

Smokey Bear Issue of 1984

Smokey's fire prevention message was shared seriously during World War II, to prevent man-made fires and allow the able-bodied to fight the war abroad. Just months after Pearl Harbor, a Japanese submarine surfaced and shelled a California coastal oil field. The firing occurred near the Los Padres National Forest, causing concerns that war-necessary manpower would be diverted to firefighting. An urgent need was recognized and coordinated by the Wartime Advertising Council, encouraging clients to incorporate fire prevention messages into advertising.

On August 9th, 1944, with the stroke of a pen, the Secretary of Agriculture, and Director of Wartime Fire Prevention Campaign, conceived a treasured icon, Smokey Bear. The Secretary's memo began the longest running Public Service Campaign in the United States...our beloved, Smokey Bear! 2024 will be the 80th year of the program.

Purpose of this exhibit is to examine the public adoration of a hard-worked cartoonish character that has earned this stamp tribute.

Scope of the exhibit includes the "who" of Smokey, "what" happened during the production of the stamp, and the "why" of his messaging and messengers, through artful cachets with the worldwide adoration of the stamp and its uses.



A Fleetwood produced cachet, with the artwork of Don Blake. Stamp artist, Rudy Wendelin added a pencil remarque (making it unique) and his inked signature, to this already beautiful cachet.

EXHIBIT PLAN

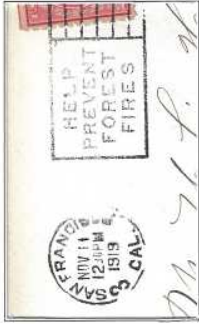
1. HISTORY OF FIRE PREVENTION MESSAGE DURING WORLD WAR II - Leading to Smokey's Creation
2. STAMP PRODUCTION - CSAC Design Essay, Errors, Freaks and Oddities
3. FIRST DAY EARLY MATERIAL - USPS Warnings to Cachetmakers, Ceremony Programs, FDOI Invitations, Plus+
4. FIRST DAY COVERS - Artistic Treatments, to include much original artwork for cachets
5. USES OF THE SMOKEY BEAR ISSUE - Auxiliary Markings, Multiple Services, Destinations, Events

Red Frame, Mattes, or text indicate rare, unique or key items indicates Personal Research

Arial Font (regular or italics) are captions or titles Georgia Font indicates Background Information

History of Smokey Fire Prevention Message

An early finding of the Prevent Forest Fires slogan, on cover, is this Armistice Day cover sent from San Francisco, California, November 11, 1919.



"Prevent Forest Fires!" was the cry heard for years before Smokey came into being.

Cachet, (below) by an unknown maker, was created with a trimmed U.S. GPO Poster Stamp displaying Hitler and Tojo. The Duo were a popular theme with the War Advertising Council, before they found that school children were frightened by the two and a "better idea" arose through the generosity of Walt Disney.

Bookmark (right) shows the menacing Tojo and Hitler theme, with advertising propaganda helping to "Win the War" at home.



Help on the Home Front WIN THE WAR

FOREST, grass, and brush fires sign enemy, direct man-made fires, and are the most serious danger to our forests; cripples valuable water Smokey interferes with training of invites attacks by Nazi and Jap subs; hide them from patrols. **Until we as the Axis, forest fires help the enemy.**

FARMERS AND RANCHERS—BURNING: Check with your ranger warden about a permit. Scrape a plow around for safety. Don't be dangerous fire weather. **During after burning:** Have help handy! last spark is dead.

SMOKERS—Stop to smoke during weather—in places clear of inflamm materials—but observe the rules in closed to smoking. Be sure matches reties, and pipe ashes are cold throwing them away.

FOREST INDUSTRIES—Build and rain safe fire lines. Use efficient arreters. Watch warning fires, with State laws. Don't burn in dry fire weather. Keep patrols alert. Be rather than sorry.

CAMPERS—Before building a fire permit. Scrape away inflammable material, dig a hole there, build your fire in it, keep the fire small. **Before leaving:** Stir coals and turn sticks while drenching them with water. Back your ground around the fire. Be sure the spark is dead.

