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Hoosier State's Bicentennial Celebrated on Forever Stamp
Stunning Photo is Former Milford Resident's Work

INDIANAPOLIS — A stunning photograph taken at sunset over cornfields in Milford, IN, by a young photographer raised there was selected as the Forever stamp to celebrate Indiana's 200th statehood anniversary. Indiana became the 19th state of the Union Dec., 11, 1816. Celebration festivities will take place throughout the year.

The [Indiana Statehood Forever Stamp](#) was issued today at the state capitol in Indianapolis. Indiana Governor Mike Pence helped dedicate the stamp. The public is asked to share the news on social media using the hashtag **#Indianastatehood**.

"In our state's bicentennial year, it is altogether fitting that we memorialize the occasion with the issuance of the Indiana Statehood Forever Stamp, which so vividly captures the beauty of rural Indiana," said Governor Pence, who joined the Postal Service in dedicating the stamp. "Its image will tell of Indiana's unique beauty as it's sent to untold locations around the country and around the world. As the sun sets on Indiana's first 200 years of history, we look forward to a new dawn that builds on the vision cast over our last two centuries."

“What better place to unveil the Indiana Statehood stamp than here in the Indiana Statehouse,” said U.S. Postal Service Great Lakes Area Vice President Jacqueline Krage Strako in dedicating the stamp. “Since 1887, decisions made inside this spectacular building have helped to shape the land, people, and culture of the Hoosier State and the country. In the coming weeks and months, we anticipate that Post Offices across Indiana will greet many customers who are thrilled at the opportunity to affix a piece of their state’s history to the upper right corner of every piece of their mail. This stamp belongs to everyone. It belongs to history enthusiasts, art admirers, nature photographers, and those who are simply captivated by Michael Matti’s sunset imagery.”

Joining Governor Pence and Krage Strako in dedicating the stamp were stamp photographer [Michael Matti](#); Indiana First Lady Karen Pence; Historian Jim Madison; Bicentennial Commission Co-Chair Becky Skillman and Indiana Bicentennial Executive Director Perry Hammock. Miss Indiana 2015 Morgan Jackson sang the national anthem and the Indianapolis Children’s Choir provided renditions of historic Indiana songs.

Getting the Photo

“This has to be one of the highlights of my career thus far,” said Matti. “It is truly an honor to have my work immortalized on a Forever stamp.”

Matti, today an adventure and travel photographer, grew up in Milford and had driven past that view hundreds of times until one day he decided to pull over, stand on top of his car, and take in the beautiful sunset.

“I was home from Wesleyan University for the summer and on my way back to Milford from a friend’s house in Warsaw when I pulled over and took this photo of the sunset,” explained Matti.

“I drove by this road every day to Lakeland Christian Academy, so I had seen this view hundreds of times. On this particular evening, the sky just lit up and produced this remarkable sunset. I couldn’t resist pulling over, standing on top of my car, and snagging this photo.”

Matti grabbed the shot July 22, 2012, on the corner of W 1100 N and 15, just south of Milford. He used a Canon EOS 60D camera and a Canon 10-22mm lens. The shot is a blend of three photos taken in rapid succession at different exposures to capture details near the bright sun as well as in the shadows of the corn. One shot was at normal exposure, the second was two f-stops underexposed and the third was two f-stops overexposed. The three were merged and blended together in Photoshop to create the final image.

The U.S. Postal Service receives about 40,000 suggestions for stamps each year, yet only about 25 topics make the cut. To have one’s work appear on a stamp is extremely rare. Art director Derry Noyes of Washington, DC, designed the stamp with Matti’s existing photograph. Matti currently resides in Seattle, WA.

America’s Heartland

With good reason, Indiana has often been considered the heartland of America. Striving to find a middle way has been part of its heritage since frontier times, when it attracted settlers from both north and south. According to historian James H. Madison in *The Indiana Way*, this influx created a distinctive culture that was more western than northern or southern.

Indiana’s progress toward statehood began with the creation of the Northwest Territory in 1787, which encouraged settlement in the region. In the succeeding years, new legislation further hastened settlement by making the purchase of land more affordable to pioneering families. Indiana was the second of five states, after Ohio in 1803, carved out of the original Northwest Territory.

The state’s fertile soil — a legacy of Ice Age glaciers that flattened and enriched much of its terrain — made for ideal farm country. Corn was the most commonly planted crop during the 19th century and

remains today a staple of the state's agricultural economy, along with soybeans. More than 60 percent of Indiana's land is still used for farming.

Manufacturing became increasingly important to the state's economy by the late 19th century. Indiana spawned such homegrown companies as the pharmaceutical maker Eli Lilly, founded in 1876, and Ball Brothers (now Ball Corporation), founded in 1880 and the largest producer of glass jars in the nation by 1900. The petroleum industry came to the state after Standard Oil Company built a huge refinery in Whiting, on the shores of Lake Michigan, in 1889. Also along the lakeshore, United States Steel Corporation erected a massive steel mill in 1908 and founded the city of Gary, named after its chairman, Elbert Gary.

