

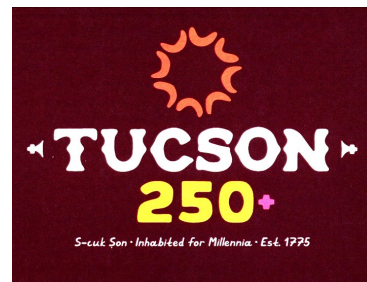
Stamp Tracks



NEWS AND
INFORMATION FOR
PHILATELISTS OF ALL AGES

Tucson 250+: Postal History Celebration

Tucson 250+ is a year-long celebration honoring over 4,000 years of history, heritage, and culture in the Tucson and Pima County region. This milestone commemorates the 250th anniversary of Presidio San Agustín del Tucson in 1775 and recognizes how its foundation shaped Tucson's trajectory and how that influence continues today. The plus (+) honors the Indigenous people and diverse communities that shaped the region long before and after its founding.



As Tucson continues to celebrate its 250th year, the Postal History Foundation stands as a confirmation of the power of stamps, letters, and community spirit to tell the story of a city and its people. The Postal History Foundation's participation in the Tucson 250+ celebration included our Tucson Birthday Kids Art Contest and our current exhibit celebrating Tucson.

Tucson Birthday Kids Art Contest: A Tradition Reimagined

The Tucson Birthday Contest has long been a way to celebrate the city's history and creativity through art and philately. For twelve years, PHF hosted a custom postage contest. However, when the U.S. Postal Service discontinued custom postage in 2020, the contest was paused, and the pandemic further delayed its return. This year, the Foundation proudly revived the contest in a new form to celebrate Tucson's 250th anniversary.

Students were invited to create original artwork reflecting Tucson. The grand prize-winning design would appear on a postcard, while additional winning designs would be featured as cachets on envelopes for collecting or use in the mail. Entries were divided into three age groups, with nine finalists selected.

Event Day: August 20, 2025

The awards ceremony drew an enthusiastic crowd as families, students, and community members filled the Slusser Library. The program began at 10 a.m. with remarks from Education Director Lisa Dembowski, who shared the history and significance of the contest. Tucson Postmaster John LaFreniere served as honorary guest and presenter. LaFreniere and his team brought two new postal service trucks for families to tour, as well as additional goodie bags for the finalists.



Tucson Postmaster John LaFreniere with contest finalists.

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Postal History Foundation

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www.postalhistoryfoundation.org

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Book Specials from the Sales Shop

(shipping costs will be added)

The Error World: An Affair with Stamps by Simon Garfield, Boston, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt 2009 \$15.00

Chicago Postal History by Harvey M. Karlen, Chicago, Collectors Club, 1971. Fine condition. \$15.00

Revenue Unit Columns from the American Philatelist, Lawrence, KS, Quarterman Publications, 1979, In dustcover good condition \$20.00

The Yankee Post Office: Its History and Its Postmasters By Frederick Calvin Norton, New Haven, The Tuttle, 1935. History of Guilford, CT, Post Office Some staining to the upper board and long inscription on the endpaper \$15.00

The Harry F. Allen Collection of Black Jacks by Maryette B. Lane, A.P.S. 1969 \$15.00

The Private Local Posts of the United States: Volume I New York State by Donald Scott Patton, London, Robson Lowe, Ltd, 1967 Fine condition \$15.00

Folded Typewriter Postcards by Robert M. Bell, West Sedona, AZ, 2008. Inscribed by the author on title page. (soft cover) \$10.00

From the Treasurer Annual Membership Renewal 2026

**To our past members who missed a year...
Please rejoin to support our important work
here at the Postal History Foundation.**

Our needs in these times are substantial. Please be generous and move your membership to a higher level.

Your dollars allow us to support our active Stamp Discovery program and the Slusser Library as we promote philatelic learning and inspire future generations.



The children, teachers, and parents thank you!

