The Columbian Dollar Value Online Cover Census
User's Guide – V 0.1

Preliminary Draft

Welcome to the new Comprehensive Census of the Columbian Issue of 1893 Dollar values on cover.

This online census is sponsored by the United States Philatelic Classics Society. This Census is based on the original work of Dr. Richard Searing[1], who published several articles about these stamp issues on cover in the USPCS **Chronicle** during 1992, the 100th anniversary year of their issue. Those articles listed the 240 covers known at that time. The current Census includes information on over 360 covers, and increase of 50% over the original census.

Searing's original census listed, but did not assign an identifying number to, all the covers which he had located. There was also no attempt to develop or maintain an archive of illustrations for most of the covers. To provide a method of reference to the covers in Searing's Census, they have been artificially provided with a "Pseudo-ID" number created by numbering these covers from **1** to **240**, beginning with the first cover listed on page 194 of the article in the Aug. 1992 issue, and continuing to the end of the list in the November issue. While not perfect, it does provide a straightforward method to refer to covers included in this original census.

The illustrations in the present census are made possible by the various auction houses and internet sites that routinely sell these covers to collectors, as well as collectors who have graciously submitted scans of their holdings.

The online census is intended as a research tool where collectors can get information about a single cover or an entire correspondence. Auction lot descriptions, Philatelic Foundation opinions, and prices realized are available for many covers. Historical information has been added to many listings.

Accessing the Census

The census is available to both members of the USPCS and the general public on the website of the USPCS (www.USPCS.org). The user can navigate to the Resource Center page and, at the lower left of the Selection Options, click on the Censuses link. Choose the **Columbian $Value Covers.**

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[1] Searing, Richard M. *"Goodby Columbus"*, **The Chronicle**, No. 155, Vol. 44, No. 3, p191; No. 155, Vol. 44, No. 5, p 276.

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Census Display Contents

The census consists of three separate parts:

(1) The **Table View,** a row oriented view of the cover entries,
(2) The **Zoom View, a** detailed view of each cover, and
(3) The **Advanced Search** filters.

The Table View listings are arranged with one cover per line and currently include all the covers listed in Searing's original articles. A number of the entries in Searing's original lists were eventually determined to be duplicate entries for the same cover, which no doubt had crept into his census due to the difficulties with capturing and organizing images from auctions catalogs, collections, and other sources in the early 1990s, prior to advent of the computer technology which has changed the way that postal historians have been able to document their research.

For the present, these duplicate entries have been retained in the census, and where possible, the original illustration had been located and included. The descriptive text that accompanies each of these duplicate entries further identifies them as duplicates, and directs the use to the primary entry for the particular cover.

The default listing sequence for the covers in this census is chronological by **Date** of mailing, then ordered by the **From State** and **From City**.

The TABLE VIEW

The census opens in the **Table View** using the sorting rules described above. Each row contains information for an individual cover. If one, or more, pictures are available, the first picture is shown as a thumbnail in the leftmost column. Other pictures may be available on the **Zoom View** page, described in another section.

The cover mailing date appears next. Sometimes, if the postal markings are not available or readable, a docketing date or internal dateline, if known, is used. Otherwise, the unknown portion of the date is filled in with 'x'.

Next is the origination city and state, again if known. State names use the current two letter official abbreviations for the states that existed in 1893. DC is used for the District of Columbia. In the current census there are no covers mailed from any of the territorial areas, but in the event that one is encountered later, it will probably be entered under the relevant state name abbreviation, and the user will be responsible for knowing the date the territory became a state. Unknown location entries, (typically the result of having only a partial image available from an old auction catalog", are marked 'Unknown' in both the City and State fields.

Moving to the right, the destination Town and State (or Country) appears next.

The next five fields consist of a count of the number of copies of each of the five different dollar value issues that were found on the cover.

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If a cover has a Philatelic Foundation certificate, the number of the most recent certificate, as posted on the PF website, is listed. There are few instances where an older auction catalog description has implied the existence of a PF certificate, but unless the actual certificate number has been located in the PF Certificate database, this is not flagged in the Table View.

A certificate from the APS Expertizing Service is designated as APEX 123456, and similarly, if there is a known certificate from the Professional Stamp Experts, it will be identified as PSE 654321.

The final two fields in **Table View** mode are organization in nature.

The **CENSUS ID** field is a sequential number assigned to the cover, and serves as a permanent identification for that cover. These numbers begin with **1**, and continue up to about **370** at the time the census was implemented. It will not change, so a reference to the cover as **USPCS Columbian $Value Cover Census #25** will uniquely identify the cover.

