

Chapter Five: The Pan-American Exposition

About the Pan-American Exposition

Intended as another celebration of American land, people, and technology, the Pan-American Exposition of 1901 was the first world's fair to be illuminated by electric lights, powered by Niagara Falls. A tribute to new technologies – from automobiles to electric typewriters, storage batteries to instant coffee – the fair drew eight million people over the six months that it was open, beginning on May 1, 1901. Among those visitors was President William McKinley. On September 5, 1901, he announced during his visit that “Expositions are the timekeepers of progress. They record the world's advancements. They stimulate the energy, enterprise, and intellect of the people, and quicken human genius.... They broaden and brighten the daily life of the people.”

The following day, in the Temple of Music, President McKinley posed for what would be his last photograph. Shortly afterward, he was standing in a receiving line when an anarchist named Leon Czolgosz approached him, holding a gun in his bandaged hand. He fired twice at McKinley at close range; the President died eight days later. After the Exposition closed, the Temple of Music, along with nearly all the buildings erected for the fair, was torn down. The grounds were later converted into a residential development. That is why, in a grassy median on a quiet side street in Buffalo, a small boulder and plaque now mark the site of a tragic event, one for which the Pan-American Exposition would forever be known.



Figure 5.1. Bird's eye view of the Pan-American Exposition, Buffalo, New York, 1901. Courtesy The Library of Congress, LC-DIG-ppmsca-07832.



Figure 5.2. The Mall, Pan-American Exposition, Buffalo, New York, 1901; photo by C. D. Arnold. Courtesy The Library of Congress, LC-USZ62-96245.



Figure 5.3. Machinery Building, Pan-American Exposition, Buffalo, 1901; photo by C. D. Arnold. Courtesy The Library of Congress, LC-USZ62-96243.



Figure 5.4. Pan-American Exposition at night, Buffalo, New York, 1901. Courtesy The Library of Congress, LC-USZ62-96246.



Figure 5.5. Temple of Music, site of the McKinley's assassination; photo by C. D. Arnold. Courtesy The Library of Congress, LC-USZ62-124582.



Figure 5.6. Last portrait of President McKinley, Buffalo, 1901; photo by Frances B. Johnston. Courtesy The Library of Congress, LC-USZ62-37983.

Figure 5.7. McKinley is shot at Pan-American Exposition, 9/6/1901; drawing by T. Dart Walker. Courtesy The Library of Congress, LC-USZ62-5377.



The Pan-American Exposition Issue

Scott #294-299

The first set of 20th century commemorative stamps celebrated the Pan-American Exposition, which opened in Buffalo, New York on May 1, 1901. On that same day, “the most artistic series ever issued by the Department,” the Pan-American Exposition commemoratives, went on sale. They were available at Post Offices throughout the United States for only six months, until the Exposition ended in November. Designed by R. Ostrander Smith, each stamp celebrated a different transportation technology from the period. They were printed by the Bureau of Printing and Engraving using a bicolor process (as had originally been intended for the Trans-Mississippians three years earlier). They are all labeled “Commemorative Series 1901”.

A fairly large number of each Pan-American was printed, and the highest-priced stamp in the set was only ten cents. As a result, all stamps in the set were within reach of most collectors at the time. The first bicolor commemorative series, the Pan-Americans were highly appealing visually and were very popular. The set is treasured by philatelists to this day.

Scott #294: 1¢ “Fast Lake Navigation” and Scott #294a: Inverted Center



Figure 5.8. One-cent “Fast Lake Navigation”, Pan-American Issue, 1901.

The first bicolor U.S. commemorative ever printed, the one-cent Pan-American featured a black steamship (the “vignette” or “center”), printed first, surrounded by a green frame, printed second. The vignette was engraved by G. F. C. Smillie from a photograph, and the frame was engraved by Robert Ponickau. Because of this two-step printing method, the



Figure 5.9. One-cent “Fast Lake Navigation” with inverted center, Pan-American Exposition Issue, 1901.

location of the ship could differ from sheet to sheet; in fact, it could appear anywhere inside the frame. The result is a number of variants, including “fast”, “slow”, and “sinking” ships, along with about 600 to 700 accidentally “inverted” ones (#294a, which shows the vessel upside-down) that are highly valued today. Although these latter stamps are referred to as having inverted centers, it is actually the frame that is inverted, since it was printed afterwards. The

center print run for this issue began on March 6, 1901, and frame printing started on March 15.

The ship pictured on “Fast Lake Navigation” was the “City of Alpena”, a 917-ton steamer that plied the Great Lakes. Built in 1880, its home port was Detroit, Michigan. One cent was the postcard rate, and this stamp was also very useful for adding to postage on other more expensive items. A large number of these stamps were printed: 91,401,500 in all. The one-cent “Fast Lake Navigation” was recently ranked #33 in a book on the 100 greatest American stamps.

