

# Collect New Hampshire—On Stamps

by John F. Dunn

Like many non-collectors, you may not be aware that stamp collecting—“philately” to some of the faithful—is much more than filling an album with as many different stamps as possible. It can be the appreciation of the engraving and printing crafts in the form of miniature works of art; or the study of history, worldwide or of your own local region; or creating a display—perhaps an award-winning exhibit—that declares “this is me, and my world.”

Not that it ever was as simple as gathering up any and all stamps, but with up to 10,000 stamps being issued every year the idea of maintaining an up-to-date worldwide stamp collection has been abandoned by most collectors.

Increasingly stamp collectors are specializing in one specific area of interest. As with so many other aspects of life in modern America, people like to personalize whatever they do—and that includes collecting stamps.

For many, this has led to the growth of “topical” collecting. For some reason, in most countries this format is known as “thematics”—similar to their “football” vs our “soccer” terminology—but either way it is the collecting by subject rather than by country or region.

No matter what your interest, you will almost certainly find some stamps that have been issued on your favorite subject, and you can also seek “covers”—what non-collectors think of as envelopes—that may have “cachets” (pictorial designs) and/or postmarks that supplement the subject on the stamp.

The good news is that the thousands of

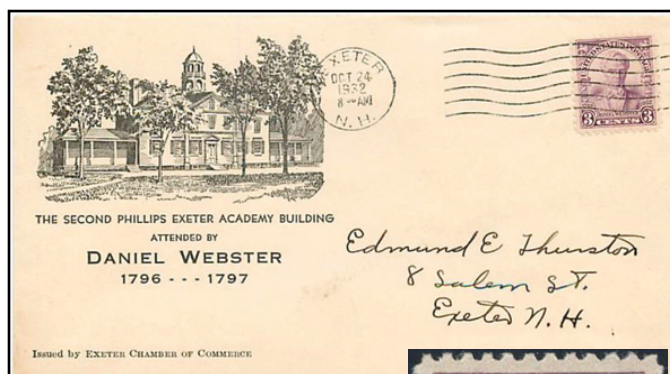
stamps being issued each year—and the imagination of stamp issuers in dreaming up subjects of interest—means that you can collect just about any subject you might choose. But the bad news for some collectors is that it has become too much of a good thing, with themes like flowers on stamps coming out by the hundreds each year.

Fortunately, stamp collecting offers more diversity than just about any other hobby you might consider. And this brings us to one that will be ‘near and dear’ to the hearts of readers of *New Hampshire Magazine*:

## Collect New Hampshire

Yes, New Hampshire. With our long, rich history, there is a tremendous amount of material around which you can build a New Hampshire Collection. With this in mind, here are a few examples of the variety that is available to New Hampshire buffs.

This Daniel Webster stamp was issued on October 24, 1932 to celebrates the 150th anniversary of the great orator’s birth. One



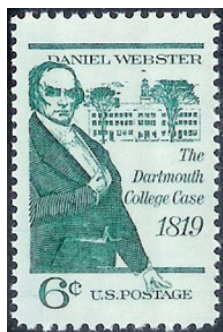
of the First Day of Issue covers for the occasion was created by the Exeter Chamber of Commerce. In addition to Washing-



ton, D.C., other towns from which Daniel Webster covers are known cancelled on the first day of issue of this stamp are Franklin and Hanover, New Hampshire.

I could not find any information on the addressee on the cover—Edmund E. Thurston of Exeter—(perhaps one of our readers can), but it suggests another form of collecting that some use, which is by family name, whether or not the person is a family member.

This 1969 6¢ stamp commemorates the monumental legal decision known as the “Dartmouth College Case,” which Daniel Webster argued and won before the U.S. Supreme Court 150 years earlier. Simplified, the Supreme Court jurists upheld the right of Dartmouth College, under its charter, to be a private institution, rather than a New Hampshire public college—a decision that spurred the growth of the private enterprise system.



The stamp pictures Webster with Dartmouth Hall in the background, and was designed by John R. Scotford, Jr., the then-assistant director of Dartmouth’s Hopkins Center for the Creative and Performing Arts.

Sanbornton Bridge (today’s Tilton, N.H.) to Ossipee, N.H., showing a full face beardless Lincoln and a rail splitter motif.



