Chapter 4: Shaping National Identity with Commemoratives, 1920s-30s

My stamps tell wondrous stories
In their own mysterious way;
Weaving a quaint fascination
That holds me in its sway.

They illustrate man's achievements,
And his victory over things;
His many modes of travel,
On water, rails and wings.

They show our nation's heroes,
Men who helped to free
Our great and might country,
Dearest land of liberty.

Thomas Kildride, "My Stamps," 1936[1]

When Thomas Killride looked at the stamps he collected, he read "wondrous stories." He felt patriotic about American achievements and proud of heroes who helped to "free Our great and mighty country." Stories leaping out from American commemorative stamps, like the ones Killride alluded to, were shaped by decisions made by the Postmaster General and his assistants and influenced by elected officials and the general public. Starting in 1892, the USPOD printed commemorative series advertising the U.S. world's fairs with imagery that revered American achievements in technology and American and European conquest of lands and peoples. History as

[1] Thomas G. Killride, "My Stamps," in Charles J. Phillips, *Stamp Collecting, the King of Hobbies and the Hobby of Kings* (New York.: H. L. Lindquist, 1936), 407-08.

depicted on ordinary definitive postage represented a top-down approach by honoring American political and military history showing the faces of former presidents and military leaders. Commemorative stamps in particular offered a government-sanctioned version of American history that both collectors and non-collectors noticed. By the 1920s, Americans petitioned the government and asked the USPOD to print a stamp that commemorated their local anniversary or honored their favorite hero. By doing so, petitioners sought the legitimacy of the USPOD to broaden the American national narrative as distributed and presented on commemorative, limited-issue stamps. Individuals and special interest groups framed their petitions by arguing that their anniversary or hero exemplified American values, contributed to founding of the nation or winning independence, or fought to achieve equality promised by the Revolutionary War. Most petitioners did not collect stamps as a hobby, yet they saw how stamps held power to tell stories and naturalize them through imagery that circulated widely throughout the U.S. and the world.

Early American commemoratives taught stamp consumers to read the stories embedded in images, which served as a powerful tool for disseminating federally-sanctioned versions of American history. This strategy proved successful for the USPOD as it became more interested in fostering philately as a consumer practice and hobby. After finding that commemorative world's fair stamps would indeed sell, the Department looked beyond national expositions and began to honor regional commemorations and individuals and significantly increased the number of

commemoratives printed in the early twentieth century. From 1892 to 1919, the USPOD printed forty-seven different commemorative stamps, almost exclusively printed to celebrate world's fairs or regional expositions. Limited-issue production tripled between 1920 and 1940, when the USPOD printed and released 150 different commemoratives (See Appendix A for a full list of U.S. commemoratives, 1892-1940). With the Philatelic Agency established in 1921, the Department was better equipped to handle the distribution of additional issues and requests from collectors. While the U.S. led the way in the production of limited-issue stamps, it was not the only country producing commemoratives. Latin American nations celebrated centennials of independence between 1910 and 1924 with stamps. Sixty-two countries comprising the British Empire celebrated the twenty-fifth anniversary of George V's reign by printing a stamp to commemorate this event, offering quite a catalog for the collector. Although originating the postal revolution, Great Britain did not issue its first commemorative until 1924, so this "Jubilee" set pleased collectors of British and British colonial stamps. While other nations printed commemoratives, the USPOD was printing a greater variety of limited-issues. Global production increased greatly, so that all postal agencies printed more commemoratives during 1930-1934 than had been printed in the previous decade (1920-29), or any time prior.[2]

[2] Jack Child, *Miniature Messages: The Semiotics and Politics of Latin American Postage Stamps* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008), 47-8. The following articles all appear in Frank L. Wilson, *The Philatelic Almanac: The Stamp Collector's Handbook* (New York: H.L. Lindquist, 1936): George B. Sloane, "A Review of the 1935 Auction Season," 27-8; C.I. Cromwell, "British Colonials in 1935," 31; and Kent B. Stiles, "Major and Minor Varieties of Postage Stamps Issued 1840-1934," 58-60.

In the U.S., patriotic commemorations flowered following WWI. Commemorative committees, business leaders, and politicians actively pursued federal postage stamps celebrating regional anniversaries held at Plymouth Rock, Mayport, Minneapolis, Lexington and Concord, and Valley Forge. Others fought for stamps honoring military, cultural, and political heroes, such as Casimir Pulaski, Theodore Kosciuszko, Susan B. Anthony, and Booker T. Washington. Knowing of the postal service's power to sell an idealized and patriotic vision of the American past, some sought commemoratives as part of grander strategies fighting for social and political equality while others perpetuated a romanticized, white-washed, view of colonial America. The battle for recognition on a federal stamp also reflected contemporary struggles over the construction of race and definitions of citizenship in the U.S. Residents and citizens with southern and eastern European ancestry, for instance, strove to be accepted as racially white, and that worked to further the chasm between whites and blacks who still struggled as second-class citizens for political power and representation on postage.[3]

In the early twentieth century, vernacular interests in stamps may have emerged from the growth of local historical societies that promoted genealogical

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[3]Roger Brody, "Pilgrim Tercentenary Issue," in *Arago: People. Postage and the Post* (Washington, DC: National Postal Museum, 2006), available online at http://www.arago.si.edu/index.asp?con=1&cmd=1&mode=1&tid=2033807; Michael Kammen, *Mystic Chords of Memory: The Transformation of Tradition in American Culture* (New York: Knopf, 1991); Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998); David R. Roediger, *Working Toward Whiteness: How America's Immigrants Became White, The Strange Journey from Ellis Island to the Suburbs* (New York: BasicBooks, 2005).

research and historic site preservation. State and privately-funded societies, from libraries and archives to patriotic-hereditary groups, encouraged Americans to research the history of their families and save family heirlooms. Hereditary group members took pride in tracing their roots back to pioneering families who established communities in Pennsylvania, for example, before the American Revolution. These practices helped to build regional and state pride that connected small towns and counties to broader national narratives. Encouraging family history research also created dividing lines among old and new immigrant groups, as many older immigrants grasped onto their colonial lineage while ignoring the challenges faced by late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century groups with similar European origins.[4] Regional preservation groups such as the Association for the Preservation of Virginia Antiquities (APVA) erected memorials and preserved sites tied to Virginia's founding families that recalled pleasing myths about Jamestown and Williamsburg that supported traditional, hegemonic, white elitism. For elite Virginian members of the APVA, post-Civil War political and cultural upheaval left them reaching backwards so as to rebuild a better future which meant returning to a time when white elites commanded power that demanded deference from blacks and poor whites.[5] This chapter will reveal how other groups reached backward to use images and individuals

[4] Katharina Hering, "'We Are All Makers of History': People and Publics in the Practice of Pennsylvania-German Family History, 1891-1966" (PhD dissertation, George Mason University, 2009).
[5] James M. Lindgren, "'Virginia Needs Living Heroes': Historic Preservation in the Progressive Era," *The Public Historian* 13, no. 1 (Winter 1991): 9-24.

from America's past to represent their desires to influence who was entitled to the rights of citizenship through the medium of a commemorative stamp.

Through the mid-twentieth century, the USPOD became a powerful institution for legitimizing certain interpretations of the past through the commemorative stamp program. Since the mid-nineteenth century, federal statutes restricted the UPSOD from printing the portrait of any living person on stamps making all stamps—definitive and commemorative—snapshots from the past.[6] The postal service did not accept all stamp requests and carefully chose subjects for commemorative printing, this authority elevated any story or individual into a broader official American narrative that told consumers that this person or event was nationally-significant and worthy of honor. These carefully chosen and constructed stamps were then collected and saved by philatelists, some who saw American stamps not only as "wondrous stories" but as "stepping stones of history" that traced, from beginning to end, the "Alpha and Omega" of America's story.[7] Viewing the corpus of commemoratives in this way indicated that many collectors—and most likely many non-collectors—believed that scenes printed on stamps told accurate stories from the past and that individuals were chosen because of their significant contributions to American history. These stories became memorialized as collectors saved stamps.

[6] 31 USC, Section 5114, RS 3576.
[7] William J. Reed, "The Sun Never Sets in Philately Land," *Philatelic West* 85, no. 2 (February 1927): n.p.; and Killride, "My Stamps."

Postmaster General, James Farley, appointed by "First Philatelist" Franklin Delano Roosevelt, recognized that these commemorative stamps also acted as "permanent memorials." Much like structural memorials built in public spaces, one vision of the past dominates the stamp's imagery, which often screens out other perspectives. Stamps were small in size, but their availability made them more accessible than memory sites such as museums, archives, and monuments. These sites have the power, according to Pierre Nora, to be nation-building tools that erase a personal, experiential memory of the past.[8] For this reason, it is important to examine limited-issue commemoratives and their impact as if they are miniature memorials. I will explore how citizens, collectors, and the USPOD engaged in conversations related to commemorative stamp selection from 1920-1940. I will also analyze the images printed on selected stamps that treat colonial origins, war heroes and battles, and the struggle over racial and gender equality. As the USPOD worked to present a united vision of the past, stamp scenes showed a decisively white and Protestant pluralistic vision of America that obscured more complicated stories of slavery and oppression. Conversations revolving around these stamps demonstrate how the USPOD became a powerful institution that legitimized and distributed historical narratives, and one that allowed ordinary citizens to engage with its government. Americans always

[8] United States Post Office Department, *Annual Report of the Postmaster-General of the United States for the Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 1936* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1936), 47; Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, trans. Lewis A. Coser (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992); Pierre Nora, "Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Memoire," *Representations* 26 (Spring 1989): 7-25.

maintained a close relationship with the postal service, and when successfully petitioning for a stamp on behalf of their cause some citizens actually influenced postal decisions and public memory.

Pilgrims, Colonial Revivals, and Origins

As Americans were confronted with political radicalism, labor unrest, changing roles of women, Jim Crow laws, African American urban migration, and international immigration in the interwar period, some found comfort in celebrating a nostalgic, homogenous fiction of the American colonial past. Public celebrations of historic anniversaries were filled with patriotic sentiment weaving together local, vernacular, events, and people into official national narratives, as was the case with commemorative stamps printed in this era.[9] Negotiations of public memory occurred when commemorative or memorial committees, comprised of community, business, and cultural leaders, campaigned for a limited-issue federal postage stamp. Beginning in 1920 with the Pilgrim Tercentenary issue, commemorative stamp subjects were moving away from solely advertising world's fairs as the Department began celebrating battles, anniversaries, and individuals that were part of greater cultural trends that sought to define Americanness in post-War America. Like most memorials and

[9] John E Bodnar, *Remaking America: Public Memory, Commemoration, and Patriotism in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 13-20, 169-185. Bodnar defines official culture as presenting the past in a patriotic ways that emphasize ideals rather than complex realities. Vernacular culture represents many interests of diverse groups that reflect personal experiences in smaller communities.

commemorations at the time, stamps projected a nostalgic vision of America's past and ignored the more complicated stories of slavery, oppression, and conquest. Americanization efforts attacked customs and practices of new and first-generation immigrants thought to be racially and socially inferior by patriotic-hereditary organizations. Historic preservation and colonial revival movements grew in popularity because those preserving and reproducing iconography from the colonial period believed this style was uniquely American. Preserved homes and historic sites were constructed to be places that taught immigrants about America's past, while "patriotic Americans" were urged to buy and display colonial-era reproductions in their homes.[10]

Colonial-themed stamps from the 1920s and 1930s coincided with growing interest in the physical evidence, or material culture, from colonial and early Republic eras. Wealthy businessmen and heiresses of industrial fortunes donated money to finance wings in museums and historic preservation. The American Wing at the Metropolitan Museum of Art opened in 1924 to exhibit early American decorative arts and furnishings of "our ancestors." Philadelphia's Sesquicentennial Exposition boasted "High Street," an attraction that featured rebuilt "colonial" structures of Philadelphia in 1776. Inspired by Henry Mercer's collections of tools, Henry Ford began voraciously collecting a host of buildings and objects in 1919—anything from

[10] William B. Rhoads, "The Colonial Revival and American Nationalism," *The Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 35, no. 4 (December 1976): 239-254; Patricia West, *Domesticating History: The Political Origins of America's House Museums* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution, 1999); and Kammen, *Mystic Chords of Memory: The Transformation of Tradition in American Culture*.

agricultural machinery to household and kitchen implements—that he would eventually display in Greenfield Village, Michigan. Uninterested in financing an established historic site like John D. Rockefeller, Ford created his own emulation of an "Early American Village" that opened to the public in 1931. And the physical restorations and quests for "authenticity" at Colonial Williamsburg in the late 1920s and early 1930s encouraged some Americans to purchase antiques and replicas to decorate their homes.[11] Calling upon the designs of the late colonial and early Republic periods during a time of American post-World War I conservatism in foreign policy, some Americans focused on building the image of United States as an exceptional place with a unique history.

