Since 1847, stamps have been used as evidence of payment for carrying the nation’s mail. Their second purpose has been to tell the story of great changes in American culture and technology.
Second Purpose

In this fourth Maynard Sundman Lecture, Roger Brody will present fascinating, illuminating, and little-known stories about changes in the development and use of America’s Postage Stamps since 1847.

Table of Contents

The Maynard Sundman Lecture Series................................................1
Second Purpose....................................................................................2
United States Stamp Time Line ..........................................................4
America’s First Stamps – 1847............................................................6
Columbian Commemoratives ..............................................................8
Series 1902.........................................................................................10
Registry Stamp...................................................................................12
Philatelic Agency ...............................................................................14
White Plains Souvenir Sheet..............................................................16
Day’s Folly – Dag Hammarskjöld .....................................................18
The Biglin Brothers Racing ...............................................................20
Stamp Production – The Stickney Rotary Printing Press ..................22
Roger Brody.......................................................................................25
United States Stamp Society..............................................................26
Encyclopedia of United States Stamp Collecting ..............................27
National Postal Museum....................................................................27

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Cover: Four United States booklet stamps promoting Stamp Collecting, Issued Jan 23, 1986
Maynard Sundman Lecture Series

Maynard Sundman’s love of stamp collecting began in 1927. As a child, Maynard was fascinated by these tiny bits of paper and all the history and culture they held.

At 19, Maynard started a mail-order stamp business with $400 he had saved, operating out of his parents’ home in Connecticut. After serving in World War II, he founded his second firm, Littleton Stamp Company, with his wife, Fannie Kasper Sundman.

The company branched into coins for collectors in the 1950s. In 1974, the Sundman family purchased Mystic Stamp Company of Camden, New York. Maynard’s son Donald is president. Maynard continues to work with his son David, president of Littleton Coin Company in Littleton, New Hampshire.

In 2002, the Smithsonian’s National Postal Museum began a lecture series named in honor of Maynard Sundman, which is funded through a donation to the Museum by his sons David and Donald Sundman. The lectures further philatelic scholarship and explore and interpret new philatelic research.
Second Purpose

Since 1847, stamps have been used to show evidence of payment for carrying the nation’s mail. Their second purpose has been to tell the story of great changes in American culture and technology.

America’s postage stamps have, from their origins, paid tribute to the nation’s history and the people who have guided and influenced our culture and society. These stamps are not just portraits and pictures. They tell stories of communication, industry, education, art, music, science, and technology. As our nation has grown and changed, so have the small pieces of paper that carry cards, letters, and parcels down the road, across the nation, and across oceans.

In colonial times, letters without stamps were dispatched with an “expectation of payment.” Sir Roland Hill’s 1840 grand experiment with adhesive penny postage stamps promoted communication and literacy throughout Great Britain, and eventually the ripples hit America’s shores. When the Post Office pictured Benjamin Franklin and George Washington on the first 5¢ and 10¢ postage stamps in 1847, the nation had 21 million people living in 29 states, most of them east of the Mississippi river. America was about to “Go West.” Some were well on their way. By 1851, missionaries were printing stamps in Hawaii to carry messages to friends and family back east.

There have been enormous changes in the images of American postage stamps in the last 158 years. Some have been subtle, some dramatic, some controversial. Stamp images have reflected, and will continue to reflect, our diverse and changing society, influenced by culture, sports, education, entertainment, religion, science, technology, politics, national security, and extra-terrestrial exploration. America’s postage stamps offer a visual history of America.

By the time postage stamps were introduced, the nation was on the threshold of challenges and great changes. Post Office services and related stamps were linked to people, promoting industry, commerce, and banking. With a swelling population by the turn of the 20th century, new stamp formats would be required to meet the demand for communication by mail. Experimentation and postage stamp format change have remained part of the stamp story to this day.
With every new form of technology the demise of stamps has been predicted. Even with the impact on first-class mail from the dramatic growth of e-mail, the quantity of stamps printed over the last few years has not diminished. Printing technology introduced for the production of postage stamps has brought wonderful changes in the shapes, sizes and images that frank our mail. This year the Bureau of Engraving and Printing ends its 111-year role as a producer of postage stamps for the Postal Service, another example of the changing stamp story.

Protecting postal revenues has also played a role in postage stamp development. From the earliest days of postage stamps, features were introduced to thwart the reuse of stamps and reduce stamp theft. Surprisingly, even small denomination stamps have occasionally attracted counterfeiters. Many innovations have been employed to keep one step ahead of the villains.

The story of America’s stamps is not without its tribulations. As in every aspect of our society, the “outtakes,” “dropped balls,” and “bloopers” get the headlines.

Stamps have been used as payment for a variety of mail services that physically deliver communications and merchandise anywhere in the world. Driven by postal needs and production technology, the design, production, and use of our stamps have undergone many changes since 1847. “Second Purpose” takes a glimpse at that stamp odyssey.
## United States Stamp Time Line

