Postal Service Celebrates Louisiana’s Bicentennial
On 2012 Forever Stamp

NEW ORLEANS — The Postal Service will salute the bicentennial of Louisiana statehood next April by issuing a First-Class Mail Forever Stamp. The stamp image, based on a photograph of renowned environmental photographer and writer C.C. Lockwood of Baton Rouge, LA, was previewed today at the Kent Plantation House in Alexandria, LA.

Lockwood’s photograph is of Flat Lake near Morgan City, LA. In the image, a setting sun casts the shadows of bald cypress trees hung with Spanish moss across the dark water. Flat Lake is in the Atchafalaya Basin, the largest contiguous river swamp in the United States. Its bayous are home to alligators, crawfish, snakes, turtles, nutria, owls and eagles.

“The historical significance of the Louisiana Statehood stamp depicts 200 years of diverse cultures, which support freedom, democracy and unity,” said Trent Nelson, Senior Manager, Postal Office Operations, Alexandria, LA, in previewing the stamp image.

Joining Nelson was Louisiana Lieutenant Governor Jay Dardenne.

“C.C. Lockwood always provides a unique view of Louisiana’s fascinating landscape and his photograph is a fitting tribute to Louisiana’s 200 years as the Sportsman’s Paradise,” said Dardenne.

Customers may preview the Louisiana Statehood Forever Stamp as well as many of next year’s other stamps on Facebook at facebook.com/USPSStamps, through Twitter @USPSstamps or on the website Beyond the Perf at beyondtheperf.com/2012-preview. Beyond the Perf is the Postal Service’s online site for background on upcoming stamp subjects, first-day-of-issue events and other philatelic news.
The flags of seven sovereign nations have flown over modern-day Louisiana since 1682, creating the lively history and dynamic mingling of cultures that characterize the state today. Louisiana became the 18th state in the Union April 30, 1812.

When the first European explorers reached present-day Louisiana during the 16th century, Native Americans were farming the land and hunting its wildlife. European settlement began after René-Robert Cavalier de La Salle sailed down the Mississippi River in 1682 and claimed the area for France, naming it Louisiana after King Louis XIV. Settlers founded New Orleans in 1718 and French ships carrying enslaved Africans began to arrive soon afterward. The Africans brought valuable skills to the struggling colony, including experience growing rice and indigo, plants that flourished in Louisiana’s semi-tropical climate and became vital crops along the Mississippi.

A group of new settlers boosted the colony in the 1760s: French-speaking families from present-day Nova Scotia, then called Acadia. After being expelled from their homes by the British, many Acadians settled in Louisiana, where they became known as Cajuns.

As its military power in the New World waned, France ceded all of Louisiana west of the Mississippi River and New Orleans to its ally, Spain, via a secret treaty in 1762. The following year, Britain took control of Louisiana east of the Mississippi. Spain returned Louisiana to France in 1800. In 1803, the land traded hands yet again. President Thomas Jefferson bought much of the present-day state as part of the Louisiana Purchase. In 1804, Congress made most of present-day Louisiana the Territory of Orleans. Statehood followed eight years later.

Much of Louisiana’s history is rooted in its unique geography. The Mississippi River flows through the state and into the Gulf of Mexico, filling portions of Louisiana with fertile alluvial soil. The climate is subtropical, with New Orleans lying on about the same latitude as Cairo, Egypt. As a result, the state includes rich agricultural land, pine-filled woods, swampy bottomland forests and marshes. In fact, about 40 percent of the marshland in the U.S. is found in Louisiana. Nearly 400 miles of its coastline borders the Gulf of Mexico.

Louisiana’s culture and people also are diverse. About a third of the state’s residents are African American, some of whom can trace their ancestors back to West Africans who brought the crops and culture of their native land to Louisiana. Another large group is descended from the French, including the Cajuns of southern Louisiana. The descendants of Africans, Native Americans and white settlers who intermarried call themselves Louisiana Creoles. The Creole language blends French and African words to arrive at new terms such as “gumbo,” a flavorful stew.

Nowhere are these diverse groups better represented than in Louisiana’s music. From a brass band leading a New Orleans jazz funeral, to Cajun fiddlers keeping time for dancers, or an accordion player launching into a Zydeco riff in the Creole tradition, Louisiana’s music is a hallmark of the state’s cultural heritage.

With its vibrant music, authentic cuisine and abundant natural areas, tourism is one of Louisiana’s leading industries. More than 20 million people visit the Pelican State each year, some to attend festivals such as Mardi Gras, a celebration brought to Louisiana by French Catholics. New Orleans has been attracting Mardi Gras revelers since its first parade took to the streets in 1837.

The Louisiana Statehood stamp is being issued as a Forever stamp. Forever stamps are always equal in value to the current First-Class Mail one-ounce letter price.

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A self-supporting government enterprise, the U.S. Postal Service is the only delivery service that reaches every address in the nation, 150 million residences, businesses and Post Office Boxes. The Postal Service receives no tax dollars for operating expenses, and relies on the sale of postage, products and services to fund its operations. With 32,000 retail locations and the most frequently visited website in the federal government, usps.com, the Postal Service has annual revenue of more than $65 billion and delivers nearly 40 percent of the world’s mail. If it were a private sector company, the U.S. Postal Service would rank 29th in the 2010 Fortune 500. Black Enterprise and Hispanic Business magazines ranked the Postal Service as a leader in workforce diversity. The Postal Service has been named the Most Trusted Government Agency six consecutive years and the sixth Most Trusted Business in the nation by the Ponemon Institute.