

# Palm Beach Stamp Club

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NEWSLETTER

May 2026



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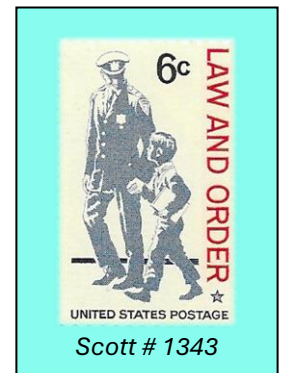


American Philatelic Society  
Chapter Affiliate #923  
Membership Affiliate #81338

May in Florida arrives with that unmistakable shift in the air—the sun climbs a little higher, the breezes off the water turn warmer, and the state settles into its long stretch of bright, tropical days. It's the month when snowbirds finish packing their last postcards home, hurricane-season mailers begin appearing in post office lobbies, and our coastal towns start to hum with early summer visitors. For Florida's postal history, May has always been a month of movement. Steamship routes once grew busier as Gulf and Atlantic travel picked up, Key West postmasters prepared for the seasonal influx of maritime mail, and inland communities saw their rural carriers navigating sandy roads under the growing heat. Many of the covers we collect today carry the faint imprint of those early summer rhythms—salt air, travel, and transition.

## *Stamp of the Month*

In 1962, President John F. Kennedy proclaimed May 15<sup>th</sup> as National Peace Officers Memorial Day and the calendar week in which May 15 falls, as National Police Week.



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## May 2026

Each May, as Florida settles into its early summer rhythm - our state also pauses for a moment of reflection. Memorial Day has long been a time when communities across Florida gather to honor the men and women who gave their lives in service to the nation.

For collectors, the day carries an added layer of meaning: the mail itself has always played a quiet but powerful role in how Americans mourn and remember.

Florida's military and postal histories are deeply intertwined. During the Spanish-American War, soldiers stationed in Tampa and Jacksonville sent home letters that now serve as treasured artifacts of both family memory and national history. In World War II, Florida's vast network of training bases - from Miami to Pensacola - generated a flood of correspondence. Censored envelopes, APO markings, and V-Mail sheets from these camps remain poignant reminders of young Floridians preparing for service far from home.

There was a great deal of discussion at our April 9<sup>th</sup> club meeting on how to improve

turnout at our club shows. Public turnout at the Embassy Suites Hotel on March 21<sup>st</sup> was quite low, but apparently dealers were not disappointed in sales volumes.

The key is to stop relying on the assumption that "stamp collectors will find us" and instead market the shows like modern hobby events. The good news is that stamp collecting has huge, untapped appeal—history buffs, travelers, art lovers, kids, retirees, and even investors—but they won't show up unless the show feels accessible, visible, and fun! There is work to be done to improve turnout. All suggestions should be given to President Kaye.

Keith Lichtman made an interesting presentation on "Christmas Seal" stamps (Cinderellas) at the April 23<sup>rd</sup> club meeting. At the same meeting we welcomed our first "Facebook" stamp collector who arrived with his excellent United States collection.



May 5, West Volusia Stamp Club, Collector to Collector Sale, Sanborn Activity Center, 815 So. Alabama Ave., Deland, 32724, Tuesday, 9:30-3.

May 10, Second Sunday Stamp & Coin Show, Azan Shrine Center, Sunday 9:30-3:00, Melbourne 32935.

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# A Philatelic Artifact, A Mystery & More

Daniel Maddalino

*The Artifact:* Strange and dull-looking covers encountered at stamp shows can lead to mystery and discovery. During an annual APS-WSP stamp exhibition and show I was contacted by an internationally known and respected Philatelist, APS-WSP Judge, author and researcher (Just to mention a few accolades). He had encountered a curious Florida cover at the show and thought I might be interested. After he described it to me, I rushed to acquire it! The cover is shown with this article<sup>1</sup>. Only the front is shown for space conservation as there are no markings on its reverse side.

