

THE SRSC NEWSLETTER

*The Santa Rosa Stamp Club: Promoting the study, knowledge, and enjoyment of stamp collecting.
APS Chapter 1584*



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Club News

Membership in the Santa Rosa Stamp Club continues to grow. As of our June 2013 meeting we enrolled our fortieth member. It appears that our members find the meeting format that includes a short business session, a speaker or club-wide activity and an auction to be informative and useful. The opportunity to learn about our members' collecting interests and about philately in general as well as to sell, buy and trade stamps continues to be the basis for a successful stamp club. The high level of philatelic expertise evident among our members is readily shared as we exchange ideas and ask questions about our wonderful hobby. Whether it is a philatelic show and tell, an equipment swap meet, or an interesting talk about the pleasures of collecting King George VI era stamps, we continue to work to realize our club's purpose to "promote the study, knowledge, and enjoyment of stamp collecting."

Collecting US Stamps

Almost half of our members indicate an interest in collecting US stamps. It is our single most popular collecting area. Nearly all of our club auctions have items of interest for the US collector. I would hazard a guess that most members got started collecting stamps by acquiring US issues. So, the question arises, how do you go about collecting US material? Some members appear to be generalists. That is, they develop mint and/or used collections from all eras. Other members indicate that they confine their collections to the so-called pre 1938 classical era, or they collect plate blocks, first day covers, booklet panes or commemoratives only.

I would first like to address the challenges faced by the general US collector and then return to those who take a more specialized approach. If you are a general US collector and you use a standard Scott, Harris, Lighthouse or other album brand, the prospect of acquiring a complete collection is, indeed, a daunting one given the rarity and expense of many items especially from the 19th century. In recent years, many collectors complain about keeping up with the seemingly endless number of new issues and varieties that appear from the U.S. Postal Service. Collectors of used new issues face the additional problem of finding ways to mount difficult to remove self-adhesive stamps. Despite these problems, the generalist gains a great deal of satisfaction in filling those empty spaces and

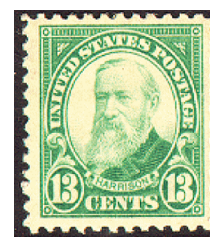
The Santa Rosa Stamp Club

Membership is open to anyone interested in stamp collecting and who agrees to abide by the club By-Laws. The new member fee is \$10.00 which includes \$5.00 dues for the first year of membership. Meetings are held the first Tuesday of each month at 7:30 pm in the Lodge at Paulin Creek, 2375 Range Avenue, Building D, Santa Rosa. For information about club membership call: 707-774-6296 or send an email to: srsc2012@yahoo.com

moving toward the goal of developing a more complete collection. In the process, the generalist also improves his or her philatelic knowledge by paying attention to watermark and paper varieties, perforation differences, printing changes and so forth. Moreover, by taking time to look into the background and subject matter of each issue, one can learn a great deal about American history and culture. No doubt, the generalist approach will sustain the interest of many throughout their active collecting years.

Many US collectors, even generalists, turn to specialization as a way to expand their interest or to look for a new collecting slant. As previously indicated, some of our members have taken this route for their US collections. Nevertheless, the specialist also confronts challenges. Extensive reading and research is often needed to get a handle on the specialization being pursued. In addition, finding appropriate items to add to one's collection requires patience and exhaustive searches among stamp dealers and auction houses. Nevertheless, specialization can be very fulfilling and usually results in a unique and attractive collection. Besides the approaches already indicated by our members, what other forms of specialization are available to the US collector? Here are some examples of many suggested by Rodney Juell and Stephen Rod in their excellent book, *Encyclopedia of United Stamps and Stamp Collecting*.

Definitive Issues. The *Scott Specialized Catalogue of United States Stamps & Covers* lists all of the definitive series from the 1847 issues up to the present. For example, a careful examination of the catalogue indicates the major varieties that appeared in the "Fourth Bureau" 1922 to 1932 definitive issue. Most standard US albums do not have spaces for all of these listings. The specialist collector develops his or her own way of organizing and displaying these stamps and often includes covers to show how the stamps were postally used.



Air Mail Stamps. Some of the most interesting and well designed US stamps were airmails and, as we all know, one of the most spectacular printing errors was an airmail – the 1918 twenty-four cent Jenny. Collecting first flight covers is another aspect of this field.

Special Usage Stamps. These include the following: Special delivery; special handling; registration (only one was issued!); certified mail; parcel post/fourth class mail; postal savings stamps; postage due; official stamps; etc. Finding these stamps on cover is a particularly interesting pursuit.

Federal Revenue Stamps. These stamps take many forms including documentary and proprietary stamps, alcohol and tobacco stamps, special tax stamps, and fee stamps. The latter include the highly popular federal duck stamps.

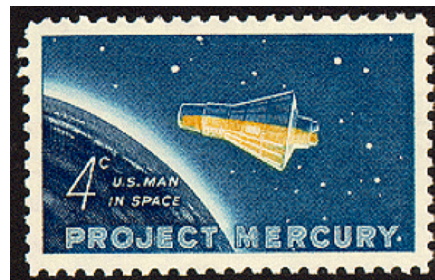
Stamps of US Possessions, Usages Abroad, and Occupied Areas. This is a fascinating area that includes stamps from the former Spanish colonies of Cuba, Guam, Philippines, and Puerto Rico. Also of interest are the stamps of Hawaii and the Canal Zone. The US postal agency operated in Shanghai, China from 1867 through 1922. Shanghai overprints of US definitives are available. Many collectors put together an interesting collection of World War II Allied Military Government (AMG) stamps that were used in Italy, France, Germany and Austria during the post-war occupation period.

