Stamp Tracks

News and Information for Philatelists of all Ages

NATIONAL POSTAL EDUCATION CENTER Fall 2026 No. 53

The Postal History Foundation has adopted a new name.

National Postal Education Center (NPEC)

Earlier this year, we shared that the Postal History Foundation would be adopting a new name. That transition is now underway, and you may already be noticing the National Postal Education Center name and new look appearing across our website, communications, programs, and materials.

Our new name reinforces what has always been our organization's strength and purpose. Founded in 1960, our organization has long used stamps, letters and postal artifacts to connect people with history, geography, culture and human connection. The name change reflects a broader ambition to deepen our educational programming and strengthen our role as a national resource for learning through stamps and postal history.

While our name and visual identity are changing, we remain the same organization. Our programs, collections, services, memberships, donations, and commitments continue without interruption.

> "Our new name reflects the full scale of what we believe and what we're building. Postal education builds curiosity and helps us discover new doorways to learning. This next chapter in our organization will help us bring this education to everyone."
>
> – Chairman Bob Davis

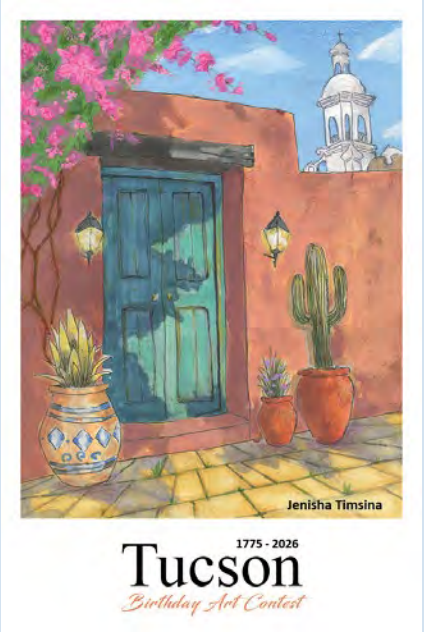
Already a member?

Thank you for your continued support. As part of this next chapter, we'll be reaching out to reconnect, learn more about your interests, and strengthen our connection with our NPEC community.

For more information visit our website:
NationalPostalEducationCenter.org

NATIONAL POSTAL EDUCATION CENTER
TUCSON ARIZONA

The transition will continue in phases through the end of the year, so you may see both the Postal History Foundation and National Postal Education Center names during this period.



A reception was held in the Slusser Library on August 20 to honor the youth winners of our 2026 Tucson Birthday Stamp Art Contest. Grand Prize winner Jenisha Timsina's winning design is featured on this year's commemorative postcard. See the full story and all contest winners on page 3.

NATIONAL POSTAL EDUCATION CENTER

920 N. 1st Avenue
Tucson, AZ 85719
520-623-6652

NationalPostalEducationCenter.org
info@phftucson.org

VISIT NPEC

Monday-Friday,
8:30 a.m.-2:30 p.m.
Closed on federal holidays.
Check our public calendar for temporary Slusser Library closures due to events.

ADMINISTRATION

Kara Ward
e: info@phftucson.org

SLUSSER LIBRARY

p: 520-623-6652 ext. 107
e: library@phftucson.org

STAMP DISCOVERY EDUCATION PROGRAM

Arielle Garcia, ext. 102
Education Assistant: Kat Wahl
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Mike Wood, ext. 108
e: sales@phftucson.org
eBay Sales: Bob Davis
eBay: bobacarol

NPEC BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Chairman: Bob Davis
Vice Chair: Mike Wood
Secretary: Steven Hamann
Treasurer: Ted Maynard
John Carney, James Green,
Max Schwartz, Joe Cody, Jim Zuelow

Chairman's Note

Hello Friends,

It's fall and our offices are a buzz with planning and activities for the season ahead! As we begin this new chapter as the National Postal Education Center, our focus remains on the programs, collections, and people that have always been at the heart of our organization.

This summer, we celebrated the young artists of our highly successful 2026 Tucson Birthday Art Contest. The community gathered to salute the nine young talented artists whose creations celebrated Tucson's civic, architectural and natural beauty. We recreated their art as commemorative postcards and cachets displayed during our fun event.

Our Education programs continue with field trips, Museum visits by classes and homeschoolers and ongoing distribution of our curricula and activity sheets across the country. That little paper stamp still shines as a window into history and knowledge for young people, and a source of fascination for researchers in our library.

Our annual Membership Campaign is also underway. Membership remains a critical source of support for everything we do. Whether you're a longtime member, recently joined, or are considering becoming a member, we deeply appreciate your support. We'll have more to share about our Membership Campaign in the weeks ahead.