Important events in the History of U.S. stamp production and use

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1845</td>
<td>Postmaster Provisionals, Jul 15, 1845</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1847</td>
<td>5¢ Franklin &amp; 10¢ Washington Postage Stamps, Jul 1, 1847</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1856</td>
<td>Stamps Required For PrePayment, Jan 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1857</td>
<td>Perforation of Stamps, Feb 28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1867</td>
<td>Grills introduced to prevent stamp reuse (1867 - 1870)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1869</td>
<td>Bi-Color stamps, 15c, 24c, 30c, 90 (First Inverts 15c, 24c, 30c), Mar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1885</td>
<td>Special Delivery stamps, Oct 1 (Last one in 1971)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1893</td>
<td>Commemoratives, The Columbians, Jan 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1893</td>
<td>Special Delivery Orange, vs 1c Columbian Blue, Jan 24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1894</td>
<td>American Banknote Co. passes torch to BEP, Feb 21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1900</td>
<td>Booklet stamps, 2¢ Washington, Apr 18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1902</td>
<td>Series 1902, Names, Dates, American Woman on a Stamp, Nov 18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1908</td>
<td>Experimental Coil stamps, 1¢ Franklin endwise, Feb 18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1908</td>
<td>Perfins permitted on stamps, Apr 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1911</td>
<td>Registry stamp, Dec 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1913</td>
<td>Parcel Post stamps, Jan 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1914</td>
<td>Web Fed Stickney Rotary Press, 2¢ Washington coils, Jun 30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1918</td>
<td>Air Mail Service 24¢ Jenny (Inverted Jenny) May 13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1918</td>
<td>Offset Lithography, Washington 1¢, 2¢, 3¢ values, Mar 15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1921</td>
<td>Post Office opens Philatelic Sales Agency, Dec 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1925</td>
<td>Special Handling stamps, Feb 28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1926</td>
<td>First Souvenir Sheet – Battle of White Plains Souvenir, Oct 18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1929</td>
<td>Kansas – Nebraska overprints, May 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1935</td>
<td>Farley Imperforates, Mar 15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1943</td>
<td>Overrun Countries, by American Bank Note Co., Jun 22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1952</td>
<td>Engraved &amp; Topography, Red Cross Bi-Color, Nov 21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1955</td>
<td>Certified Stamp, Jun 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1962</td>
<td>Day’s Folly Dag Hammarskjöld error, Nov 16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1962</td>
<td>First Christmas Issue, Nov 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1963</td>
<td>Phosphorescent tagging on City Mail Delivery stamp, Oct 26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1964</td>
<td>Lithograph and Engraved Homemaker stamp, Oct 26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1964</td>
<td>Christmas Issue 5¢ and First Se-Tenant four designs, Nov 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1967</td>
<td>Two Stamp Single-design “Spacewalk Twins,” Sep 29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1967</td>
<td>Photogravure Process color, Biglin Brothers stamp, Nov 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>Booklet Experimental Dry Gum (No interleaf), Mar 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>United States Postal Service stamp, Jul 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1973</td>
<td>Love Stamp Series, Jan 26</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
United States Stamp Time Line

1973  Printing on (gummed) side Postal Service Series, Apr 30
1975  Service Inscribed stamps, Francis Parkman stamp, Nov 4
1976  50 Face-different pane State Flags, Feb 23
1976  Process color Lithograph, American Bicentennial, May 29
1978  Small Indian-Head Penny stamp panes of 150, Jan 11
1978  Non-Denominated Rate-change stamps, May 22
1978  Black Heritage Series, Harriet Tubman, Feb 1
1978  Canadian International “Joint Nation” Souvenir sheet, Jun 10
1980  Contract Printer produces 15¢ Benjamin Bannaker stamp, Feb 15
1981  First Plate number coil Flag “From sea to shining sea,” Apr 24
1982  Photogravure and Engraved stamp, Touro Synagogue, Aug 22
1983  Express Mail stamps, Aug 12 (Service began 1970)
1987  Prephosphored paper, 22¢ Flag over Capitol coil, May 23
1989  Computer-Vended stamps, self-adhesive (Autopost), Aug 23
1989  Self-adhesive stamps, 25¢ Eagle & Shield panes & coils, Nov 10
1991  Self-adhesive 25¢ Stars & Stripes on plastic ATM pane, Jan 22
1991  4¢ Make-Up Rate stamp, Jan 22
1991  Priority Mail stamps, Jul 7 (Service began 1968)
1991  Coil Stick – perforated stacks of 10 coils, 29¢ Tulip, Aug 16
1992  Variable-rate coil vended by Postage and Mailing Center, Aug 20
1993  National Postal Museum four-stamp issue, Jul 30
1994  Security Microprinting (year 1994 date) Four Freedoms, Jul 1
1993  Elvis Presley Old vs New Public Votes for design, Jan 8
1994  Legends of the West, Wrong Pickett Brother and uncut sheets, Oct 18
1995  Non-denominated (5¢) 3rd-class, Year-dated Butte Coil, Mar 10
1995  Simulated perforations, Flag o’r Porch booklet and coils, Apr 18
1997  Tete Beche & Triangular stamps, Pacific 97 sheet, Mar 13
1997  Secret Marks – stamp decoder Air Force 50th Anniv., Sep 18
1998  Semi-Postal, Breast Cancer Research, Non-denominated, Jul 29
1998  Celebrate The Century, public mail ballots chose some subjects, Feb 3
1998  Alfred Hitchcock Laser-cut caricature silhouette in stamp, Aug 3
1999  Irregular shape Love stamps, Self-adhesive, Jan 28
2000  Linerless Coil stamps, 33¢ Berries (four designs), Jun 16
2000  Circular stamp, Hologram Space Achievement Stamp, Jul 8
2002  Last BEP Stamp, 37¢ Flag Self-Adhesive printed through 2005, Jun 7
2004  Photostamps, Stamps.com & USPS experiment, Jul 29
2005  Photostamps permitted with multiple vendors, May 17
America’s First Stamps – 5¢ Franklin, 10¢ Washington, 1847

The stamps of 1847, a 5¢ Benjamin Franklin and a 10¢ George Washington, were the first general issue adhesive postage stamps issued by the United States Post Office (Figure 1). Issued on July 1, 1847, they remained valid for use until June 30, 1851. New York City was the first to receive the new stamps, and has the earliest documented uses (EDU), July 7 for the 5¢ stamp, and July 2 for the 10¢ stamp.

Figure 1. First general issue adhesive postage stamps issued by the U.S.

The 1847 stamps represent an innovation that the Post Office had previously resisted – providing a convenient method for the public to prepay the postage on their letters. While an obvious idea today, at the time, it was considered radical. Although their use was optional, it was anticipated that the availability and convenience of the new stamps would encourage the public to use them for the prepayment of postage.

Though the concept of adhesive stamps was developed in Great Britain in 1840, private carriers in the U.S. used adhesive stamps as early as 1842. In 1845, local postmasters in several cities issued provisional stamps under Post Office authority. The two stamps of the 1847 issue were the first ones issued and distributed by the Post Office for use throughout the country.

