

SAVAGE Pacer



Stamped out: Dan Patch doesn't make USPS cut

By Nancy Huddleston; Editor; Friday, January 13, 2006

Although Batman, Judy Garland, Harley Davidson and Benjamin Franklin are all highlighted on 2006 commemorative postage stamps, Dan Patch is not.

The Dan Patch Historical Society submitted a proposal for Dan's likeness to be honored with a stamp since 2006 is the 100th anniversary of his record-setting mile of 1:55 at the Minnesota State Fair. But the Citizens Stamp Advisory Committee (CSAC) gets 50,000 ideas per year for stamps and only 20 to 25 of those make it, according to Mark Saunders of the Community Relations Division of the U.S. Postal Service.

Art Suel, a member of the historical society, said he is disappointed that the pacer didn't make the cut. "It was a shot in the dark, given they get 50,000 ideas a year for stamps," he said.

Still, Suel thinks Dan Patch should have garnered some support, given that 2006 commemorates the 100th anniversary of his record and, during Dan's time, he was treated like a national hero wherever he went. His record-setting time of 1:55 was set in front of 93,000 people at the Minnesota State Fair on Sept. 8, 1906.

Historical accounts relay that the show Dan Patch put on at the State Fair was the "I-was-there" brag of a whole generation of Midwesterners. Dan's owner, Marion W. Savage, had announced in advance that Dan would try and give a record-breaking performance and he did not disappoint.

The record Dan Patch set that day defied pacers and trotters for almost half a century. His mark was finally equaled in 1938, by another pacer, Billy Direct.

Dan Patch, during his racing days and after he retired in 1909, was kept at the famous International 1:55 Stock Food Farms stables on the banks of the Minnesota River in Savage. It was a 600-acre farm with luxurious accommodations including two race tracks one indoor and one outdoor.

Mr. Savage promoted Dan Patch's image on the many items sold by his International Stock Food Co., from pot-bellied stoves to tobacco tins to pin-up photos. He also took Dan around to promotional races throughout the United States in a special rail car until his retirement in 1909.

Before he died, Joe Egan tried for years and years to get a stamp issued in Dan's name, but also failed. Suel said the historical society used some of Egan's research to help bolster their request. The historical society also garnered support from congressional representatives for their request, in the hopes that the political endorsements would help.

The CSAC is appointed by the U.S. Postmaster General and includes 15 members whose background reflect a wide range of educational, artistic, historical and professional expertise. The group includes Minnesotan Joan Mondale, wife of former vice-president Walter Mondale, and actor Karl Malden.

There are 12 specific major areas that guide subject selection for stamps. Some of those include: subjects will feature American or American-related subjects, the person honored cannot be living, events of historical significance will only be considered on anniversary years or in multiples of 50 years and only events, people and themes of widespread national appeal and significance will be considered.

Typically it takes three years for approved stamps to be issued, in order to allow for design and production time.

Other images available on stamps this year include favorite children's book animals, the 2006 Olympic Winter Games, Hattie McDaniel, the Art of Disney: Romance, Sugar Ray Robinson, Katherine Anne Porter, the 1606 voyage of Samuel De Champlain and distinguished American diplomats.

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