

Viewing the Flaot Collection of Antarctica

by John F. Dunn

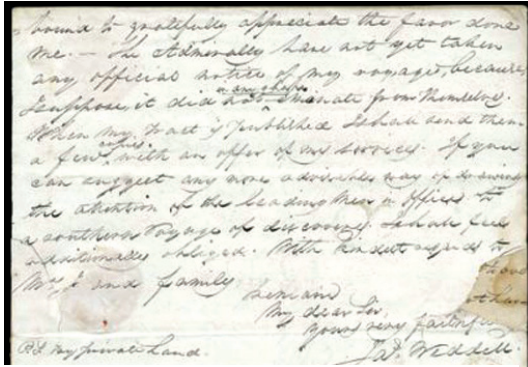
On January 31, 2009, Spink Shreves Galleries sold the David Flaot Collection of Antarctica as part of their Collector's Series Sale. I had overlooked this section until I was cleaning out some old catalogues, but it is still well worth a viewing, as it was one of the finest collections of its kind to be offered in years and included many items we will not have a chance to view again.

The section opened with this autographed letter dated August 16, 1826, signed by James Weddell, one of the earliest explorers of the Antarctic, to William Jerdan, the editor of the *Literary Gazette* in Edinburgh, Scotland, with postmarkings. In the contents of the letter Weddell canvasses for notice for his pamphlet on reaching the South Pole, and for a "way of drawing attention on the leading men in office to a southern voyage of discovery". The lot description also tells us, "Weddell made two Antarctic voyages, both undertaken as commercial sealing voyages: on his first, 1819-21, he discovered the South Orkney Islands; on the second, 1822-24, he examined the Falkland Islands, Cape Horn, the South Shetlands, South Georgia and the South Orkneys, and proceeded to the furthest southern latitude yet achieved". This early letter was estimated at \$1,500-2,000 and sold for \$1,600.

All prices quoted here do not include the Buyer's Premium that is added on to these hammer prices. In this auction that was equal to 20% of the successful bid price of each lot up to and including \$2,000 and 15% of the excess over \$2,000.

Next we view a cover from a lot of three from the 1873-76 Voyage of HMS *Challenger*. All three seaman's concessionary mail rate covers are from the same correspondence and written by S.S.A. Matkin who was serving on the *Challenger*, and all with Great Britain 1p stamps tied upon entry into the civilian mails. This one is docketed 1874 at Hong Kong, the others were St. Vincent in 1873 and Montevideo in 1876, upon the ship's return from the Antarctic area. Estimated at \$3,000-4,000, this lot realized \$3,250.

At the top of the next column is a small 1874 cover that was carried on a French Expedition through the French Antarctic Territories to view the transit of Venus in the sky by a team of French astronomers. It is



franked with a French 1874 25c blue tied by an anchor in dots cancel and matching "Cor. d'arm/Lig. T Paq. Fr. No. 1/10 Sept. 74" c.d.s.

The reverse, show hear, sports a handstamp, "Passages De Venus Sur Le Soleil/Mission a Saint Paul" in blue with a snake wrapped around an anchor. Estimated at \$1,500-2,000, this cover fetched \$2,600.



The next two lots are from the 1901-03 German "Gauss" Antarctic Expedition. First we view a post card

to Germany, with a message from expedition member Carl Luyken, franked with a 10pf Germania tied first by the three line "Deutsche Sudpol-Exp*/Kerguelen Insel/Royal Sound 2 Nov 1901" purple cachet, then by a 1902 "Seepost" c.d.s. Also at top left there is a further violet three line expedition cachet "Deutsche/Sudpolar - Expedition/Kerguelen Station". This card, estimated at \$1,500-2,000, soared to \$4,250. And below that, to remind us of the hardships of Polar exploration, we see the picture side of another post card from that same "Gauss" expedition. The card, franked with a Natal 1p, was, written by expedition member Emil Kuhnert to Germany. Estimated at \$750-1,000, it went for \$850.



