



N.S.S.S. meets on the 2nd and 4th Saturday of each month at 10:00 am
in the Sparks Heritage Museum at Pyramid and Victorian Avenue

P.O. Box 2907 Sparks, Nevada 89432

N.S.S.S.



POST BOY

April 12, 2003

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The interest the club members have been showing by their attendance at the meetings is amazing. There was hardly an empty seat in the house. We had over sixty items for sale in the auction and boucoup prizes for the drawing. To top it off, we all got to sing "Happy Birthday" to John Wetterling. What will we do for his birthday?

Today's computer corner will highlight the APS website. We have a lot of members of the APS in our club but, how many have tried out the site? If you haven't, take a look. It's a winner!

I missed the last meeting and **Steve Foster's** program on collecting Asia, so I Asked **Nadiah Beekum**. Nadiah tells me it was a great program. Steve's collection centers on his travels to Burma where he collected a lot of great Asian stamps, some of which you saw in his program. There was also an interesting story of where many of his better items came from. Ask Steve.

The **Reno Gazette Journal** wrote a great piece on youth and stamps. It is in the March 29th issue in the "Life" section.

You can go to on the computer at RGJ.COM in the "Archive" section (upper right corner of the opening page). Hurry though, it's only a two week archive. I'll bring in a couple of copies at the next meeting I attend.

Stan Cronwall sent me this:

In the most recent rgj "Calendar" supplement (arrived yesterday), the News the Weird column carried the following piece:

A New York Daily News investigation revealed in March that the Postal Service has spent at least \$3.6 million of stamp buyers' money in recent years sending its Inspector General staff through a series of executive conferences that featured exercises in wrapping each other in toilet paper and aluminum foil, building sand castles in freezing weather at the beach and freely making animal noises, all because the conference sponsors convinced Inspector General Karla Corcoran that those exercises would improve job performance and make the staff work together better.

Other therapeutic tasks included dressing in cat costumes and asking make-believe wizards advice.

It's always darkest before dawn. So if you're going to steal your neighbor's newspaper, that's the time to do it.

Postal Mechanization/Early Automation

Gehring Mail Distributing Machine test in Washington, DC, 1922 At the turn of the 20th century, in spite of a burgeoning mail volume and limited work space, the Post Office Department relied entirely on antiquated mailhandling operations, such as the "pigeonhole" method of letter sorting, a holdover from colonial times. Although crude sorting machines were proposed by inventors of canceling machines in the early 1900s and tested in the 1920s, the Great Depression and World War II postponed widespread development of mechanization until the mid-1950s. The Post Office Department then took major steps toward mechanization by initiating projects and awarding contracts for the development of a number of machines and technologies, including letter sorters, facer-cancelers, automatic address readers, parcel sorters, advanced tray conveyors, flat sorters, and letter mail coding and stamp-tagging techniques.

As a result of this research, the first semi-automatic parcel sorting machine was introduced in Baltimore in 1956. A year later, a foreign-built multiposition letter sorting machine (MPLSM), the Transorma, was installed and tested for the first time in an American post office. The first American-built letter sorter, based on a 1,000-pocket machine originally adapted from a foreign design, was developed during the late 1950s. The first production contract was awarded to the Burroughs Corporation for 10 of these machines. The machine was successfully tested in Detroit in 1959 and eventually became the backbone of letter-sorting operations during the 1960s and 70s. In 1959, the Post Office Department also awarded its first volume order for mechanization to Pitney-Bowes, Inc., for the production of 75 Mark II facer-cancelers. In 1984, more than 1,000 Mark II and M-36 facer-cancelers were in operation. By 1992, these machines were outdated and began to be replaced by advanced facer-canceler systems (AFCS) purchased from ElectroCom L.P. The AFCSs process more than 30,000 pieces of mail per hour, twice as fast as the M-36 facer-cancelers. AFCSs are more sophisticated too: they electronically identify and separate prebarcoded mail, handwritten letters, and machine-imprinted pieces for faster processing through automation.

