



Washington Bicentennial Series

FDR and the 1932 Washington Bicentennial Series, Part I

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“ First in war, first in peace, and first in the hearts of his countymen... ”

—From the eulogy for George Washington by Henry Lee (1799)

The twelve-stamp Washington Bicentennial Series of 1932 had its origins in the December 2, 1924, Congressional Act establishing a Washington Bicentennial Commission signed by President Calvin Coolidge. This meant that there was period of seven years available for planning, resulting an unusually long and fascinating tale of stamp development, with numerous essays that ultimately led to the set of twelve George Washington portrait stamps (Scott 704–715). Presidents of the United States served as Chairmen of the commission, beginning with President Calvin Coolidge, and although the stamps themselves were issued during the administration of President Herbert Hoover, it was President Franklin D. Roosevelt (FDR) who signed the Washington Bicentennial Commission’s final report.¹ Also of the three men it was FDR, an avid stamp collector, who was especially familiar with these stamps. My present two-part article traces the long and complex history of the development of designs for the Washington Bicentennial Series, showing the final issued stamps on White House stationery, usage on covers sent to FDR, on covers from his personal stamp collection and on items related to

FDR’s 1932 presidential campaign. The present effort might be viewed as supplementing the recent series of articles by Marjory Sente on postal history items of the Washington Bicentennial Series that appeared from March 2021 through March 2022 in the *United States Specialist*.

Initially, it was reported that Postmaster General Walter F. Brown said that “there would be eighteen values, and it was believed that an entire new issue, up to and including the \$5 value, would appear.”² Astoundingly, this would have exceeded the long 1893 set issued for the Columbian Exposition. Furthermore, like the original plans for the 1898 Trans-Mississippi stamps, it was envisioned that these might be issued as bi-color stamps in a full-size commemorative format. Like the story of Columbus told visually in the Columbian series, this would allow the story of George Washington’s life to be told in a series of vignettes based on historical paintings and other images. The notion that these could be bi-color stamps was perhaps not so far-fetched, recalling that two of the three commemorative stamps issued in 1931 were also bi-colored. In any case, a preliminary series of essays for bi-color stamps ranging from one to twenty-five cents were apparently prepared as shown in Figure 1.



Figure 1. Preliminary bi-color essays of Washington Bicentennial stamps (courtesy of Van Looy & Van Looy Auctions, Antwerp, Belgium).

The vignettes on these bi-color essays show respectively, the national Capitol in Washington DC, George Washington's birthplace at Wakefield, portraits of George and Martha Washington, George Washington's 1793 inauguration, Mount Vernon, George Washington crossing the Delaware, Washington resigning his commission in 1783, Washington's tomb, the Washington Monument, another view of Wakefield, again George Washington's 1793 inauguration, and a view of Washington's home life. These would certainly have made for a spectacular commemorative set, however it was soon decided that due to the added difficulty and expense of bi-color flat plate printing of engraved stamps, it would be better to produce these in a single color. This would allow them to be rapidly and economically printed on a rotary press.

Although Max Johl mentions recommendations for a series of bi-color pictorial stamps up to a 10¢ value showing the Washington Monument, there is no explicit mention of the existence of bi-color essays in his book.² On the other hand, monochrome



Figure 2. Monochrome pictorial photoessays for lower value Washington Bicentennial Series stamps (Smithsonian National Postal Museum).

photoessays of Washington Bicentennial Series pictorial stamps are well known, with lower values up through 6¢ from the collection at the National Postal Museum being shown in Figure 2. Similar to the bi-color stamps in Figure 1, these show the Capitol building in Washington, DC, George Washington’s birthplace at Wakefield, portraits of George and Martha Washington, George Washington’s 1793 inauguration, Mount Vernon, and George Washington crossing the Delaware, respectively.

Several monochrome photoessays of the 8¢ value in full-size commemorative format were developed. These show a scene of Washington resigning his commission with several variations, as shown in Figure 3. The scene in the first essay is unlabeled, the second and third have labels with different-sized lettering.



Figure 3. Monochrome pictorial photoessays for the 8¢ Washington Bicentennial Series stamp (Smithsonian National Postal Museum).

Higher value monochrome pictorial photoessays in full size commemorative format are shown in Figure 4. These show views of Washington’s tomb on the 9¢ and 13¢ values, and the Washington Memorial on the 10¢ stamp. Others repeat themes, with his birthplace at Wakefield, Washington resigning his commission, the 1793 inauguration, and Washington crossing the Delaware. Finally, an idyllic scene of George Washington’s home life is depicted on the 25¢ value.

However, concern arose about the historical accuracy of these depictions of George Washington’s life produced so long after his death in 1799. For example, the scene of Washington Crossing the Delaware by the German-American artist Emanuel Leutze was painted in 1851 and historians questioned whether such an event ever took place. Also, the large painting of General George Washington Resigning his Commission by Jean



Figure 4. Monochrome pictorial photoessays for higher value Washington Bicentennial Series stamps (Smithsonian National Postal Museum).

Leon Gerome Ferris is from his series of tableau illustrating American history entitled "The Pageant of a Nation," and these were not actually painted until the 20th century.

Although the use of pictorial stamps had been much favored in the philatelic press, the Post Office Department came around to the notion of employing a series of George

Washington portraits painted from life as a solution to the historical dilemma. This became especially feasible when a younger looking portrait of Washington as a colonial officer at about the time of the Braddock campaign during the French and Indian War was found, leading to a search for other portraits. In November 1930, Postmaster General Brown stated, “[w]e hope to show in stamps Washington as a youth, as a civil engineer, as a commander-in-chief in the Army, and so on through life.” Curiously in January 1931, a bill was even introduced in the House of Representatives that during the year 1932 that all postage stamps sold “shall bear the portrait of George Washington.”² It did not pass.

Thus, the design focus for Washington Bicentennial Series stamps at the BEP began to shift from pictorial stamps to portraits. Among early experiments with portrait designs was an essay in large vertical format as shown in Figure 5. This shows a portrait of George Washington on a 10¢ stamp.

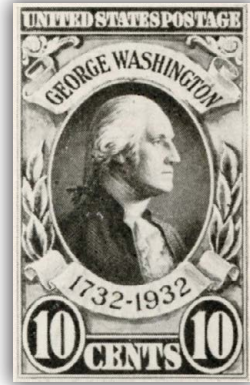


Figure 5. Essay for 10¢ Washington portrait stamp in large vertical format.²

Once the use of Washington portraits was settled, it was decided that “for purposes of economy, these stamps be of single colors, and of the same size as the ordinary issue.”² Thus they could be rapidly printed on a rotary press at minimal cost, an important money saving feature during the Great Depression. Although initially values up to 15¢ in the portrait series had been contemplated as shown by the essays in Figure 6, it was decided to limit the scope of the series to eleven values ranging from ½¢ to 10¢. Then in late February 1931, it was announced by PMG Brown that a 1½¢ value would be added to make it a series of twelve stamps.²



Figure 6. Essays for higher value Washington portrait stamps.²

Numerous essays for Washington Bicentennial Series stamps with portraits were prepared at the BEP and in this article, I will show as many of these images as I have been able to find. Together they present a complex situation, with many different trial combinations of the same portraits and frame styles explored for various denomination stamps in the series. This makes it useful to consider Washington Bicentennial Series stamp design development as a whole, along with cropped Washington portrait artwork for comparison in a single article.

With the notion in mind that stamps of the 1932 Washington Bicentennial Series might be used replace regular issue postage stamps during the commemorative year, it



Figure 7. Sketch and essay for ½¢ Washington Bicentennial Series stamp showing Washington Monument (Smithsonian National Postal Museum).

was initially contemplated to issue the 2¢ value in booklet form along with 1¢, 2¢, 4¢ and 5¢ stamps as vertically perforated coils, and 1¢ and 2¢ stamps as horizontally perforated coils. This was not to be, although printing plate numbers for these were assigned, and printing plates were actually prepared (but not used) for 2¢ coil and booklet stamps.²

Curiously, perhaps in a throwback to earlier pictorial designs, there exists a hand drawn pencil sketch (now in the Smithsonian's National Postal Museum) showing that the Washington Monument was originally considered as a possibility for use on the ½¢ stamp. This is shown in Figure 7 along with the BEP essay based on it.

