



THE PHILLY PHILATELIST

Award-Winning Newsletter of the Greater Philadelphia Stamp & Collectors Club

Founded 1904

American Philatelic Society – Chapter 18

February 2025

www.GPSCC.org

Volume 13, Issue 2

NEXT MEETING

February 18, 2025 at 7:00 p.m.

Community Rooms
GIANT Supermarket
315 N. York Rd., Willow Grove, PA

Dinner:

For those who would like to join us for dinner beforehand, we will meet at The W Tavern, about a block from GIANT, at 5:00 p.m. for cocktails followed by dinner at 5:30 p.m.

210 York Rd., Willow Grove, PA

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Paul F. Miller

How can you get the most enjoyment from your stamp collection? Well, you probably have heard for most things that what you get out of it is what you put into it. That is entirely true for our stamp collections!

There is no "secret answer" here, though, as the level of participation and enjoyment in one's stamp collection varies based on one's personality. Everyone has their own interests in types of stamps, countries, topical themes, etc. Although some of us have overlapping interests in what we collect, the real way to enjoy your collection is to put in the time and effort.

Time and effort is not a bad thing, especially if it relates to a hobby. It should be time and effort that results in doing what you want; learning about your hobby; achieving an element of relaxation. Many of us do this without even thinking about it.

You sit down in front of your collection, look over the great "gems" that you have found over the years, and strategize about how you will find the next "gem" for your collection. You may read about the items in your collection to learn more about what they meant at the time they were issued or created. Maybe you have a conversation with a fellow collector about similar items in your collection. Each of these actions you take can be thrilling and add to the enjoyment of your collection.

So, if you are already doing this, then you are on the right path to enjoying your collection and getting the most out of it that you can. Keep up the good work – you will be rewarded with hours of satisfaction, enjoyment, and relaxation.

Remember, stamp collecting is not a race. Rather, it is a journey. A journey that only you can build for

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE (CONTINUED)

yourself based on your own unique interests. Pick something – or pick many things – as collecting interests and throw yourself into it.

I recently read an article about Franklin D Roosevelt, the thirty-second President of the United States. Many of us know that he was an avid stamp collector. As a child, he loved stamp collecting for the world of knowledge that stamps unlocked for him. As an adult, he used stamp collecting as an avenue for relaxation in his otherwise very busy life.

It is said that he spent time every day with his stamp collection. But not only did he spend time enjoying

his stamp collection, he actively participated in the world of stamps by brainstorming over stamp designs, colors, and themes during his presidency. And he actually sketched numerous ideas for stamp designs. Roosevelt once claimed, "I owe my life to my hobbies – especially stamp collecting."

Roosevelt was a living example of "what you get out of it is what you put into it." In our own way, we should strive to be like Franklin D Roosevelt (not necessarily becoming the president!) as we approach our stamp collecting interests. It served him well, and I am sure it will serve you well, too.

PROGRAM FOR FEBRUARY 18, 2025:

"THE U.S. BYRD ANTARCTIC STAMP: PRODUCTION, FIRST DAY AND OTHER USES"

Distinguished philatelist and GPSCC member **Alan Warren** will present, "The U.S. Byrd Antarctic Stamp: Production, First Day and Other Uses."

Alan is an accredited chief judge for both philately and philatelic literature. As an exhibitor he has achieved numerous awards including the grand and reserve grand.

His tireless work in the stamp hobby has resulted in numerous honors. Alan was invited to sign the Roll of Distinguished Philatelists in 2019. He received the American Philatelic Society John N. Luff award in 2002 and the Alfred F. Lichtenstein memorial award for outstanding service to philately from the Collectors Club of New York in 2013.



REMINDER ABOUT THE MARCH 18 MEETING

On March 18, Scott English, the executive director of the American Philatelic Society (APS), and his wife Kendra will join us for the pre-meeting dinner at 5:00 p.m. and meeting at 7:00 p.m. Scott will discuss his 10-year tenure with the APS and his thoughts on the future of the hobby. It's sure to be an enjoyable evening, so please make a special effort to attend the dinner, meeting or both.