Attempts to craft the unique history of America's origins, particularly in nostalgic ways, appeared in many regional and local settlement-related anniversaries during the 1920s and 1930s; some even appeared on commemoratives. These stamps were not the first attempts at shaping America's founding mythologies. We saw in the last chapter that the Columbian (1892-93) and the Jamestown Tercentennial

[11] William B. Rhoads, "The Colonial Revival and American Nationalism," *The Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 35, no. 4 (December 1976): 239-254; West, *Domesticating History*; Kammen, *Mystic Chords of Memory*; Steven Conn, *Museums and American Intellectual Life, 1876-1926* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998); Richard Townley Haines Halsey and Elizabeth Tower, *The Homes of Our Ancestors* (New York: Doubleday, Page, and Company, 1925); Thomas J. Schlereth, *Material Culture Studies in America* (Nashville: American Association for State and Local History, 1982); Karal Ann Marling, *George Washington Slept Here: Colonial Revivals and American Culture, 1876-1986* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988); Francesca Morgan, *Women and Patriotism in Jim Crow America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005); Hamilton J.G. de Roulhac, "The Ford Museum," *American Historical Review* 36, no. 4 (July 1931): 772-775; Walter Karp, "Greenfield Village," *American Heritage Magazine* 32, no. 1 (December 1980); Walter Karp, "Electra Webb and her American Past," *American Heritage Magazine* 33, no. 3 (May 1982); Edward Park, "My Dream and My Hope," *Colonial Williamsburg History*, available online at http://www.history.org/Foundation/general/introhis.cfm.

Expositions (1907) celebrated discoveries and settlements of lands that would become the United States.[12] For the Pilgrim Tercentennial celebration in 1920, poems and speeches glorified the legacy of the Massachusetts pilgrims as nation builders and model immigrants. Plymouth was proclaimed to be the "corner stone of the Nation," and Senator Henry Cabot Lodge, a Mayflower descendent, detailed how the pilgrims' success against adversity allowed for America to grow into a great nation.[13] Vice President Thomas Marshall also touted the achievements of the "pilgrim fathers" who "prepared the way" for "the birth of a new and mighty world." He used the opportunity to argue for immigration restrictions advocating that immigrants needed to follow the example set by pilgrims and commit to staying in US rather than merely coming to work and returning home. According to Marshall, the pilgrims came to America "to worship God and to make homes, determined never to return to Europe."[14] Politicians and patriotic-hereditary groups used a perceived legacy of the Plymouth pilgrims in the early twentieth century not only to assert the primacy of Plymouth as America's birth place, but also to speak to local and national concerns over immigration and labor.

The tercentenary committee promoted the pilgrims' legacy as first founders, evident in the stamps chosen to commemorate the celebration. Interestingly, the

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[12] Alexander T. Haimann, "Columbian Exposition Issues," in *Arago: People. Postage and the Post* (Washington, DC: National Postal Museum, 2006), available online at http://www.arago.si.edu/index.asp?con=1&cmd=1&mode=1&tid=2027851.
[13] Charles A. Merrill, "Urges Revival of Pilgrims' Faith," *Boston Daily Globe*, December 22, 1920.
[14] "Urges Bar on Aliens," *Washington Post*, February 20, 1920.

USPOD seemed so convinced that the world associated the story of the pilgrims' landing at Plymouth as quintessentially American that none of the three postage stamps printed in the series contained the identifying words, "U.S. Postage," which all other stamps prior and since carried. Even the U.S. Mint's commemorative anniversary coin imprinted the words "United States of America" on the front of the half-dollar coin.[15]

Mayflowers, fittingly, flanked each stamp's scene, and like the Columbians, the Pilgrim Tercentenary series formed a short narrative. The story began on the 1-cent stamp with the *Mayflower* sailing west across the ocean on its journey with no land in sight—origin or destination. Similar to the Columbians, the landing occurs in the 2-cent stamp, which was the most commonly used since it was the standard rate of first-class postage from 1883 to 1932.[16] This stamp's engraving makes the landing look harsh, unexpected, and jolting for the party at Plymouth Rock. Although this image suggests that struggles lie ahead for the settlers, the rock is what grounded the travelers, and is the object that grounded those celebrating the anniversary in the past. Plymouth was the ceremonial ground in 1920 and provided the physical connection to the past events. The journey's symbolic end revealed itself in the 5-cent where the Mayflower Compact was signed indicating political agreement, permanence, and Divine right and

[15] Brody, "Pilgrim Tercentenary Issue." To view an image of the commemorative coin, see <http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Pilgrim_tercentenary_half_dollar_commemorative_obverse.jpg>

[16] Jane Kennedy, "Development of Postal Rates: 1845-1955," *Land Economics* 33, no. 2 (May 1957): 96; and Andrew K. Dart, "The History of Postage Rates in the United States since 1863," September 26, 2008, available online at (http://www.akdart.com/postrate.html). First-class postage temporarily increased to 3-cents from 1917-1918 during American involvement in World War I.

blessing of their settlement as the central figure pointed towards the light illuminating the signing. Based on a painting by Edwin White, the signing image illustrates families migrating together even though only men signed the document.[17] The scene emphasizes that a community comprised of family units crafted the Mayflower Compact and pledged to work together. New England preservationists and genealogists argued that the pilgrims were the true first Americans because family units arrived together to form a permanent settlement, unlike the commercially-minded immigrants to Jamestown. By representing this scene, the Tercentennial committee reiterated their argument and wanted all Americans to distinguish Plymouth as the birthplace of the America.

[17] Marling, *George Washington Slept Here*, 233-38. The 5-cent, "Signing of the Compact" stamp, is a miniature engraving based on an Edwin White painting from 1858. William Bradford may have been the main figure in this painting, since he is pictured in the U.S. Mint's half-dollar commemorative coin also issued for this anniversary. White specialized in American historical painting, including *Washington Resigning His Commission* which was commissioned to hang in the Maryland State House. To see a copy of *Washington Resigning his Commission*, see http://www.msa.md.gov/msa/speccol/sc1500/sc1545/e_catalog_2002/white.html.

Figure 20: Pilgrim Tercentenary, 1-cent, 1920 (Photo, National Postal Museum Collection)

Figure 21: Pilgrim Tercentenary, 2-cent, 1920 (Photo, National Postal Museum Collection)

Figure 22: Pilgrim Tercentenary, 5-cent, 1920 (Photo, National Postal Museum Collection)

Placing Plymouth Rock at the center of the national American narrative was attacked by historians and angered heritage and preservation groups who desperately wanted to pull the pilgrims down from their pedestal to broaden the story of European settlement in the New World. For many years, Virginians and New Englanders argued over the primacy of Plymouth versus Jamestown that also carried

with it strong regional pride leftover from the Civil War.[18] No one, of course, at this time argued on behalf of the original residents of "America"—the native peoples who were displaced, attacked, manipulated, and feared by European colonizers.

When celebrating the founding of New York in 1924, the Huguenot-Walloon New Netherland Commission wanted the entire country to know the story of their ancestors just as others knew about the Plymouth pilgrims, and they pursued a stamp to recognize their ancestors' settlements. The Commission wrote that the Walloons were pilgrims too and their story was "wonderful and romantic, and all Americans should know it." The colony of Plymouth was not the only one founded by God-fearing exiles, a point that the commission—formed by the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America—declared. Settlements in New York were the "fulfillment of their fondest dreams and their advent marks a new epoch in the history of both Church and State." Apparently the Commission understood what they were up against in trying to educate Americans about their history, because a few collectors wrote to the Postmaster General puzzled by the printing of that series and inquired

[18]The following *William and Mary Quarterly* article provides an example of the type of arguments that ensued between Virginians and New Englanders. The article offers a point-by-point refutation of claims made at a meeting of the New England Historic Genealogical Society explaining why New Englanders were better than Virginians. Even though the Jamestown settlement pre-dated Plymouth, New England colonists immigrated in family groups and only criminals and "the most objectionable part of its feminine population" were sent to Jamestown to mother generations of Americans. Their objectionable backgrounds did not have the same positive, feminine influence on the populace as the women who settled in New England as part of family units. Plymouth "subordinated the commercial spirit (of Jamestown) to that of securing ecclesiastical and political freedom for themselves." *WMQ* responded that those charges were "so gross, so unprovoked, so untrue," that they replied in the "interest of truth." There is no doubt that sectional pride was vibrant in 1909, even among historians and genealogists. "Jamestown and Plymouth," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 17, no. 4 (April 1909): 305-311.

about the significance of those events. One collector begged for a short bibliography, because "all of the histories I have at hand seem to be a bit deficient in matters relating to the events these stamps commemorate."[19]

Figure 23: Huguenot-Walloon Tercentenary, 1-cent, 1924 (Photo, National Postal Museum Collection)

[19] The design files kept in the National Postal Museum provide the official records kept by the USPOD regarding stamp requests, including correspondence, designs, and related press. These files are organized by the Scott International Catalog number. The following sources came from the Huguenot-Walloon Tercentenary stamp design files (#614-616): Huguenot-Walloon New Netherland Commission, *Huguenot-Walloon New Netherland Commission, 1624-1924, Program* (New York, 1924); Ruth Hawes to Post Office Department, August 25, 1924; J.D. Riker to Post-Master General of the United States, June 18, 1924; and Lois D. Williams to Post Office Department, July 21, 1924. Framing the founding of New York as the "Huguenot-Walloon" achievement was contested at the time of the anniversary. The Commission justified the joining of both groups because the Walloons, although mostly Belgian, were French-speaking and many had French ancestry, never mind that many of those initial immigrants were officially Dutch citizens. The discussion of founding was not just about sharing the spotlight with the Pilgrims in Massachusetts, but of stealing some of the glory from the Dutch who claimed and purchased Manhattan Island. For some discussion of these varying interpretations as they relate to the "founding" of New York, see "Says French Came Here Before Dutch," *New York Times*, October 21, 1923; Sam Roberts, "New York's Birth Date: Don't Go by City's Seal," *The New York Times*, July 14, 2008, sec. New York Region, available online at http://www.nytimes.com/2008/07/14/nyregion/14seal.html?_.

Figure 24: Huguenot-Walloon Tercentenary, 2-cent, 1924 (Photo, National Postal Museum Collection)

Figure 25: Huguenot-Walloon Tercentenary, 5-cent, 1924 (Photo, National Postal Museum Collection)

National significance was often cited as the criteria for printing a commemorative stamp, yet irked collectors and citizens occasionally questioned the standard. In the case of the Huguenot-Walloon issues, the series contained no readily-identifiable images and none of them were labeled on the stamp itself, which may have contributed to the confusion. The *Nieu Nederland* sailed in 1624 east towards America in the 1-cent issue, while families landed in what became New York in the 2-cent. And the last stamp in the series is even more cryptic with an unnamed monument facing a rising sun with palm trees and plants surrounding it that are not similar to the landscape pictured in the 2-cent settlement stamp. The 5-cent denomination actually represents a stone monument erected by Jean Ribault who explored the area near Mayport, Florida, in the 1560s to establish a refuge colony for French Huguenots. Before returning to France to pick up passengers for the sail back to Florida, Ribault erected a stone column festooned with the French King's coat of arms to claim Florida in the name of France. As part of the Huguenot-Walloon anniversary in 1924, the Florida Daughters of the American Revolution chapters financed the building of a similarly-shaped monument to honor Ribault and the "first landing of Protestants on American soil."[20] This series is a good example of how the stamps alone cannot teach anyone about a subject if there is not enough information to inform the reader. The

[20] Roger Brody, "Huguenot-Walloon Tercentenary Issue," in *Arago: People. Postage and the Post* (Washington, DC: National Postal Museum, 2006), available online at http://www.arago.si.edu/index.asp?con=1&cmd=1&mode=1&tid=2033829&. For plaque text see photo of the monument Shannon McCann, "Brown on White on Flickr - Photo Sharing!," *When Lost in...*, March 19, 2008, http://www.flickr.com/photos/whenlostin/2743408241/in/photostream/.

main idea behind the Huguenot-Walloon series was to challenge the idea that pilgrims of Plymouth were the only Protestants to sail to America in search of religious freedom who endured hardships and helped to build a nation.

The Huguenot-Walloon Tercentenary committee very specifically wanted the memorial commemorating Jean Ribaud's settlement to be pictured on a stamp, to depict the first Protestant settlement in America. Celebrating white Protestant beliefs of early settlers on stamps may not have just been for pride in religious freedom, but may have been yet another way that native-born Protestants clung to an idealized vision of a harmonious and homogenous American past. This vision saw immigrant radicals, Jews, and Catholics as threats to Protestant mainstream culture. Battles over immigration, public education, and prohibition, for example, often divided the population along religious lines.[21] Defining the United States as a Christian Protestant nation helped those remembering these early settlements to deal with an uncomfortably heterogeneous population of the 1920s. Ancestors of Huguenots and Walloons desired stamps to commemorate their contributions to early America stemming from regional, religious, and ethnic-racial pride as they staked their ground in New York City as the region's original immigrants. By earning a series of stamps, the federal government appeared to endorse this interpretation.

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[21] Lynn Dumenil, *The Modern Temper: American Culture and Society in the 1920s*, 1st ed. (New York: Hill and Wang, 1995); Douglas J. Slawson, *The Department Of Education Battle, 1918-1932: Public Schools, Catholic Schools, And The Social Order* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2005); and Roediger, *Working Toward Whiteness: How America's Immigrants Became White, The Strange Journey from Ellis Island to the Suburbs*.

