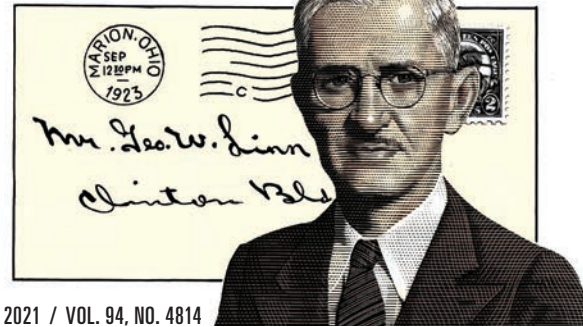


LINN'S STAMP NEWS

World's Largest Weekly Stamp News and Marketplace

FEBRUARY 1, 2021 / VOL. 94, NO. 4814



Die-cutting omitted error discovered on 2018 Sparkling Holidays stamps

BY CHARLES SNEE

A new die-cutting omitted error of the United States 2018 Sparkling Holidays Santa booklet stamps (Scott 5332-5335) was discovered at a post office in Colorado in late December 2020.

The error occurs on the 12-stamp side of a partial double-sided booklet pane of 20 (Scott 5335b) that Ken Beiner of Colorado purchased at his local post office on Dec. 30.

Both sides of the booklet that Beiner acquired are illustrated nearby. The eight stamps on the front side that includes the "Sparkling Holidays" booklet label had been removed by another customer, according to Beiner, who sent the booklet to *Linn's* for examination.

The 12 stamps on the back side of the booklet show no trace of the serpentine die cutting that allows for removal of indi-

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All 12 stamps on the back side of this 2018 Sparkling Holidays Santa double-sided booklet pane of 20 are missing the serpentine die cutting that normally separates the individual stamps from one another. All eight normally die-cut stamps on the front side of the booklet pane, also shown, had been removed by the time the new die-cutting omitted error was discovered at a Colorado post office in late December 2020.

U.S. Year of the Ox stamp continues annual series

BY MICHAEL BAADKE

The upcoming Year of the Ox begins Feb. 12, and 10 days before that, the United States Postal Service will issue its Year of the Ox forever stamp.

The nondenominated (55¢) stamp is the second issue in the current Lunar New Year stamp series from the Postal Service.

A Feb. 2 virtual first-day ceremony is planned for the USPS Facebook and Twitter social media sites, beginning at 11 a.m. Central Time (noon Eastern Time).

Instructions for accessing the event can be found at <https://about.usps.com/newsroom/events/year-of-the-ox-2021-commemorative-forever-stamp-ceremony.htm>.

Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Postal Service has not scheduled a ceremony open to the public for almost a year.



Camille Chew's three-dimensional art is featured on the second stamp in the current Lunar New Year series from the United States Postal Service. The commemorative stamp celebrating the Year of the Ox has a Feb. 2 issue date.

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MAILED JAN. 19 \$2.50



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Astrophilately reflects renewed interest in space achievement

Astrophilately is a collecting field that includes studying philatelic items relating to space and space exploration.

Examples of what might be commemorated are flights of balloons, high-speed and high-altitude planes, rockets, missiles, satellites and planetary flights, as well as participating tracking stations, facilities, ships and supporting aircraft.

While stamps are an important part of this collecting specialty, this column will focus on the space covers that bring together multiple elements of the space theme.

A space cover is an envelope, a postcard or a postal card that is canceled on the date and at the place of a space launch or related event. The latter might include landing on the moon or on another planet, docking with the International Space Station, or a return from space, such as a splashdown.

A classic space cover for the 1962 launch of Lt. Col. John H. Glenn, the first American in orbit, is shown in Figure 1.

This cover was produced by Space Craft Covers, one of the most popular space cover companies, but collectors can also create their own covers.

The cancel on this cover is from Patrick Air Force Base, Fla., which served the Cape Canaveral launch facility. It is dated Feb. 20, 1962.

The high-end design and detail in the cachet make Space Craft Covers popular even today.

The cancellation is the most critical part of a space cover. It must include the correct date, and be from the correct place.

The space cover cancel would be from the closest post office, or from the post office that is part of the facility, or the

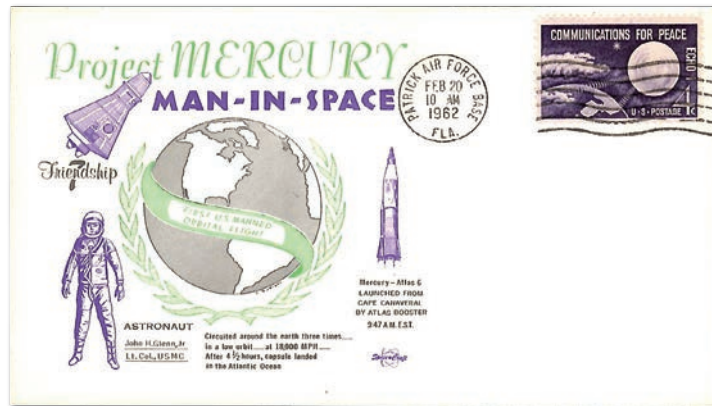


Figure 1. A space cover has a postmark to commemorate a space-related event. This example, with its cachet celebrating the first flight of Lt. Col. John H. Glenn and the *Friendship 7* spacecraft, is a classic from 1962. It was postmarked at the Florida Air Force base that served the Cape Canaveral launch facility.

post office that provides postal service to the facility. Sometimes there are multiple acceptable post offices.

Special cancellations with a space theme are also collected.

A stamp is required to obtain a cancellation. In general, an appropriate stamp for franking a space cover should have a space theme, or alternately, be a Flag stamp. But there is generally little or no premium for the stamp. The stamp is essentially utilitarian, especially for early space covers.