If you plan to attend the dinner, please email Mike Wilson at vpprograms@gpsc.org, so he can ensure sufficient seating.



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UPCOMING CLUB MEETINGS

2025: Mar. 18 – Apr. 15 – May 20 – June 17 – Aug. 19 –
Sep. 16 – Oct. 21 – Nov. 18

UPCOMING EVENTS

March 14-16 – [Garfield Perry March Party](#), Best Western Plus, 15471 Royalton Rd., Strongsville, OH.

March 15 – [Philatelic Gathering](#), 10:00 a.m.-noon, Chester County Historical Society, 225 N. High Street, West Chester, PA.

March 29 – [DELPEX](#), Nur Shrine Center, 198 South DuPont highway (US 13 & 40), New Castle, DE.

April 5-6 – [SPRINGPEX 2025](#), John R. Lewis High School, 6540 Franconia Rd., Springfield, VA.

April 18-20 – [Philatelic Show](#), Boxboro Regency Hotel & Conference Center, 242 Adams Place, Boxborough, MA.

June 6-8 – [NAPEX](#), McLean Hilton at Tyson's Corner, 7920 Jones Branch Dr., McLean, VA.

June 21-22 – [SCOPEX](#), American Philatelic Center, Bellefonte, PA.



CLUB MAILING ADDRESS

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WEB SITE

www.gpscc.org

FOLLOW US ON INSTAGRAM

[@gpscc19090](https://www.instagram.com/gpscc19090)

HAVE SOMETHING PHILATELIC YOU WANT TO SHARE?

The Philly Philatelist is always interested in publishing articles by our members or other collectors.

Articles of any length are welcome. An article that is 750 words long with two or three images will fill

two pages. Just email the text in a Word file and the images as separate files to Mike Wilson at newsletter@gpscc.org.

Thanks!



MINUTES OF THE JANUARY 21, 2025, GPSCC MEETING

It was a very cold and icy Tuesday night in January when 12 members of the Greater Philadelphia Stamp and Collectors Club, enthusiastically and totally unexpectedly, bundled up and arrived at 7:00 p.m. for the "All Show And Tell" meeting. They couldn't wait to describe and show the treasures that they brought to the meeting. This was just an example of what President Paul Miller pointed out in the January edition of *The Philly Philatelist* about the wonderful participation levels at our meetings.

In Paul Miller's absence, Vice President Mike Wilson ran the meeting.

On a motion made, seconded and approved, the club agreed to donate \$100 to a charity in honor of Paul's mother who passed away the day before the meeting.

Secretary Robert Cohen reported that as of January 16, there were a total of 55 members. We are hopeful to regain some new members in the new year. A visitor by the name of Lindsay Dearing came tonight after inheriting thousands of stamps from a family member. Hopefully, he'll become a member when he sees all the interesting things we discuss at our meetings.

Our treasurer, Bruce Marsden, indicated that we have approximately \$5,900 in the club checking account.

American Philatelic Society members received an email in December announcing that 70 members had already joined Grouper. In order to join, you must be at least 65 years old and be covered by a Medicare Advantage or Medicare Supplement insurance policy. You receive \$50 annually and \$20 for every three months you are active with any group. A few GPSCC members applied to Grouper and were ineligible because their health plan did not participate.

Another email we received had to do with the upcoming Boston 2026 World Expo. They are seeking members to donate off-paper United States and worldwide stamps for welcome packets in their

beginner's area. Their goal is to get 3 million stamps. The Spellman Museum is handling all donations.

A total of 10 members brought something to share at this evening's "All Show and Tell." The following is a brief summary.

Letty Moon brought in an 1867 cover with a Westtown local stamp on the back. Two-cents was charged to deliver letters from the school to the post office. She also showed two covers from 1886 and 1889 with dried up plant samples in them sent to the Moon Nursery in Morrisville for plant identification.

