

THE SRSC NEWSLETTER

The Santa Rosa Stamp Club



Promoting the study, knowledge, and enjoyment of stamp collecting.
APS Chapter #1584

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President's Note

Santa Rosa Stamp Club, where do we go from here?

With 15 to 20 members showing up for our monthly meetings, how do we grow participation? The goal is to see the continuation and growth of our club, rather than face the demise as too many clubs have done. As the newly minted president I am definitely interested in both growing membership and participation. New blood is essential to flourishing. Ideally there are two groups that immediately come to mind: finding how to reach the local youth and providing support for developing their philatelic interests and reaching out to those more aged individuals, who for whatever reason have abandoned their collections. Although there are no quick solutions, I refuse to accept the status quo. Stamp collecting has endured for centuries, and we have to endeavor to sustain it.
Hank Kelty

Amazing Stamp Stories #13: "il diavolo mi porti se mi sbaglio*"

You might say that if any SRSC member owns U.S. Scott Catalogue #230 through 245 Columbians in mint condition they're a pretty advanced collector. After all, Scott 241 (the \$1.00 Salmon sells for around \$1,700 and the \$3.00 yellow green for \$2,950. We'll skip to the finale, the \$5.00 black at \$3,500. All in all, the 16 stamps comprising the 1893 Columbian Commemoratives is something we dreamed of owning when we were young and something to strive for as mature collectors.

The series was issued by the United States to commemorate the World's Columbian Exposition held in Chicago during 1893. The finely engraved stamps were the first commemorative stamps issued by the U.S. Postal Service, depicting various events during the career of Christopher Columbus. Stamps were supplied by the American Banknote Company.

Our Amazing Story, though, is focused upon Scott 231 MNH, the 2-cent Columbus "Broken Hat." The record shows that 1,464,588,750 copies of the 2-cent stamp were issued beginning on



Sunday, January 1, 1893 and was available on the next day at post offices. Now, we are not talking about Scott 231 brown violet which has a mint catalogue value of \$29.95 and a measly cancelled value of 30-cents (this is why we all have at least one in our collection or even 30 or so) but we are focused on the 231 "Columbian Broken Hat Variety" that now fetches SCV \$160.00. This is the best-known variety of the Columbian series, and experts say the broken hat is probably the result of a small crack caused by a weakening of the metal on the transfer roll and occurs near the base outer right vertical line and extends for about an eighth of an inch. For the record, a single sheet of these stamps escaped from the bureau without perforations. A pair has a value of \$ 3,500.

But this would not be an *Amazing* story if the real truth of the matter wasn't revealed. The bureau had recently hired an Italian engraver "straight off the boat" from Bologna, one Giuseppe Manicotti. Little did the Bureau of Engraving and Printing know that Manicotti held a doctorate from the University of Bologna and his studies were in the Age of Exploration. His thesis was devoted to Columbus's Voyages. Dr. Manicotti took it upon himself to authenticate the 2-cent stamp ("A travesty!!" - per the Doctor) by etching in what was really Columbus's famous bite out of his hat. Dr. Manicotti had access to Columbus's son's diaries of his father's voyages. These reside in the archives of the University of Bologna. He knew that Columbus's crew was in near mutiny on the first voyage and to quell the spirit of mutiny amongst his crew he declared: " Men, if we don't sight India in three days, I will eat my hat."

As Columbus munched on the brim, as luck would have it, debris was spotted in the water by the men in the forecandle who yelled "INDIA, INDIA." Of course they were in the Caribbean, but that's another story.

It is worth noting that Columbus is clean shaven while sighting land on the 1-cent Columbian (Scott 230) whereas the 2-cent value depicts Columbus during the landing sporting a full beard. This was the subject of much derision at the time of issue. You might ask: "Why didn't Dr. Manicotti correct this foolish inaccuracy?" The good doctor is reported to have uttered derisively, "Hey, I'm an historian, not a barber."

*"the devil take me if I'm wrong"
Steve Brett.

You Read It Here First!

The SRSC Newsletter published one of my fictional articles in its October, 2017 issue entitled: "The Diary of Luke 'Flash Garcelon' - Entry December 24, 2084." It was the writer's speculative and predictive vision for the future of stamp collecting. Readers may have viewed its content as fanciful or farcical, but let readers take note! *Flash Garcelon* wrote futuristically in the first person nearly four years ago: "I'm a member of several stamp syndicates. These sprang up in the 2050's when some rarities became way too pricey for almost anyone. So, for instance, I bought 1,000 shares of the famous British Guiana stamp and am now a 1/36,000 owner. Six times a year this stamp and other issues where I am a syndicate owner will appear on my iPad. They are mine and this gives me bragging rights. Stamp dealers have given way to Syndicators. They make their money lining up rarities and collections and make a brokerage commission from people like me who enjoy fractional ownership."



Those who subscribe to *Linn's Stamp News* can read the bold heading in the November 29, 2021 issue: "Stanley Gibbons launches fractional ownership of British

Guiana 1856 1 cent Magenta Stamp." I'll provide the highlights here since many of us subscribe to Linn's.

