

Synopsis

A Philatelic Biography: The 1960 Jefferson Credo stamp

Introduction

This exhibit is about the design process for the 1960 Jefferson Credo stamp. While the Bureau of Engraving and Printing (BEP) retained in-house designers for most U.S. postage stamps, the design contract sometimes went to independent artists. When that happened, the artist was supposed to surrender their design work to the BEP.

Frank Conley, an independent artist based in New York, got the contract for the 1960 Credo series. Contrary to the regulations he never surrendered his design work. In 1995 his design archive came onto the market when it was auctioned by Superior Stamp and Coin Co. That archive has made it possible for us to take a unique look at what I'm calling the biography of the Jefferson stamp – from the artists earliest design ideas, to scarce examples of its commercial use.

Treatment

The exhibit is laid out as a biographical sequence. It opens with a **Prologue**: Conley's earliest ideas for the series as captured in rough sketches. **Chapter 1** is about the design process. It covers hand-drawn essays, layout tests, multiple versions of the flaming sword icon, ideas for the color palate, and beautifully rendered water-color essays for the stamp.

Chapter 2 shows essays that illustrate the approval process. This was before the days of fax machines or email. Color photography was expensive and there were no color photocopying machines. Artists seem to have interacted with the U.S.P.O. mostly by way of black and white photographs and photocopies. That is what you'll see in chapter 2.

Chapter 3 is all about the stamp and its usage. It starts with a set of plate blocks, shows some of the better examples of first day covers; and finishes with difficult to find, genuine commercial usages.

A simple **Epilogue** introduces the viewer to the complete series.

Knowledge and Original Research

The U.S. Stamp Society published exhaustively detailed information about the stamp and the press on which it was printed, the Giori press, in *The Bureau Specialist*. The exhibit uses all of that information. But most of the exhibit is unique and new. From the Conley archive we learn about an artist's design ideas; and we get a glimpse of the U.S.P.O.s approval process.

Rarity and Condition

But their nature, a great many items are **unique**. Then there are many items that have been copied and reused for one purpose or another, in this way creating perhaps three or four renditions of a particular design element. The stamps themselves are very common. First Day Covers are abundant. Commercial usages are cheap but exceptionally difficult to find.

I have highlighted some of the most important items on the Title page. The condition is as good as it gets

Track Record

This is the first outing for this exhibit.

A Philatelic Biography: The 1960 Jefferson Credo stamp

From the artist's initial ideas to the stamp's commercial use

Purpose

The purpose of this exhibit is to tell the life-story of the 1960 Jefferson Credo stamp – from the designer's earliest ideas to the stamp and its uses.

Scope

The 1960/61 Credo series was designed by Frank Conley of New York. The Jefferson stamp was the third in the series. The exhibit opens with Conley's earliest sketches for the series. It then covers in detail the multiple stages in the development of the stamp, starting with rough pencil sketches and ending with the issued stamp and its commercial uses. A maxi-card showing the six stamps in the series completes the exhibit.

Exhibit Plan

Prologue: Conley's sketches for the series	2
Chap. 1: Hand-drawn and painted essays	4
• Layout tests, the flaming sword, the color palate, water-color essays	
Chap. 2: Approving the design	10
• A model for the stamp, the revised quotation, essays for the finished stamp	
Chap. 3: The issued stamp: plate blocks and usages	13
Epilogue: The completed series	16

A hand-painted water-color essay for the 1960 Jefferson stamp



Painted in **dark brown** and **dark orange** on semi-transparent paper. Signed by the artist, Frank P. Conley.

Importance

Although the Credo series is historically important, this exhibit doesn't derive its importance from the series. Its importance lies in the **uniquely detailed insight** it gives us into the design process for a stamp.

Research

The basics of the Jefferson stamp are well-known thanks to the work of the U.S. Stamp Society (see *The Bureau Specialist* bibliography below). Conley's archive only came onto the market in 1995. This exhibit is the first analysis of what the Conley archive tells us about the design and approval process for a stamp.

Important items

There are many **unique, hand-produced** items in this exhibit. The first day covers have some interest. Genuine commercial uses, although cheap, are exceptionally difficult to find. The most important items are:

- Three **unique drawings** that outline the artist's original ideas for the series p. 2/3
- Multiple unique sketches for **the flaming sword icon** used on the Jefferson stamp p. 5
- Seven life-size, hand-painted gouache water-color essays p. 7/8
- A 1960 'AR' registered letter from New York to **Taichung, Taiwan** p. 15

Bibliography: *The Bureau Specialist* 1958 Ns. 339, 340, 341, 342, 345; 1960 Ns. 360, 361, 364, 365, 366, 367, 368, 369; 1961 Ns. 377, 378, 379; 1962 No. 393; 1963 No. 368; 1965 Ns. 428, 430; *The United States Specialist* 1995 Ns. 788-790