






Upcoming Events

Enjoy *Delivering Hope: FDR & Stamps of the Great Depression* through free events for adults and families.

-  **Stamps for a New Deal**
Friday, July 24, 2009
-  **Hopeful Messages & Stamp Design**
Fall 2009
-  **Curator Talk**
Sunday, October 25, 2009
-  **FDR's Birthday Celebration**
Saturday, January 30, 2010
-  **Delivering Hope Family Day**
Saturday, April 17, 2010

For more information, check the museum's website regularly:
www.postalmuseum.si.edu

The National Postal Museum is devoted to presenting the colorful and engaging history of the nation's mail service and showcasing the largest and most comprehensive collection of stamps and philatelic material in the world. It is located at 2 Massachusetts Avenue N.E., Washington, D.C., across from Union Station. The museum is open daily from 10 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. (closed Dec. 25). For more information about the Smithsonian, please call (202) 633-1000 or TTY (202) 633-5285. Visit the museum web site at www.postalmuseum.si.edu.



Delivering Hope: FDR & Stamps of the Great Depression

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 **Smithsonian**
National Postal Museum



Delivering Hope: FDR & Stamps of the Great Depression

June 9, 2009—June 6, 2010



Gallery Guide

Enjoy discovering different ways to think about FDR: President Roosevelt the collector, his relationship with Postmaster General James A. Farley, and the ways the two changed postage stamps to create optimism while promoting FDR's New Deal programs.

The Stamp Collecting President and the New Deal

President Roosevelt, an ardent stamp collector since childhood, spent time each day with his collection. He understood the power of stamps to give solace and to communicate ideas. When he became president in 1933, he faced economic challenges unlike any other in American history, and he drew upon his experience as a stamp collector when devising solutions.

Roosevelt used every tool at his disposal, including postage stamps, to fight for recovery and raise the hopes of careworn citizens. Collectively, the many programs he created are called the “New Deal.” Roosevelt ingeniously redesigned stamps to inform citizens of New Deal programs and their success, to assure them of the American government’s steadfastness, and to direct their hopes toward a prosperous future.



Debate It

This exhibit references the economic crisis in the 1930s. Do you think the current economic conditions have similarities to that time? How are the presidents of these eras similar or different? Who do you think would agree with you on this? Why and why not?

Reflect on It

Messages come in all sizes, including small pieces of paper used for postage. During the 1930s, stamps were designed to bring optimism to America. If you were asked to design a stamp that would “deliver hope” to people today, what subjects would you include? What colors and styles would you select?

During the Great Depression, President Franklin D. Roosevelt influenced the appearance of postage stamps. As you walk through this exhibit, look closely to see the changes. Notice the color and design, all approved by FDR and his postmaster general, James A. Farley. What messages do they convey? FDR and Farley intended that the lighter colors, streamlined design, and images express hope, create optimism, and assure the nation that the president stood securely at the federal government’s helm.

Above from top to bottom:
3¢ National Recovery Administration, 1933
2¢ Grand Canyon, 1934
3¢ Boulder (Hoover) Dam, 1935
5¢ Virginia Dare, 1937
3¢ Peace of 1783, 1933



Franklin D. Roosevelt

Franklin D. Roosevelt, James A. Farley, and “Farley’s Follies”

In 1933, President Roosevelt appointed the ambitious James A. Farley to the nation’s highest patronage job—postmaster general. The two enjoyed a long-standing relationship based on political alliances. Together, they revolutionized the look of postage stamps. No other president or postmaster general in American history has used postage stamps to express messages so boldly, and critics felt that the pair had overstepped their bounds.

Farley, well aware of FDR’s passion for philately, used stamps to gain favor with his boss and others. His actions ignited a fury among stamp collectors that climaxed in what is called “Farley’s Follies,” a special printing of stamp sheets like those he had purchased off the press for FDR and others for use as political favors. Like the original sheets, they remained ungummed and imperforate, and he made the sheets available to the public. FDR and Farley had signed the originals, making them more valuable than the unautographed reprints.



Reason It

Each uncut and ungummed sheet with Roosevelt’s and Farley’s signature is unique and highly desirable. By virtue of their history, the “Farley’s Follies” reprints are also very special. Match an original sheet with its “Follies” twin. Both are desirable, but which is rarer and why?



