

# CHICK PHILATELY

*Covers about the  
Chicken Industry  
in Texas*

By Lyle Boardman

Several years ago, when two of my daughters were raising chickens in their backyards, I sensed an opportunity to find a way of introducing stamp collecting to them. I started accumulating stamps from around the world featuring chickens, mounting them and giving them to the kids for presents. They still have the collections, still have chickens, and are still not stamp collectors, but the seed is planted.

The most famous “Chicken” stamp in the United States is the one issued for the Centennial of the American Poultry Industry (Scott #968), part of the great excess of 1948. I wondered how the Post Office knew that the Poultry Industry was 100 years old, and started in 1848. It seemed to me that chickens had been around for more than 100 years, and certainly someone had been raising them and selling them for much longer.



Fig. 1

As it turns out, the centennial is based on the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Boston Poultry Show (according to an article by Kathleen Wunderly in the May 2004 issue of *Scott Stamp Monthly* and stated on the first day cover in Fig. 1). This particular stamp has been the brunt of philatelic jokes for many years and deservedly so. It was one of the first United States stamps to feature something other than a hero or historical event. There have been animals on stamps as far back as the Trans-Mississippi Exposition Issue which included Bison, Horses, Oxen, Mules and the famous Western Cattle in a Storm. The Chicken stamp of 1948 was the first to include an animal as its *raison d'être*. We have come a long way since 1948 as US stamps now regularly feature cartoon animals.

Interestingly, rather than being released at the Boston Poultry show, the stamp was issued in New Haven, Connecticut, most likely because legislation to issue the stamp was introduced by Connecticut Congressman Antoni N. Sadlak, recognizing the significance of chicken farming in his state.

But, I digress. If the Chicken stamp celebrated the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Boston Poultry Show, certainly there is correspondence out there that would document the first Boston Poultry Show and form the basis of a collection (and an exhibit!). I have

so far found nothing that refers to poultry shows of that vintage.

Along the way, I have come across several Texas covers that relate to the Chicken industry and so have prepared this article as a status of an ongoing search. Most of the covers merely reflect the current postage rates in effect at the time they were mailed, and use stamps available to the public, so this is more of a survey of what the mails were used for as opposed to a rate or usage study.

## The Industry

Chickens are part of a larger class called “poultry,” and the businesses that deal with them and with poultry as a whole are varied. The businesses that the 1948 stamp seems to commemorate are the raising of chickens to eat and chickens to look at. Over the 4,000 or so years that chickens have been domesticated, many separate breeds have been developed; some for their beauty, some for their ability to lay eggs, and some for their large, tasty breasts.

In Texas, the Chicken Industry followed the pattern of the rest of the country and included at least one interesting twist. Many of the covers from the early 1900s are from Texas breeders and are addressed to A. C. Hawkins in Lancaster, Mass. Hawkins was one of the largest and best known breeders in the U.S. and supplied breeding stock. Letters addressed to Hawkins usually are asking for price and delivery, or are orders for chicks or eggs.

In the process of accumulating covers, a logical breakdown of categories in the Chicken Industry occurs, including:

**Breeders** – those who raise chickens for supply to other local breeders or who raise chickens for market

**Commission Merchants** – the middle man who buys from breeders and sells to dealers

**Dealers** – another middle man, more like a wholesaler

**Feed and Medications** – provide food and medicine to breeders

**Machinery manufacturers** – make and sell brooding equipment, food preparation equipment, etc.

**Associations** – groups of growers or fanciers sharing information

**Publications** – journals with lots of advertising and articles for various aspects of the industry

**Schools** – private and government schools with agrarian courses, some specifically poultry-related

**Government** – data gathering and regulation enforcing

**Eggs** – the product of laying poultry

## Breeders – and A.C. Hawkins

Not all of the categories are represented in the Texas covers accumulated to date. Most are from breeders, and most of them are addressed to A. C. Hawkins. Figures 3 through 16 are to Hawkins and are in chronological order.

Fig. 2 is a postal card (Scott UX9) from Floresville posted in



Fig. 2  
1889 requesting a poultry list. The cover in Fig. 3 was posted in Eden, Texas in 1890. The note inside asks for a list of poultry and eggs, and also asks "...where I can get the Golden Spangled crested Polish" (a chicken with long feathers on its head).

