

Palm Beach Stamp Club

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NEWSLETTER

July 2026



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July always brings with it a sense of celebration, reflection, and a little patriotic pride — and for good reasons. When the Revolutionary War erupted in April 1775, the American colonists weren't yet fighting for full independence. They were demanding something far more modest: fair representation and relief from the heavy hand of unjust taxation. But as the conflict stretched on for more than a year, the Continental Congress realized that the relationship with the United Kingdom had reached a breaking point.

On July 2, 1776, the delegates took their boldest step yet, voting unanimously to declare the 13 colonies free and independent states — the birth of what would become the United States of America. Two days later, on July 4, Congress approved Thomas Jefferson's Declaration of Independence, sending it out to be printed, distributed, and read aloud to crowds eager to hear the words that would define a nation.

Stamp of the Month

The beautifully preserved "official" Declaration displayed at the National Archives wasn't actually signed until August 2, nearly a full month after the vote for independence. As philatelists know well, history is full of these fascinating twists.



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As the United States approaches its 250th anniversary in 2026, collectors across the country are taking a fresh look at the stories our stamps preserve—stories of exploration, innovation, conflict, and community. Here in Florida, those stories feel especially vivid. From the earliest Spanish colonial posts to the pioneering Air Mail flights that linked Key West with Havana, the Sunshine State has long been a crossroads of American history and postal progress.

As July brings both Independence Day and the height of summer, it's a fitting moment to appreciate how the mail has bound the country together for two and a half centuries. Every postmark, every cachet, every carefully saved cover is a small piece of that larger American journey. And as we look ahead to the Semi-quincentennial celebrations, Florida's philatelic community continues to play its part—preserving the past, sharing discoveries, and celebrating the nation's enduring spirit.

The cash-strapped U.S. Postal Service announced a \$10 billion deal recently to handle "last-mile" delivery for Germany's

DHL eCommerce, the biggest contract in the two organizations' 25-year relationship. DHL will handle pickup and sorting at its 19 American hubs, while USPS completes the final leg of deliveries to its network of 170 million addresses nationwide. The deal is a major win for USPS, which has warned it could run out of cash as early as 2027 after losing \$9 billion in the last fiscal year.

At our June 11th meeting Richard Goldberg provided a report on the American Philatelic Society Boston show that he attended. Some of his photos are now on the club website. Also, Keith Lichtman gave a talk on postal cancellations.

Our June 25th meeting was lightly attended with a small auction. Club member Dan Maddalino gave a presentation on first flight covers out of West Palm Beach in 1931.

Plans are coming together for our club's fall stamp show at the West Palm Beach Embassy Suites on Saturday, October 31st.



July 12, Second Sunday Stamp & Coin Show, Azan Shrine Center, Sunday 9:30-3:00, Melbourne 32935.

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Sweet Corn

Pat Hensley

When I think of July, I remember family cookouts that always included corn on the cob. That is my favorite summertime vegetable! Slathered in butter and salt, it makes my mouth water just thinking about it!



The United States Postal Service celebrated one of America's favorite foods with postage stamp #5005, "Sweet Corn." The stamp was issued as part of the U.S. Postal Service's efforts to highlight everyday objects, foods, and traditions that are meaningful to Americans. It was issued on July 11, 2015, at the California State Fair in Sacramento, California. The Sweet Corn stamp features an image of fresh corn and celebrates a crop that has been an important part of farming and food in the United States. The drawing of this stamp was inspired by vintage shipping crate labels, seed packets, and catalogs and was designed by Michael Doret.

Corn is popular and important because it is used in many foods that people eat every day. We enjoy corn on the cob, popcorn, cornmeal, tortillas, and many other foods made from corn. Corn provides important nutrients, including fiber, vitamins, and minerals that help support a healthy diet. It is also used to make products such as corn oil, animal feed, and ingredients found in many foods. Because it is useful, affordable, and easy to grow, corn is one of the world's most important crops.

