D. Computer Cachets

D.1. Computer Designs With Hand Coloring

D.1.a. Drawing With a Mouse

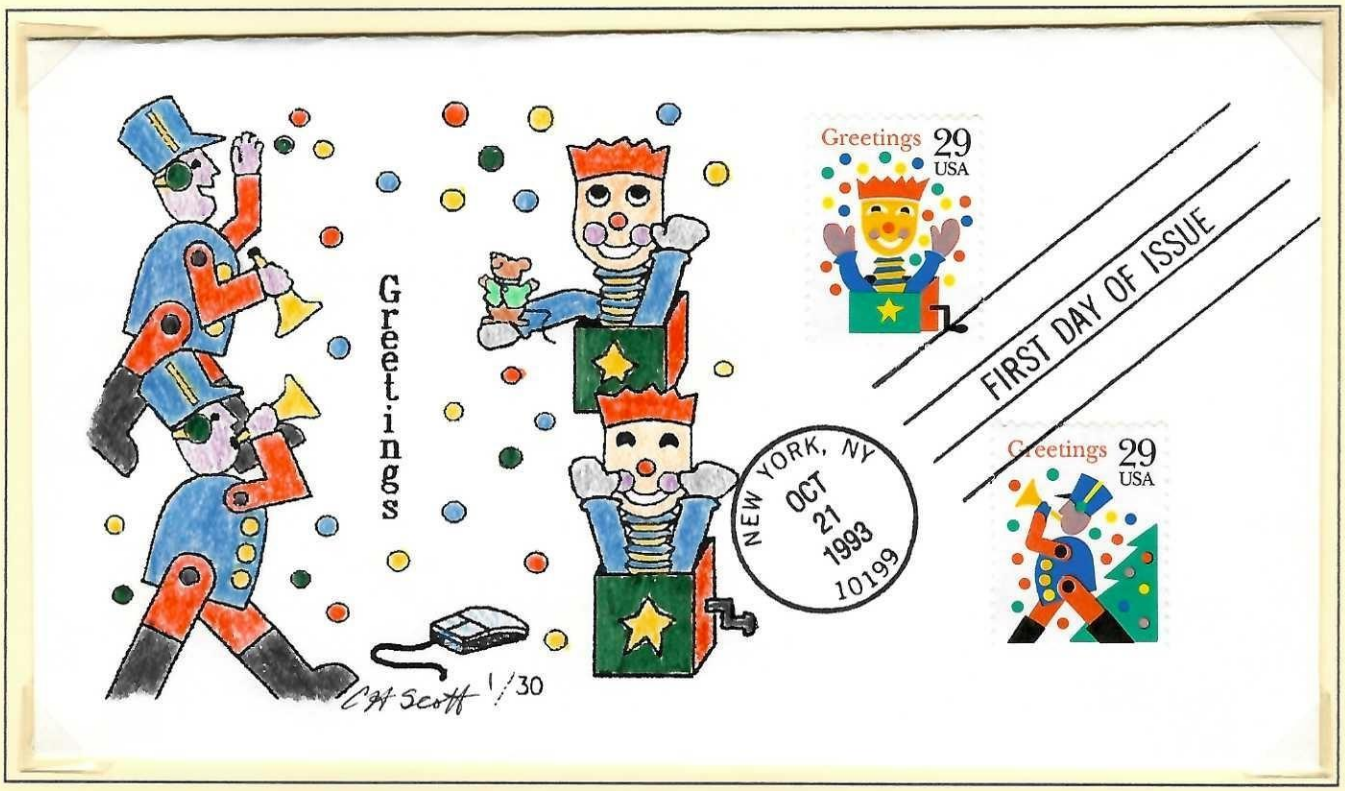
This graphic is the FIRST drawn with a Personal Computer "mouse" for Anon E. Mouse Cachets. It has a Tagged Image Format (.tif) file created in Paint Show Plus. This "tif" file was also the FIRST to be exported to another application and printed together with a computer-drawn envelope pattern.

Even though the computer was used for a "drawing pad," some hand lettering, paste-up work, and hand coloring were still needed. After that, a single clean mock-up was then photocopied to cotton bond paper to make thirty covers.

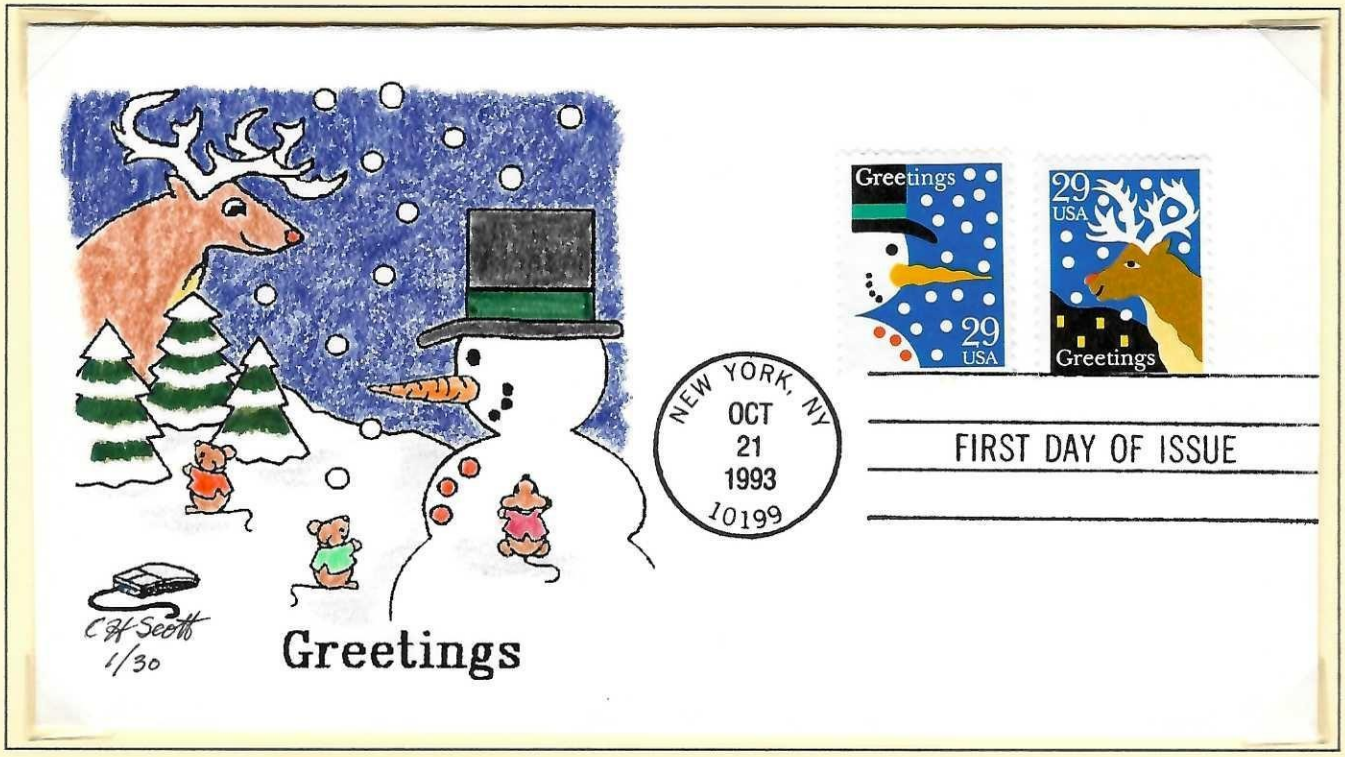
Color are usually tested on a clean photocopy, but this time it looks like colors were applied to the master paste-up.

D.1. Computer Designs With Hand Coloring

D.1.a. Drawing With a Mouse



The cover above shows the FIRST non-horizontal cancel placement requested by Anon E. Mouse. These covers also show how computer drawing programs are great for drawing perfect circles and for duplicating images many times in the same composition.



