



SPECIAL SECTION

Mining the time-space matrix Commemorative postage stamps and US world's fairs, 1893–1915

Richard HANDLER, *University of Virginia*

This article examines turn-of-the-twentieth-century US world's fairs and the postage stamps that were issued in their honor. The fairs celebrated the progress of industrial civilization, in part by anchoring themselves to a historical origin point (such as Columbus' voyages), and the post office designed the accompanying stamps to commemorate a historical story deemed to be nationally significant. Both the origin point and the history associated with it were located within a time-space matrix defined by prior processes of mapping the national territory and standardizing time reckoning within it. The commemorative stamps were sold on the fairgrounds, where they could be postmarked to locate them precisely in time and space as souvenirs of what would become past events that would have value in the future. These overlain commemorative practices reveal how the raw materials of history—time and space—have to be manipulated before the history-making practices of modern societies can even begin.

Keywords: national commemoration, postage stamps, time-space matrix, world's fairs

Much scholarly attention has been lavished on the great US world's fairs at the turn of the twentieth century, but there has been almost no analysis of the fact that the US Post Office Department first began issuing commemorative postage stamps specifically to promote the fairs. This conjunction of commemorative stamps and world's fairs constitutes a particularly significant "*lieu de mémoire*" (Nora 1984) for the anthropologist of nationalist history making. Nation-states make themselves in worldly space and secular time—or, more precisely, nationalist ideologues and politicians depict the nation-state as a self-contained entity, situated in a particular, bounded geographic space, and moving through time as it creates its own history. The fairs and their stamps became important means, or media, with which local elites and national institutions (like the Post Office) could mark—celebrate,



commemorate, or even advertise—selected points in time and space in ways that served their political and economic interests. Here I will focus on the national (US) time-space matrix as a multidimensional domain of resources for the historical imagination, a source of possibilities that fair organizers, publicists, and exhibitors could draw upon, or mine, to tell their stories.

The metaphor of the matrix suggests both expanse and depth. Other metaphors that convey a similar idea, and that have been used for discussions of the ordering of time and space, are *grid* and *stratigraphic layer*. One can speak, for example, of colonial authorities mapping a territory, imposing a uniform grid, as Timothy Mitchell (2002) has described it, discussing the British colonization of Egypt at the turn of the twentieth century. And stratigraphic layers are a common image used by archaeologists to describe the serial or temporal deposits of material remains within a given territorial expanse. For present purposes, the matrix metaphor allows us to convey the idea that the domain of history, as understood in modern ideology, has both spatial expanse and temporal depth; translating this into nationalist terms, the national territory has attached to it a particular history.

The imposition of a spatial grid, a two-dimensional system of enumerated geographic coordinates covering the globe, grew out of the needs of maritime navigators attempting to circumnavigate the earth in the early modern period (Sobel 1995). European colonization, following what was deemed to be discovery, eventually required a way to define and bound territories independent of local political and social ties. In the US case, as Philip Fisher has described it, the local “diversity of geography underwent abstraction” in Thomas Jefferson’s Land Ordinance of 1785, based on “one-mile-square (640-acre) sections”: “Jefferson set down a mechanical grid over the surface of America that would have as one result that the United States was the first nation with property lines that could be read easily from an airplane at thirty thousand feet” (1988: 64).

The imposition of this spatial grid was followed by attempts throughout the nineteenth century to impose a uniform system of time reckoning throughout the national territory. At the moment of the great world’s fairs considered here, the national time-space matrix had only just been completed for the continental United States. Frederick Jackson Turner presented his famous thesis on the closing of the American frontier at the Chicago fair in 1894. And it was only eleven years earlier that a uniform time system, Standard Railway Time, went into effect in North America (Stephens 1983; Schlereth 1991: 29–31). That there was resistance to the ongoing reordering of spatial and temporal expanses, both by displaced indigenous nations and by American citizens who had their own, local understandings of time and space (Thomas 2008), is evident (see Hamann, this collection). Indeed, their resistance was one reason why political and economic elites turned to the fairs and their commemorations to legitimate the stories they wanted people to believe.

The world’s fairs exploited or mined the time-space matrix in multiple ways. Their grandest theme was civilizing progress and the competition among nations (and races) to contribute to it (Rydell 1984). The “time map” of this theme was keyed less to specific dates than to the notion of an inevitable rise, depicted visually as a line or curve ascending from the lower left (of the visual field) to the upper right (Zerubavel 2003: 14–16). But many fairs also commemorated specific events, and thus looked back to or marked a particular date and place. The Post Office took

advantage of this feature of the fairs to issue commemorative stamps that made definitive claims about the national import of particular events. Moreover, making use of its unique time-date-authenticating technology, the postmark, the Post Office also began mining the time-space matrix for the future, as it were, by setting up fair post office stations to allow visitors to mail home postcards and letters postmarked on the fairgrounds—documents which, at a later date, could serve as souvenirs of their (past) visit (for a different example of what people *do* with a time-space matrix, or chronotope, see Wirtz, this collection; for a different semiotic framework used to imagine the past, see Handman, this collection).

Analysts of the nineteenth-century American spatial (Fisher 1988) and temporal grid (Thomas 2008) have shown how the organization of reality coordinated by those grids matched the civilization of the machine age (emergent from industrial capitalism), a consumer economy, and (as Max Weber warned) the iron cage of bureaucratic rationality. My focus, consonant with their work, is the time-space matrix as an economic and political resource for the historical imagination. Like the bureaucrat who oversees a rational system or schedule, the historian works from outside or above history, with the liberty to survey the entire domain of historical possibility and choose the object of study. The matrix organizes those possibilities: it provides a means to locate events at specific places and times. Historians or commemorators have imaginative access to the total matrix, allowing them to link origin points (a place and time where a particular event is known or said to have happened) to planned contemporary (or future) events. And the resultant products of the historical imagination—in this case, world's fairs and postage stamps—become consumer items that can themselves come to have historical value.

Siting the fairs in time and space

Historians and anthropologists will know the fairs from a scholarly literature that has grown up since the 1980s (Badger 1979; Benedict 1983; Rydell 1984; Parezo and Fowler 2007; Brownell 2008). As Reid Badger pointed out, “Between 1851 and 1925, it was unusual for a year to pass without at least one major international exhibition” (1979: xvi), beginning, of course, with the Crystal Palace Exhibition in London in 1851. For the United States, Robert Rydell’s seminal book on the topic, *All the world’s a fair* (1984), provides a survey of the most important fairs of the period: Philadelphia’s Centennial Exhibition (1876), New Orleans’ World’s Industrial and Cotton Exposition (1885), Chicago’s World’s Columbian Exposition (1893), the Tennessee Centennial Exposition (1897), Omaha’s Trans-Mississippi and International Exposition (1898), Buffalo’s Pan-American Exposition (1901), the South Carolina Interstate and West Indian Exposition (1901–1902), St. Louis’ Louisiana Purchase Exposition (1904), Portland’s Lewis and Clark Centennial and American Pacific Exposition and Oriental Fair (1905), Seattle’s Alaska-Yukon-Pacific Exposition (1909), San Francisco’s Panama-Pacific International Exposition (1915), and San Diego’s Panama-California Exposition (1915–16).