The **SET ID** field is used to group covers in the census (these are primarily philatelic in nature) that were prepared and sent by a collector, often to himself or another collector. This feature takes the place of trying to record the address name or sender name in the Table View section of Census database. These **SET ID's** are zero filled, i.e., **S01, S02, … S10,** etc.

In general, the guideline used was that at least three covers, typically with three of the five issued dollar values present, were necessary to designate the group of covers as a **Set.** Several exceptions were made, particularly in instances where two or three covers had multiple issues so that the five issues were present.

There were also instances were more than five covers were encountered that had been prepared by the same individual, so some sets have more than five covers, and with more than one cover with a particular denomination present.

Under the assumption that users would be interested in being able to view all related covers in a convenient manner, an arbitrary decision was made to include all images related to a Cover Set in the **Zoom View** file for the $1.00 cover in the set.

In several instances, it was observed that two or more covers of the same value, prepared by the same individual, and having almost identical markings, were part of the census. I have tried to handle these in a manner similar to the sets, but without the formal nature. Instead, the description of the cover will mention the existence of similar covers.

Non-Standard Entries.

The **SET ID** and **CENSUS ID** fields were also used in combination in a non-conventional manner to help identify and locate some non-standard entries. By examining the cover images collected for the 240 covers in the original Searing Census, it was determined that at least 27 of these represented a second or third instance of a specific cover in the census.

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Even with the image at hand, the ability to accurately designate one of these covers as a "duplicate" entry was not always absolute, so a decision was made that in the original posting of the new census, all of the original 240 covers would be given an entry in the new census, but those 27 that were believed to be a duplicate were assigned a **CENSUS ID of "999",** and a unique **SET ID** beginning with a "**D**", i.e., **D01, D02, D03, … D27.** The use of the **"999"** as the **CENSUS ID** was an artificial choice to insure that these non-standard items would either stand out when examining the Table View, or alternatively to provide a simple method of selecting all of these non-standard entries.

For these duplicates, in the Description section for the cover in **ZOOM MODE**, the cover is still given a description similar to that provide by Searing, together with an explanation which explains why the cover was believed to be a duplicate entry, and the connection to the primary entry in the census is provided. In some instances, the image from the original source for the duplicated entry is shown, followed by the image of the primary entry.

A similar scheme was used to include image of several collateral items. Several rarely encountered items related to the Columbian stamps were located during the compilation of information relating to these dollar value covers, and it seemed appropriate to include them in the census, although not directly related to the covers in the census. These were accommodated in a manner similar to the duplicated entries, that is, with a **CENSUS ID** of **"999"**, identified, and a **SET ID** in the form of **C01, C02, .. Cnn.**

Sorting the Table View

The **Table View** listing of covers can be resorted, either ascending or descending, by clicking on the headings at the top of the list. An upward or downward pointing triangle will indicate the direction of the sort. The headings at the bottom of the list simply duplicate the upper text and cannot be clicked on to perform sorts.

The sorts in multiple columns will work in combination so the order in which the column headers are clicked is important. Sometimes this can be counter intuitive and strange (unwanted) results may occur. When all else fails, the blue "Reset Sort" button will restore the list to its default state.

The Advanced Search - Using Filters

If you are searching for a single or select group of covers, using the filters in the Advanced Search is the best option. Clicking the blue button will expose a selection of filter boxes above the listings.

You do not have to enter the complete information in any box. Typing 'New" in the From Town box will provide covers from New York and New Orleans as well as Newark NJ and Newark NY but only a few more characters will quickly limit the row view. Adding LA (for Louisiana) will obtain the covers from New Orleans only. You can also type "w Yor" to obtain the covers from New York. The text does not have to start at the beginning.

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The filters can be used in combination so many different paths can quickly lead to the same cover. After some practice, you should be able to quickly find the unique cover you are looking for.

Once you make an entry, hit the Enter key to start a search. Or, use the TAB key to move to the next box and start the search. Finally, just click on a different box or the blue Search button to start a search. It may not be the entire filter you want but each of these actions will quickly check the database and return all covers that match your criteria.

Only single entries are allowed in each box. You cannot apply **AND** or **OR** criteria to any field. You cannot apply a NOT criteria, either. The goal is not to find only the cover(s) you are interested in but simply to make sure it is included in the list.

If you know the cover **CENSUS ID**, type it in the CENSUS ID box. Each ID is unique and this will quickly find the desired cover.

Unique covers can also found by typing in the PF certificate number in the PF box, but only the one shown on the row view. If you have an earlier PF number, try typing it in the text box to find the cover.

If you are interested in examining those cover which are part of a **Set**, that is, those where two or more covers were prepared by a single individual, you can specify an **"S"** in the SET ID field box. If you only are interested in covers from a single set, then specify the entire set ID, i.e., **"S13"** in the SET ID field box.

