

Is the USPS Entering the Gaming Stamps Field?

by John F. Dunn (with images by Marianne K. Cariddi)

An undisclosed source has reported to Stamp News Publishing (SNP) that the United States Postal Service has “finally” decided to move into the gaming field, albeit on a very modest basis.

“I tried to get them to get real with their stamps more than a decade ago, but did they listen to me? Noooooo. Instead they came out with stuff like Harry Potter, birds, flowers, goody-goody stamps, I mean, how do you sell that kind of stuff to the average American who is more interested in making money and winning contests? At least they listened to me by issuing some Upside Down Planes stamps that weren’t upside down—although I never did get an answer when I asked what kind of a plane is a C3a plane.”

We have the privilege of presenting here Essays for the final designs, lacking only the denominations. In these images, the values are described as “Foreverfun” rates, but the expectation at that time was that values would be assigned based on the relative value of the item pictured on the stamp.

For example, the Stack of Paper stamps was planned to be a Presort Standard rate stamp. Our source also mentioned “there was some concern that the Stack of Papers stamp might be described by some postal detractors as the Junk Mail issue, but we decided that would only add to the ‘Foreverfun’ theme.”

On the other hand, the Diamond Rock stamp would be a high value issue. “We considered giving it a Wave stamp look, but our outgoing PMG [Donahoe] stated, ‘Enough with the Waves, I’m beginning to think everyone is just waving me goodbye with those dumb looking stamps.’”

The Rock of Gibraltar stamp will be assigned an International rate, while the Scissors and Paper Cutter stamps will be First Class Forever rate stamps. As for the stamp picturing the 1891 *Mekeel’s Weekly*, a design taken from a stamp issued by Antigua & Barbuda in 1993 to honor us, our source stated, “There was some disagreement on that. I wanted it to state ‘Priceless’; others felt that it should be 2¢, a prevailing rate when *Mekeel’s* was launched in 1891; sad to say, a few disgruntled Postal People were lobbying to replace it with a stamp picturing a roll of toilet paper.” (He offered to give us a copy of that Essay, but we declined the offer.)

In assigning the rates the Postal People also decided to include instructions in a pictorial margin so that Gamers can “add to the excitement” by putting higher point factors on some issues. “So if you feel good about your prospects of winning, you play the high point *Diamond* stamp. They didn’t want to get too close to gambling odds, but in case Las Vegas wants to start running a book on the stamps, I sent them a set of Essays in hopes that they might.”

Providing further background on the Gaming concept stamps, our source explained that when he first broached the idea to Postal managers, “It took me a while to explain to them what Gaming was and how popular it was becoming. Then it took them a while to figure out how it might be applied to postage stamps. I actually gave them the idea of replacing a regular Birds issue with an Angry Birds set, but while they were thinking about it, someone else stole my idea. I still wonder how that member of our Stamp Gaming team was able to suddenly resign and buy his own Caribbean island.

“Finally—can you believe—they didn’t even know how the Game was played (paper covers rock, scissors cut paper, rock breaks scissors). I mean, I began to think that Forever was not a rate but a standard Postal Service decision making timetable.”



One concession to the Gamer market is that the stamps will use Water Activated Gum. According to our source, “Can you believe, those ‘knee-jerk jerks’ actually were going to produce the stamps with Pressure Sensitive Adhesive? So I told them to try playing the game with PSA stamps and they suddenly discovered what stamp soakers have been saying for years—you can’t remove a stamp once the PSA gum sticks to any paper! To solve the problem, I suggested issuing stamps with no gum on the assumption that our stamps no longer are intended to be used for postage anyway. I did get the support of the Gamer team member from the Citizens Stamp Advisory Committee, but the postal old timers were sobbing so loudly that I quickly dropped the subject.”

In the interests of full disclosure, we turned to the Postal People for a comment on this story. They declined official comment, but one undisclosed source declared, “your leaker can best be described as bitter and therefore perhaps ‘unreliable’. In other words, your readers will want to take this story with a grain of salt. Hmm, ‘grain of salt’...now that sounds like a good idea for a new U.S. set. It could picturing various members of Congress—particularly members of our Postal Service oversight committees, with their quotes on how they want to cut costs, even though they won’t let us close post offices or other postal facilities in their districts.

“Or perhaps to ‘salt’ sales we can produce 100 ‘Rock, Paper, Scissors’ sheets with a ‘grain of salt’ stamp in place of a diamond stamp.”

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At that point the whole subject was beginning to get a bit too complicated, so I decided to conclude our exclusive coverage of the Rock, Paper, Scissors Gaming stamps.

In any event, as we went to press we were advised that the "Rock, Paper, Scissors" Gaming set would be an April 1 issue.

Actually, I think our source may have described it as an "April Fool's Issue," so I guess the joke is on me...or is it on you?

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A special credit goes to our Graphics/Website manager, Marianne Cariddi for creating the Foreverfun images.

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