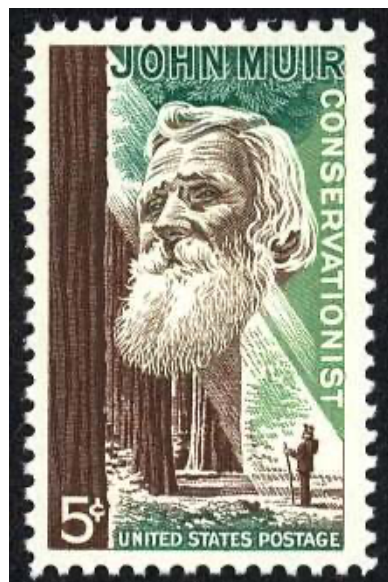


Rudolph Wendelin

Designer of the 1964 John Muir Commemorative Postage Stamp



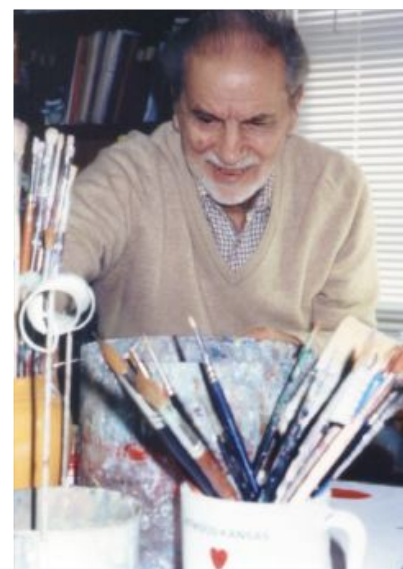
John Muir is one of very few Americans who have been honored by a commemorative postage stamp; and a member of an even more select lot for whom two commemorative stamps have been made. The first stamp was issued in 1964 (Scott #1245), and the second in 1998 as part of the "Celebrate the Century -1900's" series (Scott #3182j).

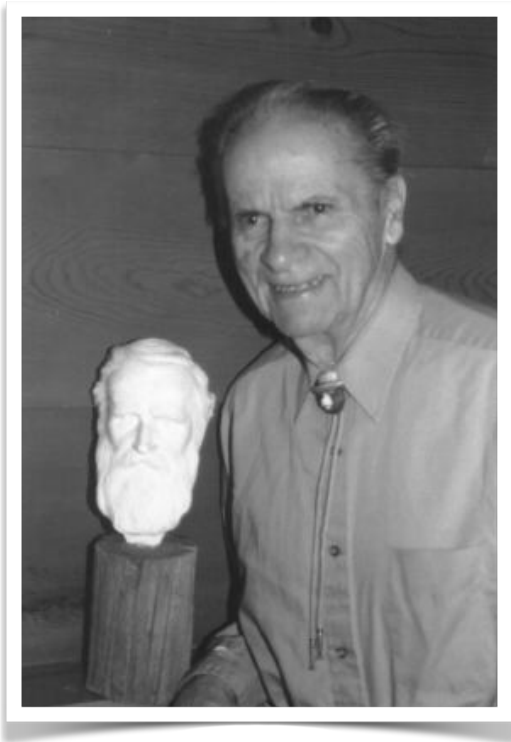
The design of the 1964 stamp was in the hands of a kindred spirit. That stamp was the work of artist **Rudolph "Rudy" Wendelin** of Arlington, Virginia, famous as the primary guardian of Smokey Bear. Wendelin is a man who used his art to the same purpose that Muir put his prose and poetry - recognition of the wonders of Nature and the need to preserve these for future generations.

Where Muir, at the turn of the century, crusaded to save California's giant redwoods, Wendelin, at mid-century, spent much of his career fighting forest fires. His helper was Smokey Bear, a friendly cartoon character who has showed up constantly on TV, billboards, posters, and in newspapers and magazines in the last forty years. Wendelin did not create Smokey -- at least ten other artists earlier turned out different versions of the bear - but he was responsible for giving Smokey the friendly and personable qualities he is so well known for today.