There were many advantages to the new stamps. They paid the new 5¢ and 10¢ rates and could be purchased in advance, thus eliminating the need to stand in line at the post office to mail a letter. They were easy to apply (they had gum on the back) and they provided extra convenience as they could be dropped in the post office receiving slot, not only during regular office hours, but at any time.

Adhesive postage stamps were more convenient for the public and efficient for the Post Office. However, there was also an implicit hope in their
introduction, that if this method of prepaying postage was accepted by the public, it would be possible to require the use of stamps on all letters carried by the Post Office. This new system would virtually eliminate the costly and inefficient postage due system. When postage rates were lowered again in 1851, with a preferential rate for prepaid mail, the popularity of adhesive postage stamps soared. Effective April 1, 1855, the Post Office required prepayment of postage, but the use of stamps or stamped envelopes was not mandatory until January 1, 1856. Stampless letters, even when the sender wanted to prepay postage in cash, were no longer permitted.

The firm of Rawdon, Wright, Hatch, & Edson, a well-known producer of banknotes, was selected to design and print the stamps. Their initials “RWH&E” appear in small letters at the bottom of each stamp. This is only time a printer’s name or initials were shown within the frame of a postage stamp. Asher Durand, an American artist who went on to be a founder of the Hudson River School of painting, did the engravings.

It is an interesting curiosity that the Arabic numeral “5” is used on the Franklin stamp, while the Roman numeral “X” is used for the Washington stamp. The only other U.S. stamp to have Roman numerals was the 10¢ stamp of 1856.

The Postal Regulations of 1847 discussed the use of the new postage stamps and specified how the stamps were to be cancelled, but not the color of ink used. Some postmasters did not follow these regulations and apparently used whatever means was at hand to cancel a stamp.

What Others have Said

“One of the first things I tell newcomers who ask my advice on collecting U.S. is to consider starting at the beginning and to buy a copy of Scott #1, the 5¢ stamp of 1847. This is not an inexpensive stamp, but the hobbyist who takes up skiing, sailing, or tropical fish is likely to spend much more on the entry level. Scott #1 is listed at $525 for a used copy in very fine condition. But a copy with a pen or manuscript cancellation is priced at $275. This is one of the first lessons that this stamp teaches the collector. The price varies depending on the cancellation [and] on condition... For all these reasons, a collector who buys a copy of this stamp generally will not be making his or her purchase without some research... another lesson that his stamp teaches: shop carefully, and buy each stamp with planning and care.”

Commemoratives – The Columbians

Ordinary postage stamps had already been around for nearly 50 years when an enterprising Postmaster General (PMG), John Wanamaker, had the idea to issue a series of stamps which commemorated a historical event. They were to become the first U.S. commemoratives, which were issued in 1893. A set of 16 stamps they honored both the 400th Anniversary of Columbus’ voyage and the great 1893 Chicago Columbian Exposition. These stamps prepared the way for the rapid growth of commemorative issues in the twentieth century.

Stamp collectors should pay homage to PMG Wanamaker, who served from March 7, 1889, to March 6, 1893. He announced his intention to produce “a special series of stamps with illustrations to commemorate the discovery of America by Columbus” in his annual report to Congress for the fiscal year ending June 30, 1892. The idea paved the way for a monumental change in the stamp program: stamps to commemorate, memorialize, and honor people, places, and events. Until that time, stamps contained portraits of Benjamin Franklin, George Washington, and others (deceased) considered great American leaders, and various objects, or paintings, in the case of the 1869 Pictorials.

Mr. Wanamaker signed the contract with the American Bank Note Company announcing that these “new stamps will be of the same height as the present series, but twice as long, the increased size thought necessary in order to properly display the illustrations.” After the initial series of 15 stamps had been announced, a 16th, an 8¢ stamp, was required when the new fee for sending a registered First Class letter was reduced from 10¢ to 8¢.

The illustrations for the stamps were all selected from famous paintings. They form a veritable gallery of fine art, featuring works found in great museums and key government buildings. It may be unfortunate that the beautiful engravings on each stamp were not arranged in chronological order to tell the story of Columbus and his voyages. But Mr. Wanamaker felt there was a very good reason for the stamps being out of chronological order: he wanted the stamps with the most important parts of the story to be on the denominations most frequently used, hence the selection of the low values for the best-known portions of the story. It is interesting to note that on the 1¢ stamp, which shows Columbus Sighting Land, Columbus is depicted as clean-shaven. But on the 2¢, which pictures Columbus Landing in the “New World” just a few hours later, he has grown a full beard! (Figure 2) Such observations started the tradition of finding odd or allegedly impossible situations depicted on U.S. stamps.
Figure 2. The 1¢ Columbian depicts a clean-shaven “Columbus In Sight Of Land,” and the 2¢ “Landing Of Columbus” shows a bearded Columbus.

There was considerable public criticism of the issue. The $15.00 total face value of the five $1 to $5 denominations of the Columbian set was out of reach of most Americans. Also, there was no proper domestic use for the dollar-value stamps according to the postal rates in effect on January 1, 1893.

There were many complaints about the size of the new 1893 stamps. The public, particularly the business community, condemned the fact that people had to lick stamps that were twice the size of any regular postage stamps that had ever been issued before. The size of these stamps was labeled “special delivery size,” a name taken from the blue special delivery stamps of 1885 and 1888. Licking such a large-size stamp for an occasional special delivery mailing was apparently acceptable, but not for everyday letters. This brings up another important piece of “Columbians” history. A new orange special delivery stamp had to be issued to replace the original blue versions, because the 1¢ deep blue Columbian stamp was sometimes mistaken for the 10¢ special delivery stamp and vice versa. The orange special delivery is often referred to as the “17th Columbian” issue.