Ed Weisberg showed us a series of framed United States stamps with different themes. Also, he brought in gold stamps from Equatorial Guinea.

Bruce Marsden brought in a cover from 1905 that was sent from Switzerland to Japan. It made several stops through the United States before it got to Japan. The seven lower value stamps were attached in six different colors to pay 50 cents in postage. The letter traveled by ship to New York, then by train to Seattle Washington and then to Yokohama, Japan.

Louis Gotlib brought in hydrometer labels, a hydrometer from 1820 with slide rules, and a mercury thermometer.

Dean Fowler shared an album of American Commemorative Collector Pages and a book of slogan blocks.

Phil Russell informed us about the life of meteorologist, teacher and principal, James Pollard Espy. He was famous for his theories on storms and established a series of daily weather observations, compiled weather maps and instituted telegraphic bulletins. His work built the foundation for weather forecasting. Phil had a copy of a letter that was sent to local people asking them to gather weather information in each town in the United States.

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MINUTES OF THE JANUARY 21, 2025, GPSCC MEETING (CONTINUED)

Thom Almerini showed us four Priority Mail Covers with excessive postage, some of which were of questionable usage including certified mail, postage due and official mail stamps.

Mike Wilson shared a crash cover from 1919 addressed by John N. Luff, a famous 20th century philatelist. The letter was sent to August Roterberg, who was an associate of Harry Houdini. The plane crashed onto the roofs of two homes and never made it to Chicago. Only three covers survive.

Richard Brent brought in a cover from 1927 that was mailed from a hotel in Atlantic City to a residence in Chuckswood, Villanova. He showed us pictures of the house and informed us about its history.

Anne Gibby shared an English translation of the novel *Don Quixote* published in 1652. She inherited the book from her Great Uncle Len. The book is not in great condition, and she has been attempting to find someone who would appreciate it nonetheless.

Respectfully submitted by Robert Cohen

GPSCC PROGRAMS FOR 2025

This is the line-up of meeting speakers for 2025. There is one open date: October 21. If you would like to present something at that meeting or one in 2026, please email Mike Wilson at vpprograms@gpscc.org.

- March 18: Scott English, APS Executive Director - Future of Stamp Collecting
- April 15: Ron Leshner - Pure Adulteration? Oleomargarine, Process Butter, Mixed Flour, Filled Cheese, and Fertilizer Taxes
- May 20: Yamil Kouri - BOSTON 2026 (via zoom)
- June 17: Thom Almerini - Modern History of Indonesia and Its Philatelic History
- August 19: Mac Sarreal - Philatelic Potpourri: Making Stamp Club Meetings More Engaging
- Sept. 16: Phil Russell - Colonial Covers
- Oct. 21: TBD
- Nov. 18: Anne Gibby – Great Uncle Len



PHILATELIC GATHERING RESTARTS

The Philatelic Gathering (PG) meets for the first time in 2025 on February 15 from 10:00 a.m. to noon at the Chester County Historical Society. The speakers will be Richard Colberg on “Miss Vickie by the Numbers, Great Britain Surface-Printed Issues, 1855-1883” and Ronald Majors on “1860 Royal Visit of the Prince of Wales to Canada and U.S.” Check out the [PG’s website](#) for more information.

A DANIEL WEBSTER “FREE FRANK” - NO DEVIL BUT PLENTY OF BIRD POOP

Michael L. Wilson

Daniel Webster (Figure 1) was a prominent lawyer and politician in the antebellum period. He served in the U.S. House of Representatives, representing both New Hampshire (1813-1817) and Massachusetts (1823-1827). He also represented Massachusetts in the U.S. Senate from 1827 to 1841 and again from 1845 to 1850. He also served as Secretary of State from 1841 to 1843 and again from 1850 to 1852 and would die while in that office. All told, he spent nearly 40 of his 70 years alive serving in one capacity or another in the U.S. government.