July is "Corn Month", a time to celebrate this important crop and the many ways people enjoy it. Summer is a popular time for fresh sweet corn because many crops are ready to harvest. During Corn Month, people celebrate with summer meals, festivals, and recipes featuring corn. The Sweet Corn postage stamp helps remind us how this simple crop connects farming, history, and American food traditions.

Time to go hunt for some corn on the cob for dinner!

References:

U.S. Postal Service — Stamp information and stamp releases

USDA SNAP-Ed — Corn nutrition information and food resources

Healthline — "Corn 101: Nutrition Facts and Health Benefits"

National Today — "Corn Month" information

<https://www.mysticstamp.com/5005-2015-first-class-forever-stamp-summer-harvest-sweet-corn/>

Ahrens Fire Engines

Keith Lichtman

A childhood memory rekindled by a fire engine cover: As a kid, I was always fascinated by fire trucks. Growing up in Brooklyn, my friends and I would wander over to Pennsylvania Avenue just to wait for the fire trucks to roar past. We'd wave like our lives depended on it, and when the firemen waved back, it felt like the greatest victory a child could win. Those moments stayed with me.



So, when I spotted a horse-drawn fire engine cover (above) at a Palm Beach Stamp Club auction, something clicked. Even though it wasn't the red engine of my childhood memories, it stirred the same excitement. I knew I had to bring it home and when I did, I started digging into the history behind the company depicted on the envelope.

The Ahrens Steam Fire Engine Company began in 1868 in Cincinnati, founded by Christopher Ahrens. Less than a decade later, in 1877, it became the Ahrens Manufacturing Company. The business continued to evolve, and in 1891 it merged with three other firms to form the American Fire Engine Company. This era also marked the arrival of Charles Fox, Ahrens' son-in-law, whose engineering talent would soon reshape firefighting history. In 1902, Fox helped develop the world's first gasoline-powered fire engine, a breakthrough that pushed the industry into the modern age.

By 1905, the Ahrens family had separated from American Fire Engine Company and rebranded themselves as the Ahrens Fire Engine Company. Five years later, in 1910, the firm adopted the name collectors know well today: The Ahrens-Fox Fire Engine Corporation.



Among their most celebrated creations was the “Continental”, the fire engine that dominated its era, setting a world record for gallons PPM (pumped per minute), pressure delivered, hose length reached, and the height and distance of its water streams. For a time, nothing else on wheels could match it. The company continued producing engines until ceasing operations in 1957.

This cover that caught my eye has no cancellation, but the company name printed on it provides a helpful clue. Because the name Ahrens Manufacturing Company was used only between 1877 and 1891, we can place the envelope within that window. The stamped envelope itself appears to be either a Scott U83, issued between 1870 and 1871, or a Scott U160, issued from 1874 to 1886. That overlap gives us a reasonable production range for the piece.

Ahrens-Fox even made its way onto a modern United States postage stamp. In 1988, as part of its Transportation Series, the Postal Service issued Scott 2264 featuring a 1913 Ahrens-Fox Model AC No. 516 fire engine—a fitting tribute to a company that helped define American firefighting.

What began as a childhood love of fire trucks turned into a small but meaningful philatelic discovery. That’s the beauty of this hobby, when a single cover can carry you from Brooklyn sidewalks to 19th-century Cincinnati and back again, all in one afternoon.



Reference:
Cover from Author’s collection.

1960's Stamps of Yemen: Beauty Born of Turmoil

Michael Rogers

During the 1960s, northern Yemen—situated at the southern end of the Arabian Peninsula—was engulfed in a civil war that reshaped the nation and left a lasting imprint on world philately. The conflict pitted the Mutawakelite Kingdom of Yemen, ruled by descendants of Imam Yahya, against the revolutionary forces of the Yemen Arab Republic. As the fighting intensified, the country found itself divided not only politically and geographically, but also postally.