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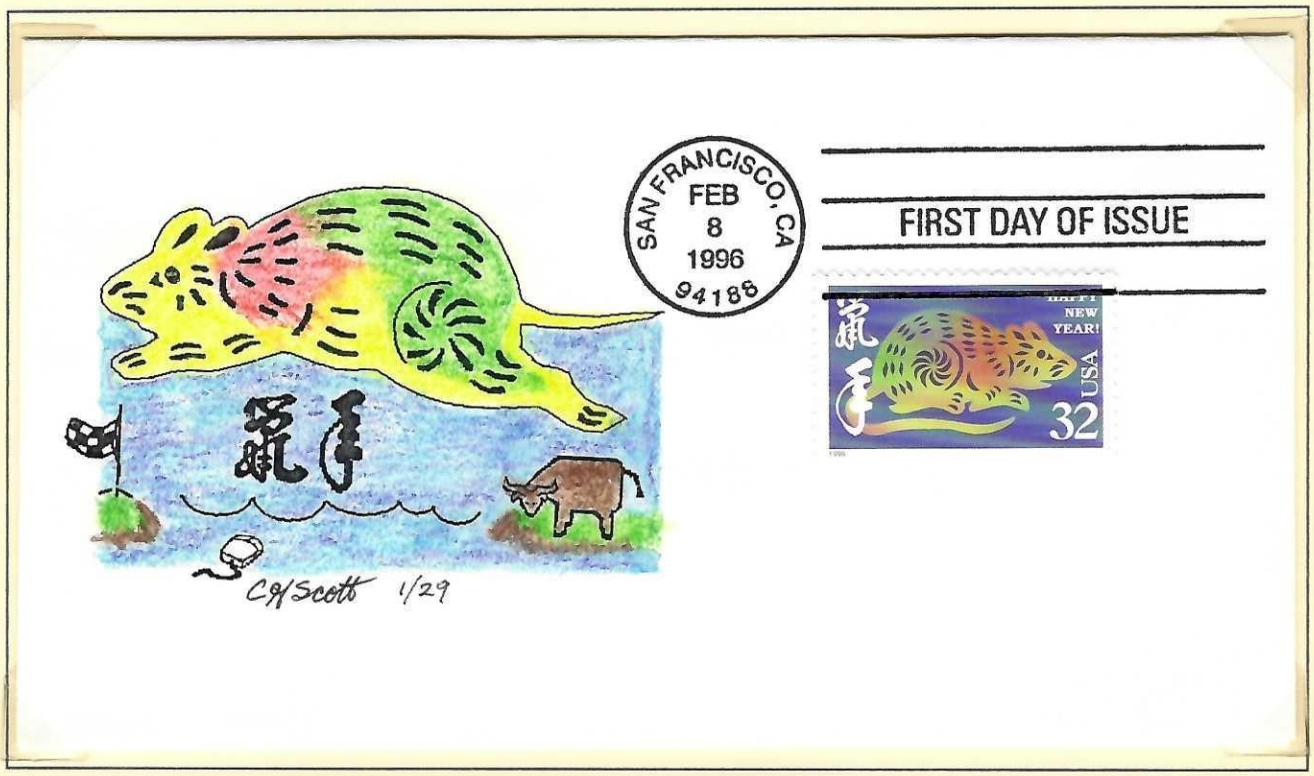
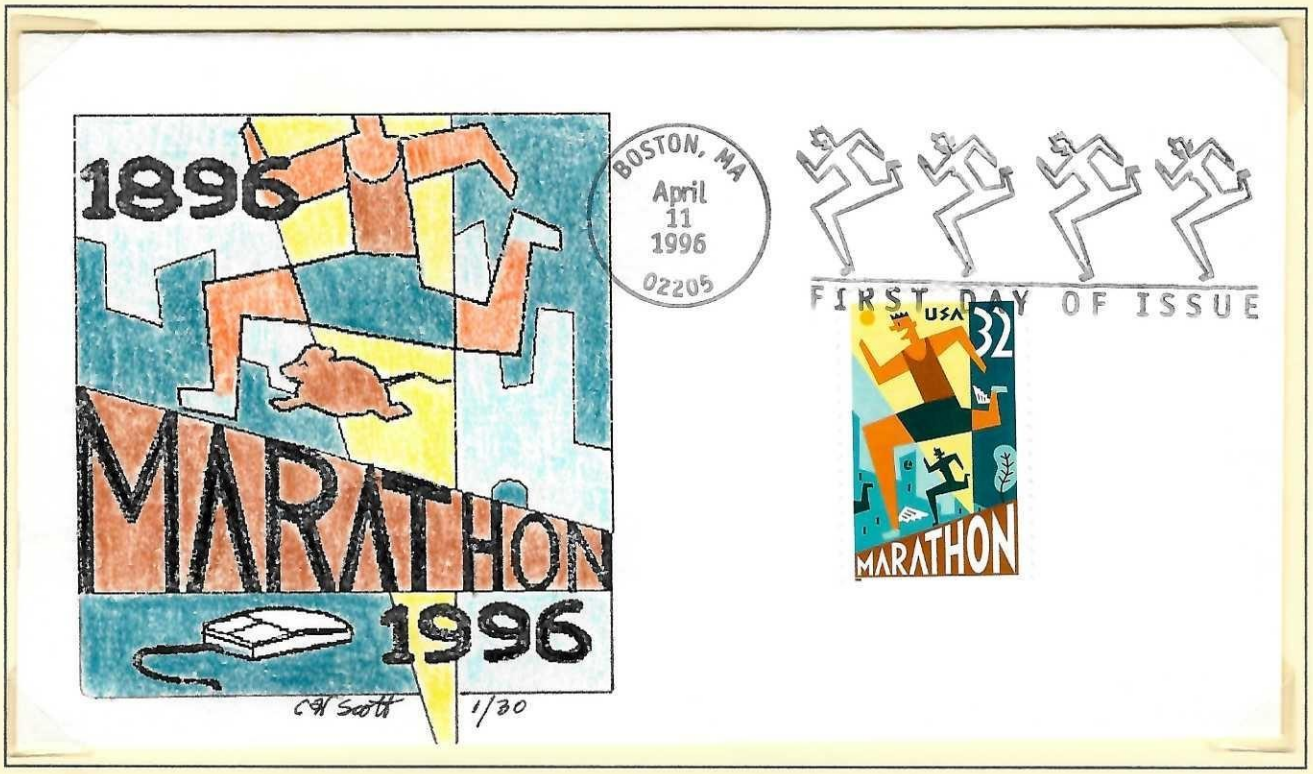
D.1.a. Drawing With a Mouse





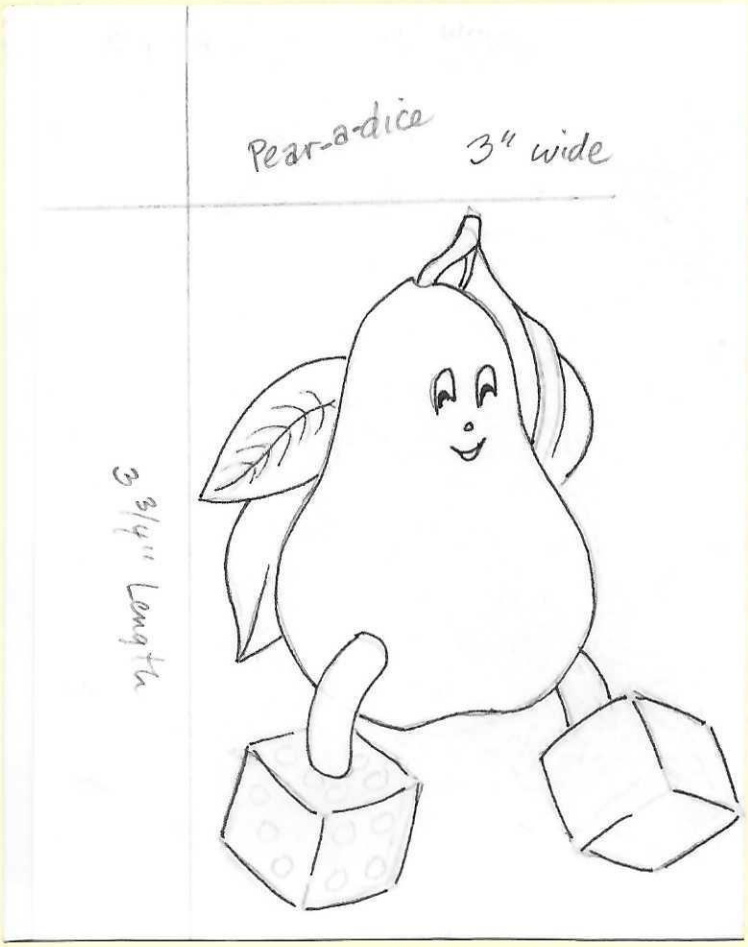
D.1. Computer Designs With Hand Coloring

