

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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**150TH ANNIVERSARY OF LAUNCH OF USS CONSTELLATION
CELEBRATED WITH NEW U.S. POSTAGE STAMP**

BALTIMORE, MD — Thunderous cannon fire from the U.S. Navy's last all-sail sloop-of-war reverberated through Baltimore's Inner Harbor as the U.S. Postal Service commemorated the 150th anniversary of the *USS Constellation's* launch by dedicating a commemorative postage stamp in its honor.

The first-day-of-issue dedication ceremony took place at the Inner Harbor Amphitheater near the 186-foot ship's berth and marked the beginning of a five-day tall ship "Sailabration" that culminates July 4 with a harbor-wide fireworks display.

"It's a pleasure to honor the U.S. Navy's pride and joy," said John Nolan, Deputy Postmaster General, U.S. Postal Service, who dedicated the stamp. "The Constellation has become a treasured symbol of our nation's history as a relentless protector of America's democracy."

"The museum is extremely pleased that *USS Constellation* will be honored by the commemorative stamp on the occasion of the 150th anniversary of her launch," said Christopher Rowsom, Executive Director, *USS Constellation* Museum (www.constellation.org). "It is a great opportunity to celebrate the history of this ship, and all three ships named *Constellation*, and to bring that history to the nation."

Joining Nolan and Rowsom at the event were Rep. C.A. Dutch Ruppersberger (D-MD), U.S. House of Representatives; Martin O'Malley, Mayor, City of Baltimore; David Beck, Board Chairman, *USS Constellation* Museum; and Jacob Cheeks, Acting District Manager, Baltimore District, U.S. Postal Service.

The stamp art is a hand engraving based on a photograph, believed to date to 1893, in the collection of the U.S. Naval Historical Center.

Baltimore, as the host city of the event, holds the unique distinction of being the only city in the nation where the stamp is available today. The stamp will be available at Post Offices and Philatelic Centers nationwide on Thursday, July 1.

Ships scheduled to showcase the Sailabration include these tall ships: *Bluenose II*, 181' Nova Scotian; *Capitan Miranda*, 205' Uruguayan Navy training; *Cisne Branco*, 257' Brazilian Navy training; *Cuauhtemoc*, 270' Mexican Navy training; *Mircea*, 269' Romanian Navy training; *Pride of Baltimore II*, 170' Maryland Goodwill Ambassador; and *Sagres*, 296' Portuguese Navy training.



For decades naval authorities disagreed on whether *Constellation* was a new ship built in 1854 or a modification of the 1797 frigate of the same name. In 1991, scientific examination of the ship and a recently discovered half-hull model confirmed that the ship berthed in Baltimore and known as the *USS Constellation* was indeed a new ship built in 1854.

The third ship to bear the name was the aircraft carrier *USS Constellation* (CV 64). Commissioned in 1961, the ship participated in naval operations ranging from the Vietnam War to supporting Operation Iraqi Freedom. She was decommissioned in 2003.

The *USS Constellation* depicted on the stamp, as the last Civil War-era naval vessel still afloat, was built at the Gosport Navy Yard (now the Norfolk, VA, Naval Shipyard) and launched on August 26, 1854. The *Constellation* actively served the nation for nearly 100 years. Today the ship is a floating museum anchored in Baltimore's Inner Harbor.

The largest and last all-sail sloop-of-war built by the U.S. Navy, the *USS Constellation* carried 22 guns on one deck and a crew of nearly 300. Commissioned on July 28, 1855, the vessel was deployed to the Mediterranean Sea, and later assigned to interdict the slave trade off the west coast of Africa. During the Civil War, the *Constellation* was assigned to the Mediterranean and later to the Gulf of Mexico blockade.

For some twenty years after 1873, *Constellation* served as a training ship for Naval Academy midshipmen, and occasionally was used for other missions including transporting works of American art to the Paris Exposition of 1878 and food to Ireland during the 1880 famine. Over the next 50 years, *Constellation* would serve as a training ship, sit in dry dock and participate in the 1914 Star Spangled Banner Centennial Tour. Its last appearance as a commissioned ship occurred during the commemoration of the 150th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence on July 5, 1926.

Decommissioned by the Navy in 1933, *Constellation* returned to active duty during World War II as relief flagship for the U.S. Atlantic Fleet and Battleship Division Five. In 1955, having been decommissioned once again, the ship was brought to Baltimore and donated by the Navy to a local non-profit foundation. When finally opened to the public nearly a decade later, it had been configured to resemble its namesake, the frigate *Constellation*.

In November 1996, *Constellation* was towed into dry dock to undergo extensive restoration. On July 2, 1999, the venerable all-sail ship, a National Historic Landmark now restored to its as-built (1854) configuration, returned to its permanent berth in Baltimore's Inner Harbor and re-opened its decks to the public.

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 about 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 46 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.

How to Order the First-Day-of-Issue Postmark

Customers have 30 days to obtain the first-day-of-issue postmark by mail. They may purchase new stamps at their local Post Office, by telephone at 800-STAMP-24, and at the Postal Store Web site at www.usps.com/shop. They should affix the stamps to envelopes of their choice, address the envelopes (to themselves or others), and place them in a larger envelope addressed to:

USS CONSTELLATION COMMEMORATIVE STAMP
FIRST DAY OF ISSUE
POSTMASTER
900 EAST FAYETTE STREET
BALTIMORE, MD 21233-9715

After applying the first-day-of-issue postmark, the Postal Service will return the envelopes through the mail. There is no charge for the postmark. All orders must be postmarked by July 30, 2004.

How to Order the First-Day Covers

Stamp Fulfillment Services also offers first-day covers for new stamp issues and Postal Service stationery items postmarked with the official first-day-of-issue cancellation. Each item has an individual catalog number and is offered in the quarterly *USA Philatelic* catalog. Customers may request a free catalog by calling 800-STAMP-24 or writing to:

INFORMATION FULFILLMENT
DEPT 6270
US POSTAL SERVICE
PO BOX 219014
KANSAS CITY, MO 64121-9014

First day covers remain on sale for at least one year after the stamp's issuance.

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