



News from the American Philatelic Center
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USPS First Days Set for APS STAMPSHOW in Hartford



Albert Bierstadt's *Valley of the Yosemite* — August 14, noon

Those who fancy first days of issue will find plenty to enjoy at APS STAMPSHOW 2008, coming August 14 to 17 to the Connecticut Convention Center, 100 Columbus Boulevard, in the heart of Hartford. The four-day show will host the release of two attractive new United States issues.

Thursday, August 14, STAMPSHOW 2008 will host a first-day-of-issue ceremony for a 42-cent stamp honoring the panoramic landscape paintings of Albert Bierstadt (1830–1902) — the eighth issue in the American Treasures series. The stamp depicts *Valley of the Yosemite*, an oil-on-paperboard painting created in 1864 by the artist by that “shares the freshness and immediacy of the plein air field sketches Bierstadt used in composing a much larger painting titled *Looking Down Yosemite Valley*,” according to the Postal Service. The 11 $\frac{7}{8}$ - by 19 $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch painting belongs to the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, a gift of Martha C. Karolik in 1947. The painting first changed hands publicly at New York City's Metropolitan Sanitary Fair Auction of April 1864. It sold to a “Mr. Davis” for \$1,600, the funds going to provide basic hygiene necessities to Union soldiers during the Civil War.



**Sunflower Definitive
August 15, noon**

As described at the website of the Museum of Fine Arts, Bierstadt visited the Rocky Mountains in 1859, and returned to the region in 1863, after which he wrote to a friend “that he had found the Garden of Eden.”

Bierstadt was a prolific artist, having completed well over 800, and possibly as many as 4,000, paintings during his lifetime. Most of these works have survived, many scattered through U.S. museums. Mount Bierstadt in Colorado is named in his honor.

Inaugurated with the four 34-cent Amish Quilt stamps in 2001, American Treasures is an eclectic annual series celebrating design quality and excellence in U.S. fine arts and crafts.

Previous issues in the series included a 37-cent stamp of John James Audubon's *Scarlet and Louisiana Tanagers* (2002), four of 37-cent stamps in booklet form depicting paintings by Mary Cassatt (2003), 37-cent booklet and 60-cent sheet stamps depicting a pair of 19th-century floral compositions by Martin Johnson Heade (2004), booklets of four 37-cent Rio Grande blankets (2005), panes of ten 39-cent stamps showing quilts created over the past six decades by African-American women in Gee's Bend, Alabama



(2006), and a 41-cent stamp displaying Louis Comfort Tiffany's stained glass window *Magnolias and Irises* (released last August 9 at STAMPSHOW 2007 in Portland, Oregon).

Bierstadt's artwork was previously honored with a 32-cent stamp depicting a detail from his 1888 painting *The Last of the Buffalo* (Scott 3236m) in the pane of 20 Four Centuries of American Art commemoratives released in 1998.

On Friday, August 15, at 12 noon, there will be an unofficial first-day ceremony at STAMPSHOW 2008 to mark the nationwide release of a new multicolored Sunflower definitive, sure to be one of the workhorse issues of the 42-cent first-class letter rate era. According to the most recent information from the U.S. Postal Service, these new self-adhesive Sunflower stamps will be issued in convertible 20-stamp booklets.

Like the Beautiful Blooms definitives issued last year at STAMPSHOW 2007 in Portland, Oregon, the 42-cent Sunflower uses a striking image of a common but colorful American bloom as its central design. A Sunflower blossom and its seeds were one of four 39-cent Crops of the Americas stamps picturing plants cultivated in the Americas for centuries when Europeans first arrived in the New World, issued in 2006 in self-adhesive coil and booklet form. A large bloom also was the most prominent feature of the 4-cent stamp that in 1961 commemorated the centennial of statehood in Kansas, where the sunflower is the state flower. It was printed on bright yellow paper to emphasize the bloom.

The sunflower (*Helianthus annuus*) is an annual plant native to the Americas in the family Asteraceae, with a large flowering head. The stem of the plant can grow as high as 10 feet tall, with the flower head reaching up to a foot in diameter.

According to *The Sunflower*, journal of the National Sunflower Association, "Sunflower is an important agricultural crop choice for U.S. producers in the northern plains of the Dakotas to the panhandle of Texas." Total U.S. commercial sunflower seed production in 2000 totaled 1.79 million tons.

Look for additional details of exciting first-day events you'll want to be a part of at STAMPSHOW 2008 as we get closer to August 14-17.

For complete details of the many events at Hartford STAMPSHOW 2008, please visit the American Philatelic Society website frequently at www.stamps.org