

## Pictorial Postmarks

Handbook PO-230

May 2006  
Transmittal Letter


- A. Explanation.** Two of the key strategies in the Postal Service™ *Transformation Plan* are to enhance revenue opportunities by leveraging existing assets and to continue to seek opportunities to leverage our brand and assets to create new products and services with minimal investment. The Pictorial Postmarks program contributes to both of these strategies because these philatelic postmarks enhance the equity of the Postal Service brand and generate new and continuing revenue. In addition, the Pictorial Postmarks program offers communities across America a way to commemorate local events.
- B. Purpose.** This handbook provides general information about and procedures for the Pictorial Postmark program.
- C. Audience.** This handbook is for Postal Service personnel, including postmasters and district managers, who are responsible for pictorial postmarks.
- D. Distribution.**
1. **Printed copies.** You may order printed copies from the Material Distribution Center (MDC) using the Touch Tone Order Entry (TTOE) system. Call 800-273-1509, Option 2.  
  
*Note:* You must be registered to use TTOE and must wait 48 hours after registering before you place your first order.
  2. **Handbook PO-230 is available on the Postal Service Intranet.**
    - a. Go to <http://blue.usps.gov>.
    - b. Under “Essential Links” in the left-hand column, click on *References*.
    - c. Under “Policies” on the right-hand side, click on *PolicyNet*.
    - d. Click on *Hbks*.
  3. **Handbook PO-230 is also available on the Postal Service Web site.**
    - a. Go to [www.usps.com](http://www.usps.com).
    - b. Click on *About USPS & News*.
    - c. Click on *Forms & Publications*.
    - d. Click on *Handbooks*.

**E. Comments and Questions.** Send a memorandum with comments and questions regarding the content of this handbook to:

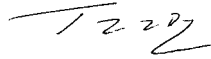
PICTORIAL POSTMARKS PROGRAM MANAGER  
STAMP SERVICES  
US POSTAL SERVICE  
1735 N LYNN ST RM 5016  
ARLINGTON VA 22209-6432

PICTORIALPOSTMARKS@USPS.GOV

**F. Effective Date.** This handbook is effective May 2006.



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Manager  
Stamp Services



*Tom Day*  
Senior Vice President  
Government Relations

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# 1 Introduction

Handbook PO-230, *Pictorial Postmarks*, organizes in one document the guidelines and procedures for managing the Pictorial Postmark program efficiently, consistently, and in accordance with national policies. It is intended to serve as a guide for new and veteran postmasters, marketing managers, Customer Relations coordinators, and pictorial postmark program managers. It also serves as a working reference for everyone involved in philately.

Most of the information in this handbook is found in the *Postal Operations Manual* (POM). However, some of the information here has been revised specifically to address pictorial postmarks. Additionally, some new guidelines and procedures have been incorporated into the program.

This handbook will be updated periodically and reissued. Recommendations are helpful in revising the handbook and making it more useful. Submit your comments or suggestions to the following address:

PICTORIAL POSTMARKS PROGRAM MANAGER  
STAMP SERVICES  
US POSTAL SERVICE  
1735 N LYNN ST RM 5016  
ARLINGTON VA 22209-6432

[PICTORIALPOSTMARKS@USPS.GOV](mailto:PICTORIALPOSTMARKS@USPS.GOV)

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## 2 General Information

Pictorial postmarks are event postmarks offered by the Postal Service™ to commemorate local community events, such as fairs, conventions, or other types of local celebrations. They are initiated by postmasters, sponsors, and organizers of events, and they may feature wording and/or graphics relating to those events.

Pictorial postmarks are provided upon request to collectors at temporary philatelic stations established at events and through mail-back service. They may not be obtained at regular stamp or retail windows.

Devices used for applying pictorial postmarks are generally rubber composition handstamps. There is no charge to the sponsor for the production of these handstamps or for the Postal Service's staffing of the temporary philatelic station.

Upcoming pictorial postmarks are announced in each issue of the *Postal Bulletin* and through news releases distributed to the press and philatelic publications.

Pictorial postmarks should not be confused with "special cancellations," which are mechanical mail processing picture postmarks approved by the manager of Mailing Standards at Postal Service Headquarters in Washington, D.C.

First day of issue postmarks that feature pictorial designs or digital color postmarks are not part this program. First day of issue postmarks must follow first day of issue mail-back service instructions found in stamp release announcement articles published in the *Postal Bulletin*. Second day ceremony and first day of sale pictorial postmarks must comply with the program policy and procedures described in this handbook.

**Reminder:** The pictorial postmark date must never predate a postage stamp's first day of issue date.

Field offices may not use digital color postmarks. Only Stamp Fulfillment Services is authorized to create and use digital color postmarks.

In addition digital color postmarks are not available through first day of issue mail-back service. Digital color postmarks are an exclusive product of Stamp Services and are only available through the *USA Philatelic* catalog and Stamp Fulfillment Services.

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# 3 Format Requirements and Restrictions

## 3-1 Required Information

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Each pictorial postmark must contain the following information:

- a. The name of the temporary philatelic station.
- b. The word “Station” or “Sta.” (e.g., Gift of Life Station, Founder’s Day Sta.).
- c. The city, state, and ZIP Code™ of the physical location of the temporary philatelic station.
- d. The month, day, and year when the postmark is offered.

The standard two-letter abbreviation should be used for the state name. The name of the city must be spelled out.