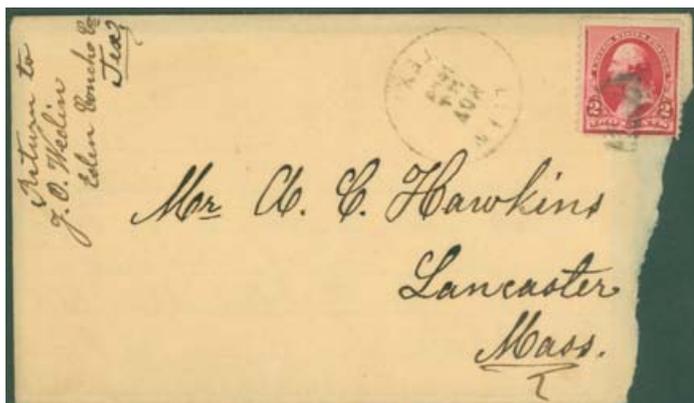


Fig. 3  
Fig. 4 was posted in April of 1896 by a breeder in Houston.



Fig. 4  
Fig. 5 is from Clareville, and asks for the Hawkins Catalog and "...Express charges on Eggs to Beeville Texas - Wells Fargo Express Co is the only Ex. Co to Beeville." Fig. 6 is from the aptly named town of Henrietta, Texas posted with Scott 302.

By the early 1900's, the envelopes began to be more attractive. Fig. 7 posted in Blum, Texas in 1904 is in two colors on blue paper, and the chicken picture in Fig. 8 posted in Brownwood in 1906 is a photograph instead of a line drawing.



Fig. 5



Fig. 6

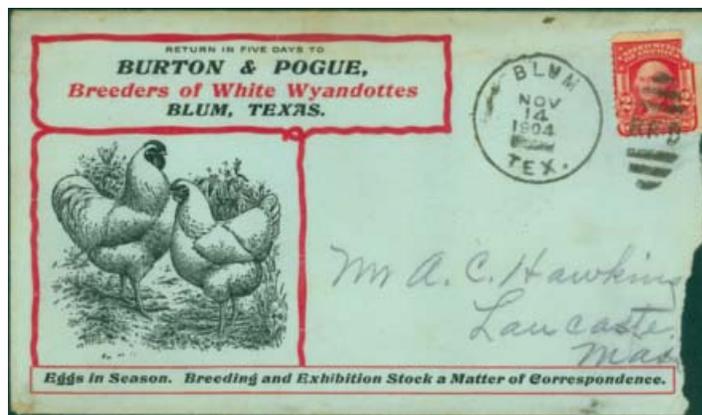


Fig. 7



Fig. 8



Fig. 9

Fig. 9 from Mesquite in 1909 includes a note saying:  
 “Regarding your 3 sitting Plymouth Egg offer for Ten dollars. Do you make any guarantee regarding safe delivery or hatching. I am desirous of possessing your stock but you know Texas is a long way from Mass. I would like to hear from you.”

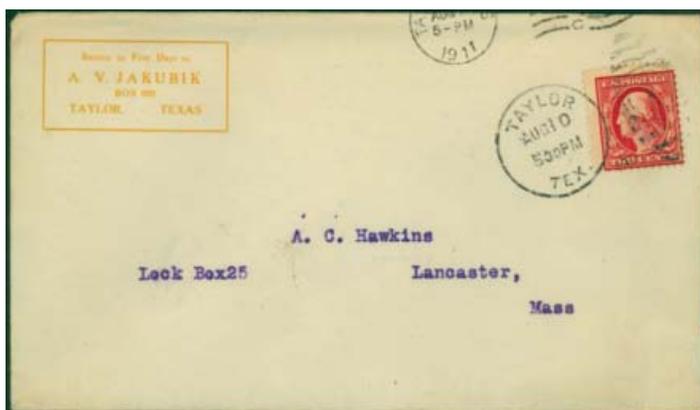


Fig. 10

The envelope in Fig. 10 from Taylor in 1911 is not too fancy, but includes a rather elaborate letterhead (see Fig. 11). The box in the upper right corner says that A. V. Jakubik breeds Buff Orpingtons because:

