

**2010 Winton M. Blount Postal History Symposium
Smithsonian National Postal Museum, Washington DC
Thursday and Friday, September 30 - October 1, 2010**

Stamps and the Mail: Imagery, Icons, & Identity

Our symposia to date have largely looked at stamps in terms of the work they perform moving the mail in various ways (transportation) and under various conditions (wartime), but what about the stamps themselves. As they have evolved since 1840, their designs, initially a secondary function, are now encoded with historical, cultural, and political messages. Stamps, as official government documents, can be treated as primary resources designed to convey specific political and esthetic messages. Other topics and themes for the symposium are: Stamp design's influence on advertising envelopes and bulk mailings, censorship of stamps as propaganda as used on letters, and the role of the citizens' stamp committee or organizations that generate the designs.

In our past symposia, we have had several papers that addressed this theme: "Images of Past Futures: World's Fairs, Postage Stamps and the Impact of Modernism"; "The Medium is the Message: Union Civil War Patriotic Envelopes and Their Impact"; and, "V for Victory and Icons of Reform."

Proceedings of the Symposium will be considered for publication by the Smithsonian Institution Press.

Several academic books and articles providing ideas along these topics are:

- David Scott, *European Stamp Design: A Semiotic Approach to Designing Messages* (1995) takes an artist/aesthetic look at British, Dutch, and Swiss stamps.
- Jack Child, *Miniature Messages: The Semiotics and Politics of Latin American Postage Stamps* (2008) considers the postage stamp to be a unique kind of sign, with an impressive capacity to convey a number of messages in a very confined space.
- Donald M. Reid, "The Symbolism of Postage Stamps: A Source for the Historian," *Journal of Contemporary History*. Vol. 19, No. 2 (Apr. 1984) pp. 223 - 249.
- Harlan J. Strauss, "Politics, Psychology and the Postage Stamp," *The 1975 Congress Book*. pp. 157 - 180.

Deadline for proposals — May 15, 2010

Proposals should be no more than one page and be accompanied by a one-page curriculum vita with contact information (e-mail, phone, and address).

Please e-mail complete proposals to NPMResearchChair@si.edu. Notification of accepted papers will be issued by early June. **Papers must be submitted by September 5, 2010 to be considered for publication.** Conference papers and presentations will be posted on the National Postal Museum Website. Conference co-chairs are Thomas Lera, David L. Straight, and Virginia L. Horn.

