


Washington Calligraphers Guild  
Vol. 39, No. 2      Fall 2016

# PENS & PROTOCOL

THE CALLIGRAPHY  
OF OFFICIAL WASHINGTON

VOLUME 2



*The President and Mrs. Obama  
request the pleasure of the company of*

*at a dinner in honor of  
His Excellency  
Matteo Renzi  
Prime Minister of the Republic of Italy  
and Mrs. Agnese Landini  
to be held at  
The White House  
on Tuesday, October 18, 2016  
at six thirty o'clock*

*Black Tie*

*Southeast Entrance*



# Scripsit

Vol. 39, No. 2  
Fall 2016

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Front cover invitation and menu  
on opposite page by White House  
Chief Calligrapher Pat Blair for the  
State Dinner honoring Italian Prime  
Minister Matteo Renzi and his wife,  
Agnese Landini.  
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*The Washington Calligraphers Guild*

P. O. Box 3688, Merrifield, VA 22116 [www.calligraphersguild.org](http://www.calligraphersguild.org)

## Dinner

Sweet Potato Agnolotti  
with Butter and Sage

PALMINA VERMENTINO "SANTA YNEZ" 2015

Warm Butternut Squash &  
Frisee and Pecorino di New York

VILLA RAGAZZI SANGIOVESE "NAPA" 2012

Beef Braciolo Pinwhite  
Horseradish Gremolata  
and Broccoli Rabe

RIDGE VINEYARDS ZINFANDEL "EAST BENCH" 2014

Green Apple Crostata  
Thyme Caramel  
and Buttermilk Gelato

Celebrating Autumn's D  
Sweet Corn Crema and Blackbe.  
Concord Grape Bittersweet Chocol  
Orange Fig Slice  
Pumpkin Cranberry T  
Tiramisu

L

As Jacqueline Kennedy explored the White House during her first day as First Lady, she is said to have exclaimed:

*"Jack! There's a whole nest of calligraphers in the basement!"*

Today the White House employs three calligraphers—no longer in the basement, but alongside the First Lady's offices in the East Wing. The State Department's lettering artist has also earned the title of Senior Protocol Officer. Freelancers put ink to paper for other Cabinet departments, the Vice President and the U.S. Postal Service.

It is a tradition that goes back to the engrossers who lettered America's cherished documents, starting with the Declaration of Independence. During the McKinley administration, the White House began to put calligraphers on staff to produce invitations (apparently before then, individual invitations were not believed necessary).

Just as many of today's professional lettering artists have branched out from creating invitations, the calligraphers of Official Washington now combine hand lettering with other graphic arts and cutting-edge computer design. Yet calligraphy remains a fundamental influence as they produce a dizzying array of works on paper (or, sometimes, in pixels).

A formal event may still call for an elegant copperplate on gold-rimmed stock; but their many menus, programs, citations, cards and invitations can blend hand lettering with watercolors, illustration, typography and computer graphics.

In this issue of *Scripts*, we sample their latest creations (the Washington Calligraphers Guild published the first edition of *Pens & Protocol: The Calligraphy of Official Washington* in 2008). We go behind the scenes at State Dinners and travel overseas to summit meetings. We look in on a calligrapher working inside the Vice President's residence and artists who fill the tiny canvas of a postage stamp. The calligraphers also share their favorite inks, nibs and paper, and describe how they use software along with their lettering to create the social and ceremonial documents put before presidents, kings and everyday Americans.

You'll still find a nest of calligraphers representing the USA in the Nation's Capital. May their skill and creativity hatch new ideas for you as you pursue the art of hand lettering.

—Lorraine Swerdloff, Editor

# The White House Calligraphers

PAT BLAIR

DEBRA BROWN

BECKY LARIMER



White House Chief Calligrapher Pat Blair (seated) with calligraphers Becky Larimer and Debra Brown (r) in their studio in the East Wing. They are full-time government employees who are, in Pat's words, "proud to have our work represent the Presidency and uphold the White House's tradition of excellence."

No calligraphy was used on the Jazz Concert invitation. Pat chose to use two fonts, building them into a rectangular block to offset the freer watercolor. After penciling an outline of the saxophone, she prepared several colors and "very loosely painted in the outline, letting the colors run into one another," she said. "The first attempt gave me exactly what I wanted!"



**I**t takes more than hand lettering to faithfully execute the office of White House calligrapher.

Chief Calligrapher Pat Blair—along with fellow artists Debra Brown and Becky Larimer—also rely on their expertise at typography, watercolor painting, illustration and graphic design, their mastery of graphics software and their knowledge of protocol and White House history.

From their desks in the East Wing, they put ink to paper, and pixels to monitor, to create the graphic products that represent the President and First Lady to the rest of the world. Their elegant hand-lettered menus, place cards and programs grace each place setting at State Dinners, while less formal events allow them to combine hand painting, lettering and typography to complement the theme of each White House occasion.

"We collaborate with the Social Office, who collaborates with the First Lady, as far as the tone of the event," Pat explained. "That goes to the hand we choose, the look we choose, how graphic we get and any kind of illustration that's added."

A musical program or a children's event might allow them to include more design elements. For example, a more informal invitation might feature a saxophone painted in watercolors, stylized piano keys drawn in Adobe Illustrator, or a watercolor strawberry cloned in InDesign into a veritable berry patch (page 11).

"As soon as a person opens the invitation, they know what the event is," said Pat. "And because of the development, ease and affordability of



Debra Brown lettered the menu for the dinner honoring British Prime Minister David Cameron in an elegant copperplate.

using color, we've been able to do spectacular things with graphic images and printing."

A black tie dinner demands the classic look of hand-lettered calligraphy. "I don't think that's ever going to go away," said Pat. "We'll suggest doing something very elegant and stately, like a very dressy copperplate or a very refined Italic."

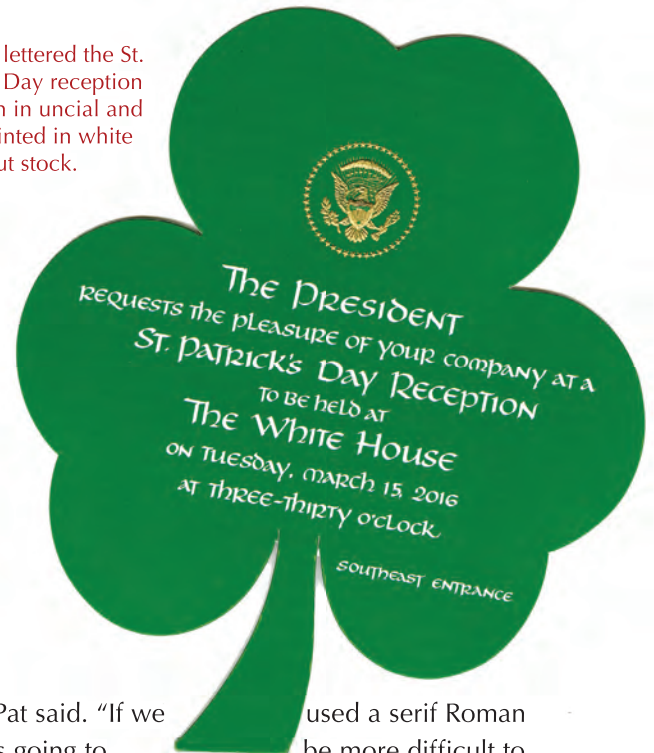
However, calligraphy may not work in every graphic project. "Especially if there's artwork, I find that calligraphy will fight it a little bit," Pat said. "In the end we're conveying a mood through a piece, so I'm going to be selective and it has to fit the project."

Sometimes a font is selected with calligraphy in mind. "When we choose typography for a menu, we try to match the place card to the menu in color and



The Ray Charles invitation combined hand lettering with piano keys created in Illustrator by Becky Larimer, who placed them on a royal blue background. Then Debra Brown chose a simple italic hand to coordinate with the linear quality of the keys, but lettered on a fixed slant to play against their various angles.

Pat Blair lettered the St. Patrick's Day reception invitation in uncial and had it printed in white on die-cut stock.



style," Pat said. "If we used a serif Roman font, it's going to be more difficult to match on the place card," Pat noted. "We'll use a very calligraphic-inspired font that we can emulate on the place card."

### Tools and Process

For their hand lettering, the White House calligraphers write on Canson Pro Layout Marker paper using Moon Palace sumi ink and pointed nibs such as the Gillott 303 and flexible Zebras, along with Mitchell nibs for italic and Coit pens for banners and such.

# Nordic State Dinner

The décor of the Nordic State Dinner, honoring Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden, had a clean, contemporary look, and Pat Blair designed the program cover and inside menu to reflect this. The Seal of the President of the United States on the cover was engraved in silver, and the cascading dot design, inspired by a wall of lights behind the head table, was printed with silver foil on satin-finish white stock.

Pat chose to letter the menu in an elegant italic hand to coordinate with the tables' tall ice-sculpture vases and cool palette of white, grey and silver. "It's fairly simple, but I always like to add one or two hand touches—in this case, one on the top and a small one on the 'g' at the bottom, she said. "It was just enough, I thought, for that menu."

The calligraphers provided tent cards for the summit celebrating the relationship between the United States and the Nordic nations. Each tent card bore the hand-painted flag of that nation and the participant's name in a font that had glyphs for the different characters in the Scandinavian languages.



The original calligraphy is lettered larger than it will appear in the finished piece.

"For a calligrapher to write using a Mitchell 2.5 or 3 is much more comfortable," Pat said. "You're going to attain much more detail in the lettering. And when we reduce it to printing size, it tends to look a little bit sharper."

To get there, the calligraphers scan the lettering at a very high resolution (1200 dpi) and save it as a bitmap file that recognizes only black and white. They bring the lettering into Photoshop and change it to grayscale so it can be transformed and cleaned up as required. Then each line may be resized and combined with artwork and typography within Adobe InDesign.

The calligraphers also provide themselves with options—for example, writing out letters twice using descenders of different sizes.

"You can write them both, and then when they're in the layout you can make that decision and swap them out," Pat said. "If we want it to extend the letter even longer, we could do that in Photoshop by bringing it

down and filling in the pixels."

Even printed projects that don't feature calligraphy can receive extra attention by hand, as the calligraphers add personal touches like a dot of gold foil, a colorful ink flourish or a splash of watercolor.

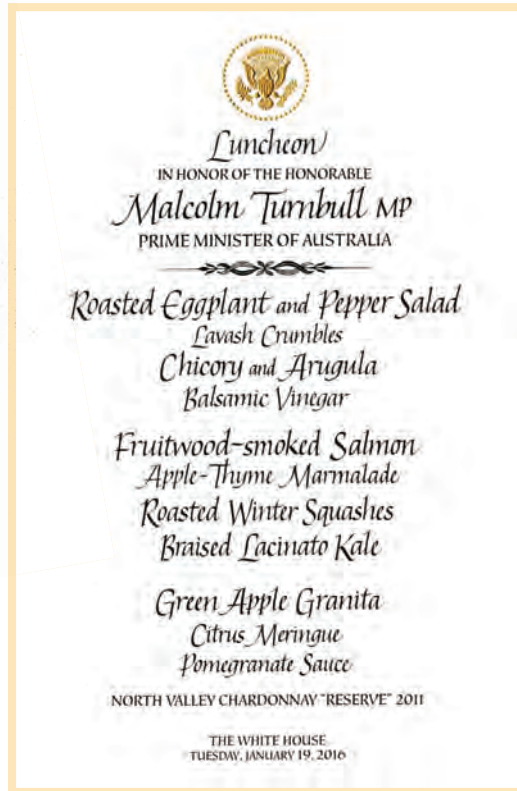
For more formal events, the artists rely on a menu stock that is 100% cotton three-ply, pre-printed with a gold beveled edge and pre-engraved with the Coat of Arms of the President of the United States.

For less formal events, the office can use its own four-color printer. "We do have the luxury of printing something in-house in color," noted Pat. "And it accommodates a heavier card stock weight, which we have engraved with the POTUS Coat of Arms and keep on hand for smaller or last minute events."

## Preparing for State Dinners

A State Dinner taps all of their skills, beginning with calligraphy.

"State Dinner invitations are still hand lettered, with a gap in the engraved invitation so that the guest's



Luncheon menus lettered by Debra Brown (above) and Rick Muffler (right), who retired in 2014 after more than 30 years as a White House calligrapher.



name will be added to match the lettering,” said Pat. “It will look like it was hand lettered just for them. It’s kind of a throwback to the days where the entire invitation used to be hand inscribed.” Inserted with each invitation is a matching response card.