A tour of the cover finds an “Eagle, Shield, Olive Branch, and Arrows” 6¢ airmail postage stamp, Scott U.S. #C23, issued May 14, 1938, on unwatermarked paper. This is a very attractive carmine eagle inside a dark blue frame cancelled with a black hand stamped oval: WEST PALM BEACH/FLA.



The 6¢ stamp paid the domestic airmail rate for the period of 1934 – 1944. There is a faint hand stamp: “POSTAGE DUE, 2 CENTS” in red ink immediately below the airmail postage. The domestic airmail rate at the time of mailing was 8¢ (1944-September 25, 1946<sup>2</sup>). To the left is a black circle date hand stamp “WEST PALM BEACH/FLA./JAN 25/230PM/1946” accompanied by “1” in a Bar Killer device. This number recognizes West Palm Beach as a high-volume post office. Below the CDS, a precancelled 2¢ Postage Due stamp is affixed. This is Scott U.S. #J81 issued in 1931 and printed on unwatermarked paper using the wet printing method.

**SORRY \_\_\_\_\_**  
**The official dedication of the**  
**Post Office did not take place.**  
**No cachet was issued**  
**Palm Beach County Stamp Club**

Finally, there is a large red ink hand stamp that commanded my attention. A philatelic artifact has now been added to our Palm Beach Stamp Club’s historical record!

*The Mystery:* Having searched thousands of miscellaneous covers at many stamp shows I have never come across this one.

The mystery is in what is **not** stamped on the cover. What post office did not have an official dedication and why? The answers to these questions required extensive searching on the internet newspaper archives, and through multiple Florida post office reference catalogues. So, what post office was the Palm Beach County Stamp Club referring to? The only post office to begin operation in Palm Beach County in 1946 was for the Company Town of Bryant, which was located just east of Lake Okeechobee in Palm Beach County. The Bryant Post Office was established March 1, 1946, and discontinued December 1, 1959<sup>3</sup>. Working with a CDS of January 25, 1946, our cover was posted too early to be referring to the opening at Bryant. So, let's back up.

In 1945, the establishment of a Contract Post Office (CPO) was announced for July 12. CPO's were locally referred to as Community Post Offices but, the U.S. Post Office Department at this time used RS (Rual Station) or RB (Rual Branch) to log their existence. A CPO was established at a private residence or business in low populated areas. Thus, the "Post Office" was not government property nor were the "Clerks" Post Office employees. Hence, no official dedication was ever performed. Consequently, neither a cachet nor covers were ever prepared. CPO's generally were limited to selling stamps and postal stationery, collecting outgoing mail and taking it to the nearest official post office, and retrieving any incoming mail<sup>4</sup>.

Now, where was this CPO? It was in a small hamlet on the south shore of Lake Okeechobee, five miles east of Clewiston at the mouth of the Miami Canal, named Ritta.

*And More:* This small farming community had a violent and tragic history. Having been settled in about 1906, the entire population was repeatedly annihilated by hurricanes (1909, 1926 and 1928) and drowning floods (1922 and 1923). Each event resulted in almost no survivors. Yet, pioneer homesteaders kept returning. Its original official post office was established March 26, 1912, and abandoned following the '28 hurricane to be discontinued by the United States Post Office Department on October 31, 1931<sup>5</sup>. By the end of World War II, Ritta recovered only enough to warrant a CPO for its farming community from July 12, 1945, until it was folded into the town that replaced Ritta - Lake Harbor, on October 6, 1978<sup>6</sup>.

*Discover More:* Slow down when thumbing through that box of strange and dull-looking covers. A philatelic artifact, a mystery, and more could be right at your fingertips!

