

# THE SRSC NEWSLETTER

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



Vol. 10, No. 3

May 2021

## Editor's Note

Dennis Buss

For those of you who have missed attending stamps shows since the Covid-19 restrictions were mandated, you will be pleased to learn that WESTPEX 2021 will open from July 30 to August 1 at the San Francisco Airport Marriott Waterfront Hotel. The show will feature over 280 frames of exhibits along with 75 stamp dealers from around the world. Many meetings and seminars are scheduled by various philatelic societies and organizations. This is one of the premier stamp show events in the country and is not to be missed.

## Amazing Stamp Stories #8

Stephen Brett

Crime and Punishment, Philately Style

To my fellow collectors here's a headline and story you never wish to read: ***The APS Stamp Theft Committee is alerting the collecting community about a stamp theft in Santa Rosa, California.*** *There was a major theft on November 5, 2020 between 4:30 PM and 6:00 PM in Walnut Creek. A collector named Merle Springer was the victim of theft of three plastic binders holding his most expensive material. Each binder contained 20 to 23 Hagner pages. The most valuable volume was worth \$150,000 and consisted of U.S. material.*

But the *Amazing Story* I'm about to tell goes back to Nov. 27, 1998 and occurred at the Jacob Javits Center in New York City following the Postage Stamp Mega Event. The victim, Jeffrey Forster considers art as "stacks of old mail." His collection of 1869 stamp, most affixed to their original envelopes, were masterpieces worth an estimated one million dollars. The stamps in Forster's collection, issued for eight months in 1869 are rare because they were examples of the first two-color pictorial stamps ever printed in the United States. Before this series, stamps featured only the faces of dead Presidents.



The 12-cent stamp was a green stamp depicting the steamship Adriatic. The 15-cent stamp has a brown and blue scene of Columbus's arrival in the New World. And the 24-cent stamp was a green and violet vignette of the famous Turnbull painting of the signing of the Declaration of Independence. It is so detailed that with the help of a magnifying glass it is possible to distinguish the faces of the signers.

A Mr. Laurence, an esteemed philatelist, stated "When these stamps came out people hated them. They didn't like the two colors and they thought it was inappropriate to put pictures on stamps." But, collectors loved them from the moment they were printed.

But, back to the theft! Mr. Forster, then 53, a lawyer from San Jose left the exhibition hall with a locked briefcase holding his stamp collection and two other pieces of luggage. Mr. Forster said he set his bags near the curb at 11th Avenue and 35th Street and turned his back for a few seconds to hail a cab. When he turned back around, the suitcase was gone.

At first, police had no leads and Forster offered a \$ 25,000 reward for this million dollar collection believed to be "the largest theft ever of rare stamps." But here's where the story turns amazing. At the moment of the theft, by sheer good fortune, an off duty NYPD detective, Murray Greschler was downing a cup of coffee at Harry the Ref's coffee shop while watching the traffic and indulging in people-watching, a popular New York pastime. He saw the briefcase grab. The thief was wearing a postal uniform. And, he knew the man. Next day, detective Greschler visited the post office at 37<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> and asked to speak to the Postmaster. After showing his detective shield the Postmaster told the sad story of the suspect.

To begin with, he should not have been wearing a postal uniform. He was on probation for the deliberate desecration of stamps that he believed were, in his words, "gaudy." When the Postmaster added, "the crazy part of this is that his Great-Great Grandfather was a postman way back in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and he was fired for the same thing, I believe, when the first two color stamps came out. He hated them."

This was pay dirt for Greschler. Based upon information he obtained from the Postmaster a bench warrant was easily granted and the accused thief's apartment was visited by New York's finest. The stamps were retrieved to the great joy of the owner. Officer Greschler got the \$25,000 reward. Jeffrey Forster got his prized three volumes. But, there was a snag. The furloughed postman, now in custody, added his notorious touch: the Benjamin Franklin, Scott 100 was given a pipe to smoke and the Andrew Jackson, Scott 87, received a nice black mustache.

And, now you know the rest of the story.