The Norse-American Centenary stamp series provides another example of how the government endorsed a narrative of ethnic-racial pride proposed by a regional commemorative committee. Much like the Huguenot-Walloon celebration, which was "of more than ordinary interest particularly in those sections of the country where these colonists originally settled," this regional celebration in Minneapolis honored the first Norwegian immigrants. A Congressional Joint resolution commended Norwegian immigrants who contributed to the "moral and material welfare of our Nation." The "Norse element" in America was credited with settling the "great Midwest," rather than piling into cities like contemporary immigrants.[22] Like other celebrations, petitioning for a commemorative was one piece of a larger physical festival. Imagery and narratives presented by the Centennial committee sought to unite Norwegians in America to a heroic past, one that could be traced to Vikings such as Leif Erikson, whose arrival in the New World predated Columbus and the Pilgrims. The Pilgrim Tercentennial influenced how the Norse-American Centennial Committee shaped their message and why the committee rooted the message in celebrating pioneer fathers. The Committee balanced asserting their differences as Norwegians while also

[22] Irwin Glover to James R. Fraser, January 9, 1925; Gisle Bothne to Postmaster General Harry S. New, December 10, 1924; Carl G. O. Hansen to Mr. Harry S. New, December 10, 1924; all in Design Files, #620-621, National Postal Museum. *Joint Resolution Authorizing Stamps to Commemorate the 100th Anniversary of the Landing of the First Norse Immigrants*, 1924.

claiming their rights to be a part of the dominant official narrative of the American past.[23]

Again, this series of stamps emphasized immigration and a journey across the Atlantic that asserted that all of these groups were early immigrants and distinguished their stories of migration from those of new immigrants arriving in the U.S. in the early twentieth century. The 2-cent, Restaurationen, shows the ship carrying the first Norwegian immigrants, sailing west without land in site toward the United States in 1825. The second stamp does not represent the landing but rather, the 5-cent issue featured an engraving of a Viking ship built for the Columbian Exposition. That ship sailed from Norway to Chicago to remind fairgoers and stamp consumers in the 1920s that Norwegian explorers had visited America long before Columbus, the English-Dutch Pilgrims, the Huguenots, or the Walloons. This particular image, interestingly, pointed the ship's bow toward the east, or toward the homeland, yet on the stamp itself the Viking ship sails from a banner or shield of Norway towards one of the United States. The Norse-American Viking ship is flying colors similar to an American flag. These stamps were in high demand from collectors because of the design and

[23] April Schultz, "'The Pride of the Race Had Been Touched': The 1925 Norse-American Immigration Centennial and Ethnic Identity," *The Journal of American History* 77, no. 4 (March 1991): 1265-1295. Whether the Norse sloop carried religious refugees or not was under some debate. One article in the *New York Times* spread those claims in the popular media: E. Armitage McCann, "Uncle Sam Honors His Norse Family," *New York Times*, October 11, 1925. A scholarly article published the same year argued against the assertion that Quakers on the sloop fled Norway because of persecution. As Henry Cadbury argued, the Norwegian government exaggerated the story of fleeing Quakers to slow the rate of Norwegian immigration to the United States in the 1840s. Norwegian officials passed a law granting religious tolerance to all of its residents in 1845. See Henry J. Cadbury, "The Norwegian Quakers of 1825," *The Harvard Theological Review* 18, no. 4 (October 1925): 293-319.

intensity of the ink colors. The USPOD received letters requesting the issues be reprinted. Postal officials regretted that they had to treat all commemoratives consistently and could not reprint this series alone because they would hear protests from other groups claiming the Norwegians received preferential treatment.[24] In this case, the USPOD understood that the subject matter represented on the stamp held great meaning for petitioners—past and future—and citizens. Postal officials were careful to balance the sensitivities of commemorative scenes chosen with interests of some collectors who focused more on the attractiveness and particulars of stamps' designs.

[24] Norse-American Centenary stamp (#621) design folder, NPM.

Figure 26: Norse-American Centennial, 2-cent, 1925 (Photo, National Postal Museum Collection)

Figure 27: Norse-American Centennial, 5 cent, 1925 (Photo, National Postal Museum Collection)

Descendents of these early European settlers wanted to demonstrate that their immigrant ancestors were good immigrant-citizens and worked to transform the U.S. into a great and prosperous nation. Difficult to read in the stamps' images, these feelings were expressed by the Norwegian-American commemorative committee who wanted to celebrate ethnic pride, but designed the celebrations to focus on messages of good citizenship and patriotism. Even the planning committee and other Norwegian Americans involved with the Centennial felt conflicted over the messages of the celebration. Many Norwegians opposed American involvement in World War I and faced nativistic attacks. By 1925, the Norwegian communities in the northern Midwest still debated the value of Americanization and of supporting ethnically-constructed heritage activities.[25] Through public commemoration, the Norwegian-Americans of the Midwest declared that they were nation builders like the pilgrims at Plymouth Rock. And with their heritage represented on commemorative stamps, the reach of their story stretched far beyond Minnesota.

Regional anniversary committees took advantage of the opportunities available from the USPOD's commemorative stamp program to legitimize their interpretation of the past and to insure that the founding stories of their ancestors were included in the broader story of America's origins. Stamps represented European settlements and trans-Atlantic journeys with images of ships and of white settlers. The timing of these stamps also spoke to the contemporary fights over immigration. Legislation in 1921

[25] Bodnar, *Remaking America*, 55-61; and Schultz, "The Pride of the Race Had Been Touched."

and 1924 established eugenically-minded quotas. Congress developed these quotas to shape the racial biology of future American citizens. Johnson-Reed (1924) drastically reduced the number of southern and eastern Europeans entering the United States, and completely eliminated immigration from Asia.[26] By the 1930s, regional celebrations continued as states celebrated anniversaries and successfully petitioned for commemoratives stamps that educated fellow citizens of local founding stories from around the nation. Together these regional anniversary stamps also reinforced the idea that the United States was founded by white Western Europeans and that the future national racial and ethnic salad bowl should aspire to achieve that ideal from the past.

The Sesquicentennial celebrations of Revolutionary War battles moved discussions of colonial origins into dialogues about the formation of the United States as a nation.

Humble Heroes of the Revolution

Persevering pilgrims gave birth, figuratively, to Revolutionary War heroes who fought for freedom against British oppressors as represented in stamps. Starting in 1925, a flurry of activity surrounded the150th anniversary of the American Revolution, including many local commemorations across the United States. The national Sesquicentennial celebration in Philadelphia in 1926 encouraged a colonial revival, not

[26] Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), 91-117 Asians were not legally eligible for citizenship because the federal court system did not define any Asian as white, making them ineligible for naturalization.

only of design and style, but in storytelling through stamps. Surprisingly, while the pilgrim anniversaries yielded small stamp series each, the "Sesqui" exposition did not. No narrative was told across three issues, leaving the Liberty Bell—the iconic symbol of the fair—to stand in as the only symbol of independence. Beginning in 1925, the USPOD released fourteen stamps, or stamp series, related to Revolutionary commemorations.[27]

Images from the Revolutionary War issues often represented portraits of victorious generals and elite soldiers or engravings of battle scenes. This was certainly the case for the Lexington and Concord stamp series printed in 1925 that ushered in the anniversary celebrations. The Department released the stamps on April 4 to long lines of interested collectors and citizens waiting to purchase these stamps in Massachusetts. Ceremonies commemorating the skirmish were celebrated in and around Boston in April where salutes were fired and Paul Revere's ride into Boston was re-enacted on April 19 and 20th during Patriot's Day festivities.[28]

Unlike other series, the Lexington and Concord commemoratives did not necessarily proceed chronologically by denomination. The 1-cent represented

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[27] A large replica of the bell adorned with electric lights was built near the entrance to the exposition and considered a highlight for visitors. The bell appeared on the stamp and on a commemorative coin. Erastus Long Austin, *The Sesqui-Centennial International Exposition: A Record Based on Official Data and Departmental Reports* (Philadelphia: Current Publications, 1929); and Gordon Trotter, "Sesquicentennial Exposition Issue," in *Arago: People. Postage and the Post* (Washington, DC: National Postal Museum, 2007), available online at http://www.arago.si.edu/index.asp?con=1&cmd=1&mode=1&tid=2032940. See Appendix A for full list of commemorative stamps.

[28] "New Postage Sale Starts Saturday," *Boston Daily Globe*, March 31, 1925; "Throngs at Post Office for Lexington Stamps," *Boston Daily Globe*, April 4, 1925; and "Elaborate Program Arranged for Lexington's Celebration," April 9, 1925.

Washington assuming command of the Continental Army in Cambridge months after the initial skirmish. It was followed by a 2-cent depicting the actual confrontation, and the 5-cent completed the series with a memorial to the minuteman soldier.[29] The image of Washington taking command of the continental army in Cambridge may have been a conglomerate of nineteenth-century prints depicting this scene. Those prints, however, chose to represent Washington on horseback, while on the stamp Washington stands among his soldiers.[30] Perhaps this interpretation saw Washington as a man equal to his soldiers, a fellow citizen, even as he is set apart because he was not equal in rank or status. Ready for war, the collected armies are dressed uniformly while one company marches in the right of the scene and another, larger company stands at attention in the background. The viewer is led to believe that the Continental Army organized soon after the first confrontation and was prepared for combat.

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[29] Roger Brody, "Lexington-Concord Issue," in *Arago: People. Postage and the Post* (Washington, DC: National Postal Museum, 2006), available online at http://www.arago.si.edu/index.asp?con=1&cmd=1&mode=1&tid=2033846.

[30] See these two examples of prints: Michael Angelo Wageman (artist) and John Rogers (engraver), *Washington Taking Command of the Army at Cambridge 1775*, print, New York Public Library, Mid-Manhattan Picture Collection, available online at http://digitalgallery.nypl.org/nypldigital/id?808530; and Charles Stanley Reinhart, *Washington at Cambridge, Taking Command of the Army*, print, 25 x 36 cm, 1875, New York Public Library, Mid-Manhattan Picture Collection, available online at http://digitalgallery.nypl.org/nypldigital/id?808520.

Figure 28: Washington at Cambridge, 1-cent, 1925 (photo, National Postal Museum Collection)

Based on a painting by Henry Sandham, the 2-cent issue borrowed this victorious vision of the battle.[31] Sandham painted the minutemen as a disadvantaged band of soldiers on foot who engaged the British in battle who charged on horseback. The minutemen appear larger in size but smaller in number in the foreground, standing victoriously with their arms in the air, shaking fists at the enemy who appears smaller in size and larger in number to be retreating in the background. This painting contrasts drastically with the vision etched by contemporary artist, Amos Doolittle, in May 1775. Doolittle represented the small band of minutemen in disarray after the first shot was fired as they scattered across the green in retreat. From other sources

[31] *Proceedings of Lexington Historical Society and Papers Relating to the History of the Town* (Lexington, MA: Lexington Historical Society, 1890), xi-xii, available online at http://www.archive.org/details/proceedingsoflex05lexi. The stamp mislabels the painting as "The Birth of Liberty," while it is titled "The Dawn of Liberty."

available, this representation seems to more accurately describe the events at Lexington. While the British eventually retreated to Boston after a standoff in Concord, the colonist did not defeat the British. Both sides exchanged fire and lost lives in this brief skirmish. Accuracy, however, was irrelevant to local history enthusiasts and residents who believed in the town's centrality to the Revolution's narrative. The Lexington Historical Society purchased Sandham's painting in 1886 to hang in their town hall, and this scene was an integral part of their local history.[32] Embedded in the residents' memory was that their fictive ancestors were a victorious band of volunteer soldiers who held off the well-trained British and forced a retreat. This image of local importance that circulated across the country and the world confirmed what most schoolchildren learned as part of the War for Independence narrative.

[32] David Hackett Fischer, *Paul Revere's Ride* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995); and Amos Doolittle, *The Battle of Lexington, April 19th 1775*, colored etching and engraving, 1775, New York Public Library, Print Collection, available online at http://www.nypl.org/research/chss/spe/art/print/exhibits/revolution/captions/54426.html. For an excellent close reading of the 2-cent stamp with the Amos Doolittle print, see "Why Historical Thinking Matters," interactive presentation, Center for History and New Media, George Mason University, and School of Education, Stanford University, *Historical Thinking Matters*, available online at http://historicalthinkingmatters.org/why/.

