

The PhilateliKid

The newsletter for Stamp Collecting Clubs for Kids (SCCFK)

Collect Stamps (The Most Educational Hobby)

www.stampcollectingclubsforkids.org

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Stay Safe Indoors! Collect Stamps!

William Christopher (W. C.) Handy

Beale Street is a major street in downtown Memphis, Tennessee, which runs from the

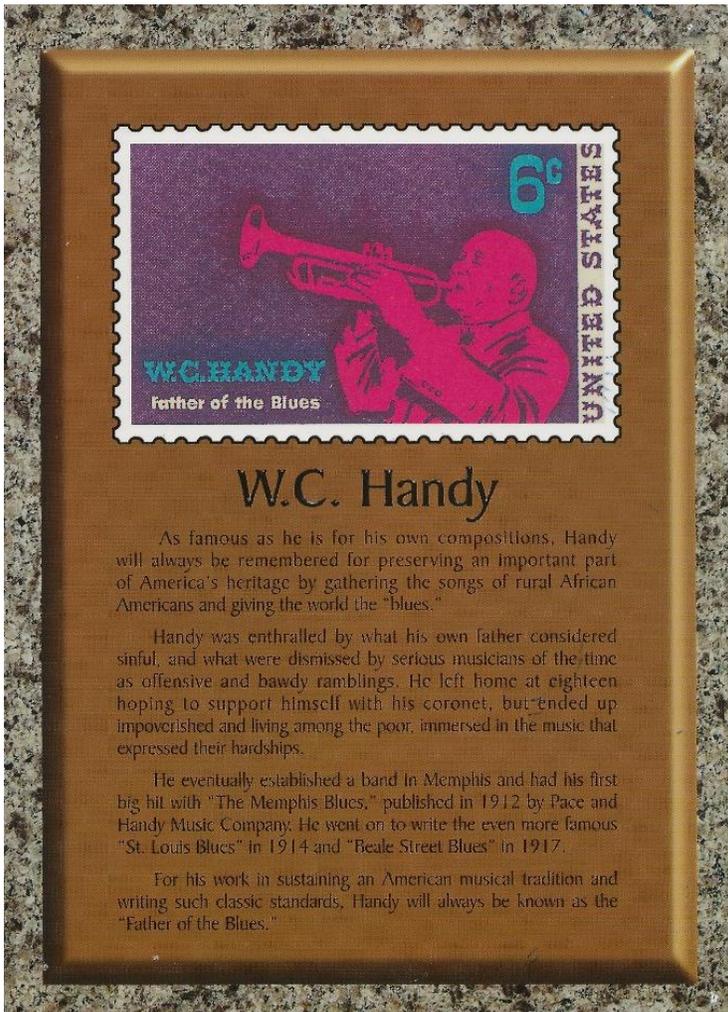
Mississippi River to East Street, a distance of approximately 1.8 miles. It is a significant location in the city's history, as well as in the history of blues music. *Beale Street Blues*, *St. Louis Blues*, and *Memphis Blues* were big hits for musician W. C. Handy, who now is known as the **Father of the Blues**.

At left is a postcard sold by the USPS as part of a series featuring famous African Americans commemorated on U.S. stamps. The series also includes postcards for Duke Ellington, Martin Luther King, Jr., Jackie Robinson, Joe Louis, Dr. Allison Davis, Ralph Bunche, Percy Lavon Julian, Malcolm X, A. Philip Randolph, Ernest E. Just, W.E.B. Dubois, Carter Woodson, Gen. Benjamin O. Davis Sr., Bessie Coleman, Salem Poor, Paul Laurence Dunbar, Dr. Charles R. Drew, Benjamin Banneker, Roberto Clemente and more. These postcards were sold in sets by the USPS, and none had an indicium – thus they were not postal cards, but postcards.

Postal Cards and Postcards

There is an old adage that goes something like this: It is not the cost of the piano that will “break the bank” – it is the sheet music.

In the world of stamp collecting that is not true. The albums can break the bank. The stamps can break the bank. The literature can break the bank. However, the converse is also true, sometimes. A person can collect stamps without having to spend a large sum.



Today we are going to examine the world of postal cards. But ever so briefly!!