## Ask Phil

*Dear Uncle Phil: What is a surtax on a stamp? Is this a new fangled program of the Biden-Harris administration? Can I move to Texas or Florida and avoid paying it?*

*Yours,*

*Stonewall.*

Dear Stonewall:

Change your channel. A surtax is the non-postage amount in the total cost of some postage stamps. It appears on semi-postal stamps as a separate figure, usually in the form of 10c + 2c or similarly. The additional amount, or surtax, is generally devoted to some charitable purpose and is a method long used to raise funds.



*Dear Uncle Phil:*

*Is this just another "urban legend" or is there an actual organization dedicated to discouraging countries from issuing "junk stamps."*

*Handy Andrews*

Dear Handy:

Not an urban legend at all. Founded in Great Britain in 1895 the Society for the Suppression of Speculative Stamps (SSSS) attempted to persuade stamp-issuing authorities to refrain from issuing stamps the chief purpose of which was to raise money from their sale to collectors. A measure of their failure is the fact that most of today's stamps are produced with philatelic sales very much in mind. In 2012 Scotland Yard intercepted an SSSS plot to attack Hungary.

*Dear Phil:*

*I just purchased a high-valued early U.S. stamp (Scott 16, 10 cent Washington, green IV). It hasn't arrived yet and a neighbor said that \$1,600 was too rich a price because in the description it said: "slightly hinged." When I thought that over I really got unnerved because, to the best of my knowledge, back in 1857 there were no such things as hinges! What can I expect as to the stamp's condition? And, should the stamp have been more reduced in price due to this condition?*



*Jared U.*

Dear Jared:

Unhinged stamps, like people, are more desirable to stamp dealers. The term "lightly hinged" is used to describe a stamp that bears only the faintest shadow of a previously applied hinge on its back. To merit this description there must be no more gum disturbance than the faint shadow where the hinge was affixed. This condition is usually indicated in advertisements, price lists, and auction catalogs as "LH." If your stamp is LH you did well.

*Dear Phil :*



*In a mixture I just bought there are a couple of Italian stamps from around 1945 that have black overprinted letters that take up most of the stamp. One overprint reads: A.M.G. - F.T.T. and the other A .M.G. V.G. What do these overprints mean?*

*Joe Bargano*

Dear Joe:

The overprint "A.M.G. F.T.T." was applied by Allied Occupation Authorities to Italian stamps from 1947 to 1954. These were for use by Allied Military Governments in Zone A of the Free Territory between Italy and Yugoslavia and included Trieste. The overprint "A.M.G. V.G." was applied to stamps of Italy in 1945 by the combined US-British Military Government of the province of Venezia Giulia on the Italian-Yugoslavian border. There's enough in my reply for you to figure out what the letters stand for. As an aside, in this period the Agnelli family of Milan came up with the name for their auto: FIAT. The name is short for "Fix It Again, Tony. "

*Dear Phil:*

*I'm looking at an ad in the latest Linn's Stamp News promising 500 Stamps in "average" condition for \$ 2.00. What can I expect?*

*Penn Pincher*

Dear Penn:

Generally a stamp that is "average" can be damaged, faded, or heavily cancelled and can only be considered as a space filler. Exceptions could be major rarities or stamps from countries like Afghanistan where completely different standards must be applied because of circumstances in the use of early stamps. Just remember, Penn, half the people in our beloved country are below average.

*Dear Phil:*

*I'm a new collector and I'm sure you will know the answer to this question. I found a stamp with a profile design of an eagle and it has Domestic Mail on the top with a "C" next to the eagle and US Postage on the bottom. What is this stamp?*

*Sally Y.*

Dear Sally: The "C" stamp is a non-denominated US postage stamp prepared for release at short notice to fill a postal rate until stamps in the new denomination could be prepared. The stamp was issued on Oct. 11, 1981 and allocated a denomination of 20 cents to cover the new 20¢ rate at that time. Similar in design to the "A" and "B" stamps it bears the inscription "Domestic Mail" to emphasize that it is not valid for international use. Such stamps, according to the Universal Postal Union requirements must bear a figure of denomination. It has not been determined whether the "C" stamp will be accepted in the CHAZZ zone in Portland, Oregon. That's all folks,