*References:*

1. *Cover from the author's collection*
2. *Beecher, Henry W. and Anthony S. Wawrukiewicz: U. S. Domestic Postal Rates, 1872 – 1999, Revised Second Edition. 1999. CAMA Publishing Company, Portland, OR*
3. *Bradbury, Alford G. and E. Story Hallock: A Chronology of Florida Post Offices, Handbook No. 2. 1962. The Florida Federation of Stamp Clubs*
4. <https://www.about.usps.com/suppliers/becoming/contract-postal-unit> Accessed March 26, 2026
5. <https://www.newspapers.com> Search Ritta 1900-1932 Palm Beach County, Florida
6. *Gallagher, John S.: Florida Post Offices. 1997. The Depot, Lake Grove. OR*

# Special Delivery, Messenger on Bicycle

Pat Hensley

Remember when you learned to ride a bicycle? I remember my dad running alongside me while I learned to ride a two-wheeled bike without training wheels. I was scared to death, but eventually I loved it! May 1<sup>st</sup> is “National Learn to Ride a Bike Day.” This fun day encourages people, especially children, to learn how to ride a bicycle. Riding a bike is good exercise and a useful skill. It also connects philatelically because bicycles once helped Special Delivery Messengers deliver mail quickly. Now, this day is a great time for families to practice riding together and enjoy being active outdoors.

Special Delivery stamps were special stamps that paid for faster service. People affixed the stamps to letters in addition to regular postage. The first U. S. Special Delivery stamp was issued in 1885 and showed a running messenger. Over time, many different designs were made, often showing messengers, bicycles, or other ways of quick delivery. These stamps are now popular because they tell part of the story of how mail delivery improved.



The 1902 10¢ Special Delivery stamp “Messenger on Bicycle” (Scott #E6) depicts a postal worker riding quickly on a bicycle to deliver an important letter. The image helped demonstrate how bicycles made deliveries faster and more efficient. Today, this stamp is a favorite among collectors because it represents both postal history and the growing use of bicycles in everyday life.

Special Delivery Service was a fast mail service offered by the United States Postal Service. It began in 1885 to ensure important letters were delivered immediately, even if regular mail was not scheduled. When a letter was marked for Special Delivery, a messenger would take it directly to the person’s home or business as soon as it arrived at the post office.

Special Delivery Messengers began in 1885, the same year the service started. These workers rushed the mail to its destination as quickly as possible. At first, many messengers ran on foot, carrying letters through busy streets. Later, they began using bicycles to move faster and cover longer distances. The bicycle itself was invented in the early 1800s, with important improvements made by inventors like Karl Drais in 1817, who created an early two-wheeled riding machine.

When was the last time you rode a bike? Today might be a good day for a bike ride!

*References: Stamp from the author’s collection; Smithsonian Institution – Postal history collections; United States Postal Service – History of Special Delivery; Library of Congress – Bicycle history; National Postal Museum – Special Delivery stamps history; Mystic Stamp - 1902 10c Special Delivery, Messenger on Bicycle*

# Ryukyu Islands

Michael Rogers

Collecting opportunities abound for the Ryukyu Islands. The *Scott Specialized Catalogue of United States Stamps and Covers* and *Volume One of the Scott Standard Postage Stamp Catalogue* place the Ryukyus with United States issues. This is because the Ryukyu postal administration (as well as the entire 63-island chain) was completely or partly under United States authority from 1945 to 1972. Collectors often seek imprint blocks and first-day covers of 1948-1972 issues.

While the Scott catalogue provides excellent treatment, there is much beyond these catalogue issues to collect. Fortunately, the key reference works are in English. The Ryukyu Philatelic Society has published the journal, *From the Dragon's Den*, as well as many monographs and tracts. The 1962 classic *Ryukyus Handbook* by Minoru Sera is worthwhile and easy to obtain.

The first Ryukyus general issue was released on July 1, 1948 (Scott 1a-7a). On July 18, 1949, a second printing was issued (Scott 1-7). I have observed sets offered that contain stamps from both of these printings, usually the cheaper of each denomination from each printing combined to make one set. The careful collector must be able to distinguish between the two printings.