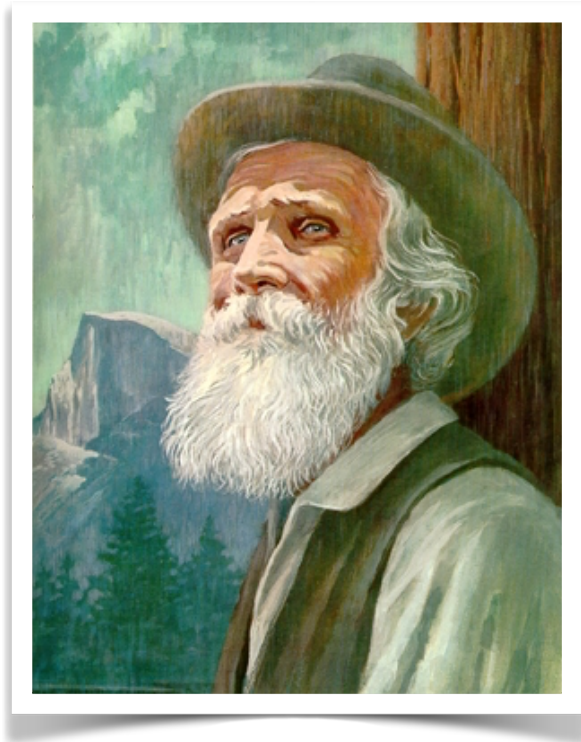
Rudolph Wendelin was born February 27, 1910 in Herndon, Kansas. He grew up in Ludell, Kansas, then attended the University of Kansas School of Architecture, and art schools in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and Washington, D.C.

He began his career with the U.S. Forest Service in 1933 as a draftsman and illustrator in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. In 1937, he was transferred to Washington D.C. where he worked on exhibits and visual illustrations as an illustrator. After wartime duty in the Navy, he rejoined the Forest Service in Washington, D.C., where he helped to launch the Smokey Bear project. He has painted Smokey in hundreds of situations that point to conservation of natural resources and prevention of forest fires. Smokey is a public service

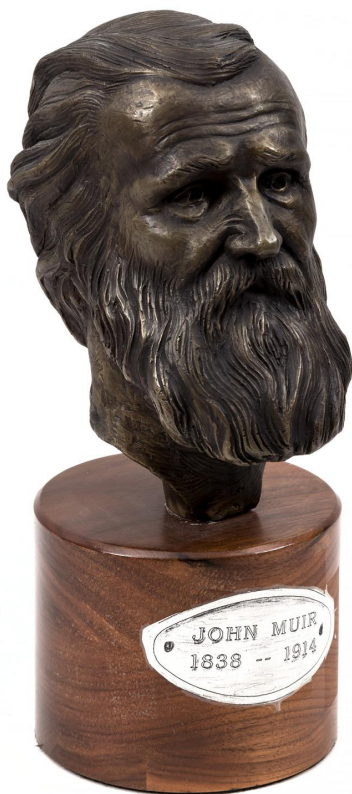




Rudolph Wendelin with Muir Bust Sculpture, February, 1999



Portrait of John Muir by Rudolph Wendelin, used for the National Wildlife Federation's Conservation Hall of Fame, 1965.



project of the U.S. Forest Service, the Advertising Council, Inc., and the National Association of State Foresters (NASF), in partnership with creative agency FCB, to aid State and federal Forest Services. In 1949, Wendlin became the campaign's full-time artist and was considered Smokey Bear's "manager" until Wendelin retired from the Forest Service in 1973.

When invited to submit designs for the 1964 John Muir commemorative stamp, Wendelin prepared himself by reading heavily of the naturalist's work to catch the mood. He became so engrossed with Muir that he did a portrait and bust in walnut of the famous naturalist, and a plaster cast later made into a bronze.

Later, he also painted the portrait of Muir that was used when Muir was inducted into the National Wildlife Federation's [Conservation Hall of Fame](#) in 1965.