Ultimately, a youthful looking portrait was selected for the ½¢ Washington Bicentennial Series stamp. Although this was said to represent Washington at age 25,² it was based on a miniature, now in the collection of the New York Metropolitan Museum of Art, that itself was based on a 1777 painting by Charles Willson Peale. In fact, it's believed that an engraving based on this miniature later published in a book was actually used by the BEP, and confusion about the original date of this Washington portrait arose from an error in the book.² In any case, a progression of essays with different frame styles, the miniature, and the final stamp are shown in Figure 8. The stamp's design is credited to Clair A. Huston at the BEP. The Washington vignette was engraved by J. C. Benzing, with the frame and lettering by D R. McLeod.

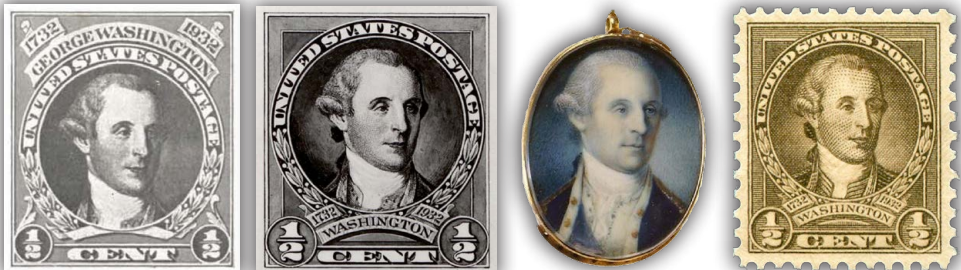


Figure 8. Essays, portrait on miniature and final ½¢ Washington Bicentennial Series stamp.²



Figure 9. Essays, 1785 Houdon bust and final 1¢ Washington Bicentennial Series stamp.²

Essays, closeup view of the Houdon bust of Washington and final design of the 1¢ Washington Bicentennial Series stamp are shown in Figure 9. At first the 1772 painting known as the “Virginia Colonel” by Charles Willson Peale was considered for the portrait, but ultimately a stamp design by Alvin R. Meissner based on the 1785 Houdon bust of Washington in Mount Vernon was selected. Note that this utilizes one of the frames that had originally been developed for the 2¢ stamp. In any case, the vignette was engraved by J. Eissler, and the frame and lettering by E. H. Helmuth.



Figure 10. Essays and final 1½¢ Washington Bicentennial Series stamp.²

For the recently added 1½¢ stamp, the famous likeness of Washington by Gilbert Stuart from his unfinished 1796 painting known as the Athenaeum portrait was initially considered, but this became slated for the 2¢ stamp instead. Another essay employing the design used later for the ½¢ stamp was also prepared, before finally settling on Charles Willson Peale's 1772 "Virginia Colonel" portrait for the 1½¢ stamp. These essays, cropped portrait image and the final stamp design by Clair A. Huston are shown in Figure 10. J. C. Benzing engraved the vignette, and W. B. Wells the lettering. Note that use of the "Virginia Colonel" portrait was also considered in essays for the 1¢ and 2¢ stamps.



Figure 11. Essays, cropped portrait from 1796 painting by Gilbert Stuart and final 2¢ stamp.²

The design of the 2¢ stamp paying the first-class letter rate was perhaps the most important single decision for the Washington Bicentennial Series. Six essays, cropped portrait image and the final stamp design are shown in Figure 11. Most of the initial essays were based on the based on using the 1785 Houdon bust of Washington with various frames including the one selected for the 1¢ stamp and another, later used for the 8¢ stamp. The "Virginia Colonel" portrait was also considered, but it was the famous likeness of Washington by Gilbert Stuart from the unfinished 1796 painting known as the Athenaeum portrait, that was selected. This is the same familiar portrait whose mirror image has long been used on the one-dollar bill. The original of this famous painting of George Washington by Stuart is now jointly owned by Boston Museum of Fine Arts and the National Gallery in Washington, DC. The die for the 2¢ stamp was engraved by J. Eissler and E. M. Hall, and it is considered to be the finest of the series.²

Unusually, no regular-stamp-sized Washington portrait essays appear to have been prepared for the 3¢ Washington Bicentennial Series stamp, although larger



Figure 12. Cropped portrait from painting by Charles Willson Peale with final stamp.

dual portrait essays with Martha Washington, exist (Figures 1 and 2). Perhaps this was considered to be fairly low in priority because at the time, there was little postal need for a 3¢ stamp. The stamp itself was designed by Clair A. Huston based on Washington’s image on a full-length painting by Charles Willson Peale. The vignette was engraved by J. C. Benzing, with the lettering and numerals by D. R. McLeod. A cropped image from this Washington portrait together with the final stamp, are shown in Figure 12.

The postage situation changed once the first-class letter rate increased to 3¢ on July 6, 1932, however already anticipating this need, a new regular issue 3¢ stamp with the same Gilbert Stuart portrait of Washington used on the 2¢ Washington Bicentennial Series stamp was released by the Post Office on June 16, 1932. This became a workhorse postage stamp of the 1930s, with various coils and booklets produced (more on this in Part II).

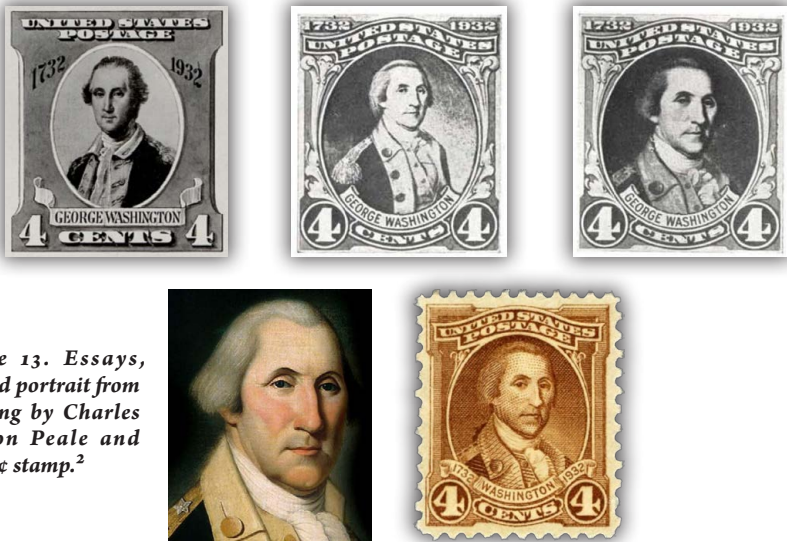


Figure 13. Essays, cropped portrait from painting by Charles Willson Peale and final 4¢ stamp.²

Three essays were prepared for the 4¢ Washington Bicentennial Series stamp. These are shown along with a cropped portrait image and the final stamp in Figure 13. The first essay is based on a full-length portrait by John Trumbull, the others on a painting by Charles Willson Peale that was used for the final stamp. The stamp was designed by Alvin R. Meissner, the vignette engraved by J. C. Benzing, with the lettering and numerals by F. Lamasure.

Only a single portrait-sized essay for the 5¢ stamp is known. This is shown in Figure 14 along with a cropped portrait of Washington from a 1795 painting by Charles

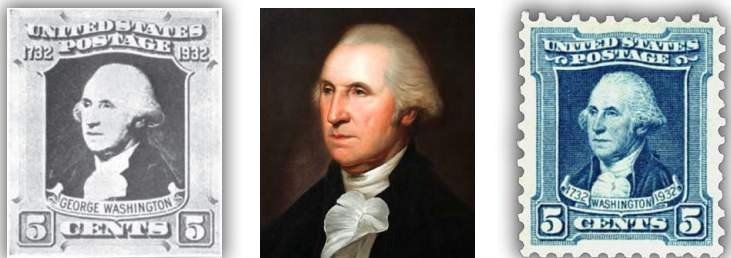


Figure 14. Essay, cropped portrait from painting by Charles Willson Peale and final 5¢ stamp.²

Willson Peale, and the final stamp. Designed by Alvin R. Meissner, the stamp's vignette was engraved by J. C. Benzing with the lettering and numerals by H. S. Nutter.

