981, I had some free time on my hands and decided to play around with some more FDC cachets. The contemporary and traditional Christmas stamps were available, and so was the new John Hanson stamp.

The drawings had to be simple because it might be difficult to make copies if they were too intricate. I knew I could draw a cartoon-like still life, but wanted to add some kind of whimsical touch. That's why the little mouse was added.

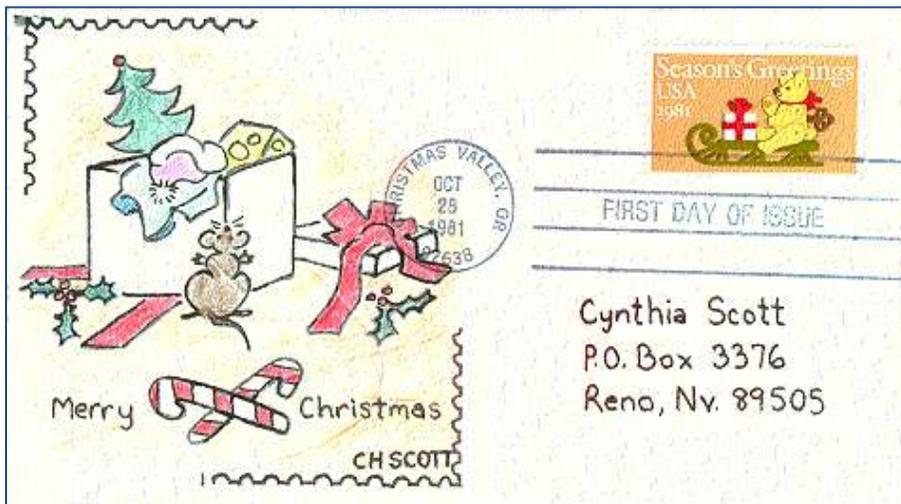
I made six copies of each by tracing my original drawing with a piece of carbon paper sandwiched between it and each envelope, one at a time. I then inked over those faint impressions and added color with pencils.

The first design I drew was the opened gift box, just delivered to the mouse by the toy felt bear in the stamp image. I wanted to call this my "first cachet," but the AFDCS sequences cachets by Scott Catalog number. The artist painting-supplies design I drew next, Sc. 1939, counts before the toy bear Sc. 1940.

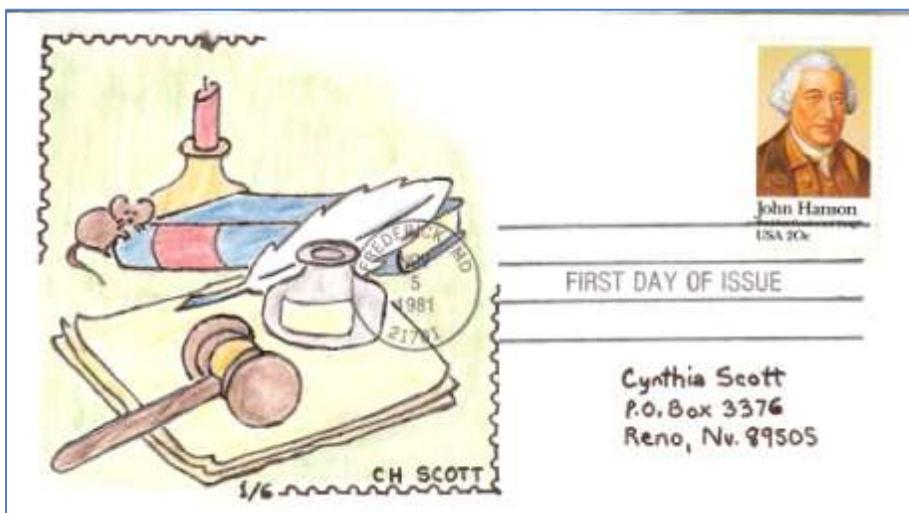
None of this would have mattered if I hadn't taken those covers to the next stamp club meeting. When Richard (Dick) Dreiling saw them, he immediately encouraged me to keep making cachets. He wanted to start buying much of whatever I made, to sell to collectors. Wow! This was flattering and exciting to hear. Dick was the one to launch my cachet line and advertise it in the journal of the American First Day Cover Society, *First Days*.



Anon E. Mouse Cachet number 001, Sc.1939



Anon E. Mouse Cachet number 002, Sc. 1940



Anon E. Mouse Cachet number 003, Sc.1941