Planning for a State Dinner begins months in advance after the First Lady selects a theme for the décor and choices are made for the tablecloths, flowers, china and room ornamentation. Pat and her staff then design graphic pieces that tie together all of these elements, from the invitations to the items positioned at each place setting. They include place cards and either a menu or a larger program which would contain the menu and other information, such as a description of the night’s entertainment.

They also hand-letter escort envelopes for each guest containing a card directing the guest to the proper table and prepare in typography a program for the Arrival Ceremony, often attended by up to 5,000, that takes place on the morning of the dinner.

“We do hand write all of our invitation envelopes,

but there is no calligraphy involved because of the sheer number,” notes Pat. Instead, the artists employ a social script patterned after the Palmer Method, using a black Pilot G-Tec in size .03 or .04. “It has a beautiful fine line and works well with our cotton paper.”

### On Site at State Dinners

The day of the State Dinner is both long and busy. The calligraphers finish up last-minute lettering (often having received a final guest list just the day before), organize the place cards in the proper order and insert table numbers into each escort envelope.

“When we get the okay that the tables are ready for us, we go into the State Dining Room and set out each place card and the program or menu,” said Pat.

Dressed up for the occasion, they greet guests and hand them their escort envelopes. “If there is a case where a name is misspelled, or maybe we have a gentleman as a ‘Mr.’ and he’s a ‘Dr.’, we will find out when the guest comes to the White House gate,” said Pat. “We quickly redo the place card and escort

envelope with the goal that, by the time the guest arrives at our station, everything is correct.”

Changes may also crop up at the time they greet a guest. “If there’s something we discover—he might mention, ‘Oh, I have that name but I go by so-and-so’—we will quickly go upstairs and write out a new place card,” Pat explained. “By the time he is seated in the room, it’s all correct as he wants it.”

While the President often hosts world leaders in the State Dining Room, seated dinners can vary in size, location and ambiance. “They can be very intimate,” Pat said, citing smaller dinners in the Blue Room. “We’ve also had large events in a tent on the South Lawn with a beautiful open view of the White House in the background.” One such occasion was the 2014 U.S.-Africa Leaders Summit, where the guest list of nearly 400 included heads of state and government officials from 50 African nations.

“Whoever is here, we try to do our best to make all the President’s official, social and ceremonial events run smoothly,” Pat said. “The same attention is paid whether it’s ten guests or 300.”

The staff is gratified to know their creations are presented to heads of state, dignitaries and celebrities.

“These pieces are carried home by guests and placed in their scrapbooks and framed on their walls,” Pat said. “We’ve seen people pass the menus around to have them autographed by the others at the table as a keepsake ... so I think they’re treasured.”

And there are new ways, beyond the formality and tradition of State Dinners, that the artistry of Pat, Debra and Becky is being shared. “Some of the calligraphy for events does show up on the First Lady’s Instagram,” Pat said. “She has posted images of the State Dinners ... and they get a lot of likes!”

# Singapore State Dinner

For the state dinner honoring the Singapore Prime Minister and his wife, “the First Lady chose a beautiful palette of yellows and golds ... to show the friendship that the two countries share,” Pat Blair said.

“I made a pen-and-ink sketch of the flower motif in the tablecloth,



added color in Photoshop and created an overall pattern in InDesign,” she said.

The design was printed on paper duplexed

onto the inside of the program’s cover, a dark grey metallic stock with the presidential seal engraved in silver.

“This complemented everything that was chosen for the table,” Pat noted.

Debra Brown laid out the contents of the program in InDesign, using type for information about the entertainment, and Pat designed the menu, which is a combination of calligraphy and typography.

“I originally lettered all the food items by hand, but when I laid it out I saw it was too fussy and the writing would have to be reduced so much it would be hard to read,” Pat said. “When that happens, we use a combination of typography and calligraphy.”

The copperplate on the menu reflected the engraved copperplate invitations (far right) lettered by Debra that guests had excitedly received by mail.

*M*  
Calamc

Marger

*L*  
Cucum

*A*

Roasted Yc  
Waits-N

*W*

Wolffer Esta



*Dinner*



*Maryland Blue Crabs*

*Amanshi Curd, Crisped Root Vegetables  
Spiced Crab Tuille  
Argerum Sauvignon Blanc "Sybarite" 2014*

*Local Tomato Salad  
Cucumber, Pickled Green Mangoes,  
and Papaya*

*Soursop Sorbet, Lime Basil*

*American Wagyu Beef*

*with Marrow Crust*

*Red Yam • Wilted Kale and Heirloom Carrots  
Rifts-Mast Pinot Noir "Deer Meadows" 2012*

*Peach Sangria  
White House Honey Brittle*

*Chamomile Anglaise*

*Estate "Noblesse Oblige" Sparkling Rosé 2012*



*The President and Mrs. Obama  
request the pleasure of your company  
at a dinner in honor of*

*His Excellency*

*Lee Hsien Loong*

*Prime Minister of the Republic of Singapore*

*and Mrs. Lee Hsien Loong*

*to be held at*

*The White House*

*on Tuesday, August 2, 2016*

*at seven o'clock*

*Black Tie*

*Southeast Entrance*

*The  
Ambassador  
OF THE  
Republic of Singapore*

Just as in this sample at left lettered by Becky Larimer, the front of each escort envelope is written with the full title of the guest. Inside is a card with the table assignment written on it. The calligraphers distribute these to the guests as they arrive for an event and remain on hand in case they need to make a change.

# Canada State Dinner



*The President and Mrs. Obama  
request the pleasure of your company  
at a dinner in honor of  
The Right Honorable  
Justin Trudeau, P.C., M.P.  
Prime Minister of Canada  
and Mrs. Grégoire Trudeau  
to be held at  
The White House  
on Thursday, March 10, 2016  
at seven o'clock*

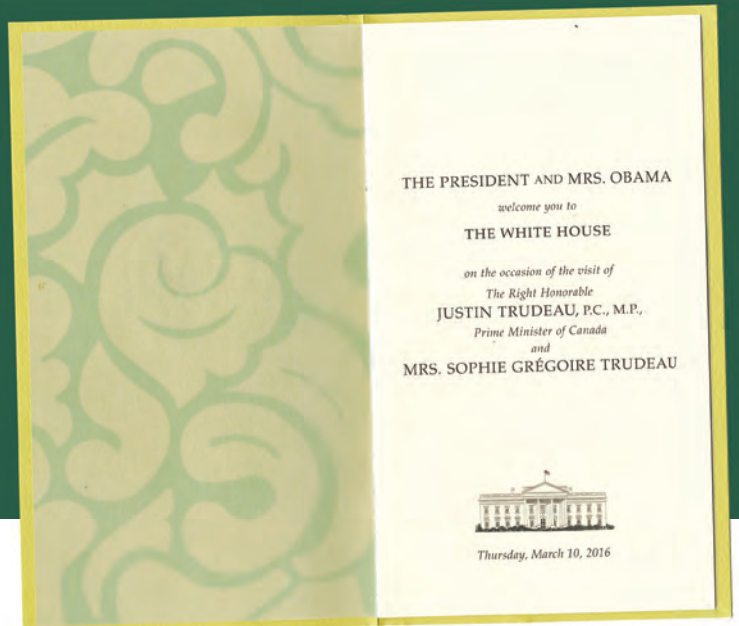
*Black Tie*

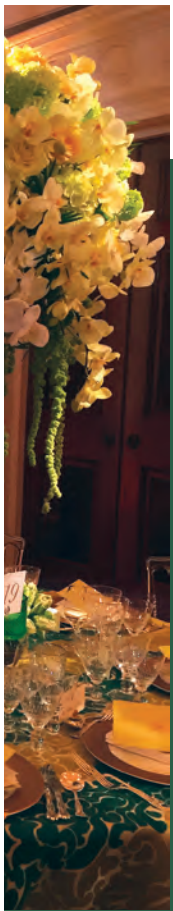
*Southeast Entrance*



Above, Pat Blair sets out place cards and programs in the East Room prior to the State Dinner in honor of Prime Minister of Canada Justin Trudeau.

Like all such events, the work of the calligraphy staff was inspired by the décor chosen by the First Lady. A sample table setting is put together "and from that we'll get the color scheme, we'll know the tablecloth they are using, we'll know the china," Pat said. "We then try in our printed pieces to tie it all together."





The cover was inspired by the celadon green in the floral arrangements, and the liner (bottom of opposite page) featured Pat's computer-drawn illustration inspired by the pattern in the tablecloth. It was printed on translucent vellum in a color that complemented the Obama china used for the event.

Like the invitation, the menu calligraphy was copperplate script with "a little bit of a flourish." At the bottom of the menu, Pat lettered an "f" with a flourished descender. When she laid out the menu, she decided to bring it down below the wine line by extending it in Photoshop (right).

"It's nice to add those hand-touched elements so people know it's not a font," she said.

In recognition of her expertise with the pointed pen, Pat Blair was named a Master Penman by the International Association of Master Penmen, Engrossers and Teachers of Handwriting in 2005.

## Dinner

*Alaskan Halibut Casseroles*  
*Cepes · Asparagus*  
*Chanterelles · Baby Onions*  
*Lardon · Herbed Butter*

*Roasted Apricot Galette*  
*Appalachian Cheese*  
*Heirloom Lettuces*  
*Pine Nut Crisps*

PENCE CHARDONNAY "SEBASTIANO" 2013

*Baby Lamb Chops*  
*Yukon Potato Dauphinoise*  
*Fricassee of Spring Vegetables*

CLIFF LEDE "HIGH FIDELITY" 2012

*Maple Pecan Cake*  
*Butterscotch Swirl Ice Cream*  
*Cocoa Nit Wafer*

CHATEAU CHANTAL ICE WINE 2013



## CONGRESSIONAL PICNICS



The White House calligraphers are called on for jobs as small as place cards and as large as painting signs. The annual Congressional Picnic requires a lawn sign that generally copies each year's invitation. For the 2014 event, Pat painted the invitation's illustration in watercolor (left), hand-lettered "America's Pastime," added "Congressional Picnic" in type and created the edging and distressed look in Photoshop. Then they projected the image onto a sign, drawing it in pencil and

painting in latex house paint.

To reproduce the "America's Pastime" banner, Pat took the original hand lettering and printed it at the required size using the printer's tiling function, which output about 20 pieces of paper. After taping them together and rubbing pencil graphite on the back, she scored the outside of the letters to transfer the graphite so she could paint around the calligraphy in red (above right).

The theme of the Congressional Picnic in 2010 was Taste of the States, highlighting five areas of the country that have unique cuisines.

"Design evolves in different ways. The Social Secretary came in and we were talking about how to present the theme on the invitation," Pat recalled. "We chose different foods from those areas but also wanted to incorporate the Americana aspect of it. We came upon this play on the flag, with the red and the blue and the white stripes."

As they talked, Pat sketched out some foods and "they came out kind of haphazard like that. And we're both looking at it and we say, 'Hey, that's pretty cool.' So some things happen by accident. We went with the design jaunty on the page instead of stacked straight like a flag would be."



Debra painted the foods in watercolor and sent scans to Pat, who did the calligraphy and combined all the elements in InDesign.

## KIDS' "STATE DINNER"

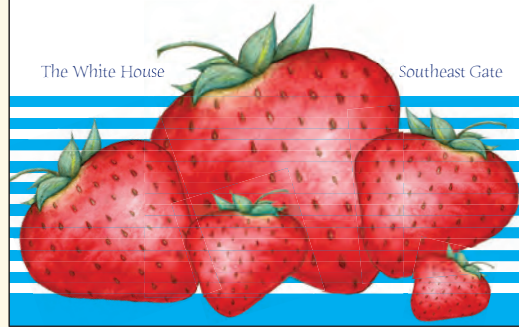
First Lady Michelle Obama hosted Kids' "State Dinners" for students from each state who had developed healthy recipes. Actually a brunch, they were held like a state dinner in the East Room, complete with White House china and beautiful décor. Becky Larimer designed the invitation at right based on the color scheme, painting a strawberry in watercolor and cloning it in InDesign. Due to the one-day turnaround on the menu, she used typography for the wording, selecting Humana, a "very calligraphic font." The calligraphers matched the font to letter place cards with broad-edged nibs.



