

One Grumpy Old Man's Opinion: How The Post Office Managed To Kill Off My Interest In Collecting U.S. Stamps

By Stan Cronwall

Personally, I think it all began with President Franklin Delano Roosevelt and his co-conspirator Postmaster James Farley of "Farley's Follies" fame. The President was a stamp collector and Farley acted as his wingman. From there, it was only a hop, skip and jump to the 35 stamp Famous Americans Issues with the first issue on January 29, 1940. Fast forward with me to the year 1950, when there were 11 new 3¢ issues. In 1960, there 34 new 4¢ stamps. In 1970, the number of new issues slipped back to 18 but they were now at 6¢. Come 1980, there were only 22 new stamps but the face value was now up to 15¢ each, and we had blown through the "A" rate change. And, there was a new set of 26 definitives on the horizon. Thank goodness someone decided we no longer needed a 1¼¢ stamp.

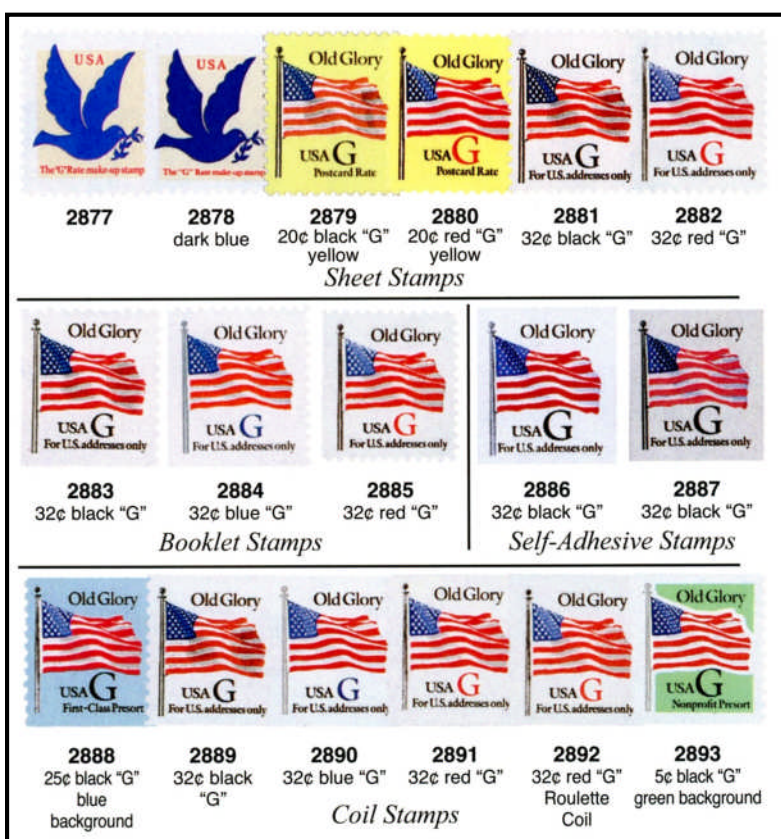
Stay with me as we are now entering the turbulent waters of 1980 with 31 new issues still at 15¢ each. But there was another set of 26 definitives coming. The rest of the 1980's was philatelic madness passing by the rate changes of the "B" "C" and "D" and starting yet another round of definitives.

Forget about trying to wrap your mind around the new issues from the year 1990 and after.

Net, net... back in the year 2000, I decided that USPS had finally killed off my interest in collecting U.S. stamps.

Why? Just look at the number of new issues that came spewing out starting in the 1990's. To collect them all was bad enough but if you were an FDC collector as I was, it was a real wallet flattener.

I began to have an appreciation for those U.S. collectors who drew a red line in the sand, and repeated to themselves the famous Roberto Duran boxing champion mantra, "No Mas!"



For some of you, the end date was 1940, for others the end of World War II, while others staggered on and at least some are still hanging in there.

Journey back with me to the mid-1990's - the years 1994-95 to be exact. The good old boys hit us up with a rate change from 29¢ to 32¢ greasing the way with the seventeen different "Old Glory" "G" Rate Change definitives Scott 2877-2893 including some a, b, c & d variations.

This is the largest group of non-denominated stamps ever issued by USPS. And, to top it off, they were only on sale for a very limited time, only to be replaced in about five months by the "Flag Over Porch" (Scott 2897) and its run-on brothers and sisters as well as the associated non-profit, bulk rate, pre-sorted, first class card, etc.

Give me a break!

Back when we were still writing on stone tablets, a kid could happily go to his or her local post office and proudly give the clerk 12¢ and get a block of 4

stamps. If the clerk knew the child was a stamp collector the youngster might ask and even get a block of stamps with a plate number.

Maybe when the child got home and studied their purchase they might detect something of interest beyond the subject of the stamp itself. For example, Scott 922 was issued May 10, 1944 to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the completion of America's first trans-continental railroad.



On close examination, the main illustration is curious.

Why is the flag waving in one direction, while the smoke from the locomotive is blowing in the opposite direction?

Strange indeed.

Hey, the guy was a painter not the weather guru on the 10 o'clock news. The painter goofed and his error is on canvas for all-time. The weatherman is wrong at least 50% of the time, but his predictions are gone in the ether forming a large cloud over Texas.

Go figure.

Do me a favor and drop the Post Boy Editor a line telling him why you stopped collecting U.S. stamps, or tell him why I'm all wet. I don't want to be known as the only curmudgeon in the group.

Stan Cronwall's collecting interests include Germany: Third Reich 1933-45 and the areas it occupied (stamps covers & cards). He also collects U.S. World War II Patriotic Covers and Cards; Civil War Patriotic Covers (both U.S. and CSA); U.S. Naval Covers; DDR stamps; and, Post WW II Soviet Zone Hitler Head Obliteration stamps, covers & cards.