The Date filter requires more explanation. The dates can be entered as either a single date, using the **Date boxes**, or a **Date Range** using both the **From** and **To** boxes. In the single Date boxes, enter the month (Jan = 1, Dec =12), the day (1 or 2 digits) and the year (use 4 digits). If you want all the possibilities, leave the associated box empty.

The **Date** filter also has a single character wild card feature. The ? will substitute for a single number 0-9 or an x. So typing a **?** in the month portion will return all covers mailed between January and September. Not too useful, perhaps. Typing 1? in the day field will return all covers mailed between the 10th and 19th. This is handy if you can't read the second digit in the CDS.

The **Date Range** filter is useful for finding all covers between a given date range. A calendar pop up will help you select the **From** and **To** dates in the range. It appears as soon as you click inside either box. The date range will not give any covers with missing numbers replaced by an **x**.

By providing only the **From** date will give all covers to the end (three 5/24/1927 covers are the last one).

By providing only the **To** date will give all the covers from the start to that date. (The earliest cover in the census is dated 1/2/1893.

The best way to demonstrate the use of multiple filters is to consider a few examples.

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1. You run across a cover in an auction sale. The cover was mailed from New York, NY to Vienna, Austria, and dated April 5, 1893 in the Robert A Siegel sale 1055, lot 223, with 070, with a Scott #245 (the $5 issue).

Method 1: Type New York in the **From City** box, Austria in the **To State/Country** box, and **5** in the day field (middle box in the Date). The cover is uniquely found.

Method 2: Type lot 223 in the text box. .Two covers are found. Our desired cover is the second entry.

Method 3: Type 8, 18, 1850 in the date box. Four covers are found. Our desired cover is the second entry.

2. You want all covers with any combination of the $1.00 and $3.00 issues.

Method: Type **"?"** in the "($1) 24" box and the same in the "(4) 243" box.

Note: More examples provided one the database is fully populated and the examples will be "accurate".

The ZOOM VIEW

The **Zoom View** page contains all the information located and recorded about the cover. There are three sections displayed.

The **Table View metadata** is summarized in the upper left. The descriptive information in found on the right. The images are presented below this text.

The **Description Field** will typically include the source, auction or other, lot descriptions, prices realized, and other relevant information. Unfortunately, for many covers seen only in older auction catalogs, prices realized were not available, and even in some of the more recent sales, I failed to record the prices realized. When the cover is known to have been part of multiple auctions, these will be listed, and usually in chronological order, with the most recent at the top. This information is generally presented in the following order.

(1) A description of the cover, typically a composite of information taken from the various auction lot(s) descriptions for the cover, together with additional information to make the description complete and standard across most of the covers, by adding information not found in the auction description but discernible from the cover.

(2) A summary of auction(s) where the cover was sold, in chronological order with the most recent at the top of the list. Unless otherwise credited, the cover image illustrated will be from the most recent auction catalog.

(3) Information about previous owners is provided when known.

(4) Information about any Philatelic Foundation certificate when the information is available. A complete statement of the opinion is generally provided.

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(5) Information about the Set to which the cover belongs, when applicable.

(6) At the bottom of this field there will be a reference identify the Searing Census "pseudo-ID" created and described earlier, or a statement "Not in Searing".

The COVER IMAGE

When available, a **Cover image** is provided. The images may include cover fronts, cover backs, close ups of the CDS (modified to enhance the date), close up of the stamps, and copies of the enclosed letters, if available. The color of the scans can vary between different sources. Where appreciably different, multiple copies of the cover may be included.

The cover image is typically one taken from the most recent auction catalog listing provided. When from some other source, or individual, or a non-auction catalog location, the source will be identified.

Some cover fronts may also have multiple images. Sometimes a black and white image may show better detail than a full color one, due to better contrast. Other covers may have been cleaned or repaired and the second image may show its original state. There is usually some text indicating why this image is included.

The census does not contain a complete history of the cover going back to the 19th century. Early catalogs before 1990 are rarely searched, except for the Siegel catalogs and the Richard C Frajola postal history sales, both of which are available online in pdf format. Richard also posted the Ashbrook Special Services collection on his PhilaMercury site. Covers I was able to locate from back issues of the **Chronicle** are also included.

Several collectors provided me with photocopies of older exhibits of their materials, made prior to the easy access to scanners and color copies. Sonny Hagendorf, of Columbian Stamp Company, and Jerry Login, generously offered many scans. These photocopies were rescanned, and the images extracted and are included where these were the only known images of a cover.

Images were also scanned from older catalogs, but these tended to be poor quality and in many cases, covers were greatly overlapped, making it impossible to extract date and address and sender information. Such images were still included when they were the only image available. It is hoped that as more users view the covers in the census, better copies of these covers will be forthcoming and can be added.