Mrs. Obama  
requests the pleasure  
of your company  
at a  
**Luncheon** at the **White House**  
on Thursday, July 14, 2016  
at ten o'clock in the morning

The White House

Southeast Gate



## MOTHER'S DAY TEA



### Mother's Day Tea



*Cucumber-Watercress Sandwich*  
*Smoked Salmon on Blinis*  
*Chive Crème Fraîche*  
*Shaved Virginia Cured Ham*  
*on Buttermilk Biscuits*  
*Chesapeake Crab Salad*  
*on Profiteroles*  
*Hot Smoked Chicken Sandwich*  
*Mozzarella and Heirloom Tomatoes*  
*on Bruschetta*

*White Chocolate Raspberry Cake*  
*Lemon Madeleines*  
*White House Honey Cherry Tarts*  
*Chocolate Napoleon*  
*Decorated Flower Sugar Cookies*

JASMINE GREEN  
(TEAISM)  
DARJEELING "ORGANIC"  
(TEAISM)  
BLUEBERRY KONA POP TEA  
(TEAVANA)

THE WHITE HOUSE  
MONDAY, MAY 12, 2014

More than 100 military mothers and their families were invited to the White House for annual Mother's Day Teas. The military mothers in attendance, including military spouses, active duty and reserve service members, and women veterans, were feted in the East Room while the children made gifts for their mothers and grandmothers.

Pat Bair lettered the menu for the 2014 event and designed it to be offset-printed in green, including the outline of a pansy.

Once they got the printed job back, the calligraphers "had a painting party, which was kind of nice, because then the pansies were all different and the guests could see they were hand-painted," Pat said.

## TOUR GUIDEBOOKS

The White House calligraphers combine their lettering and graphic design skills to produce visitor guidebooks, tickets and even seed packets. Every spring and fall they create a full-color booklet and tickets for the popular White House garden tours. Pat designed the cover at right, using flower illustrations and calligraphy to enhance the beauty.

As part of the White House Kitchen Garden initiative, First Lady Michelle Obama visited schools with a basket filled with gardening tools and packets of seeds from the White House vegetable garden. The seed packets (below right), designed and printed by the calligraphers, were also given to White House visitors in large envelopes (below left). Pat created the calligraphy and vegetable watercolor illustrations, printed them in-house, then the team cut and glued the flat templates into seed packets or large envelopes.



## SEED PACKETS



Seed packets such as the one above were placed in a large envelope (left) that the calligraphers created. They designed the packet templates, printed them in-house, then trimmed, scored, folded and glued the edges of each packet to hold seeds.

# CHRISTMAS AT THE WHITE HOUSE

Christmas at the White House has always been a festive time, sparkling with decorations that the public is encouraged to view. To enhance their enjoyment, “We produce a tour book every holiday season, a tradition going back at least five decades,” said Pat Blair.

“Working with a contributing artist’s illustrations, and copy provided by the First Lady’s correspondence office, we design, produce the layouts, add calligraphy on the cover and prepare to print,” she said.

“For the past several years, we’ve been working with student artists in DC who come to the White House and talk to the designers ... and come up with these phenomenal images several weeks later.”

The calligraphers create pages in Adobe InDesign using portions of student art, and in Photoshop edit the art, “cloning one sprig of berries into a border, one vase to three, one cookie to several in different colors.”

The 16-page guidebooks, which include what is on the tour, White House history, healthy recipes and more, are “keepsake treasures to all the guests and tourists who visit the White House each holiday season,” Pat said.

The calligraphy staff does more to make the holidays special. “One year we created a dozen large banners about three feet wide, and with a wide Coit pen did the lettering in black sumi ink,” she said (photo at right).

During December the President and First Lady host about 20 holiday receptions, and the calligraphers prepare invitations and response cards for each event.

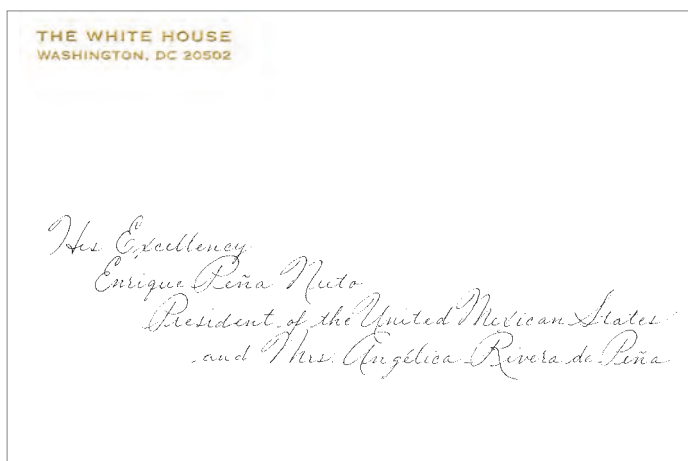
They hand address more than 8,000 envelopes for the guests using a social script and fine-point Pilot G-Tec pens. Becky Larimer, who joined the staff in 2014, lettered the envelope at right. ❖



In recent years the 16-page holiday tour books featured artwork from Washington, DC students, such as the 2012 guidebook (above). Pat lettered “Joy to All” and added type to complete the cover.



One of many banners Pat lettered in 2010 to announce the theme that holiday season. This one was just inside the East Wing entrance, but most were placed on Christmas trees in each of the White House rooms on the public tour.



# Presidential Inaugurations

SAMMY LITTLE



Sammy Little, shown here making a presentation at the Baltimore Museum of Art, lettered the Inaugural Luncheon place cards (below) with Gillott 303 nibs and 38 years of professional experience.



Inaugural luncheon place setting with Sammy's card. Right: She addressed the luncheon envelopes with black ink she mixes from green bottle sumi, "something that's less abrasive to nibs [than sumi] and a bit of gum Arabic, to help keep the ink from rubbing off the paper."

Immediately after new presidents are sworn in, they are escorted into the Capitol for the Inaugural luncheon, where they are seated at a place card that Sammy Little has lettered on gilt-edged Crane stock. Since 1996 Sammy has been hired to address the luncheon's invitation envelopes and letter the place cards. Sammy attends every Inaugural luncheon in order to make last-minute changes using a small, battery-powered light box.

"Behind the scenes in Statuary Hall is so exciting," she enthused. "Before I could put out my escort envelopes, a caterer ironed the cloth right on the table."

The weeks leading up to the inauguration are frantic, as the Inaugural Committee makes last-minute changes to the list of invitees and a driver picks up Sammy's addressed envelopes from her home studio at least once a day.

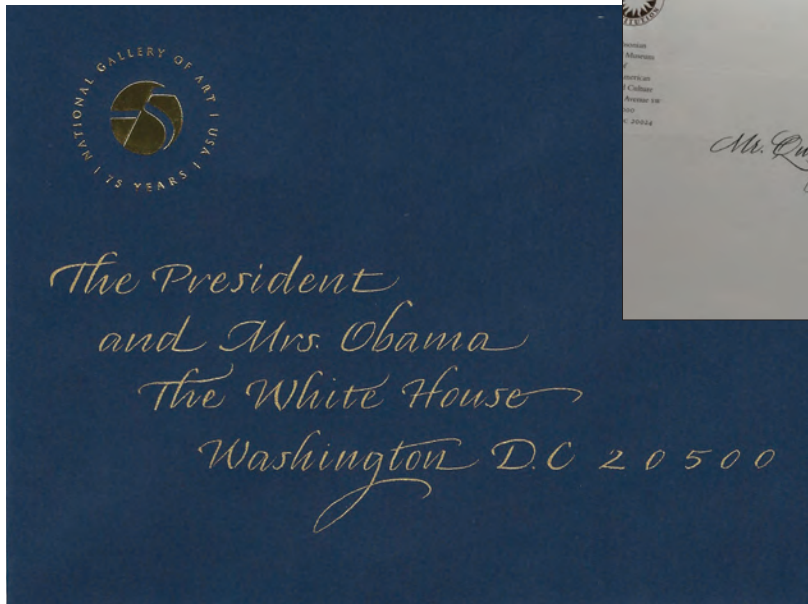
"The night before the 2013 inaugural, I got no sleep because of requests for changes in place cards," she said, "and the driver came for me at 5 am to take me to the Capitol!"

Because of the historic 2009 inauguration of Barack Obama, she was interviewed in her studio by NBC and Fox television networks. "I'll never forget being driven into Washington in the dark and seeing people streaming to the Capitol" to witness the swearing-in.

"The mantle of the presidency is handed over so smoothly, no matter the politics of the people involved," she said. "I'm honored to be asked to do this work and feel privileged to be inside the Capitol while the luncheon is taking place." ❖

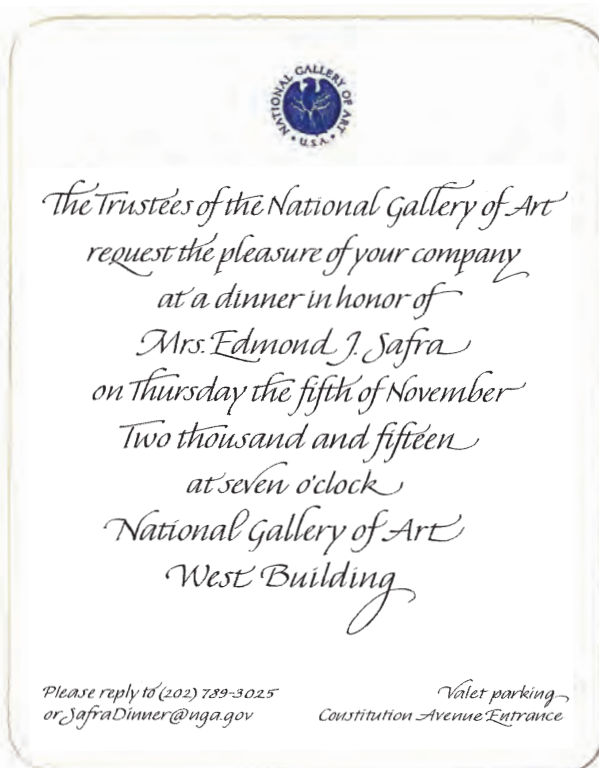
*The President  
and Mrs. Obama  
The White House  
Washington, District of Columbia*

Sammy's work is part of another historic occasion: the opening of the Smithsonian Museum of African-American History and Culture. With a pointed pen she combined elements of copperplate and italic.



When writing on dark stock in white or metallics, she prefers to use Gillott 303 pointed nibs "to get a consistent flow more easily than contending with a reservoir."

Sammy prepares new nibs by "putting them quickly into a match flame a couple of times, then quickly into water, just to remove any varnish or coating." She does the same thing with new chisel-edged nibs, then sharpens "just the top side of the nib on an Arkansas stone to get a very fine line where needed."



Sammy lettered the invitation and menu at left for the National Gallery of Art in italic with Mitchell nibs.

When they wanted "something fun and flouished" (below), Sammy used her favorite Gillott 303 nib and mixed a red with gouache and watercolor.



To create a menu or invitation that will be printed, Sammy letters a rough in ink on Letraset Bleedproof Marker or Canson Pro Marker layout paper, does it again to center the lines, and then letters a final version. She doesn't scan or touch up her calligraphy in Photoshop. "It goes to clients and they deal with the printer, sending a note to keep the hairlines thin without losing them," she said. "Whenever I do an invitation that is engraved or letterpress printed, often the hairlines become thicker but that's just the nature of the process."

# Calligrapher to the Vice President

LEE ANN CLARK

Lee Ann Clark has specialized in the pointed pen since the 1980s. "I'm constantly changing my script to keep it fresh," she said. "To me the beauty is in the life and movement of the letters."



*M*otoring past the embassies on Massachusetts Avenue, Lee Ann Clark turns onto the grounds of the U.S. Naval Observatory and passes through security. She parks near the Vice President's Residence, prepared for some last-minute lettering before a formal dinner.

She had been up since dawn to help feed the chickens and turkeys on her farm, located north of Baltimore. On most days, she would then retreat to her home studio to create artwork for weddings and other events.

But she's also been handling the Vice President's calligraphy since 2006, when the previous freelancer, Pat Blair, was hired by the White House. The VP's office tried out several calligraphers before giving Lee Ann a rush job. "We worked well together and I've been their contractor ever since," she said.

In addition to lunches or dinners, which could be formal or informal, "the Vice President hosts some celebratory events. Unless they have a specific look they want, I can be creative and have fun," she said. "The Bidens have a contemporary sensibility, whereas the Cheneys were more traditional."