First, let us define what a “postal card” is, and how it is not the same as a “post card.”

A postal card is issued and sold only by the post office. It has pre-printed on it a “stamp” that pays the appropriate postage. The preprinted “stamp” is not a stamp at all – it is actually called “**indicium**.” (Pronounced Inn-dih-she-uhm.) A postal card is one type of **postal stationery**.

At right is a postal card with a 5¢ indicium, which was the full cost of mailing a postal card in 1968, when this card was sold. Note the 3 horizontal lines, which presumably “precancelled” the postal card.



Indicium is a Latin word. The plural form of **indicium** is **indicia** (pronounced Inn-dih-she-uh) and is frequently used, even when the author is referring to just one. It is similar to when a person is referring to datum (singular) but uses data (plural) instead, such as “The data *is* clear.” It should be the data *are* clear.

Indicia are printed on the **obverse** (front side) of the postal card. The **reverse** side (back side) of a postal card usually is totally blank, which leaves the entire reverse side available for the message the sender wants to write.



At left is the reverse side of the 5¢ postal card pictured above. Note it is totally blank.

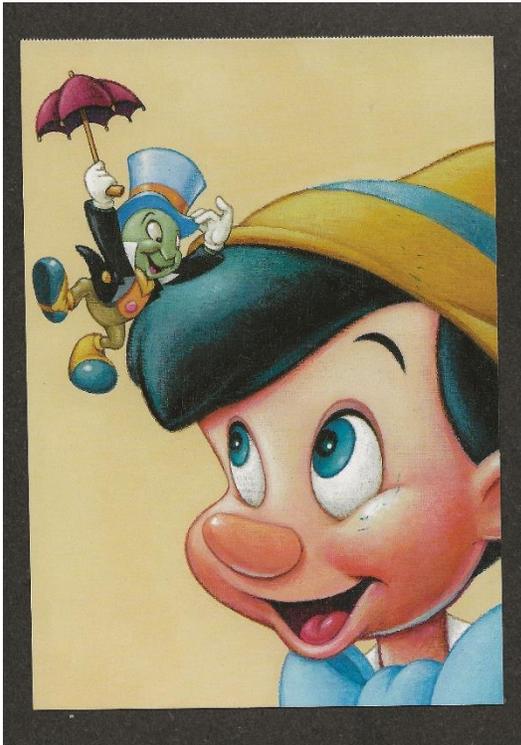
For many years a postal card was mailed by surface transportation,

but with the advent of airplanes, for a premium cost, a postal card could be purchased which would be transported by air, whenever practical. An airmail postal card can be easily

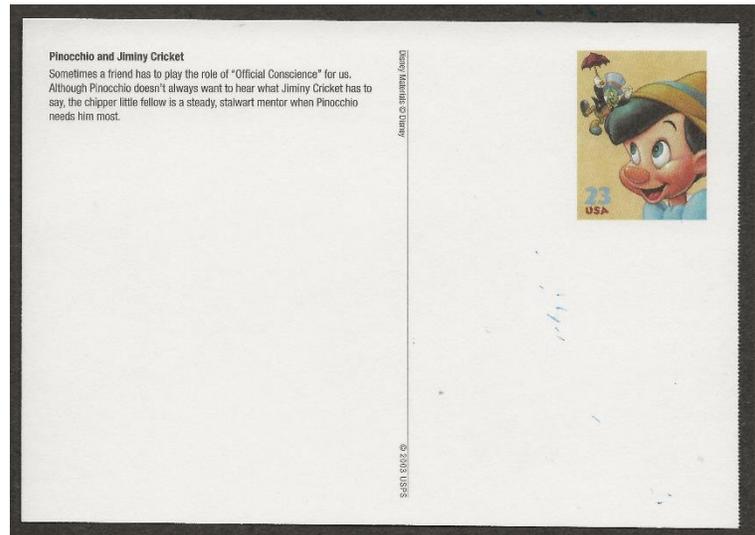


identified by red and blue lozenges around the four edges of the obverse.