As with the 3¢ Washington Bicentennial Series stamp, there are no known regular-stamp-sized Washington portrait essays for the 6¢ stamp, although rejected pictorial essays of Washington crossing the Delaware exist (Figures 1 and 2). A Washington portrait cropped from a 1792 painting by John Trumbull was used for the final stamp designed by Clair A. Huston. These are shown in Figure 15. The stamp's vignette was engraved by L. S. Schofield, with the lettering and numerals by E. M. Hall.



Figure 15. Cropped portrait from 1792 painting by John Trumbull with the final stamp.

Another Trumbull portrait was used for the 7¢ stamp, although at first two essays based on a 1795 Washington portrait by Adolph Ulrich Wertmuller were produced. These show slight differences in the frame line surrounding the portrait. Ultimately however, it was a 1780 full-length portrait by John Trumbull that was selected, and a cropped image of this together with the earlier essays and final stamp are shown in Figure 16. The stamp was designed at the BEP by Alvin R. Meissner, with the vignette engraved by L. S. Schofield and lettering by E. H. Helmuth.



Figure 16. Essays, cropped portrait from painting by John Trumbull and final 7¢ stamp.²

For the 8¢ Washington Bicentennial Series stamp, a life portrait of George Washington from a 1798 crayon drawing by Charles B. J. F vret de Saint-M min that was later turned into a mezzotint engraving was used. Reversed to face to the left, a closeup image of this is shown in Figure 17 along with an essay and the final stamp. Designed

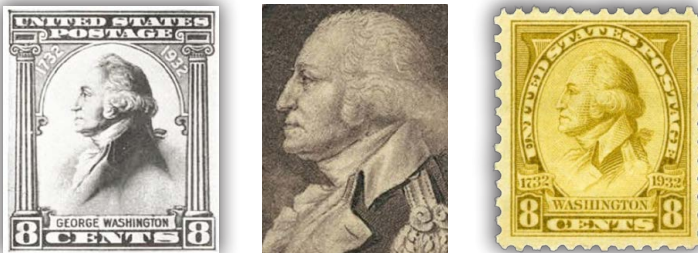


Figure 17. Essay, cropped 1798 portrait by F vret de Saint-M min and the final 8¢ stamp.²

by Clair A. Huston, the stamp was engraved by E. J. Hein, with numerals and lettering by W. B. Wells.²

The 9¢ Washington Bicentennial Series stamp essays originally employed Gilbert Stuart’s 1796 Athenaeum portrait. This was not approved and a 1795 Washington portrait by Rembrandt Peale, the son of Charles Willson Peale, was substituted.² However, at the suggestion of Peter Gouled, a 1794 pastel portrait by William J. Williams of George Washington from life in his Masonic Lodge regalia, was used after removing all traces of the regalia in the final design.² These essays, a closeup of the original pastel portrait and the final stamp are shown in Figure 18. Designed at the BEP by Clair A. Huston, the vignette was engraved by L. S. Schofield, with the numerals and lettering by E. M. Hall.²

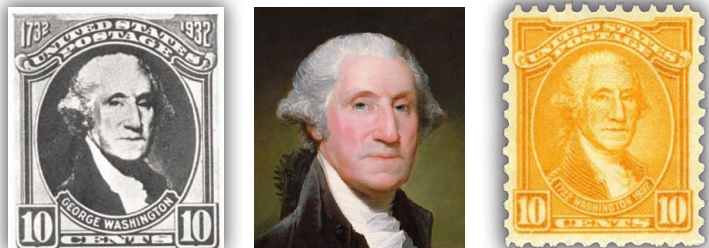


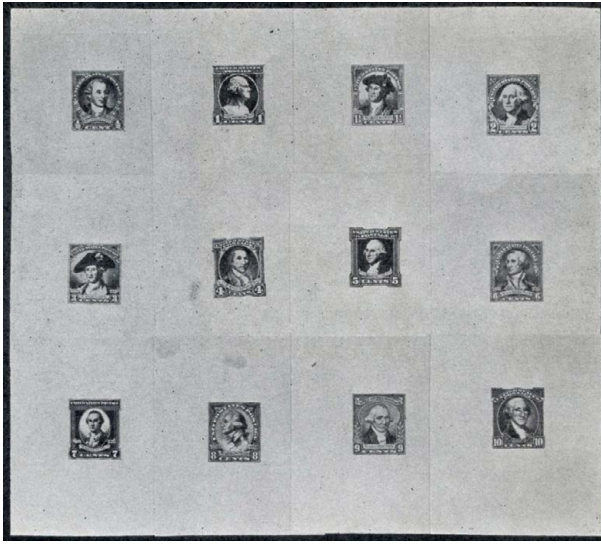
Figure 18. Essays, cropped portrait from pastel by W. J. Williams and final 9¢ stamp.²

For the 10¢ Washington Bicentennial Series stamp, another Gilbert Stuart painting was selected, this time of the 1795 Gibbs-Channing portrait. This is shown as an essay, cropped image of the painting and as the final stamp in Figure 19. The stamp itself was designed at the BEP by Alvin R. Meissner, with the vignette engraved by E. J. Hein, with numerals and lettering by H. S. Nutter.²

Ultimately, from these diverse George Washington portrait essays the final twelve stamp Washington Bicentennial Series of 1932 series emerged. Again of these, Clair

Figure 19. Essay, cropped 1795 portrait by Gilbert Stuart and the final 10¢ stamp.²





55 1932 WASHINGTON BICENTENNIAL $\frac{1}{2}$ c TO 10c COMPLETE SET OF 12 IN NORMAL COLORS. $\frac{1}{2}$ c-334047, 1c-334297, $1\frac{1}{2}$ c-334059, 2c-334187, 3c-333959, 4c-333941, 5c-334304, 6c-334178, 7c-333933, 8c-333933, 9c-334388, 10c-334177. Only ones known (Illustrated on page 22) (704P1-715P1)

130 1932 Bicentennial $\frac{1}{2}$ c to 10c complete set of 12 in normal colors, each with a v. f. unused stamp. There are also photos of rejected essays — $\frac{1}{2}$ c-1, 1c-2, 2c-6, 3c-1, 4c-4, 5c-2, 6c-1, 7c-1, 8c-2, 9c-4, 10c-2. Only complete set of small die proofs known. Only one other of the 7c and of the 8c are known and these are catalogued by Scott's in italics at \$200 each (704P2-715P2, 704-715)

Figure 20. Large die proofs, small die proofs and photoessays of Washington Bicentennial Series stamps in FDR's collection.³

A. Huston designed the $\frac{1}{2}$ c, $1\frac{1}{2}$ c, 2c, 3c, 6c, 8c and 9c values, and Alvin R. Meissner designed the 1c, 4c, 5c, 7c and 10c stamps.

Franklin Roosevelt himself was an avid stamp collector, and he ultimately had an outstanding collection of Washington Bicentennial Series stamps, including both large and small die proofs, plus photoessays. His twelve large die proofs were apparently the only ones known, and are shown in the H. R. Harmer auction catalogue image from the 1946 sale of FDR's collection in Figure 20.³ Also shown are detailed Harmer auction lot description for these, plus an additional description of FDR's small die proofs and photoessays. Note especially that BEP control numbers stamped on the back of each of the large die proofs are listed, and with the small die proofs there is a further listing of rejected photoessays for each value. By the way, the 1946 hammer prices for these two auction lots from FDR's collection were \$1,200 and \$1,000, respectively.