But long before this new scholarly interest in world’s fairs, collectors of US stamps were familiar with a similar list, because the Chicago, Omaha, Buffalo, St. Louis, Seattle, and San Francisco expositions, as well as the 1907 Jamestown (Virginia)

Tercentenary Exposition, were accompanied by the issuing of new stamps. Indeed, the Chicago exposition featured the release of the first commemorative stamps ever issued by the US Post Office, the Columbians, still the series that collectors prize most highly among US stamps, a series “ever linked” in their minds to the Chicago world’s fair (Kimble 1933: 5). Thus world’s fairs have come to figure in the philatelic imagination as the occasion for a series of series: a succession of commemorative stamp series that are among the most collectable of all US stamps.

The fairs’ organizers, usually businessmen who were civic boosters, were interested in a narrative that could site their cities and regions at the apex of socioevolutionary development. Such a narrative is easily supplied by the “homogeneous, empty time” of modernity (Benjamin [1940] 1969: 262; Anderson 1983: 22-36), time that Benjamin Lee Whorf (1941: 78-82) described as an abstracted process of “counting itself,” enumerated in a base-ten number system that suggests the completion of a hundred-year interval as a celebratory or commemorative moment: the centennial and its multiples and fractions (e.g., quadricentennial, sesquicentennial). Not all the fairs were keyed to such base-ten historical moments—their great theme, after all, was progress and thus the future—but those in Philadelphia, Chicago, Jamestown, and St. Louis were, while the theme of the Buffalo fair was the progress of “the century just closed,” as one fair guidebook put it (quoted in Rydell 1984: 127). Many Americans at the turn of the twentieth century would have known that 1876 was the one hundredth anniversary of the Declaration of Independence and 1892 the four hundredth anniversary of Columbus’ discovery of America; perhaps fewer, but still considerable numbers, would have known that 1907 was the three hundredth anniversary of the founding of the Jamestown colony and 1904 the one hundredth anniversary of the Louisiana Purchase. In any case, the idea of the centennial was well established by then.

Notice, now, that the sequence or series of fairs, which generated for stamp collectors a chronologically ordered series of stamp series, did not mark a chronologically ordered series of historical events. The commemorated or celebrated moments of the fairs to which commemorative stamps were attached were:

Chicago (1893):	1492
Omaha (1898):	the recent past
Buffalo (1901):	the nineteenth century
St. Louis (1904):	1803
Jamestown (1907):	1607
Seattle (1909):	the present
San Francisco (1915):	1914 (year of the completion of the Panama Canal)

Commemorations and celebrations of different past events were not constrained vis-à-vis one another by the chronological relationship between the framed events and moments. That is to say, in 1907, Jamestown could commemorate an event of 1607—three years *after* St. Louis celebrated an event of 1803. This elementary fact is crucial to my claim that the modern time-space matrix makes available a vast field of past events or moments to be commemorated. At any present moment, the past—all of the past that is known or can be imagined—is available for use, irrespective of the chronological relationships among those known past events (for a

different kind of “heterochrony,” in which different times, as we say, are copresent, see Lambek, this collection).

But at any given present moment, not every person or institution can muster an equal claim to a particular event in the past. At the end of the nineteenth century, in both Europe and the United States, there was considerable competition among cities to be preeminent centers of civilization, as evidenced by their possession of great cultural institutions like museums (Penny 2002). Just as they competed to amass cultural treasures, cities competed to host fairs, seeking exclusive rights to exploit particular historical slots at particular present-day locations. It was one thing for a small city or town to commemorate an event of merely local significance, without attending to what other municipalities may have been planning. But any city planning a major effort to showcase the city nationally wanted exclusive rights to the chosen year. Michael Kammen cites the case of Detroit: “In 1898, when a big bicentennial exposition was proposed for 1901, the organizers discovered that they were too late. Buffalo had pre-empted their year” (1991: 143). All of the past was available, but on a first-come, first-served basis.

While all of the past was potentially available to the organizers of the US fairs, geographically siting major world’s fairs uniquely, to commemorate one event at one location, was a different issue, since most complex historical phenomena unfold over space and therefore their commemoration cannot easily be sited in one and only one place. There was no competition to host the fair celebrating the centennial of the signing of the Declaration of Independence, which was sited in Philadelphia, but as the Columbian quadricentennial approached, there was heated competition (from the early 1880s on) among major American cities to host it (Badger 1979: 43–52). Chicago won out, over New York, St. Louis, and Washington. Rydell finds the situation “ridiculous,” since neither New York, “with its obvious Dutch and English beginnings,” nor Chicago, “situated a thousand miles from the Atlantic seaboard,” had much claim on “Columbus’s landing in the West Indies” (1984: 41–42). But Rydell’s judgment depends on an overly narrow placement of *the* event. Organizers agitating to host the Columbian fair framed their arguments in terms of the national and continental significance of the event; in a sense, *America* was the site of Columbus’ action, and promoters were competing to prove not so much that Columbus belonged, geographically, to their city, but that their city was the one most representative of American civilization.

Socioevolutionary history: Commemorating the present

Kammen suggests that the many commemorative fairs held in the United States between 1876 and 1915 “tended to celebrate the present at the expense of the past” (1991: 136). By 1876, the year of the Philadelphia exposition, the world’s fair was an established genre, and it had an established narrative to accompany it, a narrative that not only celebrated the present, but also looked to the future. These fairs exhibited the story of the rise of civilization, understood as the rise of capitalist nation-states, regions, and cities which competed to be preeminent in science, technology, agriculture, and the industrial and fine arts. In keeping with the narrative of progress, successive fairs had to be grander than past fairs: as Badger put it, “one of the

basic requirements for any great world's fair was that it should surpass all previous efforts" (1979: 46; cf. Benedict 1983: 7–12).

It would be easy to say that in the competition to prove their city preeminent, urban elites merely used upcoming centennials as excuses to secure marketing opportunities. After all, almost ten million people (or one-fifth of the national population) attended the Philadelphia fair, each one contributing, it was estimated, \$4.50 to the city's economy (Rydell 1984: 10, 42). As Rydell explains, "The promoters of these extravaganzas attempted to boost the economic development of the cities and regions in which they were held as well as to advance the material growth of the country at large. Fairs provided manufacturing and commercial interests with opportunities to promote the mass consumption of their products" (ibid.: 2).

But Rydell goes on to argue that the very ideas of "economic development" and "material growth"—in short, of progress—were underpinned by nineteenth-century racist social theory. At a time when the United States had fulfilled its Manifest Destiny and was taking on imperial adventures overseas, the fairs were not only showcases of industrial products, they were also museums and living tableaux depicting racial hierarchy as the natural order of the world. Even as US power waxed abroad and its internal Indian Wars came to a close, the end of the nineteenth century was a time of intense social strife in the nation-state: the freeing of the slaves had led quickly to the suppression of their civil rights by Jim Crow; a growing wave of immigrants from Eastern and Southern Europe and Asia was frightening proponents of the nation's Anglo-Saxon racial identity; labor was becoming increasingly militant; and women were agitating for the vote. In these troubled times, the fairs, according to Rydell, were sites for mass cultural indoctrination, where tens of millions of Americans were exposed to educational exhibits and midway shows that validated the social position of the elites: "The emphasis on white supremacy as a utopian agency . . . muted class divisions among whites, providing them with a sense of shared national purpose" (ibid.: 236). The fairs, in brief, combined nationalism, racism, and belief in progress to propagate the elites' understanding of "the proper organization of American society" (ibid.: 237).