Complaints about the set quickly crescendoed, and activity around the Columbians became so frenzied that legislation was actually written and introduced on the floor of the U.S. Congress to halt their sale. In a concisely worded resolution, Colorado Senator Edward O. Wolcott (1889-1901), presented the following to the United States Senate: “That the Postmaster General of the United States be instructed to discontinue the sale of the so-called Columbian stamps except to such persons as may specifically call for them, and be instructed to keep on sale the ordinary postage stamps in use before the printing of the so-called Columbian stamps.” Fortunately, the legislation never passed.
**Series 1902 Regular Issue**

In the final months of 1902, a new set of stamps, the Series 1902, sometimes called the Second Bureau Issue, was introduced. It was the first regular issue of definitive stamps completely designed and produced for the Post Office Department (POD) by the craftsmen of the BEP.

The sixteen designs of the series include a Special Delivery design and the 1903 replacement for the original 2¢ design. The series was in general use through 1909. However, the $2 and $5 designs were produced until 1918, and the Special Delivery design continued on stamps until 1922.

The 1¢, 2¢, 4¢, and 5¢ were produced as perforate and imperforate sheet stamps. The 1¢ and both 2¢ designs were made in booklet format. 1¢, 2¢, and 5¢ values were used for the first experimental coil stamps, 20th century rarities.

The Series of 1902 marks the first time that a U.S. stamp design included the name of the person portrayed, as well as year dates of birth and death. Two historical events gave impetus to these features. The 1898 Spanish-American War significantly increased both the country’s global territory as well as the number of people served by the U.S. postal system. Between 1890 and 1910, 16 million immigrants landed on both shores of the continental United States. By 1902, almost one third of the country’s population consisted of immigrants or first generation Americans who spoke little or no English. The portraits on these stamps, with names and dates, provided one of the few exposures many immigrants had to some of the great figures of American history. This in turn would help assimilate all these new postal patrons into American culture.

![Stamps](image.jpg)

*Figure 3. Benjamin Harrison appeared on the first 13¢ stamp; Martha Washington, on the 8¢, is the first American woman pictured on a U.S. stamp.*
The 13¢ stamp (Figure 3), honoring the recently deceased Benjamin Harrison (#308), was issued in November of 1902. It was the first U.S. 13¢ stamp, and was intended to pay the 8¢ registry fee plus 5¢ foreign letter rate.

Although Queen Isabella had appeared on stamps of the Columbian issue, only prominent men had previously been portrayed on U.S. stamps. As a result of a Detroit Journal article on March 24, 1902, suggesting the idea of including a woman in the new stamp series, Postmaster General Henry C. Payne inquired of any encumbrance to the idea and possible suggestions. The result was the 8¢ Martha Washington (Figure 3) stamp, the first to honor an American woman, primarily used to pay the 8¢ Registry fee.

Another interesting feature was an exchange of images. Abraham Lincoln went from the 4¢ stamp to the 5¢ from the previous series, replacing Ulysses S. Grant, whose image changed from the 5¢ stamp to the 4¢. Lincoln was deemed a better image for a world audience, as the 5¢ stamp was used primarily to pay the Universal Postal Union (UPU) foreign single letter rate.

Every stamp of the series was engraved with words “Series 1902.” In 1898, the BEP initiated a policy of printing the “series year” on the revenue stamps issued to pay for the Spanish-American War. This policy was first applied to postage stamps with the 1901 commemorative Pan-American issue. This feature was continued on postage stamps after the Series of 1902, including the five-stamp 1904 Louisiana Purchase and three-stamp 1907 Jamestown commemorative series, but was discontinued with the introduction of the Washington-Franklin Series (Third Bureau Issue) in 1908.

What others have said

“The new stamp has been made especially for the benefit of those foreigners who know not our history, for do we not perceive under the engraving the name, noble and honored, of Washington? And is there not also the dates showing his time of office [sic]? This is history – and for 2 cents!”

– Frederic D. Pangborn, a letter to the editor of the New York Times, about the new 2¢ Washington Flag stamp, February 9, 1903.
Registry Stamp

Registry service was established by Postmaster General James Campbell to provide greater security for valuable mail matter. When the service was launched July 1, 1855, the 5¢ fee was supposed to be paid in cash. As one would expect, examples of postmaster use of stamps to pay the fee exist during the “cash” period. Some philatelists, however, believe that the purpose of the 5¢ Jefferson stamp issued in 1856 was for payment of the registry fee. On July 1, 1863, the fee was increased to 20¢, and over the following years the fee changed many times. It was not until June 1, 1867, when regulations required that the registry fee be prepaid by stamps.

The new regulations of 1867 also enhanced the security of the system. Registered letters were to be sent in official envelopes between post offices, in the custody of sworn postal employees, and a system of records and receipts was established whereby mail matter could be traced from sender to addressee. Postmasters were directed to make every effort to promote the security and efficiency of the registry system. Any neglect or violation of regulations was to be promptly reported to the third Assistant Postmaster General.

When the Post Office Department inaugurated Special Delivery service in 1885, they required the 10¢ fee be prepaid with a new special delivery stamp. On July 1, 1907, any ordinary stamp(s) paying the fee was acceptable. In 1911, the POD decided to issue a stamp to identify mail matter as entitled to all the benefits and safeguards of the registry system. This was a curious event considering how well the system had worked since 1867, when any ordinary stamps would have paid the fee.

In late September of 1911, the Bureau of Engraving and Printing engraved two sets of four plates. The first set, certified October 3rd, went to press the next day. The plates were put back on the press and run three more times through Feb 21, 1913. Approximately 38,000,000 10¢ Registry stamps were produced for the POD. The four additional reserve plates were eventually cancelled without going to press. On December 1, 1911, the light blue 10¢ Registry stamps were placed on sale in post offices in connection with holiday mailings.

Over time, the distinctive registry stamp’s slight advantage was outweighed by the confusion for persons unfamiliar with the Registry system.
Moreover, ordinary stamps could be used to pay for registry fees, so the registry stamp was redundant. Consequently, Postmaster Frank H. Hitchcock issued an executive order that the use of the stamp was not required by law.