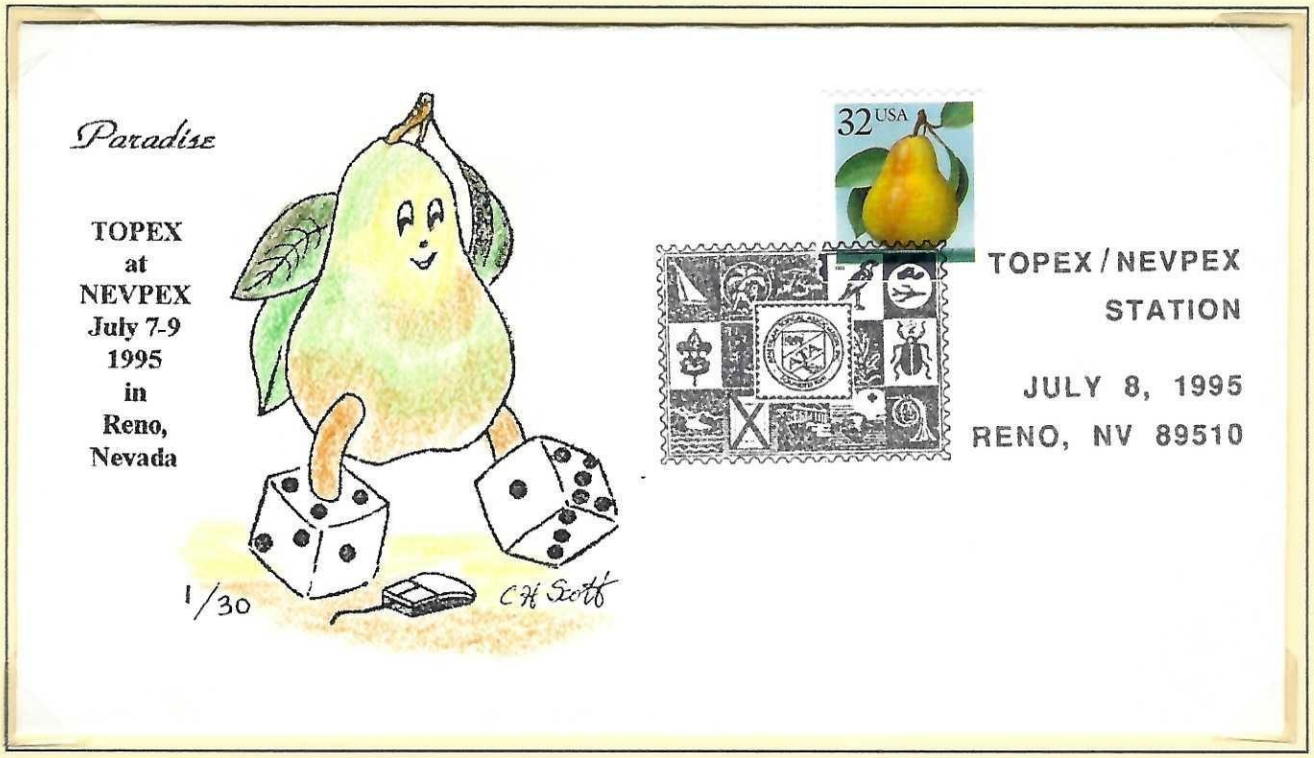
D.1.b. Scanning

This is the original drawing for the Pear FDC below. The pencil lines at the left side and top were guide lines for a hand-held scanner. The scanned image had to be preset for size before the scan began, which is why there are notes about length and width.

After scanning, the .tif file thus created was further enhanced with spots on the die, a P.C. mouse, and text. The end result was glued to an envelope template for photocopying and pencil colors were added by hand.

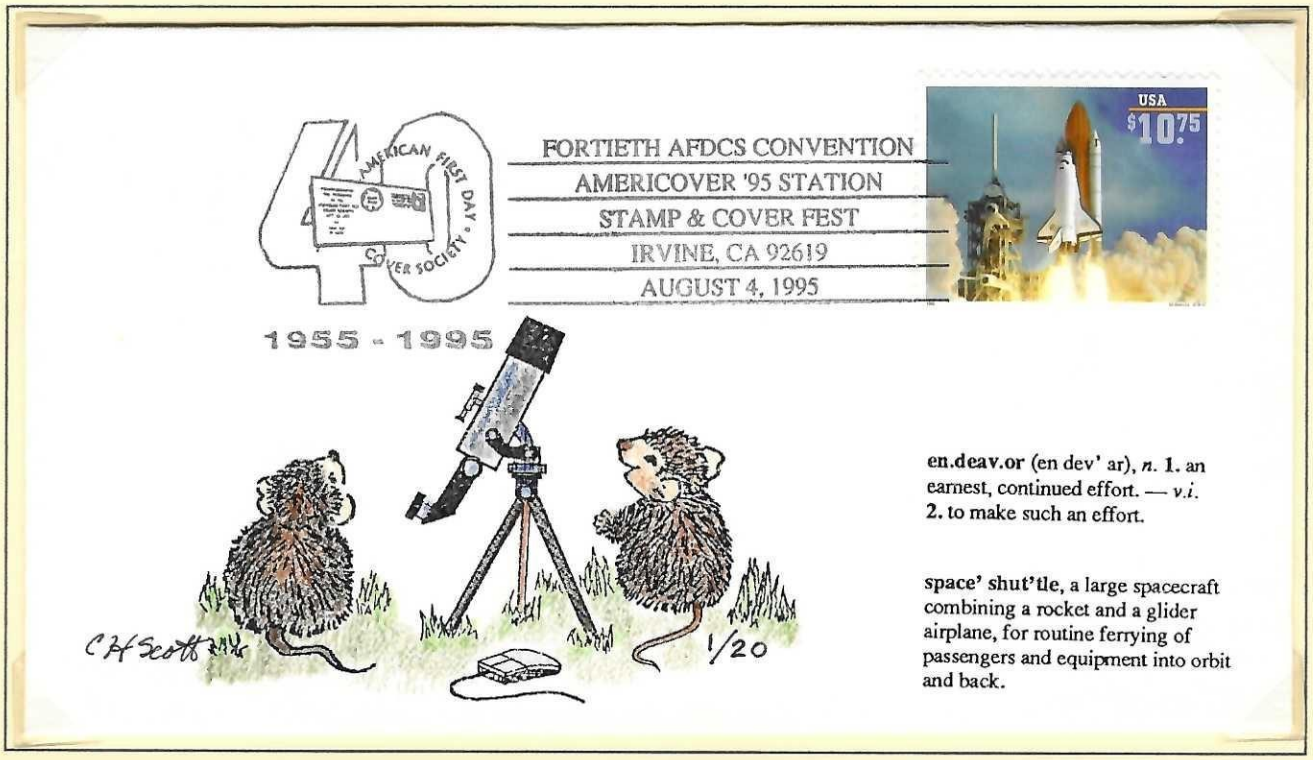
The Peach and Pear booklet stamps were issued at the American Topical Association convention, also known as "TOPEX."