My next selection is a March 25, 1902 cover from the 1901-04 British National Antarctic Expedition. It was sent to England from New Zealand by the expedition leader, Robert Scott, and is franked with a New Zealand 1p "Universal" and a superbly margined example of the "National Antarctic Expedition" engraved vignette in deep blue, which has had the ship's name *Discovery* inserted in



manuscript in the circle part of the design. The lot also included the original three page letter written by Commander Scott, datelined "Winter Headquarters/Feb 11th 1903," whose interesting contents include "...the season is disappointing us, the ice refuses to break away as it did last year and I have to make preparation for another winter, arrange stores with the relief ship and prepare many dispatches in order to get her away before there is any chance of her being frozen in...". Estimated at \$2,000-3,000, this lot fetched \$4,500.



"Recuerdo de la Expedicion Argentina" picture post cards illustrating the sinking of the Swedish Expedition ship *Antarctic* and a different member of the rescue crew, each bearing an Argentina 1899 5c adhesive on the picture side and signed by the respective member of the crew. There also were cards illustrating the entire crew and the rescue ship, plus an unused card illustrating the rescue ship and inset with a map. The group of cards from this rescue mission realized the top end of its \$400-500 estimate range.

For added "Polar flavor" I selected this picture post card from a group of eleven from a series of 1903-10 French Antarctic Expeditions, seven of



which are postally used. Several are of the expedition ship *Le Francais*, including this rare real photo card, others include various scenes and crew members. Estimated at \$500-750, this lot brought \$550.



quoi Pas?" [a French ship's name] at bottom. The expedition picture post card depicts penguins sunning themselves on rocks in view of the ship. The card also is franked with three Chile 2c stamps which are tied by "Puntas Arenas/(Dec) 19 1908/Chile" double ring c.d.s., with written Christmas greeting from "The Deceptives" (Shetland Islands).

Serving as a reminder of the hazards of Polar exploration is this picture post card from a 1903 rescue mission. It was part of a series of six

coming from these same expeditions is this cover with a blue 1908 expedition vignette inscribed "Pole Sud - Expedition Charcot" at top and "Pou-

This being what may be the only example of the special expedition vignette correctly used on an expedition related piece of postal history, it was one of the highlights of the Collection and was hammered down for \$11,000, well beyond its \$2,000-3,000 presale estimate.

Next we view a 1908 1p rose carmine with a "King Edward VII/Land" overprint in green, also handstamped "Specimen" in violet. Not listed in Scott, it is Gibbons #A1s, and was distributed as a specimen stamp by the U.P.U. in Berne to the Natal Post Office, affixed to a small piece. Estimated at \$400-500, it sold for \$350. As explained in a subsequent lot description, the stamps were issued for use on the *Nimrod* expedition by Sir Ernest Henry Shackleton.



Produced for a 1910-12 German South Polar Expedition, this



"Deutsche Sud polar Expedition" red vignette is tied to a picture post card of the expedition ship *Deutschland* not by the usual four line expedition

cachet, but by the extremely rare two line "Paid 1 at South Georgia/EBB" provisional handstamp, also with a small "a" of "at" and the manuscript initials "E.B.B." (Edward Beveridge Binnie, Postmaster at South Georgia), then overstruck as always by a "South Georgia/31 No/11" double ring c.d.s.. The only known example of the Expedition vignette cancelled by the South Georgia provisional handstamp, it was estimated at \$4,000-5,000 and realized \$7,250.

We will continue with this view next week, and will conclude this installment with a 1911-14



Australian Antarctic Expedition, a 1913 commercial cover addressed to Sydney, Australia, from the expedition, franked with an Australia 1p Kangaroo and tied by "Hobart/15 Mar. 13" machine cancel, with a complete strike at lower left of the "Loose Ship's Letter/Post in/Antarctica/S.Y. Aurora/A.A.E." expedition cachet illustrating a penguin in the center. It also bears a Sydney arrival backstamp, after which it was redirected to reach the addressee. The lot description tells us, "any cover from this expedition is quite scarce, but this is one of only two covers of which we are aware that bear the ever popular Kangaroo franking". Estimated at \$1,000-1,500, it sold for \$2,000.—and two lots later the other 'Roo cover from this expedition, with the same estimate, went for \$2,100.