

My visit to the Spellman Museum of Stamps and **Postal History**

Jack Searles

This last summer while visiting historic Boston on a summer vacation I stumbled upon a real gem! This gem is the Spellman Museum of Stamps and Postal History. We found the museum on our way back to New York State just off the Weston exit of the Massachusetts Turnpike. On the way into Boston we had picked up a brochure for the museum at a tourist information area on the Turnpike.

After a few false starts in attempting to find the museum and wandering around Regis College, we finally found the actual museum building. It is a dignified building located just past the main entrance to the college.

We were met at the door by a museum staff member who collected the necessary admission fee of \$5.00 per adult and then oriented us to the layout of the place. There is a philatelic research library, a post office (open Sundays!), a large exhibition area, and downstairs a large group activity room with plenty of stamps on paper to sort through.

We were traveling with my teenage son and daughter. Upon seeing these younger family members, the museum staff immediately engaged them in some great youth oriented activities involving finding different items mentioned in the exhibits. It was rumored, also, that there were prizes for the most correct answers. Well, a healthy and robust brother/sister competition was thus launched! From my perspective, this was wonderful because it gave me time to peruse the exhibits unhurried.

The core basis for this museum is the personal stamp collection of Frances Cardinal Spellman. Cardinal Spellman was both an influential Roman Catholic Cardinal and a confidant to US Presidents. At one time Cardinal Spellman had a significant and substantial collection of Vatican City stamps. But, judging from the museum, this was but one of his collecting interests. As we entered the main exhibit hall I noticed immediately covers that were carried on various early space launches, covers

commemorating various treaties on which there was a stamp of each country represented cancelled by the signature of the treaty's delegates, and a beautiful post card collection focusing upon foreign post offices in Constantinople, etc....etc. My mind was whizzing and my attention glued to the massive collection of what had to be one of a kind items before me. This was truly a stamp collector's heaven!

In speaking with the museum staff I found out that the museum was just beginning an outreach effort to both promote itself and engage more youth in stamp collecting. My two children were some of the early benefactors of this focus upon youth.

On all the literature of this museum is a quote from Cardinal Spellman, it goes "stamps are miniature documents of human history. They are a means by which a country gives sensible expression to its hopes and needs; its beliefs and ideals. They mirror the past and presage the future. They delineate cultural attainments, industrial works, domestic, civil and social life. In a word, these vignettes give a vivid picture of the world, its occupants and their multifarious endeavors". This quote and the philosophy inherent in it have truly molded the mission of this museum.

Before leaving, I had to visit the post office! While the library is for serious research and the main display area is for being awe struck, the post office is really the meeting place. A place where collectors and friends gather, exchange vegetables, jokes, and plan future vacations. In the post office are the traditional US Post Office sponsored philatelic wares, but it also serves as a museum store. There are mini-stamp collections for sale, used philatelic books and even the latest Scott Catalogues. It is really hard for a stamp collector to leave here without something! I must admit I succumbed to a partial set of Scott Year '2000 Catalogues, to be "put away for Christmas".

Before I forget, both my teenagers were kept well occupied competing with one another. They both did very well and as their "prize" were able to open an old-fashioned post office mailbox and keep its contents. They were quite happy with the packet of stamps/covers they received. Somehow, however, I just have a feeling that while the stamps were great and appreciated the competition between brother and sister was the real motivator!

All in all, we had an absolutely wonderful Sunday visit to the Spellman Museum and would highly recommend it to others traveling in the area. The address of the Museum is:

The Spellman Museum of Stamps and Postal
History
235 Wellesley Street
At Regis College
Weston, MA 02493
(781) 768-8367
(781) 768-7332 (Fax).

The hours of operation are Thursday through Sunday 12:00 (noon) through 5 p.m. There is a \$5.00 admission fee for adults, senior/students \$3.00 and those 16 and under free.

Why not plan to make a visit to this great place!

The logo for the Spellman Museum of Stamps & Postal History is displayed on a dark red rectangular background. The word "Spellman" is written in a white, cursive script font. Below it, the words "Museum of Stamps & Postal History" are written in a white, serif font.