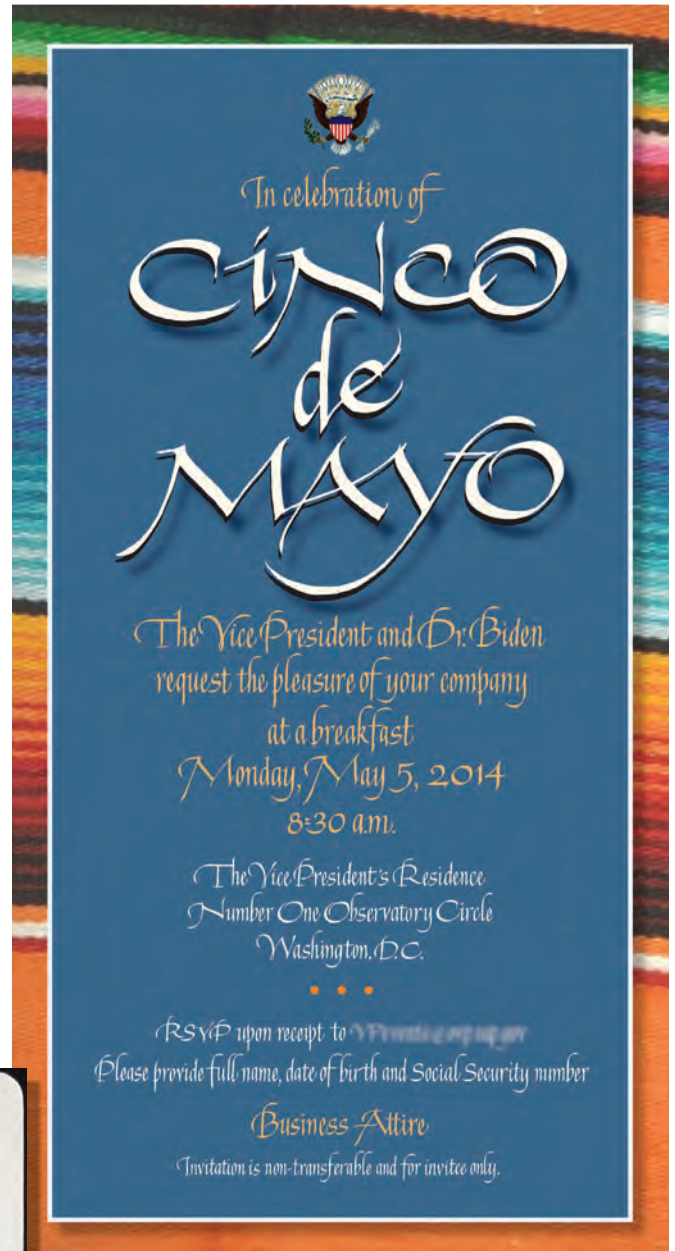
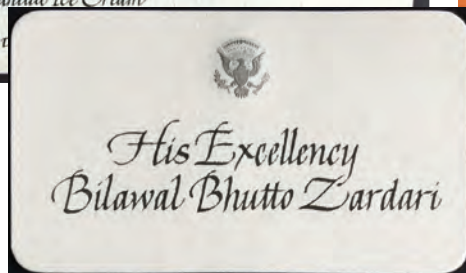
Lee Ann starts all her invitations and menus with roughs on a graph pad, then moves to a piece of Borden and Riley #100s which she runs through her inkjet to print baseline, x-height and angle lines in blue. She does her final lettering using Sumi green cap ink and pointed nibs—Leonardt Principal and Brause EF66 are her two favorites—using the roughs just as a guide.

After scanning the sheets in black-and-white bitmap at 1200 dpi, which makes the blue lines





Lee Ann Clark was on hand at the Vice President's dinner honoring two chiefs of state in case new place cards were required. In the days before the event, she painstakingly hand-painted flags on menus she had lettered in italic and that were printed in black. The U.S. flag was a particular challenge as she painted around all 50 stars—"or at least tried to," she said.



Lee Ann lettered the above breakfast invitation with a Mitchell 2 and 4. She prefers to work large and then reduce the lettering in InDesign, where she adds color, drop shadows and other design elements. She leased the image of the fabric background from an online art service for a small fee.

drop out, she cleans up her lettering in Photoshop. Moving to Adobe InDesign, Lee Ann reduces it to print size and adds effects such as color or drop shadows to some of the words. She sends the proof to the VP's Social Secretary, who organizes and manages all of the events. After changes, Lee Ann emails the file as a PDF to the printer.

The invitation envelopes are handled by the VP's office, but she letters place cards, escort envelopes and other items on stock she keeps on hand in her studio,

including gold and silver-beveled stock engraved with the Seal of the Vice President of the United States.

In recent years, most of the VP's invitations have been evites, electronic invitations Lee Ann designs even though they often use little or no calligraphy.

"The majority of their receptions don't require menus and place cards, but the Bidens like to have appealing invitations," said Lee Ann. With a degree in graphic design and extensive calligraphic experience, she enjoys the creative challenge.



The Vice President and Dr. Biden  
request the pleasure of your company  
at dinner

with

His All Holiness Bartholomew  
Archbishop of Constantinople, New Rome  
and Ecumenical Patriarch

and

The Holy Synod of America

on

Wednesday, the fourth of November  
two thousand and nine  
at seven-thirty o'clock  
Cocktail reception at seven o'clock

The Vice President's Residence  
Number One Observatory Circle, NW  
Washington, District of Columbia

Invitation is non-transferable

Black tie

The Bidens wanted a formal look for the Archbishop's dinner invitation, so "I lettered it in a hybrid of pointed pen styles," Lee Ann said, adding, "I'm not much of a purist."

Formal events still require house calls and a trip to Washington. Bringing a bag with all her supplies including a small light table, Lee Ann letters last-minute changes, sets out her menus and place cards at every seat and helps in other ways.

While the VP's Residence seats about 40, "for more guests or standing receptions, they'll put up a tent or move to a larger venue like the Observatory," she said.

Discretion is an important quality when working at



Breakfast

in celebration of

Cinco de Mayo

May 2, 2012

Tortilla Española

Potato and Egg Omelette

with Tomatillo and Poblano Sauce

Chorizo

Roasted Tomato and Sliced Avocado

Fresh Fruit

The Vice President's Residence • Washington, DC

the Vice President's home, so Lee Ann makes a point of lettering quickly and remaining inconspicuous. Yet when an event is underway, the Washington Calligraphers Guild member is often able to share in the excitement.

"I love being on site, seeing people coming in and looking at and holding the things that I've lettered," she said. "Especially when there are visiting dignitaries, I feel like I'm a small bit of history." ♦♦

Right: Using a pointed pen, Lee Ann enjoys having fun with letterforms and embellishments when the occasion gives her more freedom. She teaches pointed pen for the Smithsonian Associates Studio Arts program in Washington.



Dinner  
in honor of  
*His Excellency Xi Jinping*  
Vice President of the People's Republic of China  
February 14, 2012



Delaware Crab Cakes  
with Corn Salad, Mache, and Basil Tartar Sauce

Balsamic Marinated Beef Tenderloin  
with Balsamic Shallot Sauce

Wild Rice and Orzo Pilaf  
Roasted Root Vegetables  
with Ancho Honey Glaze

Poached Pears  
with Truffle and Ginger Pear Sorbet

HALL SAUVIGNON BLANC NAPA VALLEY 2010  
HALL CABERNET SAUVIGNON NAPA VALLEY 2009  
The Vice President's Residence & Washington, DC

Menus are offset printed on heavy Crane stock that is beveled and edged in silver or gold and engraved with the Vice President's seal. Images such as the dragon (above) are from an art service, but Lee Ann created the pointed pen motifs, including the lily of the valley at left.



Dinner  
11th April 2011



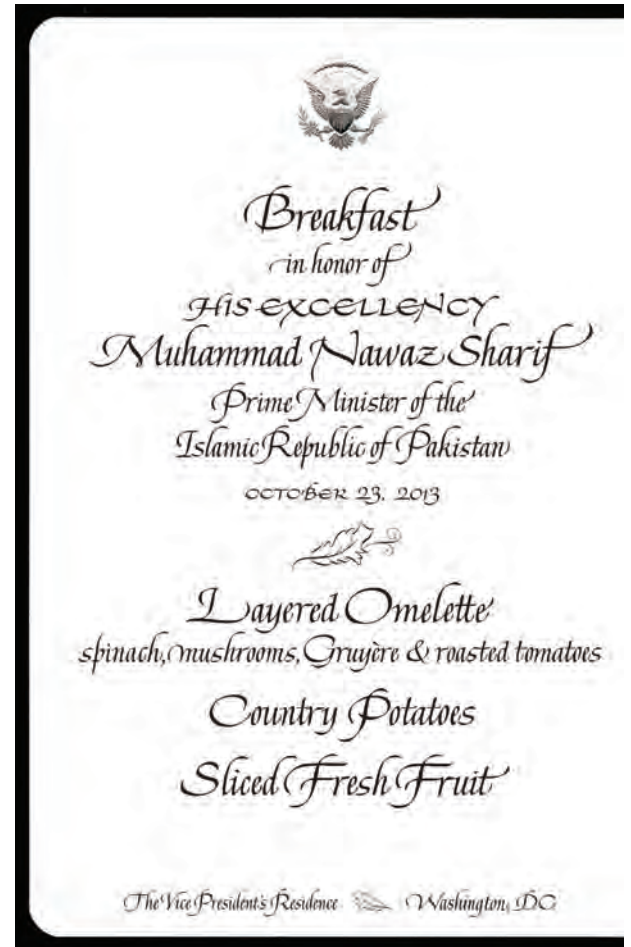
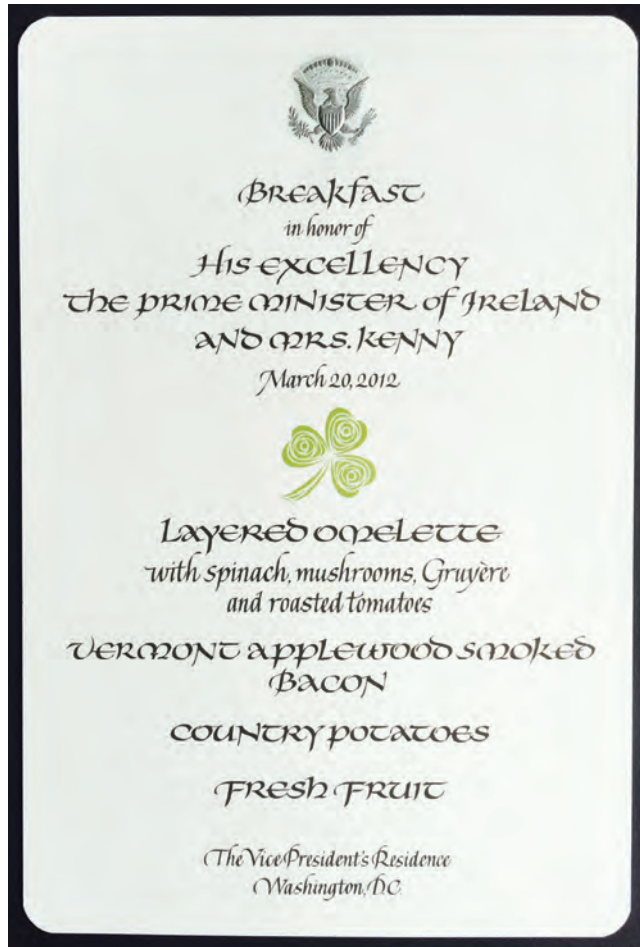
Tender Baby Spinach Salad  
Applewood smoked Bacon &  
Red Wine Vinaigrette

Sautéed Filet of Sea Bass  
Herbust Couscous  
Asparagus with Lemon Sauce

Caramelized Williams Pear Tart  
Blackberries, Almonds  
and Sauce Anglaise

The Vice President's Residence & Washington, DC

Four menus hand-lettered with a broad-edged pen. The shamrock and embellishment at far right are art-service images; the smaller touches are Lee Ann's.



Invitation to the Vice President's annual St. Patrick's Day breakfast combines Lee Ann's calligraphy, typography and a Celtic knot image from an art service. The Prime Minister of Ireland attends the popular event held in his honor along with numerous Irish-American politicians.