Sea Snail Connection to Stamps

Contribution by Doug Files

What rare British stamp is related to sea snail mucus? Stay tuned to learn how snail trails tie into stamp collecting...One of the rarest United Kingdom stamps is called the Tyrian plum due to its distinctive color. This is its story.

When Queen Victoria died in 1901 her son became King Edward VII. The postage stamps prepared with his portrait used the same frames as the definitives issued to honor his mother. And they were bicolor, which was attractive and deterred counterfeiting. However in 1909 the post office decided to change to monochromatic stamps, mostly to save money. The printer De La Rue submitted the final design for the new stamp in a purplish color called Tyrian plum. Color trials were then sent to the Post Office leadership on crown watermarked paper, which the Postmaster General approved.

De La Rue then began printing 2-pence Tyrian plum stamps as replacements for the bicolor Edward VII definitives. At the government's request 25 million stamps were produced. The new plum-colored stamps were distributed to post offices all over the nation, and their release date was set for May 6th, 1910. However, postmasters were instructed to use up older stocks of 2-pence stamps before selling any new ones.



Everything was set for the release...and then the king died the day the stamps were to be issued. The Postmaster General cancelled the release of the brightly-colored stamps so

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Sea Snail Connection cont'd

that the event of the king's death would not appear festive. From that point on new stamps would have to bear the portrait of the new king so the Postmaster General ordered that all the stamps be destroyed except for one sheet to be kept in Post Office archives. But to paraphrase Robert Burns, the best-laid plans of mice and men soon go awry. Approximately 20 Tyrian plum stamps were released in Southeast London before clerks learned of the cancellation order. As far as is known none of these twenty stamps was used on mail. The only used copy is on a cover which was mailed May 5th 1910 by the Prince of Wales, an avid stamp collector. It is a philatelic use because he received and sent it to himself prior to the planned release date. The cover arrived in his mail pouch the day his father died and the Prince became King George V. The current location of most of the 20 Tyrian plum stamps is not known to the philatelic community, but it is possible that others exist, and they are quite valuable. Mint copies are listed in the Stanley Gibbons catalogue at roughly \$125,000. (110,000 pounds).

Finally we get to the snail tie-in. Tyrian purple – also known as royal or imperial purple – was a rare pigment in ancient times. It was associated with the city of Tyre in Phoenicia and it was produced by processing the bromine-infused mucus of snails. The purplish dye was so valuable that its method of manufacture was often kept secret. It was time-consuming to make and that is why its use in some regions was limited to the royal family, hence its nickname of imperial purple.

So this is how sea snail mucus relates to one of the rarest UK stamps in existence. You never know what stories you can learn as you research stamps. So keep collecting, and if you find a Tyrian plum stamp in an old collection, let other collectors know.

If you prefer YouTube videos to written articles there is a video on the Tyrian plum stamps at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BcbrsXI6b2o>

Grateful for IBM During United Way Days of Caring



We are grateful for our loyal group of current and retired IBM employees who worked all day performing various tasks in support of our Stamp Discovery education program. They sorted stamps for filing, gathered stamps for lessons, soaked stamps off of paper, and more!

A big Thank You to our loyal group shown above. It is always a fun day! Back row: Jason Willerup, Guadalupe Willerup, Russell Conder, Alec Forszt, Ken Pholphiboun, Angela Pholphiboun, Gary Anna. Front Row: Andrea Ochoa, Josie Anna, Kat Wahl, Richard Wahl.

Thank you to all and especially Kat Wahl, our education program assistant, for organizing all of the tasks.



Tucson 250+ cont'd

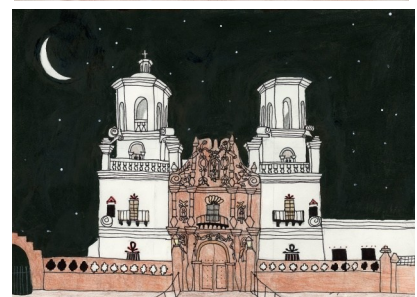
Generous sponsorships and community support allowed for enhanced prizes this year, while volunteers—who also served as judges—made the event possible. Excitement built as each finalist received recognition, leading up to the announcement of the grand prize winner: Elizabeth Luxbacher, a 15-year-old freshman whose stunning illustration of a Gilded Flicker captivated the judges. (At right) Her artwork now graces a commemorative postcard, available for purchase along with the collectible envelopes and a pictorial postmark created for the day.

