

• WILLIAM N. STOKVIS •

March 4, 2010

~~Citizens' Stamp Advisory Committee  
c/o Stamp Development  
United States Postal Service  
1735 North Lynn Street, Suite 5013  
Arlington, VA 22209-6432~~

Sorry, the correct address is:

Citizens' Stamp Advisory Committee  
c/o Stamp Development  
U.S. Postal Service  
475 L'Enfant Plaza SW, Room 3300  
Washington, DC 20260-3501

Dear Citizens' Stamp Advisory Committee:

I am pleased to submit a proposal for a U.S. stamp honoring Amalie Emmy Noether who was considered by many to be one of the world's greatest mathematicians.

The time for a U.S. postage stamp honoring a great female mathematician like Emmy Noether is now (only a single mathematician, John von Neumann, has been previously honored.) Although American women today excel in schools and colleges, they lag behind their male counterparts in mathematics. (See *U.S. Male-Female SAT Math Scores: What Accounts for the Gap?*) Emmy Noether is an inspiring example of a woman who had to overcome many of the prejudices of her time to practice her calling. She can be a role model for not just women, but also for men all over the world to follow their dreams and make them a reality as she was able to do freely in the U.S.

Honoring Emmy Noether with a US stamp would help to bring to the forefront the importance of mathematics in the US as well help inspire more young students to study mathematics and the sciences continuing to make the U.S. a stronger and more vibrant nation setting a high example for the world.

Thank you for your consideration and hope you will honor this inspirational woman in the near future. I have attached an addenda with more references about Emmy Noether.

Sincerely,

William Noether Stokvis

(As part of full disclosure, I am a high school junior who loves mathematics; Emmy Noether was my great, great aunt and I am very honored to share her name.)

## **Proposal to Honor Mathematician Amalie Emmy Noether With A U.S. Postage Stamp in 2013 – Eighty years after Coming To America To Teach Mathematics at Bryn Mawr College**

Amalie Emmy Noether (Born: Erlangen, Germany March 23, 1882; Died: Bryn Mawr, PA, April 14, 1935) was according to many “the greatest woman mathematician who has ever lived and the greatest woman scientist of any sort... and a scholar at least on the plane of Madame Curie” (Norbert Wiener, founder of Cybernetics (1935).) She was a mathematician who “changed the face of algebra by her work.” (Herman Weyl) and is known for many mathematical creations including new math and abstract algebra.

Although coming from a family of distinguished mathematicians, Emmy Noether was not allowed to openly study, teach, research, or practice mathematics in her native Germany, She was first discriminated against because she was a female and later because of her Jewish heritage. It was only when she was invited to come to America in 1933, became a citizen, and pursued her dreams of openly teaching and conducting research, did she achieve personal happiness.

Emmy Noether thus exemplifies the best of mathematicians, the best of women, and the best of America. The opportunity given to her by Bryn Mawr College was her American Dream where she could work and do what she loved.

After her death in 1935, Albert Einstein wrote a flowing tribute that stated “In the judgment of the most competent living mathematicians, Fraeulein Noether was the most significant creative genius thus far produced since the higher education of women began. In the realm of algebra, in which the most gifted mathematicians have been busy for centuries, she discovered methods which have proved of enormous importance in the development of present-day younger generation of mathematicians....Farsighted friends of science in this country were fortunately able to make such arrangements at Bryn Mawr College and at Princeton that she found in America....not only colleagues who esteemed her friendship but grateful pupils whose enthusiasm made her last years the happiest and perhaps most fruitful of her entire career.” (*New York Times*, May 4, 1935)

Today, many consider mathematics to be a man’s profession and despite great improvements for women, young American girls are often discouraged from studying mathematics and the sciences. A postage stamp honoring Emmy Noether would encourage more young women to pursue their dreams in mathematics and the sciences.

Therefore, it would be fitting for the USPS to recognize Emmy Noether with a U.S. postage stamp in 2013 to celebrate the 80 years since her welcome to the US and her professorship at Bryn Mawr College, Bryn Mawr, Pennsylvania. An alternate would be

2012, which would be the 130<sup>th</sup> anniversary of her birth. Either date would honor an amazing woman who was one of the most brilliant mathematicians ever born.

## References

- *Nobel Prize Women in Science, Their Lives, Struggles, and Momentous Discoveries*, Sharon Bertsch McGrayne, Chapter 4 “Emmy Noether, pp. 64-89.
- “The Late Emmy Noether” Professor Einstein Writes in Appreciation of a Fellow-Mathematician, “Letter to the Editor, *The New York Times*, May 4, 1935, p. 12.
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