

**Patrick R. Donahoe  
Postmaster General and Chief Executive Officer  
United States Postal Service  
“Cherry Blossom Centennial” First Day of Issuance Ceremony  
National Building Museum  
401 F Street, N.W.  
Washington, D.C.  
March 24, 2012  
10:30 AM**

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**Thank you, Susan (LaChance), and good morning everyone.**

**It’s a pleasure to be here representing the United States Postal Service, and I would like to thank the National Building Museum, its staff, and its volunteers, for their hospitality in hosting us today.**

**Over the past 100 years, millions of families from all over the world have been drawn to our nation’s capital to enjoy one of spring’s most breathtakingly beautiful displays during the annual Cherry Blossom Festival.**

**How very fitting, then, that we are gathered here during the Museum’s “Family Days” to dedicate our “Cherry Blossom Centennial” stamp issue.**

**{PAUSE}**

**A unique platform for recognizing our national legacy, the Postal Service’s commemorative stamp program has – for over 150 years – focused attention on the events, ideals, people, places**

**and things that have made our nation great. With today's stamp dedication, we continue that long-standing tradition.**

**In previous years, we've dedicated stamps to the Washington Monument, the Jefferson Memorial, and even to Washington, D.C. itself – but now the beauty of all three of these elements culminate in the special centennial issue that we are dedicating today.**

**Indeed, the two new stamps we are about to dedicate form an important narrative of the story of our country, and I'm extremely proud to share that story with you.**

**Just over a mile from here is the Tidal Basin, where the story of the arrival of cherry blossoms in Washington, D.C. first took place....**

**For it was at the Tidal Basin, in a modest ceremony on March 27th, 1912, where First Lady Helen Herron Taft and Viscountess Chinda, wife of the Japanese ambassador, planted the first two of 3,000 cherry blossom trees on the northern bank of the Tidal Basin.**

**A gift of friendship and goodwill to the United States from the people of Japan, the trees were placed around the Tidal Basin and elsewhere throughout Washington, D.C.**

After the trees were planted, Colonel Spencer Cosby of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, who supervised the project, wrote prophetically about them to Mayor Ozaki in Tokyo:

*“The trees completely surround the Tidal Basin,” he wrote. “And, when in bloom in the spring, will make a magnificent display.....In a few years, this will undoubtedly be one of the famous sights of Washington and a constant reminder to our citizens of the kindly feeling of your City and Country.”*

Since that simple ceremony, witnessed by only a handful of people on that early spring day 100 years ago, Washington’s cherry blossom trees have become – just as Colonel Cosby predicted – one of its most beloved landmarks, as well as an ever-renewing source of pride, not just for Washingtonians, but our nation as a whole.

The first celebration of these trees took place in 1927 with a re-enactment of the original planting ceremony. Today, however, the National Cherry Blossom Festival, which includes events such as a parade, concerts, galas, and cultural gatherings, typically draws over a million visitors each year.

These two new stamps pay tribute not only to the beauty and splendor of springtime, but to all that the cherry blossoms represent: a symbol of life’s transience.....a celebration of being alive.....and a welcome harbinger of spring. But most of

**all, the cherry blossoms commemorate the close relationship between the United States and Japan.**

**How appropriate, then, that we are dedicating two separate stamps which form the left and right halves of a panoramic view of blooming cherry trees surrounding the Tidal Basin.**

**Working with art director – and Washington, DC native – Phil Jordan, artist Paul Rogers created the two stamp designs.**

**The stamp on the left depicts blossoming trees arching over two girls dressed in bright kimonos and a family on a stroll with the Washington Monument in the background.**

**On the second stamp, the Jefferson Memorial forms the backdrop for tourists taking in the sights under a canopy of pink blooms.**

**The cherry blossom trees were a gift of friendship to the people of the United States from the people of Japan – and starting today, the “Cherry Blossom Centennial” stamps are the Postal Service’s gift to America.**

**From this day forward, these lovely new stamps will travel on letters and packages to millions of households and businesses throughout the country.**

**And remember – if you purchase the Cherry Blossom Centennial stamps today, or at some time in the future, they will be good for First-Class postage *forever*, no matter what the rate is when you put it on the envelope.**

**In this small way, the Postal Service has created a lasting tribute to the gift of cherry blossoms in Washington, DC, as well as the friendship between two nations that inspired that gift — a friendship that we hope will last forever. To that end, we hope you will all make the most of them by buying them, using them, and collecting them.**

**Now, before we officially dedicate these beautiful new stamps, I would like to introduce the Ambassador of Japan to the United States, Ichiro Fujisaki.**

**Ambassador Fujisaki began his duties as the Ambassador of Japan to the United States in June 2008.**

**Previously, he served as the political minister of the Embassy of Japan in Washington, D.C. from 1995 through 1999. However, his association with the United States goes back even further, as he lived in Seattle, Washington for a year in the early 1960s as a junior high school student. He also studied one year each at Brown University and Stanford University Graduate School in the early 1970s.**

**As a diplomat, Ambassador Fujisaki also served in Jakarta, Paris and London. Prior to his current post, he served as Ambassador to the United Nations and to the World Trade Organization in Geneva, Switzerland. While there, he served as Chairman of the Executive Committee of United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.**

**Ambassador Fujisaki's wife, Yoriko, attended kindergarten at Ben Murch in Washington, D.C., and their two daughters also attended school in the Washington area. Both daughters now work as journalists in Japan.**

**Ladies and gentlemen, please join me in welcoming Ambassador Ichiro Fujisaki....**

**And now, on behalf of the United States Postal Service, I'd also like to ask Allison Speaker, the 2011 Cherry Blossom Queen, and our platform participants to join us on stage as we dedicate our *Cherry Blossom Centennial* commemorative Forever stamps.**

**Ambassador Fujisaki will share remarks with us after the dedication.**