A postcard is manufactured by a business, not the post office, and sold commercially – rarely by the USPS. If the post card has a picture on one side, it is called a picture post card. A post card required the user to purchase a stamp and affix it to the postcard in order to mail it. It is cheaper to mail a post card than to mail an envelope, so the USPS sells stamps which are cheaper than the 55¢ necessary to mail an envelope. In January 2012 the rate for a postcard was increased one cent from 35¢ to 36¢. However, if a postcard is oversized, it required the same postage as an envelope.



Just to make things a bit more complicated, the USPS occasionally will issue a postal card (with preprinted indicium) but the obverse is a picture! To the left is the obverse one such postal card issued by the USPS in 2003 which features Pinocchio and Jiminy Cricket. To the right is the reverse side of the card with the 23¢ indicium,



which by 2003 was the amount needed to mail a postal card. It is one of a set of 4 different designs in the “Art of Disney” series. The USPS sold 20 of these postal cards, with a face value of \$4.60, for \$9.75, a \$5.15 profit. At that time, it was considered by many collectors to be an exorbitant profit for the USPS. I guess you could call these picture postal cards. Maybe somebody who reads this can clarify that for us. Note that on the reverse side, beneath the indicium is space for the address of the recipient to be written, and on the left side is space for the message.

The study and collection of postcards is called “**deltiology**.” A person who collects postcards is a deltiologist. Deltiologists collect only picture postcards, but some also collect postal cards.

Mint, Used, On Cover

The three most common ways that stamp collectors collect stamps are: mint, used (cancelled), and used on cover. Mint stamps come in a variety of states: “Post Office fresh” means that the stamp appears just like it did when it was originally purchased from the post office. This means the stamp has no discoloration from sunlight or chemicals in the air, including smoking, which

adds an odor to the stamp. The reverse side (the “back”) appears just as it was when manufactured, with no “disturbance” to the gum. A self-adhesive stamp has the original paper backing to which it was attached. If two or more attached stamps are involved (these are called “multiples”) the perforations between the stamps are as originally sold, without any folds, creases, or separations.

A mint stamp that has had a hinge applied can be termed “Hinged,” (H) “Previously Hinged,” (also H) or “Lightly Hinged.” (LH) If a piece of the hinge remains affixed to the back of the stamp, then it is termed a “Hinge Remnant.” (HR) A stamp that has never had a hinge applied to it is termed “never hinged.” (NH) If the gum has been altered in any way it is Disturbed Gum (DG).

A stamp that is on a piece of paper and cancelled is termed “On piece.” Often the piece of paper is large enough so that the entire cancellation, and sometimes the postmark, can be seen. A stamp that is on an entire envelope and is cancelled is called a “Cover.” If the cover has a cancellation that shows that the stamp was used on the very first day that the stamp was available for sale, it is termed a “First Day Cover.” (FDC) Sometimes, the exact date that a stamp became available for sale is not certain. The stamp with the earliest date known so far is termed “Earliest Known Use.” (EKU)

There are people who collect baseballs. A brand-new baseball is a nice thing to have, but if it was actually used in a live game, and it was hit out of the park as a foul ball, it is more desirable. If it was hit out of the park in a home run, it is even more desirable. Sometimes a brand-new baseball is given to a professional ball player who is asked to autograph it. It then becomes more collectible. A baseball can actually be signed by more than one person, sometimes even every player on the team. More collectible! Sometimes even the team manager and the coaches sign. Those baseballs are pretty rare and highly valued among baseball collectors.

I know I am in the minority, but I look upon stamps pretty much the same way. A mint stamp is interesting, but if it is hinged, and came out of the collection of a famous stamp collector, such as President Franklin D. Roosevelt, then it becomes more interesting to me. The hinge mark does not detract. In fact, to me, it is interesting to think that the previous owner actually licked a hinge and carefully place the stamp in his album.

A stamp with a cancel on it can be much more interesting, especially if it contains information about an interesting date, city, or method of transportation, such as RPO (Railroad Post Office) or HPO (Highway Post Office.) Sometimes a cancel is unusual, and those are very collectible. A stamp on a cover can be very interesting, as normally the sender and recipient are then known, along with the date and city of the sender. Often auxiliary information is also present on a cover, such as the marks of a censor who approved the passage of the cover during war times. Cachets add to make the cover even more interesting. **Next month:** Cancellations and event covers from **U S Navy ships**.

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