Chairman, Bob Davis

Sales Spotlight: The Enduring Allure of Souvenir Sheets

For collectors seeking something special, souvenir sheets can add visual interest and variety to any collection. Often issued to commemorate significant events, these sheets can break from convention with unique shapes, larger formats, and striking designs.

Our collection includes hundreds of souvenir sheets spanning decades of postal history, available at 50% of Scott Catalog Value (SCV) or less, with NPEC members receiving an additional 20% discount.

Whether you're searching for a specific commemorative issue or simply enjoy the thrill of the hunt, there may be a souvenir sheet in our collection waiting for you.

Interested in browsing? Contact our Sales Department to see what's available or arrange a time to browse the collection.



1949 Children's Day souvenir sheet from Japan. Catalog value: $450. NPEC price: $225. Member price: $180.

Young Artists Turn Their Creativity into Art

On August 20, NPEC announced the winners of the 2026 Tucson Birthday Art Contest, celebrating young artists ages 5 to 17 who submitted original designs inspired by the city they call home.

Winners were revealed at a reception at the Slusser Library. Entries were judged in three age groups. The Grand Prize design was unveiled as a commemorative postcard, while the other winning designs were reproduced as decorative illustrations on commemorative envelopes, known as cachets. The winning designs will be on public display at NPEC for one year.





Grand Prize
Jenisha Timsina's design, a colorful rendering of a barrio doorway framed by desert plantings, took top honors and is featured on this year's commemorative postcard.

Age Group 5-8



1st place - Rosali Cuestas



2nd Place - Miraj Rafi-yath



3rd place - Magnolia Bowman

Age Group 9-12



1st place - Aarohi Pai



2nd Place - Sammy Cuestas



3rd place - Satvika Vasireddy

Age Group 13-17



1st place - Jenisha Timsina



2nd Place - Isabelle Summers



3rd place - Ella Poggi



Take Home a Piece of the Contest!

Commemorative postcards featuring the Grand Prize design and cachet envelopes featuring the winning designs are available for purchase through NPEC.

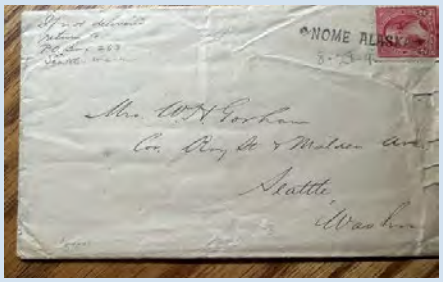
Contact us at **520-623-6652** for ordering information.

Bringing Alaska's Postal History to Life

Spotlighting a Presentation to Tucson Stamp Club
by Jim Zuelow and Len Miller



Philately is a way of reading history, say Len and Jim, and few places illustrate that as powerfully as Alaska! From left: Len Miller and Jim Zuelow. Jim is a retired educator who lived in Alaska for 25 years. Len, also a retired educator, has traveled extensively throughout Alaska, including visits to Prudhoe Bay and Barter Island.





Photos above: One of the earliest postal cancellations from Nome, dated August 1899; and a cancellation from Barrow (now Utqiagvik), the northernmost community in the United States.

Alaska philately sits at the intersection of exploration, territorial history, statehood and the story of the mail. NPEC's Jim Zuelow and Len Miller, both historians and stamp collectors, recently brought that history to life in a presentation to the Tucson Stamp Club.

At the Club's May meeting, Alaska's history was described and illustrated. There was discussion about the First People to enter Alaska many thousands of years ago when the Bering Land Bridge existed between Siberia and North America. Cancellations used on mail from current major and little known former US military sites in the state also were viewed. Facts and figures were presented. For example, the Southcentral Alaska Anchorage area contains over half the state's population. Also, there are more men than women residents, and an annual dividend is paid to each qualified resident. The dividend was $1,000 in 2025. US and foreign stamps related to Alaska were shown and discussed as were several rare Alaskan postal history covers. Both Len and Jim described some of their personal experiences in Alaska.

Long before a single postmark existed Alaska was home to Indigenous Peoples whose trade routes and knowledge of the land helped shape where trading posts, forts and eventually post offices were built.

Jim opened the talk by reminding the room that postal history doesn't begin with the first stamp. It begins with those Indigenous paths and how in Alaska those paths existed thousands of years before the Russian explorations. Jim and Len continued their presentation with discussion of the early Russian, British and Spanish explorers, and how those expeditions reshaped the region around commodities of fur pelts, gold and the broader wealth of the Alaskan pristine wilderness. There was explanation of the transformation that came when Alaska was sold to the US in 1867. Collectors can now trace the story of Alaska stampbystamp thanks to the waves of correspondence that emerged as prospectors, business entrepreneurs and officials rushed north.

