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SPARKLE ON HER LEFT HAND LEADS TO BLOSSOMS AND BOUQUETS ...

U.S. Postal Service Dedicates 2004 Love Stamps

WASHINGTON – Now that you’ve grown accustomed to the sparkle, you’ve chosen the dress, fireplaces, chandeliers and antiques for a storybook wedding, it’s time now to make that first impression of style and form that you want for your special day. Thanks to the U.S. Postal Service, the 37-cent Garden Bouquet and 60-cent Garden Botanical stamps will gracefully and elegantly add just the right “touch of class” for invitations, announcements and greetings.



A first-day-of-issue ceremony for the new commemorative postage stamps took place today in Madison Square Garden. Available in New York City today, the Garden Bouquet and Garden Botanical stamps will be available nationwide tomorrow.

“The 37-cent one-ounce stamp features a gorgeous arrangement of white lilacs and large pink roses, specially designed for the response envelope often enclosed in wedding invitations,” said Charles E. Bravo, senior vice president, Intelligent Mail and Address Quality for the U.S. Postal Service, who dedicated the stamps. “While the 60-cent two ounce stamp – a botanical illustration of five varieties of mostly pink roses – is perfect for the extra weight of a wedding invitation, oversized card or small gift enclosure that requires extra postage.”

Joining Bravo at the first day ceremony were Elizabeth C. Pope, president, American Stamp Dealers Association; Carley Roney, Co-Founder and Editor-in-Chief, The Knot (www.theknot.com), today’s leading wedding resource; and David E. Failor, Executive Director, Stamp Services for the U.S. Postal Service.

“We appreciate the Postal Service’s commemoration of these delightful bouquets at our Postage Stamp Mega Show here at Madison Square Garden,” said Elizabeth Pope, president, American Stamp Dealers Association. “And we are honored to host this celebration that introduces the philatelic public to stamps that are perfect additions to cards for Valentine’s Day and Mother’s Day, birthdays, anniversaries and wedding invitations.”

The 37-cent stamp art – a bouquet of white lilacs and pink roses – is a reproduction of a chromolithograph probably printed in Germany circa 1880-1900. The artist and engraver are unknown. The 60-cent stamp – a botanical illustration of five varieties of simple pink roses – is a reproduction of a chromolithograph created from a drawing by English artist Anne Pratt. This drawing was one of hundreds appearing in a five-volume book of Pratt's illustrations published in England between 1850-1866 and reprinted in England and New York between 1889 and 1900.

Richard Sheaff of Scottsdale, Ariz., was the designer and art director for both stamps. Seven hundred fifty million Garden Bouquet and 150 million Garden Botanical self-adhesive stamps were printed. To see these stamps and other images from the 2004 Commemorative Stamp Program, visit the Postal Store at www.usps.com/shop and click on "Release Schedule" in the Collector's Corner.

Current U.S. stamps, as well as a free comprehensive catalog are available by toll-free phone order at 1 800 STAMP-24. A wide selection of stamps and other philatelic items are also available at the Postal Store, www.usps.com/shop, and www.postalartgallery.com offers beautifully framed prints of original stamp art for delivery straight to the home or office.

Since 1775, the U.S. Postal Service has connected friends, families, neighbors and businesses by mail. An independent federal agency, the Postal Service makes deliveries to more than 141 million addresses every day and is the only service provider to deliver to every address in the nation. The Postal Service receives no taxpayer dollars for routine operations, but derives its operating revenues solely from the sale of postage, products and services. With annual revenues of more than \$68 billion, it is the world's leading provider of mail and delivery services, offering some of the most affordable postage rates in the world. Moreover, today's postage rates will remain stable until at least 2006. The U.S. Postal Service delivers more than 43 percent of the world's mail volume - some 202 billion letters, advertisements, periodicals and packages a year - and serves seven million customers each day at its 38,000 retail locations nationwide.

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