In recent years, most of the Vice President's invitations have been designed on computer and sent electronically. Lee Ann creates them in Photoshop and InDesign even though they use little or no calligraphy, as in the reception invitation at right produced entirely with fonts.

A decade before becoming a professional calligrapher, Lee Ann Clark earned a degree in graphic arts in 1981. She continued to develop her graphic skills using new technologies, and her experience designing calligraphic projects has enhanced her typographic eye.

Far right: Every year Lee Ann creates holiday tour brochures on the computer for the many receptions at the Vice President's Residence.





# The State Department's Calligrapher

JENNIFER NICHOLSON



Jennifer Nicholson is the calligrapher and graphic designer in the Office of the Chief of Protocol at the U.S. Department of State. As a Senior Protocol Officer, she provides assistance and guidance on protocol practices to include precedence order, condolence book procedures, flag protocol, use of the Great Seal, forms of address and proper use of honorifics and titles.

Diplomacy is part of the job for the U.S. Department of State's calligrapher and graphic designer, so Jennifer Nicholson has also earned the title of Senior Protocol Officer. The title comes with unique opportunities such as escorting foreign ambassadors to the White House to present their credentials to the President and serving as lead advance for Inaugurations, State of the Union and Joint Session speeches at the Capitol that the Diplomatic Corps is invited to attend.

She often travels to international summits hosted by the United States, such as NATO 2012 in Chicago and the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation conference held in Hawaii in 2011, doing calligraphy and seated events hosted by the Secretary of State.

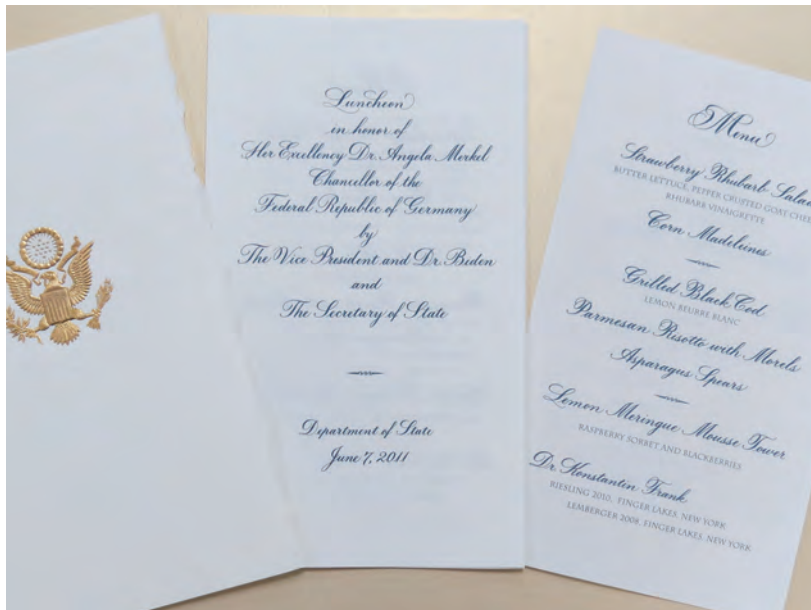
"For APEC, I lettered all the place cards in advance but couldn't do the menu, since it hadn't been decided," Jen said. "So after landing in Honolulu, I quickly set up in a conference center to design that evening's menu on my laptop, but I had Internet and technical problems printing and had less than two hours before departing for the venue.

"I lettered place card changes and placed everything onto the outdoor dinner table in time to see a beautiful sunset on the Pacific," she recalled. "Unfortunately the meeting ran late and the dinner participants missed the sunset and incredible water view."

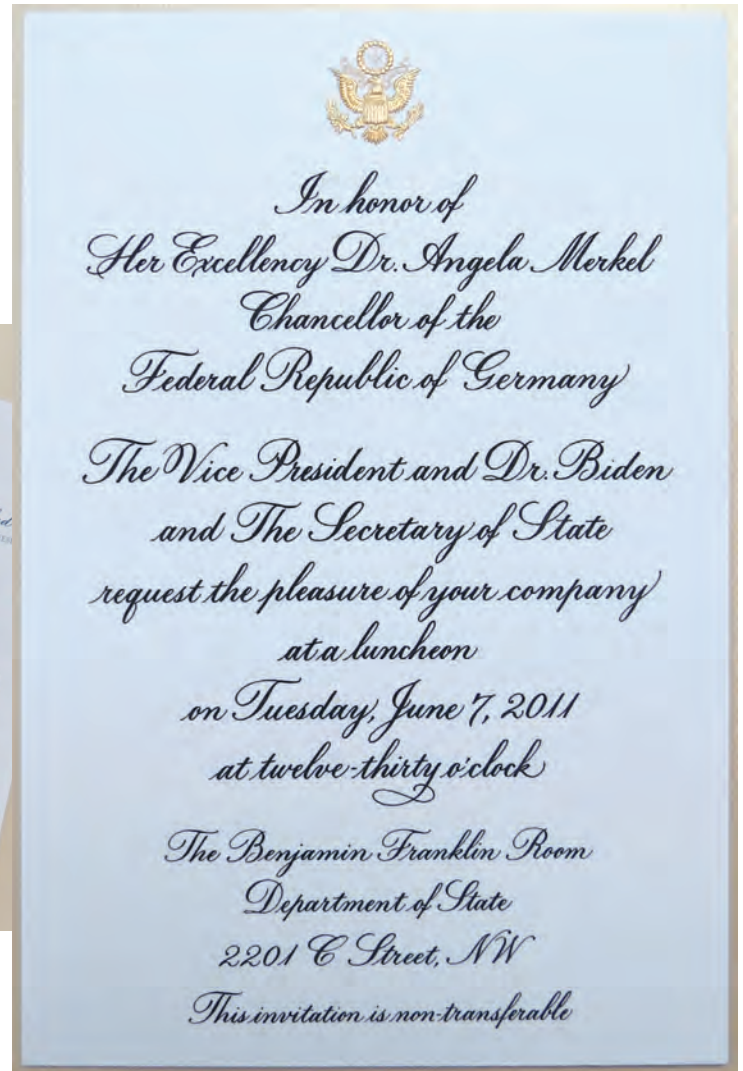
She also lettered revisions for the President's Leaders dinner and the First Lady's luncheon for spouses.



Jen designed the menu program for the State Luncheon honoring the Prime Minister of Japan. She chose a pearl iridescent paper that was printed in blue ink with a gold foil Great Seal.



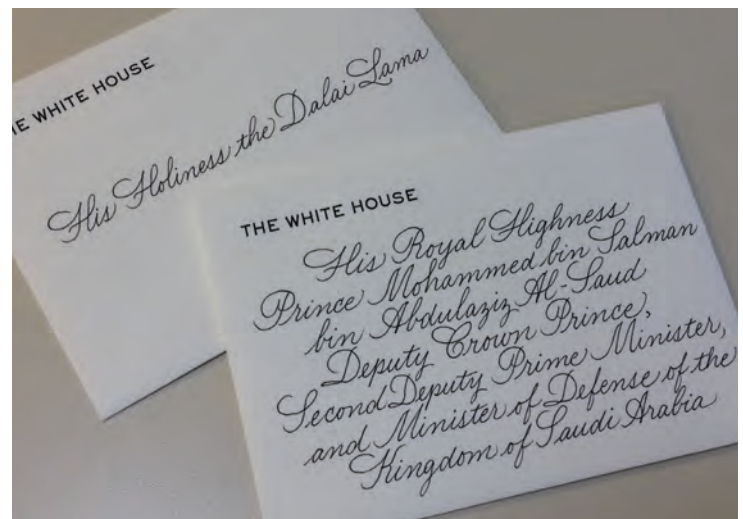
Jennifer Nicholson lettered the engraved invitation (right) for the State Luncheon honoring the Chancellor of Germany in pointed pen. She also used calligraphy for the program's menu and insert (above), which were printed on a crisp white stock with a deckle-edged cover, which she prefers for its hand-made look.



"In order to produce professional printed materials while traveling, I take along a small ink-jet printer, Canon Pixma iP100, for last-minute tent cards, menus and printed place cards. I can print on 120# cover that has the engraved gold seals," Jen said.

Her efforts afford her a unique perspective on international affairs. "I'm honored to view present-day history and witness diplomacy at work," said Jen, who had previously been a graphic designer for the Smithsonian Institution. After she was hired by the State Department in 1998, Jen entered "a completely different world—fast-paced and also political." She has worked at four peace talks, three Inaugurations, 16 openings of the United Nations General Assembly, numerous summits and two events at Camp David.

When a new Chief of Protocol took office, Jen assumed additional responsibilities. "The new chief wanted an outreach program for the foreign



The Gifts Division, located in the Office of the Chief of Protocol, is responsible for gifts presented by the President, First Lady, Vice President, Second Lady and the Secretary of State. Jen has hand lettered several thousand 2½ x 3½" gift envelopes for foreign dignitaries presented in the United States and on trips abroad.

ambassadors in Washington, so we started arranging Experience America trips to cities and states (California, Texas, Arkansas, Alaska, New Orleans, Boston, New York). “I was responsible for the invitations, menus and 250 place cards and escort envelopes for welcome dinners in other cities as well as designing the 75-page trip book,” she said.

To Jen the events are “all about building relationships—creating an environment for diplomatic relations to take place.” The Chief of Protocol hosts luncheons for newly accredited ambassadors as well as welcome and farewell teas, and the guests include White House, State Department and National Security staff for the diplomats to establish relationships, which, Jen said, the Diplomatic Corps appreciates.

Menu and insert for a dinner honoring the Archbishop of Constantinople were stamped with gold foil on bronze Stardream paper. The cover, white Strathmore Pastelle with a deckle edge, was engraved with a gold seal. The inserts and cover were secured by a gold cord.

“I think that’s why we pay attention to so many details—to let our foreign guests know that thought and consideration are put into events in their honor.”

## Preparing for State Visits

Occasions involving chiefs of state demand particular attention. Jen creates a program booklet including the menu, chef biography, cultural connections of the food, flowers and entertainment selections and quotes by the Vice President and Secretary. The meal is prepared by a chef from the Department of State’s Diplomatic Culinary Partnership program’s American Chef Corps.

It is necessary to be flexible and ready for changes after files are sent to the printer. The menu for a dinner honoring the Archbishop of Constantinople had a last-minute menu change. But Jen, who designed the program to be stamped in gold foil, had already sent out the files for plates to be made. “Luckily the plates hadn’t been made, so that evening I redid the

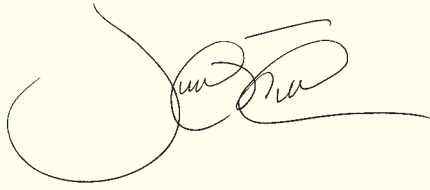
calligraphy and at 11 pm I delivered a new menu file,” she said.

The morning of a State Visit is hectic. While the Arrival Ceremony is taking place at the White House, the Protocol Ceremonials Division is preparing to receive 230 guests for the State Luncheon in the Benjamin Franklin Room at the Department of State.

“The final seating needs to be signed off by 8 a.m. in order for the time schedule to go smoothly. Many times we receive major seating



*Merçi pour le magnifique accueil!*



*Avec profonde reconnaissance,*



*The Right Honorable  
Justin Trudeau, P.C., M.P.  
Prime Minister of Canada  
and Mrs. Sophie Grégoire Trudeau*

*March 10, 2016*



Secretary John Kerry invites the Prime Minister of Canada and Mrs. Trudeau to sign the Department of State's guest book before the State Luncheon. On each page Jen letters the honorees' names using a Mitchell 3½ nib and Winsor & Newton jet black gouache. There are more than 100 inscriptions each year.

changes if a high-ranking government official is either added or regrets," Jen explained.

"After Secret Service sweeps the room [agents perform a security sweep when the Vice President is the co-host], it takes an hour to put the place cards on the 23 tables. Then I get changes and additions, so I letter new cards and swap them on the tables," Jen said.

Some guests are surprised to see the place cards written by hand. She views such situations as "an opportunity to share the world of calligraphy and assure them it's not a dying art."

## Guest Books

Among Jen's responsibilities when foreign leaders visit Washington are a pair of guest books, one at the State Department and the other at Blair House,

the President's guest house. Presidents and Prime Ministers write their signatures and a brief greeting to a page she has lettered with the visitor's name and full title. She uses italic and a Mitchell 3½ nib on the Secretary of State's book for a business look, and chooses copperplate for the President's book "for a more formal look."