The Tucson Stamp Club learned about the Territorial period, the growth of Alaskan cities, highways, railroads and defense systems, up through when Alaska became a state in 1959. Jim and Len continued their review of Alaskan history in relation to postal history, including the 1960s earthquake, the 1970s Pipeline and the 1980s Exxon Valdez spillage. Bringing the story full circle Jim and Len spoke about Alaskan philately as a layered record of Indigenous life, gold fever ambitions, wartime defenses, and human ingenuity against genuine wilderness.

Stamp It and They Will Come

A look at the future of connecting Science, Tech, Engineering, Math, Civics and Arts learning to stamp history

Step into our Education area and you'll find volunteers elbow-deep in mounds of stamps. Is that an airplane or a dinosaur? A famous female artist or a civil rights leader? Nearby, colorful piles of flowers, ships, and trains wait their turn to be sorted.

Welcome to NPEC's educational work tables, where volunteers assemble lesson plans and stamp sets bound for educators, parents, students and homeschoolers across the country.

Since 1964, NPEC has offered these resources completely free. Our online Educator's Store features downloadable lessons and activity sheets, including more than 100 ready-to-order lessons complete with stamp packets.

Locally, NPEC hosts field trips and community tours featuring a mini-museum of vintage stamping equipment from the old Naco post office, an on-site contract post office, and a library holding more than 30,000 books and artifacts including rare Civil War stamp memorabilia. A rotating exhibit changes twice yearly. The current display celebrates the nation's 250th anniversary.

Behind it all is a small but mighty team led by Arielle Garcia, Director of Library, Museum & Education Services, and Education Assistant Kat Wahl, with the support of dedicated volunteers who help keep the program running. This summer they're preparing the annual letter to educators along with a full slate of grade-level lessons and activities for the 2026–2027 school year. "Our program has many unique, defining features," Arielle says. "Through stamps and postal materials, we're able to provide students and educators across the country with free resources that bring subjects like history, geography, art, and social studies to life."

Building relationships with local and national education communities is central to the NPEC mission. Arielle often cites a 2011 Smithsonian piece on stamp collecting's broad appeal especially for young collectors, who find in it a gateway to new cultures, geography, and history. As she puts it, "these are rewards that last a lifetime, and a doorway to lifelong learning."

NPEC Education By The Numbers

1964
The year PHF's education program began

60 years
of Stamp based learning

8.5 million+
Stamps distributed in the last two decade



NPEC Hits the Road

Fall Field Trips Bring Stamp Discovery to Local Classrooms

NPEC's Education team is officially on tour, with field trips designed to spark learning, curiosity and hobby enthusiasm through hands-on philatelic education are now underway.

The first stop this season was Twin Peaks School in Marana on August 20. Education team volunteers Karen and Paula *(Paula pictured above with young enthusiasts)* staffed the NPEC booth, where students explored a stamp discovery activity sheet and dug through stamp treasure chests. Literature about philately and NPEC was also distributed. Nearly 100 attended, with roughly 500 stamps distributed at the event.

Field trips will continue throughout the year as part of NPEC's commitment to community outreach and our educational mission. Scheduling for the fall program is in progress. Educators and homeschool families requesting a visit may contact the Education department at education@phftucson.org.

Collectors' Corner

Philatelic Research by Doug Files



Doug Files is a former Tucsonan who, from his current home in Ohio, continues his close association with our organization. He currently serves as Member Chair of the United Postal Stationery Society and secretary of the Dayton Stamp Club. A regular contributor to Stamp Tracks, Doug enjoys sharing the stories behind favorite pieces of postal history. In this edition, he explores the 3-cent locomotive of the 1869 Pictorial Issue.

Despite its small size, collectors in the 21st century find the 3-cent locomotive stamp to be interesting with its detailed engraving and bright color. It can commonly be found as a single, in pairs and on covers and proudly exhibited by collectors of U.S. stamps.

The Pictorial Series of 1869

The 3-cent ultramarine locomotive stamp from the U.S. 1869 series has long been a favorite of collectors. The Pictorial Series marked a switch in U.S. definitives from featuring only portraits of politicians to showcasing highlights of mail delivery in America. The National Bank Note Company used new color printing techniques to achieve detailed vignettes for this illustrative issue. Post Office headquarters wished to make sure that attempts to reuse the 1869 stamps would be unsuccessful so they imprinted a "grill" on the back of them. At the time this was called "embossing" and it involved making small indentations on stamps that would make cancellation ink absorb into the paper better. This way cancels would be difficult to remove with water or other chemicals. Grills can still be seen on the back of many U.S. stamps from the 1800s.

Some postal customers criticized the 1869 stamps saying they were too small for the designs to be seen and the gum on the back did not stick well onto envelopes. One journalist called the locomotive not "American" enough since trains had been invented in Great Britain. He claimed the stamp was not historical, national or beautiful. Currently, collectors admire the technical skill that went into creating these artistic stamps. Most feel the locomotive stamp is historical, national and beautiful. Perhaps the Pictorial Series appeared ahead of its time.

