

THE SRSC NEWSLETTER

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

APS Chapter 1584



Vol. 9, No. 5

August, 2020

Editor's Note

Dennis Buss

I am pleased to send you another issue of the club newsletter during this time when we are unable to hold our regular meetings. When we conducted our telephone survey of the club membership, the wish to return to our regular meeting format was universal. Until the time when we can safely conduct our meetings the newsletter serves as one way to maintain our ties as a stamp club. Based on the feedback we received from our telephone survey, the club board members decided to hold a virtual meeting via the Zoom application. Scheduled for Tuesday, September 1 at 7:00 pm, you will receive more information on how to participate in the near future. In the meantime, I hope you find the newsletter informative and interesting.

Watermarks: Their History, Importance and How to Detect Them

Paul von Gottfried

Watermarks have been used on postage stamps since their inception on May 6, 1840. The famous Queen Victoria penny black has a crown watermark on its reverse. Watermarks are formed usually in the process of paper manufacture. Watermarks can be as fun and interesting as other stamp distinctions, such as perforation and color varieties. Watermark papers for stamps were used for security purposes. It is often an easy method to not only identify the country but when the stamp was issued. In the case of Great Britain, 25 different watermarks are listed. The watermarks of Great Britain usually contain information pertinent to that country, for example, a crown, a rose, the initials of the monarch, etc. Some of the later watermarks, such as #373, used by many British Colonies, are difficult to detect by sight or by fluid. This usually doesn't make a lot of difference in these later stamps, as there are less watermark varieties in the latter part of the 20th Century. Many British Colonies from the late 19th and 20th Centuries used different watermarks every few years to stay ahead of forgers. Many George V issues changed watermarks after 15 to 20 years. Watermarks are as distinctive as the country that produces them. Some stamp issues were released with different or no watermarks. A different watermark can make the difference between a few cents and hundreds or even thousands of dollars. For example, the 1952 Seychelles definitive set, Scott 157-171, exists with a watermark error on all 15 stamps. They are quite scarce and valuable. Yeah, I don't have any of 'em.



Watermark error: St. Edward's Crown

There are thousands of watermark varieties listed in the catalogue. As noted, a scarce watermark can change the value of a stamp by thousands of dollars. It's a good idea if you think you have a stamp made valuable by a watermark to have it expertised. Watermarks often reflect the culture or symbols of a particular country. A pineapple image is used by some as well as caricatures of animals by others, although the latter is less common. The United States applied watermarks, but rarely after 1916. Watermark 191, used from 1895 to 1910, consists of double lined U S P S letters applied continuously across the entire sheet of stamps. Watermark 190, was applied in a similar manner but the letters U S P S appeared as single lines. This watermark was used from 1910 to 1916. There are few, if any, watermarked U.S. stamps after 1916.

The introductory chapters in Scott catalogues contain a general watermark overview that explains how they were applied to paper used for stamp production. I encourage everyone to read it along with other important philatelic terms used in the catalogue. In addition, Scott depicts images of all of the watermarks used by each country along with varieties that may be found for particular issues. Watermarks are harder to detect on heavily canceled or damaged stamps. More recent definitive stamps that display watermarks are usually not that valuable and are at little risk for forgery. The use of watermarks for security purposes started to decline in the 1980's as other methods came into use. These include different papers, the use of self-adhesive gum, different inks, and different methods of printing, such as photogravure and lithography. Different and intricate perforation varieties hard to duplicate have become commonplace, including U.S. stamps. These perforation varieties are primarily used for higher face value stamps.

Recently, a SRSC member asked me what fluid to use to detect watermarks. It got me thinking. I remember as a kid we used carbon tetrachloride. It evaporated quickly and didn't smell offensively. I think it was similar to what was used in dry cleaning establishments. My Dad cautioned me to use carbontet near an open window. Carbon tetrachloride is no longer available. Similar fluids are usually expensive as I will explain.

There are 5 different methods to detect a watermark on a stamp.



1. The simplest way is to hold the stamp up to a bright light with the back of the stamp facing you. In some cases the bright light will show through (thinner) areas of the paper and reveal the watermark. You can also try laying the stamp face down on a black surface. This sometimes will reveal the watermark. This method is not very reliable, especially with some modern watermarks.