He also was a famous lawyer, arguing more than 200 cases before the U.S. Supreme Court. It was his fame as a lawyer that led Stephen Vincent Benet to write a short story in 1936 titled, *The Devil and Daniel Webster*, in which a fictionalized Webster defends a farmer who sold his soul to the devil. Spoiler alert: Webster prevails, and the farmer's contract to sell his soul to the devil is torn up.

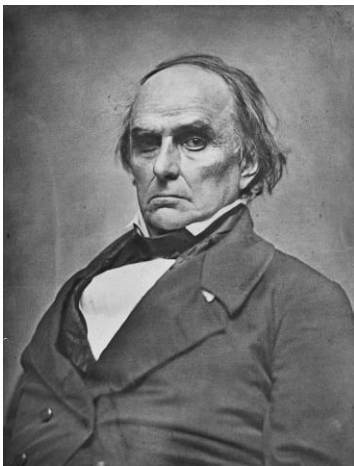


Figure 1 -
Daniel
Webster,
1782-1852.
Source:
Wikipedia.

As member of Congress, Webster had the privilege of sending mail free of charge under the “free frank” system. This practice dates back to 18th century Great Britain when members of Parliament were granted this right, and it is a benefit that members of the U.S. Congress continue to have. The folded letter shown in Figure 2 is one such letter sent by Webster on September 12, 1840, when he was a U.S. Senator.

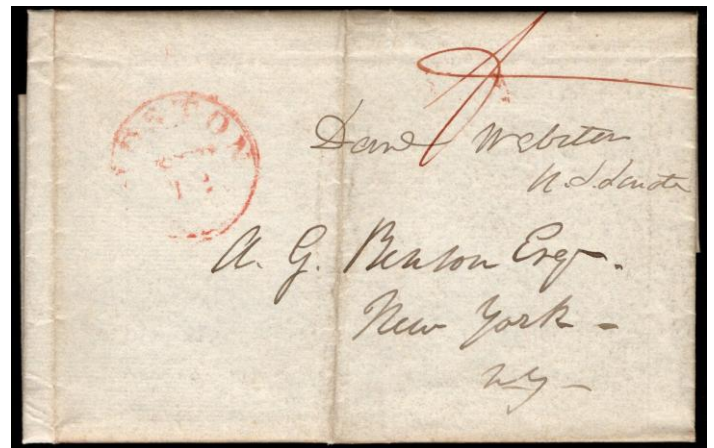


Figure 2 – Daniel Webster “Free Frank” from 1840. Source: Author’s collection.

The front of the cover contains Webster's signature with his free frank - a red manuscript “F” - and a red circular date stamp from Boston. The date in the handstamp is not clear, but we know it is September 12, 1840, from the manuscript date at the top of the letter.

The letter (Figure 3), as best as I can make out, reads as follows:

*Boston Sept. 12th 1840.
A.G. Benson, Esq.*

My dear Sir,

I was obliged unexpectedly to be on the Common at eight o'clock Thursday morning & I missed seeing you at the United States Hotel, I suppose.

I shall see you at New York and we will conclude our preliminary arrangements, at all events, & wait the movement of the ? ?.

I have to get away from here next week some time – am only waiting to raise the wind (?).

*Truly your's
Dan'l Webster*

A DANIEL WEBSTER "FREE FRANK" - NO DEVIL BUT PLENTY OF BIRD POOP (CONTINUED)