## 3-2 Size Limitations

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A pictorial postmark must not be larger than 4 inches wide or 2 inches high.

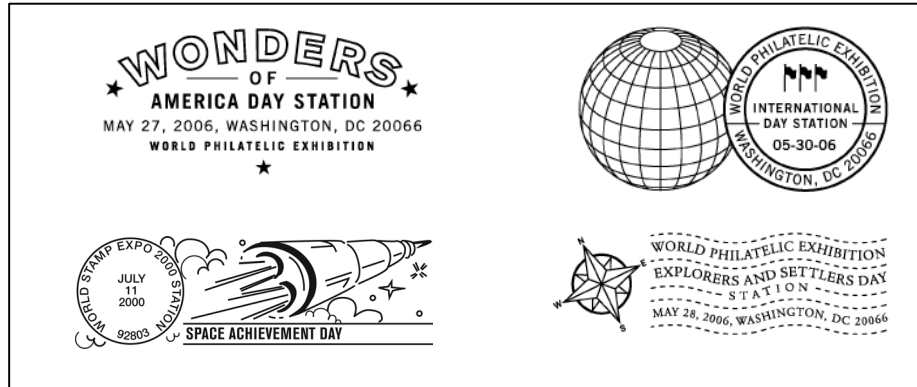
## 3-3 Design Limitations

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Only one postmark design will be authorized for a temporary philatelic station, regardless of whether the station is operated at a 1-day or a multiple-day event.

The only exception to this restriction is for philatelic exhibitions recognized by Stamp Services. Exhibit 3-3 shows multiple postmark designs for an international philatelic exhibition recognized by Stamp Services.

Exhibit 3-3  
**Multiple Postmark Designs for an International Philatelic Exhibition**



### 3-4 Dating Postmarks for Multiple-Day Events

When a temporary philatelic station is operated for more than 1 day, the postmark used for each day of the event must display the date only for that day. Consequently, stations operated for more than 1 day actually require more than one postmark stamp or a stamp that has a “date-plug” for changing dates.

In many cases, the design for a multiple-day event contains a “bull’s-eye” whose date changes each day, but other designs incorporate the date in different parts of the text. Exhibit 3-4a shows properly designed postmarks for multiple-day events.

Multiple dates must not appear in a postmark. Exhibit 3-4b shows an improperly designed postmark displaying multiple dates.

Exhibit 3-4a  
**Properly Designed Postmarks for Multiple-Day Events**

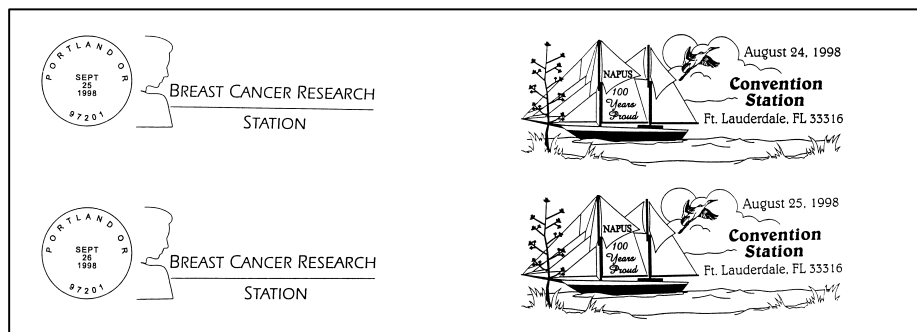


Exhibit 3-4b  
**Improperly Designed Postmark Displaying Multiple Dates**



## 3-5 Restricted Illustrations, Wording, and Designs

The Postal Service places the following restrictions on illustrations, wording, and designs featured on a pictorial postmark:

- a. The illustrations, wording, and designs must directly reflect the event to be commemorated.
- b. The pictorial postmark cannot promote or endorse the following:
  - (1) The sale or use of non-Postal Service products.
  - (2) The beliefs, ideals, policies, or programs of any individual or organization.
  - (3) A political candidate or campaign.
- c. The pictorial postmark cannot feature illustrations, wording, or symbols (including religious or antireligious symbols or subject matter) that refer to, promote, or endorse the beliefs, ideals, policies, or programs of any individual or organization. However, the Postal Service may approve a pictorial postmark in which a symbol of this nature is merely incidental to the design, such as an event sponsor (see section 4-2).

## 3-6 Authorization for Artwork

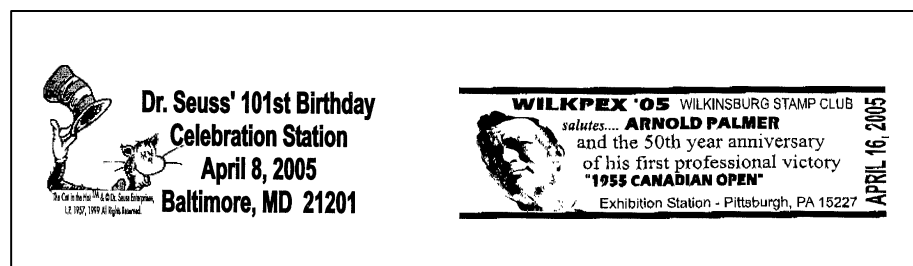
The Postal Service cannot approve a pictorial postmark without express written authorization from the individual or company that created the design featured in the pictorial postmark. See section 4-2.

