

This Day in History... October 27, 1913

First US International Philatelic Exhibition

On October 27, 1913, the US hosted its first International Philatelic Exhibition (IPEX).

Stamp shows had been held in other countries as early as 1870. And in 1889, the US held its first stamp exhibition at the Eden Musee in New York City. Others would follow, but none in the US were international events until 1913.

The 1913 IPEX was dubbed the “Great Exhibition” and was held at the Engineering Sciences Building at 25 East 39th Street in New York City. Unlike later stamp shows, the Great Exhibition didn’t include special cacheted covers, souvenir sheets, commemorative stamps, or special cancellations.



A non-overprinted Cinderella printed to promote the show.

The show officially opened to the public at 2 pm on October 27, 1913. A lengthy article ran that morning in the New York Times promoting the show, giving extensive details on some of the stamps and collections that would be on display. The opening ceremony was held at 8pm that night with an address by Board of Education President Thomas W. Churchill. Churchill was selected because stamp collecting is educational and they thought he would be a fitting speaker.

The show’s banquet was held a few days later and included a speech from famed collector Fred J. Melville of London. He said, “I must say without any qualifications that the New York Exhibition of stamps is equal in every respect to anything of the kind that has ever been held in Europe.” And philatelic editor Hugo Griebert said, “Not a single European Exhibition has attained to that which New York has shown can be achieved.”



An inverted version of this stamp was among those stolen on the last day.

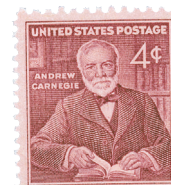
However, the Hamilton Bank Note Company of New York did produce a set of steel engraved poster stamps to promote the show. But as the show approached, a concerned US attorney stepped in and ordered that the stamps not be circulated. He argued that they looked too much like postage stamps and might be fraudulently used in that way. It was an odd claim, since the poster stamps were about three times the size of the circulating stamps of the time.

After extensive debate, a compromise was reached. The stamps would be overprinted “Open October 27 to November 1,” as a means to prevent their use as postage. However the stamps were not released until very close to the exhibition, so they likely didn’t help to promote the show.

The show officially opened to the public at 2 pm on October 27, 1913. A lengthy article ran that



An Overprinted Cinderella printed to promote the show.



The site of the show was built as a gift from Andrew Carnegie to the city in 1907.

In all, the show included 331 exhibits (a far cry from the 4,000 that appeared at Stamp Show 2016). The show also didn’t have stamp dealer booths or international post offices. Additionally, the US Post Office rejected an offer to participate in the show. The closest thing was the presence of Joseph E. Ralph, director of the Bureau of Engraving and Printing, who was a guest speaker at the banquet.

On the final day of the show, just before it was about to close down, three 1869 inverts belonging to an exhibitor were stolen. The stamps (15¢, 24¢, and 30¢) were valued at \$2,500 at the time – and are valued at over \$2.5 million today. The owner offered a \$500 reward, no questions asked, but the stamps were never returned. Aside from that, the show was considered a success.

This Day in History... October 27, 1913

First US International Philatelic Exhibition

On October 27, 1913, the US hosted its first International Philatelic Exhibition (IPEX).

Stamp shows had been held in other countries as early as 1870. And in 1889, the US held its first stamp exhibition at the Eden Musee in New York City. Others would follow, but none in the US were international events until 1913.

The 1913 IPEX was dubbed the “Great Exhibition” and was held at the Engineering Sciences Building at 25 East 39th Street in New York City. Unlike later stamp shows, the Great Exhibition didn’t include special cacheted covers, souvenir sheets, commemorative stamps, or special cancellations.



A non-overprinted Cinderella printed to promote the show.

The show officially opened to the public at 2 pm on October 27, 1913. A lengthy article ran that morning in the New York Times promoting the show, giving extensive details on some of the stamps and collections that would be on display. The opening ceremony was held at 8pm that night with an address by Board of Education President Thomas W. Churchill. Churchill was selected because stamp collecting is educational and they thought he would be a fitting speaker.

The show’s banquet was held a few days later and included a speech from famed collector Fred J. Melville of London. He said, “I must say without any qualifications that the New York Exhibition of stamps is equal in every respect to anything of the kind that has ever been held in Europe.” And philatelic editor Hugo Griebert said, “Not a single European Exhibition has attained to that which New York has shown can be achieved.”



An inverted version of this stamp was among those stolen on the last day.

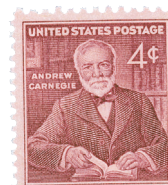
However, the Hamilton Bank Note Company of New York did produce a set of steel engraved poster stamps to promote the show. But as the show approached, a concerned US attorney stepped in and ordered that the stamps not be circulated. He argued that they looked too much like postage stamps and might be fraudulently used in that way. It was an odd claim, since the poster stamps were about three times the size of the circulating stamps of the time.

After extensive debate, a compromise was reached. The stamps would be overprinted “Open October 27 to November 1,” as a means to prevent their use as postage. However the stamps were not released until very close to the exhibition, so they likely didn’t help to promote the show.

The show officially opened to the public at 2 pm on October 27, 1913. A lengthy article ran that morning in the New York Times promoting the show, giving extensive details on some of the stamps and collections that would be on display. The opening ceremony was held at 8pm that night with an address by Board of Education President Thomas W. Churchill. Churchill was selected because stamp collecting is educational and they thought he would be a fitting speaker.



An Overprinted Cinderella printed to promote the show.



The site of the show was built as a gift from Andrew Carnegie to the city in 1907.

In all, the show included 331 exhibits (a far cry from the 4,000 that appeared at Stamp Show 2016). The show also didn’t have stamp dealer booths or international post offices. Additionally, the US Post Office rejected an offer to participate in the show. The closest thing was the presence of Joseph E. Ralph, director of the Bureau of Engraving and Printing, who was a guest speaker at the banquet.

On the final day of the show, just before it was about to close down, three 1869 inverts belonging to an exhibitor were stolen. The stamps (15¢, 24¢, and 30¢) were valued at \$2,500 at the time – and are valued at over \$2.5 million today. The owner offered a \$500 reward, no questions asked, but the stamps were never returned. Aside from that, the show was considered a success.