Given the fairs' overarching socioevolutionary narrative, it is not surprising that they pressed anthropologists into service to organize ethnological exhibits featuring both artifacts and living specimens, "natives" gathered from around the world. The native villages, often organized by anthropologists (Benedict 1983: 41–52; Parezo and Fowler 2007), shaded into the attractions of the midway, which, Rydell argues, was itself far more than sideshow entertainment. On the midway at Chicago, for example, visitors could climb "the rungs of the evolutionary ladder," moving from "the 'savagery' of the Dahomeyans to the delightful and engaging Javanese—the 'Brownies'" (Rydell 1984: 66). And of course beyond the midway, the exhibits of the civilized nations' industrial and fine arts allowed visitors to understand the vast socioevolutionary distance that separated the darker races from white people. The world's fairs may have used a particular historical moment as a kind of prompt to tell a story, but the larger story that their physical layouts and exhibits presented was less about specific events than about world history understood as the progress of civilization in relationship to biologically fixed and clearly ranked races. And, with the leading race in the vanguard, the fairs' stories looked to the future, even as

their commemorative impetus suggested a national past that various government agencies had an interest in curating.

The Post Office at the fair

In 1890, the US Congress passed, and President Benjamin Harrison signed, an “Act Creating the World’s Columbian Expositions of 1893,” which awarded the fair to Chicago. The envisioned “exhibition of arts, industries, manufactures and products of the soil, mine and sea” would celebrate “the four hundredth anniversary of the discovery of America by Christopher Columbus.” The federal government would not only support the fair financially, it would be a major exhibitor there. Its “Executive Departments, the Smithsonian Institution, the United States Fish Commission and the National Museum” were to provide “such articles and materials as illustrate the function and administrative faculty of the Government . . . tending to demonstrate the nature of our institutions and their adaptation to the wants of the people” (reproduced in Badger 1979: 133–36).

In line with this agenda, A. D. Hazen, Third Assistant Postmaster General (the official in charge of stamp issues), announced the Post Office’s plan “to issue, during the progress of the Columbian Exposition . . . , a special series of adhesive postage stamps . . . to signalize the four hundredth anniversary of the discovery of America by Columbus.” Hazen continued:

This course was in accordance with the practice of other great postal administrations on occasions of national rejoicing, and it was consistent with the idea of a display at the Exposition of such articles as would illustrate the history, progress and administrative functions of the Post-Office Department, which Congress, by statute, has directed to be made part of a general governmental exhibit.

Hazen explained that the series of sixteen stamps would be available throughout 1893, and that the “estimated quantity” to be produced was three billion. “The principal feature” of the stamps, he continued, “is the delineation of some scene in the life of Columbus associated with the discovery of America.” He noted also that this special issue would not replace the regular-issue stamps then in use, so that “anyone needing postage stamps will be able to procure either or both kinds” (report of November 20, 1892, quoted in Brookman 1947: 147–48).

Hazen pointed out that the new issue would encourage “the collecting of stamps,” an activity conducive to “the cultivation of artistic tastes and the study of history and geography, especially on the part of the young.” Moreover, sales to collectors were highly profitable, since collected stamps, never “being presented in payment of postage,” required no further servicing from the Post Office (quoted in *ibid.*). Finally, Hazen noted that the stamps would directly benefit the Exposition by advertising it, “constantly drawing it to public attention” (quoted in Luff 1902: 170).

In his annual report dated two weeks later, John Wanamaker, the Postmaster General, estimated that the stamps would generate \$2,500,000 in “net profits.” These would come both from the increased business use of the stamps—“to get out new advertisements and circulars, to which more attention is drawn when the new

stamps are first seen on the envelopes”—and from the collector market. And Wanamaker noted two different aspects of the collector market that made it lucrative for the Post Office. First, “the ‘mania,’ as it is called, for collecting postage stamps . . . is universal throughout the world” among “every class and condition of people.” Collectors had already put away “many millions of dollars” in stamps that would never be redeemed (as Hazen had explained) for postal services. Moreover, these collectors sparked a speculative market, one that would be especially active in relation to commemorative stamps available only for a “limited time,” during which the stamps would be “accumulated in great quantities by dealers . . . to meet future demands” (report of December 5, 1892, quoted in Tiffany 1893: 281–82).

The new stamps quickly provoked the ire of Senator Edward Wolcott of Colorado, who sponsored a resolution to instruct the Postmaster General to discontinue them and reinstate the regular issue. Wanamaker responded that the regular-issue stamps had remained on sale, and he marshaled early sales figures to back up his prior assertion that the Columbian stamps would be profitable. He also offered a panegyric explaining the significance of the stamps:

All mankind is . . . now honoring the memory of Columbus. . . . In our own favored land . . . a splendid exhibition, in his name and to his honor, of a magnitude beyond anything of the kind heretofore occurring, will in two months be opened, in which the National Government will take a conspicuous part, and to which it has given magnificent aid, part of this being comprehended in the preparation of one hundred thousand commemorative diplomas and bronze medals, and the issue of five million silver souvenir coins. The appropriateness of issuing, in connection with this great event, a series of souvenir postage stamps, to familiarize the people with the story of Columbus, to help the Exposition, and to connect with it the postal service, which more than any other branch of Government comes into familiar contact with all the people, no person can reasonably doubt. (Wanamaker 1893)

This contretemps between a senator and the Postmaster General is typical of the history of the Post Office Department, which was subject to congressional control and often put on the defensive about its budget. On the one hand, then, we have an expressed concern for the budgetary consequences of commemoration (a central concern in the competition to host expositions), with costs and profits estimated over future time. On the other hand, we have a stated determination to exhibit the Post Office as an important branch of the national government, indeed, as one having an especially close relationship to the public. To be able to issue stamps to teach citizens about Columbus, to advertise the fair in the present, and to provide fair-goers with souvenirs for the future—all these benefits of the commemorative stamps were, according to Wanamaker, beyond doubt.

John Wanamaker was one of the pioneers of the modern American department store, having founded Wanamaker’s in Philadelphia in 1869. He was a key member of the citizens’ committee that brought the celebration of the centennial of the Declaration of Independence to Philadelphia (Appel 1930: 78), having understood even then that merchandising techniques used in stores could be used in fairs, and vice versa. During the Centennial Exhibition, he converted a freight depot into the Grand Depot, a protodepartment store larger than any store in the United States

until that time, to which fair visitors flocked (Gibbons [1926] 1971: 141–52). A pioneer in advertising, he had already experimented with balloons, children’s “slates and pencils and tracing books,” calendars, and postcards, the latter having been “used with great effect at the Centennial Exhibition” (ibid.: 102). He obtained “the great eagle” from the St. Louis world’s fair for display in his Philadelphia store, in response to a New York competitor who had installed a copy of a statue from the Columbian exposition. These publicity stunts were, according to Miles Orvell, “crowning manifestations of a longstanding continuity between our officially certified national purpose and merchandising” (1989: 41). Or, as Wanamaker himself explained, the Centennial Exhibition provided a model for the development of the department store: “The rising tide of popular desire to assemble under one roof articles used in every home and with freedom to purchase was a constant suggestion in 1876, not alone because of its convenience, but because . . . it would form a permanent and useful exhibition” ([1900] 1966: 658).

This was the man who is credited with creating the first US commemorative stamp.