2. You can dampen your stamp using lighter fluid or rubbing alcohol (which is in hot demand for other reasons right now – the rubbing alcohol, not lighter fluid). Both fluids should not be inhaled. Also, they contain additives that can damage your stamp and leave an oily residue on your stamp. Both are highly flammable. Both can dissolve aniline ink. Fortunately aniline ink is rarely used to print stamps, most often found in early Russian stamps.
3. Use watermark detector fluid, available at your favorite stamp dealer and online. Use a small dark dish or watermark detector dish that fits most stamps. While more costly than rubbing alcohol or lighter fluid, the commercial detector fluid is relatively inexpensive, it will not damage your stamp, and it enables quick evaporation. The fluid does have a strong odor, so again, use it in a ventilated area. But it is a fairly reliable method. Watermark fluid can also help you detect thinned, repaired or creased stamps.

4. Morley Bright Inst-a-tector.

Basically this is a box that you can put your stamp in face down. When you close the cover, a transparent cover containing bright blue ink is pressed against the stamp and collects against the thinner areas of the paper, revealing the watermark. The enclosed ink never touches your stamp, so no damage will occur. This device costs about \$35 online, with a replacement ink sachet costing about \$8.

5. Optical Watermark Detector

These mechanical devices can be plugged in or run on batteries. Your stamp is placed inside the box and pressed against the acrylic block. Then a light is shone through the block. The refracted light shows the watermark. Some versions of this device include the SAFE Signoscope and the Stanley Gibbons Detectamark. Both can be purchased online and will cost you between \$200 and \$400. Ouch. They are effective.

In conclusion, I recommend using method #3, watermark detector fluid for most collectors. It is safe and reliable. It also helps to detect thins, creases and repaired stamps. It is sometimes difficult to detect the watermarks of later British Colonies stamps with watermark fluid. It usually does not make a difference. I recommend the SAFE Signoscope for advanced collectors with specialized collections. I have always found it exciting to find out if a stamp is watermark #2 or #3 for example. There is a change in value and it illustrates the changes in the history of the colony postage stamps.

Bulls-eye or Socked On The Nose (SOTN) Postmarks

Dennis Buss

When a circular date stamp postmark is applied to a postage stamp it is often referred to as a bulls-eye cancel. Recently while working on my collection of used Netherlands stamps I noticed a rather striking example of a bulls-eye postmark on the stamp shown at the right. Sometimes referred to as socked-on-the-nose cancels, the postmark is applied to the center of the stamp indicating the date and town name from where it was mailed. Many collectors find these stamps to be particularly desirable especially when the entire postmark is shown within the stamp's margin. In this example the mailing date is indicated by "19 VIII 75" or August 19, 1975. Since the letter "N" is missing from the city name of Apeldoorn the postmark does not qualify as a perfect SOTN example. Nevertheless, I find the stamp quite engaging especially if we envision the person's eye peering from behind the postmark itself.



The significance of this observation becomes apparent when we understand the purpose of the stamp. Issued on April 29, 1975, it commemorates the 30th anniversary of the liberation of the Netherlands from the German occupation during World War II. The dates 1945-75 are diagonally inscribed in red just above the eye. Below the eye we see a slanted strand of barbed wire. These symbols represent a poignant reminder of the dreadful conditions endured by the Dutch during the Nazi invasion, occupation and the subsequent liberation of the country.



Let's now return to the postmark itself and find out more about the city of Apeldoorn from where the stamp was mailed. Located in the province of Gelderland in the center of the Netherlands, the city has a population of nearly 160,000. During the summer of 1993 my wife and I visited the

Netherlands. During our trip we stopped in this pleasant city. Shown at the left is the former town hall.

Perhaps the most notable memory of Apeldoorn was our tour of the Het Loo Palace, the country estate of the Dutch royal family. Surrounded by beautiful gardens, the castle is relatively modest in scale especially when compared with those found in Great Britain or France and is in keeping with the Dutch distaste for extravagance. The palace reflects the historical bonds between the House of Orange-Nassau and the Netherlands. Completed in 1686, the central building and the nearby pavilions show how the palace was inhabited by the House of Orange for three centuries starting with the King Stadholder William III of England up to and including Queen Wilhelmina. It was Queen Wilhelmina and her royal court along with the chief government ministers that were able to escape to Britain just prior to the surrender of the Netherlands to the Nazi invaders on May 15, 1940.



It was not until five years later on May 5, 1945 that the Germans offered their unconditional surrender to the Canadian First Army thus liberating the Netherlands just three days before the end of the War in the rest of Europe. The Canadians launched *Operation Cannonshot* on April 11 with the objective of liberating the city of Apeldoorn. The city was still full of Dutch civilians thus extensive aerial and artillery bombardments were not an option. Aided by the Dutch resistance, the Canadians engaged in street-by-street and house-by-house fighting until the city was secured on April 16th. When the Canadians entered Apeldoorn they were astounded by the massive amount of riches plundered from the Dutch, the Germans had left behind or were attempting to carry when captured. It is not difficult to imagine that the eye peering behind the postmark recalls what it was like in Apeldoorn in 1945.

