

JOHN WAYNE - LEGENT OF HOLLYWOOD

By George Constantourakis

John Wayne was born in 1907 in Winterset, Iowa as Marion Michael Morrison. When he was six, the family moved to California. There he picked up the nickname Duke. He used to get up at 4:00 AM to deliver newspapers and after school and football practice made deliveries for local stores. He was an A student, head of his senior class and an all state guard on championship football team. He narrowly failed admission to the U.S. Naval Academy at Annapolis and went to University of Southern California on a football scholarship. There football coach Howard Jones got him work in the summer of 1926 as an assistant prop man on the set of a movie directed by John Ford. He worked his way into roles on the screen. John Ford convinced United Artists to give him the role of the *Ringo Kid* in his classic film *Stagecoach* (1939). John Wayne was on the road to stardom.

In 1941, when war broke out, he tried to enlist but was rejected on account of a football injury and being a father of four. He even went to Washington to plead that he be allowed to join the Navy but was turned down. So he poured himself into the war effort by making inspirational war films e.g "The Fighting Seabees", "Back to Bataan" and "They were Expendable"; thus he became a symbol of the determined American fighting man.

In 1944, he helped found the Motion Pictures Alliance for the Preservation of American Ideals, later becoming its President. His conservative political stance was also reflected in *The Alamo* (1960) which he produced, directed and starred in. His patriotic stand was enshrined in *The Green Berets* (1968) which he co-directed and starred in. He received the Best Actor nomination for *The Sands of Iwo Jima* (1949) and the Oscar for his role as one-eyed Rooster Cogburn in *True Grit* (1969).

In Sept. 1964 he had a cancerous left lung removed. Studio agents tried to conceal his illness, but he went before the public to raise awareness against cancer and went on to raise millions of dollars for private cancer research. In March 1978 he had a heart valve replacement surgery. In Jan. 1979 his stomach was removed and when doctors told him there was no hope, he urged them to use his body for medical research. He died on June 11, 1979; a Tokyo newspaper ran the headline "Mr. America passes on". John Wayne symbolized the force of the American will to do what is right.

STAGECOACH (1939) (see: *Figures 1, 2, 3 & 4*)

A western tale of seven passengers trying to cross Apache territory in a stagecoach. The passengers on the coach include: Thomas Mitchell as a drunken doctor, Claire Trevor as a shamed saloon girl, a pregnant woman, a bank manager who has taken off with his client's money, Donald Meek as a whiskey-peddler, John Carradine as a gambler and John Wayne as the famous *Ringo Kid* (see stamp: *Figure 1*), a prison escapee is picked up last. As the stagecoach makes its way to Lordsburg, the threat of Geronimo (see: *Figure 4*) and his guerrilla bands looms everywhere. The passengers represent various elements of humanity and social groups. This film put John Wayne on the map. Even as young as he was then, his height (6' 4 1/2" or 1.94m.) and virility made him a striking hero of the west. Thomas Mitchell was amazing and won an Oscar for his amusing performance.

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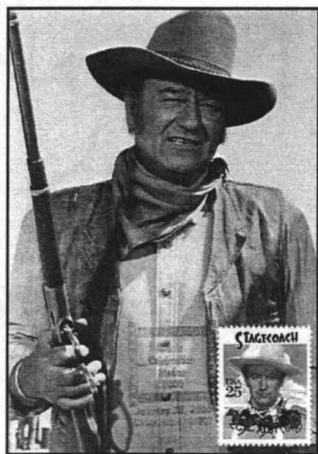
Clockwise from Left:

(Figure 1) STAGECOACH (1939). The image of the stamp is from this film. However the image of the postcard is from another film RIO BRAVO (1959). Issue: Mar. 23, 1990. For: Classical Films. Cancel: Jan. 20, 2000, Cadiz OH, special mention: 'REELS CELEBRATION STATION.'

(Figure 2) STAGECOACH - PACIFIC '97. The image of the stamp is from this film. However the image of the postcard is from another film RIO BRAVO (1959). Issue: Mar. 13, 1997. For: Pacific '97 Intl. Exhibition. Cancel: June 22, 1997, Laughlinton CA, concordant illustr. of a Stagecoach (triple).

(Figure 3) STAGECOACH - OVERLAND MAIL. Issue: Oct. 18, 1994. For: Legends of the West. Cancel: Oct. 22, 1994, Gainesville TX, special mention: 'BUTTERFIELD OVERLAND TRAIL STATION', concordant illustr. of a Stagecoach (triple).

(Figure 4) GERONIMO. Apache Indian Warrior who fought and terrorized anyone crossing through Apache lands. Issue: Oct. 18, 1994. For: Legends of the West. Cancel: Jan. 18, 1996, Geronimo TX, regular.



