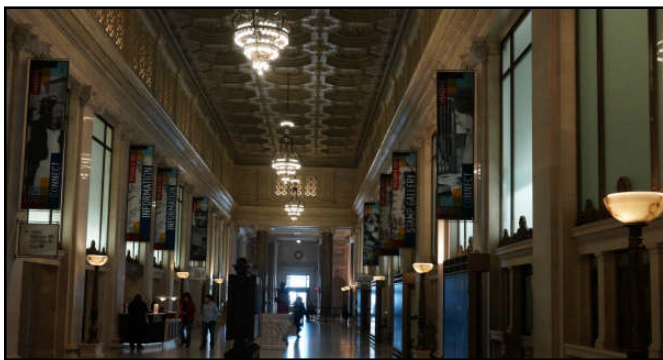


A Visit to the National Postal Museum

by Harvey Edwards

I am home now from a week in Washington DC. It was an eventful week, falling in the middle of the Cherry Blossom Festival. I saw the Easter egg roll at the White House (from afar), visited the Navy Museum, Navy Memorial, along with other museums and memorials along the Mall. I also visited the National Postal Museum. The museum is part of the Smithsonian and is free.

Getting to the museum was pretty easy using the Metro (the city's underground mass transit system). The Museum is located on the Red Line, across the street from Union Station. I arrived just before the opening at 10 AM. All bags have to pass through the security scanner and there's no entry until opening time.

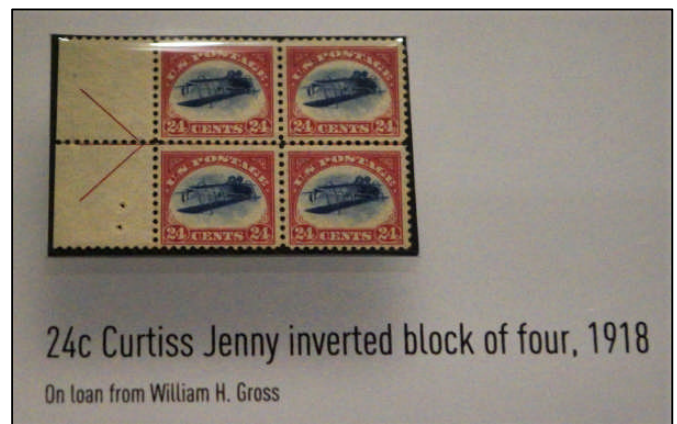


The building itself is an attractive piece of architecture with its columns and high ceilings (left). You can walk the old lobby lined with post office boxes where customers used to pick up their mail.

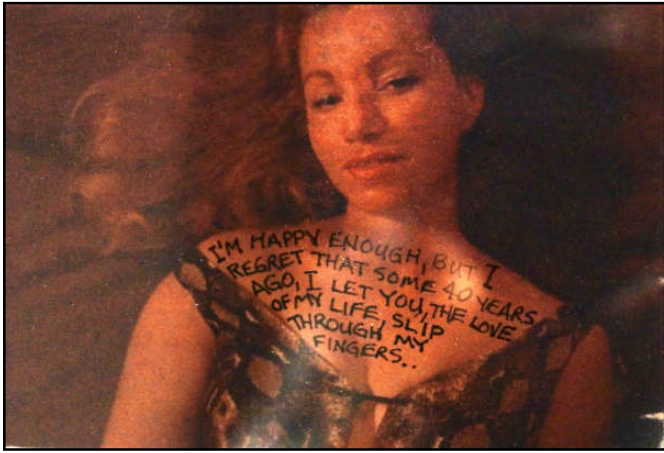
The museum has multiple galleries, both upstairs and down. The William H. Gross Stamp Gallery is the world's largest gallery dedicated to philately. It houses the museum's stamp collection in hundreds of pullout frames. A block of four inverted Jennies (below), the Z grill, the British Guiana

one-cent magenta and other rare stamps as well as other not so rare stamps from around the world are on display. There are also several interesting covers in the collection ranging from the museum's oldest piece (the Silk Road Cover dated November 24, 1390) to Pony Express mail to a Hindenburg disaster card.

The Owey display shows an interesting story of the Railway Mail Service mascot from the late 1880s through the 1890s, traveling the world with the mail. Many of our members might remember Elna Brew. She spent years petitioning the post office for an Owey stamp and it paid off.



Other displays included the history of transporting mail including by wagon, rail, and air. One of the planes used a hook similar to the one used by the Railway Mail Service. The planes were fitted with a long take up with a hook and a winch that caught and reeled in mail containers. Another nearby display had the evolution of mailboxes. It's intuitively obvious but I had never thought about the fact that the first mailbox didn't appear until after the first stamp appeared. Stamps prepay postal services and allowed mailers to have a supply of stamps on hand. They no longer had to go the post office to pay postage for each individual letter.



One area I found really interesting was the PostSecret Project. The project allows people to anonymously share their most personal secrets on a postcard. One card spoke of regretting letting go of their love 40 years earlier. The card on the left reads "I'm happy enough, but I regret that some 40 years ago, I let you, the love of my life, slip through my fingers.."

Another card (on the right) talks about her kids having allergies and how, when she doesn't want to share, she tells them that they are allergic to the candy.

There's so much more to write about the museum and its exhibits but I encourage you to visit yourself.

Harvey Edwards is a NSSS Director and the Chair of the Stamp Show Committee. He is an award winning exhibitor and winner of the Chaloner Award in 2015. Harvey's current collecting interests include submarines and Nevada history which varies based on the exhibit he is working on. He also collected St Pierre et Miquelon and pictorial cancellations.