"London -based stamp dealer Stanley Gibbons began offering fractional shares of the legendary British 1856 1 cent Magenta on November 8 via the online platform Showpiece." "At Showpiece we split ownership into a fixed number of pieces and your level of ownership corresponds to how many of these pieces you hold."

In the case of the 1 Cent Magenta a total of 80,000 pieces called fractional shares are available for the purchase at £100, roughly \$135 per share. For more detail, refer to the Linn's article.

Stephen Brett

(Editor: Steve AKA, *Flash* also predicted that in an effort to please collectors the USPS will eventually return to gum stamps by 2020, so he's no Nostradamus).

Why Collect Post World War II Eastern Europe?

Did you ever stop to think about how little the term *Cold War* means to people presently in their 40's, 30's, or 20's and what the term conjures for Baby Boomers - people in their late 60's, 70's, 80's? This was a period of tremendous world tensions and constant threats—real and imagined—of nuclear war and confrontation on huge scales much greater than WW II.



Prior to the Covid 19 social distancing and being more home bound than usual, I had been an interested collector of the stamps of East Germany, typically referred to as the DDR. I had more time than usual to comb through the tons of loose stamps, stamps in packets and envelopes all used to build up my DDR collection and smarten up what I already had. Along the way I found more packets and troves of other former Soviet Bloc states' stamps and I became determined to build these collections. They included Poland, Hungary, Yugoslavia, Bulgaria and Czechoslovakia. Before I go further, I am completely aware that these

countries were also a major source of the dreadful CTO issues that began appearing in huge quantities during these years. However, I want you to cast aside your doubts and see why I believe these stamps provide another insight into our own experiences and histories.

After some extensive sorting, I found that while the stamps of these countries shared many common characteristics and themes, especially from the late 40's into the 50's and early 60's. They typically commemorated their liberation from the German Nazi occupiers by the Soviet army, their solidarity with the Soviet Union and their commitment to establishing Marxist-Leninist regimes at home. As the post war reconstruction of these communist bloc countries proceeded, their respective stamp issues also revealed national differences as they depicted their distinctive political, industrial, artistic and social programs that they pursued with great energy and pride.

While working with stamps of the late forties and fifties there are the distantly familiar names of the newly installed leaders of these post-war bloc countries, most of whom were puppets of the Kremlin, and who had escaped to the USSR who otherwise would have been killed by the anti-communist leaders of Nazi Germany. Their names rang familiar as I looked at their portraits on stamps: Wilhelm Pieck (East Germany); Imray Nagy (Hungary); Tito (Yugoslavia). These men were re-planted by Stalin to lead his post-war empire and there they are on stamps -with loving workers or with Stalin himself - or sharing a stamp with Marx or Lenin.



For me the most fascinating thing about old Soviet Bloc Stamps is the glimpse they provide of life and living in those days of reshaping these societies. I compare and contrast



the vision of these countries provided by our government, the image they wished to portray to the world of their version of freedom and prosperity. For certain, their stamps were propaganda tools to shape their own population's view of how things were going as well as the West's picture of their accomplishments and strengths.

Just a few more observations and personal theories: The DDR stamps are the most highly propagandistic; plenty of Stalin, Marx, Lenin on their stamps; plenty of Nazi atrocity commemorative memorials - both those who died for opposing Hitler or pictorials of memorial structures showing Soviet liberators and atrocity sites. Because of the DDR's strategic importance, they obviously received the greatest Kremlin attention for their postage topics and depicted art in comparison to the other Bloc countries.

While Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Bulgaria were obviously synchronized somewhere in the Kremlin as to stamp propagandistic content and design, one can see some independence and for me, that implies a softer agenda from the central controllers. Hungary and Poland have a much richer cultural heritage that is commemorated through their stamps from the 50's through 80's. Not as much of a "hard liner" program; more varied and cultural and much more of their own national history shows up in their stamp designs. The early 50's Czechoslovakian stamps have the mandatory Marxist-Leninist depictions but then their own heritage becomes amplified in the 70's with the token nod to Lenin now and then. Moreover, the Czechoslovakian postal authorities employed talented engravers that gave their stamps a special appeal. The cult of personality is plain to observe in Yugoslavia which exalts Tito over all other men. Their post war stamp output is indicative of their independent Communist path with practically no nod to the Kremlin. After all, they were not liberated or occupied by the Soviet Army. It is clear that they were steering their own ship throughout the Cold War.



The post war communist bloc is easy to collect. The stamps are relatively inexpensive. Moreover, the story told from 1945 through the collapse of the Berlin wall in 1989 provides a convenient beginning and end point. So, one can practically complete a collection of any given country mentioned. The interest comes in taking a nostalgic tour through one's early years and putting the story together of what was wafting over the radio during our formative years and seen in black and white on our one TV in the living room as narrated by Huntley and Brinkley, or John Cameron Swayze or Eric Severeid or Walter Cronkite - when news was news and was often scary (FOR REAL). Through the stamps of these countries- some dead - we know we weren't imagining things. Through some grim images on their plentiful stamps that their leadership believed provided bragging rights - we can affirm to ourselves that indeed we lived a pretty privileged existence as American baby boomers.