Rather than ink, Jen prefers to use Winsor & Newton jet black gouache because it gives her finer lines. For pointed nibs, she relies on Brause BF66 because "it's nice and flexible and gives a lively line. It has spunk." For place cards she may use the Brause Rose nib. When Jen receives a guest list late and time is limited, she uses a Hunt 101 which "doesn't catch when writing quickly." Paper for roughs comes from Bienfang Graphics 360 or Borden & Riley Boris layout pads.

# Holiday Cards

For holiday cards Jen loves to use historical pieces from the collection of the Diplomatic Reception Rooms, and she was excited to find a Federalist sideboard featuring drawer pulls with a dove and the word "Peace." Jen commissioned Kristen Doty to render a drawer pull in colored pencils and pastels and to letter the greeting. The white cover of the tri-fold card (below) was a die cut of the dove, and when opened revealed the drawer pull and calligraphy. The back panel of the card (not shown) has a picture of the sideboard with its history and a description of the Diplomatic Reception Rooms and how they provide an ideal setting for engaging foreign dignitaries.



Jen creates conceptual designs for the Secretary's holiday cards that are sent to Foreign Ministers and the Chiefs of Diplomatic Missions. In 2015 she worked with a photographer to create this holiday image of the Treaty Room which has a nautical compass inlaid in the floor, a reference to Secretary Kerry's passion for the ocean.

For the 2010 holiday reception invitation (below), the calligraphy was printed in red ink within a red border of gold engraved filigree. There were three passes through the press: one for the engraved gold seal, a second for the red ink and a third for the engraved gold filigree. Jen placed the invitation off center "because I felt it was more dynamic and it reminded me of William Morris' off-center borders."





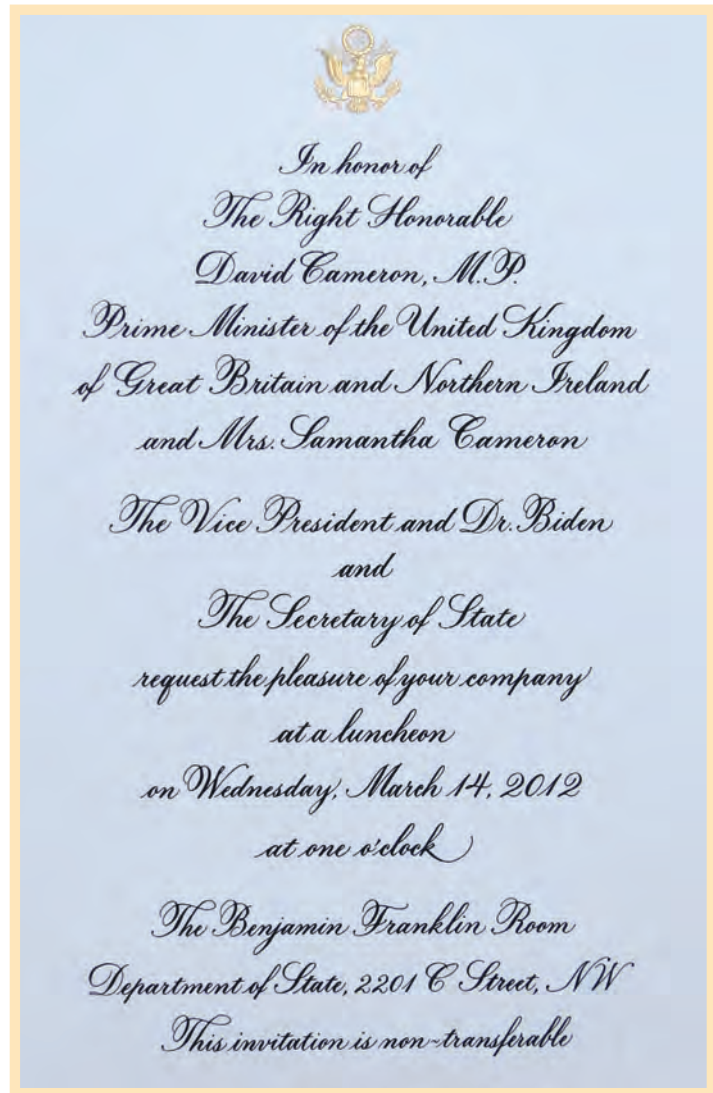
The digital age has increased the pace and quantity of projects, and Jen uses Photoshop and InDesign to meet the deadlines.

Digital technology came to her rescue during sequestration, when automatic spending cuts meant she could not hire freelance calligraphy help. "I had to figure out a way to streamline the process of producing place cards for large conferences and summits," Jen said.

She designed 8½ x 11" sheets foil stamped with eight gold seals that trim to eight place cards, then personalized them using Bickham script or Briosio font "so I could match by hand on last-minute changes."

Due to time constraints, Jen creates many assignments with typography. Since 2013 all invitations, both hand lettered and typeset, have been sent to recipients electronically. Besides the gift envelopes, the only envelopes she still hand addresses are the Secretary's holiday cards that are sent to Foreign Ministers around the world. ❖❖

For the U.S.-China Dialogue dinner, Jen's calligraphy was printed in thermography on the cover and the inside gold paper. She adhered each gold menu to the cover stock using an adhesive transfer gun.



Above: Hand-lettered and engraved invitation for the State Luncheon honoring the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

Above left: Place cards Jen lettered for a small farewell dinner.



# Interior Department Calligrapher

MARTA LEGECKIS



Marta Legeckis teaches broad-pen calligraphy for the Smithsonian Associates Studio Arts program in Washington.

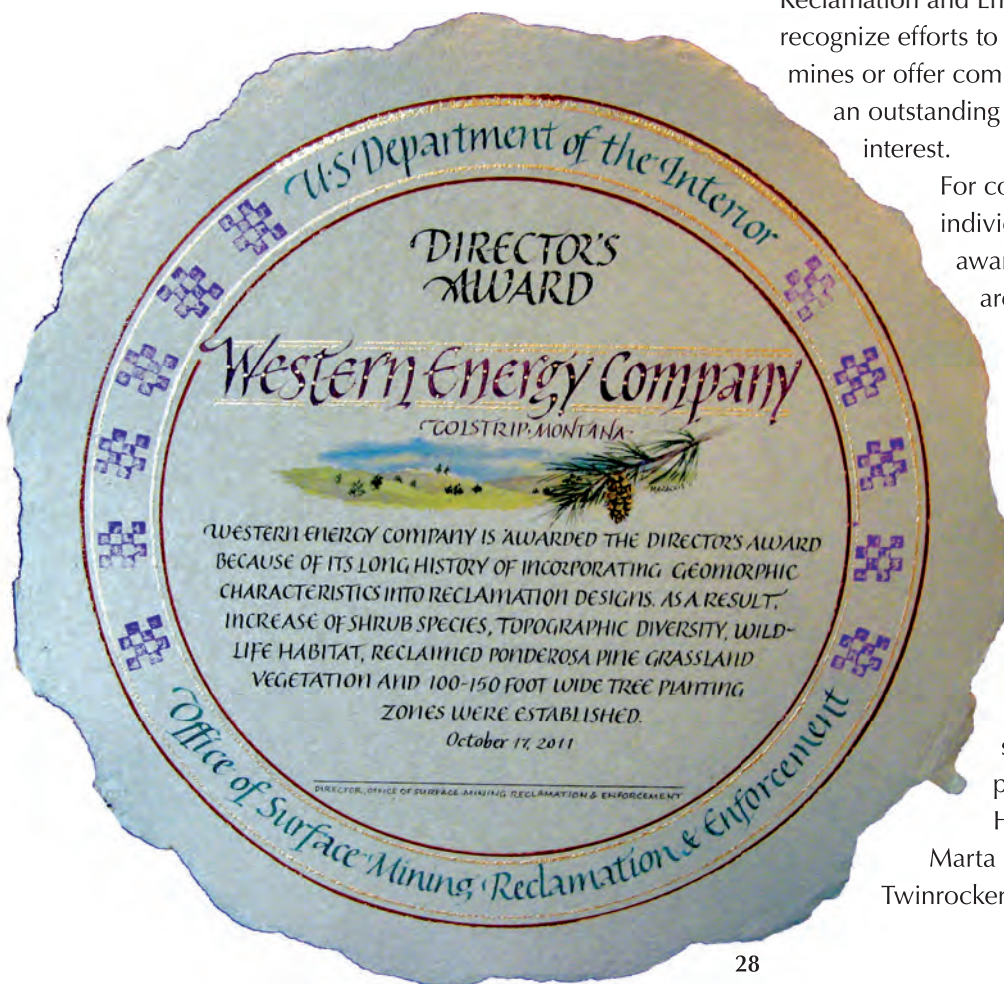
Official Washington includes an alphabet soup of federal agencies, but lettering artists working for them manage to apply the alphabet in creative ways. For example, the calligraphy of Marta Legeckis for the U.S. Department of the Interior is as varied and evocative as the public lands the Department oversees.

Marta designs and letters awards for two agencies within Interior, decorating her projects with collages of dried flowers, original watercolors and special papers. During the past decade, she has produced 15 to 25 original certificates each year for the Bureau of Land Management and the Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement. Most of the awards recognize efforts to restore land around abandoned mines or offer commendation to coal mines with an outstanding record of protecting the public interest.

For consistency, Marta creates an individual style for each type of award, but no two certificates are exactly alike. "Even though the layout is the same for a particular award, I try to use different decorations or lettering color," she said.

Lettering in italic and a variety of hands, she uses Mitchell, Brause or Speedball nibs (especially for larger lettering) and gouache or watercolor rather than ink. For gold, silver and bronze lettering she relies on pans of FineTec paint, as well as Schmincke and Holbein.

Marta creates many awards on circular Twinrocker handmade paper. As a bonus,



When the Department of the Interior commissions Marta Legeckis to create unique award certificates, she often uses Twinrocker hand-made paper because of the mill's selection of shapes, textures and earth tones.



Marta complements her calligraphy with watercolor illustrations. Her painting in the award at left showcased the coal company's success in restoring the mine's land so that wildlife have returned to graze and windmill farms that generate electricity have been erected.

“when ordering paper from Twinrocker, you can request that it be sized for calligraphy. This makes it possible to write on what might otherwise be porous paper surfaces,” she said.

“If the paper is porous, I may have to spray it with workable fixative. But it’s important to spray before you draw guidelines or you won’t be able to erase them.”

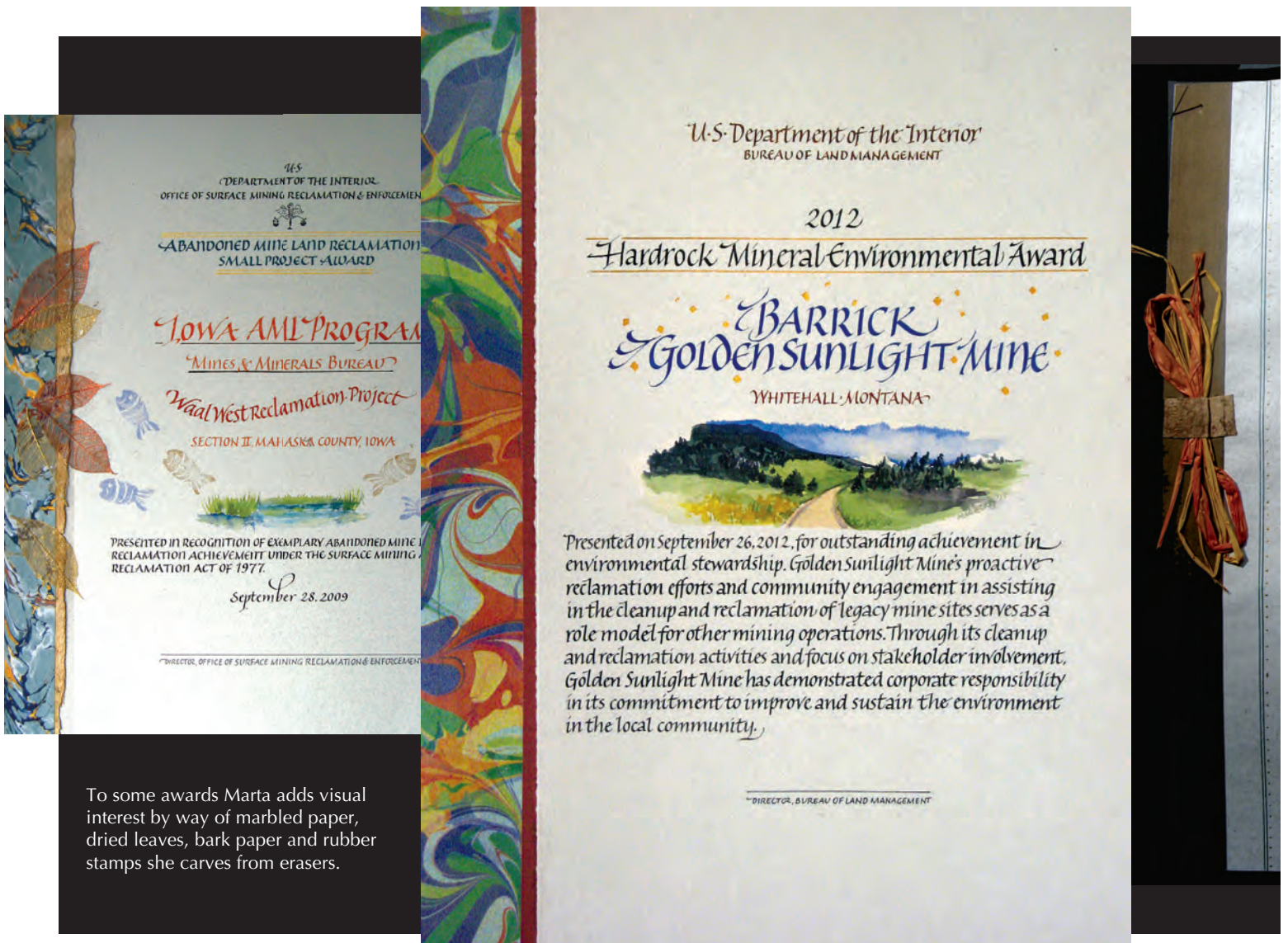
Others awards are lettered on Arches Text Wove or Fabriano Ingres to which Marta adds decorative elements such as marbled paper, dried leaves, bark paper and rubber stamps she carves from erasers.