It might be pointed out that the Washington Bicentennial Commission was more than just about postage stamps. In early 1931, the Treasury Department proposed that a commemorative half dollar be issued, and the Treasury and Washington Bicentennial Commission cosponsored a design competition with the cooperation of the federal Fine Arts Commission. It was specified that the obverse design be based on the Houdon bust of

George Washington at Mount Vernon. However, Congress became involved and decided that the Washington Bicentennial should be honored on the quarter instead. The design ultimately chosen after some controversy was by John Flanagan.⁴ An example from my collection is shown in Figure 21. Although this was originally intended to be a one-year only commemorative coin, it was decided to issue it at face value and continue its design as regular coinage, and this basic type is still in circulation today.



Figure 21. 1932 Washington Bicentennial quarter dollar coin.

The first day of issue for the Washington Bicentennial Series stamps was January 1, 1932. Shown in Figure 22 is a full set of these on official White House stationery with Washington’s portrait.

This is addressed to “Mr. W. T. Marshall” at the White House. Like Jules Rodier, the White House telegraph operator, Marshall was a long-time White House employee who served as clerk and personal librarian in every presidential administration from William McKinley through that of Franklin D. Roosevelt.

Originally, he had worked for the US Government Printing Office, who had loaned him to the White House in 1899 where he then remained until 1938. Apparently, Marshall must have later gotten FDR to sign this cover above the Washington portrait. In fact, FDR was well known to have

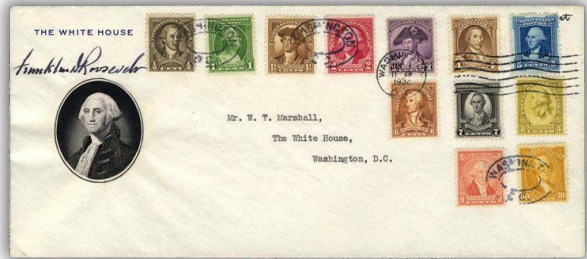


Figure 22. FDC for the Washington Bicentennial Series stamps on White House stationery (courtesy Cherrystone Philatelic Auctioneers).

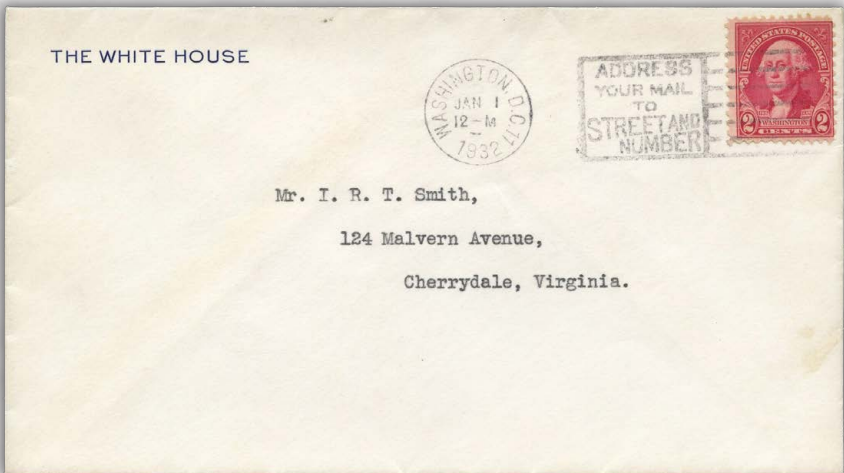


Figure 23. FDC for the 2¢ Washington Bicentennial Series stamp on official White House stationery.

signed covers for others in his circle at the White House, and I'm fortunate in having a similar example of a signed transpacific flight cover on official White House stationery in my collection. This was signed by FDR for Paul M. Hart, a senior member of FDR's Secret Service detail in the White House.⁵

Regarding Washington Bicentennial Series stamps, I do have an example of an FDC on official White House stationery in my own collection for the 2¢ stamp. This is shown in Figure 23, further suggesting that even in the Hoover White House, access to official White House stationery for special philatelic items was granted.

However, most philatelic attention was focused on the bicentennial of George Washington's birthday on February 22, 1932. In fact for this, an official Washington Bicentennial Commission cachet was prepared.

I'm fortunate in having a partial set of seven Washington Bicentennial stamp covers on official White House stationery, self-addressed by Ray Z. Henle at the Press Room in the White House. Unusually, this is gold intaglio printed on very heavy stationery such as might be used for formal White House invitations. An example franked with the 8¢ Washington Bicentennial Series stamp is shown in Figure 24. Note the February 22, 1932 Mount Vernon, Virginia, cancellation and that the official Washington Bicentennial Commission's cachet is simply stamped over the Henle's hand-written address on the envelope. Wording at the top of the oval cachet says "United States George Washington Bicentennial Commission," with the dates and "Washington's Birthplace" underneath. The oval surrounds a vignette showing Wakefield House where George Washington was born on Feb. 22, 1732.

Raymond Z. Henle was Washington Correspondent for the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette from 1929-45, remaining throughout the FDR administration. He then moved to NBC



Figure 24. Washington Bicentennial 8¢ stamp on Washington Correspondent Raymond Henle's self-addressed cover on official White House stationery.



Figure 25. Washington Bicentennial 3c, 4c, 5c, 6c, 7c and 9c stamps on official White House stationery.

News where he became anchorman of the radio news program “Three Star Express.” Henle reported on all US Presidents from Hoover through Kennedy. The other covers in Henle’s partial set for the Washington Bicentennial stamps are shown in Figure 25.

According to the Washington Bicentennial Commission’s final report, only a single official type of Washington Bicentennial Commission cachet was produced, although more than 250 others were prepared by local Bicentennial Committees, Chambers of Commerce and other organizations during 1932. With the cooperation of the Post Office Department, more than 500,000 pieces of mail were canceled using this official cachet at Mount Vernon on February 22, 1932. Perhaps as a result, the cachet is often seen weakly applied, and even the example sent to President Herbert Hoover by the Commission itself (illustrated in the final report) is weakly printed.¹ However, this same official cachet was also applied in Washington, DC, Alexandria, Virginia, and Wakefield, Virginia.

I was fortunate in finding an unusually clear impression of the official cachet on a cover franked with a 4c Washington Bicentennial Series stamp canceled in Wakefield, VA. This cover from the “George Washington Bicentennial Stamp Distribution Service” of Y. Souren is shown in Figure 26.

Y. Souren, whose real name was Souren Yohannasians, was a colorful and famous stamp dealer in New York City. Some of his many quirks, exploits, and philatelic feats are recounted by “Pat” Herst in his book *Nassau Street*.⁶ For example, during his time as



Figure 26. Cover from Y. Souren's Bicentennial Stamp Distribution Service franked with 4¢ stamp showing unusually clear impression of official cachet.

a stamp dealer, Souren owned some of the greatest rarities in stamp collecting, including the unique plate block of four of the 24¢ inverted Jenny and the block of four 24¢ stamps of the 1869 pictorial issue with inverted centers from the famous Crocker collection.

In Part II of this article, I plan to discuss other Washington Bicentennial activities, including those from New York City's George Washington Bicentennial Commission. Also, I'll show a wide variety of usages of Washington Bicentennial stamps on covers sent to FDR, on covers from his personal stamp collection, and on items related to FDR's 1932 presidential campaign.

The author would like to acknowledge Roger Kerby for his help, especially with the bi-color essays that appeared at a Van Loy and Van Loy auction in Antwerp, Belgium circa 2005.

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Washington Bicentennial Series

FDR and the 1932 Washington Bicentennial Series, Part II

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“ To the United States George Washington Bicentennial Commission the country owes a debt of gratitude... ”

—President Franklin D. Roosevelt in the Bicentennial Commission’s Final Report (1933)

Official items that resulted from the United States George Washington Bicentennial Commission’s efforts included the set of twelve 1932 Washington Bicentennial Series postage stamps, 1932 dated silver quarter dollar coins based on the Houdon bust of Washington at Mount Vernon, and an official Washington Bicentennial Commission cachet used in celebrating the bicentennial of Washington’s birthday on February 22, 1732. These were described last month in Part I.

