

THE SRSC NEWSLETTER

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



Vol. 3, No. 2

August 2014

Editor's Note:

Our summer newsletter features articles by Steve Brett and Robert Kirk that share a common theme – the importance of childhood exposure to stamp collecting that led to their lifetime commitment to the hobby. As a club, we continue to lament the absence of interest among today's youth. Given the reported decline in the number of active collectors, I would like to propose a different approach to this problem. While not giving up on opportunities to attract youth, why not concentrate our recruiting efforts on the baby boomer generation that is now retiring in great numbers? As many of us know, it is easy to retire from a job but one also needs to retire into an active and productive life as a "senior." What can we do to offer stamp collecting as an attractive option for the other end of the generational spectrum? I, for one, would be interested in your opinions on this slant to bringing more people into our hobby. This issue concludes with Victor Ivashin's written summary of his fascinating presentation on Russian charity stamps. As an expert on Russian philately, Victor amply demonstrates how our hobby can stimulate interest in history and cultural understanding.

Get to Know Your Members: Steve Brett

I was born on Christmas morning in 1946 at a hospital in Grammercy Park, Manhattan. I was given the middle name of Noel as a souvenir. My greatest asset is the wonderful childhood I experienced thanks to my parents Rose and Charles, and a sister who was my spare mom (12 years my senior). She was the "Depression Baby," born in 1935 who had very young and struggling parents. I was the silver spoon baby boomer with two mature well-heeled folks.



I grew up in Laurelton, Queens. My neighborhood was within the bounds of New York City but had the character of a small suburban town on the south shore of Long Island. I went to public schools in Queens and I am a graduate of Queens College with a major in Anthropology. I had the good fortune of meeting my wife of 42 years, Robin, at the one evening function I ever attended at Queens College. She was so pretty that I overlooked the fact that she was a high school senior. Robin had a part-time job at the nearby KFC near her home, and aside from her good looks, she had this enchanting aroma.

At my birthday party in 1954 my friend Marty Amsterdam gave me a wrapped narrow box that contained "My First Stamp Album." The set, which cost \$2.95, came with a plastic magnifier, a bag of hinges and 1,000 world-wide stamps. My folks said that on the same evening when the party was over, I sat at my small desk and just started putting the

stamps in the album “like you knew what you were doing.” I guess I never really stopped except for the teen years when it wasn’t cool to collect stamps. In those days every candy store in Laurelton had a rack of stamps in little packets for 10 to 25 cents. Gimbels department store, which was a bike ride away in one of the first modern shopping centers on Long Island, had a full-blown stamp department in the basement level where all of us kids crowded around with our lists – ogling the glass display counters and driving the three poor souls behind the counter crazy with our questions and lack of understanding that a whole dollar wouldn’t buy the Zeppelin sets. I think that the Minkus Stamp Company was



behind the establishment at Gimbels. A big treat for me was seeing a Broadway show (*Damn Yankees, Sound of Music*), having lunch in Sardi’s or Jack Dempsey’s and also dropping into one of the street level stamp dealers we passed in the theatre district and being treated to a good set of stamps for my birthday, one of which was the Lexington-Concord mint set for only \$2.85. My dad, a stockbroker from 1930 to 1992, could not understand why

he had to pay \$2.85 for 9 cents worth of postage. He did understand stocks and bonds.

I entered the field of insurance in 1969 after spending an unhappy time in law school. My start in insurance was an absolutely random occurrence. I walked up a flight of steps in a building on lower Broadway in New York. The guy behind the counter asked me what I was looking for. I said, “I have no idea.” With that he pulled out six index cards, one of them was the Fireman’s Fund and I soon became an underwriter for them for the first 28 years of my career. I started in the mail room and by the time I left them, I was President of two of their affiliated companies. I have just retired on July 11 this year after serving as a Senior Executive of Brit Syndicate, one of the largest Lloyd’s Underwriting Groups. After 45 years in the insurance business, I am already spending more time on my stamps sorting out issues to put in my global collection. It was a great thing for me to join the Santa Rosa Stamp Club. I am not a big joiner but I feel like I have made 45 friends over night and I hope to be able to contribute more to the club now that I am retired.

The “Golden Age” of Philately

Robert Kirk

I can’t prove it, but I like to think the “Golden Age” of philately was in the 1940’s and 50’s, when I was growing up. For me, it centered in the East Bay. A friend of my father’s, one Horace Valentine Carter, urged him to introduce his seven-year old to collecting. My father brought home stamps, hinges, and an album and I was off and running. I’ve never looked back.

Lots of kids collected, and some of my life-long friends still do. In August 1949 my father took me to the Rose Garden at Lakeside Park in Oakland for the East Bay Collector’s Club annual outdoor stamp show. I joined the club. They met every Wednesday night, with around 50-60 in attendance. Because the EBCC welcomed kids, about eight or ten of us formed a junior auxiliary, which met Saturday mornings at the Oakland Museum. Philately was so popular that we had a club at Frick Junior High.



The Bay Area had a number of stamp shops, and the ones I visited were Harry Gray’s on Franklin Street, and Jack Hughes’ on 17th Street, both in downtown Oakland. Gray offered short sets of King George VI definitive issues -- 1/2d, 1d, and 1-1/2d -- for fifteen

cents. It was love at first sight and they led to my specialization in the GVI era a decade later. In San Francisco I visited the United States Stamp Co., which is still, astonishingly, on Bush Street.

With high school came girls and lesser attractions, college, career marriage, and travel; yet I never lost interest in collecting.