“The client gives me a lot of freedom,” Marta said,

and that allows her to apply her creativity, her many decades of lettering expertise and her master’s degree in fine arts.

All awards begin as thumbnails in order to plan the layout, followed by roughs in ink. She lines the good paper with pencil because, she said, “the light table doesn’t work well for me. I find it bothers my eyes, but I often use it for envelopes and place cards.”

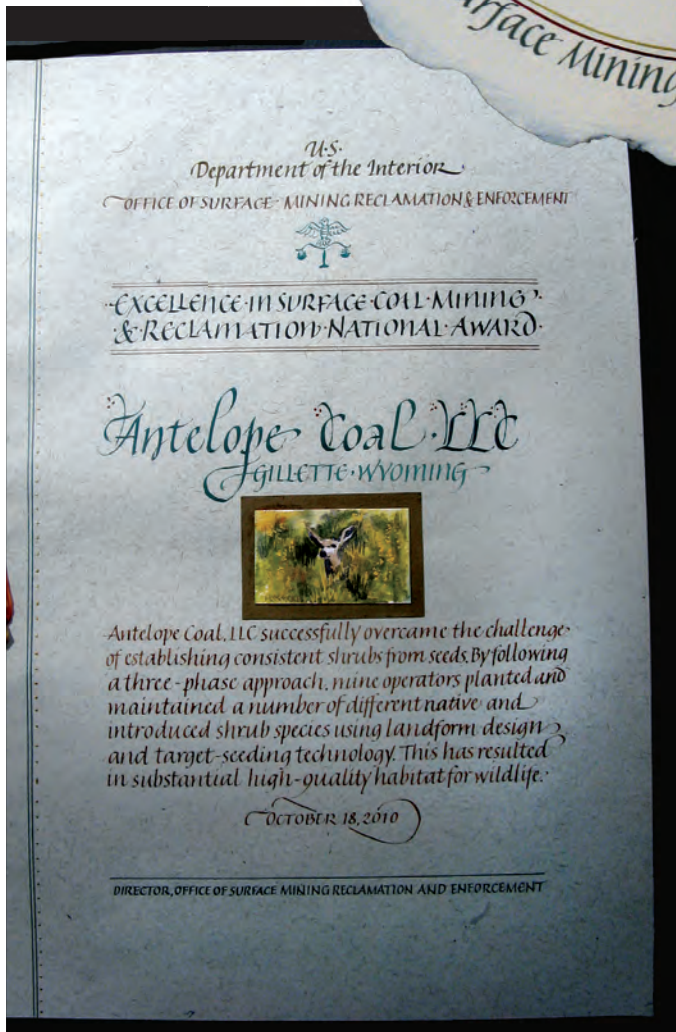
Marta especially enjoys enhancing her certificates with small watercolor paintings. “Personalizing the awards this way is truly meaningful to the people receiving them,” she said. ❖



To some awards Marta adds visual interest by way of marbled paper, dried leaves, bark paper and rubber stamps she carves from erasers.



Marta draws circles in gold and color using a ruling pen attached to a compass.



U.S. Department of the Interior  
OFFICE OF SURFACE MINING RECLAMATION & ENFORCEMENT

Excellence in Surface Coal Mining & Reclamation

**GOLD GOOD NEIGHBOR AWARD**

OCTOBER 18, 2010



**ICG Beckley, LLC**  
ECCLES, WEST VIRGINIA

ICG Beckley LLC is awarded the Gold Good Neighbor Award for their many community projects and environmental improvements in and around Eccles, West Virginia. ICG Beckley completed removal of the majority of the pre-law refuse as well as the completion of reclamation for this site. The project enhanced 2,602 linear feet of Miller's Camp Branch and 524 feet of Laurel Branch.

U.S. Department of the Interior  
OFFICE OF SURFACE MINING RECLAMATION & ENFORCEMENT

Excellence in Surface Coal Mining & Reclamation

**Silver Good Neighbor Award**



**Cloud Peak Energy Resources LLC**  
ANTELOPE, CORDERO ROJO, & SPRING CREEK MINES  
Gillette, Wyoming

Cloud Peak Energy Resources LLC was selected to receive the 2012 Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement Silver Good Neighbor Award for successfully working with the community while conducting exemplary mining and reclamation at the Antelope, Cordero Rojo, and Spring Creek Mines.

U.S. Department of the Interior  
OFFICE OF SURFACE MINING RECLAMATION & ENFORCEMENT

Excellence in Surface Coal Mining & Reclamation

**Good Neighbor Award**



**Oxford Mining Company, LLC**  
CADIZ, OHIO

Oxford Mining Company, LLC is awarded OSM's Good Neighbor Award for their many community projects and environmental improvements in and around the Harrison County area. Outstanding outreach activities include reforestation tours, workshop presentations, mine site classrooms, access roads for hunters, and handicap access to a public fishing area.

OCTOBER 17, 2011

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF SURFACE MINING RECLAMATION & ENFORCEMENT

U.S. Department of the Interior  
Office of Surface Mining Reclamation & Enforcement

Excellence in Surface Coal Mining & Reclamation

**BRONZE GOOD NEIGHBOR AWARD**



**COULTERVILLE COAL COMPANY, LLC**  
GATEWAY MINE  
RANDOLPH COUNTY, ILLINOIS

Presented on October 28, 2009 for actively recruiting employees from the surrounding communities and for participating in training and education programs to develop students to their full potential.

Director, Office of Surface Mining Reclamation & Enforcement

For consistency, Marta creates an individual style for each type of award, but no two certificates are exactly alike. For gold, silver and bronze lettering she used FineTec, Schmincke and Hol-bein products.

Her watercolor illustrations reinforce the citations. For example, the award at far left honors the mining company for creating handicap access for fishing. She cut the rubber fish stamps from an eraser.

# Presidential Commission

MOHAMED ZAKARIYA

**P**rofessional calligraphers are accustomed to rush jobs; but in 2009, Mohamed Zakariya had just three days to create an elaborate Arabic manuscript in time for President Obama to take it to Saudi Arabia as a present for King Abdullah. “It was kind of a command performance,” Mohamed remembered. “It takes a lot of work to make one of these things. You don’t just sit down and write them and gild them.”

The finished product, measuring nearly two square feet, features a verse from the Quran chosen by the President himself.

“It’s a very famous verse, which is meant to draw people together rather than make them flee apart,” Mohamed said. “I think it was a very good message.”

Translated from the Arabic, the verse reads:

*O people, we created you from the same male and female, and rendered you distinct peoples and tribes, that you may recognize one another. The noblest among you in God’s sight is the most conscientious of you. God is All-Knowing, All-Aware.*

The lettering at the top of the manuscript is the Besmele, the Arabic phrase in praise of God that opens the Quran and often precedes Quranic verses.

“I had to plan the entire project, select all the papers, create the design and do the actual lettering by the first night,” the artist recalled.

The first American-born master Arabic-script calligrapher, Mohamed is an expert at gracefully positioning each letter on the page. While consonants and semi-vowels make up the larger forms, “the narrow lines are the vowels a, i and u, which are written to surround the consonantal structure,” he explained.



Surrounded by his tools, Mohamed Zakariya works in his home studio outside Washington, DC. After growing up in Southern California, he was inspired by a visit to North Africa to convert to Islam and learn Arabic. He began teaching himself Arabic calligraphy, making trips to mosques and libraries in Morocco, Spain and England to study the most revered form of artistic expression in the Islamic world.

Just as a master calligrapher in Turkey accepted him as a pupil more than three decades ago, the artist now passes on his mastery of several Islamic scripts to his own students.

“Then there are a few decorative items that balance out the empty spaces.” They include the ornamental “V” shape and a W-shaped mark that doubles the sound of a consonant.

Many of the letters are five dots [pen widths] high. “The concept of five dots is very important in this script,” Mohamed said. “It puts a lot of motion in it.”

He did numerous designs in pencil before selecting a paper he had dyed, treated and aged, gathering the pens he cut from reeds and bamboo, and lettering the verse in hand-made black ink.

On day two, Mohamed pasted on a border of colorful paper he had marbled earlier. The border is an integral part of the manuscript. “It’s not a mat,” he pointed out. “All work of this type has a border of some kind.”

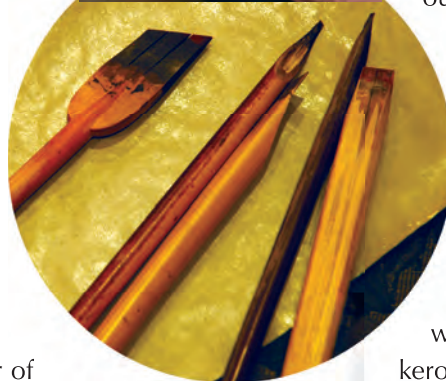
He also created a backing from several pieces of Fabriano coated with homemade glue, stretched the artwork and backing on a wood frame to dry totally flat and later burnished the surface.

“Then on the final day I had to do the illumination and the gilding,” Mohamed said, using gold pigment he made that morning.

“The Besmele is surrounded by a wreath made with different colors of gold ... both 23-karat and a ‘green gold’ (an alloy of 18-karat gold and silver). Then there’s a bit of highlighting with watercolor to give it a little 3D effect.” He decorated the lower corners in a similar manner, applied two gold borders outlined in black and added a white border using a ruling pen and white gouache.

Turning thin sheets of gold leaf into gold paint is labor intensive.

“I start by rubbing the gold, one sheet at a time, on a glass plate with gum Arabic to dissolve it,” he said. Four hours later, he had enough gold, which



he mixed with distilled water to wash out all the gum. Then he reduced it to a finished pigment.

“When you want to paint it on, you mix it with a little gum Arabic to make it stick and maybe a little fish glue,” Mohamed said. “When it’s dry, you burnish it with an agate stone. Then you can treat it with various tools to give it a texture, or you can outline it with black.”

Happily, he had already prepared a supply of ink. Mohamed painstakingly makes his own ink using a lab furnace he built in his Arlington, Virginia back yard with bricks, a vent pipe and two flowerpots to catch the soot. “I fill a V8 can with a mixture of linseed oil and kerosene and add a wick from a tiki torch,” he said. “Over a month I’ll burn this

thing every day and scoop out the soot each day with a feather.”

He removes any trace of oil by pounding down the soot, covering it with flatbread dough from a local Iranian restaurant and baking it in the oven.