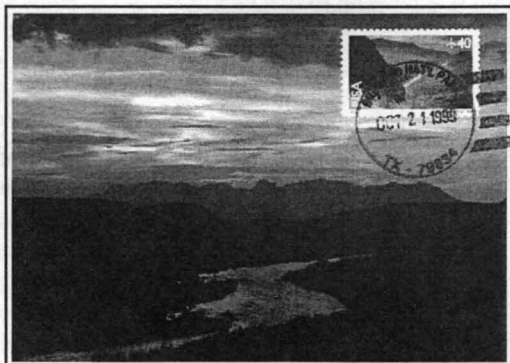
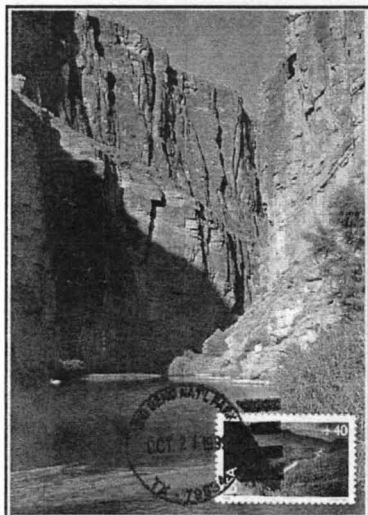
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Clockwise from Left:

(Figure 5) MARINES RAISE FLAG ON IWO JIMA. Issue: Sept. 2, 1995. For: World War II -1945 Victory at Last. Cancel: Aug. 4, 1997, Chicago IL, special mention: 'UNCOMMON VALOR WAS COMMON VIRTUE - IWO JIMA 1945'.

(Figure 6) IWO JIMA - MARINES. Issue: July 11, 1945. For: Victory at Iwo Jima. Cancel: July 22, 1953, Camp le Jeune - Jacksonville NC

(Figures 7 & 8) RIO GRANDE. Issue: July 30, 1999. For: Air Mail Issue. Cancel: Oct. 21, 1999, Big Bend Natl. Park TX



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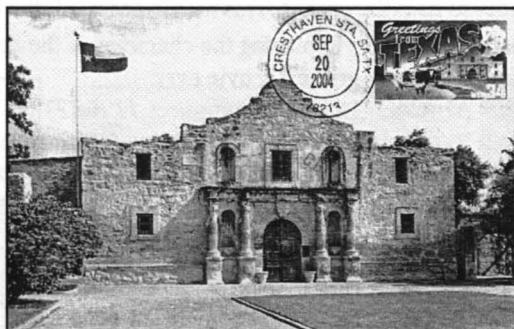
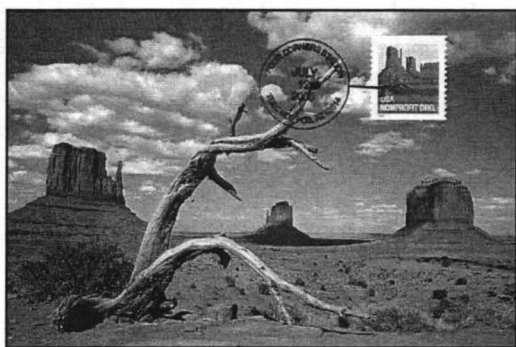
Clockwise from Left:

(Figure 9) MONUMENT VALLEY, UTAH. Issue: June 15, 1996. For: Non Profit Organizations. Cancel: July 12, 2000, Four Corners Station, Teec Nob Pob AZ

(Figure 10) RIO BRAVO (1959). Issue: Sept. 9, 2004. For: Legends of Hollywood. Cancel: First Day, Los Angeles CA, regular.

(Figure 11) THE ALAMO. Issue: Apr. 4, 2002. For: Greetings from America - Texas. Cancel: Sept. 20, 2004, Cresthaven Stn, San Antonio TX, regular.

(Figure 12) DAVY CROCKETT. Issue: Aug. 17, 1967. For: American Folklore. Cancel: First Day, San Antonio TX, special mention: 'MAILED AT THE ALAMO'



JOHN WAYNE - LEGENT OF HOLLYWOOD (continued)

THE SANDS OF IWO JIMA (1949) (see: *Figures 5 & 6*)

Marine sergeant John Stryker (John Wayne) is an embittered man who takes his misery out on the young Marines his trains for combat in the Pacific war. The squad grows more and more resentful at his increasingly brutal training, but his determination to mold them into fighting men helps save their lives when the squad is landed at Tarawa in Nov. 1943. The now battle-tested squad becomes more closely-knit and Stryker's relationship with the men warms as the squad eventually finds itself at Iwo Jima in the bloodiest island battle of the war. Three of the actual raisers of the flag (see: *Figures 5 & 6*) appear in the movie. Much of the amphibious landing material is newsreel footage from the actual war. Wayne plays himself and American values to the fore.