## 3-7 Authorization for Names and Images

The Postal Service cannot approve a pictorial postmark that features the name and/or image of any individual without express written authorization from the appropriate owners, families, or estates. Authorization is also required for copyrighted material and other proprietary material such as trademarks, service marks, registered marks, insignias, and logos. See section 4-2. Samples of postmarks requiring authorization are shown in Exhibit 3-7.

Exhibit 3-7

### Postmarks With Proprietary Material



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# 4 Applying for Pictorial Postmarks

## 4-1 Letter of Request and Pictorial Postmark Artwork

At least 10 weeks before the date of the event, sponsors or organizers of events who wish to use a pictorial postmark must submit a letter of request to the postmaster of the city where the postmark is to be used. Requests submitted less than 10 weeks before the date of the event are subject to rejection.

Each request must include the following information:

- a. The name of a contact person.
- b. The contact's telephone number.
- c. Camera-ready artwork for the pictorial postmark design.
- d. A complete description of the event.
- e. The dates the postmark will be offered.
- f. Any and all supporting information required for the pictorial postmark (see section 4-2).

## 4-2 Supporting Information

The sponsor or organizer must submit express written authorization from the individual or company that created the pictorial postmark design authorizing the Postal Service to reproduce and distribute the design. See section 3-6.

If any word, symbol, or illustration featured in a pictorial postmark design is the proprietary interest of another person or organization, the sponsor or organizer must submit express written authorization for the Postal Service to use such proprietary material in the pictorial postmark. See section 3-7.

Authorization is also required from the following individuals:

- a. Each living person who is named or featured in the pictorial postmark.
- b. An authorized representative of the estate of each deceased individual who is named or featured in the pictorial postmark.
- c. The owner of copyrighted material or other proprietary material that is featured in or incorporated in the pictorial postmark (e.g., trademarks, service marks, registered marks, insignias, and logos.).



# 5 Approving or Rejecting Requests

## 5-1 Overview

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A request for a pictorial postmark occurs as follows:

1. Sponsor makes a request.
2. Postmaster reviews the request and approves or disapproves postmark.
3. If approved, postmaster completes PS Form 413, *Pictorial Postmark Announcement and Report*, and forwards it to the district manager (or designee) for review.
4. District manager (or designee) reviews the postmark and, if acceptable, forwards PS Form 413 to the program manager of pictorial postmarks in Stamp Services at Postal Service Headquarters.
5. Program manager of pictorial postmarks reviews the postmark and, if acceptable, forwards it to the *Postal Bulletin* editor at Postal Service Headquarters.
6. *Postal Bulletin* editor reviews the submitted material and, if acceptable, publishes it in the *Postal Bulletin*.

## 5-2 Conditions for Acceptance

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A request will be considered for acceptance if all the following conditions are met:

- a. The request must include all required information. (See section 4-1.)
- b. The request must include camera-ready artwork that meets all requirements. (See chapter 3.)
- c. If required, the request must include express written authorization from the appropriate individual or organization allowing the Postal Service to use the pictorial postmark design. (See sections 3-6 and 4-2.)
- d. If required, the request must include express written authorization allowing the Postal Service to use any word, symbol, or illustration featured in the pictorial postmark design that is the proprietary interest of another person or organization. (See sections 3-7 and 4-2.)
- e. The sponsor must ensure that the temporary philatelic station will be established in an adequately secured area at the event. (See section 13-2.)

- f. Temporary station requirements cannot be waived unless approved by Stamp Services.
- g. The Postal Service must be able to provide adequate staffing for sales and postmark service at the temporary philatelic station during the period requested. (See section 13-4.)
- h. Sales and postmark services at the event must support the primary goals of the Postal Service.

If there is doubt as to whether a request meets all of these conditions, the postmaster should consult with the district manager (or designee) before granting approval.

## 5-3 Approval/Rejection of the Request

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### 5-3.1 Response Time

The Postal Service, through the postmaster, should respond to a sponsor within 14 days of receiving the sponsor's letter of request.

### 5-3.2 Initial Action by Receiving Postmaster

Upon receiving the sponsor's letter of request, the postmaster must stamp it with the date received, review it to ensure it meets the conditions in section 5-2, and either approve it and forward it to the district manager (or designee) or reject it.

If the request is rejected, the postmaster must respond to the requester in writing and indicate the reason for the denial. A copy of the denial letter and the original request must be kept in a permanent file for 3 years.

The postmaster should complete the review within 7 days so that, if the request is approved, the district manager (or designee) still has sufficient time to review it and provide a response within the required time frame (see section 5-3.1).

### 5-3.3 Action by the District Manager (or Designee)

The district manager (or designee) should review the postmaster's approval, either concur with the approval or reject it, and respond to the postmaster about the matter.

If the request is approved, the district manager (or designee) must forward a PS Form 413, *Pictorial Postmark Announcement and Report*, (see Exhibit 5-3.3) to the program manager of pictorial postmarks at the following address:

PICTORIAL POSTMARKS PROGRAM MANAGER  
 STAMP SERVICES  
 US POSTAL SERVICE  
 1735 N LYNN ST RM 5016  
 ARLINGTON VA 22209-6432

When possible, the district manager (or designee) should try to consolidate announcements and send them together in one package rather than sending each one separately. An announcement must be sent at least 6 weeks before the date of the event and must include the following information:

- a. A reproducible copy of the finished postmark artwork.
- b. The name, address, and telephone number of the Postal Service contact.
- c. The date(s) that the temporary philatelic station will be open.
- d. The sponsor's name.
- e. The name and complete address of the temporary philatelic station.
- f. A *complete* mailing address for customers requesting the postmark by mail (in the "Mail Postmark Requests to:" section).