The artwork from all the finalists were also on display and are featured on special cacheted envelopes. Many were purchased the day of the event and a supply is available for sale while they last. They are a fun, beautiful way, to send a letter to friends and family far away. Spread the beauty of Tucson and the region across the country by sending a postcard or a note in a colorful envelope. Call Lisa Dembowski to order postcards and collectible envelopes at 520-623-6652 x 102.

Another fun part of the celebration was the opportunity for visitors to have their mail canceled with the



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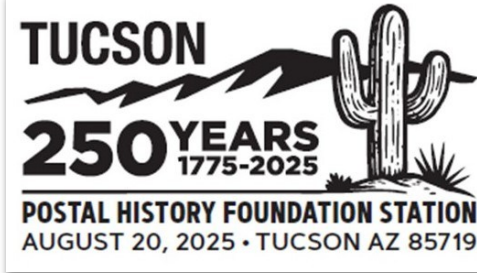


All designs are available as cacheted envelopes for collection or mail use.

Finalist artwork above was created by local students of various age groups. Top row, left to right ages 5-8: Miraj Rafiyath, Saison Maultsby, Meri Mukan Nguyen. 2nd row ages 9-12: Nicolette Rodman, Sebastian Minano, Zahra Rafiyath. 3rd row ages 13-17: Eva Boicourt, Ella Poggi, Elizabeth Luxbacher.

Tucson 250+ cont'd

special Tucson Birthday pictorial postmark. Local designer Don Regole graciously designed the postmark which was approved by the USPS. Requests were received from across the country and the world including Germany, Japan, and China. Our staff cancelled more than 600 various postcards, envelopes and regular mail.



Collectible cover including finalist Eva Boicourt's artwork, a USPS Happy Birthday stamp, and the 250th Tucson pictorial cancel.

Tucson 250 Desert, Culture, and Community

In conjunction with the art contest, the PHF unveiled a new exhibit, Tucson 250: Desert, Culture, and Community. This landmark exhibition celebrates Tucson's 250th anniversary by exploring the city's history through stamps, postcards, and historic mail.



Postcard circa 1930-1945

Organized into four sections—Early History, First Day of Issue, Iconic Tucson, and Postal History Foundation—the exhibit highlights the diverse landscapes, cultures, and communities that define Tucson. From territorial covers to modern commemoratives, the materials on display illustrate how mail has chronicled the city's evolution. The exhibit is the result of a collaborative effort between PHF staff, volunteers, and the education department.

Many items are drawn from the Foundation's extensive archives, while others were generously loaned by volunteers and community members. The following are but a few examples of over 100 items in the exhibit that range from 1859 to recent covers issued by the Postal History Foundation, University of Arizona, United States Postal Service, Tucson Stamp Club, and other organizations.



A reorganization of New Spain frontier defenses in 1775 resulted in the transfer of Presidio San Ignacio de Tubac to what is now the city of Tucson. On August 20, 1775, Spanish-Irish officer Hugo O'conór established Presidio San Agustín del Tucson on the site of the Tohono O'odham village, S-cuk Şon. Over the years, the name S-cuk Şon evolved into the name Tucson. This cacheted cover with pictorial cancel, at left, was issued for the bicentennial celebration in 1975.