Figure 29: Birth of Liberty, 2-cent, 1925 (Photo, National Postal Museum Collection)

Prior to the 150th Anniversary, poems written by Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry Wadsworth Longfellow cemented this mythical interpretation of Lexington and Concord in American memory during the nineteenth and early twentieth century. An engraving of Daniel Chester French's "The Minute Man" statue, dedicated in 1875, appeared on the 5-cent stamp that also included the first stanza of Emerson's 1837 poem, "The Concord Hymn." Emerson wrote that poem for one commemoration ceremony and later, it was engraved at the base of French's statue commemorating the battle's centennial. Most stamps did not include words other than "U.S. postage" or a brief identifying label, relying on the picture to illustrate the stamp's theme. By reprinting the first stanza of Emerson's poem, readers of the stamp, most of whom would never see the statue in person, understood the symbol. Emerson's words would

have been very familiar to many Americans because "A Concord Hymn" often appeared in textbooks and school readers. The government endorsed this vision celebrating humble, inexperienced, and "embattled farmers" who "fired the shot heard around the world."[33]

French's monument was similar in design to that of the common-soldier Civil War memorials erected in municipalities across the country in the late nineteenth century. Civil War memorials crafted as standing soldiers holding a rifle, not embattled, remembered those who fought and died and served as a place to honor all veterans. In the case of the "Minute Man," though the physical statue stood in Massachusetts, once on a stamp, its representation became a national symbol of the earliest citizen soldiers who fought for independence. It was the stories of these men "who helped free our great and mighty country" as represented on postage that Thomas Killride spoke of in his poem, "My Stamps."[34] Civil War monuments acted in ways to unify the country by focusing on the individuals who fought rather than the reasons for fighting. During the Revolutionary War, northern and southern colonies fought together, even if it was for a loosely-knit union. In 1925, the Massachusetts

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[33] Brody, "Lexington-Concord Issue;" Steven Gould Axelrod, et al., eds., *The New Anthology of American Poetry* (Piscataway, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2003), 185. Emerson's poem was sung at the dedication of another battle monument on July 4, 1837. These words were thought so moving that they were included in *The Minute Man* statue by French. Bessie Louise Pierce, *Civic Attitudes in American School Textbooks* (Chicago: University Of Chicago Press, 1930), 204, available online at http://www.archive.org/details/civicattitudesin00pierarch.

[34] Kirk Savage, *Standing Soldiers, Kneeling Slaves: Race, War, and Monument in Nineteenth-Century America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 162-208; and Killride, in Phillips, *Stamp Collecting, the King of Hobbies and the Hobby of Kings* ,407-08. Interestingly, Daniel Chester French earned a commemorative stamp of his own when he was included in the Famous American series' artists grouping issued in 1940.

Minute Man acted as a unifying figure for celebrating white male citizenship throughout the U.S.

Consumers of the Minute Man commemorative saw in the stamp design that this figure was to be remembered as a heroic freedom fighter. All commemorative stamps, I argue, become miniature memorials once saved by collectors, but this particular stamp was designed to look like a memorial. The stamp represents the original sculpture and then frames it as if French's piece is part of a large Neo-Classical memorial. Unlike the statue that stands in a field in Concord, the Minute Man on the stamp is flanked by two Doric order columns and two tablets bearing verses from Emerson's hymn as if the verses are commandments, giving the statue the appearance of standing in an architectural niche. A niche highlights the figure inside it, and very often the figure is one to be worshipped or revered. Reverence of the Minute Man is reinforced with lighter shading behind the statue's head on the stamp that draws the eye in to focus on an archetypal American hero. Like physical memorials, commemoratives do not allow space for questioning of the subject's interpretation. In this case, the white citizen-farmer-soldier stands as the archetypal American hero.

Figure 30: The Minute Man, 5-cent, 1925 (Photo, National Postal Museum Collection)

In contrast to the Lexington and Concord series which elevated the white citizen-farmer-soldier to the status of national hero, the Valley Forge anniversary stamp represented a mythical story about General George Washington that made him seem more like a common man. In the 1920s, Washington lived prominently in popular and political cultural as his name and face were used to market dishes, sell movies, and to justify immigration restrictions. Even prior to the Sesqui, mail order catalogs sold colonial-themed, mass-produced knickknacks containing George's image. One familiar scene was Washington kneeling in prayer at Valley Forge. A nineteenth-century print of this vignette, based on a painting by Henry Brueckner, circulated widely after the Civil War and again following World War I. A bas-relief of a similar image was installed at the YMCA West Side Branch in New York in 1904, and replicas

were created and installed in churches, schools, and historical societies. Many viewed this print as visual evidence of Washington's true piety, even though the image was completely contrived. Imagery that illustrated how a military leader turned to God for help in hard times was powerful. The scene was based on a tale first recanted by Parson Mason Weems in 1804. Weems perpetuated a cult of Washington through many stories he published about Washington including the myth about chopping down the cherry tree.[35]

Supporters of the anniversary encampment at Valley Forge wanted to incorporate this familiar image on a stamp and began petitioning the USPOD in the mid-1920s. Malcolm H. Ganser asked in a letter to the editor of the *New York Times* for other readers to write to a very reluctant Postmaster General to sway him into printing a stamp commemorating this event. Requests were honored and the image of Washington kneeling in prayer would represent the anniversary at the encampment even as some historians began questioning the accuracy of that scene. One newspaper columnist wrote, "there was no good reason to doubt it," and another posited that neither the stamp engraver nor the outspoken historian Rupert Hughes was at Valley

[35] For an excellent examination of the culture of Washington's image, see Marling, *George Washington Slept Here*. Weems's claims have never been proven and attempts to debunk this particular myth were published in 1926 during the Sesquicentennial. Mason Locke Weems, *A History of the Life and Death, Virtues and Exploits of General George Washington*, Mt Vernon ed. (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippencott Company, 1918), 234; and James W. Loewen, *Lies Across America* (New York: Touchstone, 1999), 340. Some critiques of Washington myths were published by C.W. Woodward, *George Washington, the Image and the Man* (New York: Boni and Liveright, 1926); reviewed by James A. Woodburn in *The American Historical Review* 32, no. 3 (April 1927): 611-614. Lorett Treese, *Valley Forge: Making and Remaking a National Symbol* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995).

Forge with Washington, so why should Hughes and other historians contest Washington's actions?[36]

Hughes was a biographer of Washington and was extremely critical of those wishing to mythologize Washington. Hughes and others criticized the stamp because they recognized that the government held immense power by endorsing images that stamp consumers might assume to convey historical fact. Interestingly, while Hughes was concerned about representations of the general and president, others were thankful that remembrances of the Revolution were not solely militaristic. Other anniversary stamps, such as Lexington-Concord (1925), the Battle of White Plains (1926), or the Burgoyne Campaign (1927) depicted battle scenes and images of soldiers, cannon, rifles, and powder horns. Postal officials approved of Washington kneeling as a way to please those seeking representations of the "spiritual" side of war.[37]

The stamp engraving is a voyeuristic view of Washington kneeling in prayer in the woods surrounding the Valley Forge encampment as if from the perspective of Issac Potts, who was shown hiding behind a large tree. According to Weems's tale, Potts was delighted when he came upon Washington praying in the woods. Potts decided at that moment that he could support the Revolution because Washington

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[36] Malcolm Ganser, "A Valley Forge Postage Stamp," *New York Times*, January 20, 1928; "To Issue Valley Forge Stamp of Washington at Prayer," *New York Times*, May 4, 1928; Harry Carr, "The Lancer," *Los Angeles Times*, May 12, 1928; and "Valley Forge Stamp," *Los Angeles Times*, May 27, 1928.
[37] Hughes writes about the struggles he encountered as Washington's biographer to discover Washington's human and more complex self that often conflicted with myths of his infallibility. Rupert Hughes, "Pitfalls of the Biographer," *The Pacific Historical Review* 2, no. 1 (March 1933): 1-33; and "Stamp News: About Our Commemoratives," *The Youth's Companion* 102, no. 8 (August 1928): 418.

demonstrated that one could be a Christian and a soldier without moral conflict.[38] This image provided a comforting message for some, particularly for those still reeling from the brutal effects from war. Washington kneeling at Valley Forge also spoke powerfully to those who believed that the United Sates was not only a Christian nation, but one that benefitted from the Grace of God during hard times.

Four words solidified the notion that the entire nation believed in God: "In God We Trust." These four words distinguished this stamp from any others printed at the time. This phrase appeared on contemporary U.S. coins, but never on stamps. It would not be until another Red Scare in the 1950s when a stamp, this time a definitive, carried the motto.[39] On the Valley Forge stamp, however, the phrase acts as a label interpreting the scene telling consumers that this is why we trust in God, because Washington trusted in God and the U.S. reaped the blessings of freedom. Any debates over Washington's religious beliefs or his aversion to prayer were settled in the minds of some Americans because the USPOD printed and circulated this interpretation of Washington's private life.

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[38] Marling, *George Washington Slept Here*, 1-8. In 1955, a stained glass window with Washington kneeling was donated anonymously and installed in the Prayer Room next to the rotunda as a reminder of the religious faith of the nation during the Cold War.

[39] In 1954, a definitive issue of the Statue of Liberty carried the phrase, "In God We Trust" two years before it was adopted as the official motto of the United States. See Steven J. Rod, "8-cent Statue of Liberty," in *Arago: People. Postage and the Post* (Washington, DC: National Postal Museum, 2006), available online at http://www.arago.si.edu/index.asp?con=1&cmd=1&tid=2028969.

Figure 31: Valley Forge Issue, 2-cent, 1928 (Photo, National Postal Museum Collection)

This stamp held great meaning for some, particularly the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR). They included the Valley Forge stamp together with a collection of papers and objects in a copper box buried in the cornerstone of Constitution Hall in November 1928.[40] That this stamp was included in this time capsule further illustrates how powerful, and sometimes transitive, stamp messages could be. The representation of Washington as a pious man held value for the DAR because they believed they were upholding ideals held by descendents of

[40] "Mrs. Coolidge Lays D.A R. Stone with Old Washington Trowel," *The Atlanta Constitution*, November 25, 1928. Also included in the box was a Bible, a copy of the U.S. Constitution, various DAR founding documents and publications, including their immigrant handbooks, and signed cards by President and Mrs. Calvin Coolidge.

Revolutionary War heroes. Washington's actions and values were therefore theirs because their ancestors served under Washington. One could argue that a stamp was chosen to represent these connections to Washington because of its small size making it fit neatly inside a capsule. If true, the DAR easily could have purchased a definitive 2-cent stamp used every day by millions of Americans to send first-class letters with Washington's portrait that had been a mainstay of U.S. definitives since the mid-nineteenth century.[41] Instead, they chose the Weems-inspired image of Washington in prayer.

Figure 32: Washington, 2-cent, definitive (Photo, National Postal Museum Collection)

[41] Rod Juell, "2-cent Washington," in *Arago: People. Postage and the Post* (Washington, DC: National Postal Museum, 2006), availbel online at http://www.arago.si.edu/index.asp?con=1&cmd=1&mode=1&tid=2033917.

We can see from the Revolutionary War Sesquicentennial commemoratives that the UPSOD glorified individuals and selective battles to instruct Americans and immigrants as to what and who was important to remember from the War for Independence. Other stamps reflected similar patterns in design and message, including the Battle of White Plains (1926), Vermont Sesquicentennial (1927), and the Burgoyne Campaign (1927).[42] Common white common men were the heroes, and leaders were not elites but rather strong men who walked among their soldiers, and sometimes prayed. Seeing these stamps representing Revolutionary War men motivated other heritage and hereditary-based groups to pursue commemoratives for their heroes.

Heroes from Poland

Polish Americans and immigrants fought for the U.S. government to honor two Polish Revolutionary War heroes on stamps as part of a larger strategy to portray Polish Americans as good Americans with ancestral ties to the birth of the United States as a nation. Efforts began in the early twentieth century to recognize the contributions of Count Casimir Pulaski and General Thaddeus Kosciuszko with statues and postage memorials. In 1910, monuments honoring both men were

[42] Gordon T. Trotter, "Battle of White Plains Issue," in *Arago: People. Postage and the Post* (Washington, DC: National Postal Museum, 2007), availble online at http://arago.si.edu/index.asp?con=1&cmd=1&mode=1&tid=2032942; Gordon T. Trotter, "Vermont Sesquicentennial Issue," in *Arago: People. Postage and the Post* (Washington, DC: National Postal Museum, 2007), available online at http://arago.si.edu/index.asp?con=1&cmd=1&mode=1&tid=2032943; and Gordon T. Trotter, "Burgoyne Campaign Issue," in *Arago: People. Postage and the Post* (Washington, DC: National Postal Museum, 2007), availble online at http://arago.si.edu/index.asp?con=1&cmd=1&img=&mode=1&pg=1&tid=2032944.

dedicated in Washington; Pulaski's financed by Congress and Kosciuszko's donated to "the people" by the Polish American Alliance.[43] Pulaski was a Polish nobleman who volunteered to fight for the colonies and has been called the Father of the American Calvary. He fought and died at the Battle of Savannah in 1779 and the city honored him as a local hero. To further extend Pulaski's reputation as a national hero, the local chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution spearheaded a stamp campaign in 1929. They co-sponsored an anniversary commemorating the 150th anniversary of the fall of Count Pulaski at the battle of Savannah, Georgia. Supporting the DAR's efforts to secure a stamp was Georgia Congressman Charles Edwards, who petitioned the Postmaster General to support a Pulaski commemorative and commented that "the Daughters of the American Revolution would not sponsor anything that is not real meritorious and entirely worthy." According to Edwards, the DAR properly vetted the stamps' subject matter and passed their patriotic test and possibly upheld Pulaski as an early model Polish immigrant. Honoring Pulaski as a war hero was not in question when President Herbert Hoover declared October 11, 1929 as "Pulaski Day," yet no

[43] "Monuments of Two Polish Heroes to be Unveiled in Washington May 12," *The Atlanta Constitution*, May 11, 1910; and "Nation to Honor Polish Patriots," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, May 9, 1910. For stamps that were eventually approved, such as those honoring Thaddeus Kosciuszko (# 734), see rejection letters for why petitions were denied for specific years in the stamp's design file, NPM.

stamp came.[44] Hoover and Congress acknowledged Pulaski as a national hero, but earning a commemorative stamp proved more difficult.