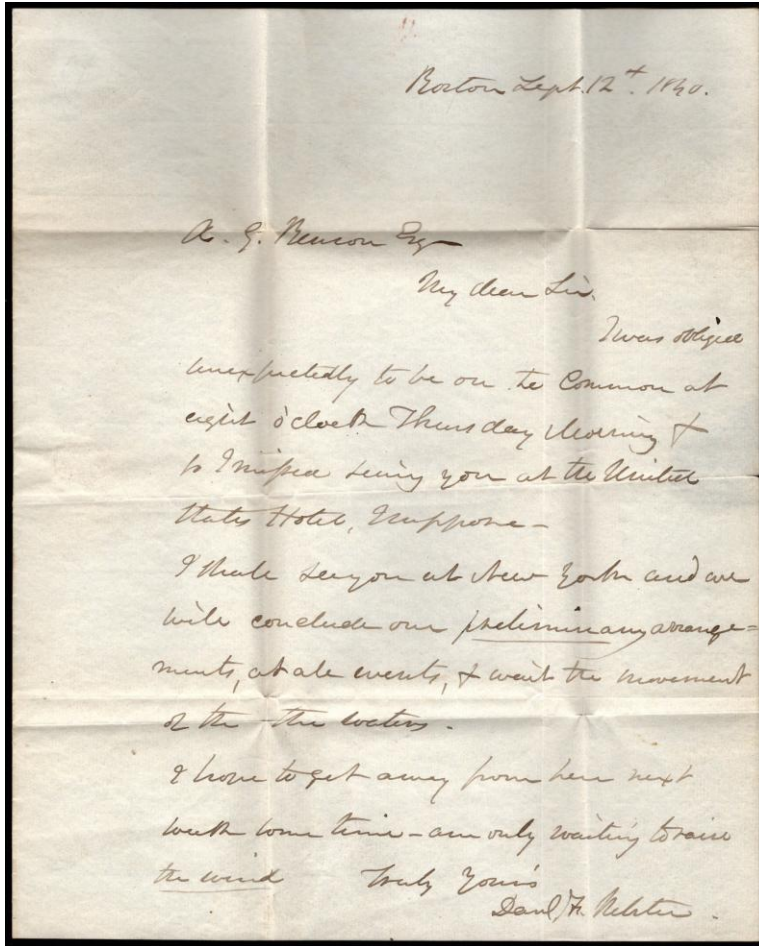


Figure 3 – Daniel Webster 's Letter
to Alfred G. Benson.

Webster was writing to Alfred G. Benson, a resident of New York City. Benson was a former business associate of Webster's close friend Charles March, which is probably how Webster and Benson became acquainted.

What arrangements Webster was referring to are unknown, but they may have had to do with Benson seeking a government contract to facilitate the settlement of Oregon and California. I suspect this might be the case based on a document that Benson submitted to the U.S. Congress many years later in which he writes, "In 1841, I engaged extensively in the Oregon and California business to facilitate the trade and commerce, and especially the colonization of those regions, under a contract made on the part of

the Government of the United States by the advice of Mr. Webster." According to Benson, the government failed to hold up its end of that contract in the early 1840s, so it is remarkable that Benson would turn again to Webster for assistance in 1852 on another matter: the exploitation of guano from islands off the western coast of South America.

Benson, who was born in Maine in 1804 and moved to New York when he was 22 to engage in the shipping business, was among the first to discover the adaptation of guano – aka "seabird poop" – to the purposes of fertilization, and he began to import it in large quantities from the islands off the western coast of South America. With its high concentrations of nitrogen, phosphate and potassium, guano was pivotal for the development of input-intensive farming in the 19th century and would remain a valuable farm commodity until the early 1900s when the Haber-Bosch process was invented for extracting nitrogen from the atmosphere.

In the late 1840s and early 1850s, Benson was associated with the Lobos Island Foundation. The Lobos Islands were two guano-rich islands off the coast of Peru that Benson believed were not claimed by any government. Benson was determined to take possession of these islands in the name of U.S. government and enlisted the help of Webster to make that a reality. In a letter to Benson's business partner, Captain James C. Jewett, Webster intimates that Benson may be correct that the islands are unclaimed, and Webster commits to send a letter to the Secretary of the Navy suggesting "that a vessel of war be ordered to repair to the Lobos Islands, for the purpose of protecting from molestation any of our citizens who may wish to take guano from them."