At the beginning of the 20th century, Studebaker Brothers Manufacturing Company of South Bend, a leading maker of horse-drawn wagons since the 1850s, entered the automobile business and propelled the state for a time to the fore of the new industry. In 1909, the state capital of Indianapolis — once a magnet for railway traffic — became the site of the Indianapolis Motor Speedway, where new car models were tested. In 1911, the speedway hosted the first Indianapolis 500 race. Today, it hosts four racing events and is the world's largest spectator sporting facility, with a seating capacity of 250,000.

In addition to being the home of race-car driving, Indiana became prime basketball country in the 1920s, embracing the new sport with a fervor that few other states could match. Thousands of spectators packed local high school gyms, and state tournaments generated something like the excitement of college basketball tournaments of a later era. The 1986 movie, *Hoosiers*, about a high school team in the 1950s, captures the flavor of the state's passion for the sport. Legendary players Oscar Robertson and Larry Bird were among the finest products of Indiana's basketball culture.

Literary Icons

Indiana also has made significant contributions to American literature. During what has been called Indiana Literature's Golden Age, the poet James Whitcomb Riley (1849-1916) and the novelist Booth Tarkington (1869-1946) developed devoted readerships. Riley wrote of simpler, more rustic times in such beloved poems as "The Old Swimmin' Hole" and "Little Orphant Annie." Tarkington wrote of the effects of urbanization and industrial growth on Indiana in *The Gentleman from Indiana* (1899) and in the Pulitzer Prize-winning novel *The Magnificent Ambersons* (1918). A writer with a more modern sensibility who drew upon his childhood in Terre Haute and other Indiana towns was Theodore Dreiser, most famous for *Sister Carrie* (1900) and *An American Tragedy* (1925). I would surely include Gene Stratton Porter in this list, she had several top selling novels in the early 20th century – was hugely popular.

Historic Sites

Some historic sites that help tell the story of Indiana include the Vincennes State Historic Sites, where visitors can learn about Indiana's oldest city, Vincennes, the capital of Indiana Territory. The Lincoln Boyhood National Memorial in Lincoln City gives a snapshot of the environment that nourished Abraham Lincoln in his youth from 1816 to 1830. At Historic New Harmony, one can learn about the famous utopian community of the early 19th century. The Levi Coffin Home, a National Historic Landmark in the town of Fountain City, preserves one of the most important "stations" of the Underground Railroad. Another National Historic Landmark is the restored home of the 23rd president of the United States at the Benjamin Harrison Presidential Site in Indianapolis.

Forever stamps always will be equal in value to the current First-Class Mail 1-ounce price.

Ordering First-Day-of-Issue Postmarks

Customers have 60 days to obtain the first-day-of-issue postmark by mail. They may purchase new stamps at a local Post Office, at The Postal Store website, usps.com/shop, or by calling 800-782-6724. They should affix the stamps to envelopes of their choice, address the envelopes to themselves or others, and place them in a larger envelope addressed to:

Indiana Statehood Stamp
Postmaster

125 West South Street
Indianapolis, IN 46206-9998

After applying the first-day-of-issue postmark, the Postal Service will return the envelopes through the mail. There is no charge for the postmark up to a quantity of 50. There is a 5-cent charge for each additional postmark over 50. All orders must be postmarked by Aug. 7, 2016.

Ordering First-Day Covers

The Postal Service also offers first-day covers for new stamp issues and Postal Service stationery items postmarked with the official first-day-of-issue cancellation. Each item has an individual catalog number and is offered in the quarterly *USA Philatelic* catalog, online at usps.com/shop, or by calling 800-782-6724. Customers may request a free catalog by calling 800-782-6724 or writing to:

U.S. Postal Service
Catalog Request
PO Box 219014
Kansas City, MO 64121-9014

The Postal Service receives no tax dollars for operating expenses and relies on the sale of postage, products and services to fund its operations.

About the Indiana Bicentennial Commission

The Indiana Bicentennial Commission is a fifteen-member body, chaired by Becky Skillman and Lee Hamilton, charged with overseeing the planning and execution of a statewide celebration for Indiana's 200th birthday. First Lady Karen Pence serves as official Bicentennial Ambassador. Indiana's 2016 Bicentennial celebration aims to honor the state's 200 years of history, but do so in a way that engages all 6.5 million Hoosiers and leaves a lasting legacy for future generations. The commission encourages every community in Indiana to take part in this unique celebration, and to date has endorsed more than 1,300 Legacy Projects, representing all 92 Indiana counties. Visit indiana2016.org to learn more about Indiana's bicentennial history in the making. Contact Jylian Vigar, Indiana Bicentennial Commission Communications Specialist: 765.470.1035

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