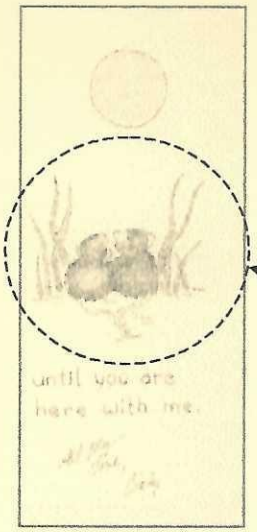


D.1. Computer Designs With Hand Coloring

D.1.b. Scanning



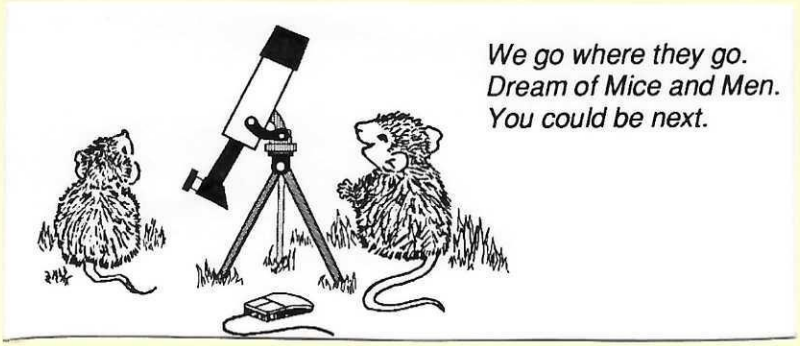
Front of Card



Inside of Card

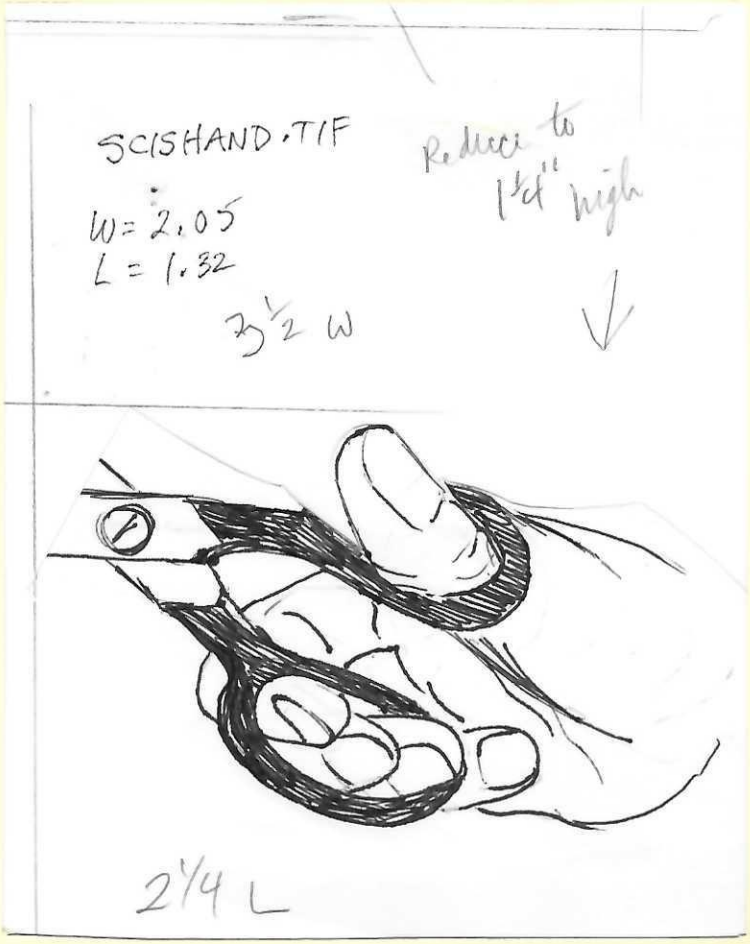
For the Space Shuttle issue, the artist scanned an old drawing in a home-made greeting card. The mice were separated and edited inside the Paint Show Plus program, with the telescope mouse-drawn between them.

Scanned portion



Text was added to the graphic in the Microsoft Publisher application. One discarded experiment (shown here) gives words to the mouse on the right.

D.1. Computer Designs With Hand Coloring

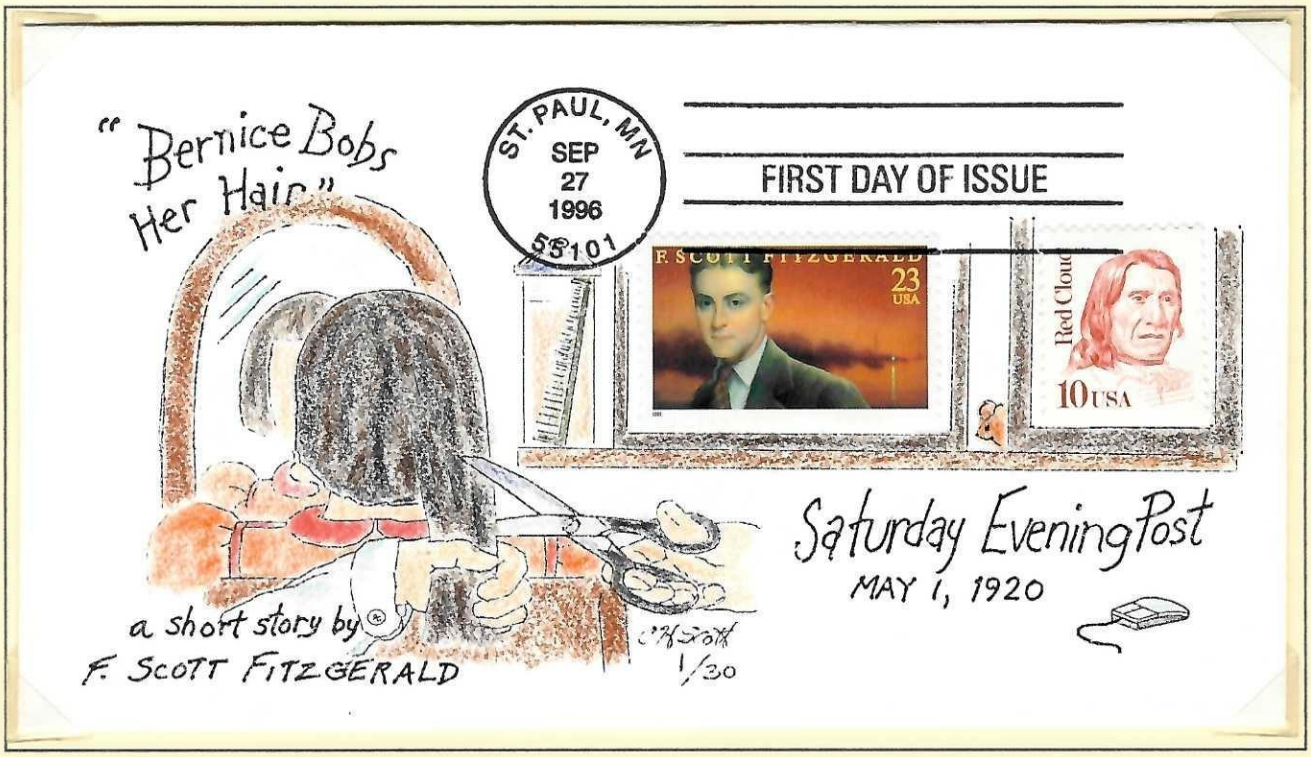


D.1.b. Scanning

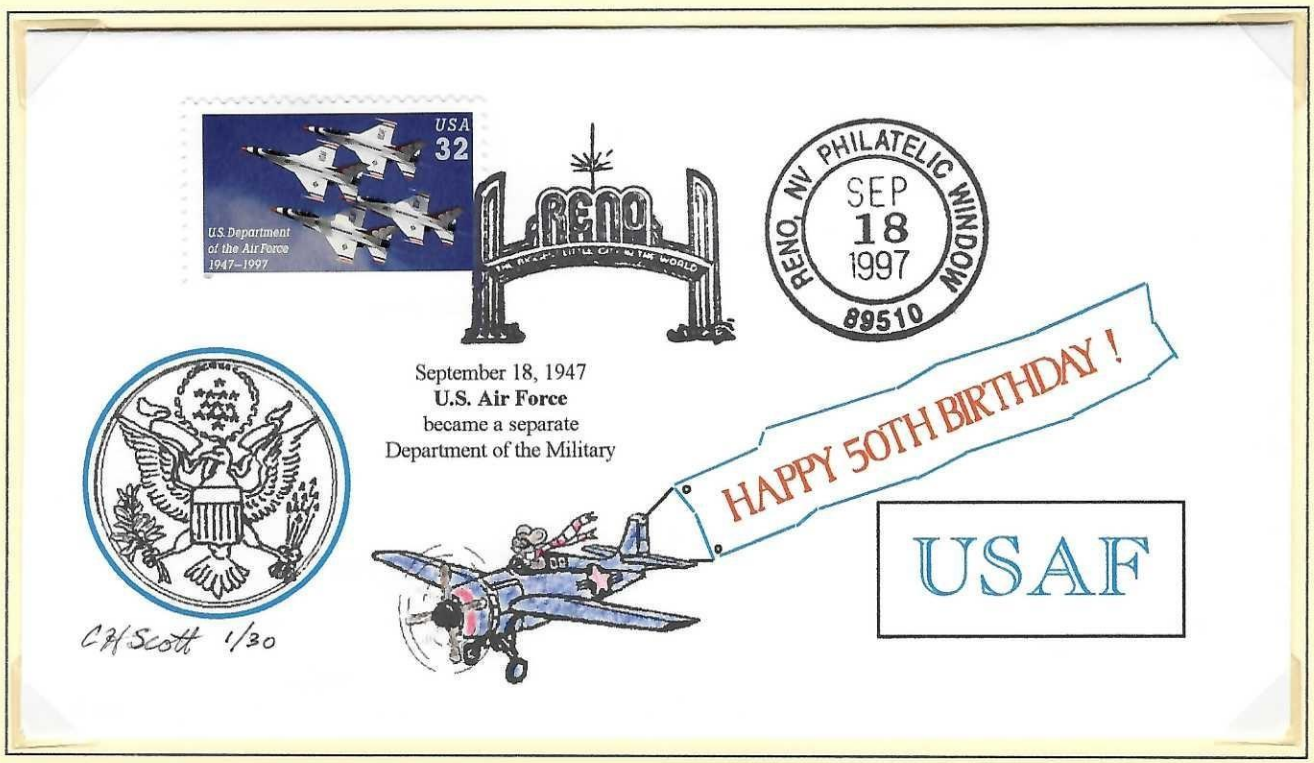
The cachet for the F. Scott Fitzgerald stamp is a combination of hand drawing, hand lettering, PC-mouse drawing, and scanning. The composite was pasted to an envelope template for photocopying.