As it turns out, Webster was badly mistaken. Peru did have a legitimate claim to the islands, and Benson's excursion almost resulted in a war between the United States and Peru. Peru treated Benson and his work crews as invaders and promptly evicted them from the islands. Notwithstanding Webster's

A DANIEL WEBSTER “FREE FRANK” - NO DEVIL BUT PLENTY OF BIRD POOP (CONTINUED)

commitment that the U.S. government would stand by him, Benson was left holding the bag by himself.

Benson took a significant financial hit from Webster's error, and on January 8, 1855, he submitted a 28-page document titled, “Memorial of Alfred G. Benson to the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States” seeking compensation for his losses. Benson's claim worked its way through the Senate's Committee of Claims and resulted in a massive 284-page report released on February 18, 1857. That report supported passage of Senate Bill Number 606 that provided Benson a measure of compensation.

The Lobos Island's fiasco, however, did not dissuade Benson from continuing to seek wealth through the exploitation of guano on Pacific islands. Several years later, Benson and other investors located guano deposits on other islands, which proved to be valuable though not as lucrative as the Lobos Islands would have been. Benson no doubt was encouraged in his new endeavors by the passage of the Guano Islands Act of 1856 that enabled citizens to take possession of unclaimed islands containing guano deposits in the name of the United States, and it empowered the president to use the military to protect such interests. That law, in effect, codified Webster's commitment, but the U.S. government was extremely careful to ensure that any islands seized were, in fact, unclaimed by any other jurisdiction. (That law remains on the books to this day and was last used in 1997.)

Benson passed away in 1878, with *The New York Times* April 20, 1878, obituary stating that the “deceased merchant was public spirited, and in a modest way took part in several enterprises of value to New York and Brooklyn.”

In August 1852, just two months before he passed away, Webster wrote to a friend, “All my concerns in this Department have never given me so much disturbance, as this Lobos business.” It's puzzling why Webster chose to question Peru's jurisdiction of the Lobos Islands and how he came to that conclusion. Reasons put forth range from that he was duped by Benson and Captain Jewett to accusations that he was in collusion with Benson and Jewett in a “get rich quick scheme.” The most plausible reason, however, may be health related. When Webster responded to Captain Jewett's letter (which Benson likely penned) on June 5, 1852, Webster was suffering from a severe head trauma that he suffered in a carriage accident on May 8, 1852. He was also suffering from cirrhosis of the liver and would pass away on October 24, 1852, a little more than four months after he replied to Jewett/Benson.

The Lobos Islands episode did not reflect well on Webster, but in the greater scheme of things, it was a minor blemish on a sterling career. He served his country for 40 years, and he is regarded as a talented attorney, orator and politician. It's no wonder that he has been honored on multiple U.S. postage stamps in the 19th and 20th centuries.

INTERESTED IN LEARNING MORE ABOUT FREE FRANKS?

For more information on free franks, the National Postal Museum has a wonderful [online exhibit](#) that is worth viewing.



Smithsonian
National Postal Museum



AWARDS AND HONORS

Alan Warren

At the Sarasota National Stamp Exhibition in Florida in January, **Vernon Morris** won a large gold and the American Philatelic Society's pre-1900 medal of excellence for his "Evolution and Impact of Blood's Local Post: 1842 to 1862." **Alan Warren** served on the show jury.

In the literature competition in Sarasota, **Michael Wilson** received a gold for his article, "Celebrating 50 Years of Airmail Service to Bermuda: A FDC Cover from 1975 and Maybe One from 1925?" That article appeared in the American First Day Cover Society's publication *First Days* for July-August 2024.

Mike also had three other articles published recently. In *Kelleher's Stamp Collector's Quarterly* for the 4th quarter 2024, he penned, "A Civil War-era Fancy Cancel – Oh Yeah, and a Heartfelt Letter from a Union Soldier." He writes about the "prison bars" fancy cancel used in Columbus, Ohio in the early 1860s and the background of Edward Bohm, the

soldier who wrote the letter – in German – to his dear sister on her 21st birthday.