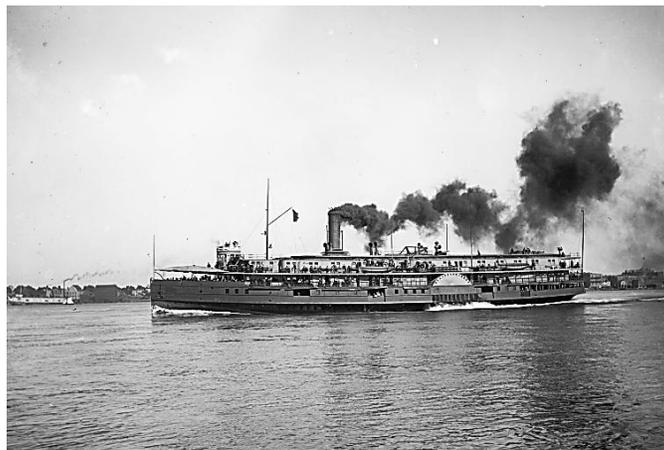


Figure 5.10. *City of Alpena* steamship, circa 1893-99. Courtesy The Library of Congress, LC-D4-5435.

Scott 295: 2¢ “Fast Express” and Scott #295A: Inverted Center



Figure 5.11. Two-cent “Fast Express”, Pan-American Exposition Issue, 1901.

The New York Empire State Express, one of the country’s most modern and luxurious trains, was featured on the carmine and black two-cent Pan-American. In 1891, the train set a new speed record when it covered 436 miles from New York City to Buffalo in only 7 hours and 6 minutes (including stops), an average speed of 61.4 miles per hour. Then, in 1893, outfitted with a special locomotive called No. 999, the Empire State

Express was used on a special run from Syracuse to the Columbian Exposition in Chicago. During its journey, it reached 121.5 miles per hour. Part of the New York Central and Hudson River Railroads system, it traversed New York State, site of the Pan-American Exposition. In fact, it has been estimated that this train carried over 60% of the visitors who attended the event.

The vignette and frame for this stamp were engraved by Marcus W. Baldwin and Lyman F. Ellis. They used as their model for the vignette a photograph of the Empire State Express, taken by A. P. Yates of Syracuse while the train was moving at sixty miles an hour. Because two cents paid the first-class domestic postage rate, this stamp was the most commonly used one in the



*The Fastest Time on Record.
Photo'd by A. P. Yates, Syracuse, N. Y., May 10, 1893, when Engine 999 drawing the
Empire State Express train, made the record of 112 1/2 miles an hour.*

Figure 5.12. The Empire State Express; photo by A.P. Yates, May 10, 1893. Courtesy The Library of Congress, LC-USZ62-70302.

series, with a total print run of 209,759,700. The two-cent Fast Express” was recently ranked #31 in a book on the 100 greatest American stamps.

Like the one-cent stamp, the “Fast Express” had its share of “fast” and “slow” varieties, along with a few “inverts” (#295a), treasured by collectors. The inverts occurred on two sheets of 100 stamps each, one carmine and the other scarlet. Only 158 “Fast Express” inverts are known to exist today. The two-cent “Fast Express” invert was recently ranked #41 in a book on the 100 greatest American stamps.

Scott #296: 4¢ “Automobile” and Scott #296A: Inverted Center



Figure 5.14. Four-cent “Automobile”, Pan-American Exposition Issue, 1901.

The orange brown and black four-cent Pan-American was the first stamp to depict an automobile. The image, taken from an “Electric Vehicle Service” flyer of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad, shows an electric hansom cab used to transport travelers to and from the railroad station in Washington, D.C., along with a chauffeur and passenger. The passenger was reported at the time to be Samuel Hedges, a representative of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad. The United States Capitol Building is shown in the background of the vignette. The vignette and frame for this stamp were engraved by Marcus W. Baldwin and Lyman F. Ellis. As a member of the commemorative stamp

issue announcing the Pan-American Exposition, the stamp carries a tragic irony. After being shot during his visit to the Fair, President McKinley was rushed to the hospital in a Riker electric ambulance.

The four-cent Automobile paid double the first-class domestic rate. The United States Bureau of Printing and Engraving produced a total of 5,737,100 of them. The four-cent "Automobile" was recently ranked #23 in a book on the 100 greatest American stamps.



Figure 5.15. Four-cent "Automobile" with inverted center, Pan-American Issue, 1901.

