

Rare Cacheted First Day Covers of the 1932 Lake Placid Olympic Winter Games Stamp

by Glenn Estus

Lake Placid, New York hosted the IIIrd Olympic Winter Games from February 4 to February 13, 1932. For that occasion, the United States Post Office Department issued a 2¢ postage stamp (Scott #716) on January 25, 1932. This was the first postage stamp to honor any Olympic Winter Games.

F.A. Tilton, the 3rd Assistant Postmaster-General announced the stamp in the December 30, 1931 *Postal Bulletin*, the daily publication of the USPOD. (The *Postal Bulletin* was first published in 1880 and is still published today although on a fortnightly basis. All issues can be accessed and searched at www.uspostalbulletins.com). The same announcement was printed individually and sent to many post offices to inform the general public of the new issue. (Figure 1).

Two cachet makers, Robert Beazell and John White, used real photographic paper cachets for this issue. Cachet maker Beazell was not local to the Lake Placid area, but John White, a member of the Olympic organizing committee, was. White had been president of the local Kiwanis Club and, for many years, a supporter of Lake Placid hosting the Olympic Winter Games.

Beazell was a prolific cachet maker. Between 1929 and 1937 it is estimated that he created more than 800 cachets designs for first day covers.

Beazell used “illustrations (that) were copied photographically from magazines, books, postcard, or whatever and then reproduced as cachets. The

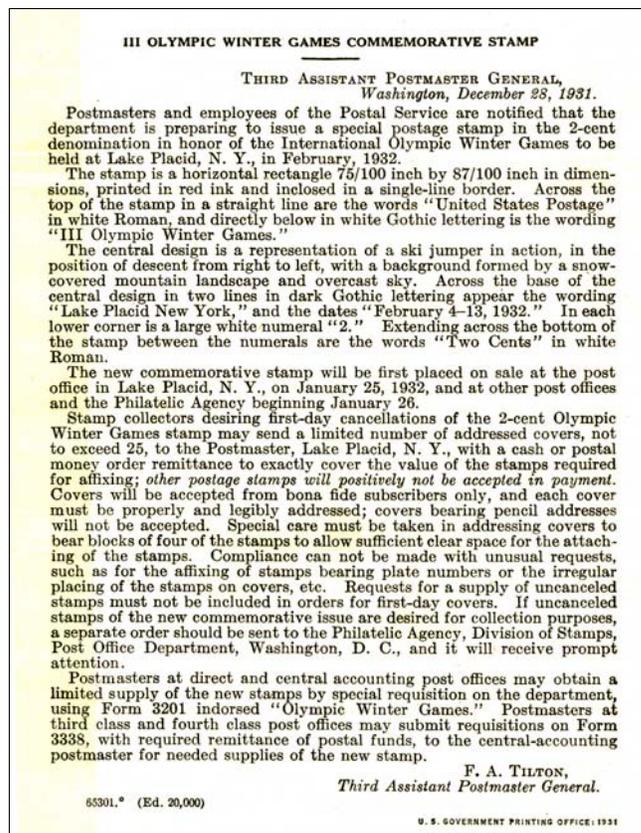


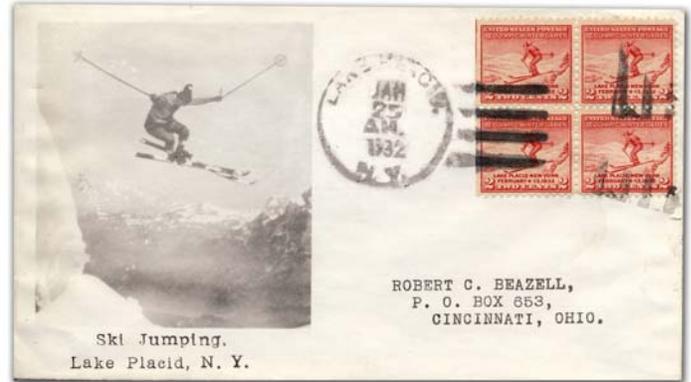
Figure 1. The USPOD Postal Bulletin announcement of the Olympic stamp issue for Lake Placid.

paper was cut and shaped by hand and glued to form an envelope.”¹

The eight different photographic cachets that he produced for the 2¢ Olympic Winter Games stamp included three that were not entirely winter sports: a “winter scene” (Planty² #25c) (Figure 2); “sleigh-



Figures 2 & 3. Two Beazell cachets for the 1932 Lake Placid First Day showing a “Winter Scene” and “Sleighting.”