Throughout the 1948-1972 general issues, varieties are found that will spice up any collection. From the inverted "1" in the "1964" overprint on the 3¢ Relay Station stamp (Scott 122a) to many airmail surcharge varieties, there are many interesting stamps for any budget.



Featured at left is a First-Day cover to celebrate "Greening of the Ryukyus". It is franked with the 3¢ Pine Tree postage stamp and cancelled at Naha, the prefecture capital of Okinawa, on May 1, 1961. The cancel translation is: "A Chronicle of the Greening Campaign in Ryukyu – Naha Central, 1961.5.1."

Ref: Reprinted in part from *Linn's Stamp News*, June 19, 2000

# The “Greatest Show on Earth” Is No More

Keith Lichtman

Don't panic! It's still operating. I went to see it in January because I have always loved the circus and was happy to see it was back. Before I explain the “Is No More” part of the title, let's have a little history of the Ringling Brothers and Barnum & Bailey Circus, an American traveling circus company billed as “The Greatest Show on Earth.”



They began as two distinct companies in 1871, Ringling Brothers Circus and Barnum & Bailey Circus. In 1909 the two circuses merged but were operated separately, allowing them to run two different shows at the same time. By 1919, it became difficult to run the two circuses independently because of labor shortages and complications relating to rail travel brought on by World War I. On March 29, 1919, the Ringling Brothers and Barnum & Bailey combined shows opened in New York City. Posters declared, "The Ringling Bros. World's Greatest Shows and the Barnum & Bailey Greatest Show on Earth are now combined into one record-breaking giant of all exhibitions." John Ringling moved the circus headquarters to Sarasota, Florida in 1927 and prospered into the 1920's, but suffered during the Depression of the 1930's and World War II. Special dispensation was given to the circus by President Roosevelt to use the rails to operate in 1942, in spite of travel restrictions imposed by the war. After the war, movies and television took a bite out of attendance. In 1956 the Greatest Show on Earth made the change from the big top tents to indoor arenas, with the last performance under the big top on July 16, 1956. In 2001, The Humane Society of the United States sued the circus over alleged mistreatment of elephants, but the suit ended in 2014 when the circus was awarded a \$25.2 million settlement. In March 2015, the circus announced that all elephants would be retired in 2018, but Ringling accelerated the decision and retired the elephants in May 2016. Eight months later, it was announced that the circus would do thirty more performances and close due to declining ticket sales, loss of elephants, high operating costs and animal cruelty concerns. The circus's last performance was at Nassau Veterans Memorial Coliseum in Uniondale, New York on May 21, 2017. But in 2021, it was announced that the circus would be relaunched in 2023. On September 29, 2023, after a six-year hiatus, the circus was back.

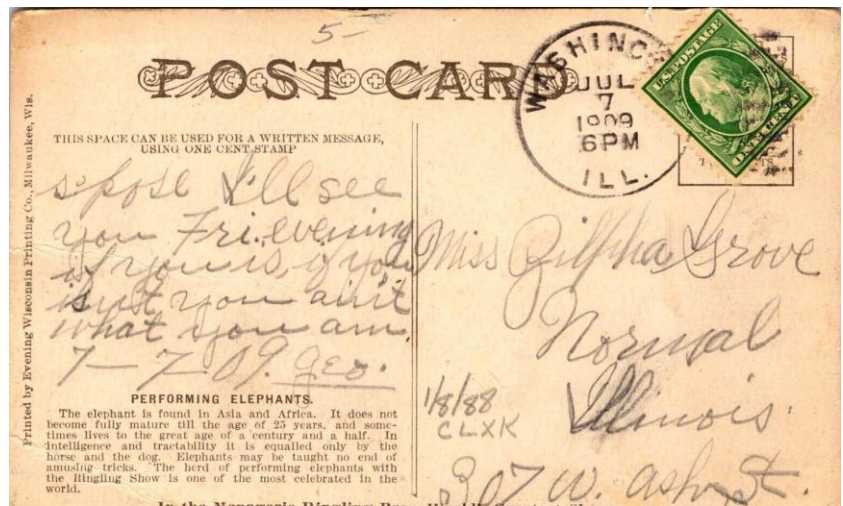
Currently, the show is not the greatest. There is no opening parade of elephants; in fact, there are no animals at all - just a robot dog. There are no clowns - what's a circus without clowns? I was very disappointed. It was, however, a great kiddie show. I can say without any fear of argument that the Greatest Show on Earth is no more!