Surprisingly, strong rebukes came from a Polish newspaper the following year that may have influenced the government's decision to print a Pulaski commemorative. The paper accused U.S. postal authorities of using a "double standard" when choosing whom to honor on stamps with the headline, "Polish Proposition Refused—Germans Favored." According to this paper's editor, the USPOD honored a German Revolutionary War hero, Baron Frederic Wilhelm von Steuben, on a stamp but refused to reciprocate for a Polish Pulaski.[45] French newspaper editors even decried the choice of a von Steuben stamp. They did not seek a Pulaski stamp, but rather sought recognition for French military officers who fought for independence, such as Lafayette and Rochambeau. Missing from the correspondence file were panicky or angry letters from government officials strongly urging the Postmaster General announce a Pulaski stamp quickly.[46] The world noticed when a government printed new stamps, making choosing and issuing commemorative stamps a challenging cultural and political task for postal officials. A few months later,

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[44] "Savannah Exalts Pulaski's Memory," *New York Times*, October 6, 1929; Telamon Culyer, "Sesqui-Centennial of Georgia's First Clash of Armies," *Atlanta Constitution*, October 6, 1929. "Notable Fete Is Planned to Honor Pulaski," *Washington Post*, October 6, 1929. Bernice E. Smith to Congressman Charles G. Edwards," April 5, 1929; Charles G. Edwards to Honorable Walter F. Brown, April 6, 1929; and American Consul Central to Honorable Secretary of State, September 23, 1930, from Design Files, stamp #690, National Postal Museum.

[45] Bernice E. Smith, "Letter to Congressman Charles G. Edwards," letter, April 5, 1929; Charles G. Edwards, "Letter to Honorable Walter F. Brown," April 6, 1929; American Consul Central, "Letter to Honorable Secretary of State," September 23, 1930. Design Files, stamp #690, National Postal Museum.

[46] Design Files, stamp #690, National Postal Museum.

nearly fifteen months after the Savannah anniversary celebration, a Pulaski issue was announced.

Even non-collecting Americans noticed new stamps and questioned the reasoning behind postal decisions. Present in the files was an angry letter from an American who asked why the USPOD honored Pulaski with a stamp and did not chose an American soldier. She spoke of her fears surrounding immigration held by many fellow citizens. Mrs. M.A. Van Wagner criticized Polish immigrants for coming to the U.S. only to "get employment here and take our American dollars back to Poland" while others remained unemployed (presumably she meant native-borns) in the early years of the Depression. For Van Wagner, the Pulaski stamp signified another way that America had been "forgnised" similar to the "gang(s) of forgners" who were responsible for importing "poison" liquor during Prohibition.[47] Her letter stands alone in the Pulaski file as one of protest, but her emotional reaction to this stamp reflects real sentiments felt by some Americans in the interwar period not only towards eastern European immigrants, but also in the power she felt stamps possessed in representing, or perhaps misrepresenting in this case, an official narrative of the U.S. Stamps may have been small, but their images were powerful.

[47] M.A. Van Wagner to Postmaster General, January 2, 1931, Design Files, stamp #690, National Postal Museum.

The Johnson-Reed Act in 1924 drastically reduced the number of immigrating Poles, together with Greeks, Italians, and Russians.[48] Many Americans supported such restrictions, so viewing an eastern European, Pulaski, on a stamp may have angered them. How could the government limit immigration of certain groups because they were not considered fit for citizenship, and then a few years later honor one of those groups, via an individual, on a federal stamp? Certainly this was not the first instance of the government recognizing the achievements of Pulaski, but the accessibility of a commemorative stamp meant that more people—across the United States and around the world—saw evidence first-hand of federal recognition of a Polish hero as an American one.

Concurrent to the Pulaski stamp campaign, petitions arrived at the USPOD seeking a stamp to honor another Polish Revolutionary War hero, Thaddeus Kosciuszko. At the time of his death in 1817, Poles and Americans mourned his legacy as a war hero and his commitment to fighting for liberty worldwide. His legacy continued on in the form of monuments and celebrations dedicated in his honor.[49] Among those commemorative efforts was one to immortalize his legacy on a postage stamp that would reach across the U.S. and abroad to his homeland Poland. The Kosciuszko Foundation first petitioned the Postmaster General in 1926, by way of

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[48] During a Kosciusko Day celebration in New York City, the mayor referred to Poles as a separate "race." See "5,000 Hear Mayor Praise Kosciusko," *New York Times*, October 16, 1933; and Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color*.

[49] Gary B. Nash, *Friends of Liberty: Thomas Jefferson, Tadeusz Kościuszko, and Agrippa Hull: A Tale of Three Patriots, Two Revolutions, and a Tragic Betrayal of Freedom in the New Nation* (New York: Basic Books, 2008), 207-213.

New York Senator Royal S. Copeland to commemorate the 150th anniversary of the general's "coming" to the colonies.[50] After those attempts failed, queries were reshaped and the Foundation asked for a stamp that would instead honor the 150th anniversary of his "naturalization as an American citizen." From 1931 to 1933, hundreds of endorsement letters arrived in the office of the Postmaster General supporting this stamp, accumulating a greater volume than supported Pulaski's stamp just a few years earlier. Seven years after the first requests, Postmaster Farley fittingly chose to announce the Kosciuszko issue on Polish Day at the Century of Progress World's Fair in Chicago. Farley claimed that he was "happy to convey (his) highest regard for the American citizens of Polish extraction" and declared that Kosciuszko's name would be "forever perpetuated in the hearts of American people."[51]

Citizenship was a key element in pitching the stamp, which then was reflected in the announcements printed in newspapers. Kosciuszko's "admission to American citizenship" and the "privilege of becoming a citizen" were celebrated alongside his military service. Much like Farley, who paid homage to Polish citizens, other reactions to the issue emphasized that the General's legacy on a stamp "honors not only the man himself, but his countrymen who have come by the hundreds of thousands to the

[50] Senator Royal S. Copeland to Postmaster General Harry S. New, April 29, 1926, Design Files, stamp #734, National Postal Museum.
[51] Copeland to Postmaster General Harry S. New; James Couzens, *S.J. RES 248*, 1931. The design file is filled with letters of support coming from individuals, politicians, businessmen, and fraternal organizations. Information Office, Post Office Department, press release, July 22, 1933.

country he helped to establish as a land of liberty for all men."[52] Whether Kosciuszko actually became an American citizen was not questioned at the time, but the stamp offered a strong symbolic gesture and honor for all people with Polish heritage as bestowed upon them by the government. They were nation builders, too.

Choosing to honor Kosciuszko's "naturalization" proves to be a curious claim made by the Foundation. There appears to be no documentary evidence to support the claim that he became an American citizen, even though he was held in high regard and called a friend by George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, and other Revolutionary War-era notable figures. After the War, Kosciuszko haggled with the new Congress, like other soldiers, to be paid back wages for his service in the Continental Army. He earned membership in the Society of the Cincinnati, which was limited to military officers who served during the Revolution. Kosciuszko returned to his native Poland to fight, unsuccessfully, against Russian occupation and oppression. On a trip back to the United States, Kosciuszko hoped to lobby support for Polish independence from American and French governments but found himself politically opposed to John Adams's anti-France policies. In light of the Alien and Sedition Acts of 1798, Thomas Jefferson urged Kosciuszko to leave the country to avoid imprisonment. If Kosciuszko had been naturalized, he would not have needed to flee the country. According to Congressional records in 1976, Representative John H. Dent tried to rectify that by

[52] "Stamp to Honor Kosciusko," *New York Times*, July 23, 1933; Richard McPCabeen, "The Stamp Collector," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, August 13, 1933; "The Stamp Album," *Washington Post*, August 20, 1933; and editorial, "Honoring Kosciusko," *Hartford Courant*, July 27, 1933.

submitting a resolution to confer citizenship upon Kosciuszko, perhaps in the spirit of the Bicentennial celebrations.[53] Kosciuszko's actual status was less important than the way that Polish-American cultural groups constructed his historical identity to be an American citizen. These groups believed there was a lot at stake by representing Kosciuszko as a citizen as well as a military hero. Polish immigrants and Polish Americans were conflicted, much like immigrants and citizens of Norwegian descent earlier in the chapter, about how best to balance their cultural and political identities as Poles and as Americans.

Unlike the Norse-American stamps which depicted ships, the Pulaski and Kosciuszko stamps depicted each man, but in very different ways. Pulaski visually is associated with Poland with his portrait flanked by the modern flags of Poland and the United States. Generally, other commemoratives did not print the U.S. flag. Pulaski's portrait appears in the center where he casts his glance to his left, to the side where the Polish flag appears from behind his portrait. In contrast, the Kosciuszko stamp did not feature either flag. Perhaps because the stamp commemorated the 150th anniversary of

[53] Kosciuszko returned to Poland, where after years of struggling he became the leader of the resistance against Russian occupation. He published the "Act of Insurrection," similar to the Declaration of Independence, and also freed the serfs in Poland in 1794. After some initial victories, Kosciuszko's resistance was crushed by the Russian forces and he was taken prisoner and held in Russia. A few years later he returned to the United States, always interested in freeing his homeland. An excellent telling of Kosciuszko's travails and travels can be found in Nash, *Friends of Liberty*. Regarding the stamp, I found some correspondence from 1986 in the design file that asked then-curator of the National Postal Museum where they could find documentary evidence of Kosciuszko's naturalization. The curator said there was no documentary evidence and attached a letter written in 1953 to the Director of the Public Library of Newark stating that there was no official "naturalization, but that through his deeds and actions he became an 'American'." See also John H. Dent, *Joint Resolution to Confer U.S. Citizenship Upon Thaddeus Kosciusko*, 1976.

his “naturalization” as an American citizen, flags were not necessary for indicating his nation of origin; Kosciusko was American, Pulaski was Polish. On his stamp, Kosciuszko stands in his uniform which is a reproduction of a full-bodied statue of that sits in Lafayette Park across from the White House in Washington. Kosciuszko appears larger than life as he looks down upon the stamp reader from his pedestal. Like many other Revolutionary War officers represented on stamps, he is standing, not on horseback, and with sword drawn, appears ready to lead a battle. Pulaski, who was a royal Count, looks out from his portrait wearing a dress military uniform. Oddly, he is not on horseback although he is credited as founding the American Calvary. No identifying language tells a stamp consumer that Pulaski died at the Battle of Savannah. And unless one read the newspaper announcements discussing the stamp, the average American probably did not understand that the dates printed on the Kosciuszko, 1783-1933, celebrated his fictional naturalization.

Figure 33: General Pulaski, 2-cent, 1931 (Photo, National Postal Museum Collection)

Figure 34: Kosciuszko, 5-cent, 1933 (Photo, National Postal Museum Collection)

Obtaining these commemoratives were great achievements for the fraternal and Polish heritage organizations that fought for these stamps to demonstrate ethnic pride but also another way to claim their status as racially white. Their members experienced discrimination and understood that Poles and other eastern European immigrants were defined as racially different from old stock immigrants hailing from western Europe, even as cultural and legal definitions of whiteness were changing in the United States. Celebrating Kosciuszko's naturalization suggests that it was important for the Polish National Alliance, Polish Roman Catholic Union, and other organizations to tie their heritage with American citizenship. Since only a "free white person" was eligible for naturalization, Kosciuszko qualified as white. Poles were inching their way out of an in-between status, racially, in the early twentieth century, a position also faced by other immigrants. The difference was that these organizations could flaunt the accomplishments of two Polish military men on federal stamps who volunteered (and died, in Pulaski's case) for the American cause during Revolutionary War—the origin of the republic.[54] Polish-American groups received help from the USPOD in proving themselves as being fit for American citizenship since their ancestors helped to found the country. The legal and cultural murkiness of racial classification in the early twentieth century made it more imperative for first and second generation immigrants to be able to stake their claim to whiteness, and in the case of Polish immigrants, earning two stamps helped.

[54] Roediger, *Working Toward Whiteness*; Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color*.

Beyond the Revolution: Equality Heroes

Polish Americans were not the only groups seeking to assert their rights as citizens on the public medium of a stamp; women and African Americans simultaneously campaigned for commemoratives to make their political achievements visible to collectors and non-collectors alike. Until the late 1930s, U.S. commemorative stamps almost exclusively honored the achievements of white men. According to the corpus of commemoratives, women and all people of color played almost no role in the founding of colonial America or in fighting and winning the Revolutionary War. As a result, racial and gender politics were more blatantly addressed through the stamp battles for Susan B. Anthony and Booker T. Washington. Petitioners were astute observers of USPOD stamp production and understood that the government almost exclusively honored white male contributions in the commemoratives. The stakes were higher for these stamp supporters. As a result, they positioned the achievements of Anthony and Washington in the context of other commemorative issues and hoped that federal approval was a step toward full political equality.