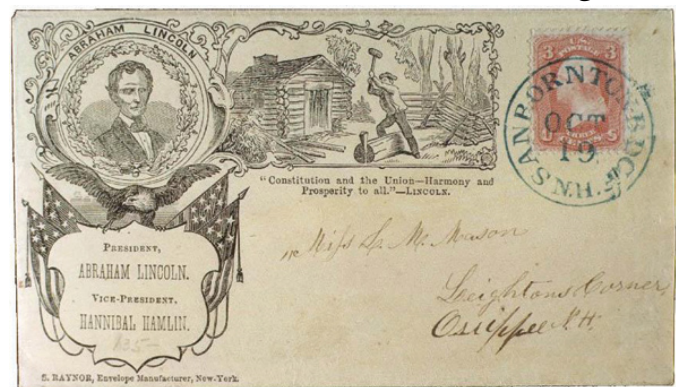
And here we display a red, white and blue illustrated “Patriotic” cover from Boston, Mass., to Hollis, N.H., picturing Col. Ephraim Ellsworth of New York, who was the first Union officer to be killed in the Civil War, in Alexandria, Va., on May 24, 1861.

The Old Man of the Mountains is gone, but it was a popular New Hampshire tourist attraction when this stamp was issued to celebrate the 150th Anniversary of the “Great Stone Face.”

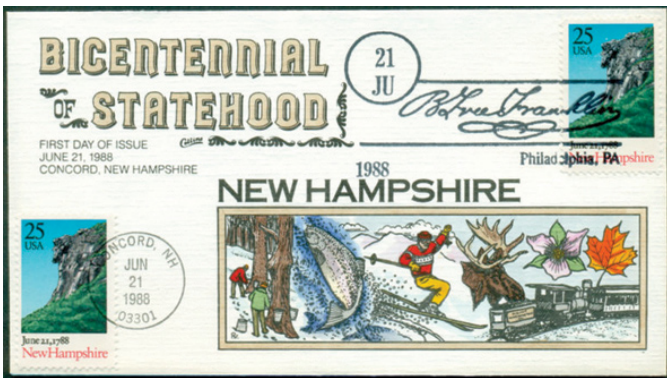


It is seen here on a cacheted cover cancelled on the June 21, 1955 first day of issue of the stamp, at the Franconia, N.H., post office.

In 2002 the USPS issued a set of 50 “Greetings From...” state stamps, reminiscent of the popular post cards of days gone by.



Illustrated covers were popular in the mid-19th century. Shown above is a Lincoln Campaign cover used on October 19, 1860 from



The iconic symbol of the Granite State was once again featured prominently on this Statehood Bicentennial stamp, which was issued on June 21, 1988. Notice that one stamp bears a Concord, N.H., cancel (lower left) and another (upper right) has a June 21 Philadelphia, Pa., “B Free Franklin” cancel.



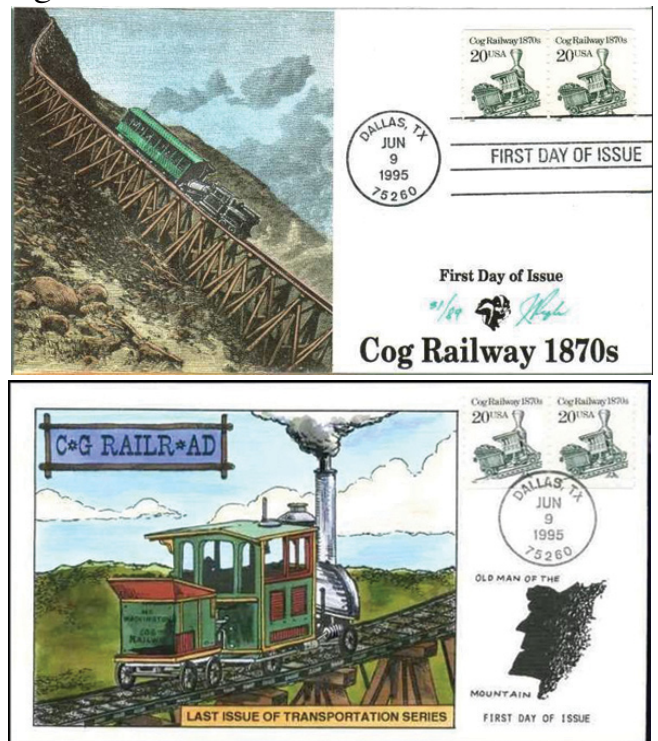
However, the Old Man of the Mountains was still standing and was featured prominently on this privately-produced hand-painted cover—**but not on the stamp**. It is also shown here enlarged on a “Maximum Card” that reproduces the stamp.