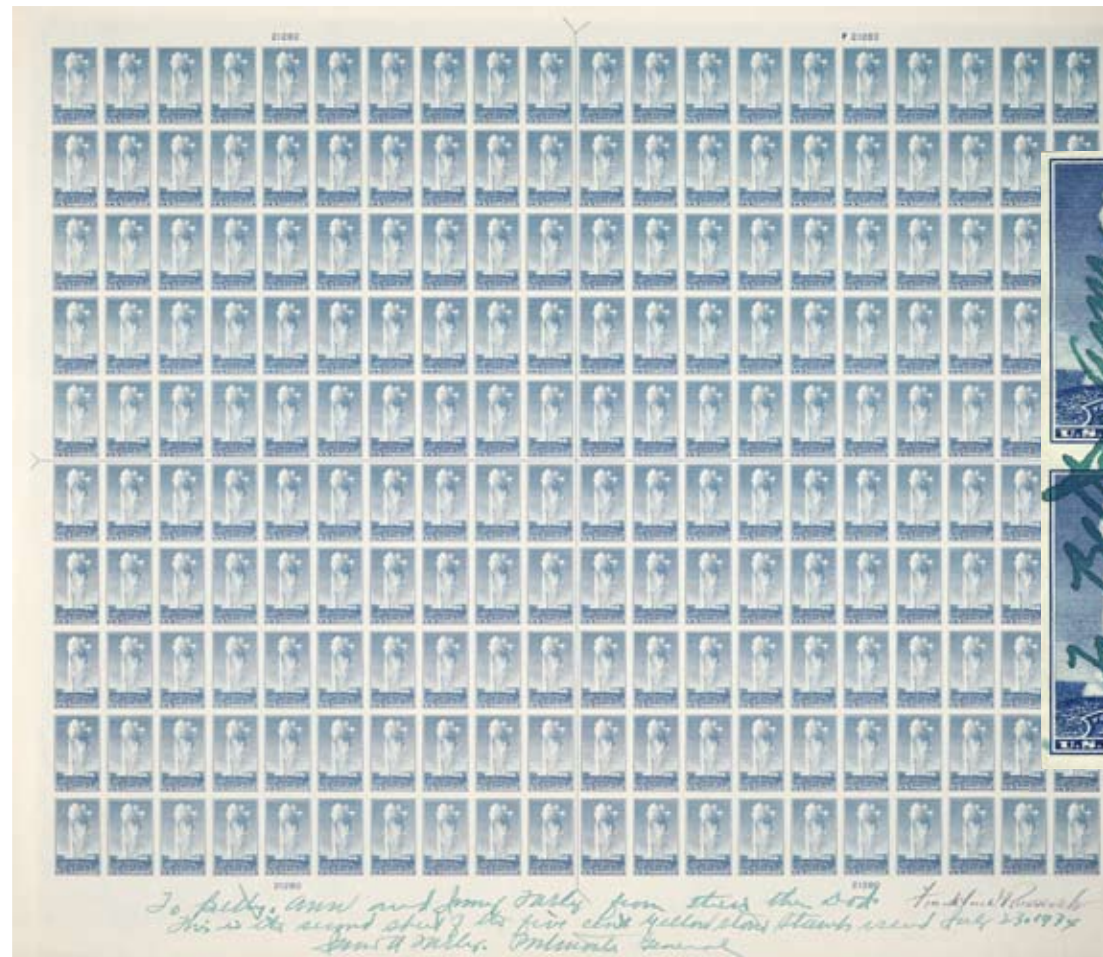
Categorize It

As president, FDR had a powerful influence over stamp subject selection. Can you find stamps that highlight subjects or institutions important to him? Look for New Deal programs, the U.S. Navy, Harvard University, and stamps that showcase technological progress.



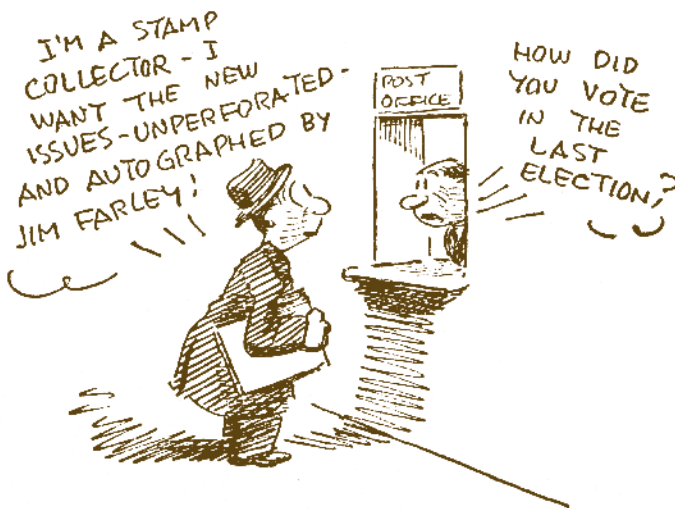
Above left: 3¢ Mothers of America sketch by FDR, 1934

Above right: 3¢ Mothers of America, 1934



Above: 5¢ Yellowstone Special Printing, 1935

Left: 5¢ Yellowstone (National Parks Issue) Original Uncut Press Sheet, 1934



Modern Design and Progress

President Roosevelt, aware that designers and printers in the business world had begun using streamlined images, sleek fonts, and lighter colors to sell products, saw the opportunity to use postage stamps to “sell” hope and optimism during the 1930s. Studies had revealed the impact of color on mood, for instance, and FDR applied this knowledge in the colors he chose for stamps. Likewise, he approved streamlined fonts and modernistic images that suggested a resurrected economy and forward-looking nation.

The world’s fairs of the 1930s emphasized the idea of progress and a better life for consumers. The Post Office Department issued stamps to advertise and celebrate each of the fairs. FDR intended that their light colors create optimism.



1¢ Fort Dearborn
Progressive Proof (detail), 1933

Envision It

Where have you seen these “optimistic” colors in your own life today? Scour the galleries for the thematic colors that, in the 1930s, conveyed the idea of progress. What do you associate with these colors today? Does “progress” have a different color palette today? Neon, pastel, chic?



Clockwise from above left:
2¢ John Adams, 1939
3¢ Connecticut Tercentenary, 1935
3¢ Win the War, 1942
50¢ Graf Zeppelin, 1933
25¢ China Clipper, 1935



Imagine It

Take a look at the world’s fair stamps in this gallery and imagine what visiting that place would have been like. What if you were living in the 1930s and this was your first view of the fair? Would it inspire you to visit? What might you find there, as promised by the stamp image?

Right: 3¢ New York World’s Fair Certified Plate Proof (detail), 1939

