

Synopsis for Year of the National Park and the 1934 National Park Stamp Series

My interest in this topic started with an article about President Franklin Delano Roosevelt and the National Park stamps that was published in White House History. At the next stamp show that I attended I purchased a set of ten stamps. I also bought several sets of ten covers with beautiful designs by several cachet makers. I discovered postcards were another source of different views of the parks. I decided to combine my interest in history and in stamps and put together my first exhibit.

I started with a brief overview of the development of the National Parks and discussed the roles of California Senator John Conness, John Muir and President Theodore Roosevelt.

After the National Park Service was established Mr. Stephen Mather was appointed as its first director. He had the idea to issue postage stamps with scenes in the National Parks for publicity. This idea was not implemented until the administration of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt.

Page 3 displays the ten stamps in the National Park series. Each page from 4 through 13 will give details about one of the stamps in the order released with covers and postcards. Pages 14 thru 16 discusses Postmaster General James Farley's role in promoting the stamps and his signed covers and stamps and an interesting letter from him.

I think the highlight of my exhibit is the signature of Ms. Esther Richards, the first woman to design a United States stamp, on the Great Smoky Mountain cover on Page 13.

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Year of the National Park and the 1934 National Park Stamp Service

The 1934 series of National Park stamps were the first set of stamps to be devoted entirely to scenic views in the National Parks and were issued to compliment the observance of the 1934 Year of the National Park. The stamps were also a means to promote the parks and encourage visits from Depression-weary Americans.

The first stamp in the series is Yosemite has an interesting history. As more and more people moved West California Senator John Conness introduced legislation in Congress to preserve Yosemite Valley and the Mariposa Big Tree Grove from development. It was passed with the result that on June 30, 1864, during the Civil War, President Lincoln signed the Yosemite Grant Act withdrawing these two areas from the public domain and placing them under the custody of the State of California.

Setting aside this acreage in Yosemite established a precedent for the preservation of Yellowstone. In 1872 President Ulysses S. Grant signed the bill that established more than two million acres as Yellowstone National Park, the first National Park. Yosemite and Yellowstone may have been saved from development but to endure they needed a voice. On cue, John Muir became that outspoken advocate in the 1880's and 1890' by calling for strengthening the laws protecting Yosemite, founding the Sierra Club and other activities including publications that garnered nationwide coverage. On October 1, 1890 Congress passed a bill that expanded the acreage protected in Yosemite and designating it a National Park.

What the parks needed next was a friend in the White House. Enter President Theodore Roosevelt who was a prominent advocate of park preservation. President Roosevelt greatly augmented the development of the National Parks in 1906 by signing the Antiquities Act that gave the President sole authority to establish national monuments out of land in the public domain. Although meant to protect archaeology sites, ancient artifacts, and objects of scientific interest, the President also used it to protect large areas from lease or development so later they could be converted into National Parks. It also protected historical sites.

Stephen Mather addressed the concern that the National Parks needed to be managed by a single organization, lobbied Congress tirelessly and started a "See America Campaign" after World War I to create an agency to put the parks under federal control. In 1916 President Woodrow Wilson established the National Park Service with Mr. Mather as its first director. One of his ideas was to have the Post Office issue stamps featuring scenes in the National Parks.

It wasn't until 1933 that President Franklin Delano Roosevelt signed Executive Order 6166 that consolidated all National Parks, monuments, military parks, and memorials under the direction of the National Park Service. To promote the National Parks, President Roosevelt's Secretary of the Interior, Harold Ickles, declared 1934 National Park Year. At a cabinet meeting