The "All Aboard" USPS Stamp Issue of 1999

"All aboard!" Those magical words reverberated through spacious high-ceilinged train stations to summon travelers to the gleaming, streamlined railway passenger cars of the 1930s and 1940s. Industrial designers of the time put their mark on everything from radios to electric toasters to automobiles. But nowhere was the streamline style more grandly expressed than in the luxurious, high-speed, regularly scheduled trains that linked America's largest cities.

Exhibit by Norman E. Wright, Sr. (1930–2011)
'ALL ABOARD' STAMPS

1. This exhibit is to show – and show off – the five U. S. "All Aboard" stamps issued in 1999. We show the stamps as issued, their use on numerous First Day Covers, and other postal mail.

2. Then we show the multitude of additional items created and sold by the U.S.P.S featuring those stamp images.

In addition to fresh additions to one's stamp collection, these stamps appealed to a bevy of collectors of 'railroadiana,' i.e. anyone interested in anything railroad.

Five vintage trains/locomotives were the featured designs with these descriptions:


*20th Century Limited* – 'Most Famous Train;' New York to Chicago in 16 hours; 1938; J-3a steam locos and streamlined Pullman cars.

*Daylight* – 'Most Beautiful Train in the World;' Los Angeles to San Francisco, along the Pacific Ocean; 1941; GS-4 steam locos.

*Hiawatha* – 'Fastest Train in America;' sped at 100 mph from Chicago to Milwaukee and the Twin Cities twice daily; F-7 steam.

*Congressional* – 'Every Mile Electrified;' converted to electricity in 1935, with help from the WPA; Washington, DC to New York City; GG-1 electric locos.
1. **ALL ABOARD Stamps and Covers**

The USPS issued the "**ALL ABOARD**" stamps in panes of 20 (below) with plate number & header; in shrink-wrap packages with protective card (scan below) showing price.
1. ALL ABOARD Stamps and Covers

On the back of the pane is the USPS message about this stamp issue that appears on many related items. And on the back of each stamp is a description of the locomotive that appears on the front.

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But nowhere was the streamline style more grandly expressed than in the luxurious, high-speed, regularly scheduled trains that linked America’s largest cities.
If you were of a frame of mind that thought “these stamps are too pretty to use, and wished you could hang them on your wall, the USPS had the answer: it created five 12x16 inch prints, one of each of the All Aboard designs, each with its own matt and ready for framing. Below is one of the prints with the original mailing container in the background.
1. ALL ABOARD Stamps and Covers

The USPS also issued the stamps in strips of five (one of each design) as seen here on the official First Day of Issue Ceremony Program. That event took place in Cleveland, Ohio on August 26, 1999.

(Program cover seen below is a reduced scan of the actual item)
and '40s, threatened by the advent of automobiles and airplanes, railroads commissioned famous designers, such as Henry Dreyfuss, and Otto Kuhler to update trains by reoutfitting them, using the popular Art Deco style. The 20TH CENTURY LIMITED, the SUPER CHIEF, and the HIWATHA were among the finest and fleetest trains in the American railroad.

Streamliners. They set a new standard of speed, comfort, and efficiency. "Streamlining" produced a new generation of dynamic trains often painted black and built entirely of stainless steel. The motive of the SUPER CHIEF was a scarlet-and-silver paint scheme, which became a popular icon of the Southwest. In the train was a car named the Serenade Lounge, which was decorated with Hopi motifs. Other cars featured murals depicting Southwestern landscapes and coordinated every detail of the train, from specially made silverware and linens to the artwork.