Figure 4. Registry stamp used on cover deposited into a postbox.

The cover illustrated in Figure 4 is an excellent example of the type of confusion the stamp caused. This sender assumed that by affixing a registry stamp on the cover and depositing it into a postbox, it would receive registry service along with special delivery. The sender was obviously unaware that all registered mail must be posted directly at a post office for proper recording to obtain registry service. Without a return address it was impossible to return the cover to the sender. The cover was, therefore, marked with the straight-line handstamp “Found in Ordinary Mail” to indicate why the letter was transmitted outside the registry service. The 10 cents the sender invested for registry service was lost, and in 1911, that amount could have purchased a full dinner.

After Postmaster General Albert S. Burleson replaced Hitchcock in March, he directed that the registry stamp be discontinued (Order No. 7136, dated May 28, 1913). The stamps would continue to be valid for registry fees as long as supplies lasted, but no more would be printed.
The Philatelic Agency

PMG Will Hays left a lasting legacy to stamp collectors, even though he only served from 1921 to 1922. At the urging of his Third Assistant PMG, W. Irving Glover, Hays created the Philatelic Agency so that collectors could purchase stamps in choice condition. He announced in December 1921, “It is the purpose of the Philatelic Stamp Agency to keep on hand specimens of all future issues and all such discontinued issues...for sale to collectors and dealers...also a small stock of the current series of ordinary stamps, well-centered and perforated.”

Before 1921, collectors depended on their local post offices for specimens. Their only access to stamps was the clerk behind the counter who, often, did not understand the importance to some collectors of stamps in mint condition.

C.E. Nickles, a famous stamp dealer, wrote in 1927, “You may credit W. Irving Glover, Third Assistant Postmaster General in 1921 and his associates in the Division of Stamps with being great benefactors of philately, for to their endeavors the Philatelic Agency owes its existence.” Glover may have been motivated when he happened upon a letter the P.O.D. received from a collector complaining that when he asked for a well-centered block of four stamps at his local post office, the clerk informed him that he could not accommodate him, as he had no time to waste on “nuts.” Glover was determined to correct this situation and the Philatelic Agency was born.

For the first three decades of operation, customers received their purchases, as today, via registered mail. Unlike today, when indicias are used, all of the registered mail from the Philatelic Agency was franked with new-issue stamps.

Glover changed the culture of stamp collecting in other ways, too. In 1922 the P.O.D. announced, “Henceforth every new stamp issued will have a designated first day of issue.” On July 12, 1922, the 10¢ Special Delivery stamp debuted as the first stamp under this new policy. The 11¢ Rutherford B. Hayes stamp, issued at Hayes’ birthplace of Fremont, Ohio, on October 2, 1922, was the first stamp to have a first day of issue in a specific city. Beginning in 1937, the words “First Day of Issue” appeared in the cancel, making FDCs easier to recognize.

Percy W. Gibbons, Chief Clerk, Division of Stamps, under the Third Assistant Postmaster General, became the first philatelic agent when the Agency opened on December 1, 1921, room 217, on the second floor of the City Post Office (Figure 5). This was the home of the Philatelic Sales Agency from 1921 until 1934. The Smithsonian Institution National Postal
On May 21, 1953, PMG Arthur Summerfield moved the Agency from the Division of Stamps to the Bureau of Finance, establishing the Division of Philately, stating “common business sense dictated that there be a division devoted exclusively to the needs and desires of collectors throughout the United States.” Effective July 14, 1957, the Division of Philately, Bureau of Finance was renamed the Philatelic Sales Agency.

By the mid-1960s, the POD’s support for the Agency began to wane. The name was changed to the Philatelic Sales Unit and services were curtailed. The agency celebrated its 50th anniversary in 1971, the same year the POD became the USPS.

The USPS has continued supplying stamps and related stamp products to collectors. Today the agency is named Stamp Fulfillment Services, under the Director of Stamp Services, and publishes a quarterly catalog, USA Philatelic. In July 1982, storage and handling was moved to a huge underground limestone cave near Kansas City. The highly automated “Cave” complex handles thousands of stamp product requests received by mail and Internet daily.
Figure 6. 2¢ stamp commemorating the 150th Anniversary of the Battle of White Plains.

In 1926, a 2¢ stamp was issued to commemorate the one hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the Battle of White Plains (Figure 6). Dr. Jason S. Parker of White Plains, N.Y., submitted the painting by E.F. Ward to the P.O.D. from which the stamp was copied. The center vignette shows a gun crew of four Continental soldiers loading a cannon with ammunition. Above are the words “Battle of White Plains.” In the lower-left corner is the Continental flag and in the lower-right corner the “Liberty or Death” flag, first used in the Battle of White Plains. In the upper-left corner appears the year “1776,” and in the upper-right corner the year “1926.”

The stamps were printed from plates of 400 subjects in four panes of 100 and first placed on sale October 18, 1926, at the post office at White Plains, N.Y. It was also placed on sale that day at a branch of the Philatelic Agency, which was temporarily established at Grand Central Palace in New York City for the International Philatelic Exhibition (October 16 to 23). The stamp did not have a First Day issuance by the Philatelic Agency in Washington, D.C., possibly because Postmaster Harry S. New and other higher-ups in the P.O.D. were in New York promoting the International Philatelic Exhibition. On October 28, 1926, the actual anniversary of the Battle of White Plains, the stamp became available at the Philatelic Agency at Washington, D.C., and at a number of larger post offices.

There are other reasons why the first-day issue of this stamp is notable. There are so-called “First Day” covers with October 16, 1926 date stamps, but they are regarded as a date stamp error. The First Day covers of this stamp were the first to be largely issued with artwork, known today as “cachets.”