EVERYBODY—Kill small fires. Report others immediately to nearest ranger or State fire warden. **HELP** on the home front to **WIN THE WAR.**

Prevent Forest, Grass, and Brush Fires



Synopsis for General Class: First Day Cover Exhibit: Smokey Bear Issue of 1984

Treatment: The purpose of this First Day Cover exhibit is to tell the story of the Smokey Bear Issue of 1984, from Smokey's "creation" by the US Forest Service in 1944, his value as a Spokes-bear, to the design and Bureau "new-press" trial printing, artistic first day covers, and a wide variety of postal uses of the stamp. The story begins with Smokey's evolution, with philatelic examples of characters preceding Smokey: Hitler and Tojo and Bambi; leading to the creation of Smokey Bear.

Rare or significant items are framed in red, and will have red font as captions.

EXHIBIT PLAN

Plan of Exhibit: Exhibit Plan and headings are on the first page of each new chapter.


The story line is developed from the traditional first day cover exhibit as described in the Manual of Judging, with stamp study, FDCs and uses. Production errors are shown and explained. Many first day covers are included, featuring artistic treatment by well-known first day artists and producers. Artifacts exhibited were selected to best display the cancels, artists and varieties from a large collection of more than six hundred varying cachets. First Day Cover (FDC) section begins with all nine of the known and published, "first cachets." Varied and rare uses are included. Commercial uses show a wide variety of postal uses, services, etiquettes, types of transportation and philatelic events, and the epilogue emphasizes that the story of Smokey Bear continues...

Importance: The **subject importance** of Smokey is very strong as this public service program (PSA) has saved untold numbers of lives and great values of property, over the last eighty years, and is the **longest running PSA in the US**. In wartime or peace, Smokey proved value to the country in a concentrated message, showing trees are important agricultural products for national defense or peacetime building. The Smokey issue, planned to begin sale on his 40th Anniversary (August 9) was delayed to August 13 to allow for much celebration by the forest industry and the Village of Capitan New Mexico, hometown to the living symbol of Smokey. Lincoln National Forest, near Capitan, was where a young Smokey, abandoned due to fire, was found. Smokey eventually resided at the National Zoo in Washington, D.C where he spent the remainder of his life pushing the fire prevention message. **Philatelic importance** is enhanced by Smokey being the first stamp printed on the newly acquired offset/intaglio D Press, by the Bureau of Engraving and Printing, and used to "de-bug" stamp printings to follow.

Philatelic and Subject Knowledge: Smokey's Story begins with the launching of a campaign to prevent man-made fires during World War II. In 1942, a Japanese submarine shelled a coastal valley oil field, just north of Santa Barbara, California. The firing occurred near Los Padres National Forest. An urgent need was recognized to encourage wartime advertising to incorporate forest fire prevention messages. In 1943, a freelance artist drew a menacing Japanese soldier for posters and poster stamps, copies of which are rare. Other anti-Axis posters and cachet art followed featuring Tojo and Hitler, with the eventual "borrowing" of the *Bambi* character from Walt Disney Studios. After a year of Bambi, costs lead to conception of U.S. Forest Service-owned cartoon (Disney-type) fire-fighting bear. This August 9, 1944, written mandate became the "birthday" of Smokey Bear.

Smokey's popularity soared in the early 1950s, when a bear cub survived a forest fire and became the National Zoo's living symbol of Smokey Bear. Smokey became so popular, and effective, that the forest industry pressed to honor him with a postage stamp in the late 1950s, though Smokey did not get his own stamp until this issue in 1984. The parallel development of philatelic fire prevention interest alongside the ever-continuing Smokey Bear story is displayed with stamp design, production, first day covers and uses.

The cartoon Smokey Bear character was developed in 1944 but did not appear in public until 1945. The first smokey image used in the prevention campaign, was drawn by Albert Staehle, and is illustrated in the exhibit with a small poster and a slogan cancel designed by Staehle. (Staehle is known for his *Saturday Evening Post* art featuring his pet cocker spaniel, Butch, and Borden's, Elsie the Cow)

Personal Study and Research will be annotated by : 

Rarity: I have been unable to find, a "signed" program though, (have been asked) but, programs are included, and search continues.