The Post Office vis-à-vis stamp collectors

Historians have argued that in the early years of the Republic, the Post Office was one of the most important institutions in the United States for knitting together a geographically dispersed population (John 1995; Henkin 2006). At a time of remarkable geographic mobility—Tocqueville was struck by the “restlessness” of Americans ([1840] 1955: 144–47)—the Post Office made it possible for ordinary citizens, no matter where they were located, to communicate with one another. Moreover, almost from the moment of the issuance of the first US adhesive postage stamp in 1847, the Post Office found itself entangled in an unsought relationship with what would prove over the next hundred years to be a growing segment of the citizenry: stamp collectors. While the public at large, and some collectors, took a keen interest in such topics as postal rates and routes, stamp collectors were first of all interested in the stamps, their designs, iconography, and production.

Great Britain’s Penny Black, issued in 1840, is considered the world’s first adhesive stamp. People were already collecting stamps by 1841, and *Punch* was satirizing stamp collectors by 1842 (Gelber 1992: 746, 755). Markets for stamps, and stamp catalogues published by dealers, had developed by the 1860s. While the Post Office produces and issues stamps, knowledge of stamps as collectable items is produced by collectors, dealers, and the companies that produce collecting supplies like stamp albums and, especially, stamp catalogues. Since at least the late nineteenth century, the Post Office has understood that collectors constitute an important market (Brookman 1947: 147; Juell and Rod 2006: 180–88, 342–48) and it has shared control of stamp classification with representatives of the hobby.

The Post Office operates in terms of discrete issues of stamps, and a classification of stamps into certain basic types (regular issue, commemorative, airmail, etc.) But it is the stamp catalogue that enumerates the totality of a country’s stamps, assigning each stamp a number. At present, the Scott catalogue, first published in 1868, is hegemonic in the United States, although in the past there were competitors.

Indeed, the Post Office uses Scott's numbering system in its own catalogue for collectors. Thus Scott produces the authoritative document (updated annually) for the US market, constituting the universe of collectable philatelic items. There are other such authoritative catalogues in other countries.

The series: Numerical, chronological, denominational

Most stamps are issued in sets or series. Our commonsense notion of a series is constructed out of modern conceptions of homogeneous time and space combined with the idea of a species, a set of objects which in their essence are of the same kind. A series is a sequence of like objects. Sequentiality can be imagined in time or in space, or in both at once. Temporal sequentiality implies (in the modern world-view) progress, since enumerated time moves only in one direction, earlier to later or lower to higher.¹ The idea of the series, as worked out in the planning, production, and classification of stamps, draws on chronological, numerical, and denominational ordering principles.

In the Scott catalogue, stamps and stamp series are ordered chronologically (by date of issue) and numbered, starting with number one, such that, in general, a stamp with a lower number will have been issued before a stamp with a higher number (or, to put it another way, a stamp is assigned the next available number at the time of its issue). The first US postage stamp, *number one*, was issued on July 1, 1847; by the end of 2015, the listings for stamps moving regular mail had exceeded five thousand. There are separate sequences of numbers for special-usage stamps; these are prefixed with letters, so that, for example, US newspaper stamps are catalogued from PR1 (issued in September 1865) to PR125 (issued on January 23, 1896; newspaper stamps were discontinued in 1898).

The pure chronological ordering of individual stamps is disrupted by the fact that most stamps are planned and issued in discrete series. Series are usually planned in ascending denominations (so, the Columbian series begins with a one cent stamp and ends with a five dollar stamp). Thus, in addition to the chronological enumeration of stamps, there is enumeration by denomination or *face value* within a series, from lowest to highest. And more important, the chronological, catalogue-numerical, and denominational orderings of stamps do not correspond perfectly. The stamps of a series can be issued all on the same day, or their issuance

-
1. The online *Oxford English Dictionary* (<http://www.oed.com/>, consulted June 10, 2016) gives, among others, these definitions of *series*:
 2. A number of discrete things of one kind (esp. events or actions) following one another in succession over time, or in order of appearance or presentation . . .
 4. A number or set of physical objects of one kind ranged in a line, usually either contiguously or at more or less regular intervals; a row or continued spatial succession of similar objects . . .
 6. A set of objects of the same kind which differ progressively in size or some other respect, or have a recognized order of enumeration or a constant relation between successive members. Also: a number of measures, magnitudes, etc., which can be formed into a progressive order or sequence.

may occur over several days, months, or even years, irrespective of denomination. In the Scott numbering scheme, ordering by denomination within a series is privileged over date of issue. A series can be planned to run from a one cent to a five dollar stamp, yet the stamps may not be issued in that order. For example, all the Columbians except one were issued on January 2, 1893: owing to a change in postal rates, the eight cent stamp was issued two months later. But in the Scott catalogue, the eight cent Columbian bears a lower number, 236, than the remaining nine stamps in the series, nos. 237–45, which were issued prior to it.

The stamp series is a privileged semiotic object, since the meaning of any individual stamp is dependent on its placement in a discrete series. The Scott catalogue privileges the chronological order of stamp series over the chronological order of individual stamps, even though there are many cases where later stamps from one series were issued *after* some of the earlier stamps from the next series listed.² And the Post Office privileges the series (or, in its terms, the *issue*) in the planning and production of stamps. As we have seen, Postmaster General Wanamaker issued the Columbians to celebrate the Chicago exposition that was commemorating the four hundredth anniversary of Columbus' great accomplishment.

Commemorative stamps

Wanamaker is credited with creating the first US commemorative stamp (Heizman 1968), which was among the world's first commemoratives.³ Recall that in his response to Senator Wolcott, Wanamaker specified that the Columbian commemorative stamps would be available for a limited time. This was in contrast to regular-issue stamps, which (then as now) remain in use for many years, until postal rate changes or technological advances (in stamp production) make it expedient to create a new issue. Both types of stamps were (and are) used to move first-class mail (in contrast to other categories of stamps for such services as special delivery, parcel post, etc.) and, as Wanamaker said, the public can buy either type of stamp at any time. But commemoratives come and go quickly; once they are withdrawn for sale by the Post Office, collectors who wish to purchase them must turn to dealers.

The approximately two hundred US stamps issued before the Columbians drew on a limited iconography: all but fourteen featured the busts of dead white men, most frequently Benjamin Franklin, George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, and

2. This is not true of all catalogues: for example, French catalogues, like Yvert et Tellier and Maury, are far more punctilious about the chronological order of their lists, so that their numbers do not correspond to Scott's numbers in the French section of its global catalogue.
3. New South Wales is said to have produced the first commemorative stamp, in 1888 (Bowyer 1972: 45–46). The United States created commemorative stamped envelopes (U218, 219, and 221 in the Scott numbering system) in 1876 for the US Centennial Exhibition in Philadelphia. At that time, the Third Assistant Postmaster General announced that "the Department will not issue Centennial adhesive stamps" (statement of May 23, 1876, quoted in Ellis and Maisel 1974: 5). The denial shows that even at that early date, the idea of the commemorative stamp was in play.

Abraham Lincoln. This type of stamp design imitated the Penny Black, which featured only the bust of Queen Victoria, the words *postage* and *one penny*, and some framing and background designs. To this day, British stamps are unique among the stamps of all countries, since they do not bear the name of the country. Instead, the silhouette of the head of state stands, metonymically, for the country. Early US stamps are similar, except they specify the name of the country (*US postage*), to distinguish them from British stamps. Still, on these stamps, as on the Penny Black, busts of the founding fathers represent the nation metonymically, the head of state or national hero standing as part to whole.