The Department's accelerated mechanization program began in the late 1960s and consisted of semi-automatic equipment such as the MPLSM, the single position letter sorting machine (SPLSM), and the facer-canceler. In November 1965, the Department put a high-speed optical character reader (OCR) into service in the Detroit Post Office. This first-generation machine was connected to an MPLSM frame and read the city/state/ZIP Code line of typed addresses to sort letters to one of the 277 pockets. Each subsequent handling of the letter required that the address be read again.

Mechanization increased productivity. By the mid-1970s, however, it was clear that cheaper, more efficient methods and equipment were needed if the Postal Service was to offset rising costs associated with growing mail volume. To reduce the number of mail piece handlings, the Postal Service began to develop an expanded ZIP Code in 1978.

The new code required new equipment. The Postal Service entered the age of automation in September 1982 when the first computer-driven single-line optical character reader was installed in Los Angeles. The equipment required a letter to be read only once at the originating office by an OCR, which printed a barcode on the envelope. At the destinating office, a less expensive barcode sorter (BCS) sorted the mail by reading its barcode.

Following the introduction of the ZIP+4 code in 1983, the first delivery phase of the new OCR channel sorters and BCSs was completed by mid-1984.

We all have questions regarding the value of our collections which is determined by the condition of the stamps in it as well as other factors such as gum, completeness, centering, postmarks, etc, etc. With this question in mind I went to the Glassine Surfer and found the following article. I will present it as written, in three parts. This is something you may wish to save as part of your collection. One day we all will pass our collections on as we do the same. This could be important information to the people who receive our stamps.

Stamp Grading and Condition

Nothing is more important to a collector than a stamp's grading and condition, and nothing is more important than knowing how to adequately describe and accurately grade stamps. Knowing how to eye-ball a stamp's grade and condition is something each collector must learn, and though it might take a little practice, a practiced eye will save both time and money and help a collector build a better collection.

Stamp catalogs have sections that outline the relationship between a stamp's grade and it's value. Typically, a catalog pegs its printed prices to a certain grade, and it's understood that better grades sell for a premium and lesser for a discount.

Even in this day of enlarged web site scans, collectors need sound and fair descriptions because some faults do not scan well and rarely are both sides of the stamp shown at a web auction site. In fact, many grade a stamp by the picture, then compare their opinion with the seller's. If his is inflated, either he does not know his stamps, or hopes that you don't.

The verbiage of stamp grading and condition is fairly standard across the world of philately, here and abroad, and in fact, it is the language of stamp collecting.

Does it make the grade

Grade is about centering, cancels and gum. Grade describes how well the stamp's design is centered between the perforations*, both horizontally and vertically, on the paper, and the condition of the gum for mint stamps, or the effect of the cancellation on used stamps. (**or margins in the case of imperforates*)

Grades are meted out like school exam scores: "superb" all the way down to "poor," but an adequate description also addresses all necessary concerns about condition.

In the next issue I will present the grades as determined by Michael Mills AKA the "Glassine Surfer." Keep in mind that while these grades are probably as accurate as you can find they are still only one person's opinion and still might be arguable. Only expertisation may be considered the final word on grading.

The Computer Corner

www.stamps.org

The American Philatelic Society's webpage is designed to be used by anyone. You do not have to be a member to get into the site or pages. You do have to be a member to purchase or sell stamps at the Stamp Store. If you have not yet joined the APS, go to the website and see what they have to offer. If you don't have a computer, go to the library and borrow yours.



The picture above shows only eight of the many links in this website. There are also links where you can pay your dues, make donations, visit an APS dealers mall, check local clubs and specialty societies and more. The Society has been developing this website for about two years now and has improved it greatly from its inception.

I have used the Stamp Store several times. It requires membership in the Society and a password to buy or sell. Non-members may browse the stamps but may not buy. Stamps may be expertised before you buy. That saves the expense of mailing and insuring the stamps once you have them in your possession. I have used that service one time for a cover I wanted to buy. It was mis-described and I didn't buy it. There was no charge for the service. When making a purchase check the item you are buying closely (pictures are provided of each item). If it seems suspicious, have it expertized. The Society accepts the vendor's description but the vendor often does not describe properly. I once saw a stamp from Cochin China (#5), used. According to Scott there were no known used issues of that stamp. After bringing this to the attention of Renee Gardener, who runs the Stamp Store, a caveat was added to have this stamp expertized. It pays to be careful and ask questions before buying. It also pays to expertise.