Earning federal commemoration of suffrage activists through a postage stamp was a key piece of the Susan B. Anthony Memorial Committee's agenda. Ethel Adamson, the Committee's Chair, noticed great public honors were bestowed on men "for much smaller achievements" than Anthony's and believed that her suffrage legacy, in comparison, should earn her greater public recognition. Some of the neglect could be repaired by the issue of a stamp honoring Anthony. Groups of women met with

Third Assistant Postmaster General Eilenberger in 1934 and in 1935 to persuade him to accept their petitions for an Anthony or suffrage stamp. He did not support the stamp and claimed that from his discussions with stamp collectors, they showed no interest either. Speaking to philatelists at the American Philatelic Society's annual convention in 1934, he maintained that the USPOD wanted to "revive the memories of historic events" with the commemoratives when he dismissed rumors that his department might print a stamp with actress Mae West's picture.[55] While laughing at the idea of a Mae West stamp, Eilenberger seemed to reassure the overwhelmingly male audience that his idea of what qualified as "historic" most likely did not include a woman.

Before the fight over an Anthony issue, collectors of American stamps most likely held a few images of women in their albums. In the Columbian commemoratives, Queen Isabella of Spain appeared on six stamps and one unidentified native Caribbean woman sat on the 1-cent. A portrait of Pocahontas dressed in English clothing was printed on the 5-cent issue in the Jamestown Exposition series (1907). In 1922, when the USPOD released a new series of definitive stamps, they chose Martha Washington's face to grace the 4-cent issues. Persons and places represented in these

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[55] Ethel McClintock Adamson, "Letter to James Farley, Postmaster General," June 22, 1934; Edith H. Hooker, "Letter to the Post Master General," February 6, 1935; Clinton B. Eilenberger, "Memorandum," June 12, 1934, Design Files; all in Design Files, stamp #784, National Postal Museum Clinton B. Eilenberger, "Speech delivered to American Philatelic Society," *Proceeding of the 49th Annual Convention of the American Philatelic Society held August 27-31, 1934, Atlantic City* 48, no. 1 (October 1934): 4-6. Some Mae West fans are still petitioning the postal service to honor her with a stamp. See Mae West NYC, "Mae West: A Stamp Vamp," blog, *Mae West*, May 11, 2007, http://maewest.blogspot.com/2007/05/mae-west-stamp-with-mae.html.

everyday stamps were selected to "stand for America as it might be viewed by a newly arrived immigrant." According to Third-Assistant Postmaster General Glover, the Department chose Washington over other suggested women, including Anthony and Clara Barton, because she "more nearly typified the women who were closely identified with the ground-work of American national life in its first phases."[56] Washington was known as a wife and mother, not as a nurse and organizer or political activist like Barton or Anthony. Selecting Washington as the first women on an everyday definitive stamp freed the USPOD from any controversy, because who would argue against choosing the country's original First Lady?

Still fighting for a stamp in 1936, women campaigning for an Anthony were outraged when they heard that the Department planned to print a series of stamps honoring U.S. Army and Navy commanders that included Robert E. Lee and Stonewall Jackson. Former president Theodore Roosevelt initiated the idea for a stamp series honoring American military heroes during World War I, but it was not until his cousin Franklin pushed for it that the series was approved. Although neither the Department nor Roosevelt announced the proposed list of military men suggested by Secretary of War George H. Dern in February 1936, word leaked that such a series was in the planning stages. Letters began flooding the Department and the White House mainly from Southerners who supported a stamp honoring Robert E. Lee. Other letters, such as one from New York Congresswoman Caroline O'Day, remarked that

[56] "Nation's History in New Stamps," *New York Times*, February 18, 1923.

Republican women of her state would not like seeing a Lee stamp as the first in the series, but, added there would be even greater protest from southerners were there no stamp for Lee.[57]

The Lee-Jackson stamp, to some, signified a necessary demonstration of national unity of the New Deal. By printing their images on U.S. stamps, the Confederate generals were no longer traitors but American war heroes who looked out from postage equally alongside the portraits of George Washington, William Sherman, and Ulysses S. Grant. Protectors of Anthony's legacy were disturbed. "Why should such men, fighting for the principle contrary to our present standard of life and liberty, be given honors in advance of an individual who gave her services freely for the cause of freedom for all of the people—men and women alike?" According to the Chair of the National Women's Party (NWP), the Department was not impressing women voters and beseeched Postmaster General Farley "to be fair with your women constituents and glorify some of our outstanding women with Susan B. Anthony leading them all."[58] These women could not reconcile the contradictions of the federal government that honored men who led a secessionist fight against the Union and fought for oppression and slavery. While the NWP often ignored voices and concerns from African American women, the party leader's rhetoric indicated that they and

[57]Marszalek, "Philatelic Pugilists," 127-138.
[58]John Marszalek provides excellent detail surrounding the debates of the Army-Navy series in "Philatelic Pugilists," *The Ongoing Civil War New Versions of Old Stories*, ed.Herman Hattaway and Ethan Sepp Rafuse (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2004), 127-138. See Sue Brobst to Honorable James A. Farley, June 1, 1936; and Olive E. Hurlburt to Honorable James Farley, June 9, 1936, Design Files, Stamp #784, National Postal Museum.

Anthony fought for equality for all persons. The timing of the Army-Navy series' release coupled with indecision by Farley further annoyed Anthony's Memorial Committee. They believed Farley kept "giving the women the run-around" by misleading them as to when the USPOD might issue an Anthony stamp: "First, we are too early, now we are too late."[59]

Figure 35: Lee-Jackson, 4-cent, Army-Navy Series, 1936 (Photo, National Postal Museum Collection)

A longer fight over the Army-Navy issues soon ensued. Images of military leaders from the Army and Navy were printed in a ten-stamp series that were released in small sets during 1936 and 1937, giving each service a set containing 1- through 5-cent denominations. Proceeding somewhat chronologically, the 1-cents honored

[59] Nancy F. Cott, *The Grounding of Modern Feminism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987); and Alma Whitaker, "Sugar and Spice," *Los Angeles Times*, July 6, 1936.

Generals Washington and Greene and Captains Barry and Jones and continued through the War of 1812, Civil War, and Spanish-American War. While the series was planned in advance, the release of the Grant-Sherman-Sheridan in February 1937 and the Lee-Jackson in March drew the biggest public responses once the stamps were printed. Southern Congressmen, collectors, and interested citizens decried Sherman as a "common murderer" and defended Lee as a wronged hero who was unintentionally demoted by the Post Office because in the stamp's engraving, his uniform's shoulder boards carried two stars instead of three. Protests against the Confederate generals became battle cries for the Anthony committee and African American newspapers, calling for a stamp honoring Booker T. Washington because "he has surely done more for American Democracy than Gen. Lee or Stonew(a)ll Jackson."[60] The USPOD stood squarely amidst a cultural debate over political equality and the legacy of the Civil War as interpreted in the 1930s.

When the Post Office Department announced it would print a Susan B. Anthony stamp in August 1936, the decision also drew substantial criticism. Since the stamp commemorated the sixteenth anniversary of the Nineteenth Amendment, some believed honoring an oddly-numbered anniversary should not be eligible for

[60] Gordon Trotter, "Army and Navy Issue," in *Arago: People. Postage and the Post* (Washington, DC: National Postal Museum, 2007), available online at http://www.arago.si.edu/index.asp?con=1&cmd=1&mode=1&tid=2033175. Interestingly, the 3-cent denominations pictured Union Civil War Generals Grant, Sherman, and Sheridan and Admirals Porter and Farragut. Confederate Generals Lee and Jackson appeared on the 4-cent Army stamp while its naval counterpart featured Admirals Dewey, Sampson, and Schley, who commanded fleets during Spanish-American War battles. The 5-cents represented the service academies at Annapolis and West Point. "Write Mr. Farley and Ask Him About the Stamp Issue," *The Chicago Defender* (National edition), April 10, 1937. I will deal with the Booker T. Washington stamp later in this chapter.

recognition, unlike a twenty-fifth, fiftieth, or one hundredth. Some collectors questioned Farley's rationale for printing an excessive number of commemoratives throughout this tenure, and specifically questioned his choice of Susan B. Anthony. One *Washington Post* reader warned of an "epidemic" brought on by the Anthony stamp that would open the door to the printing of stamps honoring Booker T. Washington, Esperanto, Babe Ruth, Al Capone, and sinking down the scale to Eleanor Holm Jarrett.[61] Wood expressed his displeasure that the Post Office went far beyond honoring white, native-born men in a traditional patriarchal sense of history. His sense of who and what deserved stamps did not include women, African Americans, Eastern and Southern Europeans, never mind athletes and gangsters. Wood marginalized the accomplishments of Anthony and Washington in particular. John Pollock, then Chair of the Democratic Party, wrote to Farley indicating that some of his members might even leave the party in protest over the Anthony stamp. He warned Farley that if he did not suppress the Anthony stamp, Pollock guaranteed "it will be prove a political

[61] "Women Honor Susan Anthony At District Fete," *Washington Post*, August 27, 1936; Millicent Taylor, "For Our 'Furtherance'," *Christian Science Monitor*, August 26, 1936; "Women Join to Hail Susan B. Anthony," *New York Times*, August 27, 1936; "Is Anthony Stamp a Commemorative? Philatelists Call NRA Sticker 'Orphan'," *Christian Science Monitor*, September 15, 1936; C.N. Wood, "Farley Stamps," *Washington Post*, August 9, 1936. In addition to Booker T. Washington, this string of unacceptable candidates for stamps included Ruth, a Catholic baseball player; Capone, an Italian gangster, and Eleanor Holm Jarrett, an Olympic swimmer who was kicked off the team before the 1936 Berlin games for excessive drinking—the worst offender according to Wood. Jarrett was married to a band leader and danced on stage with the band, occasionally in her bathing suit. Later she appeared in a few films in the late 1930s.

boomerang."[62] Despite these warnings, the stamp did not damage Roosevelt's chances of winning re-election, and Farley kept his job as Postmaster General.

This debate among citizen groups further illustrates that citizens believed stamps held real meanings because of their power to reach millions of people and to carry a government endorsement of a particular narrative represented on that stamp. Women and African Americans understood that they needed representation of their stories on stamps as they pushed for political equality. Who and what was not pictured on a stamp was as important to recognize as what was represented. The USPOD positioned themselves as creators of historically-accurate snippets commemorating the American past but laid a foundation that privileged elite white men. Slowly, petitioners worked to break that foundation. From their sense of urgency, we see that petitioners wanted their interpretations relayed on a stamp because they understood that the USPOD held power to spread historical information to the masses. As a handful of commemorative subjects slowly interjected stories outside of that privileged perspective, some rejected the stamps as unhistorical. Collectors and citizens understood that the USPOD played a pivotal role in negotiating meaning of contemporary cultural and political debates.

[62] John Pollock to James A. Farley, Postmaster General, July 21, 1936, Design Files, stamp #784, National Postal Museum. A W. Bloss, "The Stamp Album," *Los Angeles Times*, October 20, 1940.

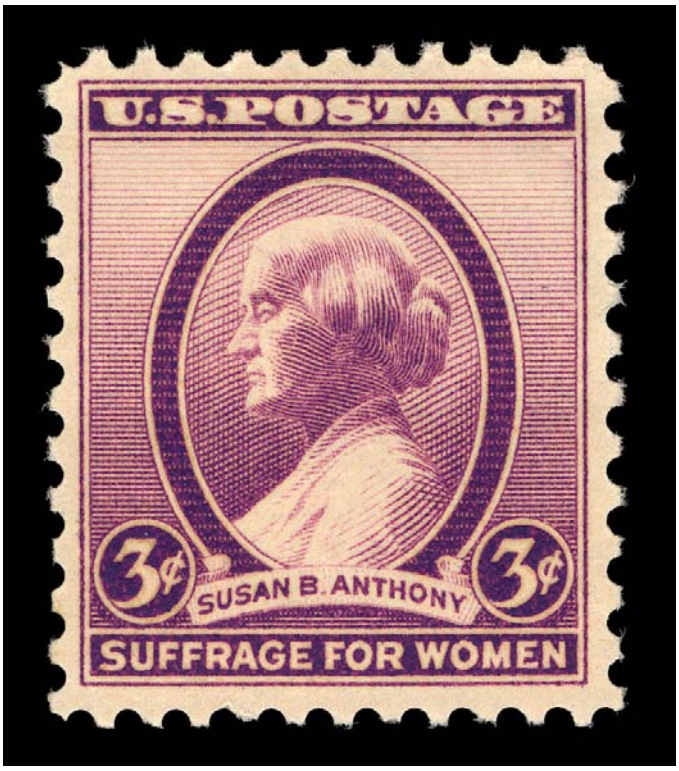

Figure 36: Susan B. Anthony, 3-cent, 1936 (Photo, National Postal Museum Collection)

The suffrage anniversary stamp's image drew from a bust sculpted by Adelaide Johnson that may have functioned to depict her as a classically-inspired figure. Johnson described her sculpture as "expressing the entire life of Miss Anthony" by emphasizing her strength and spirituality. The stamp engraving depicts Anthony's left profile with her hair wrapped into a bun in the center of the stamp. A wide oval frame encases her portrait making the vignette look like a cameo. Wearing cameo brooches became popular in the Victorian age, recalling the classical Greek art form of carving figures in stone relief. Many female cameo figures created for brooches were dressed in flowing

robes with their curly hair pulled back from their faces.[63] Anthony's clothing was not necessarily flowing and her hair was not curly, yet her image alludes to the form of a cameo that presents an idealized female figure inside representing virtue. Perhaps in this image she represents democracy. Anthony's Memorial Committee, and possibly the NWP, idealized Anthony for her contributions to the fight toward female suffrage and equality. It is possible that they wanted others to view Anthony not as an annoying agitator, but rather as non-threatening, admirable citizen. The stamp's purple ink aided in the stamp appearing like a cameo brooch, even though all 3-cent stamps were tinted purple. For example, in the Army-Navy series Admirals David Farragut and David Porter appeared on a purple 3-cent stamp. In contrast, however, the stamps of military heroes represented their bodies mostly looking outward from the stamps. Unlike other 3-cent single issues from the 1930s, the Anthony was cut to a size more similar to a definitive stamp. Other single-issue commemoratives, such as the Texas Centennial (March 1936), Rhode Island Tercentennial (May 1936), Ordinance of 1787 Sesquicentennial (July 1937), and the Constitution's Sesquicentennial (September 1937) were rectangular in shape and distinctive as a commemorative. While a

[63] Monica Lynn Clements and Patricia Rosser Clements, *Cameos: Classical to Costume* (Atglen, PA: Schiffer Publishing, 1998); and James David Draper, *Cameo Appearances* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2008).

commemorative, the Anthony stamp actually appeared in size to be that of a definitive.[64] This was as close to a regular issue stamp as possible.