In contrast to the metonymic representation of nationhood on these early regular-issue stamps, the Columbians and subsequent commemorative stamps represent the nation metaphorically. They tell a story or commemorate an event, and in so doing, they define the commemorated material as representative of, or owned by, the nation. In the Columbians, for example, it is not solely through Columbus' voyages that the nation is represented, but also through the Post Office's demonstrated right to frame his story as *national* history.

There is one regular-issue stamp series prior to the Columbians that featured something other than busts: the 1869 stamps, sometimes called a "pictorial" issue (Kimble 1933: 1–2). Of the eleven stamps, three were busts of Franklin, Washington, and Lincoln. Three featured modes of transportation used to carry mail: a post rider, train, and steamship (Figure 1). Three depicted historical scenes: the landing of Columbus and the signing of the Declaration of Independence. Two depicted national icons: eagle, shield, and flags. According to John Tiffany, a contemporary philatelic expert, the Post Office "announced that the series was intended in some sort, to portray the history of the Post Office in the United States, beginning with Franklin . . . and the post rider of the early days, followed by the locomotive of a later day, and the Ocean Steamer carrying the mails which had become so important a branch of the postal service" (1893: 145–46).



Figure 1. The two cent and three cent stamps from the issue of 1869.

But the public (as reflected in the daily press) hated the new stamps. They complained about their size (they were smaller than past issues), their gum, and the quality of the engraving. They were also not receptive to the new, expanded iconography. A critic writing in the *New York Evening Mail* in August 1869 praised the

“neat and pleasing” prior stamps, noting: “They were National and American, as they ought to have been. The head of Washington was venerable . . . [and] the head of Franklin was equally appropriate.” But the new stamps, the critic continued, were “neither historical, national, [nor] beautiful.” Writing specifically of the three cent stamp, which depicted a train, the critic complained:

Canada, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia, all have railroad engines such as ours. What is there . . . to indicate the nationality of our postal system. Aye, but there are words, “United States Postage” on the stamp. Just so. We remember having seen a boy’s drawing on a sheet of paper, the words “this is a church” underneath, and certainly the artistic performance needed the index, but not more so than the new stamp requires a similar proclamation to tell the world what it means. (Quoted in Tiffany 1893: 146–47)

In the face of such complaints, the Post Office withdrew the issue; the issue of 1870 that followed returned to the pattern of busts of great men. But it is worth pausing on the critic’s claim that there was nothing distinctively American, or national, in the new stamps. It is difficult to disentangle complaints about the quality of the execution of these stamps from complaints about their iconography, but the critic’s disgust with an image that did not transparently represent the nation—that needed an “index” as a kind of crutch—suggests that this person, at least, was not able to interpret the Post Office’s attempt to tell a story as a metaphor for national identity.

In the period from the failure of the 1869 issue to the release of the Columbians, the principle of the centennial celebration and the merchandising techniques of both the world’s fairs and the department stores became established. It made sense to the public, by 1893, that Wanamaker’s stamps could advertise the Chicago world’s fair by featuring, as it were, a historical spokesperson—Columbus. And by celebrating the fair with mechanically reproduced images that could be purchased at small cost and either used to mail letters or saved in an album, the Post Office was both advertising the fair to a mass public and selling them souvenirs of it.

The times of the Columbian and successive commemorative series

Commemorating Columbus, the Post Office was marking past time; advertising the fair, it was making a contemporary announcement; and selling souvenirs, it was projecting a future time when its customers would look back to the Chicago exposition and remember their visit to it.

The Columbian stamps differed from all prior US stamp issues. They were larger than the regular-issue stamps of the time, and while both the Columbians and the contemporary regular-issue stamps were rectangular, the Columbians extended horizontally, not vertically (Figure 2). This allowed them to frame expansive scenes (telling the story of Columbus), while the smaller regular-issue stamps vertically framed nothing but busts. The Columbian series contained more denominations than any prior series, and its highest-value stamp, at five dollars, was more expensive than any prior regular-issue stamp. In addition, to produce the Columbians, the designers worked from paintings and engravings located in museums and government buildings across the United States. and Europe (Kimble 1933: 4–13).



Figure 2. The one cent, two cent, and fifteen cent Columbian stamps.

With regard to the historical commemoration of Columbus' exploits, the sixteen stamps depicted the following scenes:

- 1¢, Columbus in sight of land
- 2¢, Landing of Columbus
- 3¢, Flag ship of Columbus
- 4¢, Fleet of Columbus
- 5¢, Columbus soliciting aid of Isabella
- 6¢, Columbus welcomed at Barcelona
- 8¢, Columbus restored to favor
- 10¢, Columbus presenting natives
- 15¢, Columbus announcing his discovery
- 30¢, Columbus at La Rabida
- 50¢, Recall of Columbus
- \$1, Isabella pledging her jewels
- \$2, Columbus in chains
- \$3, Columbus describing third voyage
- \$4, Isabella and Columbus (portraits)
- \$5, Columbus (portrait)

The denominational and catalogue-numerical ordering of this series does not match the historical sequence depicted in the stamps' illustrations. In his announcement of the stamps, the Postmaster General had noted that "the subjects [of the stamps] do not strictly follow the logical sequence of events." His explanation for this anomaly was that the lower-denomination stamps, the only ones that most

of the public would ever use or see, should carry “the representations of the more important events connected with the discovery” (quoted in Tiffany 1893: 283–84). Tiffany commented as follows:

The portrait of Columbus might properly be placed either at the beginning or end of the series, and those of Columbus and Isabella fall properly in the center or at the end of the line. Most collectors would have given the design of the \$5 stamp the first place, probably, and that of the \$4 stamp the last. The historical order of the remainder would determine their position as follows: The design of the \$5, 30, 5, 50 cents, \$1, 3, 4, 1, 2, 6, 15, and 10 cents, \$2, \$3, \$4. (Tiffany 1893: 284)⁴

In this discussion, we see interested parties reasoning over possible relationships between the contemporary usage of postage stamps and different kinds of sequences: a sequence of monetary denominations and one of historical events. The Postmaster General privileged the former and violated the latter in order to make the stamps more useful to the public. Stamp collectors since Tiffany have pointed out the discrepancy (e.g. Wunderly 2004: 43). They have also noted other impossibilities in the depicted history: for example, that the one cent stamp depicts Columbus clean shaven while the two cent stamp shows him, a day later, with a full beard (Tiffany 1893: 288–89; Kimble 1933: 10).

In addition to the historical chronology of Columbus’ voyages, the stamps suggest a different kind of time, associated with the socioevolutionary ideology that was hegemonic at the fairs. The commemorative stamps issued at the 1893, 1898, 1904, 1907, and 1915 world’s fairs depicted, either explicitly or implicitly, the displacement of American Indians by Euro-American discoverers, conquerors, and settlers. Just barely visible on the two cent Columbian, for example, Indians cower behind trees or prostrate themselves at the sight of Columbus and his men coming ashore. In the Jamestown series of 1907, no Indians are present at the landing scene of the two cent stamp, while the five cent stamp, the high value of the series of three, reproduces a portrait of Pocahontas from an engraving made in England in 1616, depicting her as an English gentlewoman and thereby suggesting that the outcome of the English colonization in Virginia was the assimilation (and hence disappearance) of its indigenous inhabitants. Indians were completely absent from the discovery scenes of the 1915 stamps for the Panama-Pacific exposition.