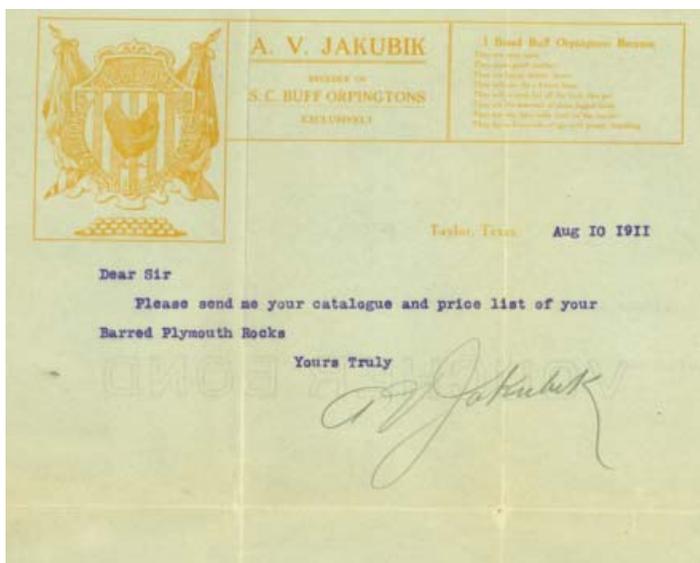


Fig. 11

# New Book!

by Rex H. Stever

*The story of how the Texas Republic handled mail*

**Texas residents - \$37.50 + \$5 shipping**  
**Out of state orders \$35 + \$5 shipping**

Place orders through:

**Rex H. "Jim" Stever**  
 44 Camden Place  
 Corpus Christi TX 78412-2613  
 Fax: 361-991-4688 Email: rhstever@hotmail.com

**"REMEMBER THE ALAMO!"**  
 and  
**"REMEMBER JOHN ROWE"**  
 when you want to sell

★ **TEXAS POSTAL HISTORY**  
 ★ **TEXAS COLLECTIBLES**  
 ★ **LETTERS, etc.**

**JOHN N. ROWE, III**  
 6116 N. Central Expwy.  
 Suite A071, 921  
 Dallas, Texas 75206  
 214-823-9202

“They are very tame  
 They make good mothers  
 They are heavy winter layers  
 The will not fly a 4-foot fence  
 They will scratch for all the food they get  
 They are the heaviest of clean legged fowls  
 They are the best table fowl on the market  
 They lay at 5 months of age with proper handling”

The last cover to A.C. Hawkins was posted in 1926 from New Boston, Texas and has only a return address with no picture. The covers to Hawkins range from 1889 to 1926 – a lot of years and a lot of chickens!

**Other Breeder Covers**

The covers in Figs. 12 through 15 are from or to Texas breeders, but not addressed to A. C. Hawkins.



Fig. 12

Fig. 12 pictures what may be Wayandottes and was cancelled in 1928 in Sidney, Texas. The cover in Fig. 13 was posted in Cuero, Texas and features what are probably White Wyandottes but also lists hares and ducks.

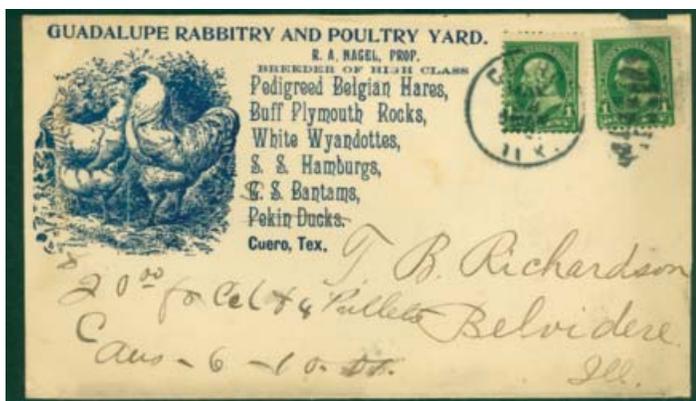


Fig. 13

Fig. 14 is most likely a return envelope since the addressee and sender have the same address. It has a nice cancellation from Friday, Texas posted in November, 1931. The 1936 cover in Fig. 15 from Von Minden’s Hatchery in Fayetteville is addressed to