RIO GRANDE (1950) (see: *Figures 7 & 8*)

It takes place after the Civil War. Union officer Kirby Yorke (John Wayne) is in charge at Fort Stark an outpost on the Rio Grande. He is training new recruits - one of which is his son whom he hasn't seen for 15 years. He whips him into shape to take on the Apaches but not before his mother (Maureen O'Hara) shows up to take him. The decision to go is left up to young Yorke. He decides to stay and fight. Kirby and his former wife fall in love once more. The film has a richness and sense of nostalgia for a West that 'may never have existed, but should have'.

THE SEARCHERS (1956) (see: *Figure 9*)

This perhaps John Ford's greatest film. The location in Utah's Monument Valley (see: *Figure 9*) is magnificent. John Wayne's portrayal of Ethan Edwards is memorable. At the beginning Edwards lives only for hate and revenge. By the end he becomes merciful and forgiving. Edwards fulfils the requirements of hero and villain. This makes him an anti-hero with human strengths and flaws so typical of this type of protagonist. On location photography gives the film its rugged character. Monument Valley (see: *Figure 9*) is depicted with beauty, savagery and mystery.

RIO BRAVO (1959) (see: *Figure 10*)

The sheriff of a small town in south-western Texas must keep custody of a murderer whose brother, a powerful rancher, is trying to help him escape. He enlists the help of a cripple, a drunk and a young gunfighter and must find a way to hold out against the rancher's hired guns until the marshal arrives. John Wayne is doing his parade role of the rough sheriff and Dean Martin makes the role of a drunk that stops drinking in order to help the sheriff. This movie has it all, the big gunfight in the end, Dean's marvellous effort in playing the character of the drunk. This is duke's and the whole western genre's greatest movie ever.

THE ALAMO (1960) (see: *Figures 11 & 12*)

Even though John Wayne is renowned for his many starring roles in westerns throughout his fifty year film career, much of his better film work was done in war films and historical epics. This film being a mixture of the two. Wayne delivers an outstanding performance as Davy Crockett (see: *Figure 12*) and an all star supporting cast also deliver great performances. The epic battle scenes are nicely done and although the film is almost three hours long, it never seems overlong. This 1960 United Artists release ranks as an engrossing history lesson and as one of the best performances ever by the legendary Wayne.

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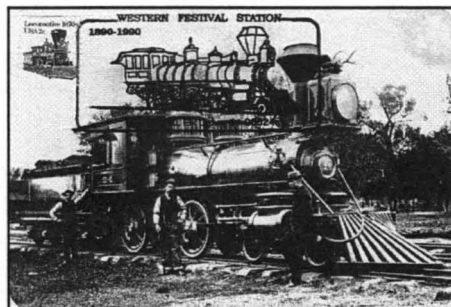
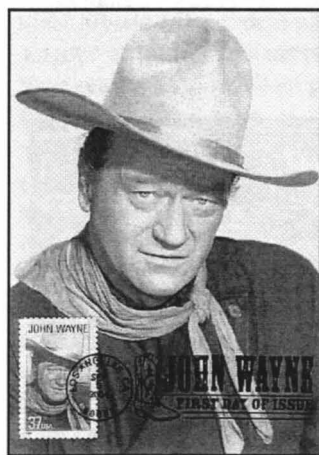
(Figure 13) JOHN WAYNE - THE MAN WHO SHOT LIBERTY VALANCE (1962).

Issue: Sept. 9, 2004. For: Legends of Hollywood. Cancel: First Day, Los Angeles CA, special illustr. and mention: 'JOHN WAYNE'

(Figure 14) COVERED WAGON(S) - HARDSHIPS OF EMIGRATION Issue: Aug. 18, 1998. For: Trans - Mississippi Re- Issue. Cancel: July 10, 1999, Gering NE, special mention: 'OREGON TRAIL DAYS', concordant illustration of a Covered Wagon (triple).

(Figure 15) TROOPS GUARDING WAGON TRAINS (The Wagon Train is visible on stamp as a background). Issue: Aug. 18, 1998. For: Trans - Mississippi Re- Issue. Cancel: May 6, 2000, Green Lane PA, special mention: 'CAMPOREE STATION - CONESTOGA DISTRICT - CRADLE OF LIBERTY COUNCIL', concordant illustration of a Covered Wagon (triple).

(Figure 16) LOCOMOTIVE 1870's. Issue: May 20, 1982. For: Transportation Issue. Cancel: May 5, 1990, Elk Grove CA, special mention: 'WESTERN FESTIVAL STATION', concordant illustr. of a 1870's Locomotive (triple).