Production has the only known example of an "essay" in private hands as certificated by APS. Numerous examples of errors, freaks and oddities are included. This unique, APS expertised essay of the Smokey Bear stamp, presented to the Citizens Stamp Advisory Committee, two years before the stamp was produced was noted by expertising officials to be..."unique in collector hands," rare, especially for a post-1980 stamp.

First Day Section includes the only USPS "restriction" letter to cachet makers on the use of Smokey's name and image, that I have seen in almost 20 years of acquiring first day covers and material.

Scott identifies a block of internal imperfs, both horizontal and vertical, of which only six are known. one of which is noted to be imperfect, and the other five are “sound.” The Philatelic Foundation Expert Committee issued a certificate of this block in April of 1996.

There are non-tagged varieties of the Smokey issue.

One-of-a-kind etched plates used by Artmaster and ArtCraft in the creation of Smokey first cachets, along with unique and original, camera-ready cachet artwork from Artmaster, ArtCraft, Colorano and Bernard Goldberg are included.

A recent finding, which I include, is a rare *Certificate of Mailing* with Smokey stamp affixed.

Condition: Many covers in “Uses” section show the wear and tear of their travels.

During production, difficulties encountered by the first use of the Bureau of Engraving and Printing (BEP) “D Press” resulted in so many plates that the numbers went into double digits for the first time in BEP history and much waste, some of this material shows poorer condition. The D Press was the only BEP press, at that time, that had offset and intaglio printing in one operation, creating issues in the registration of colors which shows easily detectable left and right variations. A photo of original stamp art, currently in the archives of the National Postal Museum, photographed and scanned on production area, show how the colors should look, along with examples of registration anomalies with printing difficulties. Production errors also demonstrate perforation errors and a Smokey sheet with apparent drippings from solvent used to wipe the plates during the printing process.

Included are first day cachets from well-known cachet artists of the period. The Dorothy Knapp hand-drawn and painted first day covers, of which, only one other similar cover is known and unavailable, and Knapp combo cover of similar design which includes *Save Woodland Habitats* and *Smokey Bear* issues, was recently acquired from the Knapp family collection and is included in this exhibit. Smokey is a late-life example of Knapp’s work, as she passed in 1986. Other well-known artists are: Ralph Dyer (another late-life design), F.M. Geerlings, Dave Bennett, Melissa Fox, Warren Wildemuth, Lois Hamilton, and Curtiss Poormon and Bob Emrick are some better-known artists, who drew “of-the-period” and add-on where noted.

Smokey is a popular issue for add-ons, which are annotated where known and detected. Stamp and cachet artist Chris Calle’s add-on is displayed with those of his son and daughter. Chris’ add-on, resembling Calle’s 25th Moon Landing stamp is a treasure, as a one-of-one cachet, as are hand painted add-on by artist, Bob Emrick.

In 1964, Smokey received so much fan mail that he was given his own Zip Code, 20252. This became the title of an all-encompassing book of the Smokey campaign, *Smokey Bear, 20252*.

2024 will be the 80th anniversary of the Smokey Bear public service program and will enjoy a year-long Smokey Bear Birthday Celebration. The “epilogue” of the Smokey Story is demonstrated by the continuing production of add-on covers which, very much like the Smokey Bear story, as the **longest running public service campaign in the U.S.**, marches on.

Titles and Tables of Contents are in Arial Bold Italic 10 point type

Captions and explanatory notes are in Arial Narrow 11 point type

Background and Additional Information is in Georgia Regular 11 point type

Lawton, William Clifford, Jr. (1994) *Smokey Bear, 20252, A Biography*. Alexandria, VA: Lindsay Smith Publishers.

Monty, Richard A., et al (2006) *Mellone’s FDC Photo Encyclopedia of First Cachets*, F.D.C Publishing Co.

Beecher, Henry W., et al, *US Domestic Postal Rates, 1872-2011, 3rd Ed*. Bellefonte, PA: APS.

Wawrukiewicz, Anthony S., et al, *US International Postal Rates, 1872-1996*. Portland, OR: CAMA.