Besides the official George Washington Bicentennial Commission cachet, more than 250 other cachets were prepared by local Bicentennial Committees, Chambers of Commerce, and other organizations for use during 1932.¹ For example, in addition to the official version, a second type was also used in Washington, DC, on Washington’s birthday. I’m fortunate to have the cover sent to FDR shown in Figure 1. This was provided “courtesy of the Merchants and Manufacturing Association,” an industry group. Sent by

airmail to Gov. F. D. Roosevelt (sic) in Albany, New York, this employed a 2¢ Washington Bicentennial postal stationery envelope (Scott U525) with additional franking provided by 1¢ and 2¢ Bicentennial stamps to make up the 5¢ airmail rate. There is also a special George Washington Bicentennial label affixed. Note that during 1932, official commemorative postal stationery depicting Mount Vernon was produced in six different values from one to five cents in a variety of colors, but discussion of this is beyond the scope of this article.

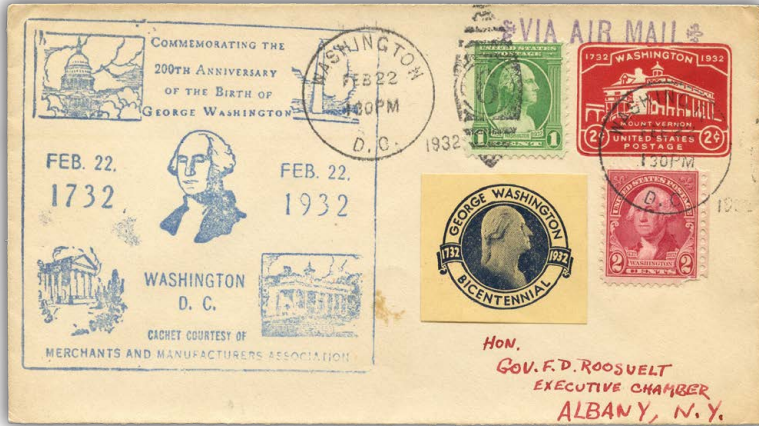


Figure 1. Cacheted cover for Washington's birthday sent to FDR.

Other Washington Bicentennial Committees were active during the bicentennial year. Perhaps the most important of these was the New York George Washington Bicentennial Commission that produced a series of twelve special cachets with the approval of the Post Office Department. These were canceled with unusual “Federal Hall” cancellations at a temporary post office sub-station established in a large-scale reproduction of New York City’s original Federal Hall with further details available elsewhere.² This re-creation of Federal Hall was situated in Bryant Park, and a photograph of it surrounded by tall buildings in Manhattan is shown in Figure 2.

What is perhaps not so well known except to students of American history is that Federal Hall in New York City from 1789–90 served as the first Capitol of the United States. It was here that George Washington was inaugurated as our first President, Congress first met, the Bill of Rights to the Constitution was approved by Congress, and laws establishing



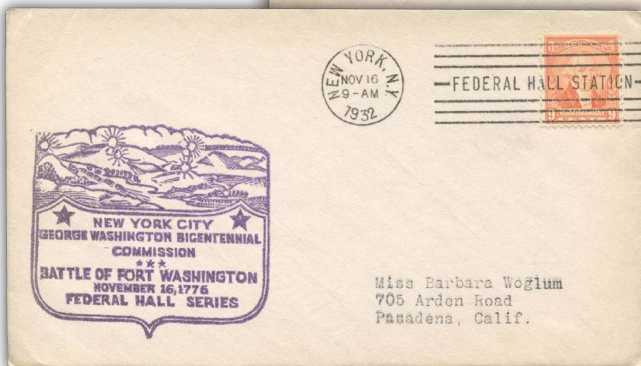
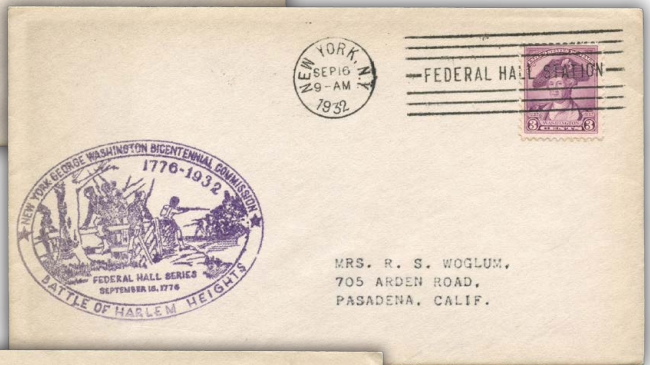
Figure 2. “Federal Hall” temporary post office sub-station constructed in New York City.



Figure 3. New York George Washington Bicentennial Commission cacheted cover depicting Federal Hall.



Figure 4. New York George Washington Bicentennial Commission cacheted covers for the Battle of Long Island, the Battle of Harlem Heights and Battle of Fort Washington.



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government departments were passed. Later the seat of government was moved to Philadelphia for ten years, until the United States Capitol building in Washington, DC, became ready to occupy in December 1800.

Among the twelve cachets produced by the New York George Washington Bicentennial Commission is my example in Figure 3 depicting Federal Hall. This commemorates the final session of Congress held in New York City on August 12, 1790. Note the special “Federal Hall Station” cancellation and use of Washington Bicentennial stamps.

I will not show all the different cachets here, but in Figure 4, I’ll show examples from my collection for three 1776 Revolutionary War battles fought by George Washington in the vicinity of New York City. These were the Battle of Long Island, the Battle of Harlem Heights and Battle of Fort Mifflin, on August 27, September 16 and November 16, 1776. Although the overall result was a military defeat, with the British capturing New York City and occupying it until the end of the war, British losses generally exceeded those of the outnumbered Americans. Washington was able to skillfully avoid encirclement and preserve his army intact. This feat was crucial to the eventual success of the American Revolution.

Other cachets produced by New York’s Washington Bicentennial Commission commemorated later events, such as George Washington signing important legislation passed at Federal Hall while he was President. I’ll show only one of these in Figure 5, mainly for Washington signing the act creating the Treasury Department. Below the Treasury Department seal, this cachet shows hand operation of an early coining press and rolling mill for making coinage blanks. Note that the cover is franked by a pair of 2¢ Washington bicentennial stamps to meet the new 3¢ rate, which took effect on July 6, 1932. Curiously, in 1789, when this act was signed, details of the future currency of the United States were still being worked out, although the dollar based on the large “Spanish dollar” coin at 0.7734 troy ounces of silver had already been adopted as the basic monetary unit of the United States.

Spanish “dollars” were the famed “pieces-of-eight” minted from vast quantities of New World silver mined in Mexico and South America during the Spanish colonial era between 1600 and about 1820. These coins circulated worldwide as the first truly

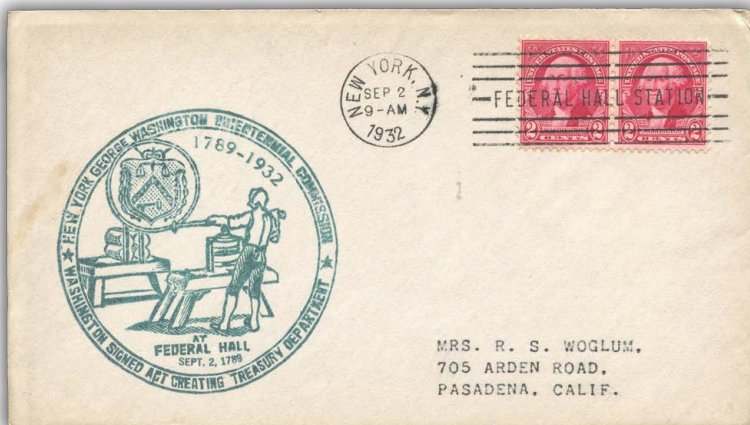


Figure 5. New York George Washington Bicentennial Commission cacheted cover for signing of Treasury Department Act.

global currency and remained legal tender in the United States until 1857. Subdivided into eight units (reals or bits) and further into half reals or medios, they became the source of slang expressions such as “two bits,” were the origin of unusual US stampless cover rates of $6\frac{1}{4}$ or $12\frac{1}{2}$ cents, and were the historical reason that until June 24, 1997, stock exchanges reported the prices of all equities in $\frac{1}{8}$ dollar increments.