If the request is rejected, the district manager (or designee) must indicate the reason for the denial in the response to the postmaster.

The district manager (or designee) must complete the review and respond to the postmaster as expeditiously as possible so that the postmaster can then respond to the sponsor within the required time frame (see section 5-3.1).


#### 5-3.4 **Action by Postmaster After Approval or Denial**

After receiving a response from the district manager (or designee), the postmaster must respond to the sponsor. If the request has been rejected, the postmaster must respond in writing and indicate the reason for the denial. A copy of the denial letter and the original request must be kept in a permanent file for 3 years.

#### 5-3.5 **Action by Postmaster Following Authorized Postmark Period**

Following the authorized postmark period, the postmaster must resubmit a copy of the completed PS Form 413, *Pictorial Postmark Announcement and Report*, to the Pictorial Postmarks program manager. The form must include the total number of postmarks supplied.

Exhibit 5-3.3  
**Pictorial Postmark Announcement Form (not actual size)**

 <p>Complete this announcement and send it to:</p> <p>PICTORIAL POSTMARK PROGRAM MANAGER          STAMP SERVICES          US POSTAL SERVICE          1735 N LYNN ST RM 5016          ARLINGTON VA 22209-6432</p> <p>Fax: 703-292-4183          PictorialPostmarks@usps.gov</p>	<p><b>Pictorial Postmark          Announcement/Report</b></p> <p>Insert pictorial postmark copy HERE          (camera ready or reproducible.)</p> <p>It must not be larger than 4" horizontal x 2" vertical          (the dimensions of this box)</p>
<b>Temporary Station Information</b>	
<b>Postal Service™ Contact</b> <i>(Name, address, telephone)</i>	
<b>Station Date(s)</b>	
<b>Sponsor</b>	
<b>Station Name</b>	
<b>Complete Street Address</b> <i>(No., street, ste./apt.) or P. O. Box Number</i>	
<b>City, State, ZIP+4®</b>	
<b>Mail Postmark Requests to: (Address for Customer Mailback Service)</b>	
<b>Station Name</b>	
<b>Addressee Name</b> <i>(Usually "Postmaster")</i>	
<b>Complete Street Address</b> <i>(No., street, ste./apt.) or P. O. Box 9998</i>	
<b>City, State, ZIP+4</b>	
<b>Postmark Report: Following event, resubmit this form as a postmark report to Pictorial Postmark program manager.</b>	
TO:	
<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; min-height: 40px;">                 Total number of pieces serviced during the authorized postmark period                   _____             </div>	PICTORIAL POSTMARK PROGRAM MANAGER STAMP SERVICES US POSTAL SERVICE 1735 N LYNN ST RM 5016 ARLINGTON VA 22209-6432  Fax: 703-292-4183 PictorialPostmarks@usps.gov
<b>Resubmit report following event.</b>	
PS Form 413, April 2006	

# 6 Publicity

## 6-1 Policy

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The Postal Service endeavors to make all unusual postmarking services known to customers through advance publicity so that the services are available to as wide an audience as possible rather than only to small groups of people.

## 6-2 Arranging National Publicity

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### 6-2.1 ***Postal Bulletin***

The program manager of pictorial postmarks in Stamp Services at Postal Headquarters in Washington, D.C., must submit electronically to the *Postal Bulletin* editor a Microsoft Word file of the text information for each report of an upcoming pictorial postmark. (The *Postal Bulletin* is published bi-weekly.)

Only the program manager — not the postmaster or the district manager — should directly contact the *Postal Bulletin* editor.

### 6-2.2 **Postal News**

For Headquarter-sponsored events, a Postal News release will be published.

## 6-3 Arranging Local Publicity

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The postmaster should contact the area Public Affairs and Communications office to coordinate publicity for a pictorial postmark offered at a temporary philatelic station. The area Public Affairs and Communications office will assist in developing and distributing press releases to local newspapers. (See *Administrative Support Manual (ASM)*, section 335.)

An announcement must be posted on the main Post Office™ lobby bulletin board so that collectors can be advised of the temporary philatelic station. Announcements also may be posted in other Post Offices within commuting distance of the event. For larger events, the announcement may also be posted throughout the district or as requested by Headquarters.

Announcements should be placed on display at least 15 days but not more than 30 days before the event.

All announcements should include the following information:

- a. The name of the event.
- b. The location, dates, and hours of operation of the temporary station.
- c. A copy of the pictorial postmark.

Announcements should focus on the philatelic products and aspects of the event, including mail-back service for those unable to attend. (See section 9-1.2.) Announcements should not include unnecessary promotional information about other aspects of the event. Additionally, the Post Office must not distribute free flyers to homes, sell or distribute tickets, exchange ticket coupons, or authorize the use of Post Office facilities for direct event promotion.

Postal Service publications used for announcements include *Newsbreak* and *Postal News*. Samples of these publications are shown in Exhibits 6-3a and 6-3b. Announcements also may be made on Postal Service television and radio networks.