 If there is neither image nor added text, the **Table View** data is still provided. This occurs primarily for covers in the original Searing Census which were attributed to a private collection at the time the census data was recorded.

If you have this cover, or information regarding a source for it, please contact the census administrator at mike@ludeman.net . All submissions of cover scans (300 dpi or better, please) are credited in the text unless requested otherwise. Cover backs and enclosed letters can also be submitted.

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Comments and corrections are always welcome. Please submit them to me at mike@ludeman.net.

COVER SOURCES

Covers come from many online sources that are checked with some regularity for new additions are updated information. These include auction firms including Robert A Siegel, Matthew Bennett International, H R. Harmer, Schuyler J Rumsey, Regency Superior, Earl P. Apfelbaum, and Harmer-Schau. Many of these, and others, are accessed through Stamp Auction Network. PhilaMercury, EBAY, and Bidstart are also regularly checked for new listings. The Philatelic Foundation is in the process of putting their certificates online and they are about 60% complete. As they post more certificates, the census data will be updated.

If you see a new, unreported, Dollar Value Columbian stamp on cover on one of these sites, please feel free to let me know.   The same applies to a recorded cover with a better color scanned image.   These Columbian covers are just one of several classes of covers that I search for and try to preserve, and I may fail to catch one from time to time.

In closing, I would like to add the following. I don't actually collect these covers, they are out of my primary area of interest and budget, but I sort of moved into this census through the backdoor.   The census requires a Sponsor, and I agreed to take on that responsibility for as long as necessary, but no one lives forever. If another person who is interested in and already collecting in this area would like to become involved, they are invited to contact me and we can discuss how we can work together. In truth, the difficult work was done in accumulating the images and the descriptions of new covers. The maintenance is a low energy effort, and it's never too early for developing a transition plan.

The USPCS is planning to make other censuses available on its website. Other censuses are desired.

If you compile a census and want to host it, contact Gordon Eubanks (gordoneubanks@gmail.com). Each census requires someone to administer the census and keep it current.

Afterword

The census is available as a tool for research or buying for your benefit. You can examine an entire correspondence without having to search out dozens of sales catalogs. You can see the price realized over multiple auctions to better determine your top bid. You can also see Philatelic Foundation opinions to determine if the cover is genuine or has been misrepresented.

Many collectors compile censuses and, after significant work, simply give up. Perhaps they lose interest. Maybe it gets too hard to find new entries. With an online census, there are more people invested in the data, more eyes watching the marketplace, and more ability to get closer to completeness. This is no longer my census. It is now ours.

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Appendix – More Search Examples and Definitions

To be added later.

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3. The To City Field – This field should contain the final destination of the cover but I'm not 100% sure that this is completely true. Forwarded covers can be tricky. Did the stamp pay the whole way inside the US or did the cover arrive stampless in New York or Boston and then had postage applied for the forwarding portion of its trip? Each cover is treated on its own merits.

4. The To State / Country Field -again the two letter abbreviations and country names are included but there are a lot more choices. The Sandwich Islands cover is listed under HI. Covers to New Brunswick are under NB (not Canada). NS is used for Nova Scotia and PEI is used for Prince Edward Island. Covers to Wisconsin are listed under either WI and Wisc Terr, depending on the mailing date

5. The Addressee – Names are spelled as they appear on the cover, with some corrections from Alexander's book. For example, if the middle initial is different on a single cover, compared to the other listings in the correspondence, and I have a copy of the cover, then I will examine to cover to see if the usual initial is possible and the difference is simply due to an interpretation of the handwriting. If so, the entry is corrected with the risk that the letter was mailed to a father or son with a different middle name.

6. The PF number – contains only the number shown in the row vies. Other certificate numbers may appear in the text. If you cannot find a cover using this field, try the number in the text field. If it isn't there either, let me know. I have only included those numbers listed in Alexander's book (except for the ones that are wrong), or on the PF website.

7. Fake – This is not a Yes / No entry. If the certificate claims the cover is genuine, the field is blank. If the cover is a fake, in total or partially (such as a local added recently), the cover is declared NG (not genuine). If the cover is suspect, it is marked NG?. If a cover is listed as having a PF certificate but the number is not given in Alexander's book and not yet posted online, the entry is ?. DO is used for declined opinion.

8. Bisect contains the shape of the bisected #2. Vertically cut stamps are either RH or LH for right and left half. Horizontally cut stamps are T or B for top or bottom half. Diagonally cut stamps give the location of the remaining 90 degree corner as LL (lower left), UL (upper left), UR (upper right) or LR (lower right).
If you want to see all the bisected covers, do not use this field. Simply enter 0.5 in the Qty of #2 field.