The place of Indians in the history of civilization is most fully suggested in the 1898 commemorative stamps issued for Omaha’s Trans-Mississippi Exposition. The one cent stamp pictured Father Jacques Marquette preaching to Indians on the Mississippi River. The four cent stamp used an image of a mounted Indian hunting buffalo, and the eight cent stamp pictured US troops guarding a wagon train. No Indians are depicted, but in 1898 they would have been understood by the US public as a menace. While the denominational sequence of the stamps does not match a chronological or historical sequence, the socioevolutionary plot is clearly evident: a culture of primitive but noble, or at least picturesque, savages must give way to civilization’s advance, whether through conversion and assimilation or annihilation.

4. Tiffany does not include the eight cent stamp in his discussion since, as noted above, it was issued as an addendum to the series.

Modern times: Mechanical reproduction

As noted above, the Columbian stamps, with their engraved images of images of historical scenes, were produced by the billions. Walter Benjamin ([1936] 1969) famously argued that the arts of “mechanical reproduction” displaced the “aura” of the original work of art. But, as Orvell (1989) has shown, late-nineteenth-century Americans delighted in mechanically reproduced copies, and cluttered the interiors of their houses with them. At the very moment when the anthropological culture concept was being articulated, to indicate a temporally and spatially discrete and aesthetically distinctive “pattern” of human collective life, the manufacturers of consumer goods were mechanically reproducing series, lines, or collections of cultural artifacts as styles to decorate middle-class spaces. The times and places of the entire world, throughout history, were becoming available as consumer choices: Louis XIV, Oriental, American colonial, etc. (Handler 1990).

Already in the 1860s, Wanamaker was using reproductions of famous works of art for advertising books and calendars (Gibbons [1926] 1971: 102). By the century’s end, the Post Office was drawing on canonized national artworks—portraits of founding fathers and scenes of their heroic accomplishments—and on a wider, more popular set of images (reproduced in books and magazines) to illustrate its stamps. The government’s Bureau of Engraving and Printing, which in 1894 took over the printing of stamps from private companies (Griffith 1997: 9), built up a reservoir of images which they drew upon when they were asked to produce stamps, currency, and coins. Its engravers often worked at third and fourth remove from the original.

Philatelic historian Gary Griffith gives an illustrative example. The Bureau was asked to produce a ten dollar bill for the 1901 Buffalo exposition. The “Buffalo Bill” featured an image of a buffalo. The Bureau engraver charged with the task tried to make a drawing “from the mounted group at the Smithsonian.” Not succeeding to his liking, he engaged an artist to sketch the museum specimens, and then made his engraving from the sketch. The same image was used twenty years later to produce a postage stamp (Griffith 1997: 88).

Philatelic historians from Tiffany’s time to today have taken care to document the origins of the images used on stamps. Sometimes considerable detective work is involved to reach an understanding of the succession of copies, reproductions, and substitutions that went into producing a series of stamps that seems to tell a temporally and thematically coherent story. To give but one example concerning the commemorative stamps we have been examining: the one dollar stamp of the Omaha series, titled “Western cattle in storm,” is today considered by many collectors to be the most beautiful of all US stamps (Figure 3). It apparently represents the risks—cattle dying in a harsh environment—of ranching in the west. These “western cattle” were Scottish. The image came from an engraving published in a periodical in London in 1879; the engraving was based on a painting by J. A. MacWhirter, who in 1878 had rented a farmhouse in the West Highlands of Scotland “for the purpose of artistic study” (Sloane 1943: 28). As in the buffalo example, we see not only mechanical reproduction, but also deliberate acts of framing, whether in an artist’s or a taxidermist’s studio, to produce apparently objective images of nature.



Figure 3. Western cattle in storm.

I am not arguing that the stories of the commemorative stamps are somehow inauthentic. The point, rather, is to understand that the processes of artistic framing and mechanical reproduction that went into creating mass cultural products like postage stamps were thoroughly routinized by the turn of the twentieth century. And a request to the Post Office to support a world's fair by announcing it with a stamp issue was also becoming routine; the Columbian stamps had set the precedent.

Thus, when a group of Nebraskan businessmen decided in 1897 to organize a world's fair "for the express purpose of furthering the progress and developing the great resources of the region west of the Mississippi River" (Sloane 1943: 3–4; also Rydell 1984: 108–10), the chair of their publicity committee petitioned James Gary, the Postmaster General, for a series of stamps to commemorate it. Gary agreed, yet his decision sparked protests from stamp collectors, who complained about the expense of acquiring the prior commemorative series, the Columbians, with their multiple high-value stamps. Gary defended himself by saying, "I wanted to help the people of the West," adding: "No one is compelled to buy the high values unless he wishes to do so" (quoted in Sloane 1943: 4).

At subsequent fairs, the series of commemorative stamps were much shorter: six for the Buffalo fair, four for St. Louis, three for Jamestown, one for Seattle, and four for San Francisco. Building up to the Jamestown tercentenary, the Virginia Historical Society asked "for a complete set from one cent to one dollar," but by then the Post Office, heeding the objections of collectors to the cost of obtaining long series, was keeping its commemorative stamps to low values (Johl 1947: 32). Still, the principle that stamps be issued to commemorate, or advertise, fairs was well established. And over time, collectors came to expect and value such stamps, whatever their initial complains about the expense of acquiring a complete set may have been. Thus, fifty years after their release, philatelic historian A. A. Lauzon wrote that the Columbians marked "the beginning of a new era for stamp collectors. The issuance of this series was the beginning of a vast flood of commemorative stamps which it has been their delight to collect ever since" (1942: 9).

Postmarking the matrix as a historical resource for the future

As we have seen, the Post Office allowed itself to be used by fair organizers to advertise the fairs, but it also used the fairs to advertise itself, in two ways: first, by maintaining a presence in federal government exhibitions at the fairs; and second, by marketing its commemorative stamps as souvenirs for fair-goers. Not only were the stamps, which were available nationally at post offices, sold on the exposition grounds, but customers could also have them cancelled there (Karlen 2003). Stamp cancellers are time-space authentication devices: they create a government-issued marking specifying the place and the moment wherein a document is deposited with the Post Office. Fair-goers who bought stamps at the Chicago exposition, affixed them to fair postcards or envelopes, and had them postmarked at the fair could demonstrate to their friends that they had attended the fair—something like the conventional message, “wish you were here,” but backed by a government guarantee. Alternatively, fair-goers could send fair-postmarked mail to themselves to keep as souvenirs certified by the government (Post Office) certified souvenirs. Today, envelopes bearing Columbian stamps and fair postmarks command a hefty premium in the philatelic marketplace (Figure 4).



Figure 4. One cent Columbian stamp with Chicago world's fair cancellation.

Subsequent fairs had their own on-grounds cancellations. Moreover, starting with the 1901 Buffalo exposition, the Post Office began advertising the fairs with so-called slogan cancels used at post offices and on stamps not specifically connected to the fair. In other words, the cancel itself became a mobile advertising medium detached in space and time from the fairs to be publicized. And collecting such cancels has become a philatelic subspecialty: a collector can amass a group of envelopes all bearing a slogan cancel for one of these fairs, each one with the time, date, and place of mailing stamped on it (Figure 5). Further impetus for this kind

of collecting was given in 1922, when the Post Office began holding “first day of issue” ceremonies for its stamps, at which time and place collectors could obtain an envelope with the newly issued stamp franked with the date and place of its release to the public (Griffith 1997: 31–32).