Ultimately arguments in favor of a fully decimal currency by Thomas Jefferson prevailed, and the first United States coins struck were copper cents and half cents in 1793. The first silver coins in the form of dollars and half dollars were struck in 1794, followed by silver half dimes (half dimes), and five and ten-dollar gold pieces in 1795. Other details about early US currency are beyond the scope of this article and the reader is referred elsewhere.³

As mentioned in Part I of this article, anticipating the postage needs posed by the upcoming rate change, a new regular issue 3¢ stamp with the identical Gilbert Stuart portrait used on the 2¢ Washington Bicentennial Series stamp was released by the Post Office on June 16, 1932.⁴ A mirror image of this portrait had also been used on the one-dollar bill since 1923. Figure 6 shows from left to right, details of how the 1732–1932 dates on the ribbon were removed for the new stamp, a one dollar bill from the 1932 era, and booklet pane for the new 3¢ stamps from my collection. Note that my Depression-era series 1928A dollar bill is a silver certificate with “One Silver Dollar” payable on demand and is signed by Hoover’s Secretary of the Treasury, Andrew W. Mellon. The back of the bill has an unfamiliar “stage money” appearance that was changed to the current “eye over pyramid” and “United States seal” design during the FDR administration. The new 3¢ stamp became a workhorse postage stamp of the 1930s, with 206 different printing plates being used. For printing booklet panes a further 16 plates were utilized, along with 88 plates for vertically perforated coils and 2 for horizontally perforated coils. These booklet pane and coil stamps were not replaced until January 1939.



Figure 6. Comparison of 2¢ and 3¢ stamps with Gilbert Stuart portrait, contemporary dollar bill and booklet pane (not to scale).



Figure 7. July 23, 1932, “A Stamp Collector for President” cover from Portsmouth, Ohio.

Regarding George Linn’s “A Stamp Collector for President” covers, the earliest usage I’ve seen is my cover franked with a vertical pair of 1½¢ Washington Bicentennial stamps sent on July 23, 1932, from Portsmouth, Ohio. This is shown in Figure 7.

A July 26, 1932, cover sent to FDR from New London, Connecticut, franked with a 1¢ Washington bicentennial stamp and pair of 4th Bureau stamps is shown in Figure 8. This is one of the more unusual cachets in my collection, which displays a variety of methods for carrying the mail and curiously celebrates the 137th anniversary of National Post Office Day.



Figure 8. 137th anniversary of National Post Office Day cover sent to FDR on July 26, 1932.

My first flight cover sent to Governor Franklin D. Roosevelt with an 8¢ Washington Bicentennial stamp paying the airmail rate is shown in Figure 9. Signed by the postmaster of Providence, Rhode Island, this was mailed August 6, 1932.

“Roosevelt for President” campaign covers displaying mixed franking with Washington Bicentennial and Fourth Bureau stamps are shown in Figure 10. Showing half-tone printed photographs of FDR and addressed to the same recipient, these were



Figure 9. First flight cover sent to FDR with 8c Washington Bicentennial stamp.

all postmarked from different towns named Roosevelt in Oklahoma, Missouri and Louisiana, from August 7–10, 1932. Of special interest, they came from FDR's personal stamp collection, as shown by the H. R. Harmer auction authentication hand stamps on the front. In fact, they are from auction lot #400 of the December 1946 sale.⁴ I'm fortunate in having these, the original auction folder for this lot, along with ten additional "A Stamp Collector for President" covers from FDR's collection, all canceled in different Roosevelt-named towns around the United States on election day November 8, 1932. But since these are not franked with Washington Bicentennial stamps they are not shown here.



Figure 10. "Roosevelt for President" campaign covers from FDR's stamp collection.

Another of my bicolor "A Stamp Collector for President" covers sent during the 1932 campaign is shown in Figure 11. This September 14 cover franked with the new 3¢ Washington stamp has an added cachet for the National Exchange Club's convention and air show in Syracuse, New York. Note that "A. Atlas Leve" is the addressee (more on that later).



Figure 11. "A Stamp Collector for President" cover posted on September 14, 1932.

While I have various covers sent to FDR during the presidential campaign franked by the new 3¢ Washington stamps, a favorite is shown in Figure 12. This has a printed advertising cachet from the Omin Company, maker of Omin Gland Tablets, and was mailed from Long Island on October 14, 1932.

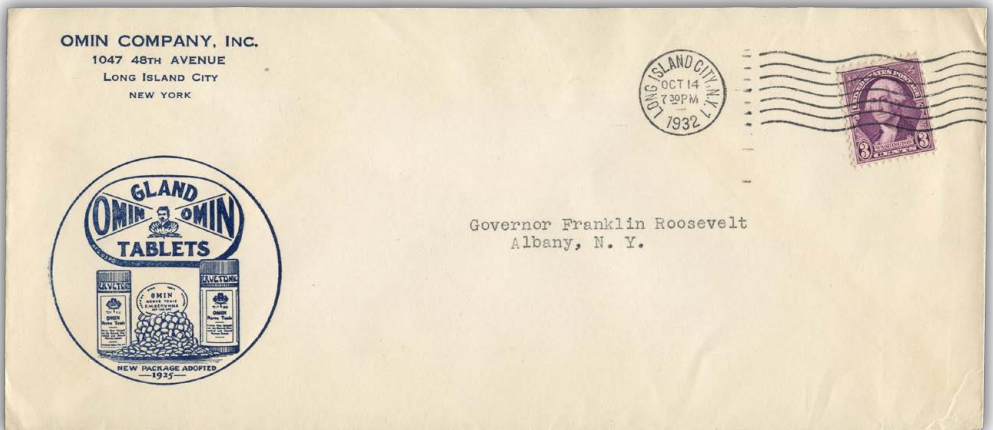


Figure 12. Advertising cover cover sent to FDR on October 14, 1932.

My large cover with multicolor printed cachet showing tulips at the Tulip Time festival in Holland, Michigan is shown in Figure 13. Franked with a 3¢ Washington Bicentennial stamp, this cover was posted to FDR on election day November 8, 1932.



Figure 13. Tulip Time festival cover sent to FDR on election day November 8, 1932.

One of the more unusual “A Stamp Collector for President” covers in my collection is the one shown in Figure 14. Printed in brown (single color) this unsealed cover is postmarked Nashville, Tennessee, on election day and was apparently mailed at the special third class rate as indicated by single franking with a 1½¢ Washington bicentennial stamp. There is a stamped notation that this was “Received at Nashville, Tenn. P.O. under cover from ___” along with a hand-written notation that this “left Philadelphia PO 11/7/32.” Also, there are typed totals (apparently added later) of the popular vote and electoral votes for Franklin Roosevelt. Taken together, this suggests that someone went to a lot of trouble to create this “A Stamp Collector for President” souvenir cover for the 1932 election, perhaps as part of a larger set postmarked from various state capitals on November 8, 1932.

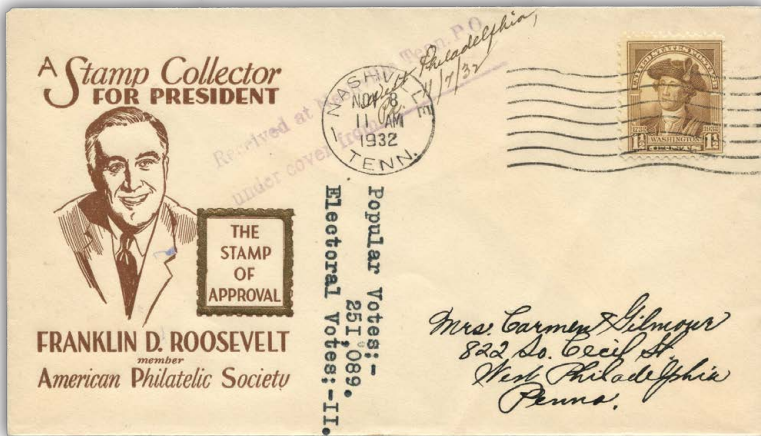


Figure 14. “A Stamp Collector for President” souvenir cover mailed on election day 1932.