The artist used her own hand (holding scissors) as a model to draw this pencil and ink sketch. After scanning and refining, the resulting .tif file was PC-copied into the mouse-drawn hair part of the cachet.

This 23-cent issue was meant for use as second-ounce postage. It is combined with the 10-cent Red Cloud to "make up" the correct first-ounce rate. The Red Cloud stamp was selected because of its color.



D.1. Computer Designs With Hand Coloring



The U.S. Air Force anniversary stamp was available at every post office across the country on its first day of issue. Several months earlier (in March) the artist moved to Reno -- which made it convenient to get this unique city cancel.

D.1.b. Scanning

AEM's airplane in this cachet is a greatly modified version of a scanned P-51 Mustang. The USAF emblem came from a pencil rubbing of a metal uniform device. It served as a rough guide for the ink-drawn version below, which was then scanned.

The blue and red text and borders in this cachet came from timid experiments with a new color printer and another drawing program. Eight more months passed before bolder attempts produced full-color PC-printed cachets.

D.1.c. Scanning Stamps

This Carter Family cachet has two scanned images, both from stamps. The train was on a foreign stamp that had a lot of detail and background which required computer "erasing" and modifications. Hours were spent doing this; it would have been easier and quicker to draw the thing from scratch. Hindsight is so sharp.

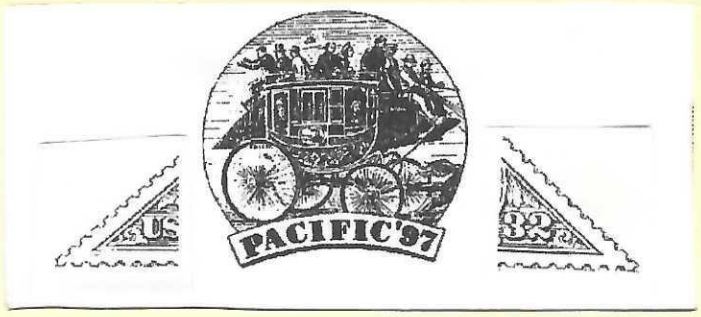
The finished cachet was pasted to this envelope template, which was drawn in the software application named below. This template was used for several cachets, both the pasted-on-with-glue kind and the computer-imported variety.

BOTTOM

Envelope Template October 1993
Created in "Super Sketch" as filename: COVER

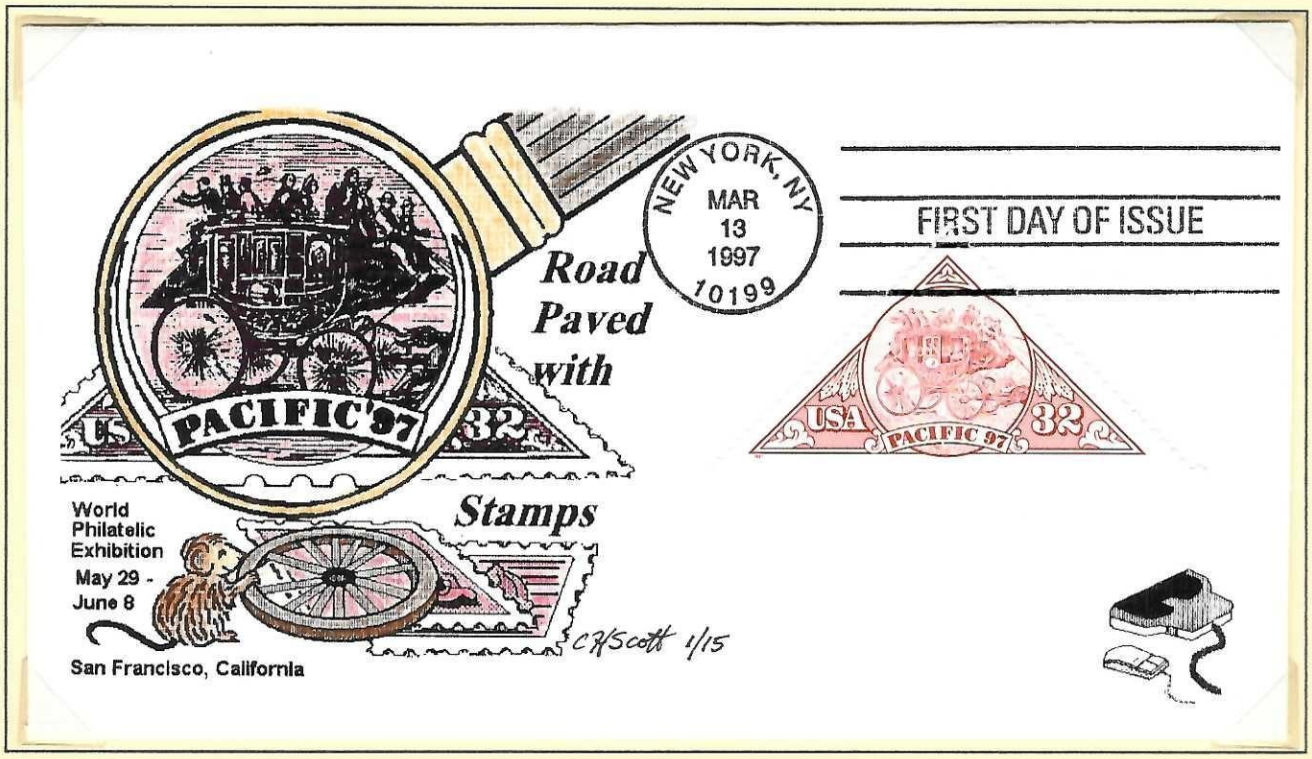
D.1. Computer Designs With Hand Coloring

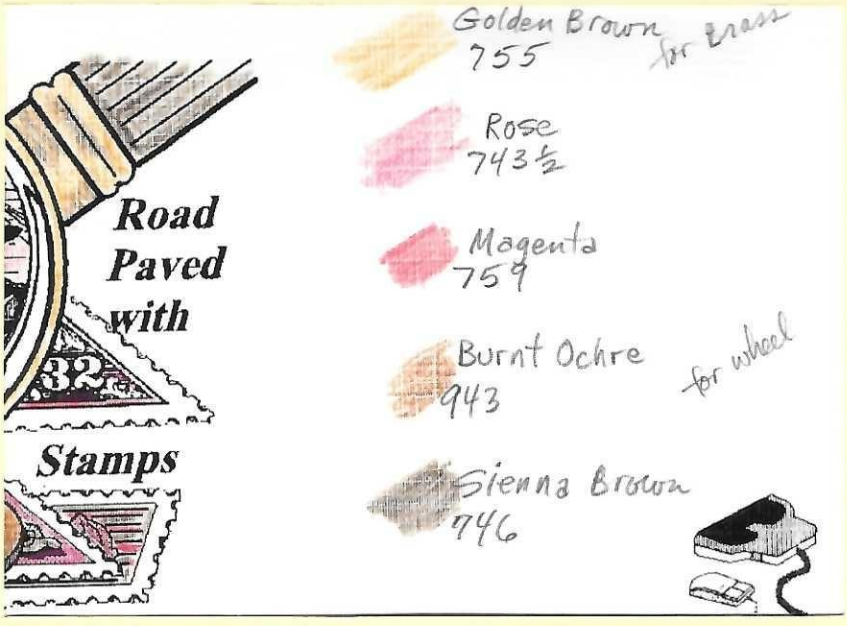
D.1.c. Scanning Stamps



The old-time engraving-style detail in the Pacific 97 triangle stamps begged to be shown off. To do this, scanning of the stamps was just a first step.

The stamp images were enlarged, dissected, and re-sized again to become parts of a new file. The new file also included mouse-drawn images.