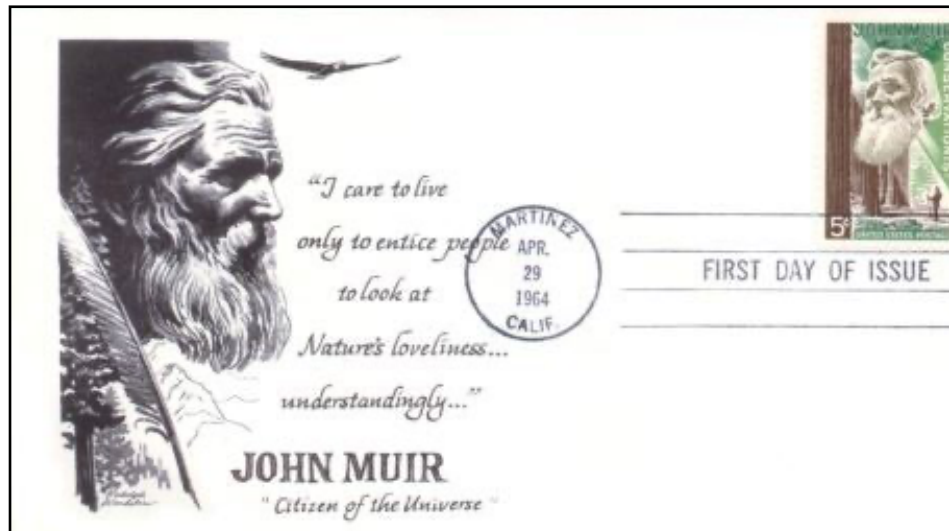
The Postal Department limited the 1964 John Muir stamp to two colors, and at first Wendelin was dissatisfied that there was not a yellow shaft of light in the forest scene. But later, after visiting Muir Woods and seeing for himself the bright green of the

sunlight foliage and the deep green of the shaded areas he was glad two shades of green had been used for the stamp.

The 1964 Muir stamp was the first to depict the subject in two ways - a large portrait bust combined with a diminutive standing figure as part of the forest scene.

Wendelin also designed - and autographed - several personal [First Day Covers](#) which are some of the most attractive designs for the 1964 issue of the Muir stamp.

One of these depicts an almost-3D portrait of Muir, with a quill and a Sequoia Tree:



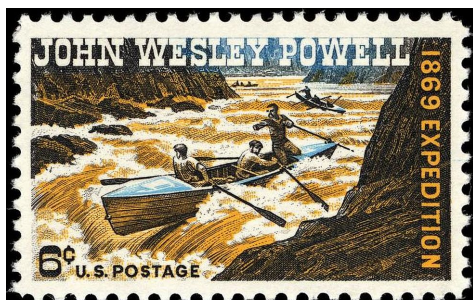
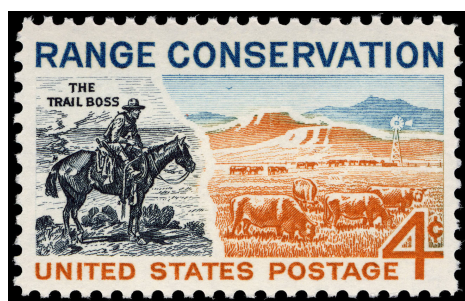
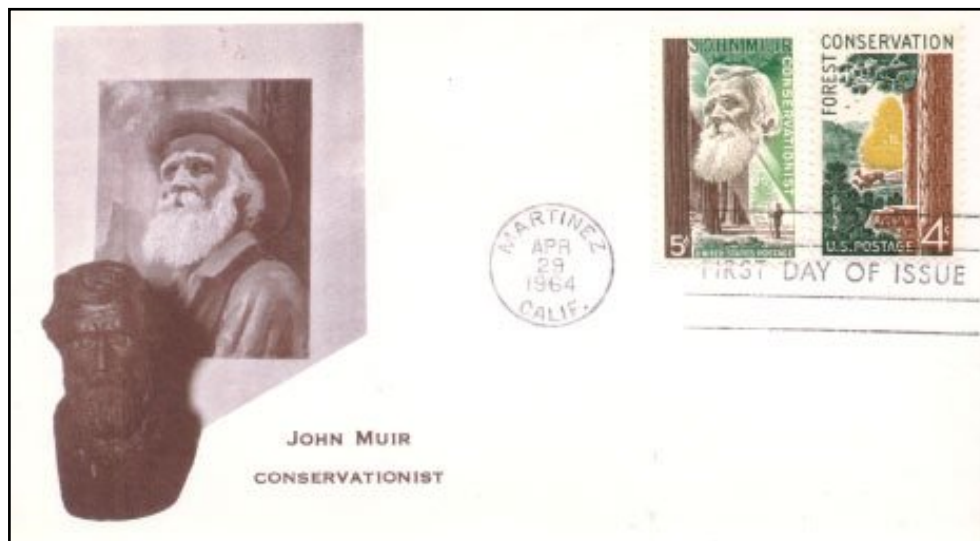
Another of Wendelin's FDCs incorporates one of Wendelin's most famous artworks - Smokey Bear (which he also designed the postage stamp for):