The Battle of White Plains stamp was also issued in special sheets of 25 stamps with the inscription “International Philatelic Exhibition, October 16 to 23, 1926, New York, N.Y., U.S.A.”, appearing on the margins of each
sheet. The special sheets were printed from four plates (numbers 18770, 71, 73, 74) of four 25-subject panes. After printing, these sheets were gummed and perforated at the Bureau of Engraving and Printing, and sent to the Philatelic Agency branch at the International Philatelic Exhibition to be placed on sale the same day (October 18) as the regular sheets containing 100 stamps. Like the sheet stamps, these special sheets were also placed on sale at the Philatelic Agency at Washington, D.C., on October 28, 1926. They were not issued to postmasters for sale to the public.

These sheets of 25 stamps were the first commemorative issuance of what would come to be named “Souvenir Sheets.” Only 107,000 were printed and all were sold to the public. For many years, stamps from the panes were used as postage. Today, the panes are prized by collectors.

Figure 7. Illustration of the sheet from plate 18772 printed at the International Philatelic Exhibition, New York.

As a special feature of the International Philatelic Exhibition, the Bureau of Engraving and Printing installed a hand-roller press and printed 700 sheets of White Plains stamps from plate No. 18772. These sheets, containing four blocks of 25 stamps each, were not gummed or perforated, and none were sold (Figure 7). They were all returned to the Bureau of Engraving and Printing and eventually destroyed along with Plate No. 18772.
PMG Follies: Farley and Day

A considerable amount has been written in the philatelic press about the special printings produced under the direction of Postmaster General James A. Farley in 1935. Farley, appointed by President Franklin Roosevelt, initiated a policy of giving FDR full uncut (and imperforate) sheets of each new stamp issue just before they were to be released. In addition, Farley also gave similar sheets to some of his family, friends, and cabinet members.

When stamp collectors found out about this favoritism, they began to holler loudly that FDR and Farley had created special issues for their friends, including items that would never reach the hands of the public. The issue was debated in Congress due to pressure from an active philatelic community. To right this wrong, Farley re-issued all of the uncut, imperforate sheets (notably the National Parks issue of 1934) to the general public. This episode has appropriately been dubbed “Farley’s Follies.”

An event occurred 27 years later that resulted in another special printing. However, this time it was not the result of pressure from the public or philatelists, but the choice of PMG J. Edward Day.

On October 23, 1962, the POD issued a stamp in tribute to Dag Hammarskjöld (1905-1961). Hammarskjöld had devoted 31 years to Swedish financial affairs, Swedish foreign relations, and international affairs. Active in promoting world peace, he was elected Secretary-General of the United Nations in 1953 and re-elected in 1957. Tragically, the highly regarded Hammarskjöld was killed in a plane crash while on a U.N. mission to Africa.

The 4¢ black, brown, and yellow stamp was printed on the BEP’s Giori press and sold in panes of 50 stamps. Leonard Sherman, a New Jersey jeweler, purchased a pane and discovered that the yellow background was inverted.
inverted. The purchase of one other inverted pane was reported. The inversion produced white spaces where there should have been yellow, and conversely printed yellow areas unintended, most prominent of which was the denomination.

How did it happen? According to the POD, in the process of inserting in excess of a million sheets into the Giori press, a few sheets were inevitably misinserted during the second run that printed the yellow background.

This invert was the first such error to elude postal inspectors since the Jenny Invert in 1918. Considerable publicity about the error followed in the general and philatelic press. Speculation about the value of the panes led Postmaster J. Edward Day to be quoted saying “The Post Office Department is not running a jackpot operation.” For reason that escape the logic of most philatelists, Day ordered the BEP to print 40 million more stamps reproducing the error with the yellow background inverted and shifted to the right (Figure 8). The official reason given for this action was that the reprint was in line with Day’s policy of avoiding production of rare or overvalued stamps, and that all collectors should share in possession of the philatelic curiosa that produced the error.

There was quite considerable uproar from the collecting community that, naturally, did not favor the reprinting of the error. It is reported that one collector wrote Day, asking that the famous 24-cent inverted Jenny also be reprinted because he would like one for his collection!

Only four stamp invert errors have been reported since the Hammarskjöld error, and none have been intentionally reprinted. Current U.S.P.S. policy suggests that if an error on a few sheets accidentally reaches the public, they would not deliberately reprint that particular error.

Today, the Hammarskjöld special printing errors are valued no more than the normal issue. Little is known of the whereabouts of the original inverts, except the pane discovered by Leonary Sherman. He donated the discovery pane to the American Philatelic Society in 1987.

Like James Farley, J. Edward Day secured his place in philatelic history with the Post Office’s first official error, which will forever be known as Day’s Folly.
The Biglin Brothers Racing

On November 2, 1967, the POD issued a stamp honoring painter and sculptor Thomas Eakins (1844-1916). Born in Philadelphia, Thomas Eakins is one of America’s indisputably great painters.

Eakins’ passion for exactness and technical precision is evident throughout his work, from the studies in perspective and anatomy he did as a student, through his meticulous paintings of boaters and other sportsmen, to his late experiments in serial photography. It is no accident that some of Eakins’ most famous pictures are of men of science, especially surgeons.

Eakins painting of “The Biglin Brothers Racing” was chosen as the subject of the 5¢ stamp. The painting resides in the National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C. In the decade following the Civil War, rowing became one of America’s most popular spectator sports. When its champions, the Biglin brothers of New York, visited Philadelphia in the early 1870s, Thomas Eakins made numerous paintings and drawings of them and other racers sculling on the Schuylkill River. Eakins, himself an amateur oarsman and a friend of the Biglins, portrays John with his blade still feathered, almost at the end of his return motion. Barney, a split-second ahead in his stroke, watches for his younger brother’s oar to bite the water.

The precision of Eakins’ style reflects his upbringing as the son of a teacher of penmanship. He studied under academic artists in Paris and traveled in Europe from 1866 to 1870. To further his understanding of anatomy, Eakins participated in dissections at Philadelphia’s Jefferson Medical College in 1872-74.

