

## Revisiting the USA C76 Moon-landing Stamp: a Connection to an Apollo-8 image of Earth

By Don Hillger and Garry Toth

The authors published an article on the USA Scott C76 (Michel 990) "First Man on the Moon" stamp in the October 2019 issue (no.122) of *Orbit*. That article discussed the Earthrise featured on this stamp, as well as the many reproductions of C76 on postal items from around the world. Besides direct reproductions, there are many other postal items where the stamp design is based on the C76 first-step Moon-landing image but are not close enough to be considered reproductions of C76. Since that article was published, some additional postal items have been found, and the authors have now placed all of these items on a separate C76 web page [http://rammb.cira.colostate.edu/dev/hillger/usa\\_c76.htm](http://rammb.cira.colostate.edu/dev/hillger/usa_c76.htm) to facilitate the study of C76 by the interested reader. However, that is not the main reason for revisiting this particular stamp.

### Images of Earth from Apollo missions

The authors are also interested in postal items with images of Earth taken by the Apollo astronauts during the various Apollo missions. The most famous such image is the Apollo-17 Blue Marble image from 1972, which was discussed in an article published in the March 2013 issue (no.97) of *Orbit*. That Earth image appears on hundreds of postal items from around the world, some issued as recently as 2019. On some, the Blue Marble photograph is presented in its original orientation, while in others it is rotated or flipped/inverted or both. In still others, it is presented in an artistic re-drawing of the original.

Many other Earth images from Apollo missions are also found on postal items. The authors have recently been listing and studying them and plan to present them in a future article. We recently realized, however, that one of those Apollo Earth images is found in the USA C76 postage stamp! That is the basis of this article.



USA Scott C76  
(Michel 990)

In our previous article on C76, we pointed out that a lunar Earthrise (Earth seen just above the lunar horizon) is impossible from the location of the Apollo-11 Moon landing at Tranquility Base. Please refer to our previous article for the details. In the C76 stamp, Earth was placed just above the horizon behind Neil Armstrong who is making that "small step for a man" onto the lunar surface. This is an appealing stamp design, even if it could not have happened in reality.

Below is the black and white artwork produced (and signed) by Paul Calle for the USA C76 stamp. This image is the basis for the C76 stamp, to which colour was added, but otherwise only minor variations between the artwork and the stamp design can be found.



In the previous article on C76, the authors were not aware that the Earth depiction was based on an Apollo mission Earth photograph. It does at first glance appear to be an artist's rendition of white clouds (and possibly ice-covered surfaces) and blue oceans. No brownish tones representing land masses are visible. However, in our expanding search for Apollo-related Earth imagery on postal items, we ran across an image that appears to be the basis for Earth as depicted on C76. That image was taken by the Apollo-8 astronauts on 22 December 1968, about 6 months before the Apollo-11 Moon landing.

The Earth image on C76 and in its artwork does not have the orientation of the original photograph. The stamp must be rotated 90 degrees left in order for the cloud patterns on the Earth depiction to be matched up with those of the Apollo image. Detailed images of all three Earth images are presented side-by-side for comparison; top of next page. The Earth image from Apollo-8 on the left, the Earth detail (rotated -90 deg) from the artwork in the middle, and the Earth detail (rotated -90 deg) from C76 on the right.

All three images have similar large-scale cloud patterns. South America, clearly identifiable in the Apollo-8 image, is less identifiable but still present in the artwork image, but has disappeared from the stamp image. The authors consider these similarities to be ample evidence that the Apollo-8 image was indeed used as the model for Earth by artist Paul Calle for the C76 artwork, which was then translated into the design of the C76 stamp. Some of the smaller cloud details differ from image to image, but the overall pattern of cloud versus no cloud is similar among all three Earths.



Earth image from Apollo-8 1968-12-22 (left), Earth detail from C76 artwork rotated -90 deg (middle), Earth detail from C76 rotated -90 deg (right)

## Other Postal Items with the 22 December 1968 Apollo-8 Earth image

As mentioned above, the authors are studying Apollo mission Earth images found on postal items. Some of that work will be presented in future articles. We foreshadow it here with one more example of the Apollo-8 Earth image on a postage stamp: a souvenir sheet from Sierra Leone issued in 2018 for the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the launch of Apollo-8. This souvenir sheet has a large reproduction of that Earth image. For interested readers, a list of other postal items that feature the Apollo-8 Earth image can be found at [http://rammb.cira.colostate.edu/dev/hillger/apollo-images.htm#apollo-8\\_earth](http://rammb.cira.colostate.edu/dev/hillger/apollo-images.htm#apollo-8_earth).

### Summary

This article continues the discussion about the USA C76 stamp by pointing out the authors' discovery that the Earth image on C76 is a rotated version of an image of the Earth taken by the Apollo-8 astronauts on 22 Dec 1968. That Earth image appears to have been used for the C76 artwork which in turn was used in the C76 final design.

### Biographical notes

The authors have researched and written extensively on the subjects of weather, climate, and un-manned satellites on stamps and covers, as well as other topics. Their Un-manned Satellite Philately website can be found at <http://rammb.cira.colostate.edu/dev/hillger/satellites.htm>. For a complete list and electronic reproductions of their publications, see <http://rammb.cira.colostate.edu/dev/hillger/stamp-articles.htm>. Email correspondence with the authors is welcome, using the addresses below.

Don Hillger, PhD, (Colorado) is a research meteorologist with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and holds a cooperative position at Colorado State University. Send correspondence to [don.hillger@colostate.edu](mailto:don.hillger@colostate.edu)

Garry Toth, MSc, (Quebec) now retired, worked many years at the Meteorological Service of Canada. Send correspondence to [gmt.varia@gmail.com](mailto:gmt.varia@gmail.com)



## Peter Hoffman's Apollo XI Anniversary Lists

Peter is happy to make available to any member the latest update to his Apollo 11 stamps list. There are few new 50th anniversary stamps. The list mainly has new catalogue numbers for stamps listed before and stamps with other anniversaries that have an Apollo 11 relationship such as birthdays of the astronauts.

For comprehensiveness, he can also send you a copy of an up to day complete list.

If you see errors or know of any stamps that he's missed, please note he'd be delighted to hear from you. Contact him at [peterh5292@aol.com](mailto:peterh5292@aol.com).

