

# Welcome to the Millennium: Different perspectives on a historic time

Jack Searles

We live in historic times! The millennium is upon us...or so we are told. But, that very statement has been the subject of debate. Let's dwell on definitions for a little bit so we can get a feel for the issues.



**What is a millennium?** According to Webster's, a millennium is "a period of 1000 years".

**Where does the Millennium start?** The millennium, as a result of consensus reached at a conference in Washington, DC in 1884 starts in Greenwich, Great Britain. The day begins at the Prime Meridian of the World (0 longitude) at the Royal Observatory-Greenwich.

**When does the Millennium start?** The Millennium is calculated using the Gregorian calendar and is counted from AD 1 (there is no “0” year in this calendar). The 1st century then is comprised of the years AD 1 through AD 100. By extrapolation then the 20th century (or the second millennium) covers the years 1001-2000. The third millennium then covers the period 2001-3000. Given this the new millennium then officially starts on January 1, 2001 at Greenwich, not January 1, 2000. Despite this fact, many have determined January 1, 2000 to be a good day on which to welcome the new Millennium, facts notwithstanding.

**Where will the sunrise on January 1, 2001?** This is a subject of some discussion in scientific circles. According to the Royal Observatory-Greenwich, the first place to have a sunrise each year “is probably the Balleny Islands in Antarctica where the Sun is below the horizon for less than one hour.” The US Naval Observatory agrees with this assertion, noting that being on the northern tip Dibble Glacier will assure viewers of seeing first light (due primarily to “refraction effects”).

**Where is the first inhabited/populated place to see the Millennium sunrise?** The US Naval Observatory indicates that this place will be Kahuitara Point on Pitt Island in the Chatham Islands, a dependency of New Zealand. But, in 1995, the Republic of Kiribati moved the International Date Line so that the country is on the western side of this line. Because of this eastern bulge in the dateline, Kiribati has claimed that Caroline Island will be the first point of land where the sun will rise. This designation is an important one for some.

**Moving on....**

**What is the first place on each continent where the Sun will rise?**

- **Australia:** Cape Pillar, Tasmania; Australian Mainland—Cape Howe, NSW;
- **Asia:** Chaplino, Russian Siberia;
- **Africa:** Fort Dauphin, Madagascar; African Mainland, Mozambique;
- **Europe:** Ukraine just west of Donetsk, Russia;

- **South America:** Cabo San Juan, Argentina; South American mainland, Cabo de Sao Tome and Ponta de Monsaras, Brazil;
- **North America:** Cape Race, Newfoundland, North American mainland, Cape Breton, Nova Scotia.

**Where is the first place in the US where the Sun rises on January 1, 2001?** If the US territories are included, the first place in the US to see a sunrise will be Peacock Point, Wake Island. But, Wake Island is uninhabited. The first inhabited land in the US will be at Inarajan, Guam. If the territories are not included, the earliest sunrise at sea level occurs at Lubec, Maine and Siasconset, Massachusetts on Nantucket Island. The first major metropolitan area in the US to see the Sun rise will be Miami Beach, Florida—at the same time as Katahdin Mountain, Maine.

**What is the last place the Sun will set on December 31?** For the nostalgics among us this place will be Falealupo, Samoa.

So what does this have to do with stamp collecting? The answer is simple, to be associated with a key location related to the rise or fall of the new/old millennium is marketable. Remember, stamps and stamp related collectibles reflect the time and the issues in which they have been produced. To paraphrase Cardinal Spellman, stamps are windows to our times. Just as key locations for the millennium mean tourist dollars, so do they translate into stamp collectors dollars. Remember, the millennium happens but once every 1000 years....or maybe twice in 1000 years if you choose to believe the millennium begins 1/1/00.

One would expect that you will see more and more millennium souvenirs as we approach the end of our second thousand years. Some of these items will be marketed for the year 2000; others will inevitably appear for the year 2001.

In doing some research, I have found some of these early items.