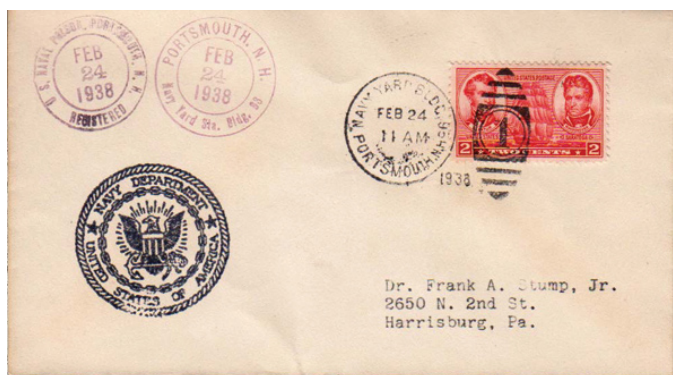
Did someone in the Postal Service know something in 2002? Whether or not they did, by the time the Postal People issued the New Hampshire stamp in its current “Flags of Our Nation” series, the Old Man was gone—from the Mountain and from this stamp.



Continuing with New Hampshire attractions on stamps, have you ever taken a ride on the Mount Washington cog railway? When the U.S. Postal Service issued this stamp as part of its Transportation Coil series, it pictured Mount Washington Railway Company’s engine No. 5, also known as “The Cloud.”



The stamp was issued on June 9, 1995, but in spite of its association with New Hampshire, the Postal Service chose Dallas, Texas, as the city where the stamp was first issued. Shown here are two hand-painted “cachets”, or illustrated covers.



Another popular approach to collecting is covers with a military connection. In this instance we see a cover with a Navy Department seal and a 1937 2¢ Navy stamp, part of a set of ten Army-Navy stamps. This one is cancelled on February 24, 1938 by a “Navy Yard Bldg. 95 Portsmouth N.H.” cancel. Whenever a U.S. Navy ship is commissioned or decommissioned, Naval cover collectors can send in envelopes to obtain a special pictorial cancellation. There is no extra charge for the cancellation, all you need is your own envelope with a First Class stamp affixed.



Another approach to collecting New Hampshire is through covers—old envelopes—with unusual, “Fancy,” cancels. The 1831 letter above displays a scarce example of the Exeter, “octagon of rosettes” with a September 12 [1831] date.

And coming back to stamps, hunting is a popular activity in New Hampshire, so col-

lecting the old New Hampshire Migratory Waterfowl hunting permit “Duck” stamps, such as the 1988-89 stamp shown here.



If you want to set yourself a lofty goal, here’s the ultimate New Hampshire philatelic collectible. It is a cover to Concord, N.H., with the only known example of the Boscawen, N.H., Postmaster Provisional, issued in 1846 by the local postmaster, Worcester Webster, before the U.S. Post Office Department began issuing stamps of their own. It’s unique, so you have two choices:



1. Pay the price. It has a value of \$300,000 according to the authoritative Scott Catalogue and will most likely sell for more if and when it comes to market again.

2. Find a second example. As unlikely as that may seem, the many-years-later discovery of great rarities has been known to happen. If another “Boscawen Provisional” does exist there is a good chance it is sitting in an attic or among the personal papers of a long-gone family member—and that it is tucked away somewhere in New Hampshire.

This brings us to the subject of an important consideration in deciding your area

of collecting interest—how much to spend. Here the voices of experience—mine as well as those of many others—tell new collectors to go slow at first. Without getting overly involved here with the potential hazards, the primary point is that novices need to learn about the attributes of value. It's not as simple as looking up a stamp in a catalog, because market prices usually vary considerably from those printed values.

The primary variable is condition. A stamp with a \$20 catalog value, for example, might sell for \$1 (5% of catalog value) if it is a damaged “second” or \$200 or more if it is in superb condition with “jumbo” margins. And often times a novice cannot even tell which example of a given issue is the more valuable one because the faults are not necessarily visible to the naked eye.

There are stamps you can buy for less than a penny apiece in bulk mixtures and there are stamps or covers that sell for millions of dollars.

One of the two most valuable United States stamps is the 1868 One Cent “Z” Grill, the grill being a pattern of embossed impressions intended to make it difficult to wash a stamp and reuse it—an experiment that was unsuccessful—and the “Z” being an arbitrary letter designation, not the actual design of the grill pattern. There are two known examples, one on display at the National Postal Museum and not available for sale and the other in private hands.



The other most valuable U.S. piece is the 1918 Curtiss Jenny Inverted airmail stamp in a unique block of four with the number of the

plate that was used to print the stamps. It comes from the only pane of 100 of the inverts to reach the public, sold over the counter at a Washington, D.C. post office in 1918.



The Airmail Invert plate block is priced in the 2013 *Scott Specialized Catalogue of United States Stamps and Covers*—the primary reference source for collectors of U.S. stamps—for \$3,500,000 while the “Z” Grill is valued at \$3,000,000. They were traded for each other in 2005 after billionaire investment mogul William “Bill” Gross bought the Invert plate block at auction for \$2.97 million so that he could trade it a few weeks later for the “Z” Grill in order to complete his 19th Century United States stamp collection.

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