The Post Office Department wanted the image of the stamp to reflect, as closely as possible, the coloration of the Eakins original. BEP’s multicolored intaglio Giori press would not meet the precision necessary to match Eakins’ standards. Based on the CSAC recommendation and approved by Postmaster General O’Brien, the POD decided to use photogravure, a printing method never before used to print a U.S. stamp.

Producing the Biglin brothers stamp was quite an undertaking. For the second time since 1894, a U.S. postage stamp would be produced by a
non-governmental printer, the Photogravure and Color Co. of Moonachie, NJ, on their sheet-fed Miehle gravure press. The plates were made and retouched by the Beck Engraving Co. of Philadelphia. Additionally, the American Bank Note Co., who had produced the 1945 series of flag adhesives memorializing Overrun Nations, monitored print quantities as the subcontractor who perforated the sheets of 200 prior to their delivery to the BEP. There they were cut into post office panes of 50 stamps.

During the retouching phase, the plates were carted to and fro between Moonachie and Philadelphia under novel security. Edward Dubelbeiss drove the Photogravure and Color Co.’s shuttle station wagon, and Robert Schmidt of the BEP rode “shotgun.” On-site security at Photogravure and Color Co. was a unique experience. Heavy steel wire mesh was used to fence off the Miehle press. In the adjacent storeroom, where paper and printed sheets were kept under lock and key, guards from the Burns Detective Agency provided 24-hour surveillance.

In the photogravure process, the design to be printed is photographed through an extremely fine screen, lined in minute quadrille. The screen breaks up the reproduction into tiny dots, which are etched onto the plate. The depressions which are formed hold the ink. Somewhat like engraved printing, the ink is lifted out of the lines by the paper when pressed against the plate. The ink does not appear to be raised relative to the surface of the paper like engraved printing.

The Eakins stamp had two runs though the Miehle press. The first run-through was of four colors, yellow, red, blue, and black. The second press run was for the gold frame, a different black ink title imprint, and the phosphor coating.

The printing inks passed sunlight and water tests, allaying concerns about fading under ordinary conditions of light and water. The gold frame was created by using a special coated powder that would be protected by the phosphor coating.

The “Mr. Zip” insignia, appearing on practically all sheet stamps since the Sam Houston issue of Jan. 10, 1964, was not been included in the original artwork. The official POD release dated August 9, 1967, stated that “Mr. Zip would not appear on the selvage of the stamp. His physician diagnosed exhaustion and proposed some rest and recreation. Mr. Zip has been granted a brief vacation from his postage stamp duties.”
Stamp Production – The Stickney Rotary Printing Press

In the early 1900s American businesses were generating record amounts of mail. This phenomenon resulted from the availability and use of mechanical equipment, which rapidly affixed coil stamps to letters. The growing number of stamp vending machines, which dispensed coil stamps in public places, increased the need for coil stamps. Unfortunately, the Bureau of Engraving and Printing (BEP) in the early twentieth century did not have the capacity to meet the huge demand.

Figure 9. Stickney Press, installed at the Bureau of Engraving and Printing.

A rotary printing press, conceived, designed and developed by Benjamin R. Stickney was the BEP’s solution. Stickney was a mechanical expert and designer at the Bureau. This press represented a significant technological advance over flat plate presses, for it enabled postage stamps to be printed on a continuous web (roll) of paper. Prior to the development of Stickney’s press, stamps could only be printed one sheet at a time. The rotary presses that Stickney developed, which came to be known by his name, were the “work horses” of the BEP. Stickney presses produced stamps starting in 1914 and continued in use until 1957. The last of the Stickney presses was decommissioned on March 15, 1962.

The Stickney Press actually came in two different sizes. The first model developed was the smaller of the two, and used smaller printing plates. It printed coil stamps from 150- and 170-subject plates. The second press,
installed in 1920, was larger, printing regular sheet stamps and booklet pane stamps from wider 400- and 360-subject plates.

The Stickney was a manually controlled, single-color, web-fed printing press and gumming machine. The web was a 24-inch diameter roll of unprinted paper mounted at the feed end of the press. The paper was carried through a series of processes (stations) that produced a printed and gummed roll at the end of the press.

The first process was to moisten the paper with warm water which would permit the ink to adhere to the paper. After the paper went through rollers that squeezed out excess water, the paper contained 15 to 30 percent moisture by weight. The paper then moved to the printing station where rotating intaglio printing plates were fitted to a plate cylinder.

The printing plates received a regulated amount of ink from a fountain by means of a distributing roller. The ink covered both the recessed engraved lines and the non-printing areas. Efficient wiping and polishing of the printing plates, essential to producing a satisfactory stamp image, was accomplished by a series of wiping material and pressurized rollers.

The paper, under pressure, then passed between a felt blanket and the printing plates. Two semi-circular companion plates joined to form a complete cylinder. A impression cylinder forced the felt blanket to press the moist paper into the inked recesses of the plate to pick up the stamp image.

After printing, the web traveled through a heated chute to dry the paper and “set” the ink. Maintaining a continuous process the web traveled over additional heaters in preparation for the application of gum. With the printed side face down the web passed between a pair of gumming rollers that deposited a film of adhesive over the unprinted side. Thereafter, the web was guided through a gum-drying station. The printed and gummed stamps, sufficiently dried to prevent sticking, were wound into rolls, gum side-out, at the delivery end of the press.

Stickney originally envisioned perforating the stamps on the press in both directions or in either direction separately as desired. The perforation would be performed after the printing and gumming process. The slower speed differential required for the perforation station resulted in abandoning this feature of the press.

A letterpress printing system was developed to precancel or overprint stamps on the Stickney Press at the time the stamps were printed. Late in April 1923, the letterpress printing unit was integrated with the rotary press and the Stickney became, in effect, a two-color press. The 1¢ Franklin green sheet stamp, series 1922, precanceled in black “NEW YORK/N.Y.,”
and issued in early June 1923, was the first stamp produced by this set-up.