In looking into the background behind this stamp and its cancel I recalled a comment made by a stamp dealer who spoke at our local stamp club when I was living in New Jersey. He reminded the members that while you are busy filling the empty spaces in your album, it is important to take time out to open those albums and enjoy the stamps you have already collected. No doubt it is a satisfying feeling when a collector fills each space on an album page. However, if filling spaces becomes a preoccupation we miss the opportunity to explore the interesting stories that often lie behind the stamps themselves. Examining the subject matter depicted on stamps including the cancels also deserve our attention. After all, why was the stamp issued in the first place if not to tell an important

story about a particular nation's history, culture or environment? In the slightly modified words of former baseball player Yogi Berra, "you can see a lot by looking."

Amazing Stamp Stories, No. 1

Emily A. Tellick

A rookie plumbing inspector for the Chaffee County Colorado School District found himself lost after repairing a dripping sink in Buena Vista High School. He spotted a sign that read: "St. Elmo, Colorado (Elev. 9,961 ft.), 2 mi." and after driving a couple of minutes found himself in a genuine ghost town. For those who are unfamiliar with St. Elmo, it was once a robust mining town founded in 1880, but by the 1920's the ore petered out and its population dwindled to zero. Stewart Muntz, the young inspector, is a passionate stamp collector and when he spotted the dilapidated St. Elmo post office he had to see what was left of it. To his surprise, it was intact albeit dusty, full of cobwebs, bits and pieces of chairs and tables. He had never been behind the counter of a post office so he took the opportunity to experience what customers can only dream of – going through the post office clerk's drawers and folders. To his amazement he found a stack of White Plains sheets (Scott 630) as well as a batch of 2 cent and 5 cent Norse American issues (Scott 620 & 621). But, the topper was the sheet of Scott 573 (\$ 5.00 America). Muntz hesitated to keep these treasures but then came up with a reasonable compromise. He left a note in the drawer with an I.O.U. for 5 hours of his time to fix anything dripping or in need of plumbing repair in the town of St. Elmo.



Amazing Stamp Stories, No. 2

Emily A. Tellick

In 2018 Myron Storch attended the Annual International Comic Book/Sports Cards Convention in Toledo, Ohio. Comic books are his secondary passion, philately is his first. He was overcome with joy when he spotted Bat Man No.2 issued in the Summer of 1940. It was in mint condition and the price was reasonable. What a find! "I grabbed it quickly before others spotted it!"

Once home and thumbing through this rare find Myron spotted a full page advertisement by Jamestown Stamps. Jamestown Stamps was founded in the city of that name in New York in 1939, and they were anxious to grab the attention of the comic book readership in this tremendous growth period for the hobby. Myron came up with a great idea, figuring it would be as much fun for him as for the present Jamestown Stamps staff.

He copied the coupon for 100 Stamps for "Only 10 Cents!" and stuck a dime to an index card as he used to do with his address and waited to see what would happen. Nine days later a large manila envelope from Jamestown Stamps appeared in his mailbox. Postage consisted of Scott 827 (22 cents Cleveland). Myron went immediately to the "Free 100 stamp collection." He sorted the stamps on his kitchen table (just like Linn's Rawolik II) and found the catalog value totaled \$ 217.60. Included was a small "Bonus Packet" -- Scott 385-8, complete 1937 Austrian



Railway Centennial, catalogue value of \$22.50.

But, nothing shocked Myron more than the Jamestown approval booklet: "Special Value if you buy all: \$ 9.75." For the sake of space, let us say that Myron took the Special which included page one, the cancelled Columbians Scott 230 - 237 (1 cent blue to the 10 cent black brown). On page four he nabbed Scott 294-298, the Pan America commemoratives. Myron kept this all to himself and refrained from offering Jamestown a referral to a friend for "50 Free Stamps!" Oh yes, Myron Storch picked out Superman No. 6 and is awaiting his Free 100 Stamps from Garcelon Stamps. What do YOU think will happen?

Note: Emily A. Tellick is the *nom de plume* of Stephen Brett.

WANTED: Henry Alker is looking for information on two types of United States revenue stamps. First, he would like to know the catalogue value of the 5-cent and 25-cent oleomargarine revenue tax stamps. Second, he wants to know the value of the 1875 Lock Seal revenue issue. The U.S. Scott Specialized catalogue does not list these stamps. Get in touch with Henry if you have any suggestions or information on these items that may be helpful to him.



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, 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. **Regular group meetings have been suspended while the Covid-19 restrictions remain in place. For further information about the club visit our website at <http://www.santarosastampclub.org/home.html>**

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