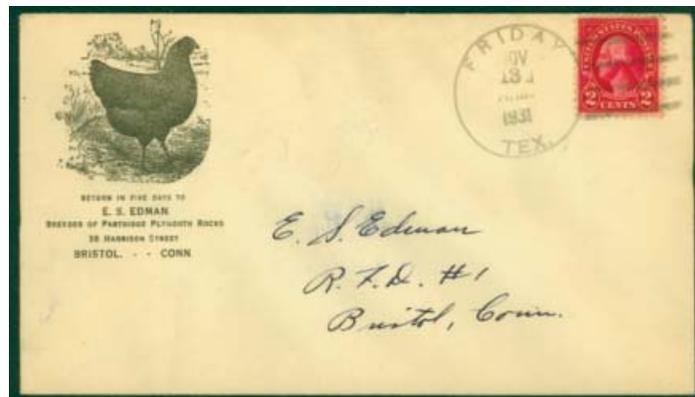


Fig. 14  
 Buda, Texas (the town where one of my chicken-raising daughters lives) and includes an order blank and price list. In 1936, 25 day-old chicks sold for \$2.00, and 100 (assorted breeds) for \$6.25. It cost 3 cents to send a letter.

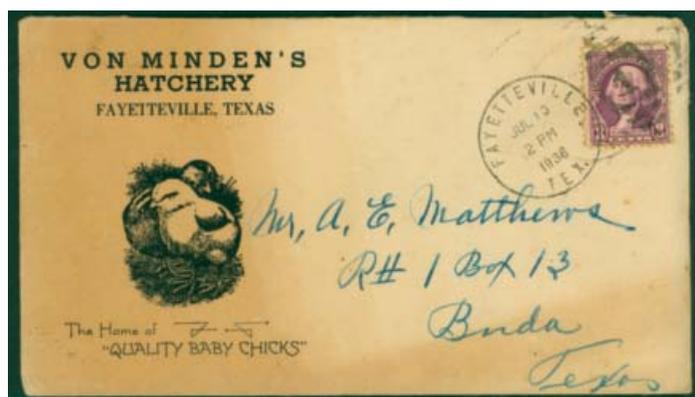


Fig. 15

**Other Industry Categories**

The next several covers are from other categories of the Chicken Industry than breeders, including dealers, feed and supply stores, machinery, publications and clubs.

The company represented by the cover in Fig. 16 was a wholesale and retail food dealer in El Paso and featured chickens on their envelopes.