Steve Brett, aka Phil A. Tellick

*Hola Phil,*

*Today is Cinco de Mayo. It is one of the more significant historical double dates. Other more obvious ones are 1/1, 10/10 and 11/11. But they're there throughout the calendar. I thought of a couple of interesting ideas for a topical collections: stamps commemorating events, like New Year's Day and Veterans Day. The other is stamps issued on double dates.*

*I realize some, like March 3, don't have lots of significance outside of it being If Pets Had Thumbs day and Talk In Third Person Day. Whatcha think?*

*Birthday Boy*

Dear Birthday Suit,

I plan on celebrating 5/5 with mas cerveza. People already collect specific, topical stamps for New Years, Veterans Day and the anniversary of the Wuchang Uprising, 10/10. I realize that the USS Cairo sank on the Yazoo River on 3/3, but it's not exactly significant. One thing about this pandemic, people are trying to find things to do. I applaud your efforts but have a suggestion: stick to the classics, including topicals. Collecting double dates is interesting but only in perspective. Clean up your collection. Trade duplicates with friends. Help your local club by being more active and involved. Make a goal of doing a presentation and writing an article. There are folks who can help. Now that's something to start on any date.

Phil

Dear Phil,

I was browsing an auction catalogue from England and came across the description of an Irish overprint stamp from 1922-1923 as having a "guide block variety." I cannot find a description of it in any of the standard catalogues. What the heck is it?

Irish stamp lover

Dear Mick,

A guide block variety is described in the Irish specialized catalogue, Hibernian, as "a piece of metal by which the overprint is attached to the plate. When it is raised, it can leave a mark on the stamp." Look carefully to the left of the 'S' of Saorstat. Guide block varieties are quite rare. Happy hunting,

Phil O'Tellick



Dear Phil,

The stamp club I belong to may be meeting in person again by summer. My friend and fellow club member Steve, has come up with this brilliant idea: each member shares what they did to enhance their stamp collection during this pandemic. I have this comprehensive France collection in 4 bulging specialty albums. I collect both mint and used of each issue on alternate pages. I have 3 stockbooks of duplicates. So I had this interesting, well, it's an idea, of painstakingly going through and finding Socked On The Nose (SON) Circular Date Stamps (CDS) and/or slogan cancels, replacing as many used stamps as I can. It's especially challenging with the small definitives. It won't enhance the value of the collection much at all. It's taking forever but it's keeping me outta trouble. So whatcha think? Does it sound weird? SON

First of all, I'm not your father Luke. Second, you may be a little alarming but I'm hoping you're harmless. Really hoping. You have WAY too much time on your hands. Way too much. Still, if it keeps you out of trouble, we ALL benefit. All of us. Third, you're talking about thousands of stamps, stamps, stamps, with commemoratives particularly challenging. I think what you have is OCD OCD OCD.

Phil Phil Phil

PS: Think of what you can share verbally and with examples of how you've enhanced your stamp collection at an in-person meeting.

Paul von Gottfried, aka Phil A Tellick

## My Favorite Stamps

Sue Dixon



The stamp that comes to my mind whenever "your favorite" stamp is mentioned, is Germany B283. I can't really call it my favorite, but it is certainly my most memorable. I started collecting stamps when I was about 10. At that time I was also horse crazy. At every birthday or shooting star or any time a wish was in order, I'd wish for a horse. I'd read all the horse books in the library and waited each year for the Sears Christmas catalog to come out so I could see if there was a new

Black Stallion book by Walter Farley. And then I saw the space for a horse stamp in my beginner's album! It was MY horse on a tiny piece of paper. I don't remember when I got



the actual stamp, but even now it's "my horse" whenever I look at it. It's the one stamp I can always remember.

### Ronald Miska

My favorite stamp is Russia 1934, Scott 546. This is the lowest denomination in a series of five stamps issued by the Soviet Union in 1934 depicting the horrors of modern warfare. It is among my favorite stamps because of its powerful and chilling imagery and the fact that within 5 years the image would once more become a reality. In addition, the composition and overall graphic quality are outstanding.



## 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>

### SRSC OFFICERS FOR 2021

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