“There there’s the matter of grinding it in a mortar and pestle for about 30 hours, mixing it with gum Arabic, then distilled water,” Mohamed continued. “I add a little rosewater and then put it in a tumbling machine with stainless steel balls for 24 hours.”

The master calligrapher had little time to admire his completed work.

“At the end of the third day, they called and said, ‘We’re going to come and get it now. Is it ready?’ An hour later they arrived in a big limo and took it away.”

The President was already at the airport preparing to fly to Riyadh—but not before he had the precious gift created by Mohamed Zakariya.



The White House contacted Mohamed Zakariya, an America master of Arabic calligraphy, to create a gift that President Obama would take to Saudi Arabia for King Abdullah. The verse from the Quran was chosen by the President himself.

# U.S. Postal Service Stamps

MOHAMED ZAKARIYA

Mohamed Zakariya said his U.S. postage stamps marking the Muslim holidays of Eid al-Fitr and Eid al-Adha are “very likely the first introduction many Americans have to Islamic culture.”

Like the manuscript commissioned by the President, the three stamps he designed all feature the centuries-old Arabic script called Sulus. “It’s the only one that has the facility of being able to interweave with the other letters,” Mohamed noted.

“It’s quite a technique to harmoniously interweave these letters without making focal points, which you don’t want to have. We like to think it’s like a plant, and it just grew that way.”

While the intricate golden calligraphy provides the main focus of the stamps, they also include greetings in English and either the word “Forever” or the stamp’s denomination.

“These words have to be able to hold their own in a very small format and yet be attractive and not compete with the golden design,” the Washington Calligraphers Guild member said.

The original Eid stamp was in circulation for ten years, after being introduced in 2001 just before the September 11 terrorist attacks. “The Postal Service released it on the first of September,” he recalled.

“Just ten days later we had this horror. There were people who sent them back to me with nasty letters.”

But he called this reaction “very minor” compared with the “overwhelming” positive response.

“A lot of people supported the stamp,” Mohamed said. “People bought them for Christmas card stamps



Mohamed Zakariya designed three Eid stamps to celebrate the two most important festivals—or eids—in the Islamic calendar: Eid al-Fitr and Eid al-Adha. On these days, Muslims wish each other Eid Mubarak, the phrase shown in calligraphy on the stamp, which translates to “May the holiday be blessed.” USPS released the first Eid stamp (above) 10 days before the 9/11 attacks.

and they bought them for Chanukah stamps. They like the message and they are decent, inclusive people ... that’s so American.”

His designs required a lot of back-and-forth with the Postal Service. “I must have made an inch-and-a-half stack of sketches,” Mohamed said. For the final design, he lettered on paper that he had prepared and then let sit for more than a year to ensure a smooth surface.

He did the calligraphy using a hand-cut bamboo pen 3/16 of an inch wide.

“It’s very hard to use a metal pen, which could cut or snag,” he said, “because many of the strokes are push strokes”—meaning that the letters are formed from the bottom to the top or from right to left.



Mohamed lettered a new version of the Eid greeting for 2011 (left). Two years later the Postal Service re-issued the same design in green (below left).

Below: With a small change in wording (“May *your* holiday be blessed”) he created a new design for 2016.



His favorite of the Eid stamps is his first update of the original design, released in 2011 and printed in red.

“Structurally it’s much better,” he said. “It was a little larger and less rectangular and I was able to give it more oomph.”

The stamp also captured the complex colors the artist is known for.

“I don’t know how on earth the printer did it because I used so many tonalities. It has a certain cadmium red and a couple of lake colors from Germany. And I put the English in a rather interesting color, kind of a jasperized blue with an ochre-ish aspect,” he said.

The USPS re-released the stamp in green in 2013.

His 2016 stamp, horizontal and printed in purple, “was the biggest of the bunch.” And, Mohamed said, it featured a copy change.

“The first three say, ‘May the holiday be blessed.’ But on the last one, I made it, ‘May *your* holiday be blessed.’ It also gave me something extra I could use in the calligraphy.”

Whether he is lettering commissions for the U.S. government, the New York Times, Jidda International Airport or the National Museum of Qatar, Mohamed Zakariya said he continues to work at mastering the subtleties and perfection of Arabic scripts.

“I still think of myself as becoming a calligrapher.” ❖

# U.S. Postal Service Stamps

JULIAN WATERS



Official Washington calls on noted calligrapher and type designer Julian Waters for unique lettering projects that are seen across America, from U.S. postage stamps to publications by such Washington institutions as the Smithsonian and National Geographic Society.

Back in 1989, he was tapped to design a stamp commemorating the bicentennial of the drafting of the Bill of Rights. It was reproduced on posters, jigsaw puzzles, mugs, t-shirts and other merchandise.

The next year USPS commissioned Julian to letter “Love” for a stamped envelope and in 2005 he handlettered “Presidential Libraries Fifty Years 37 USA” for a commemorative stamp.

More recently he did the lettering for a set of five herb stamps featuring the oil paintings of Teresa Fasolino (above).

“It was quite a challenge to fit the names of the herbs into tight spaces and at the same time complement the artwork with organic lettering,” said Julian, who works out of his Gaithersburg, MD studio.

In addition to stamps, the Postal Service has commissioned Julian to letter the headings for its Legends of American Music Series and for books of wildlife and wildflowers stamps. For *Wildlife America*, Julian did the cover lettering and the title for each page.

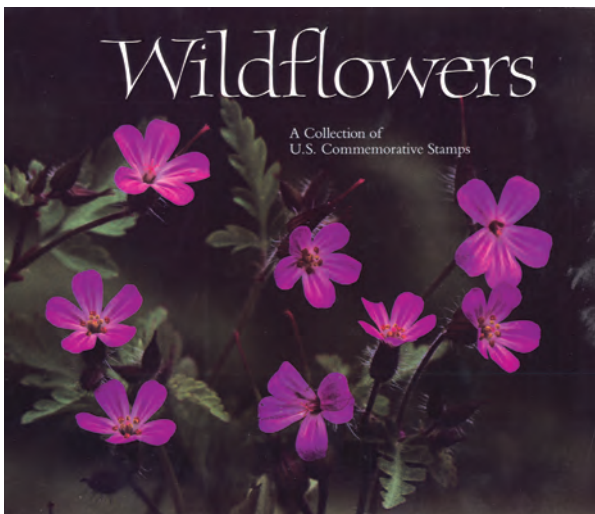
“This was a landmark job for me because of the



ALASKAN  
BROWN BEAR  
LYNA MOOTH  
WOODCHUCKY  
California  
SEALION

challenge of creating 50 different styles in my title lettering, each trying to visually reflect the personality of the bird or animal,” Julian said (examples above). “If you think only in terms of style (italic, blackletter, Roman, etc.) you quickly run out of ideas. Instead I thought about visual texture: soft/hard, round/angular, heavy/light and so on.”

The 1992 USPS book *Wildflowers* was sold with the complete 50-stamp mint set of that year’s wildflowers stamps. Julian did the cover and title page titling, and then 50 titles inside the book, one for each of the 50 stamps. ❖



## JESSICA HISCHÉ

The best part of the design “is this hidden little secret message within a sea of ornaments,” said Jessica Hische, who hand-lettered “Forever” in a whimsical, filigree-like heart design.

For the 2015 Postal Service commission, the letterer and type designer worked out the design in pencil, then finished the stamp art digitally in Adobe Illustrator.

“I don’t use a lot of fancy tricks in Illustrator, mostly just the pen tool,” said the author of *In Progress: See Inside a Lettering Artist’s Sketchbook and Process, from Pencil to Vector*. “After a few years of working intensely with the program it has become more natural for me to finish my designs on the computer than by hand.”

Jessica, who works out of San Francisco and New York, is pleased that something she created is being used for wedding invitations, baby announcements and greeting cards.

“It’s awesome to be invited into people’s lives,” she said. “Very few things are more exciting than seeing your work in real life being used by real people.” ❖

# U.S. Postal Service Stamps

MICHAEL DORET



Michael Doret's 2015 Summer Harvest stamps were sold in booklets with his title art.

Below: Adapting the drawings he proposed in 2002, Michael created the Sweet Corn stamp issued in 2015.



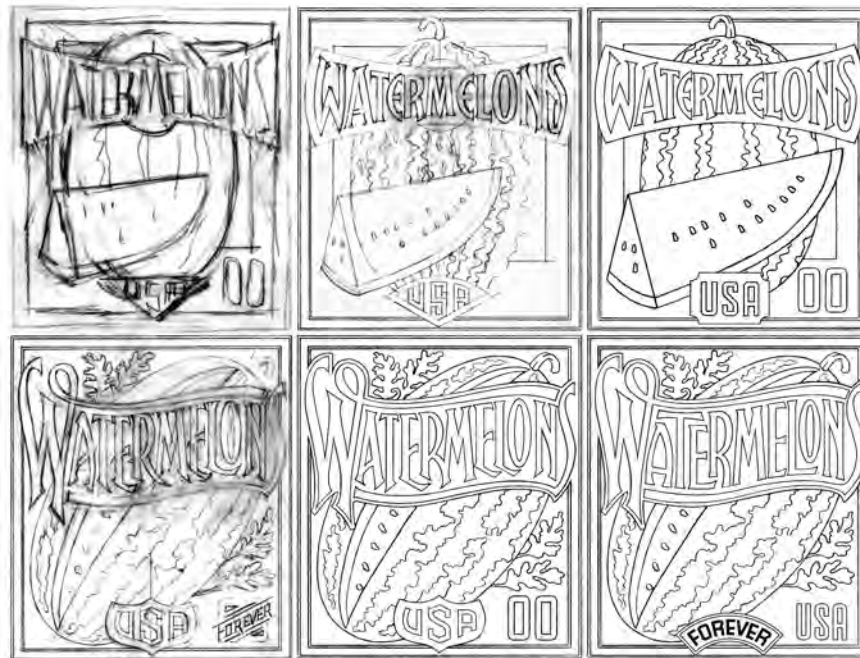
Michael Doret found inspiration in century-old seed packets, catalogs and fruit crate labels for the lettering and design of his Summer Harvest stamps that the Postal Service released in 2015.

The project began more than a dozen years earlier when the Citizens' Stamp Advisory Committee, a group appointed by the Postmaster General to recommend future stamp issues, asked the artist to work up a series of stamps featuring American fruits and vegetables. Michael sketched out six designs and composed three of them by hand with colored pencil before the USPS lost interest in the theme.

He was not contacted again until 2012, when the designs were re-submitted to postal authorities as they planned a series titled Summer Harvest. Michael was chosen to adapt his 2002 series to highlight Sweet Corn, Watermelons, Cantaloupes and Tomatoes. Sweet Corn had been one of his earlier sketches, so he began by going back and forth with the USPS on revisions to that stamp (images above right).



The Hollywood, California artist then developed drawings for the rest of the series sharing the same color palette of red, black, green and yellow-orange and using similar borders and other design elements. The design that had honored persimmons in 2002 was transformed into one featuring tomatoes.



To differentiate the stamps, Michael gave each fruit or vegetable its own distinct lettering style, all of them executed in a bold white. He also designed a fifth style for the Summer Harvest logo on the stamp booklet.

Among his biggest lettering challenges were the words “Watermelons” and “Cantaloupes.” All 11 letters had to remain readable across an image area of less than three quarters of an inch.

“I needed to really condense and overlap the letters so that they would be legible at the tiny size they would reproduce,” he said.

For the Watermelons stamp, for example, “it was felt that in the earlier iterations the letters were a bit too pointy, and so you can see those modifications in the later stages.”

Michael works out ideas and lettering styles in pencil before moving to Adobe Illustrator to render the artwork in color. ❖

Chanterelles · Baby Onions  
Lardon · Herbed Butter

Roasted Apricot Galette  
Appalachian Cheese  
Heirloom Lettuces  
Pine Nut Crisps

PENCE CHARDONNAY "SEBASTIANO" 2013

Baby Lamb Chops  
Yukon Potato Dauphinoise  
Fricassee of Spring Vegetables

CLIFF LEDE "HIGH FIDELITY" 2012

Maple Pecan Cake  
Butterscotch Swirl Ice Cream  
Cocoa Nib Wafers

CHATEAU CHANTAL ICE WINE 2013



The calligraphy of Official Washington comes in many sizes, shapes, styles — and languages.

Clockwise from top left:  
Pat Blair, Jen Nicholson,  
Marta Legeckis, Lee Ann Clark,  
Julian Waters, Jessica Hische,  
Mohamed Zakariya