For the January-February 2025 issue of *The Airpost Journal*, Mike wrote, "An Air Mail First in Milwaukee." He describes how on August 1, 1928, the U.S. Post Office Department lowered air mail rates to 5-cents per ounce and to celebrate the reduction, the post office in Milwaukee arranged for the first ever, and probably only, direct pick-up of mail at a post office by an airplane. The article includes two photos showing the planes parading in downtown Milwaukee to the main post office.

And in the February 2025 issue of the *Pennsylvania Postal Historian*, Mike describes a folded letter from 1850 franked with U.S. Scott #1a addressed to Hugh Nelson McAllister of Bellefonte, a founding trustee of what is now Pennsylvania State University. The article describes the folded letter's connection to not only Pennsylvania but philately.

DID YOU KNOW?

Paul F. Miller

London has a cool place for stamp collectors to visit – The Postal Museum.

The museum opened in Farringdon, London, in 2017 and welcomes over 130,000 visitors a year.

Information from their website indicates that the museum is award-winning, accredited, and independent. You can experience everything from family-friendly, hands-on exhibitions to modern research facilities. You can also take an immersive ride on Mail Rail, London's hidden underground railway, or visit Sorted, a popular children's play space.

The museum contains hundreds of thousands of objects and stories. Their collections tell the 500-year-old story of British postal communication and its continued impact on life around the world today.

If you visit, you can find everything from vehicles, uniforms, pillar boxes and stamps to a 100-year-old postal railway and incredible stories of innovation, engineering, design, and social history.

The Postal Museum is run by the Postal Heritage Trust. You can learn more at their [website](#).



BOSTON 2026 WORLD EXPO UPDATE

Planning for [BOSTON 2026 World Expo](#), the twelfth international philatelic exhibition of the United States scheduled for May 23-30, 2026, is in full swing. The organizers have unveiled a new website with links to register and sign-up for email updates. Hotel reservations can be made through the BOSTON 2026 website starting in March. The website also includes all the information you need if you want to enter an exhibit or submit a piece for the literature competition.

BOSTON 2026 also issued a press release on January 2, 2025, requesting stamp donations:

Boston 2026 World Expo calls on all collectors to donate off-paper stamps to build its inventory for use in welcome packets and the youth and beginners' areas during America's next international philatelic exhibition.

Coordinating the collection process is Michael Lawson, Boston 2026 Chief Financial Officer, in association with the Spellman Museum of Stamps and Postal History. "World Stamp Show-NY 2016 collected roughly three million stamps for free giveaways in a variety of ways," said Lawson. "We are again counting on the philatelic community to show their generosity and desire to promote the hobby by donating common, unwanted duplicates we all have an abundance of to our show."

It may be hard to grasp that many stamps, but artificial intelligence can help. Google's Gemini explained it this way. With an average thickness of 0.01 inches per stamp, a three million stamp stack would span 2,500 feet, nearly half a mile, or roughly the height of a 200-story building.

Donations of any quantity would be welcomed, mint and used, but all should be off-paper and sorted by US and non-US if possible. Any on-paper material is to be soaked before sending. Stamp clubs are especially encouraged to

participate by holding a soaking/collection program with their members. Dealer stock, including hundreds of the same stamp, may also be sent. Any glassines and tongs sent are much appreciated. As a 501(c)3 organization, Boston 2026 donations may be tax-deductible to the donor.

Items are to be mailed to: Spellman Museum of Stamps and Postal History, Attn: Michael Lawson/Boston 2026, Regis College, 241 Wellesley Street Weston, MA 02493. Please include a note with an email address to receive confirmation of receipt.

What a great use of those extra stamps you have laying around!

Don't forget that Yamil Kouri president of BOSTON 2026, will join us by Zoom on May 20, 2025, to provide further updates on the expo.



**BOSTON 2026
WORLD EXPO**