In stark contrast to its critics, the NWP saw this stamp as a victory for their greater cause. Using it as a rallying cry, the NWP asked their members and all women to "finish the job" in the fight for the passage of an equal rights amendment.[65] It is possible that they hoped this stamp would act as a bridge to reach those who supported women's suffrage but then opposed the NWP and the equal rights amendment. Clearly, the NWP and other supporters of the Anthony stamp believed that the stamp was an accomplishment itself. Securing a federal stamp that looked back to Anthony was important to those looking ahead for full political equality. Working for this stamp mirrored many other political battles these women and African Americans, in particular, continued to wage in early twentieth century.

Anthony was not the first woman engraved on a stamp, but perhaps it could be said that she was the first politically-active woman chosen. Another would not be chosen until the 1940 Famous American series when Jane Addams and Frances Willard were honored with stamps together with thirty-five Americans honored for their

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[64] A series of definitives that would be printed in 1938 featured profiles of presidents whose images were almost all drawn from busts. "Stamp May Bear Anthony Bust By Artist Here," *Washington Post*, July 15, 1936; Gordon T. Trotter, "Susan B. Anthony Issue," in *Arago: People. Postage and the Post* (Washington, DC National Postal Museum, 2007), availble online at http://www.arago.si.edu/index.asp?con=1&cmd=1&mode=1&tid=2033174; Encyclopedia of United States Stamps and Stamp Collecting, "Presidential Series (1938)," in *Arago: People. Postage and the Post* (Washington, DC: National Postal Museum, 2006), available online at http://www.arago.si.edu/index.asp?con=1&cmd=1&mode=1&tid=2033221.

[65] "Women Honor Susan Anthony At District Fete"; Millicent Taylor, "For Our 'Furtherance"; "Women Join to Hail Susan B. Anthony;" and Cott, *The Grounding of Modern Feminism*.

achievements in the fields of literature, music, education, and technology.[66] Among those honored in this series was Booker T. Washington, the first African American pictured on a U.S. stamp. The USPOD understood that issuing commemorative stamps carried great joy for petitioners but that not all Americans, non-collectors and collectors, approved of the USPOD's choices. This may be why the USPOD slipped Washington into a larger series of stamps comprising men and women famous for diverse accomplishments to avoid backlash and make Washington more acceptable to white Americans.

During the struggle over the Anthony stamp, the *Chicago Defender* asked, "How About Us?" Acknowledging that women rightly ought to be represented on stamps, the paper pressed, "there should be some stamps bearing black faces." As the USPOD expanded its commemorative program in the 1920s, the *Defender* and many individuals began calling for stamps to celebrate the heroism and achievements of Frederick Douglass, Booker T. Washington, or Crispus Attucks. Bostonians hailed Attucks as a martyr who was remembered as the first casualty of the Revolution, so why wouldn't he qualify as an American hero equal in valor to Nathan Hale, whose

[66] Alexander T. Haimann, "Famous Americans Issue," in *Arago: People. Postage and the Post* (Washington, DC: National Postal Museum, 2006), available online at http://www.arago.si.edu/index.asp?con=1&cmd=1&mode=1&tid=2028610.

likeness appeared on a stamp in 1925?[67] Many African Americans were frustrated that the postal service continued to ignore the achievements of people of color.

The most ardent supporter of a Washington stamp was Major Robert Wright, an accomplished former slave who fought in the Spanish-American War and founded the Citizens and Southern Bank and Trust Company in Philadelphia. With a seemingly sympathetic administration in office, Wright began petitioning President Roosevelt and Postmaster General Farley in 1933 and wrote scores of letters through 1939. By the mid-1930s, as the number of commemoratives grew at a rapid rate, African American newspapers again called on the government to choose Washington, Attucks, or Douglass for a stamp. The *Defender* asked fellow "Race citizens" across the country to write personal letters to Farley requesting a Washington stamp. Momentum also was building for a Frederick Douglass stamp, pushed by another commemorative committee that also waited and waited for the Department to choose their African American hero. The secretary of the Dunbar High School's stamp club in Washington, DC also wrote President Roosevelt asking for a stamp honoring "members of the Negro race" because "we are loyal citizens and always answer when

[67] "By Way of Suggestion," *Chicago Defender* (National edition), May 9, 1925; "How About Us?," *Chicago Defender* (National edition), June 7, 1930; and Rod Juell, "1/2-cent Hale," in *Arago: People. Postage and the Post* (Washington, DC: National Postal Museum, 2006), available online at http://arago.si.edu/flash/?s1=5|sq=nathan%20hale|sf=0. For other petitions, see Design Files, stamps # 873 and #902, National Postal Museum.

our country calls, regardless of the discriminations we are forced to suffer."[68] Constantly reminded of their status as second-class citizens, some African Americans fought for a stamp as a step towards achieving full political equality. Achievements made by African Americans would gain legitimacy possible when an image of one of their own appeared on an American stamp.

After seven years of petitioning, the USPOD announced in July 1939 that Washington's image would appear as part of the series honoring thirty-five "Famous Americans." Though not honored separately like Anthony, the Washington's stamp was lauded as a "victory" by African American leaders because it finally broke the color barrier imposed on postage designs. Throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, Washington was the most widely recognized African American, so it comes as no surprise that he was the first black person to earn a stamp. Washington's persona as an accommodationist came forward in his speeches and memoirs, which would be highlighted in the press coverage of the stamp's release. Washington's philosophy paved a way for achieving economic equality first through mastery of trades and skills before agitating for full political and social rights, making him more acceptable for white Americans who believed in racial segregation and genetic inferiority of African Americans. His approach, thought to be very practical, was

[68] N.S. Noble, "The Constitution's Stamp Corner," *Atlanta Constitution*, February 10, 1935; "Write Mr. Farley and Ask Him about the Stamp Issue"; Arthur Whaley, "What About a Stamp?," *Chicago Defender* (National edition), December 25, 1937; and Herbert A. Trenchard, "The Booker T. Washington Famous American Stamp (Scott No. 873): The Events and Ceremonies Surrounding Its Issue," *Ceremonial*, no. 4: 8-11. Wright's efforts to publically celebrate African American freedom did not end with this stamp but included conceptualizing National Freedom Day. Ethel Valentine to President Franklin D. Roosevelt, January 25, 1938, Design File, stamp #902,National Postal Museum.

acceptable to many southern African Americans. Conveniently, Washington's philosophy was also acceptable by the federal government who would soon ask African Americans to fight another world war for a country that did not allow them full rights as citizens.[69]

Three months after this announcement, a celebration of this stamp was woven into the Diamond Jubilee of the Emancipation Proclamation event in Philadelphia. Postal officials attended this "grand" celebration, and Major Wright and Mary McLeod Bethune were on hand to distribute busts of Washington to white and black children who represented over five hundred public schools in the Philadelphia area.[70] These busts would be physical reminders of Booker T. Washington's self-declared legacy as one who raised himself "up from slavery" and would not agitate for social equality. Celebrating these two events together with a mixed race audience gestured to Washington's autobiography where he recalled that newly-freed slaves felt no bitterness towards their white masters upon hearing the Proclamation read. Whites and blacks came together in another symbolic gesture during the ceremony as four girls—two black, two white—marched on stage in military costumes, carrying an American flag that they then draped across the shoulders of Major White "in token of

[69] Louis Harlan, "Booker T. Washington and the Politics of Accommodation," in *Black Leaders of the Twentieth Century*, ed. John Hope Franklin and August Meier, eds. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1982), 1-18.
[70] Kent B. Stiles, "Releases Honor 35," *New York Times*, July 23, 1939; "Stamp Victory," *Chicago Defender* (National edition), September 16, 1939; and "7,000 Celebrate Issuance of Booker T. Washington Postage Stamp in Philly," *Chicago Defender* (National edition), October 7, 1939.

his victory in securing" the Washington stamp.[71] The multi-racial audience and participants appeared to "cast down" their buckets in a joint celebration of Washington's work. His achievement of becoming the first African American represented on U.S. postage could open the door to other black heroes and earn a place in the "official" American narrative as told through commemoratives.

Figure 37: Booker T. Washington 10-cent, Famous American series, 1940 (Photo, National Postal Museum Collection)

[71] Booker T. Washington, *Up from Slavery, An Autobiography* (New York: Doubleday, Page, and Company, 1919), 21; Louis R. Harlan, *The Booker T. Washington Papers*, vol. 3 (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1974), 538-87; and "7,000 Celebrate Issuance of Booker T. Washington Postage Stamp in Philly."

Washington's stamp looked similar to the other Famous American Educators, with only the specific portrait and ink color distinguishing each issue. Washington's engraving came from a familiar photograph where he looks outward from the stamp. While the Washington was colored brown, it was in keeping with the colors established for other 10-cent stamps in this commemorative series. Washington's 10-cent issue was the highest priced stamp in the group of five educators honored in the series, and Major Wright and others worried that the price might ward off African Americans from purchasing the stamp. Despite his concerns over the higher price, the Washington was one of the most widely-sold (twenty-three million dollars worth) stamp in the Famous Americans series.[72]

The Washington stamp was first released and sold at the Tuskegee Institute's Founder's Day celebration on April 7, 1940, attracting federal officials in addition to the Tuskegee community. At the celebration, Postmaster General Farley was on hand to sell the first Washington stamp in coordination with the Tuskegee Philatelic Club and to speak at the ceremony. In his speech, Farley hailed Washington's legacy as a "pioneer educator" and spokesman of his race. The *Defender* devoted tremendous amounts of copy to the events at Tuskegee by publishing photographs and large portions of the speeches. According to Farley, "Negro progress" could be traced directly to Washington's "humanitarian work, noble ideals, and practical teachings"

[72] "Farley At Tuskegee Same Day 'Booker T.' Stamp Goes On Sale," *Chicago Defender* (National edition), January 6, 1940; "Stamps in Educators Group of Famous American Series," *New York Times*, February 8, 1940; and Trenchard, "The Booker T. Washington Famous American Stamp (Scott No. 873): The Events and Ceremonies Surrounding Its Issue."

that he put into place at Tuskegee. Importantly, according to Farley, Washington taught that "merit, no matter under what skin was in the long run recognized and rewarded." His other greatest achievement was in "his interpretation of his people to the white men," or as what some of his fellow "Race citizens" saw as his accommodationist approach to the fight for political equality. To compliment Washington's dedication to training young people of the south, Farley, drew a parallel between Washington's "refusal to accept personal gain with that of Robert E. Lee." Farley furthered the comparison by weaving into his speech a statement by Lee about his strong obligation to train young men of the south after the Civil War. According to Farley not "one word of that declaration need be changed were the speaker Booker T. Washington." Not surprisingly, the *Defender* reports omitted this portion of the speech.[73]

Farley cleverly connected Washington's work with that of Robert E. Lee during this first day ceremony for an audience of Americans not attending the Tuskegee events. One can imagine that a few gasps were heard in the audience upon Farley drawing such a comparison. Perhaps anticipating angry letters from white southern citizens, Farley explained that Washington was another southern leader who devoted himself to bettering the lives of young people. To make the Washington stamp acceptable to white southerners, the hero of the "Lost Cause," Lee (also recently

[73] "3,500 Hear Postmaster Farley At Tuskegee," *Chicago Defender* (National edition), April 13, 1940; "Farley Praises 'Mr. B. T.' As 'Negoro Moses'," *Atlanta Constitution*, April 8, 1940; "Farley Opens 'Booker T.' Stamp at Tuskegee," *Chicago Defender* (National edition), April 13, 1940; "He Couldn't Hate," *Christian Science Monitor*, April 19, 1940.

honored on postage) was called upon to make Washington's achievements also appear equally heroic.