Way back in 1769 in October Nick Young a lookout on board Captain James Cook's ship *The Endeavor* spotted the morning sun reflecting off a distant island. This island was later named New Zealand. The place where Captain Cook landed was Turanganui-a-Kiwa, later known as Gisborne City. This city claims that at 5.46 am NZDT (New Zealand Daylight Savings

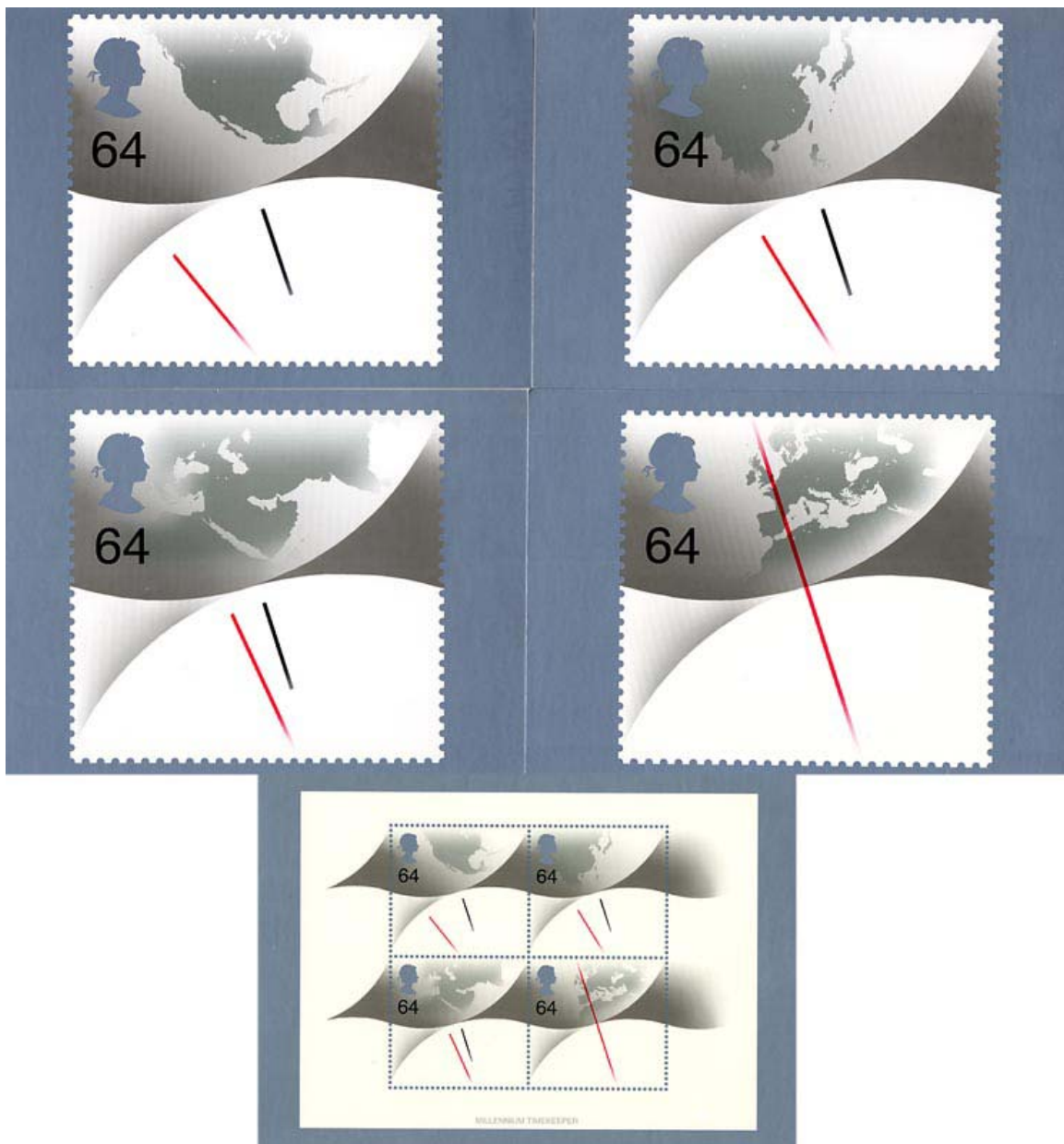
Time) on 1 January 2000, the first light of the millennium will fall on Gisborne City. As the dawn unfolds the eyes of the world will focus on Gisborne.” To commemorate this event they have produced a series of covers that will include a 4x8” picture of the sunrise. The costs is only NZ\$10 (about US\$5...For more information see their web page at: <http://www.firstpost2000.co.nz/about.html> ).