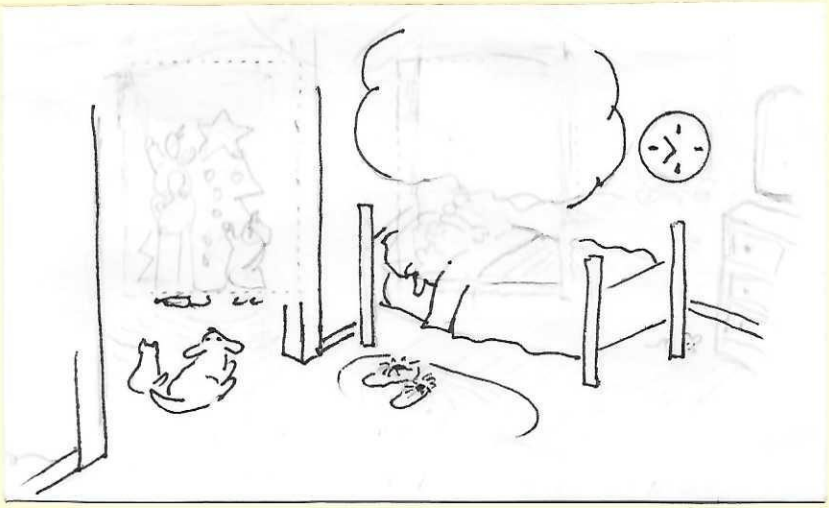




In addition to the PC mouse pictured in the lower right corner of the cover, there is a hand-held scanner to show how the cachet was produced.

Here are the color notes on a folded test envelope. Most colored pencils have numbers assigned by the manufacturer.

D.2. All-Computer Design & Color



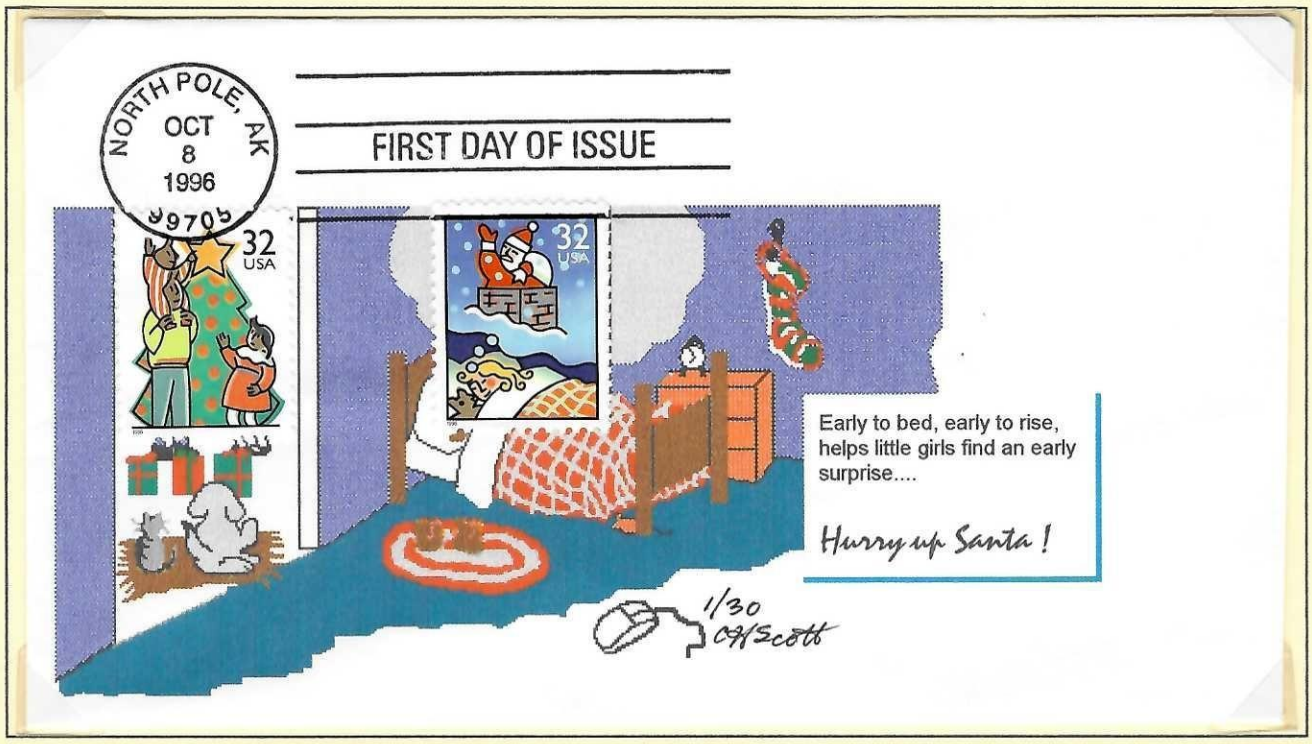
D.2.a. Stamp in Scene

This Contemporary Christmas FDC has the FIRST all computer-made envelope* cachet by Anon E. Mouse.

This concept draft shows a plan for making two of the four se-tenant stamps in that issue part of the cachet "scene."

This "brown bed" test print is one of three different variations tried and discarded before settling on the final design.

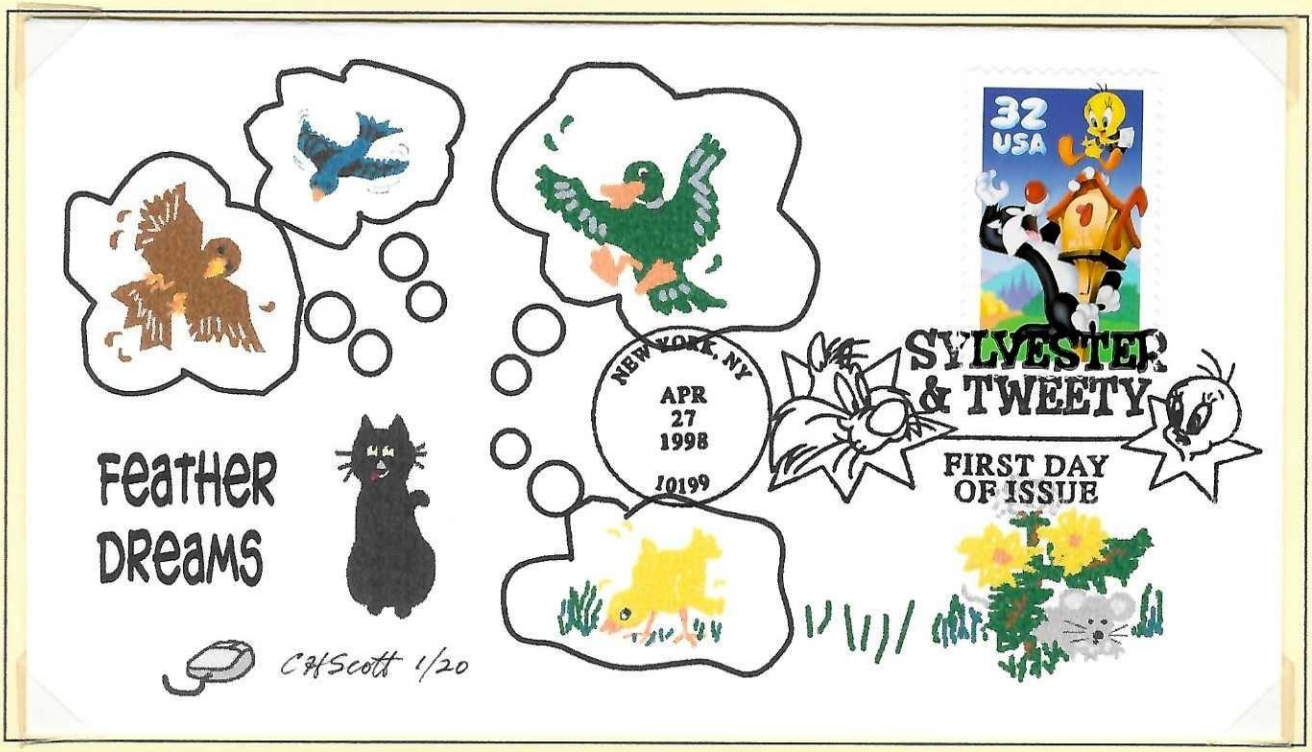
*A post card cachet came first, for the 20-cent Blue Jay self-adhesive, August 1996.