## 6-4 Canceling or Amending Previously Published Announcements

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To cancel or amend a pictorial postmark announcement that has already been published in the *Postal Bulletin*, the postmaster or district manager (or designee) must contact the program manager of pictorial postmarks with the following information:

- a. The date and issue number of the *Postal Bulletin*.
- b. The name of the temporary station.
- c. The city, state, and ZIP Code of the temporary station.
- d. The date of the postmark.
- e. The necessary action to be taken.
- f. The name and telephone number of a contact person.

If changes are needed to the postmark artwork, the postmaster or district manager (or designee) must send a hard copy or e-mail attachment of the corrected artwork to the program manager of pictorial postmarks at the following address:

PICTORIAL POSTMARKS PROGRAM MANAGER  
 STAMP SERVICES  
 US POSTAL SERVICE  
 1735 N LYNN ST RM 5016  
 ARLINGTON VA 22209-6432

PICTORIALPOSTMARKS@USPS.GOV

Additionally, the postmaster or district manager (or designee) must send announcements about the canceled or amended pictorial postmark to all the organizations and publications that received the original announcement.

Exhibit 6-3a  
**Sample of Newsbreak**



**Capital Metro**

# **NEWSBREAK**

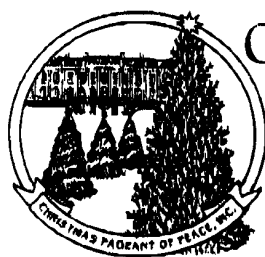
November 30, 2004

## **COMMEMORATIVE POSTAL POSTMARK TO MARK 50th ANNIVERSARY OF CHRISTMAS TREE LIGHTING CEREMONY**

Postal employees will help celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Christmas Pageant of Peace tree lighting ceremony by offering a commemorative postmark to mark the event.

The president of the United States has traditionally lit a Christmas tree since 1923, but the enlarged Pageant of Peace tree lighting ceremony was first celebrated in 1954 when President Dwight D. Eisenhower lit a 68-foot Balsam fir from Michigan. This year's event includes performances by the U.S. Marine Band, The West Tennessee Youth Chorus, American Idol Kimberly Lock, Marty Stuart and the Fabulous Superlatives, Tenor Carl Tanner and Willard Scott as Santa Claus.

The commemorative postmark is free, however, it can only be placed on First-Class Mail® postage. The postmark may be obtained by enclosing stamped envelopes to: Pageant of Peace Station, Special Cancellation Unit, P. O. Box 92282, Washington, DC 20090-2282. The request by mail must include a self-addressed stamped envelope for return and must be received by January 8, 2005.



**Christmas Pageant of Peace  
 50th Anniversary Station  
 1954 - 2004  
 December 2, 2004  
 Washington, D.C. 20066**

**PLEASE COPY AND POST ON ALL EMPLOYEE BULLETIN BOARDS.**

USPS EAGLE SYMBOL AND LOGOTYPE ARE TRADEMARKS OF THE UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

Exhibit 6-3b  
**Sample of Postal News**



# POSTAL NEWS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
 November 16, 2004

Contact: Frances Frazier 202-268-2898  
 cell 202-285-6374  
 mfrances.frazier@usps.gov

Pat McGovern 212-330-3307  
 Cell 917-837-0942  
 Patricia.mcgovern@usps.gov

Marilu Menendez 212-391-3634  
 Marilu\_Menendez@LordAndTaylor

Postal Service Website: [usps.com](http://usps.com)  
 Stamp News Release Number: 04-079

**DELIVER THE JOY!  
 NEW HOLIDAY ORNAMENTS STAMPS ISSUED BY U.S. POSTAL SERVICE AND  
 LORD & TAYLOR UNVEILED ITS CHRISTMAS WINDOWS SALUTING THE U.S. POSTAL SERVICE**

NEW YORK, NY — New York shoppers received two bargains today when Lord & Taylor unveiled “Deliver The Joy,” its 2004 Christmas Windows celebrating the U.S. Postal Service’s history of delivering holiday joy and the U.S. Postal Service issuance of the *Holiday Ornaments* stamps.

“Holiday cards, letters and gifts carry seasonal messages, but the season’s greetings really begin on the outside, on the envelope or package,” said John Nolan, Deputy Postmaster General, U.S. Postal Service. “Over 140 million *Holiday Ornaments* stamps will grace a bevy of envelopes and packages as they travel across the country this holiday season, and it is our hope that the stamps will deliver love, peace and joy.”

“Every year our Fifth Avenue holiday windows are our gift to the City of New York. Thanks to the U.S. Postal Service, this year we are delighted to add a very exciting element with the unveiling of the *Holiday Ornaments* stamps,” said Jane Elfer, President & Chief Executive Officer of Lord & Taylor. “We are honored to have them lighting up our façade.”

Nolan joined Elfers in front of the store’s Fifth Avenue doors and flipped the switch to dedicate the Holiday Ornaments stamps. After which, Lord & Taylor windows came alive, showcasing six window scenes of animated figures with painstakingly rendered period detail. The scenes will depict the mode of delivering U.S. Mail in a specific historic time when delivery was done by horse, steamboat, stagecoach, steam locomotive, biplane and truck. Stamps from yesteryear will appear on the right side of each window, making each scene appear to be a giant holiday postcard.

A special postmark, “Deliver the Joy! Lord & Taylor Station,” will be available at the in-store Post Office on the main floor Wed., Nov. 17, through Sat., Nov. 20, from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.