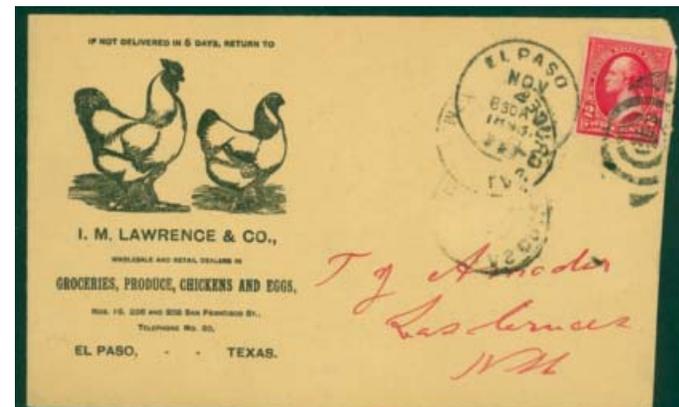


Fig. 16

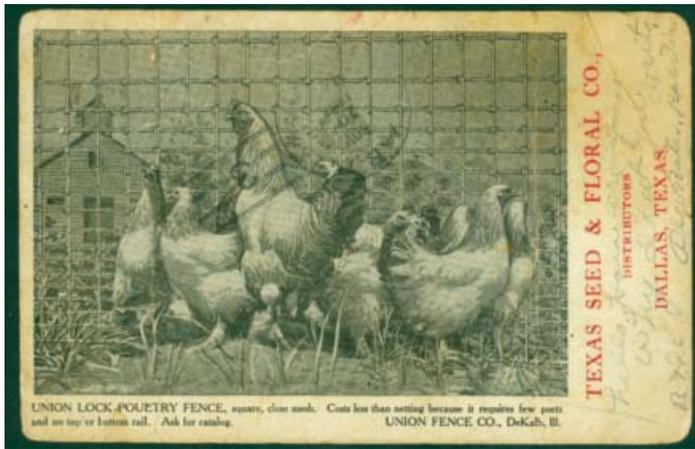


Fig. 17

The card in Fig.17 is an advertisement for chicken fence (notice that the mesh is finer near the bottom). The company selling the fence is in Dallas, Texas, but the cancellation is from somewhere else and the town name is not legible although the date of Nov. 9, 1907 is.

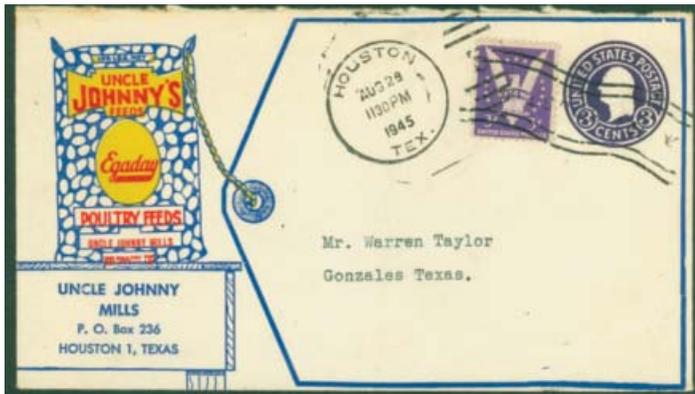


Fig. 18

Fig. 18 was mailed from a feed company in Houston. The name of the feed is “Egaday” implying that this feed will make chickens lay an egg every day. The post office apparently felt like the CDS cancel didn’t protect revenue, so applied a roller cancel as well which hit both the embossed stamp and the adhesive stamp.



Fig. 19

The advertising cover in Figure 19 was not mailed in Texas but was addressed to Sherman, which is in Texas and is for an incubator named “Old Trusty”. The “Old Trusty” is so famous in Clay Center, Nebraska that there is now an **Annual Old Trusty**

**Antique & Collectors Show** held each year. The one in September, 2008 was the 26<sup>th</sup>. The name “Old Trusty” came from M.M. Johnson’s St. Bernard dog named Trusty. Johnson, having sold his business making “SureHatch Incubators” needed a new catchy name, and his dog provided it.



Fig. 20

Another cover with a non-Texas connection, Fig. 20, advertises the *Poultry Tribune* out of Illinois, but the cover is addressed to Pipe Creek, Texas (and actually has a Pipe Creek cancellation on the reverse). It was posted in San Antonio, Texas and has the famous Chicken stamp on it.



Fig. 21

Chicken breeders and raisers, not unlike many stamp collectors, like to belong to clubs (Fig. 21). The Berry Brothers of Cleburne, Texas were no exception. The Club they belonged to (The Silver Wyandottes Club of America) is still in existence, listed on the internet as one of the Wyandotte Fancier’s Clubs.

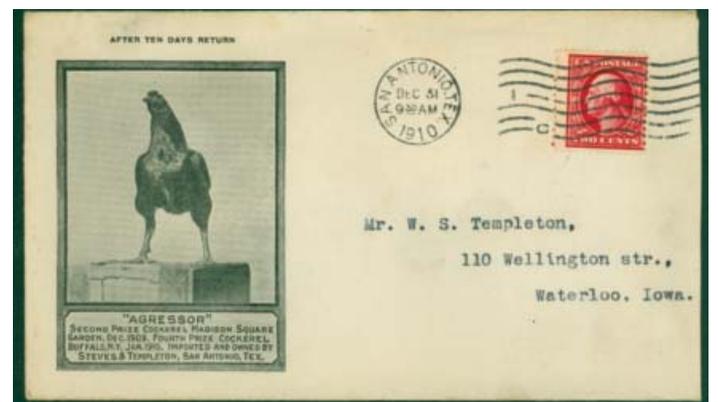


Fig. 22

**Game Cocks**

The one element I had not expected to find is Game Cocks. The cover in Fig. 22 shows a big, sturdy cock named “Agressor.” I’m not sure how many fights he won, but he took second prize at Madison Square Garden in 1909 and fourth prize in Buffalo, NY. He may have won for his aggressive stance. He is probably where the term “Cocky” came from.