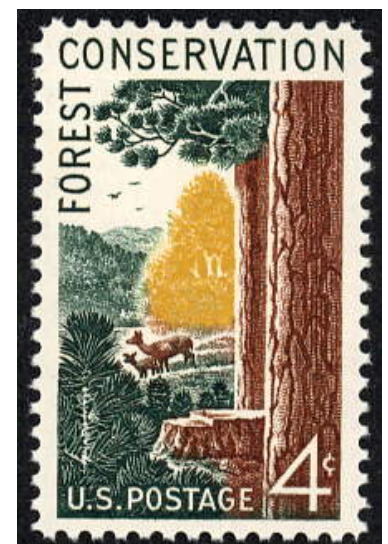
That Smokey Bear cachet depicts Smokey waving his hand to an imagined John Muir, while putting an outgoing letter into his mailbox with the Zip code 20252. In 1964, Smokey Bear was receiving so much fan mail, that he had been given his own Zip Code: 20252. After a brief hiatus, you can still send a letter addressed to Smokey Bear, Washington, D.C. 20252 today.

You will notice that Smokey's outgoing letter is addressed to "Bill McMillan." William McMillan was the Assistant Postmaster General who oversaw the release of the 1964 John Muir Postage Stamp for the U.S. Postal Service. You can read his [Address at the Dedication of the John Muir Commemorative Postage Stamp in Martinez, California on April 29, 1964](#) online.

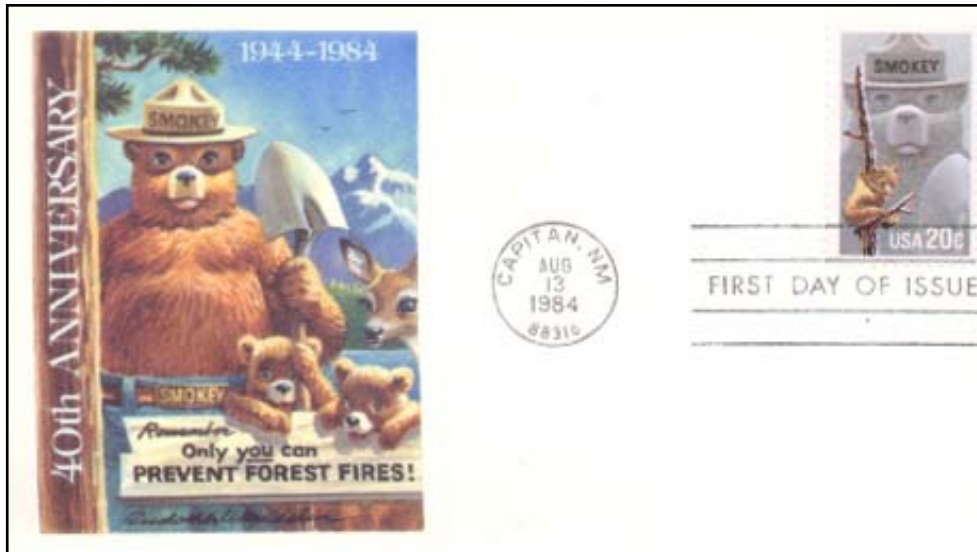
Another First Day Cover may cachet not have been designed by Wendelin, but depicts a black and white version of his portrait of John Muir he did for the National Wildlife Federation Conservation Hall of Fame, along with the Muir bust he sculpted:



Since Wendelin had retired by the time the second John Muir stamp came out, he had nothing to do with that stamp; however, he designed several additional commemorative postage stamps. These include the Forest Conservation postage stamp in 1958 (Scott #1122); the Range Conservation stamp in 1961 (Scott #1176); the 1969 John Wesley Powell stamp (Scott #1374); and, finally, the 1984 Smokey Bear issue (Scott #2096).



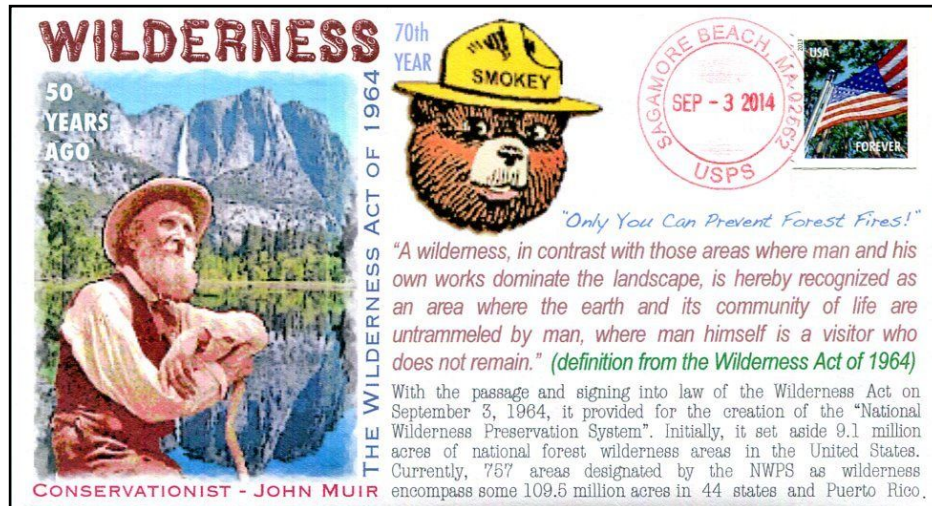
Here is the 1984 Smokey Bear postage stamp, put on Wendelin's personal First Day Cover for the issue:



Smokey Bear and John Muir have also been depicted in more recent First Day Covers, combining the two postage stamps and sometimes the cachet as well, such as this Kate Hayden add-on cachet:

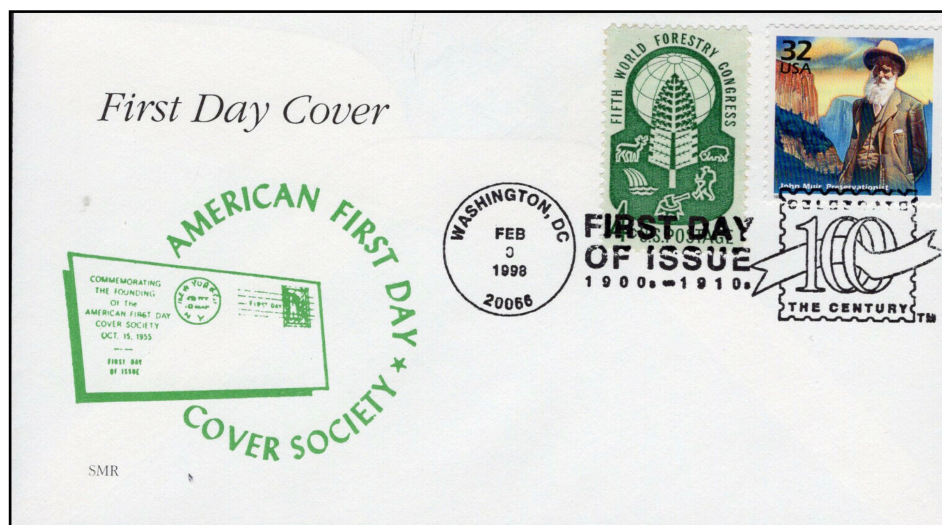


In 2014, John Muir was again depicted alongside Smokey Bear in this First Day Cover by cachet maker “Coverscape,” depicting John Muir in Yosemite in recognition of the 50th anniversary of the Wilderness Act of 1964, plus a portrait of Smokey Bear in recognition of his 70th year:



It should be noted that in 2001, Smokey’s message was updated from referencing “forest fires” to to "Only You Can Prevent Wildfires" to address unwanted fires in other natural areas, such as grasslands, and to clarify that Smokey was promoting the prevention of unplanned outdoor fires, not prescribed burns. Smokey’s official website, SmokeyBear.com , now says: "Fire managers can reintroduce fire into fire-dependent ecosystems with prescribed fire. Under specific, controlled conditions, the beneficial effects of natural fire can be recreated, fuel buildup can be reduced, and we can prevent the catastrophic losses of uncontrolled, unwanted wildfire."

In 1960, Wendelin collaborated with Maurice Eysenburg in the design of the Fifth World Forestry Congress stamp. Naturally, that stamp has also been used alongside a John Muir stamp (this time the 1998 “Celebrate the Century” John Muir stamp) to make a dual First Day Cover:



Wendelin was also a creative painter of landscapes. For example, in the fall of 1963, Wendelin took a one-week pack trip through southern Colorado, and from his sketchbook emerged 24 watercolors which were displayed in Denver. He exhibited at the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the American Forestry Association, both in Washington D.C. He created a 28-foot mural of Rawlins County in Atwood Kansas, and has also exhibited at the Pinchot Institute at Grey Towers, Milford, Pennsylvania, as well as shows in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and Topeka, Kansas.

Wendelin has received many awards for his work. Most recently, in 1998, he was presented with the Medal of Honor by the Daughters of the American Revolution for his work in popularizing Smokey Bear through his artwork. In addition to awards from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, he also received the Horace Hart Award from the graphic arts industry and both Silver and Gold Smokey Bear Awards from The U.S. Department of Agriculture. (Ironically, Wendelin had designed the latter's award Smoky statuette years before!)



Rudolph Wendelin, surrounded by Smokey Bear artwork -
Note his bronze bust of John Muir on his desk.

Rudolph Wendelin, 90, died on August 31, 2000. Mr. Wendelin is survived by his wife Carol; two sons, Michael and David; and a daughter Elizabeth.

Wendelin's appreciation for Muir is shown on so many of his designs, even with simple sketches such as the one below with a Muir quote: "I care to live only to entice people to look at Nature's loveliness..."

Compiled by Harold Wood from the following Sources:

U.S. Post Office Department press release, January 12, 1964; First Day Cover brochure, April 29, 1964; *The Man Behind the Stamp* by Joseph T. Conway; "Smokey Bear Turns 50... and Rudy Wendelin helped get him there", by Sally Eauclore, *Southwest Art Magazine* August, 1994; Smoky Bear article in *People* magazine in 1994; "Rudolph A. Wendelin: A Portrait", *Journal of Forestry* (Vol. 77., No. 12; Dec., 1979); U.S. Forest Service Press Release, May, 1998; *DAR Congress Herald* Volume 3, Issue 4 Wednesday, April 22, 1998; Telephone Interview with Elizabeth Wendelin (daughter), January 16, 1999; [Letters to Smokey Bear Reveal Promise of Hope for the Future](#), Posted by Kathryn Sosbe, Office of Communication, U.S. Forest Service, Feb 21, 2017; ["Rudolph Wendelin Dies at Age 90"](#) by Richard Pearson, *Washington Post*, September 3, 2000, [INVENTORY OF THE RUDOLPH WENDELIN PAPERS, 1930 - 2005](#), (accessed 24 November 2021) from the [Forest History Society](#).

24 Nov 2022

