

The Birth and Trials of a Stamp Show

By Dick Dreiling

The first Nevada Stamp Study Society stamp show was 1976 in Carson City with Bill Oliver as a philatelic judge. He traveled many times from Sacramento to give philatelic presentations at our club meetings and encouraged member participation. He was made an Honorary Member a few years later.

The Nevada Stamp Study Society (NSSS) was established in Carson City, NV on August 5, 1975. The meetings were held in a room of the Ormsby County Library. At the time, I was on active duty with the U.S. Navy stationed at Naval Air Station Lemoore, CA about 30 miles south of Fresno. At the time, both my mother and I were single so whenever possible I would drive to Sparks on a Friday night and back to Lemoore on Sunday afternoon. One Friday evening Mom showed me a small article in the newspaper that there was to be a meeting of the stamp club on Saturday and asked if I was interested in going to the meeting. I was, but since she did not collect stamps, I told her it would not be fair for me to go and leave her home alone. She said she would go with me. So, we went to the meeting and were welcomed as visitors to the club. The meeting consisted of some routine business matters (BORING!) and then a very interesting USPS video was viewed describing how stamps were produced including design, selection of subject, engraving and printing.

Since the club met every other Saturday, we began to schedule meetings as a routine part of my visits. In late September I joined the NSSS but was told I would not be considered a charter member as that status was reserved for those who had joined during August. Silently I thought, 'Big Deal, who cares?'

Soon the subject of a stamp exhibition was brought up at one of the meetings. It was considered a good idea, so planning began. Several of the members began to develop exhibits. I had never exhibited before, but I had been to several stamp shows and decided I would make an exhibit for the as yet unnamed show. I suggested we call it NEVPEX to stand for **Nevada Philatelic Exhibition**. I was told by the club president that since we were new to the game, we could not use the term -PEX. The decision was made to call it the "Spring Exhibition."

The room we used for meetings was large enough for the show and since we had no exhibit frames and did not know how to get any, we improvised. Large full 4' x 8' sheets of Celotex were propped up on the tables. Exhibits were mounted to the board by thumbtacks being careful to not put the tacks through the exhibit pages, but close enough that the head could support the exhibit pages. Since not all of the entered exhibit pages were in document protectors there had to be some method of protecting them from fingering, etc. The solution was simple! The entire Celotex sheets were wrapped in clear sandwich wrap! In lieu of trophies, the club ordered medals from APS.

One of the club members brought his portable engraving machine and as awards were determined by the judges, the names were secretly passed out to the lobby where the medals were engraved with the name of the winners to be presented at the Awards banquet.

Somehow, they had found philatelic judges to judge the exhibits. The two judges were **Bill Oliver** and Adrian O'Neil, both APS internationally recognized judges! To their credit, they did not laugh at the improvised exhibit displays, but immediately went to work judging the novice exhibits as none of the club members had ever exhibited before. In fact, most had never even attended a stamp show before.

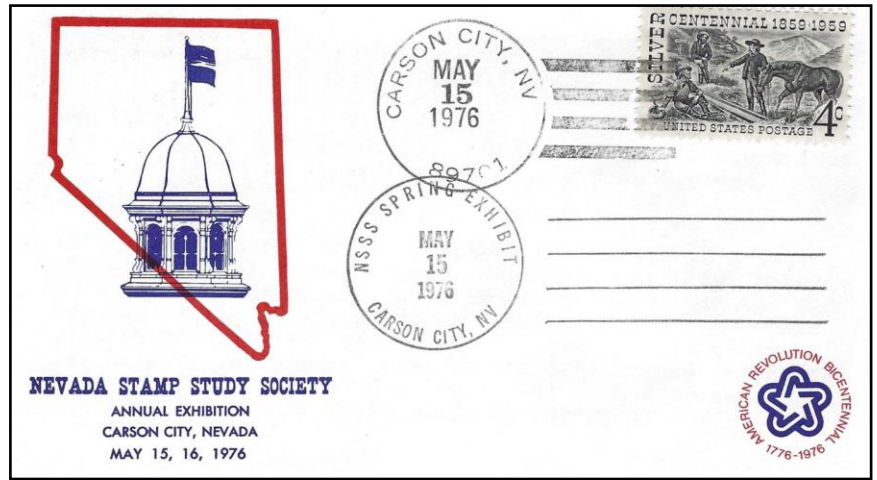
The decision was made to produce cacheted covers that we could sell to help defray some of the expense of the show. A design was made, and I think 50 covers were printed by one of the members (I don't remember his name). Larry "Skinhead" Wilhite, the club president's husband was a stamp dealer and he had a sheet of the 1959 Silver Centennial stamp which was applied to the covers. A rubber stamp canceling device was made. Bill Dunfield, the Carson City postmaster, was invited to set up a table so he could sell stamps. He informed us

that we could not apply our cancellation device to valid stamps, that he was required to bring an official cancelling device. We asked if there would be any problem if we cancelled the covers after he had cancelled the stamps. He said no, so we applied the second cancellation ensuring we did not touch the stamp.