Figures 4-7. Beazell cachets showing "Tobogganing," "Skating Contest," "Ice Skaters" and "Ski Jumping."

ing" (#25f) (Figure 3); and "tobogganing" (25g) (Figure 4). The other five were depictions perhaps of previous winter activities at Lake Placid, but before the Olympic Winter Games: a "skating contest" (#25a) (Figure 5); "ice skaters," actually figure skaters (#25b) (Figure 6); ski jumping (#25d) (Figure 7) and "ski-ing" (#25e) (Figure 8); as well as bobsledding (#25h) (Figure 9), which is called "sledding" on the Beazell cachet. The ski jumping photograph in Figure 7 is probably not from Lake Placid since the Adirondack Mountains don't really look like the mountains in the background of the cachet. Additionally, this is really not a ski jumper as poles are not used in that sport. On the other

hand, the cachet in Figure 8 labeled "ski-ing" really should be labeled "ski jumper," as that's clearly what's taking place!

As mentioned above, Beazell was not the only cachet maker who produced handmade photographic cachets. Lake Placid resident John White was also a stamp collector. He produced a set of 5 cachets (Planty #69a-e) which showed various sports venues (sites).

Planty #69a (Figure 10) shows the newly constructed Intervale ski jump about 3 miles south of Lake Placid. Figure 11 (#69b) is an aerial view of the skating oval, site of the opening ceremonies, and the Town of North Elba town hall. A bobsledder



Figures 8 & 9. The final two 1932 Olympic Winter Games Beazell cachets: "Ski-ing" and "Sledding."

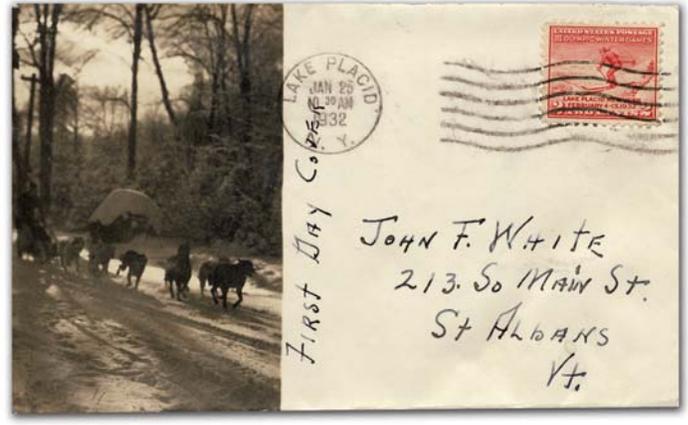
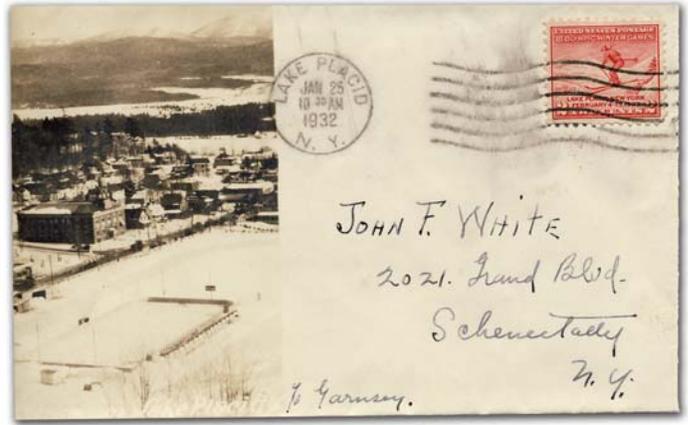
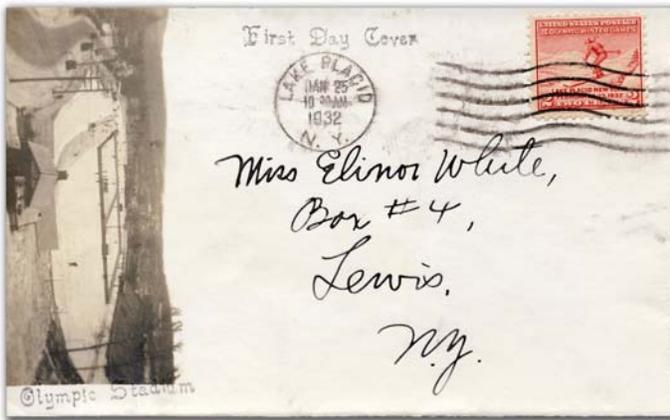