Space covers will usually include a cachet, which is a picture or special design that explains the event being recognized.

Astrophilately also includes items that are flown in any space vehicle, either officially or unofficially. Leaflets dropped by a V-2 rocket in World War II, envelopes carried in a helicopter or ship involved in recovering a spacecraft, and official or unofficial rocket mail are some of the materials that are collected.

Astrophilately is a collecting area recognized by the American Topical Association, the International Federation of Philately (known as the FIP for

its French name, Federation Internationale de Philatelie), the American Philatelic Society, and other philatelic exhibition governing bodies.

Fifty years ago, the Apollo space program was landing men on the moon, and astrophilately was recognized as the largest topical collecting area by the ATA. Classic space covers were expensive, and there was a flourishing market for covers with several major dealers specializing in astrophilately. During that time, *Linn's Stamp News* published a

monthly column on space.

When the Apollo program came to an end, and the space shuttle failed to capture people's interest, astrophilately almost died. A core of true believers, many in the Space Topic Study Unit, kept the space collecting specialty alive.

Today there are encouraging signs for the future.

Artemis and Orion are exciting new NASA programs for human spaceflight that are underway. Private companies including Virgin Galactic, Blue Origin and SpaceX are going into space.

The United States Postal Service was inundated with requests for the special cancellations offered to mark the *Apollo 11* 50th anniversary. The SpaceX Crew Dragon is flying astronauts into orbit from American soil for the first time since 2011.

Last year, tens of thousands of schoolchildren sent postcards to Blue Origin to be flown into space. One example is pictured in Figure 2.

After the suborbital flight into space on Oct. 13, 2020, from Van Horn, Texas, these cards



Figure 2. The resurgence of astrophilately has been energized by recent space achievements. Schoolchildren and others mailed covers to be flown on a Blue Origin suborbital flight in 2020. The covers were processed near the launch site.

were unloaded from the capsule and taken to a large postal facility at nearby El Paso, Texas, for processing.

Note the private "FLOWN TO SPACE" marking in blue, and the Sally Ride commemorative stamp (Scott 5283) used to frank the Figure 2 cover.

Collectors interested in the subject of astrophilately can learn more about the Space Topic Study Unit by contacting secretary-treasurer Terry Chamberlain at terrychamberlin@gmail.com.

Two excellent books serve as primers for the astrophilatelist.

U.S. Space Cover Collecting Handbook: A Guide to Collecting, Exhibiting, Pricing and Judging American Space Covers by Ray Cartier is available on CD for \$12.50. Contact raycartier09@gmail.com.

American Astrophilately: The First Fifty Years is a full color 343-page softbound reference book by David S. Ball that won an American Philatelic Society gold medal. It is available for \$39.95 and can be ordered at <https://americanastrophilately.com>.

Charles J. Vukotich Jr. has been an astrophilatelist since 1964 and has written about space since 1965. He is a director of the Space Topic Study Unit and associate editor of the study group's journal, the Astrophile.

Readers can contact him at Vuko100w@yahoo.com. □

Stamps return to 'Jeopardy!' during the final week of shows hosted by Alex Trebek

BY MICHAEL BAADKE

Linn's Stamp News has reported previously on episodes of the popular television game show *Jeopardy!* when stamps turn up in a category.

The episode that aired Jan. 7 was special in another way, though, as it was the next-to-last episode filmed by longtime host Alex Trebek before his death from pancreatic cancer.

Trebek died Nov. 8, 2020, two months before the last episodes he filmed in advance were broadcast.

On the Jan. 7 show, the three contestants encountered the category Black Heritage Stamps during the program's Double Jeopardy round. Participating were Tracy Lee, Natalie Craig and one-day champion Yoshie Hill, all from California.

Following the answer-and-question format of the show, the five answers were revealed by Trebek one by one, but for this category, a stamp was pictured as Trebek read a brief description.

All of the stamps shown were from the United States Black Heritage commemorative series. One stamp has been issued in the series each year since 1978.



The 2003 United States 37c Black Heritage series stamp honoring Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall was featured on a recent episode of the game show *Jeopardy!*.

The inscription identifying the stamp subject by name was digitally removed from the stamp illustration in each instance, because identifying the honoree would be the object of category.

Craig chose the \$800 clue first and correctly identified U.S. Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall from Trebek's reading of the clue and the edited image of the

2003 37c stamp (Scott 3746).

Craig then selected the \$1,200 clue.

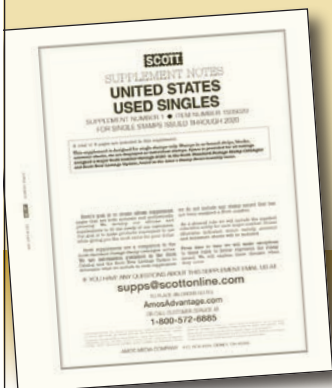
"A 2002 stamp paid tribute to a true Renaissance Man: this Harlem Renaissance poet," Trebek said. Craig again replied correctly, with the question "Who is Hughes?" identifying Langston Hughes on the 34c stamp (Scott 3557).

The next two choices in the category turned to more recent issues. Hill correctly identified dancer and actor Gregory Hines as the subject of the 2019 forever stamp (Scott 5349) for \$1,600, but all three contestants were stumped by the \$2,000 question when asked to identify journalist Gwen Ifill as the subject of the 2020 forever stamp (5432).

After leaving the category briefly to try other subjects, the contestants were shown the \$400 question in the stamps category, and Hill correctly named Harriet Tubman as the subject of the 13c stamp that introduced the series in 1978 (Scott 1744).

Now in its 37th season, *Jeopardy!* is produced by Sony Pictures Television. □

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