**DELIVER  
 THE  
 JOY!**  
 LORD & TAYLOR STATION



# 7 Pictorial Postmark Handstamps and Ink Color

## 7-1 Procurement and Use of Handstamps

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A postmaster may request pictorial postmark handstamps and other supplies from the district office, or may, upon receiving approval from the district manager (or designee), procure the supplies directly.

Handstamps may be used only under the supervision of authorized Postal Service personnel.

## 7-2 Color of Ink

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All hand-stamped postmarks must be made with black ink unless specifically requested by the customer and approved by Stamp Services.

Another single color ink may be used instead of black if the following conditions are met:

- a. The sponsor or organizer of the event requests a color instead of black.
- b. The requested color is related to and appropriate for the event (such as red for a strawberry festival or green for a forest festival).
- c. Stamp Services at Headquarters approves the request.

**Note:** The field may not use digital color postmarks. Only Stamp Services is authorized to create and use digital color postmarks.

## 7-3 Return and Disposition of Handstamps

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All handstamps must be returned to the purchasing office (district or host Post Office) no later than 65 days after the close of the event, by which time all requests for replacement of pictorial postmarks are to be handled (see chapter 12). The purchasing office must retain the handstamp for 6 months. Afterwards, the handstamp must be defaced or destroyed unless a request has been made to retain the handstamp for display purposes only (see chapter 8).

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# 8 Special Requests to Retain Handstamp

## 8-1 Requests to Retain a Pictorial Postmark Handstamp

A sponsor or organizer may request to retain the pictorial postmark handstamp used at its event so that it may be placed in a secure location in a museum, library, historical site, or other appropriate site. The request must be submitted in writing to the postmaster of the city where the postmark was used no later than 30 days after the date of the postmark. If the request is approved, the postmaster must deface the handstamp before returning it (see section 8-2.4).

## 8-2 Approving and Rejecting Requests

### 8-2.1 **Response Time**

The Postal Service, through the postmaster, should respond to a sponsor within 14 days of receiving the sponsor's letter of request.

### 8-2.2 **Initial Action by Receiving Postmaster**

Upon receiving the letter of request, the postmaster must stamp it with the date received.

The postmaster has 7 days to review the request and either approve it and forward it to the district manager (or designee), or reject it. If the request is rejected, the postmaster must respond to the requester in writing and explain the reason for the denial. A copy of the denial letter and the original request must be kept in a permanent file for 3 years.

### 8-2.3 **Action by the District Manager (or Designee)**

The district manager (or designee) has 7 days to review the request received from the postmaster and to respond to the postmaster with a concurrence of the approval or a rejection (keeping in mind that the postmaster must contact the sponsor, in writing if the request is rejected, by the end of those 7 days).

**8-2.4 Action by Postmaster After Approval or Denial**

After receiving a response from the district manager (or designee), the postmaster must respond to the sponsor. If the district manager (or designee) approves the request to retain the handstamps, the postmaster, before releasing the stamps to the sponsors or organizers, must deface the handstamps in such a way that improper use of the handstamps may be recognized. Copies of the original and defaced postmark imprint must be kept on file with the original request.

If the district manager (or designee) rejects the request to retain the handstamps, then the postmaster must destroy the handstamps (see section 7-3) and respond in writing to the requester explaining the reason for the denial. A copy of the denial letter and the original request must be kept in a permanent file.

# 9 Pictorial Postmark Service

## 9-1 Types of Service

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### 9-1.1 **Hand-Back Service**

Hand-back service for pictorial postmarks takes place when a customer personally presents an addressed or unaddressed envelope, postcard, or other item to Postal Service clerk at a temporary philatelic station for postmark with the current day's pictorial postmark. All such material must bear uncanceled postage stamps at the applicable First-Class Mail® rate, but unlike mail-back service, it does not need to be addressed. Postal Service personnel must postmark the item and hand it back to the customer. The envelope, card, or other item does not enter the mailstream. Hand-back service may be provided only on the date of the postmark. (See section 9-2.)

### 9-1.2 **Mail-Back Service**

Mail-back service for pictorial postmarks permits customers to submit envelopes and cards through the mail to a designated Post Office for postmarking with a specific pictorial postmark.

To qualify for this service, mail-in requests must be postmarked no later than 30 days following the requested postmark date (see also section 9-3). Envelopes and cards that are to receive pictorial postmarks must bear unused postage stamps at the applicable First-Class Mail rate and must have complete addresses.

Customers should supply self-addressed stamped envelopes to protect the items receiving the pictorial postmark from being marred during their return through the mailstream. If customers do not provide self-addressed stamped envelopes, the postmaster may choose to furnish a Priority Mail® envelope or box using a G-10 label protective cover when returning the items through the mailstream.

## 9-2 Conditions for Servicing

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### 9-2.1 General Information

Materials submitted for pictorial postmarks at temporary philatelic stations or philatelic outlets, or submitted through the mailstream for mail-back service, must bear an uncanceled postage stamp at the applicable First-Class Mail rate.

Photographs, postcards, other materials having a glossy-coated or hard-calendered surface, or other materials that do not readily accept ink are submitted for postmark at the customer's risk. The Postal Service is not responsible for smudged postmarks or offsetting on such types of material.

### 9-2.2 Special Materials on Which Postmarks Are Requested

The materials described in this section may be postmarked as indicated as long as they bear unused postage stamps at the applicable First-Class Mail rate.