Washington stood equally distinguished alongside fellow Famous Americans, however, the stamp commemorating the seventy-fifth anniversary of the signing of the Thirteen Amendment issued the same year looked backwards. News of this stamp came as a surprise to many as the USPOD announced the printing only one week before it was available for sale during the last week of the New York World's Fair in October 1940. Generally, the Department announced commemorative stamps at least a few months before their printing to allow for first day ceremonies to be planned and to build anticipation from collectors and the petitioning communities or commissions.[74] While debuting at the larger New York Fair, the USPOD missed an opportunity sell and promote it at the American Negro Exposition in Chicago, celebrating seventy-five years of freedom. Black achievements were celebrated while federal agencies and private corporations demonstrated concern for African American welfare through agricultural, housing, and employment exhibits. The USPOD was one of the agencies that staged a small exhibit to sell the Washington stamps—and easily could have sold the Thirteenth Amendment issue.[75]

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[74] W. Bloss, "The Stamp Album"; "13th Amendment Stamp to be Issued," *Chicago Defender* (National edition), October 12, 1940; "President Praises Negroes at Fair," *New York Times*, October 21, 1940; and "Emancipation Stamps Are Result Of A Long Fight," *Chicago Defender* (National edition), October 26, 1940.

[75] Robert W. Rydell, *World of Fairs: The Century-of-Progress Expositions* (University of Chicago Press, 1993), 157-192.

Labeled as a "New Deal masterstroke," the stamp was released just prior to the presidential election of 1940. While all commemoratives seemed to represent someone's agenda, this one in particular appeared to be politically motivated. Major Wright, however, was not surprised but delighted because he had been working simultaneously to see an African American face and a commemoration of emancipation in postage. Wright wanted a 3-cent stamp specifically, because it could be used to mail a first-class letter, which happened to be the same denomination as the Anthony and other single commemoratives issued during the Farley administration. While various ceremonies celebrated this diamond jubilee of the Emancipation Proclamation, the true anniversary was of the passage of the Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution.[76] Wright's vision for celebrating emancipation as an uplifting and powerful moment in American history was not realized in the imagery chosen for this anniversary.

[76] W. Bloss, "The Stamp Album;" "13th Amendment Stamp to be Issued;" "President Praises Negroes at Fair;"; "Emancipation Stamps Are Result Of A Long Fight."

Figure38: Thirteenth Amendment, 3-cent, 1940 (Photo, National Postal Museum Collection)

During the stamps' first day release ceremony, President Roosevelt used the stamp as a vehicle to praise African Americans' achievements after slavery even when the image chosen to represent emancipation was actually one of subservience. The stamp featured an engraving of the Freedmen's Memorial depicting Lincoln standing over a kneeling slave, bowing at Lincoln's feet, struggling to break the chains of bondage. Although financed partially by freed slaves, a white commission controlled the sculpture's construction and chose a design representing emancipation as a generous act of moral leadership by Lincoln and enfranchised whites. Supposedly honoring freedom from bondage, the sculpture as composed by artist Thomas Ball did

not represent a newly-freed slave figure on equal ground with Lincoln. The slave figure was still breaking away from slavery with no symbols of hope designed into the memorial to indicate that freedmen could ascend to a position of equality promised by emancipation. Given to the city of Washington in 1876 by the "colored citizens of the United States," the memorial reasserted racial hierarchy in which descendents of slaves would always be inferior to white men.[77] In choosing this image to commemorate emancipation with the Freedmen's Memorial, the USPOD celebrated Lincoln and not freedom and equality, but instead a racial order in which descendents of slaves could never realize full equality in the U.S.

Choosing to commemorate the Thirteenth—and not the Fourteenth Amendment, that gave all adult males full rights of citizenship—focused attention on the abolition of slavery and not on citizenship equality. Similar to the choice of Washington, the USPOD chose Lincoln to represent black freedom by printing a non-threatening stamp that also did not challenge the authority of state laws that legalized segregation.[78] Complicating the matter was FDR's speech read at the Fair. In addition to lauding achievements of African Americans who had "enriched and enlarged and ennobled American life," his language emphasized the need for American unity as he gestured toward the war in Europe. Liberty was "under brutal attack" and peaceful

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[77] Savage, *Standing Soldiers, Kneeling Slaves*. Additionally, the first day issue of the emancipation stamp occurred during the World's Fair in New York in October 1940, a fair rife with racial tensions and protests over lack of African American representation in the fair's planning, management, and exhibits at the Fair's opening in 1939. Rydell, *World of Fairs*, 157-90.
[78] Savage, *Standing Soldiers, Kneeling Slaves*, 89-128.

lives were challenged by "brute force" that would "return the human family to that state of slavery from which emancipation came through the Thirteenth Amendment." Through this celebration, he called Americans to "unite in a solemn determination to defend and maintain and transmit to those who shall follow us the rich heritage of freedom which is ours today."[79] FDR rhetorically ignored the fact that the entire "human family" was not enslaved until 1865, but it was very specifically reserved for those of African descent. For FDR, the emancipation stamp was not a celebration of freedom for African Americans, much like the statue representing emancipation, but rather a call for unity under the false pretense that all Americans were created equal.

Prior to these stamps, the absence of African Americans symbolized their lack of political power, and their publication signified a slow shift in nationalized political and cultural agitation. This shift, of course, was not without many contradictions in implementation. During FDR's administration, African Americans did not benefit equally from New Deal-funded programs as whites because of the ways federal programs were constructed and then implemented at a local level. At the same time, civil rights groups began publicizing their agendas more loudly and making their fight more visible to federal officials and the general public. They laid groundwork for legislation and executive orders to come that slowly removed federal segregation,

[79] "President Praises Negroes at Fair."

including the executive order banning racial discrimination in the defense industry in June 1941.[80] And yet FDR did not desegregate the military.

Both stamps printed in 1940 illustrated the contradictions in which the U.S. government treated African Americans. As the individual achievement of Booker T. Washington—as an educator and not as a political figure—was revered in April, African Americans as a race were reminded in October that their freedom and equality still depended on whites. The Washington issue directly honored the achievements of one man and gestured toward millions of people defined and segregated by their race, yet the emancipation stamp reinforced racial hierarchies that prevented former slaves from achieving equality. The Thirteenth Amendment stamp, coupled with Washington's, sent a message that the federal government approved of individual but not racial group achievement. Even so, FDR deftly combined Washington's and Lincoln's images as symbols of American progress to pave the way toward asking African Americans to work hard for a greater cause, and he alluded that their skills, labor, and duty would be rewarded with full equality under the law.

The USPOD sold a vision of the American past through its commemorative stamp program and also participated in the political and cultural debates of the 1920s

[80] Harvard Sitkoff, *A New Deal for Blacks: The Emergence of Civil Rights as a National Issue* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978); and *Executive Order 8802*, available online at http://www.archives.gov/historical-docs/todays-doc/index.html?template=print&dod-date=625.

and 1930s. Citizens and philatelists debated over whose interpretation of the American past deserved recognition on a commemorative stamp. As a result, the USPOD became a major negotiator in the culture wars of the early twentieth century. Visual messages of commemoratives promoting the U.S. World's Fairs prior to World War I looked to the past to justify American imperialism and formations of empire. After the fall of empires following the War, U.S. commemorations and stamps focused on American exceptionalism remembering the humble beginnings of pilgrims seeking religious freedom, and honoring the story of how untrained men and a pious military leader defeated the British Empire. Generally, all stamps valued the contributions and stories of white males. Commemoratives in particular were designed to evoke feelings of patriotism by emphasizing a progressive interpretation of the American past that avoided complicated and unpleasant narratives of conquest, slavery, and oppression.

This period also demonstrates that the Post Office had become both a powerful producer of interpretations of American history and a shaper of public memory because stamp images helped to popularlize and naturalize select stories. Citizens and politicians understood this power and sought federal approval of their interpretation of the past so that those events and people might become integrated into an official national narrative as told through its stamps. For those fighting for full recognition of their citizenship rights, such as Poles, women, and African Americans, the legitimacy afforded by the presence of their heroes on a stamp was a small victory in a much larger struggle. By 1940, the subjects of commemorative stamps diversified slightly as

the Department opened the door to honoring the achievements of Americans outside of the traditional political and military leader mold set earlier in the century. While far from relinquishing its decision-making power, the USPOD did allow for and accept citizen suggestions of commemorative stamps and stamp designs. More than mere postage, stamps sat at an intersection of vernacular and official interests, making them important cultural artifacts that could carry grand political messages and simultaneously be meaningful on a personal level for individuals or small communities.

The selection process for commemoratives became more democratic in 1957 when the USPOD established the Citizens' Stamp Advisory Committee (CSAC), officially recognizing that citizens played an important role in choosing commemorative stamps. In creating the Committee, the postal service formalized procedures for accepting stamp petitions and established specific criteria for choosing commemoratives. After years of managing petitions and making difficult decisions, postal officials were no longer directly responsible for selecting commemoratives and began to separate themselves from cultural debates that arose from stamp petitions. Some stamps studied in this chapter would not be chosen using today's criteria. For instance, historic anniversaries will only be considered in multiples of fifty years. Limiting anniversaries to increments of fifty years certainly reduces the number of eligible requests, but the Committee has also determined that fifty years must pass before an event becomes historical and worthy of recognition. Were these rules in

place during FDR's administration, many commemoratives would not have been printed, including the Susan B. Anthony stamp, commemorating the sixteenth anniversary of suffrage. Also, the Committee will only consider commemorative subjects with "national significance," specifically restricting local and regional anniversary commemorations to cancelations administered by local postmasters.[81] Civic and cultural committees could no longer expect that their regional interests might be elevated to national status through representation on a stamp, as happened in the 1920s and 1930s. Local history would remain local as the Committee decides what qualifies as nationally-significant and worthy to represent the U.S. on commemoratives in a given year.

By creating an appointed body of stamp enthusiasts who weighed proposals and made recommendations to the Postmaster General, postal officials demonstrated to collectors that the government was interested in direct input from citizens. Officially, stamps were no longer the sole production of the postal service, but a joint venture between the people and the government. Citizens had influenced commemorative choices since the 1920s, but the CSAC formalized this relationship. Citizens and postal officials understood that a commemorative's subject long outlived its limited issuance because of the large community of stamp collectors.

Today, stamps do not serve the same cultural role as they did in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century because the post office's influence on our daily

[81] Child, *Miniature Messages*, 30-35; and "USPS - Citizens' Stamp Advisory Committee," available online at http://www.usps.com/communications/organization/csac.htm.

lives has diminished. Through the Cold War period, the USPOD (now the United States Postal Service, USPS) remained central for personal and business-related communications delivering mail, magazines, and packages, while also providing money orders that allowed individuals to pay their bills without needing a checking account. Today, fewer letters are mailed requiring fewer stamps, and more bills are paid online than through paper remittance. Even with this reduction in mail volume, the USPS prints nearly twenty-five commemorative stamps each year.[82] Other than holiday-themed stamps affixed to holiday cards, most Americans no longer see stamp imagery of new commemoratives or even on definitive stamps. Collectors and citizens interested in a specific subject might buy commemorative stamps, but stamps' power to naturalize narratives for the general American public has been greatly reduced by electronic communications, and most mail delivered contains indicia and not colorful stamps. Stamps' accessibility and ubiquity from the nineteenth and early twentieth century cannot be replicated in the early twenty-first century.

Stamps today do not shape public memory in the same ways they have in the past, which is why they are important cultural artifacts to examine. This study demonstrates that stamps and the postal service occupied a more central, yet understudied, role in the creation and circulation of historical narratives about the American past during the early twentieth century. In highlighting this particular

[82] Joe Burris, "Age in Which Letters are Old-fashioned Takes Toll on Postal Service," *Baltimore Sun*, August 7, 2009, available at http://www.baltimoresun.com/features/bal-md.pa.lettersaug07,0,5960461.story; "USPS - Citizens' Stamp Advisory Committee;" and James H. Bruns, "Stamps and Coins," *Washington Post*, August 15, 1982.

practice and the often understated role of postal service, I hope other historians will look to collectors and collecting practices to discover how they contributed to discussions of local and national life. As we begin to uncover the stories of hobbyists from the past, we will gain a greater appreciation of the history work performed by them, particularly through the act of collecting and saving objects that now sit in museum collections. Collectors have often been looked upon as quirky individuals obsessed with the minutiae of the things they collect. Curators are beginning to embrace collectors, and other hobbyists, as valuable experts with specialized knowledge who can help interpret the material culture found in artifact rooms. The digital age has also encouraged some professional historians and curators to invite others to share in the processes of saving and interpreting their own history. Other professionals are reluctant to allow amateurs the ability to share in content creation. If historians and museum professionals can see collectors as history workers in their own right, then this type of collaboration ushered in by the web will seem less radical and studies like this dissertation will be less rare.