Take another look at the cover. It has a duplex postmark "April 23, 1919 1:30AM, Madison Sq. New York." The cover is marked Special Delivery, but the stamps are in too poor a state to identify. Postage paid was 11 cents, consisting of one 2¢ and three 3¢ Washington stamps. The envelope is under paid because the postal rate at the time of the mailing was 3¢ for the first-class letter rate and 10¢ for special delivery. The 3¢ letter rate did not go down to 2¢ until July 1, 1919, a little more than 2 months later. The rates were lowered after the end of World War 1, changed back to the standard rate in place before November 1917. Based on the stamps on the envelope it was short, one cent for the first-class rate and one cent for the special delivery rate. It appears the cover was forwarded from Sarasota Florida to Burnside Connecticut.



At left and below, a souvenir postcard (c. 1908) for Ringling Brothers World's Greatest Show, published by the Evening Wisconsin Printing Company, Milwaukee franked with the 1¢ Washington postage stamp, Scott #331 and cancelled at Washington, Illinois on July 7, 1909.

Ref:  
Cover, postcard from Author's collection



# U.S. Postage Stamp Centenary

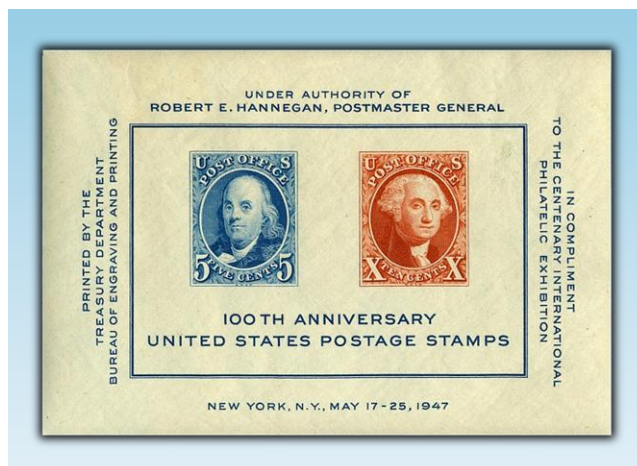
Michael Swope



The centenary of the first postage stamp issued by the United States Government was held at the Centenary International Philatelic Exhibition in New York City from May 17 to 25, 1947. Over the course of nine days, thousands of collectors filled New York City's Grand Central Palace. The exhibition spanned three floors and included 119 booths and 805 exhibits with almost 2,100 frames.

Shown above is a Ken Boll designed, Cachet Craft Company, screen printed commemorative first-day cover. It is franked with a block of 3¢, deep blue, Postage Centenary Stamp Issue, stamps which feature George Washington and Benjamin Franklin, Scott #947 and cancelled at the Centenary Exhibition on May 17, 1947.

In addition, a Centenary International Philatelic Exhibition souvenir sheet (at right) was issued on May 19, 1947. The imperforate sheet contains reproductions of the first U.S. postage stamps in different colors, the 5¢ blue Benjamin Franklin and 10¢ brown-orange George Washington (Scott #948). Text around the border of the sheet provides information about the production of the sheet.



*Ref: Cover and souvenir sheet from author's collection; Postalmuseum/si/edu.*