Shown in Figure 15 is a cover sent to FDR by an organization of Disabled American Veterans of the World War the day after election day. Posted from Omaha, Nebraska, this cacheted cover from my collection is franked with one of the new 3¢ Washington stamps.

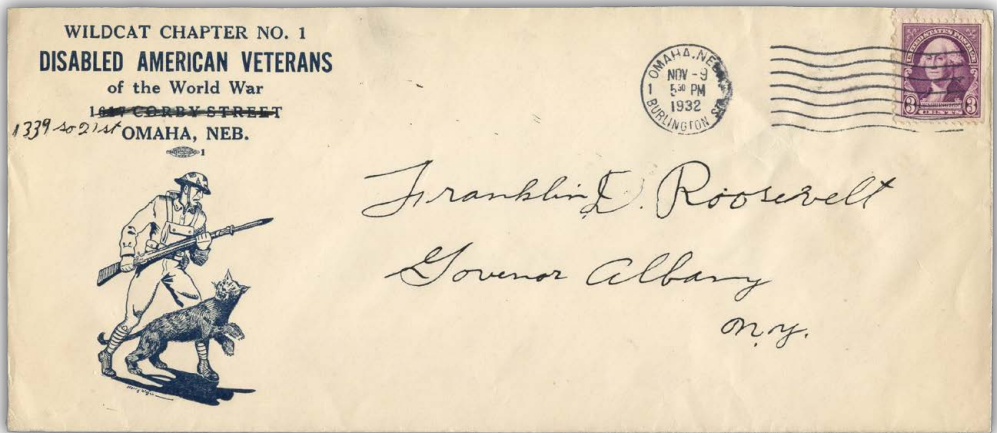


Figure 15. Disabled American Veterans cover sent to FDR on November 9, 1932.

Armistice Day (now Veteran's Day) was the theme of a bicolor cachet stamped onto my bicolor "A Stamp Collector for President" cover shown in Figure 16. This was self-addressed by A. Atlas Leve using a 3¢ Washington Bicentennial stamp from Syracuse, New York, on November 11, 1932. Note the sponsor of the added cachet.



Figure 16. "A Stamp Collector for President" cover sent on November 11, 1932.

Another bicolor "A Stamp Collector for President" cover to the same addressee (A. Atlas Leve) is shown in Figure 17. This was posted from New York City also with a 3¢ Washington Bicentennial stamp on December 6, 1932.

Besides covers on "A Stamp Collector for President" printed envelopes, others were created using the labels produced by George W. Linn. The labels themselves were printed in sheets of 20 in various colors, both perforated and rouletted. Curiously, minor printing flaws allow these labels to be plated. Examples from plate position 8 in my collection printed in all four colors are shown in Figure 18.

These labels were used on various covers. For example, each of my ten "A Stamp Collector for President" election day covers from FDR's collection (auction lot #400 mentioned earlier) also have these labels affixed. Another example of such label usage

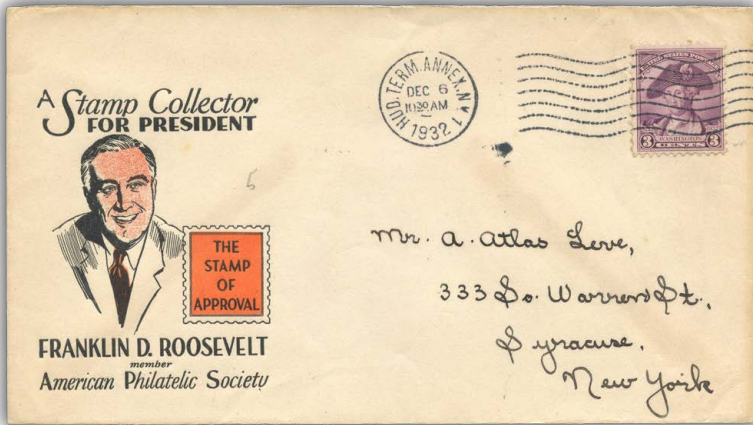


Figure 17. "A Stamp Collector for President" cover sent on December 6, 1932.

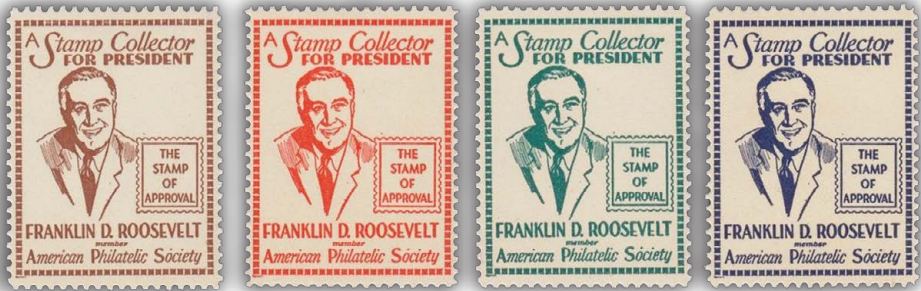


Figure 18. "A Stamp Collector for President" labels.



Figure 19. February 28, 1933, cover with "A Stamp Collector for President" label and Mardi Gras cachet.

is shown by the February 28, 1933, serial numbered cover with cachet in Figure 19. This was sent out by the Crescent City Stamp Club during Mardi Gras, just a few days before FDR's inauguration. Franked with ½¢ and 2¢ Washington Bicentennial stamps, the green label is from plate position 20.

For FDR's 1933 presidential inauguration, George Linn also prepared bicolor "A Stamp Collector for President" envelopes with "INAUGURATION March 4, 1933" printed in the space previously allowed for a return address.⁵ While I have a number of these in my collection, none are franked with Washington Bicentennial stamps, so I won't show them here.

Among my various examples of 1933 inauguration cachets there is one of special interest, as shown in Figure 20. This bicolor cachet displays a portrait of FDR above his printed signature and is franked by one of the new 3¢ Washington stamps. The enclosed card states that FDR sanctioned "the used of his signature on our official cachet" with him being listed as member No. 12 of the newly formed Empire State Philatelic Association. A membership application (not shown) further reveals that this organization was based in Dunkirk, New York, with annual dues being \$1. Other examples in my collection show that the cachet was individually printed onto envelopes supplied by the recipient. However, I've been unable to find any further information about this organization, suggesting that the Empire State Philatelic Association was short-lived.

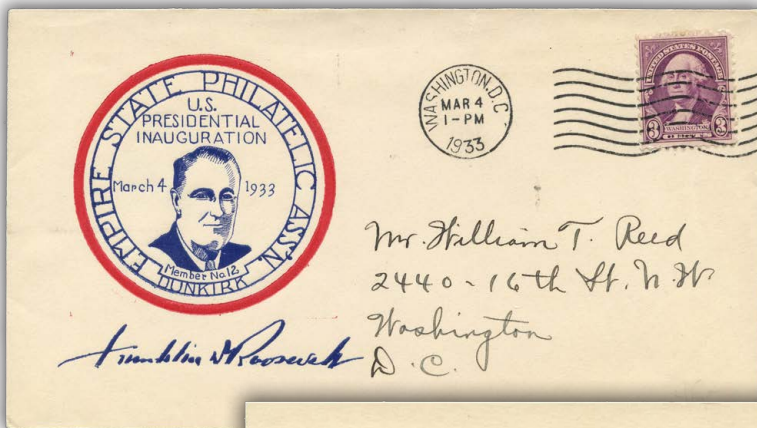
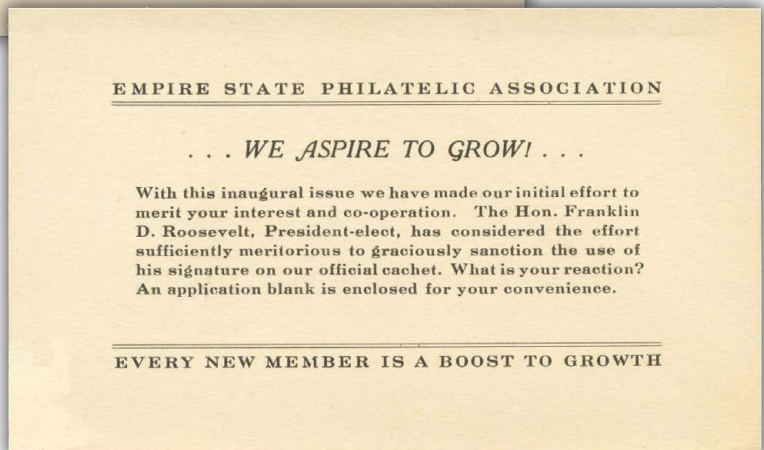


Figure 20. Empire State Philatelic Association's inauguration cover with enclosure.