Postal history

The 3-cent locomotive issue was the backbone of the Pictorial Series because it covered the first-class postage rate at that time. More specifically in 1869 three cents paid for a first class letter up to one half ounce to travel within the United States from one city to another. Each half ounce beyond that required another 3 cents of postage. Pairs and triplets of this stamp can be seen on overweight covers.

The locomotive stamp was issued about the 20th of March 1869 but the oldest known cover bearing the stamp is dated March 27th. Around 473 million ultramarine stamps were printed, and it was so common that 82% of all Pictorial Series stamps were 3-cent locomotives. Despite the fact that so many were printed the Scott catalogue still lists the 3-cent stamps at $250 mint and $17.50 used. Philatelic Foundation expertization certificates have been issued for several varieties such as without grill but with original gum, without grill on gray paper and with a double impression. These varieties are rare and sell at auction for thousands of dollars. One block of 12 stamps is known used and several mint sheets of 150 stamps exist today. Essays and proofs can also be found for this iconic definitive.

(continue)

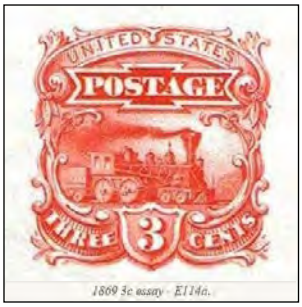
Collectors' Corner *(continued)*



Smithsonian National Postal Museum
(used with permission)



Wikimedia Commons
(Public Domain)



U.S. Philatelic Classics Society
(used with permission)

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Houseman, Donna, ed. 2017 Specialized Catalogue of United States Stamps and Covers. 95th ed., Amos Media, Sidney, Ohio.
The 1869 Pictorials. U.S. Philatelic Classics Society website, https://www.uspcs.org/stampscovers/uspodissuedadhesives/the1869pictorials/, accessed 30 Nov. 2023.
Wikimedia Commons. 3-cent locomotive stamp grill image. Public Domain, https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=119916.

In Memoriam

Honoring a Longtime Volunteer



The National Postal Education Center (NPEC) is saddened to share the passing of volunteer Barrett Behnke, who died in August after more than 20 years of dedicated service to our organization.

A retired machine shop owner from Michigan, Barrett brought his craftsman's eye to PHF in ways that touched nearly every corner of our work. He transformed vintage post office mailboxes into charming banks, sold to support PHF, and built treasure chests that delighted young visitors in our educational programs at the Museum and Slusser Library. Alongside his wife, Nancy, Barrett also sorted stamps for our Education Department — quiet, careful work that became the foundation for curricula and worksheets used by thousands of educators, students, and homeschool families over the years. Barrett and Nancy continued sorting stamps and mailing them back to NPEC, even after a move to Mesa. We are deeply grateful for Barrett's years of craftsmanship, generosity, and quiet dedication to philately. We extend our heartfelt condolences to Nancy and their family.

NPEC also acknowledges the passing of the following dedicated members:

Richard B. Silbert
Walnut Creek, CA — Friend

Donald Langlois
Chandler, AZ — Member

Blair Stannard
Ottawa, ON, Canada — Member

Robert Freeman
Gilbert, AZ — Ranger

NPEC Calendar

2026 Board Meetings

- October 21
- November 18
- December 16

Tucson Stamp Club

Meeting Location:
Voyager RV Resort
8701 S. Kolb Rd.
Tucson, AZ 85756

Upcoming Meetings:

- October 17
- November 21

For more information:
Steve Gross
gross.steve@gmail.com
408-887-3398

New Members

Clint Maish
Santa Fe, NM

Roger P. Quinby
Milton, GA

William Grady
Gilbert, AZ

Stephen M. Langlois
Chandler, AZ

Taylor Turner
Tucson, AZ

Monica Surfaro Spigelman
Tucson, AZ

Stamp Tracks is now online!
Visit our website to see current and past issues.

nationalpostaleducationcenter.org/about/stamp-tracks-newsletter

Slusser Library

Visit our permanent and rotating exhibits.

On display Jul 1 - Dec 31, 2026

Exhibit: July 4, 1776
Interpreting the Moment Through Postal History, Celebrating America's 250th Anniversary

Select exhibits may also be viewed online at NationalPostalEducationCenter.org

Get Involved with NPEC

There are many ways to support NPEC!

- Become a member
- Renew your membership
- Volunteer

Volunteer with NPEC!

Email us at **info@phftucson.org** or visit our website to learn more about getting involved.

Stamp Collecting Starter Kits

Stamps are individually selected for each collector.

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- Complete our online form and return it by email or mail

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