Closer to home West Quoddy Head Station has been established in Lubec, Maine. This US Post Office Station has developed a series of two millennium postmarks. One of these postmarks read “Last light of the Old Millennium” and is dated December 31, 1999. The other postmark reads “First light of the New Millennium”. Both postmarks note that Lubec is the “Easternmost point in the USA”. As noted in the press release from Lubec, Maine “collectors should send their pre-addressed pairs of envelopes now to Postmaster, West Quoddy Head Station, Lubec, ME 04652. Affix the usual 33 cents postage to each envelope, or include a money order for 33 cents worth of stamps for each envelope postage to each envelope, or include a money order for 33 cents worth of stamps for each envelope you send, made payable to Postmaster. Attach notes to your envelopes showing which are to receive the December 31 cancellation, and which the January 1. Eager collectors may want to use the 1990 West Quoddy Head Lighthouse stamp (Scott #2472) which portrays the actual easternmost point of the US where the ‘First Light’ of the Year 2000 arrives. This stamp is out of print and not available from the Postal Service, only through stamp dealers. It’s a 25-cent stamp so you’ll need to add eight more cents of stamps to make up the current first class rate.”

But, of course, this is just the tip of the iceberg. We are well aware of the Century stamps issued by the United States. Technically, these stamps don’t celebrate the millennium, they celebrate the century.



Great Britain, as you may recall from a previous article that this series of stamps celebrates British history through eleven “tales”. These tales include: inventors’, travelers’, patients’, settlers’, workers’, entertainers’, citizens’, scientists’, farmers’, soldiers’ and Christians’ tales or themes. These tales commemorate the achievements of the “last thousand years of British history.” Each month during 1999 a series of four stamps are issued, with accompanying First Day Covers. Then there is the “ultimate momento” a “beautifully illustrated folder, the Millennium Moment Commemorative Document” that contains a miniature sheet of the four new issue Millennium Timekeeper stamps mounted on a “uniquely numbered card”.



Canada, has been somewhat more controversial. Canada announced early in 1999 that it would publish a Millennium Collection composed of 68 stamps arranged and bound into a book. The stamps are printed in this book two per page. The selling price for this item is \$59.95 Cdn. This caused quite a stir in the philatelic world. Scott refused to list these stamps; collectors were very upset, etc, etc. In the end Canada agreed to re-issue the stamps issued in the book on September 15, 1999 in a set of Souvenir sheets early in the year 2000. Ironically, it has been suggested by a number of sources that this book “may prove difficult to obtain or their price may rise in the not to distant future.”



Canada also recently issued several other millennium related items. Canada issued a set of three stamps representing the past, the present and the future. The main theme on these stamps is a dove. The stamp representing the past is finely engraved, the stamp representing the present includes a photographic process and the stamp representing the future is a self-stick hologram. These stamps have been issued in several collectable formats including sheetlets of one and four stamps. The sheetlets of one stamp each are only issued as part of the Canada Post’s Official Millennium Keepsake. This Keepsake sells for \$8.99 Cdn. The Keepsake itself includes a “Collectors Tin”, three Souvenir sheets of the stamps just described, a post card—for a millennium message and a commemorative coin.

During a recent trip to Toronto, Canada the author had to obtain the sheetlet of four hologram stamps from dealers, as the post office was sold out of this particular format.

And I’m sure the list goes on and on. In all probability almost every

nation will issue some stamp commemorating the millennium either this year or next year. Collecting the millennium will likely become an interesting new topical collecting interest and guess what...we were there. We are part of a unique cadre of people who will have lived through the passage of a millennium. Whole civilizations have been founded and died away in just the last Millennium....think what civilization was like in the year 999. Think of the advances we have made! Just 100 years ago western colonialism dominated Africa, now Africa's nations are all independent. In 1900 (again only 100 years ago) 1 in 7 homes had a bathtub, 1 in 13 homes had a telephone, a "Brownie" camera sold for \$1.00, sugar cost \$.04/lb, a dozen eggs \$.14 and a pound of butter \$.24. I can fathom 100 years to adequately grasp the concept of the millennium I must take this knowledge of 100 years worth of changes and multiply it by 10. Truly, this is a historic time and a time when we should be introspective in regarding our achievements and our future plans.

Almost irregardless of when the millennium actually occurs, many will profit or attempt to profit from the occasion. It has been said that the millennium is the defining moment of our lives. We have just begun to see the merchandise and the products that will be marketed. As always, stamps will be our windows to the past. They will be a tribute to all the ideals, people and places we hold dear and that are us. These mini-visions will certainly be different from country to country, as one country's vision might be another's hell.

As this year ends and another begins, take the time to think about where we have been and where we are going. If you have a vision it will happen! Please have a happy and blessed holiday season! Peace, hope and joy to you and yours in the New Year and the New Millennium....whenever it arrives!

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