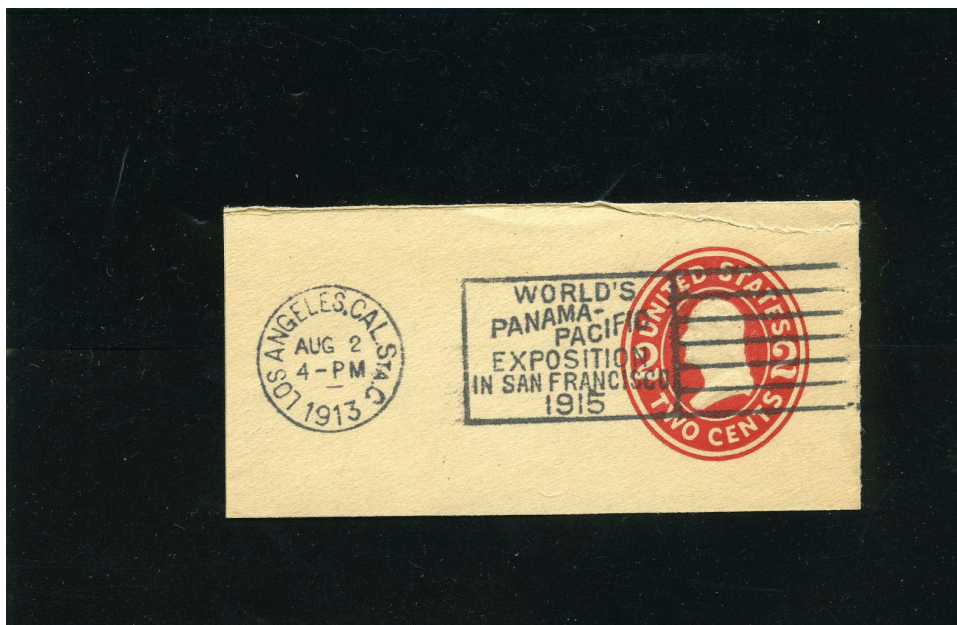


Figure 5. Slogan cancel advertising the 1915 world's fair.

These examples give us a final opportunity to conceptualize the time-space matrix as a resource for the historical imagination. Our commonsense notion of the past is rooted in the idea of unchangeable facts. Such-and-such event happened at such-and-such time, and no amount of wishing otherwise will change that fact (Hirsch and Stewart 2005: 263–65). Yet, as the philosopher Louis Mink pointed out (1978), this commonsense understanding of the past clashes with a constructionist epistemology of history making, which has come to dominate the anthropological discussion of both the creation of tradition (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983) and the cultural politics of commemoration (Gillis 1994). As Mink explained, the idea that there is an objective past that awaits our discovery—or at least our construction of it through narrative history making—is a mostly unexamined presupposition held over from earlier notions of a “Universal History.” In his analysis, this presupposition underestimates the power of historical narrative, not merely to plot the past—to pick and choose from among the available facts to create a meaningful story—but also to create facts in the first place. After all, he asks, what exactly is an event? And what is a relationship between such events? Moreover, if both sorts of phenomena, events and the relationships among them, can be delineated only through narrative, then there is little sense in saying that there is one true past that has already happened, merely awaiting the historian to discover, construct, or imagine it.

What I have called the time-space matrix complements Mink's account of “the idea of Universal History—that past actuality is an untold story” made up

of definitive events that happened at particular times and places, in particular sequences (1978: 143). The matrix provides the organizing scheme for locating the events of Universal History. Surveying that matrix, the organizers of world's fairs and the designers of commemorative postage stamps must have had some self-conscious awareness of themselves as historical constructionists, selecting the events they wished to commemorate from among a vast domain of past facts. But they did not seem to doubt the reality of that past, the truth of the events they were commemorating—and in particular, their understanding of the truth about the time when, and the place where, those events occurred. The history they presented to the public was understood to be made up of “just the facts,” as the common phrase has it, and was advertised to the public in that way.

It is in the gap between historical fact (which is thought to be fixed and determined) and historiographical choice (which is accepted as uncertain and contingent) that the postmark does its work. Postmarks were devised in the seventeenth century to monitor the progress of the mail—to make sure that carriers were not delaying delivery (Robinson 1948: 58–59). By the mid-nineteenth century, when the use of postage stamps began, postmarking was a well-established practice. A postmark creates an object that is anchored in an apparently objective fashion to a specific time-space point in the matrix. Indeed, a postmark creates a historical fact—and it does so, moreover, with the future use of that fact in mind. The postmark allows a user of the mails, at some moment after the postmark has been printed, to know with certainty the origin point of the journey a mailed document traverses. There are many reasons to want to know such information, but in all cases, the postmark creates a historical fact to be used at some future moment.

In the examples of world's fair and first-day-of-issue postmarks, we see the Post Office, in concert with collectors and the collecting market, producing a dated stream of collectable items. Almost 1.5 billion of the one cent Columbian stamps were issued, through one bearing a Chicago exposition postmark is considerably rarer and much more highly valued. But in either case—stamps common and rare—by the early twentieth century, the Post Office, stamp collectors, dealers, and cataloguers were all working to produce and document series of stamps, cancellations, and cancelled stamps that could be catalogued chronologically and valued in what we would today call a niche market. To produce limited-edition commemorative stamps, and then cancellations that moored a member of a limited-edition issue (a single stamp) definitively and perhaps uniquely to a time-space point, was a way to reintroduce aura into mechanically reproduced images. The Post Office and the hobby had learned how to mine the time-space matrix in the present for the future when, it was speculated, collectors would come to prize precisely dated collectables precisely because they could be located in the past.

And it is from these sorts of examples of history making—in the present case, the designed intersection of grand endeavors such as world's fairs, the bureaucratic business of producing postage stamps, and the quotidian, normally invisible technology of the postmark—that anthropologists of history find the grist for their mill. As historical anthropologists, we can study the commemorative dimensions of both the fairs and the stamps for their historical and historiographical significance. But as anthropologists of history, we take a further step: we study these

phenomena as a way to learn about how particular people make and use history and, indeed, what they think history is.

Palmié and Stewart (this collection) observe that an anthropology of history will look beyond “Western historical thought” to “non-Western societies, where ethnographic study can reveal local forms of historical production that do not conform to the canons of standard historiography” (p. 1). We can also look at noncanonical or popular forms of history making in Western societies, either because they work from premises different from those of academic historians (Wirtz, this collection), or because, as in the present case, they reveal how the raw materials of history—time and space—have to be manipulated before history making can even begin.