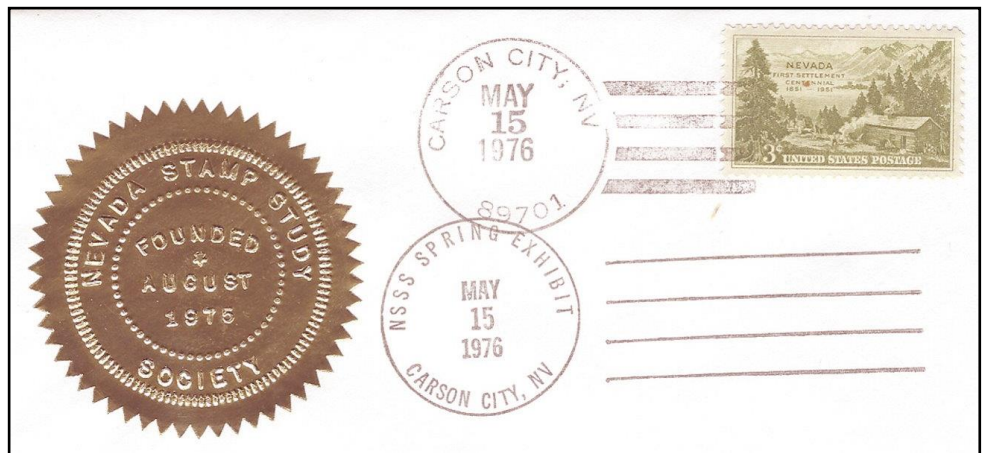
I think the club was delighted at the show attendance however, they were not delighted to find out they almost immediately sold out the entire supply

of show covers. One of the club members was dispatched to the nearest stationery store to buy more blank envelopes. Since there was no time to get the cover printed, Mom suggested they also buy a supply of gold colored notary seals. The club had already ordered a club seal, so it was used to make additional show covers for sale. "Skinhead" supplied a couple of sheets of the 1961 First Nevada Settlement stamp.

The Awards Banquet was held in a 'quackie' steakhouse similar but not as classy as a Sizzler. There were no large tables, so we sat at smaller tables and nearby booths. The meals were paid individually by the members, although the club did pick up the tab for our two judges, however, I don't remember if we gave them an honorarium or motel rooms for the



First Nevada Stamp Study Society Spring Exhibit show cover.



"Second" Nevada Stamp Study Society show cover at first Spring



First of many Reno First Day of Issue stamps on NEVPEX show cover.

night. I certainly hope so!

Our first national show was to host the annual convention of the American First Day Cover Society (AFDCS) in 1981. As a Life Member of the AFDCS, I went to one of their conventions back east and asked the Society president why they never had a convention out west. She replied, "We do! We've held conventions in Chicago." I explained to her that that was a whole lot of country west of Chicago. She asked if I would be willing to be the Show Chairman if they agreed to come to Reno. I said "definitely yes!" Since the USPS routinely schedules a First Day Issue at the AFDCS convention, I immediately sent a request to the Citizen's Stamp Advisory committee recommending they issue a stamp for the protection of Lake Tahoe. I got a reply back that they preferred to do a stamp subject that would have national appeal as opposed to just local interest. As a result, on June 26, 1981, a block of 4 "Save the Habitats" stamps became the very first First-Day Issue in Reno. I also contacted a professional cachet producer and requested they produce a colored cachet for us to use. They replied it would be too costly to us to get a special cachet, but they agreed to add our logo to the design they had already approved (at no cost). Needless to say, we bought a number of their covers to sell at the club table.

In subsequent shows, we hosted the Universal Ship Cancellation Society and the American Topical Society twice.

Dick Dreiling is the only Life Member of the NSSS, and we considered him a Charter Member. He is a past President, Director, Show Chair, Program Chair and still a member of the show committee. He collects, exhibits and gives public lectures on picture post cards of Reno. He also exhibits Apollo 11 covers, early Native Americans of Reno/Sparks and early cachet makers' covers. He enjoys talking about his George Linn first First-Day cover with a letter enclosure.