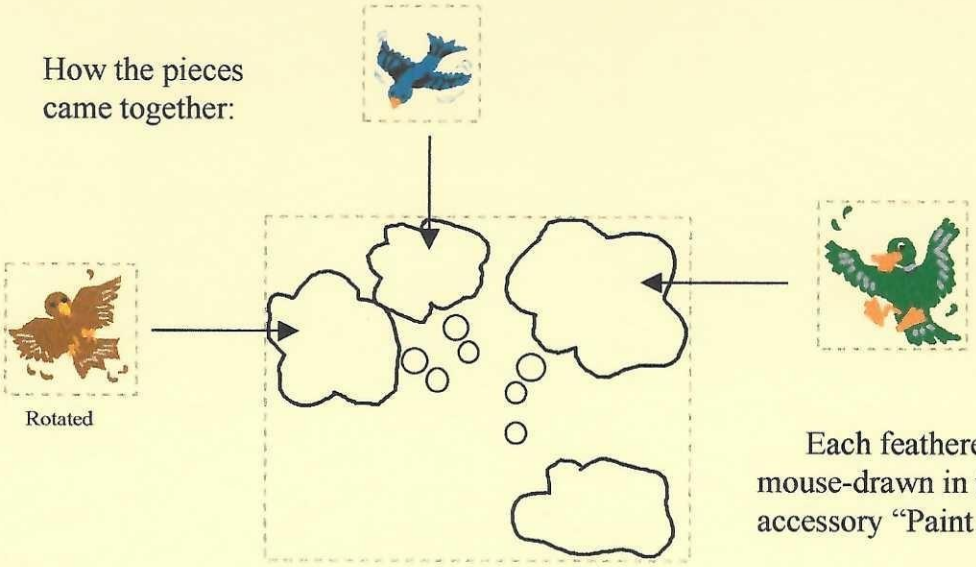
D.2. All-Computer Design & Color

D.2.b. Multiple Image Files

Seven different Bitmap Image (.bmp) files came together for this Sylvester & Tweety cachet: one for each "critter" in the picture and one for the PC mouse symbol. The dream bubbles and text were created in two layers of the Print Studio application where everything combined. Layering is a common feature of computer drawing and publishing applications -- even a relatively inexpensive ($50) one like this "Micrografx Windows Draw."



How the pieces came together:



Each feathered friend was mouse-drawn in the Windows 98 accessory "Paint Brush."

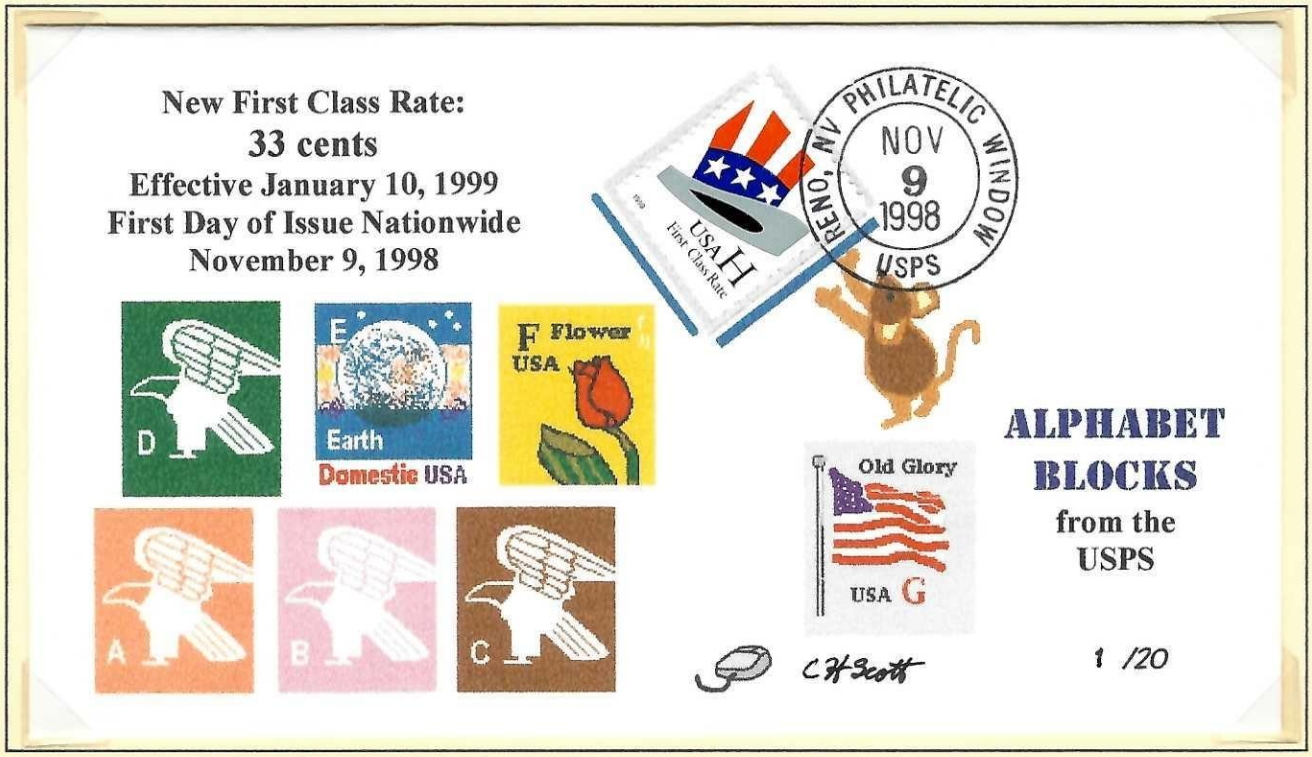
D.2. All-Computer Design & Color

D.2.b. Multiple Image Files

"Alphabet Blocks from the USPS" includes three Bitmap files. The letters A through F were created in one file, the "Old Glory" G stamp in another, and the lifting-up mouse in the third. These stamps were easy enough to duplicate via simple eye-hand coordination in the Paint Brush application. Scanning of the real thing was not necessary.

Thanks to "copy" and "paste" tools in Paint Brush, the profile eagle on the "A" stamp only had to be drawn one time. The three copies of that stamp picture were then "painted" different colors and given different letters in the corner.

The *Postal Service Guide to U.S. Stamps* provided the model photos for these "alphabet blocks." Sharp observers will notice that certain phrases like "Domestic Mail" or "US Postage" are missing from these drawings.



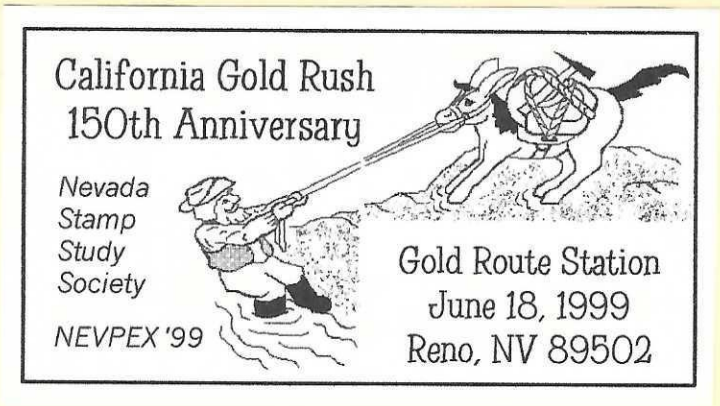
Because the "H" stamp was offered for sale in every city on the first day of issue, a hometown cancel was easy to get.

D.2. All-Computer Design & Color

D.2.c. Single Image File

This cachet represents the most ambitious single computer Paint Brush drawing attempted to date. It is the First topographical map by Anon E. Mouse. Yes, there is a mouse in the drawing -- viewers are challenged to find it.

The cachet was planned for the Nevada Stamp Study Society show (called NEVPEX 99), and timed to coincide with the 33-cent California Gold Rush stamp's First Day of Issue. The map shows the most likely route taken by pioneers and gold seekers if they decided to cross Nevada (then part of the Utah Territory) to get to California.



The map was intentionally designed without a strong central focus. It was meant to be the background for this pictorial cancel, also designed by the artist.

