



# Singing Wires

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## NEW POSTAGE STAMP WITH THE WESTERN ELECTRIC NO. 302 TELEPHONE

by Ralph Meyer



The stamp picturing the WECO 302 telephone honoring Henry Dreyfuss is one of a panel of twelve featuring American Industrial Designers of the 20th century.

The accompanying promotional picture appeared recently in the Washington Post (and probably other papers) announcing the issuance of new postage stamps commemorating pioneers of American industrial design. Henry Dreyfuss is among the designers featured, and the item chosen to illustrate his work was the Western Electric No. 302 telephone. A larger picture of the Dreyfuss stamp is also shown. The stamps are to be issued on June 29, 2011, in a special ceremony at the Smithsonian's Cooper-Hewitt National Design

Museum in New York. The art director, designer, and typographer for these stamps was Derry Noyes. Sally Anderson-Bruce photographed the telephone. And the telephone was provided by – me!

The No. 302 telephone was installed on a trial basis in 1936 and went into production in 1937. The phone that I provided for the photograph has parts marked as either 10/39 or IV-39, so we know it was made in late 1939. This phone was also shown (with a coiled cord) on the cover of the first edition of Old-Time Telephones

and in Fig. 13-1 of both editions of Old-Time Telephones (with an appropriate cloth cord, but with my funky dial center). This particular telephone was also displayed in a Henry Dreyfuss exhibition at the Cooper-Hewitt museum in 1997. For the stamp photograph, I replaced the dial because the red numbers had faded on the original, and installed an appropriate number card in the dial center. ☎

More info can be found on the USPS website:  
[http://www.usps.com/communications/newsroom/2011/pr11\\_078\\_pioneers.pdf](http://www.usps.com/communications/newsroom/2011/pr11_078_pioneers.pdf)