

LUCK-OF-THE-DRAW

"LEGENDS OF THE WEST,
THE ERRORS, REVISIONS & LOTTERY"



"The first day cover the USPS did not want made."

Tom Mueller hand painted Bill Pickett Legends of the West first day cover including a pre-lottery example of the Ben Pickett error stamp.

In 1993 one of the most egregious errors in the history of U.S. postage stamp design occurred. The revelation of this "mistake" led to an unprecedented series of events. The resulting unique remedy was possibly the philatelic news story of the century. "Luck-of-the-Draw" combines elements of a traditional stamp study with first day material to present a unified story of this history-making philatelic event.

Relatives of Pickett filed their grievances with the USPS when they discovered that the portrait used for the Legends of the West stamp honoring Bill was actually brother and business associate Ben Pickett.

Enraged dealers and collectors filed legal action to prevent the destruction of all of the recalled panes. Thousands of letters were mailed to try to influence the resolution of the stamp error controversy.

Compromise dictated the solution to the dilemma. A decision was reached by USPS officials after consulting with the Pickett family and also considering the "best interest" of the philatelic community.

All but 183 of the error panes were accounted for after the recall. The USPS destroyed all but 150,000 of the recalled panes. Survivors were made available (one to a person) by means of a drawing/lottery.

Lucky drawing entrants received a registered mail packet including a letter of congratulations, a direct mail catalog and the Pickett error pane encased in a special blue USPS souvenir display envelope. This mailing was delayed until well after first day ceremonies to insure no first day cancels on the error.

Legends of the West (1994-95) received the most philatelic press and was voted the most popular issue. This was partly due to the error/controversy and in part to the promotion of sales by the USPS.