The two postcards from H. Henzel (printed on the back of Scott Number UX22, issued in 1910) are advertisements for Fighting Game Cocks, and picture “Black Satin” who looks to be nearly as tough as Agressor. The message on the cards is different, not only in language, but in what they say. The card in Fig 23, in English, is advertising to buy game cocks while the other is advertising to sell game cocks. “Gallos Finos de Pelea” on the

other card (Fig. 24), translates to “Fine Fighting Roosters” and lists game cocks originating in Georgia, Alabama, Kentucky, Tennessee, N. & S. Carolinas and other states for sale in Mexico. Neither card is used, so the intent is mere speculation.

**Conclusion**

In the process of looking for stamps that might entice my children to become stamp collectors, I came across a very interesting aspect of collecting; chicken advertising covers. While I have not fully explored all the history of the breeding and raising of chickens in Texas, I have seen a cross-section of the business and quite a few of its ramifications, including some I hadn’t expected to see advertised.

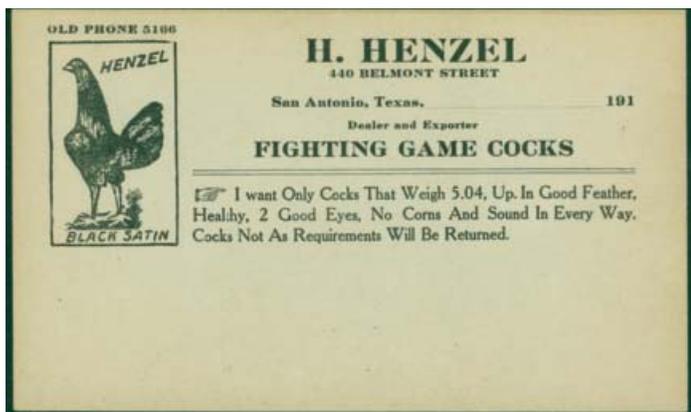


Fig. 23

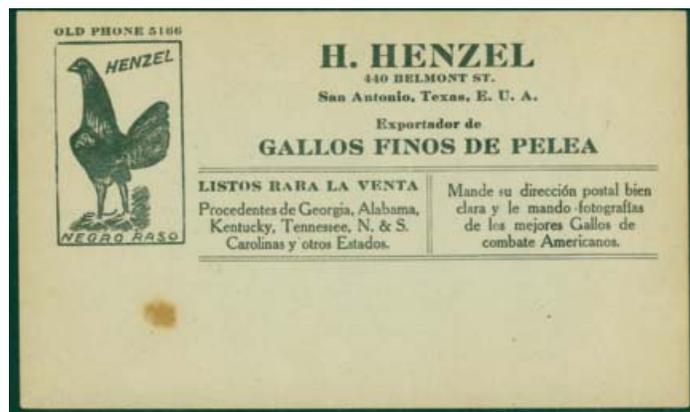


Fig. 24

**Jefferson, Texas**  
*"Buying the following Texas items"*

**19th Century, Jefferson, Texas**  
 Postal History  
 Eshenauer & Company

**VINCE KING**  
 email: vinceking.design@verizon.net  
 315 S. LOCUST ST. DENTON, TX 76201  
 MEMBER  
 TPHS - CPA - USPCS

**ATTENTION**  
**Texas Postal History**  
**Collectors and Dealers:**  
*An Avid Collector*  
*"Looking for Scott 210's on Covers"*

**NORMAN COHEN**  
 Email: norman@adventuregraphics.com  
 or write to Norman Cohen at  
 P.O. Box 29543, Dallas, Texas 75229-0543

MEMBER  
 APS - TPHS - IPA - USCS