The Library page does not offer articles or books on line but does offer a convenient way to order these books or articles. You can browse the card catalog on line or search a database of articles and journals by subject, author or title. Still, the fees must be paid for borrowing, postage and handling as well as insurance. The inter-library lending service is offered as an alternative but applicable fees are not mentioned.

There is a great deal more on this website than I have room to cover, so I suggest that you try it out. I think you'll like it.

As usual, if you know of a stamp site that hasn't been covered in this column, even if it only deals with your specialty, send it to me via email at artfulputz@aol.com. Let's get it written up. Happy computing.

You won't have a hard time with this one, I think. Mr Scott should be very helpful. As a matter of fact, he will answer all the questions for you so sit back with a tall glass of iced tea and lemon and enjoy the quiz.

- 1) What was the denomination of the first U. S. airmail stamp?
A. Six cents B. Seven cents C. Ten cents
- 2) Whos flight is honored on a ten cent airmail stamp of 1927?
A. Amilia Earhart B. Wiley Post C. Charles Lindbergh
- 3) What type of ship is shown on the three cent issue of 1946?
A. Destroyer B. Liberty C. Tall Ship
- 4) How many stamps are there in the National Capitol Sesquicentennial issue of 1950?
A. Six B. Five C. Four
- 5) In the 1940 Famous American set honoring poets, what is the denomination of the James Whitcomb Riley stamp?
A. Ten cents B. Five cents C. Three cents
- 6) What branch of the armed forces is honored on a five cent postal card issued in 1968?
A. Women Marines B. Women's Air Core C. Women's Navy
- 7) What color was the Champion of Liberty four cent stamp honoring Mohatma Gandhi?
A. Deep Blue B. Deep Red C. Deep Orange
- 8) Who is on the twenty five cent stamp of the 1938 definitives?
A. William McKinley B. Herbert Hoover C. Grover Cleavland
- 9) In what year were stamped envelopes first issued in the United States?
A. 1873 B. 1893 C. 1853
- 10) In the 1975-79 definitive series, what appears on the two dollar stamp?
A. A kerosene table lamp B. An electric light C. A candle

Easy enough for you? Everyone should do well on this one. At least I hope so. 100 auction bucks if you get them all. 10 auction bucks each.

If you have three quarters, four dimes, and four pennies, you have \$1.19. You also have the largest amount of money in coins without being able to make change for a dollar.

Maybe I'm being too easy on the local philatelists. Everybody scored a perfect score this time. Or, maybe you're just smarter than I thought. I'll go with number two. In any case, congratulations to all.

1. - B. four. They were #'s 1686 - 1689 showing paintings from the Revolutionary War.
2. - A. Detroit, Michigan. # 1000, for the 250th anniversary of the landing of Antoine de la Mothe Cadillac at Detroit.
3. - A. Three Cents. #988. Honoring Samuel Gompers (1850 - 1924).
4. - C. Purple. Issued on Sept 5 to honor the writer, Edith Wharton.
5. - B. Calvin Coolidge. # 834.
6. Auto Racing. # U134 features an Indianapolis racing car. The design was by Robert Peak.
7. Ten cents. # F1. Issued on December 1, 1911 the stamps were used for registration but were abolished on May 28, 1913. Since any stamp could be used to pay for registration there was no point in a special stamp. Their use was permitted until stocks were depleted.
8. Queen Isabella and Columbia. # 244. The issue shows a portrait of each in an oval frame.
9. Physical fitness. #1262. This issue honors the Sokol organization, an athletic group. The stamp features a discus thrower..
10. The Great Seal of the United States. # CE1 is the same design in blue as the only other air post special delivery, CE2 which has a slight addition of red.

Antoine de la Mothe. How about that name. The French are better at naming their kids than backing our troops. This quiz was worth 100 Auction Bucks. Everyone who entered an answer sheet is 100 Bucks closer to what they want at the auction. Spend it wisely.

My neighbor was bitten by a stray rabid dog. I went to see how he was and found him writing frantically. I told him that rabies could be cured and he didn't have to worry about a Will. "Will? What Will? I'm making a list of the people I want to bite."