Figure 10-14. Lake Placid collector, John White, produced a limited number of handmade photographic cachets showing the Intervale Ski Jump, skating oval, a bobsledder on Mt. Van Hovenberg, and dog sled racing. Another view of the skating oval is shown on the cover at left below; this time the photograph is turned on its side.



on the Mount Van Hovenberg bobsled run is shown in Figure 12(#69c). The demonstration sport of dog sled racing is shown on #69d (Figure 13) while #69e (Figure 14) shows another view of the Olympic skating oval.

The rear flaps on the White envelopes were sealed with vignettes, either the French version of the official Lake Placid Olympic Winter Games vignette (Figure 15) or a pair of vignettes showing a front view of a ski jumper (Figure 16).

Figures 15 & 16. The rear flaps of the White envelopes were sealed with vignettes of the Lake Placid Games.



The ski jumper vignette is extremely rare and the French version of the official vignette is scarce. The official vignette was also printed in English (common), Spanish (extremely rare), or German (scarce). I have never seen the last three language versions used on White covers.

We can find a picture

Figure 17. John White. of John White (Figure 17) in the official report book

of the Lake Placid Olympic Winter Games published at the end of 1932.

White's covers are smaller than the usual #6 envelopes, while the Beazell are #6 size.

The Beazell examples are scarce, probably no more than 20-30 copies of each design were produced and the White covers are very rare. I have seen only three sets of White covers in my 45 years of collecting this issue.

On a personal note, I purchased my set of five White covers from his daughter Claire in 1981. She died in 2018 at the age of 105. Claire had allowed the covers, along with other covers from 1932, to be exhibited in 1980 at the Games. I was a guide/guard during the games at the philatelic exhibition. White also made at least 2 set of covers with Edgerly cachets which were cancelled at the post office on each of the ten days of the Games.

Endnotes:

1. *First Days*, 15 January 1986, p. 24.

2. *Planty's Photo Encyclopedia of Cacheted F.D.C.s* written by Dr. Earl Planty and Michael Mellone, is an extensive, multi-volume catalog of cachets produced for U.S. First Day Covers. Volume 4 covers "The Classic Period" from 1923-1933 and includes both the winter and summer Olympics in Lake Placid and Los Angeles.

Another Eye-catching 1932 FDC

The FDC, shown nearby, with three plate number singles has an interesting story.

The cachet is by Albert C. Roessler, one of the pioneer US cachet makers. In later years, Roessler was in hot water with the United States Post Office Department because of his proclivity to use cachet designs which showed imaginary stamps too closely resembling real postage stamps. However, this cachet is one which Roessler used in many different variations and colors. Here, he has added an airmail border. The airmail rate in 1932 was 5¢ so the servicer used three stamps, each with a different plate number, but over paying the rate by 1¢. In addition the "20817" stamp has a bulls-eye cancel which is highly sought after by FDC collectors.

Plate numbers are an interesting sub category of stamp collecting. The Lake Placid stamp was printed in sheets of 400 which were then cut into panes of 100 for sale at post offices. A pane either has a plate number in the top selvedge or in the bottom selvedge. The plates were numbered from 20815 to 20826, thus giving 12 different plate numbers. The top plate numbers have 2 varieties, for example, 20815 and F20815. "F" stands for "Finished" referring to the fact that the printing plate was ready for production. The bottom panes each

had a plate number with no "F" number. In total, the 12 plate numbers were available for a total of 36 identifiable positions: two top positions and one bottom position.

I have collected the 1932 stamp since Lake Placid was awarded the 1980 Olympic Winter Games by the IOC in 1974. In almost a half century of collecting of this issue I have found only the following numbers on FDCs: 20815 (top, top "F" & bottom), 20816 (top & bottom), 20817 (top & bottom), 20818 (bottom), 20819 (top & bottom), 20820 (top & bottom), 20821 (top & bottom), 20822 (bottom), and 20826 (top & bottom). I have not been able to find examples from plates 20823, 20824, or 20825. Do they lurk in *your* collection? If so, I'd love to hear about them (gestus@westelcom.com).