- a. *Plain Cards, Slips of Paper, and Blank Envelopes.* Postal Service personnel may place postmarks for customers on plain slips of paper, plain cards, or blank envelopes provided that such items bear unused postage stamps at the applicable First-Class Mail rate.
- b. *Picture Postcards (Maximum Cards).* Picture postcards with the stamp placed on the face of the card rather than on the address side are known as "maximum cards." Postal personnel may postmark these cards and hand them back to the person presenting them at the day of the event.
- c. *Posters, Portfolios, and Other Memorabilia.* These items may be postmarked when presented in person for hand-back service provided that such items bear unused postage stamps at the applicable First-Class Mail rate. However, such items cannot be submitted and returned through the mail.
- d. *Already Canceled Stamps/Multiple Cancellations.* Items bearing previously canceled stamps and postmarks are acceptable for additional postmarking only when they bear unused postage stamps at the applicable First-Class Mail rate. The new postmark must strike the unused postage. The previously canceled stamps or postmarks also may be hit with the same stroke.
- e. *Currency.* Currency, or items bearing currency, having stamps at the applicable First-Class Mail rate affixed or adjacent thereto may be canceled when presented in person for hand-back service. However, such items cannot be submitted and returned through the mail. The Postal Service does not accept responsibility for currency in its possession in conjunction with philatelic services.
- f. *Backs of Envelopes.* Envelopes having canceled stamps on the front can still be postmarked if they bear on the back unused stamps at the

applicable First-Class Mail rate. These items may be postmarked when presented in person for hand-back service. However, such items cannot be submitted and returned through the mail, even when outer envelopes are provided. Such a postmark denotes only that the item was presented to the temporary philatelic station or philatelic outlet for postmarking on that date; it does not denote that the envelope was carried by the Postal Service.

- g. *Foreign Postage Stamps.* Unused foreign postage stamps may be canceled with a U.S. Postal Service postmark only when unused U.S. postage stamps at the applicable First-Class Mail rate is canceled with the same stroke.
- h. *Photo Stamps, Personalized Postage; PC Postage; Postage Validation Imprinter Strips; Bulk, Nonprofit, and Presorted First-Class Stamps; or Metered Postage.* Items may be canceled with a U.S. Postal Service postmark only when unused U.S. postage stamps at the applicable First-Class Mail rate is canceled with the same stroke.

### 9-2.3 **Items That Must Not Be Serviced**

Postmarking service must not be provided on the following items:

- a. Envelopes or cards that are submitted through the mail unaddressed, unless they are accompanied by self-addressed stamped envelopes for their return through the mailstream.
- b. Items submitted through the mail that bear stamps issued after the date of the pictorial postmark, such as first-day-of-issue stamps that were not yet available at the location and on the date that the pictorial postmark was offered. (Note, however, that first-day-of-issue stamps issued in another location on the same day as the pictorial postmark can be accepted for postmark on a hand-back basis only.)
- c. Items that bear only previously canceled stamps.
- d. Items that are presented for hand-back service after the date of the pictorial postmark.
- e. Items that are submitted through the mail more than 30 days after the date of the pictorial postmark (see section 9-3).

### 9-2.4 **Service Limitations**

The sponsor or organizer may obtain for its members any reasonable amount of hand-backs free of any service charge. Also, special folders or programs prepared by the sponsor may be canceled and made available upon the opening of the event. However, under no circumstances may any postmarked material be released before the date of the postmark.

For any single individual or group other than the sponsor or organizer, hand-stamping as a free service is limited to 50 covers. There is a service charge of \$0.05 for each postmark above 50, to a maximum of 1,000 postmarks. Post Offices receiving requests for more than 1,000 postmarks

and needing cancellation assistance can contact Stamp Fulfillment Services for guidance.

**Telephone:** 816-545-1250

**E-mail:** *stampfulfillment.services@usps.gov*

## 9-3 Extending Mail-Back Service

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The standard period of mail-back service for a pictorial postmark is 30 days after the postmark date. However, requests for extending the period may be made by the sponsor, the postmaster, or the district manager (or designee). Requests must be approved by Stamp Services Pictorial Postmarks program manager.

If the request is approved, an extension is normally made for 30, 60, or 90 days. Items submitted through the mail during the extension period are to receive the postmark, provided that they meet all other conditions for acceptance as discussed in sections 9-1.2 and 9-2. All extensions will be published in the *Postal Bulletin*.



# 10 Backdating and Pre-Dating

It is the policy of the Postal Service to prohibit backdating and pre-dating of mail except in the following cases:

- a. When postal operating requirements and public demand necessitate that postmarking commence before and/or continue after the date contained in the postmark. However, under no circumstances may any postmarked material be released before the date of the postmark.
- b. When replacements are made for damaged, defective, or missing postmarks or covers.
- c. When all requirements for postmarks are met by a customer but postmarks are not applied because of errors by Postal Service personnel.
- d. When authorization is specifically provided in writing by a Stamp Services manager.

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# 11 Cooperation With Collectors

## 11-1 Clear and Legible Postmarks

Postal Service personnel should strive to furnish clear and legible postmarks to collectors by ensuring that handstamp devices are properly inked. Postal Service personnel must give special attention to requests for light postmarks and to mail bearing an endorsement of philatelic value, and they should avoid postmarking stamps by pen or illegible smudging. However, stamps must be postmarked sufficiently to protect Postal Service revenue. See Exhibit 11-1.