Postal Stationery. These items include postal envelopes, postal cards, paid reply postal cards, letter sheets, and wrappers. Some collect these items as "cut squares" or the entire envelope or card.

Precancels and Perfins. Precancel collectors are among the most dedicated (if not fanatical) of US specialized collectors. Some collect all they can find – generalists – while others specialize in particular towns or types of precancels – “T&T” collectors. Perfin collectors use their stamps to document the history of how American business used the mails.

Confederate States of America. The stamps of the CSA continue to fascinate collectors especially those who wish to document the postal history of this era by collecting covers.

Thematic Stamps. A vast array of topics exists for the US thematic collector. Some obvious topics come quickly to mind: space exploration; flowers; black history; sports; movie stars; lighthouses; pets; cartoon characters; etc. The American Philatelic Society provides downloadable album pages that depict stamps associated with various states. Regardless of topic, the thematic collector readily moves beyond stamps to find related postmarks, covers, and other material to build his or her collection.



The History, Technology and Production of Stamps. A broad area that attracts many specialists focuses on the institutional history of the American postal system and the stamps that were issued in each period. Others focus on the production techniques used for various issues including engraved, flat plate, rotary, lithographed and photogravure techniques. Plate production, sheet layout and plate numbers and plate varieties also attract interest. Some collectors specialize in coils and booklet stamps. Another specialty focuses on freaks, errors and oddities. Essays, proofs and test stamps also draw interest.

Postal History. One of the most rapidly growing specialties among US collectors is postal history. How can we document the history of the US mail services? For example, some collectors acquire covers from the pre-stamp era as a way to tell the story earliest years of the US mail system. Some collect covers that are posted from a specified town or city to reveal the postal history of that location. Others collect covers that demonstrate how the variety of services provided by the postal authorities including certified, registered, and special handling mail were actually implemented in particular time periods. A challenging aspect of this kind of collecting is “rating” a cover which entails the procedure for determining how the amount of postage affixed met the particular postal function required.

References and Resources

Whether you count yourself as a US generalist or specialized collector there are excellent references that you should consider including in your philatelic library. Here are some of the most useful that are available:

2013 Specialized Catalogue of United States Stamps & Covers. Sidney, OH: Scott Publishing Co., 2012.

Williams, L. N. *Fundamentals of Philately*, Rev. Ed. State College, PA: American Philatelic Society, 1990.

Juell, Rodney and Steven J. Rod (eds.) *Encyclopedia of United States Stamps and Stamp Collecting.* Minneapolis: Kirk House Publishing, 2006.

Cleland, W. Wallace (ed.) *Durland Standard Plate Number Catalog.* Katy, TX: United States Stamp Society, 2012.

Beecher, Henry W. and Anthony S. Wawrukiewicz. *U.S. Domestic Postal Rates, 1872-2011*, 3rd ed. Bellefonte, PA: American Philatelic Society, 2011.

Wawrukiewicz, Anthony S. and Henry W. Beecher. *U.S. International Postal Rates, 1872-1996*. Portland, OR: Cama Publishing Co., 1996.

Thomas, Richard Louis. *Linn's Who's Who on U.S. Stamps*. Sidney, OH: Linn's Stamp News, 1991.

Thomas, Richard Louis. *Linn's More Who's Who on U.S. Stamps*. Sidney, OH: Linn's Stamp News, 1993.

Numerous organizations and websites are available to assist the US collector. The Scott specialized US catalogue lists the addresses, phone numbers and websites of thirty-one societies of interest to American collectors. Here are some examples of organizations and websites.

Organizations:

American Philatelic Society
United States Stamp Society
American Revenue Association
American First Day Cover Society
Postal History Society
American Airmail Society
American Plate Number Single Society
Precancel Stamp Society

National Duck Stamp Collectors Society
Perfins Club
Confederate Stamp Alliance
Canal Zone Study Group
Hawaiian Philatelic Society
U.S. Philatelic Classics Society
American Topical Association
United States Postal Stationery Society

Websites:

National Postal Museum: <http://www.postalmuseum.si.edu>

United States Postal Service Store: <https://store.usps.com/store/>

Stamp Collecting Resource Site: <http://www.stamp-collecting-resource.com>

Conclusion

As this brief review indicates, there is much more to collecting US stamps than just filling spaces in a stamp album. No matter whether you take a generalist, specialized or combination approach to collecting US stamps, the field is rich with opportunities to learn more about philately, the evolution of our postal system as well as about the many personages, events, resources, and achievements depicted on our stamps.

Dennis Buss

| Santa Rosa Stamp Club Officers | |
|---|--------------------|
| President | Paul Von Gottfried |
| Vice President | Doug Iams |
| Secretary | Dennis Buss |
| Treasurer | Susan Dixon |
| Auctioneer | George Land |
| Newsletter Editor | |
| Dennis Buss | |
| Executive Committee Members | |
| Martin Feibusch | |
| Don Test | |
| Advertising and Public Relations | |
| Robert Kirk | |

| 2013 SRSC Meeting Calendar | |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| August 6 : | <i>The Anthrax Letter Scare of 2001, Dennis Buss</i> |
| September 3: | <i>Open</i> |
| October 1: | <i>Member "Show & Tell" Night</i> |
| November 5: | <i>Estate Planning for the Stamp Collector, Stephen Olsen</i> |
| December 3: | <i>Philatelic Quiz Night</i> |