Like the earlier stamps in the series, the printing of the four cent Automobile produced approximately two to four hundred inverted centers (#296a). This time, however, they were produced intentionally, and made available only to collectors rather than being sold at regular post offices. Many inverts were further distinguished by being hand-stamped "Specimen" in violet ink. Because they were not true errors, these "inverts" caused a great

deal of consternation in the philatelic community of the time. The result was an official investigation into the printing of these special variety stamps. The investigation culminated in a report from the Assistant Attorney-General to President Theodore Roosevelt in 1904, officially exonerating postal officials from wrongdoing. The stir, however, was sufficient to quash Postal Department plans to issue intentional "inverts" in the higher denominations of Pan-Americans. Single sheets of the five-, eight-, and ten-cent "inverts" were printed but subsequently destroyed. Despite the clamor at the time, these "inverts" are highly valued by collectors today. In fact, only 101 of them are known to exist. The four-cent "Automobile" invert was recently ranked #30 in a book on the 100 greatest American stamps.

Scott #297: 5¢ “Bridge at Niagara Falls”



Figure 5.16. Five-cent “Bridge at Niagara Falls”, Pan-American Exposition Issue, 1901.

The blue and black five-cent Pan-American depicted what was then the longest single-span steel bridge in the world, crossing the Niagara River near Buffalo, site of the Pan-American Exposition. The vignette shows two trolley cars on the bridge, passing between the United States and Canada, set in an ultramarine frame. The vignette and frame for this stamp were engraved by Marcus W. Baldwin and Lyman F. Ellis. The Upper Steel Arch Bridge, also known as Honeymoon

Bridge and the Falls View Bridge, collapsed during an ice-melt flood on January 27, 1938. Five cents covered the first-class letter rate to Europe. In all, 7,201,300 stamps were printed. The 5¢ “Bridge at Niagara Falls” was recently ranked #28 in a book on the 100 greatest American stamps.



Figure 5.17. The Steel-Arch Bridge, Niagara, circa 1900-1906. Courtesy The Library of Congress, LC-D4-12879.

Scott #298: 8¢ “Canal Locks at Sault St. Marie”



Figure 5.18. Eight-cent “Canal Locks at Sault St. Marie”, Pan-American Issue,

the vignette and frame for this stamp were engraved by Marcus W. Baldwin and Lyman F. Ellis. A total of 4,921,700 of these stamps were produced; they covered the cost of domestic registered mail. The eight-cent “Canal Locks at Sault St. Marie” was recently ranked #44 in a book on the 100 greatest American stamps.

The brown violet and black eight-cent Pan-American shows the canal locks at Sault St. Marie, Michigan, with a tug and two ore boats. Completed in 1895, the “Soo Locks” were, at the time of the printing of this stamp, the largest in the world, and the first to be operated electrically. They were part of a navigation system which connected the Great Lakes region to the Atlantic Ocean, opening interior Canada and the Upper Midwest to shipping. The vignette and



Figure 5.19. Canal Locks at Sault St. Marie, 1905. Courtesy The Library of Congress, LC-D4-18228.

Scott #299: 10¢ “Fast Ocean Navigation”



Figure 5.20. Ten-cent “Fast Ocean Navigation”, Pan-American Issue, 1901.

The brown and black ten-cent Pan-American depicts the ocean liner “St. Paul”, built in Philadelphia in 1894. The first commercial vessel commissioned for the Spanish-American War, it was 553 feet long and weighed 14,810 tons. While deployed near Cuba, it captured a British steamer and sailing ship and disabled a Spanish torpedo boat destroyer. After the war ended, it became an ocean liner again, surviving two collisions. While being

outfitted for World War I military service, it capsized. It returned briefly to civilian use, and was finally scrapped in 1923.

The vignette and frame for this stamp were engraved by Marcus W. Baldwin and Lyman F. Ellis. Ten cents paid both the domestic registered mail fee and first-class postage. In all, 5,043,700 of these stamps were printed. The ten-cent “Fast Ocean Navigation” was recently ranked #21 in a book on the 100 greatest American stamps.

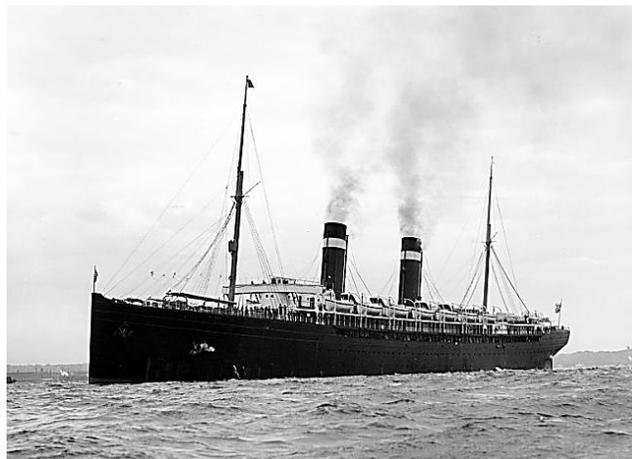


Figure 5.21. S.S. St. Paul, c. 1895. Courtesy The Library of Congress, LC-D4-22385 B.