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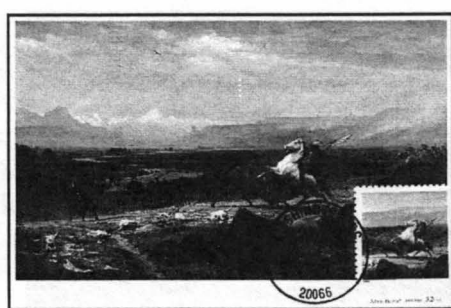
(Figure 17) *MONTANA STATEHOOD*, painting by Charles Russel 'C.M. Russel and Friends' (Rangers and Native Americans - Western Landscape). Issue: Jan. 15, 1989. For: Montana Statehood Centennial. Cancel: June 24, 1989, Circle MT, concordant illustr. of a Western Rider (triple).

(Figure 18) *'INDEPENDENCE AND THE OPENING OF THE WEST'*, painting by Thomas Hart Benton. Pawnee Native Americans facing Hunters, Trappers and a group of Settlers with their Covered Wagons. Issue: May 8, 1971. For: 150th Anniversary of Missouri. Cancel: First Day, Independence MO, special.

(Figure 19) *'THE LAST OF THE BUFFALO'*, painting by Albert Bierstadt. Issue: Aug. 27, 1998. For: American Art. Cancel: Aug. 2, 1999, Washington DC

(Figure 20) *'COMING THROUGH THE RYE'*, by Frederic Remington. Bronze group of 4 Cowboys on running horses, shooting pistols and shouting. Issue: OCT. 9, 1981. For: Honor an American Sculptor. Cancel: First Day, Oklahoma City OK, regular.

(Figure 21 - Page 11) *HELICOPTER UH-1P 'HUEY' - VIETNAM WAR*, (Versatile UH 1 Helicopters, were used by USAF in Vietnam for Rescue, Support Duties, Medical Evacuations, Training and other roles). Issue: Sept. 17, 1999. For: 1960's - Celebrate the Century. Cancel: First Day, Green Bay WI, special.



JOHN WAYNE - LEGENT OF HOLLYWOOD (continued)

THE MAN WHO SHOT LIBERTY VALANCE (1962) (see: *Figure 13*)

This black and white film is an ode to the end of the classic western. It is a satiric look at the civilizing of once wild American west. The legend concerns Ransom Stoddart (Jimmy Stewart) who has been brought to the western town of Shinbone following an altercation with a gang of stagecoach highwaymen, led by arch-villain Liberty Valance (Lee Marvin), who is nasty and taunting at every turn. His nemesis is that stalwart icon of the heroic west John Wayne as Tom Doniphan (see M.C. & stamp: *Figure 13*). His code of honor is as solid as his skill with a six-gun. He knows that might rules the west and will inevitably vanquish evil. But Stoddart's mission is to see that justice is done through the more civilized rule of law.

HOW THE WEST WAS WON (1962) (see: *Figures 14 to 20*)

Designed for the Cinerama screen, with fantastic music score that carries you along as the images unfold. The 50 years of American expansion between 1830's & 1880's are viewed through the experiences of the Prescott and Rawlings families (see: *Figures 14 & 15*) as they migrate from New York, during the California gold rush. They suffer through the Civil War and help build the railroads (see: *Figure 16*) on the plains and bring law and justice to the frontier (see: *Figures 17 & 18*). Along the way they meet mountain men and outlaws (see: *Figure 20*), journey by wagon train (see: *Figure 15*) and deal with Native Americans (see: *Figure 18*). The scenes of the wagons chased by Indians (see: *Figure 18*), the buffalo stampede (see: *Figure 19*) all were real as life. Excellent performances from great actors like Greg Peck, Carroll Baker, Henry Fonda, R. Preston, Debbie Reynolds, James Stewart and John Wayne.

THE GREEN BERETS (1968) (see: *Figure 21*)

Col. Mike Kirby (John Wayne) picks two teams of crack Green Berets for a mission in South Vietnam to build and control a camp and to kidnap a North Vietnamese General. John Wayne was very patriotic, he didn't like how soldiers were being treated on their way back. During this period you were not supposed to write movies about Vietnam, so John Wayne and other actors, writers and directors donated their time and materials to make this movie. The critics were very harsh, simply because the movie supported the Vietnam war.

TRUE GRIT (1969)

Kim Darby enlists the help of one-eyed drunk U.S. Marshal (John Wayne in his Oscar-winning role) and a Texas ranger (Glen Campbell) to help her track down her father's killer. The film is little more than a showcase for Wayne who finally found a part that everyone loved him in. An older Duke, but not a lesser Duke. This performance is one of Wayne's best. He's tough, strong, and hilarious all in one. This was the last old-time western Hollywood produced.