When the war began in 1962, each side seized the existing stocks of postage stamps issued by the previous administration. Rather than discard them, both factions overprinted these stamps for use within their own territories. These overprints became symbols of legitimacy, propaganda, and—perhaps most importantly—revenue. Stamp sales to collectors abroad quickly became a crucial source of income for both governments as they struggled to finance their war efforts. A clear example of this dual-issue phenomenon can be seen in the 1962 Trajan's Kiosk 4-bogsha stamp (Scott #127). The same base stamp exists with a Mutawakelite Kingdom overprint and with a Yemen Arab Republic overprint, each reflecting the authority of the issuing faction. For collectors, these parallel issues offer a fascinating glimpse into how deeply the postal system became intertwined with the political struggle.

As the war continued, Yemen's postal output grew at an astonishing pace. Both administrations produced far more stamps than the domestic mail system could ever absorb. The situation was further complicated by the massive quantities of cancelled-to-order stamps sold to the packet trade at steep discounts.

Yet time has a way of reshaping philatelic reputations. In recent years, collectors have begun to recognize the artistic quality and historical significance behind them. What began as a wartime necessity ultimately produced one of the most intriguing philatelic landscapes of the twentieth century. Yemen's stamps from this era tell a story of conflict, identity, and resilience, all captured on small pieces of paper that continue to fascinate collectors today.



Reference: Reprinted in part from Linn's Stamp News, April 15, 2002

Getting Kids Excited About Stamps

Keith Lichtman

One topic that keeps coming up in our meetings is how to get young people interested in stamp collecting. The Postal Service certainly issues plenty of stamps that *should* appeal to kids—superheroes, cartoon characters, fantasy themes, animals, space, video games, and more. The challenge is that the USPS doesn't actively promote these issues to children. They announce new releases to the philatelic press, and those stories appear in hobby newspapers... but kids never see them.

That means the responsibility falls to us—collectors, clubs, and local hobby groups—to spark that first moment of curiosity. If we want kids to discover the fun of collecting, we need to meet them where they are. Show them stamps that connect to their world right now. Imagine a school or scouting newsletter with bright images of Superman & Batman, The Muppets, Dungeons & Dragons, Star Wars, Disney, or Harry Potter stamps. These designs are colorful, familiar, and instantly engaging. They speak the same visual language kids already love.

The key is to make our outreach age appropriate. Younger children might respond to Sesame Street, dinosaurs, or animals. Older kids might gravitate toward superheroes, fantasy art, video games, or pop-culture icons. Teens might enjoy sports, music legends, or modern illustration styles. There truly are stamps for every age and interest—you just have to put the right ones in front of the right audience.

A simple ad or flyer can go a long way. A small display at a library, a table at a school fair, or a short presentation to a scout troop that can plant the seed. Once kids see that stamps reflect the things they already enjoy, collecting stops feeling like an “old-fashioned hobby” and starts feeling like a treasure hunt. If we want the next generation of collectors, we can't wait for them to find us. We have to bring the hobby to them—one colorful stamp at a time.



July Fourth

Michael Swope



Every July Fourth, Americans celebrate independence with fireworks, cookouts, and at least one neighbor who insists on launching something that definitely wasn't approved by the fire marshal. But for stamp collectors, the holiday brings a different kind of excitement: the annual rediscovery of just how many times the U.S. Postal Service has printed the flag, the Founding Fathers, and the Liberty Bell in slightly different shades of red, white, and blue.

Collectors know the truth—nothing says “Happy Birthday, America” quite like digging through an album and realizing you own six versions of the same flag stamp, each with a different perforation, tagging variety, or microscopic design tweak that only a philatelist could love. Meanwhile, non-collectors look at the same stamps and say, “They all look the same,” which is exactly when we smile politely and change the subject.

Florida adds its own flair to the holiday. While the rest of the country enjoys mild summer breezes, we celebrate Independence Day by stepping outside and instantly becoming a humidity-powered fountain. But even that can't dampen the fun of spotting a July 4th postmark, a patriotic cachet, or a cover featuring fireworks that—thankfully—don't require a garden hose on standby.

Featured above is a patriotic embossed post card, produced by Samson Brothers Publishing Company, New York, c.1915. It is franked with the green Panama-Pacific Exposition Issue, Vasco Nunez de Balboa, 1¢ postage stamp, Scott #397. It was cancelled at Millville, New Jersey on June 27, 1917.



Reference: Post card from Author's collection.