Steve Brett

I Heard Them on My Shortwave Radio

In the early 1980s I began listening to English language shortwave radio broadcasts sent from various international stations. I found this to be an interesting way to obtain world news reports that emanated from countries that were friendly with or sometimes hostile toward the United States. It was fascinating to hear the perspectives taken by these nations as they reported on and interpreted events that often differed from what we were hearing from American media. In those Cold War years this was especially the case with broadcasts from the Soviet Bloc countries in Eastern Europe and Radio Havana in Cuba.

I soon became aware that shortwave listening was an international hobby with its own large following. SWLing as it was called, encouraged listeners to tune into as many stations as they could and then provide reception reports to the respective broadcasters. These reports were sent on QSL cards. As Wikipedia explains it, these cards were a written confirmation of either a two-way radio communication between two amateur radio or citizen band stations or a one-way reception of a signal from an AM, FM or shortwave radio station. This activity of listening and recording reception details is known as DXing.

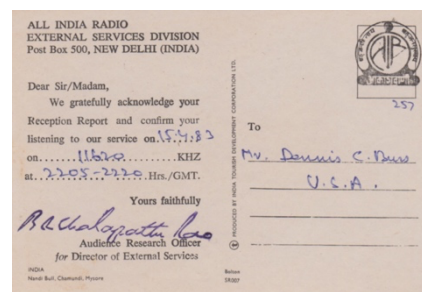
A typical QSL card is the same size as a post card (see above) and were sent through the mail as such. The cards were often quite colorful depicting various scenes and cultural artifacts of interest from the sending country. The one shown above, acknowledges my reception report to All India Radio from 1983. You can find these cards for sale on eBay

and stamp dealers who specialize in covers and postal history often have them.



and stamp dealers who specialize in covers and postal history often have them. I began sending reports to stations that I could identify with the hope of receiving a QSL confirmation from the respective stations. I started out by sending reports to the BBC, Radio Deutsche Welle, Radio Canada International, RAI Italy, Radio Budapest, Radio Sweden, Voice of America, Radio Australia, Voice of Nigeria, Radio Vatican, etc. Then I decided to try the Soviet Bloc stations starting with Radio Moscow, then Radio Bucharest in Romania, and Radio Prague in Czechoslovakia and Radio Havana in Cuba along with others. From these latter countries not only did I receive a QSL card but also separate mailings began arriving containing propaganda pieces on why these countries were champions of world peace and global friendship toward all nations. At this point I began to wonder if I was on an FBI list as a potential subversive! Shown here are two covers sent to me by Radio Moscow and Radio Bucharest that contained QSL card confirmations.

Many international band shortwave listeners purchased the indispensable annual *World Radio and TV Handbook* (WRTH) that, in their words, "is the world's most accurate and comprehensive directory of global broadcasting. It contains full details by country of radio broadcasts and broadcasters on LW, MW (AM), SW and FM, and details of national TV." Moreover, the Handbook features reviews of shortwave receivers and antennas along with reception predictions based on sun spot activity. The WRTH just published its new 2022 edition.



According to Wikipedia, international shortwave radio listening has declined in recent years with the rise in popularity of streaming audio over the internet as many international broadcasters cut back on their shortwave broadcasts. Nevertheless, religious and missionary groups still make extensive use of shortwave radio to reach less developed countries around the world. In comparison to the East Coast, shortwave reception is poor in California because the Sierra Mountain range tends to block signals emanating from Europe especially. If you are interested in exploring international radio broadcasts, static free internet streaming audio is your best option.

Dennis Buss



SRSC

The Santa Rosa Stamp Club meets on the first Tuesday of the month from 6:45 pm to 9:00 pm at the Finley Community Center, Room #1, 2060 W. College Road, in Santa Rosa. Membership dues are \$20 per year. Following a discussion of club business matters, the meetings feature a philatelic presentation and a member auction. For information about the club visit our website at <http://www.santarosastampclub.org/home.html>

SRSC OFFICERS FOR 2022

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Hank Kelty, Stephen Brett, Corrie Leisen, Susan Dixon.

Members At-Large: Dennis Buss, Barry Sovel



The SRSC Newsletter

Members are invited to contribute to the Newsletter. You may submit articles on a philatelic topic that reflects your interest and expertise. Such articles can range from 100 to 500 words. Illustrations are encouraged. You can scan covers and stamps and attach them to your text. Another category of interest entails a short paragraph or two on your favorite stamp, stamp set or cover with a description of why it attracts your interest. Multiple entries are encouraged especially if you have a favorite US stamp as well as those from other countries. You can submit your own stamp autobiography or you can interview a fellow club member and report on how he or she got started in collecting. Send your contributions to Dennis Buss as an attachment to an email (denlyn59@yahoo.com). Microsoft Word format is preferred although I can accept articles in *pdf* format.