

# From the Publisher's Desk

by John F. Dunn



## The 2019 Program

Coming off what I think was a pretty good 2018 program, the U.S. Postal Service has announced what should be much of their 2019 program, although there will be more to come. So let's run through what has been announced. This is my take and I will welcome yours, not only on what has been announced, but also what you feel subjects that have been omitted. (Rather than repeat the designs here, you can find them all in our [2019 USPS Program](#).)

**Hearts Blossom.** What's to say? Hopefully they didn't spend a lot of money designing this stamp. "Hey, Postal People, how about holding a design contest among teenagers for the Love stamps?" Perhaps you will attract some attention from a new audience that is not familiar with postage stamps.

**Year of the Boar.** This stamp is the twelfth in this current Lunar New Year series. It served as an attractive primer on the themes that are relevant to people who celebrate the Lunar New Year; hopefully they found it relevant. Next question: will there be another series starting next year?

**Gregory Hines.** When you hear this name, do you think first of his color or his talent? I realize Gregory Hines is an African-American, but his bios reveal an emphasis on promoting tap dance as an art form for everyone. His Wikipedia bio starts with "was an American dancer, actor, singer,

and choreographer." He deserves a stamp based on this artistry.

As with Lena Horne this year, these great American entertainers should have their stamps without being placed in the Black Heritage series. Not that the Black Heritage stamps are less important. In fact, there are African-Americans who deserve to be honored for their service to their race, but they are denied that recognition. Go back to the early Black Heritage issues and you will see excellent examples of pioneers who broke new ground in their fields.

**Cactus Flowers.** Nice designs. Lots of people, including me, are not aware of these beautiful flowers, and the stamp designs appear to be well done. I think this will prove to be a popular issue that will reflect well on the USPS stamp program.

**Alabama Statehood.** They probably should have used a Crimson Tide football team photo. If you search "Alabama" online that is what pops up first and foremost. After that, tourism promotions seem to be what these Statehood stamps have become, and in this regard this one is well done.

**Marvin Gaye.** A well-deserved recognition. As with Gregory Hines, his Wikipedia bio identifies him as "an American," and in this case the Postal People agree. The two stamps do have one thing in common: the designs do credit to the subjects, depicting each performer as he would be remembered by fans.

**USS Missouri.** This issue should have consisted of two stamps, the other being the famous photo of General Douglas Mac Arthur signing the Instrument of Surrender by Japan to finally end World War II. Hopefully there will be other issues that depict famous ships, planes, tanks, Jeeps, that were important examples of America's industrial and military might.

**Post Office Murals.** The theme is good, but I need to see the actual stamps, as this issue does not look to be up to the standard of the previous WPA Posters set that celebrated the work of artists during the Great Depression. (You can view those 2017 stamps in our [USPS 2017 Program](#).)

**U.S. Flag.** Nice shot of our Flag, popular with mailers, therefore we definitely should always have at least one such stamp available. I do prefer this realistic design to the recent artistic renditions that were more about the design than they were about the national symbol.

**Wild and Scenic Rivers.** Coming off the 2018 "O Beautiful" pane, this is an excellent extension of the theme. I have to admit that I never knew there was a "Wild and Scenic Rivers System," so these scenes serve as an attractive introduction to the theme and those rivers.

**Walt Whitman.** When I saw this in the 2019 announcement, I was surprised that we hadn't already had a stamp for Whitman in the Literary Arts series. We do have his Famous Americans issue (Scott 867) but nothing that singles him out in a similar fashion to the more than 30 Literary Arts stamps that have been issued since 1979. After all, he is "the father of American poetry."

**Frogs.** One stamp would have been enough, two if you count Kermit, but it seems that these flora/fauna/nature themes always consist of five to ten designs.

**State and County Fairs.** Nice, unusual theme and a colorful panoramic depiction of this aspect of Americana. A complete strip of four used together will be a rare find, so I will have to remember to buy some panes when they come out and use them on some of our Manual shipments, insured packages, and similar mail. You may want to do the same.

**Woodstock.** 'Who woulda think it' back then, that a stamp would some day be issued for this counterculture event. Given the USPS stamp subject rules, you can't find much that is more the antithesis of counterculture than postage stamp themes.

The design itself is pretty lame so it could use some help. At the very least a bit of a haze would have been appropriate. Here's another idea: to make it a best seller, produce it as a lick-and-stick stamp, 'spice up' the gum a bit with some harmless flavoring, then spread a rumor that it is a psychedelic substance.

**Winter Berries.** Giving the Postal People their due, while I am inclined to think there are too many flowers and plants designs, I have noticed that a disproportionate amount of my incoming mail does bear flowers stamps. With that in mind, this set is a nice variation on the theme and particularly appropriate if issued late in the year, as expected.

**Joshua Tree.** Nicely done. The rates are changing, and varied, so the stamps will have one of those rates though it may not be the rate you need for your mailing.

**Bethesda Fountain.** As a native New Yorker, I would have preferred a design that took in more of the Central Park area immediately around it. The Postal People tell us it is a gathering place, so a few people would have been appropriate.

**Coral Reefs.** I suppose there are people who appreciate "highly stylized" designs, as this is referred to, but these look more like a child's playroom wallpaper. Then again, they may be intended to appeal to that younger set.

**California Dogface.** Still another of these "been there, done that" themes we get every year. How many different Butterflies will we get before someone at Postal Headquarters or in the Citizens Stamp Advisory Committee decides they can do better?

**Flag Stamp Envelope.** Fine with me. A Flag envelope will have a ready market, and the design is OK.

**Wrap-up.** So far, so good. Although I may be coming off as overly critical in the details, all in all, I like the program as it has been announced thus far—and I would be inclined to use most of these stamps on my mail.

If I have one real criticism, it is the lack of historical themes. But then, our society as a whole seems to have lost interest in such themes, so we can't blame the Postal People if they try to give the remaining mailers what they want.

That's what I think—*what do you think?*

*John F. Dunn*

[jd@stampnewsnow.com](mailto:jd@stampnewsnow.com)