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Founded in 1692 by Jesuit missionary Eusebio Kino, Mission San Xavier del Bac has long served the Wa:k O'odham community. The current church, built between 1783 and 1797 during the New Spain era, showcases Spanish colonial artistry. The mission became part of the United States in 1854 after the ratification of



1906 postcard of San Xavier

the Gadsden Purchase. Designated a National Historic Landmark in 1960 and added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1966, San Xavier remains an enduring cultural and spiritual landmark as well as a major tourist designation. At right are U.S. stamps of the Gadsden Purchase issued in 1953 and San Xavier del Bac issued in 1971.

The exhibit includes a huge variety of items from Tucson's history. Here are a few more to peak your interest. Again, thank you to Arielle Garcia, our librarian/archivist, Jack Mount and Tucson Stamp Club members. We hope to see you soon!

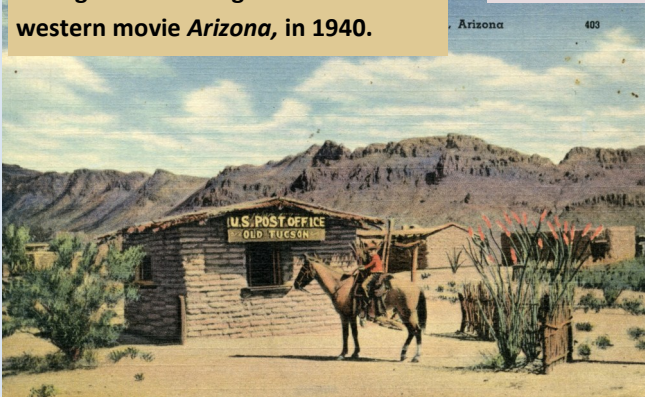


The beautiful Sonoran Desert is well known throughout the world and has been featured on U.S. stamps and postcards for over 100 years. Above is the U.S. *Desert Plants* first day of issue from 1981.

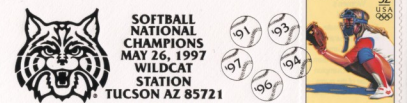
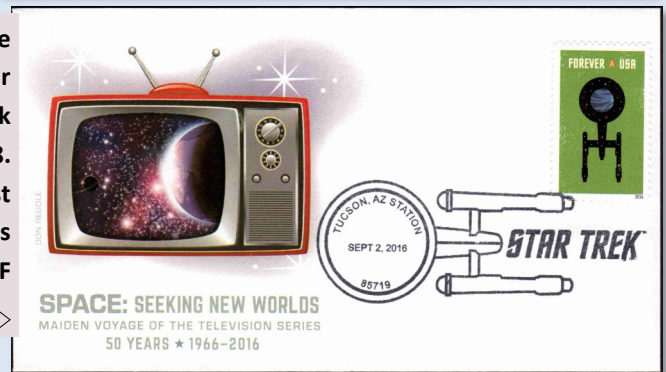


Stone Avenue, downtown Tucson (ca.1940) postcard

U.S. Post Office at the *Old Tucson Studios*, postcard, circa 1953. This was a temporary post office offering a special "Old Tucson" cancellation during the filming of the classic western movie *Arizona*, in 1940.



Local artist Don Regole designed the cachet for the U.S. Star Trek stamp issue of 2018. One of over 170 first day of sale covers produced by the PHF since 1960.



This cover commemorates the 1997 University of Arizona National Softball Champions as well as the championship teams of 1991, 1993, 1994, and 1996.

New Members

Richard Adams
Tucson, AZ

Jeff Bernknopf
Oro Valley, AZ

John Calhoon
Surprise, AZ

Michael Jonak
Redlands, CA

Charles Parker
Green Valley, AZ

Michael O'Reilly
Phoenix, Az

Mark Schauer
Yuma, AZ

In Memoriam

Malcolm Bell
Member

James T. Dempsey
Member

Daniel Fischer
Friend

Richard King
Friend

Theodor Teichgräber
Member

Richard B. Silbert
Friend

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postalhistoryfoundation/about/stamp-tracks-newsletter

Slusser Exhibit

Tucson 250:
*Celebrating Tucson's
Desert, Culture, and
Community*

View the Exhibit thru March
*check for library closures on
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