The first stamp printed by the Stickney press in 1914 was a 2¢ Washington imperforate horizontal coil. According to the BEP, the last coil stamp documented as having been printed on the Stickney Press was the 2¢ Liberty coil printed in 1954. The last commemorative was the 1956 Fifth International Philatelic Exhibition (FIPEX) issue (Figure 10).

![Figure 10. First coil stamps and last coil and commemorative stamps printed on the Stickney Press.](image)

**What Others have Said**

Mr. Stickney’s perseverance prevents the system from crushing his idea. “The mechanical expert at the Bureau, Benjamin R. Stickney, brought his creative talents to bear on this problem. Encouraged by Joseph R. Ralph, director of the Bureau, Stickney conceived and developed the design for a rotary, roll-fed, single-color press that could print from line engraved curled plates. There were strong vibrations of action and reaction between the organized plate printers, the hierarchy at the Bureau, and the POD. The phenomenon of ‘technological unemployment,’ the misconception by labor that a changing technology would cause unemployment, was a formidable concern. Unfortunately the then-current political structure at the Bureau dictated that appropriations for this project be terminated and the mechanical development work stopped. Stickney, sensing a technological breakthrough, approached and pressed William C. Fitch, superintendent of the Stamps Division of the POD, to obtain funds to continue this work. The POD, impressed with Stickney’s design, authorized the expenditure of $5600 in 1910 to complete this work and construct a pilot model (prototype) machine.”

Roger S. Brody was introduced to the world of stamp collecting at the age of 10, when he was given a general world-wide album filled with a smattering of stamps. His interest eventually led to collecting regular issue and commemorative United States and British North America postage stamps, with particular interest in color varieties. Additional U.S. interests include postal history, coils and booklet panes, airmail and revenue stamps. Roger’s specialized interest in the United States 1902 Regular Issue introduced him to exhibiting. His Series 1902 exhibit achieved National Gold/Grand and International Gold medals as well as the United States Stamp Society 1996 Walter W. Hopkinson Memorial Trophy.

Roger is an active researcher and author. He has published numerous articles on stamps and postal history in *The United States Specialist*, *The Collectors Club Philatelist*, *Linn’s Stamp News*, *Perfins Bulletin*, *The Vermont Philatelist* and *LaPosta*, and is a contributing advisor to *Scott Catalogue*. He is a two-time recipient of the annual USSS Hopkinson Memorial Literature Award for the best research article in *The United States Specialist*. He has presented lectures on several aspects of the U.S. Series 1902, and on stamp development and production at the Bureau of Engraving and Printing.

Roger is active in organized philately as well. He is an elected Governor, past Treasurer and current Vice President of The Collectors Club, New York. He is the Board Chairman of the United States Stamp Society and past Chairman of the 1902 Series Committee. Since 2003, Roger has served on the Smithsonian National Postal Museum Council of Philatelists and recently was appointed to the Board of Trustees of the American Philatelic Research Library.

Other affiliations include the U.S. Philatelic Classics Society, NY Chapter, serving as Treasurer, Westfield (NJ) Stamp Club, and several specialized societies. He is a Fellow of the Royal Philatelic Society London.
United States Stamp Society

Begun in 1926, The United States Stamp Society is devoted to the study of U.S. stamps as well as those of U.S.-administered areas. The United States Specialist is the monthly publication of the organization, which contributes to, and promotes, original philatelic research through study groups and the publishing of books and research papers.

The Society will introduce its newest publication at the 2006 World Philatelic Exhibition in Washington D.C. This 800-page book, entitled the Encyclopedia of United States Stamps and Stamp Collecting, is a comprehensive overview of the hobby.

Some information included in “Second Purpose” has been extracted from the Encyclopedia with permission of the editors.

The National Postal Museum

The National Postal Museum is part of the Smithsonian Institution family. Since opening its doors in July 1993, the Museum has occupied the former Washington City Post Office Building at First and Massachusetts Avenues in our nation’s capital.

The National Philatelic Collection was established at the Smithsonian in 1886 with the donation of a sheet of 10-cent Confederate postage stamps. Since that time, generous gifts from individuals and foreign governments, transfers from government agencies, and occasional purchases have enhanced this historic collection.

The National Postal Museum is committed to preserving the art and history of United States postage stamps and the nation’s mail service for the American people and stamp collectors everywhere. The Museum showcases the largest and most comprehensive collection of stamps and philatelic material in the world. Its five exhibition galleries present America’s postal history from Colonial times to the present. The Museum’s collections contain prestigious U.S. and international rarities and specialized collections, archival postal documents, and three-dimensional objects.

Rotating Stamp Exhibits

With growing numbers of visitors each year, the NPM is working to attract even more collectors, school children, and the general public to the Museum. Plans include seeking out and exhibiting philatelic material that
has not been available for viewing in recent years. To that end, the Museum has been creating rotating “blockbuster” stamp exhibits since 2002. The first was, appropriately, *The 1847s: America’s First Stamp*. In 2004, *The Queen's Own: Stamps that Changed the World*, a selection of extraordinary stamps from Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II’s personal philatelic holdings, graced the Museum’s main philatelic gallery.

Through March 2006, the Museum is presenting *Stamps Take Flight*, featuring material from the U.S. Postmaster General’s Collection. The collection consists of philatelic treasures from the stamp vault at the U.S. Postal Service Headquarters in Washington, D.C. This collection dates back to the late 1840s, when the Third Assistant Postmaster General was responsible for all matters relating to the printing and issuance of United States postage stamps.

Part I of the renowned Miller Collection, which resides in the New York Public Library, will be exhibited at the Museum from May 27, 2006, to September 3, 2007; Part II from October 15, 2007 until January 12, 2009.

One of the finest collections of early United States stamps in the world, the stamps of Charles A. Hirzel will be exhibited in two parts at the Museum from 2009 through 2010. The collection comes to the Museum from the Museum für Kommunikation in Geneva, Switzerland.

Like all Smithsonian museums, the National Postal Museum is open to the public from 10 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. with the exception of Christmas Day, December 25th. Admission is free.
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