## 11-2 Handling

Postal Service personnel should exercise care in handling all philatelic covers to ensure that they are not damaged in mailhandling. These covers are generally identifiable by a design printed on the left side of the envelope. Postal Service personnel should ensure that philatelic covers are not mishandled; overcanceled, backstamped, marked "received this date," or otherwise defaced on front or back; used as a tip piece for labeling purposes in a bundle for a destination package; or bent, folded, mutilated, or damaged by rubber bands.

## 11-3 Covers in the Mailstream

The Postal Service cannot provide special attention to a philatelic cover that has been routinely entered into the mailstream by the sender. Customers are encouraged to supply self-addressed stamped envelopes to protect the items receiving the pictorial postmark from being marred during their return through the mailstream. For customers that do not provide self-addressed stamped envelopes, the postmaster may choose to furnish, at the office's expense, a Priority Mail envelope or box using a G-10 label protective cover for returning the items through the mailstream (see also section 9-1.2).

Exhibit 11-1  
Clear and Legible Postmarks

# Postmark the Stamp



1. Properly ink handstamp devices.
2. Postmarks should be clear and legible.
3. Postmark stamps sufficiently to protect Postal Service revenue.
4. Postmark only a small part of the stamp to satisfy collectors.
5. Use PS Form 413, *Pictorial Postmark Announcement*, for all pictorial postmarks.

# 12 Damaged or Missing Covers

## 12-1 Requests for Replacements

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Requests for replacements of pictorial postmarks may be accepted at the appropriate Post Office for 60 days from the postmark date. Claims for replacement postmarks filed after 60 days are not honored, but the postmaster must respond to the customer with a short explanation that the request could not be honored because it was filed after the deadline.

## 12-2 Conditions for Replacements

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Replacement postmarks are made for poor quality of postmark, damage to the envelope, or other similar defects, or if the items are lost by the philatelic unit. However, replacements are not made if envelopes are marked on the front or back by letter sorting or barcode numbers as they moved through the mail system.

The Postal Service makes every effort to provide a clean, crisp postmark to each item it receives. However, because a pictorial postmark is a manual operation, it is not reasonable to expect a “perfect” postmark on each item. Postmasters must use their own best judgment when determining whether a customer’s complaint about a “poor quality” postmark is actually reasonable or is based on a standard that is too rigorous for a manual operation.

## 12-3 Customer Returns

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The customer must return the unsatisfactory cover or covers to the appropriate Post Office for replacement.

## 12-4 Stale Postmarks

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The Postal Service must return replacement covers to the customer in a USPS® postage-paid envelope so that the stale postmark does not appear in the mailstream.

## 12-5 Time Limit for Complaints and Issues

Handstamps must be retained for 6 months. All complaints and issues for nonreceipt of covers submitted for servicing by the Postal Service must be sent to the appropriate Post Office no later than 60 days from the date of postmark or from the date postmarks were last applied. Complaints and issues for replacement postmarks filed after 60 days are not honored, but the postmaster must respond to the customer with a short explanation that the request could not be honored because it was filed after the deadline.

## 12-6 Unsettled Complaints and Issues

If the postmaster is unable to satisfy a customer complaint or issue, then the postmaster forwards the customer complaint or issue to the district. If, at the district level, the complaint or issue is not settled, the district manager of Consumer Affairs forwards the complaint or issue to the Consumer Advocate, Headquarters.

## 12-7 Cacheted Covers

The Postal Service is not responsible for damage to or loss of cacheted covers or other items of value.

# 13 Temporary Philatelic Stations

## 13-1 Purpose

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Temporary philatelic stations are established at events to offer pictorial postmarks and to display and sell stamps, philatelic products, and other locally created items that are related to the special occasion and approved by Headquarters. They are frequently located at stamp shows, philatelic exhibitions, stamp ceremonies, state fairs, conventions, parades, or other activities of significant public or philatelic interest.

Sometimes the opening of a temporary station is canceled due to weather, safety, lack of attendance, or other reasons. Stamp Services must approve the use of a pictorial postmark without a temporary station requirement.

## 13-2 Set-up

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Temporary philatelic stations should be located in a secured, heavily traveled area that is easily accessible by customers. Stations may consist of booths, counters, or mobile retail units, if available. If these items are unavailable, one or more tables should be used for hand postmarking service and for sales of stamps and other approved products. An additional table should be available for customers to use while affixing stamps to envelopes. Each table should be covered with a tablecloth and bordered with skirting, if possible. Booths, counters, or tables should be positioned in a manner that prevents customers from approaching clerks from the rear.

## 13-3 Signs and Displays

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Signs should be designed and used to direct customers to the section of the temporary philatelic station that provides the product or service they need. Professionally made signs should be used whenever possible; computer-generated or typewritten signs are permissible, but handwritten signs should never be used. Displays should be designed and used to make customers aware of the products and services offered and to communicate information about them, such as their features, quality, and value.

## 13-4 Staffing

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Take special consideration in selecting Postal Service personnel who have retail experience and who are courteous, friendly, highly motivated, and knowledgeable about philately. Additionally, these Postal Service personnel should be fully trained in stamp sales and postmark policies. Handstamps may be used only under the supervision of authorized Postal Service personnel.