FDR's inauguration on Saturday March 4, 1933, occurred during a severe economic crisis, with all of the nation's banks closed during an emergency "Bank Holiday." An Emergency Banking Bill (the first piece of FDR's "hundred days" legislation) was rushed through Congress on Thursday, with FDR's famous first "Fireside Chat" following on Sunday evening. By the time banks began reopening their doors on Monday morning March 13, 1933, confidence in the nation's banking system had been almost miraculously restored.

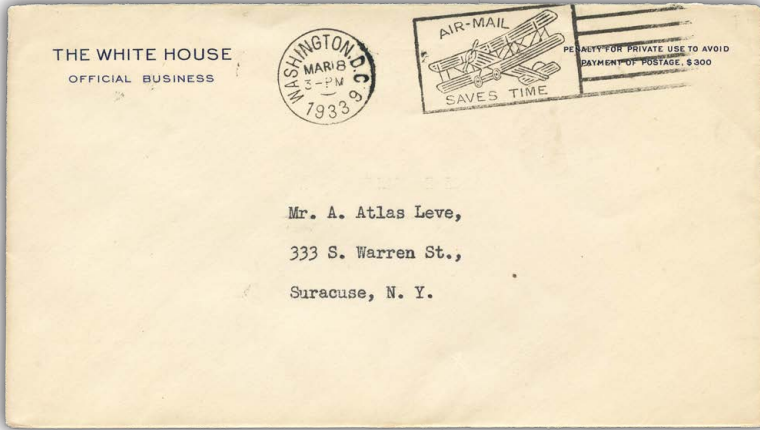


Figure 21. March 8, 1933, penalty cover from the FDR White House sent to A. Atlas Leve.

Shown in Figure 21 is my White House penalty cover mailed to A. Atlas Leve just a few days after Franklin D. Roosevelt's inauguration on Saturday March 4, 1933. Postmarked March 8th, this is the earliest penalty cover from the FDR White House that I've seen. So who was A. Atlas Leve? Abraham Atlas Leve (1869–1948) was a stamp, coin, and curios dealer based in Syracuse, New York, who produced a number of cachets for special events, including one for FDR's 1933 inauguration. This suggests that the cover on



Figure 22. Airport dedication cover sent to FDR on September 28, 1934.

official White House stationery shown, likely enclosed a brief thank you note to Leve for sending FDR one of these inauguration covers.

Washington Bicentennial stamps continued in use once FDR was in office, and in Figure 22 I show my Williamsburg, Kentucky, airport dedication cover sent to FDR on September 28, 1934. To meet the current 6¢ airmail rate, this is franked with vertical pairs of the 2¢ Washington Bicentennial and 1¢ National Parks stamps.

Perhaps my favorite cover on official White House stationery is shown in Figure 23. Franked with a 3¢ Washington stamp and special cachet, this was sent to FDR on his birthday January 30, 1935. Note that this is on a penalty envelope with postage stamp added to show this was for personal use. So who in the White House would have sent this to FDR? I think it could only have been his philatelically savvy friend and close political advisor Louis Howe, who lived in the White House, occupying the Lincoln bedroom.

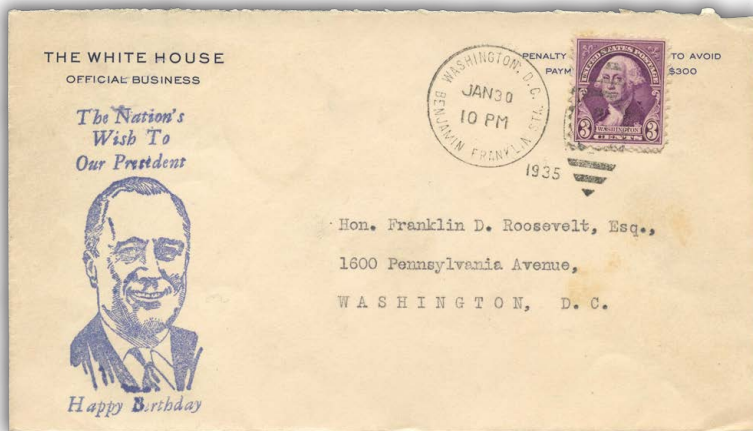


Figure 23. Birthday wishes sent to FDR on official White House stationery.

Finally, I show my example of unusually late usage of both a “A Stamp Collector for President” cover and 4¢ Washington Bicentennial corner margin stamp postmarked in Albany, New York, on November 23, 1937, (Figure 24). Especially noteworthy is the dark blue printed cachet on this envelope, as virtually all other single-color “A Stamp Collector for President” covers I’ve seen are in dark brown.

George Washington, the first president of the United States, has long been rated as one of the greatest of all US Presidents. Besides serving as commander-in-chief during the American Revolution, he is noted for voluntarily resigning his commission at the end of the Revolutionary War, thereby helping to establish the precedent of civilian control of the military. Furthermore, Washington firmly rejected the notion that he be treated like a King once he became President, and after governing with dignity and honor, oversaw a peaceful transfer of power at the end of his second term. The other American Presidents who have been considered to be candidates for the greatest of all time have been Abraham Lincoln for his inspiring leadership during the Civil War and the abolition of slavery, and Franklin D. Roosevelt for first leading the country through the Great Depression, then as leader of the Allied Nations during the worldwide battle against Axis Powers in World War II.

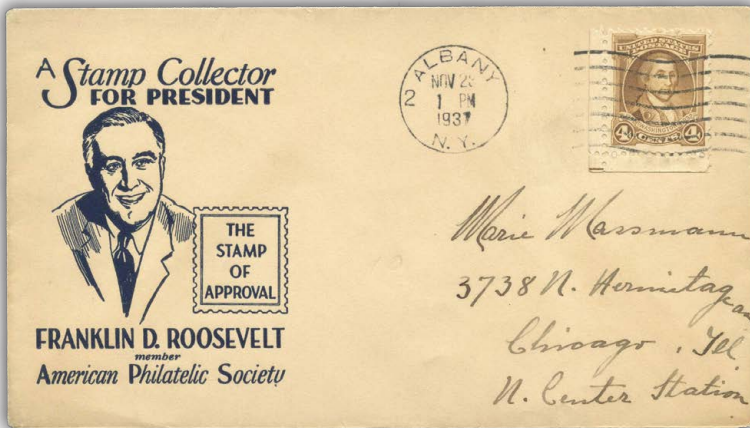


Figure 24. Unusually late usage of “A Stamp Collector for President” cover with 4c Washington Bicentennial stamp.

Author’s Notes:

On page 404 of the September issue, the name Roger Kirby was misspelled.

I somehow missed including the monochrome 15¢ pictorial essay for the Washington Bicentennial stamps in Part I (September issue, page 392). Belatedly shown here, this depicts Mount Vernon and is very similar to the 5¢ pictorial essay shown previously on page 390. The inclusion of this 15¢ essay brings the total number of essays shown for the Washington Bicentennial Stamps Series to 63.



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