The First Day Service pays tribute to the 20TH CENTURY LIMITED's stamp pane featuring five stamps. An evocative watercolor painting of the train was created by Ted Rose of Mexico. Howard Paine of St. Louis was art director. They worked with historian William J. Schreiber of the NRHS to consider one of America's greatest trains.
1. **ALL ABOARD Stamps and Covers**

The official U.S.P.S FD Cancel on each stamp, using covers with the show cachet.
1. **ALL ABOARD Stamps and Covers**

Next day cancel using the official APS STAMPSHOW Station cancellation and Stampshow cacheted covers.
1. **ALL ABOARD Stamps and Covers**

Immediately, dozens of cachet makers went to work, creating attractive covers to commemorate the All Aboard stamps. Immediately below is one from RPA’s own Kelly Armstrong, and second below is an Edken.
1. ALL ABOARD Stamps and Covers

Two more creative cachets using All Aboard stamps are first, a Pugh featuring the New York to D.C. train pulled by the Congressional. The New York City Twin Towers in the background are a poignant reminder of earlier days – not just of trains.

An unnamed cachet maker here puts the Super Chief in a western setting using a screened photo in sepia color.
1. **ALL ABOARD** Stamps and Covers

What looks like a fancy FDC with the corner cut off, but using all five **All Aboard** stamps, turns out to be a pop-up card of the Cleveland, Ohio train terminal, a Dick Bennett ‘Cachetoon.’

 Appropriately, he included an image of the Cleveland, Ohio Terminal Tower. The Tower, built in 1930 was the tallest building between Chicago and New York City – 52 stories high. Its complex of buildings is second only to the Rockefeller Center in size. It served as the headquarters of the “Chessie” system, and was a hub for all rail traffic for years.
1. **ALL ABOARD Stamps and Covers**

A unique (one of two) private cachet for the first day of issue also combines an earlier stamp to enhance the 20th Century Limited theme. 32-cent stamp comes from the Celebrate the Century series, 1930s sheet, issued Oct. 9, 1998.

(In fond memory of Norman Wright, the creator of the cover above — and owner of this and most of the material in this exhibit)
1. ALL ABOARD Stamps and Covers

All around America, places like rail museums used the All Aboard stamps, creating special cancels and special days to honor the railroads.
1. ALL ABOARD Stamps and Covers

The All Aboard stamps were used for the next couple of years at several Stamp Shows around the country as clubs chose trains and railroads as show themes. But the Fresno, CA club (next page) needed extra postage as the rate went up in Jan. 2001! Happily, there was a 2-cent train stamp to use.
All Aboard! FRESPEX 2001

Fresno, California
March 10 & 11, 2001
1. **ALL ABOARD Stamps and Covers**

Then there was the multitude of ordinary people using stamps who put All Aboard stamps on their mail. Here is just a small sample of the many letters and envelopes with a classic locomotive roaring across the stamp:
‘Stamps-to-go’ a handy pocket-sized packet of 15 All Aboard stamps, often found in stamp vending machines, offered by the USPS in addition to the regular issue.
1a. ALL ABOARD – More Stamps

For a quick mailed note to someone, the USPS provided us with a pack of postcards, each already “stamped” with an All Aboard stamp. (The stamps here were printed onto the card, with 20 cent value, the postcard rate at the time.)

The scans below are of the cover and spine of the actual booklet. 20 cards made up the pack, five of each design.
Front and back examples of the posted postcards from the postcard pack.
2. ALL ABOARD – Everything Else

In order to use all these great stamps, the USPS kindly offered packages of stationery for those who had more to say than would go on a postcard. A sample sheet is behind this scan of the package backing. Each sheet was decorated with an image of the Hiawatha locomotive.
2. ALL ABOARD – Everything Else

20 DECORATIVE ENVELOPES

$3.99
Ink Jet and Laser Friendly
Acid Free

Envelopes to put your stamps on, and your letters in.

Super Chief decorates each envelope flap.
2. ALL ABOARD – Everything Else

Handy mailing labels for stuff that won’t fit into one of the envelopes

(Each USPS item shown was “Custom designed for the United States Postal Service”)
A rail philatelist’s dream came alive in 1999 with this pack of jumbo post cards, each with a U.S. train stamp image. Besides the All Aboard set, designs included the 1987 booklet of 22-cent early locos; the 1994 booklet of 29-cent locomotives, the 1998 Celebrate the Century two 32-cent train stamps, and three earlier 3-cent stamps with trains. Samples of two of the cards (front & back) appear above the booklet. These needed (your own) first-class stamps.