References

- Anderson, Benedict. 1983. *Imagined communities: Reflections on the origins and spread of Nationalism*. London: Verso.
- Appel, Joseph. 1930. *The business biography of John Wanamaker*. New York: Macmillan.
- Badger, Reid. 1979. *The great American fair: The World's Columbian Exposition and American culture*. Chicago: Nelson Hall.
- Benedict, Burton. 1983. *The anthropology of world's fairs: San Francisco's Panama Pacific International Exposition of 1915*. London: Scholar Press.
- Benjamin, Walter. (1936) 1969. “The work of art in the age of mechanical reproduction.” Translated by Harry Zohn. In *Illuminations*, 217–51. New York: Schocken Books.
- . (1940) 1969. “Theses on the philosophy of history.” Translated by Harry Zohn. In *Illuminations*, 253–64. New York: Schocken Books.
- Bowyer, Mathew. 1972. *They carried the mail: A survey of postal history and hobbies*. Washington, DC: Robert B. Luce.
- Brookman, Lester. 1947. *The 19th century postage stamps of the United States*, Vol. 2. New York: H. L. Lindquist.
- Brownell, Susan, ed. 2008. *The 1904 Anthropology Days and Olympic Games: Sport, race, and American imperialism*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.
- Ellis, F. L., and William Maisel. 1974. *U.S. commemorative and special printed envelopes: 1876–1965*. Bellefont, PA: American Philatelic Society.
- Fisher, Philip. 1988. “Democratic social space: Whitman, Melville, and the promise of American transparency.” *Representations* 24: 60–101.
- Gelber, Steven. 1992. “Free market metaphor: The historical dynamics of stamp collecting.” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 34: 742–69.
- Gibbons, Herbert. (1926) 1971. *John Wanamaker*, Vol. 1. Port Washington, NY: Kennikat Press.
- Gillis, John, ed. 1994. *Commemorations: The politics of national identity*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Griffith, Gary. 1997. *United States stamps, 1922–26*. Sidney, OH: Amos Press.

- Handler, Richard. 1990. "Consuming culture (genuine and spurious) as style." *Cultural Anthropology* 5: 346–57.
- Heizman, Louis. 1968. "Wanamaker's Columbians." In *The congress book, 1969*, edited by David Stump, 91–98. Bellefont, PA: American Philatelic Congress.
- Henkin, David. 2006. *The postal age: The emergence of modern communications in nineteenth-century America*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Hirsch, Eric, and Charles Stewart. 2005. "Introduction: Ethnographies of historicity." *History and Anthropology* 16: 261–74.
- Hobsbawm, Eric, and Terence Ranger, eds. 1983. *The invention of tradition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Johl, Max. 1947. *The United States commemorative stamps of the twentieth century*, Vol. 1. New York: H. L. Lindquist.
- John, Richard. 1995. *Spreading the news: The American postal system from Franklin to Morse*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Juell, Rodney, and Steven Rod. 2006. *Encyclopedia of United States stamps and stamp collecting*. Minneapolis: Kirk House.
- Kammen, Michael. 1991. *Mystic chords of memory: The transformation of tradition in American culture*. New York: Knopf.
- Karlen, Harvey. 2003. *Chicago's Great White City: A postal history panorama of the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition*. Oak Park, IL: Berk-Hill Publishers.
- Kimble, Ralph. 1933. *Commemorative postage stamps of the United States*. New York: Grosset & Dunlap.
- Lauzon, A. A. 1942. *The United States Columbian issue, 1893*. Kalamazoo, MI: Chambers Publishing Co.
- Luff, John. 1902. *The postage stamps of the United States*. New York: Scott Stamp and Coin Company.
- Mink, Louis. 1978. "Narrative form as a cognitive instrument." In *The writing of history*, edited by Robert H. Canary and Henry Kozicki, 129–49. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.
- Mitchell, Timothy. 2002. *Rule of experts: Egypt, techno-politics, modernity*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Nora, Pierre. 1984. *Les lieux de mémoire*, Vol. 1. Paris: Gallimard.
- Orvell, Miles. 1989. *The real thing: Imitation and authenticity in American culture, 1860–1940*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.
- Parezo, Nancy, and Don Fowler. 2007. *Anthropology goes to the fair: The 1904 Louisiana Purchase Exposition*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.
- Penny, H. Glenn. 2002. *Objects of culture: Ethnology and ethnographic museums in imperial Germany*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.
- Robinson, Howard. 1948. *The British post office: A history*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

- Rydell, Robert. 1984. *All the world's a fair: Visions of empire at American international exhibitions, 1876–1916*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Schlereth, Thomas. 1991. *Victorian America: Transformations in everyday life, 1876–1915*. New York: HarperCollins.
- Sloane, George. 1943. “The Trans-Mississippi Issue of 1898.” *The Stamp Specialist: Green Book*, 3–32. New York: H. L. Lindquist.
- Sobel, Dava. 1995. *Longitude*. New York: Walker.
- Stephens, Carlene. 1983. *Inventing Standard Time*. Washington, DC: National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution.
- Thomas, Allen. 2008. *A republic in time: Temporality and social imagination in nineteenth-century America*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.
- Tiffany, John. 1893. *History of the postage stamps of the United States of America*. St. Louis, MO: C. H. Makeel.
- Tocqueville, Alexis de. (1840) 1955. *Democracy in America*, Vol. 2. Translated by Henry Reeve. New York: Vintage Books.
- Wanamaker, John. 1893. Letter to Senator Edward Wolcott, February 13. Reprinted in *American Journal of Philately* 16: 191.
- . (1900) 1966. “The evolution of mercantile business.” In *An American primer*, edited by Daniel Boorstin, 654–64. New York: New American Library.
- Whorf, Benjamin Lee. 1941. “The relation of habitual thought and behavior to language.” In *Language, culture, and personality: Essays in honor of Edward Sapir*, edited by Leslie Spier, 75–93. Menasha, WI: Sapir Memorial Publication Fund.
- Wunderly, Kathleen. 2004. “From Columbus to the moon.” *Scott Stamp Monthly* 22 (1): 40–44, 59.
- Zerubavel, Eviatar. 2003. *Time maps: Collective memory and the social shape of the past*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

L'extraction de la matrice de l'espace-temps: Les timbres postaux commémoratifs et les expositions universelles aux Etats-Unis, 1893-1915

Résumé : Cet article s'intéresse aux expositions universelles du tournant du siècle et aux timbres qui furent édités pour leur commémoration. Les expositions célébraient le progrès de la civilisation industrielle, définie par rapport à un point d'origine historique (par exemples, les voyages de Christophe Colomb), et les offices postaux concevaient des timbres afin de commémorer un récit historique important pour la nation. Mais les points d'origine historique et l'histoire associée à ceux-ci étaient situés dans une matrice de l'espace-temps définie par d'autres processus de cartographie du territoire national et d'une standardisation du temps associée à ces processus. Les timbres commémoratifs étaient vendus dans les expositions, où ils pouvaient être cachetés afin d'être localisés précisément dans le temps et l'espace en tant que souvenirs d'événement passés pouvant potentiellement acquérir une

valeur dans le futur. La superposition de ces pratiques commémoratives révèle la façon dont la matière brute de l'histoire—l'espace et le temps—doit être manipulée avant même que la fabrique de l'histoire des sociétés modernes puisse commencer.

Richard HANDLER is a cultural anthropologist who has written on nationalism and the politics of culture, museums and the representation of history, anthropology and literature, and the history of Boasian anthropology. He is the coauthor, with Eric Gable, of *The new history in an old museum: Creating the past at Colonial Williamsburg* (Duke University Press, 1997). He is currently Professor of Anthropology and Director of the Program in Global Studies at the University of Virginia.

Richard Handler
Director, Program in Global Studies
Box 400772
University of Virginia
Charlottesville, VA 22904-4772
USA
rh3y@virginia.edu