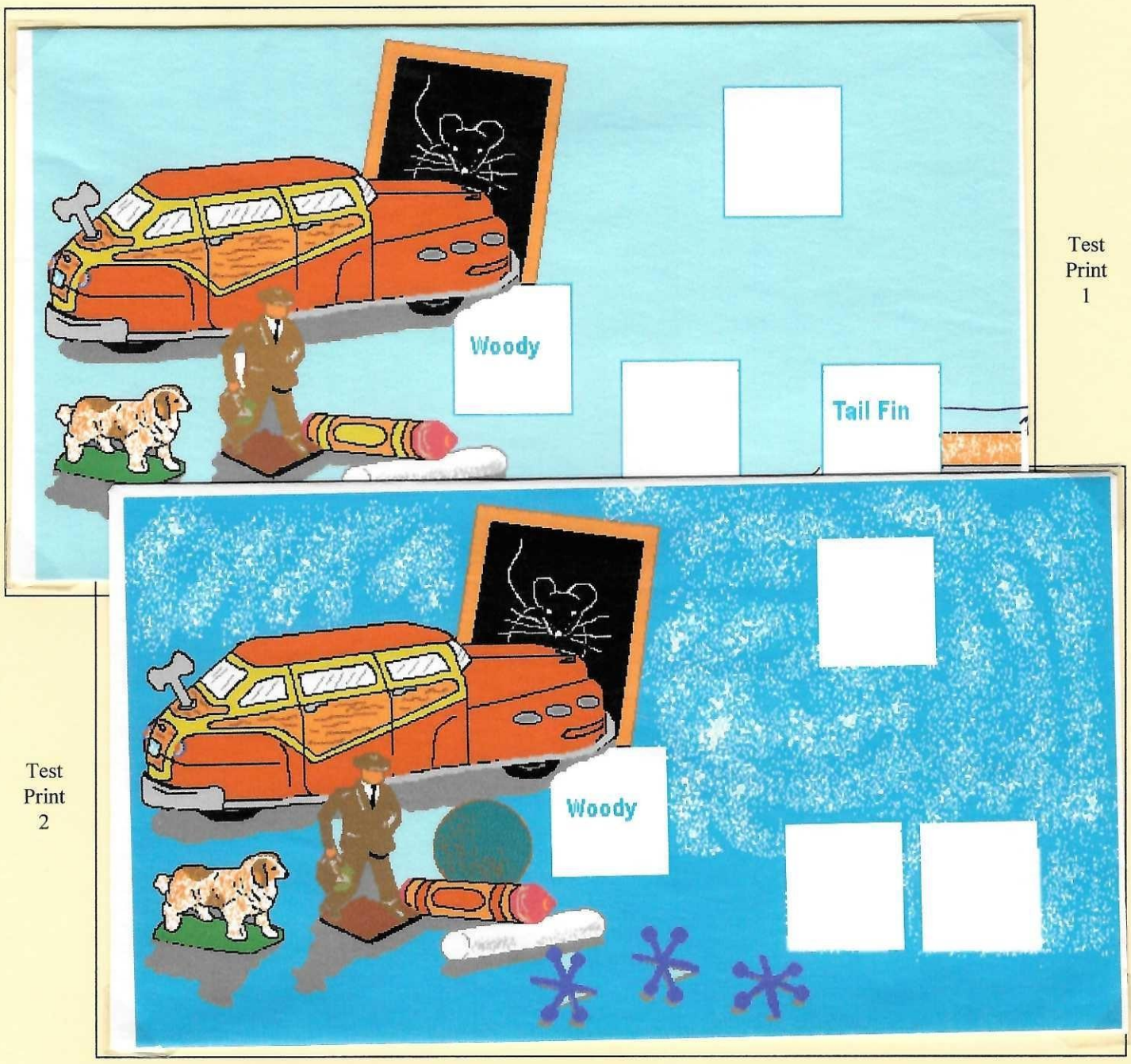
SECOND DAY OF ISSUE: Unfortunately, well after the cancel was submitted to the USPS, the artist discovered that NEVPEX would not actually start until the day after the Gold Rush FDOI. The date on the cancelling stamp had to be changed.

D.2. All-Computer Design & Color

D.2.c. Single Image File

The best reason to design on the computer is knowing the whole job will be done once the envelopes are printed and sent for cancellation servicing. It does not always take less time than the hand coloring of photo-copied designs; it just guarantees a finished process with little or no time-management worries.

Here are two of the nine trial prints made while developing one of the artist's favorite cachets. The final design took several days to achieve, including subject research, object drawing, and background development.



Test Print 1

Test Print 2

D.2. All-Computer Design & Color

D.2.c. Single Image File

Here is the finished product, for the 15-cent Woody Wagon presorted card stamp. The 2-cent Read-headed Woodpecker seemed a perfect combination to make up the normal first class rate of 34 cents.

This cover demonstrate the artist's full acceptance of the "entire" trend in cachet making. Reluctant at first to stray beyond the left side, the maker now routinely uses the whole envelope face for a more dramatic presentation.

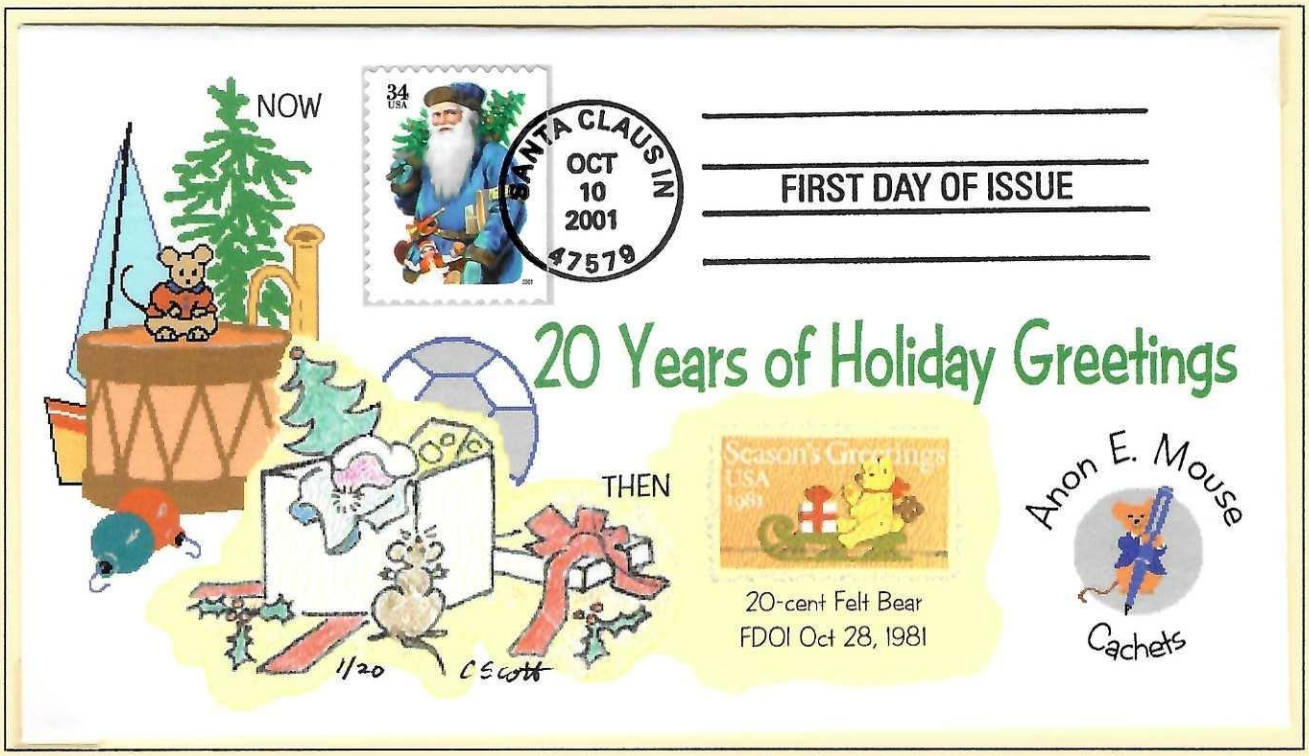
E. Twenty Years and Beyond

October 2001 marked the twentieth anniversary of Anon E. Mouse Cachets. AEM evolved slowly from simple tools and modest beginnings to present-day computer designs for two main reasons:

1. An eagerness to explore and embrace new methods and media for artistic expression
2. A desire to improve production reliability and efficiency

During the last decade or so, cachets were produced for only one to six issues a year. The avocation had to take a back seat to gainful employment. To uphold the theme of her first cachet, the artist always produced, at minimum, a design for the annual contemporary holiday issue.

This anniversary cachet shows a partial image from the earliest cachet, scanned and combined with the newest holiday design.



What will the future bring? Anon E. Mouse Cachets hopes to grow with current technology. All it will take is some time after retirement to explore new computer graphics programs. Time to develop a web site for active marketing. Time to make a sometimes avocation into a more active hobby-business.