My wife and I have loved living in Santa Rosa since retirement, but I sorely missed belonging to a club. When George Land approached me about starting a club, I enthusiastically agreed. We all know we're decidedly not in a "Golden Age" of the hobby, but here in Santa Rosa, on the first Tuesday of the month, something still shines.

Charity Stamps of Russia – A Brief Look

Victor Ivashin

Even though charity monies were collected throughout Russia in the 19th century one of the most recognized and "official" methods was through the use of charity stamps that were first introduced into the post during the reign of Czar Nicolas II (1894-1917). His wife, the Czarina Alexandria, started the Imperial Women's Patriotic Union, the organization that provided charity throughout Russia. Her charismatic efforts inspired many Russians.

By 1902, the Russian empire had more than 19 thousand charitable associations and institutions, including parish guardianships (in 1914, the latter kept, at the corresponding churches, 44 hospitals and 683 almshouses privately financed by the parishioners). It is estimated that in the mid-1900s the number of persons receiving charity probably amounted to 2.5 million.

Philanthropy in the Russian empire took many forms, including anonymous donations which amounted to 10-15 per cent of the total. Along with individual donations, equally important were the mass drives to raise funds and other forms of support, such as charity-box collections, subscriptions, charity lectures, concerts and lotteries. The use of

the postal system to gather funds became an important source of support. The "official" charity stamps shown at the left were placed in use both in 1905 and in 1914, mostly for the benefit of families who had sons or fathers killed in action during war time. They appear in several shades and colors, including perforation varieties. It must be remembered that during the imperial rule many wars, both civil and national, presented themselves across the Russian empire. Some of these were:



Charity Stamps, Continued

- 1792 Russo-Polish War
- 1804-1813 Russo-Persian War
- 1812 France –Napoleon War
- 1828 Russo-Persian War
- 1856 Crimean War
- 1889-1901 Boxer Rebellion
- 1904-1905 Russo-Japan War
- 1914-1918 World War I
- 1917-1921 Russian Civil War

Obviously, hundreds of thousands of soldiers returned home with severe problems. Many more were killed in action and their families needed support. The cost of wars is high.

Natural disasters also plagued Russia and the flooding of the Volga River in 1921 left many hungry, the stamps used for the raising of disaster funds appear below:



In September of 1922 charity stamps designed to aid children and orphans appeared as a special printing distributed for only a couple of days in Moscow. These are quite valuable and exist as overprint direction types. The inscription reads “Philatelia for Children,” and are seen in the left three examples below. The block of four in the center is the 1926 issue dedicated to helping children and to the far right are the 1923 stamps to combat famine in the Ukraine, issued with and without watermarks.



Charity Stamps, Continued

As there were many needs for charity of all types, a series of stamps also appeared that were sold through public efforts but were not part of the postal sales by the national or local governments. The following depict a variety charity and public appeals, many centered around a special theme, all reflecting a loving care for those with special needs. For orphaned, hungry and even starving children, often as a result of war, are the following charity labels:



For the wounded, blind and crippled soldiers returning from the wars:



Charity Stamps, Continued

Sickness and the plague swept through Russia often spread throughout the country by railway cars. The following stamps were warning that special funds were needed to stop the Black Death:



Some of the money from the sale of these private labels and seals went to the prisoners of war suffering in jails. Charity in its true sense holds no nationalistic preferences:



The bordering nations also marketed stamps, seals and labels to support charity in Russia. Here are a couple from the Ukraine for wounded soldiers:



Charity Stamps, Continued

Russian experts repeatedly assessed and publicized the plight of those who were in need - cripples, the elderly, insane, blind, and deaf persons, mutes, homeless children, and orphans. In 1896 the number was calculated at 3.2 million. According to the 1897 census, there were 406,659 persons disabled, 401,365 persons begging, 108,013 persons in charitable institutions, and 314,276 persons whose subsistence depended on monetary grants from charity. Consequently, the total number of persons who needed relief amounted to more than 1.2 million or about 1 per cent of the population of 125 million. In 1914, in his speech to Russia's Congress on Public Assistance, Minister of the Interior Nikolai Maklakov put the number at 8 million out of the population of 160 million. These stamps and seals document one of the most interesting ways in which the people of Russia responded to the appeals for charitable giving.



Santa Rosa Stamp Club Meetings

Meetings are held on the first Tuesday of the month throughout the year at 7:00 pm in the Lodge at Paulin Creek, Building D, 2375 Range Avenue, Santa Rosa. For more information about the meetings or membership in the club call: 1-707-774-6296 or email: srsc12@yahoo.com

SRSC Officers

President Paul Von Gottfried
Vice President Don Test
Treasurer Susan Dixon
Secretary Dennis Buss
Auctioneer Joe Kagan

Executive Committee Members

Martin Feibusch
Doug Iams

Newsletter Editor

Dennis Buss

Advertising and Publicity

Robert Kirk

Presentation Program

Sept. 2: British Empire Revenues
Paul Von Gottfried

Oct. 7: Insuring Your Stamp Collection
Steve Brett

Nov. 4: Member Show & Tell Session

Dec. 2: Philatelic Quiz
George Land

Area Stamp Shows

Winepex October 3-5 Marin Civic Center, San Rafael
East Bay Collectors Club Show October 25-25 Civic Center Assembly Hall, Walnut Creek
Sacapex November 1-3 Scottish Rite Temple, 6252 H Street, Sacramento
Penpex December 6-7 Community Activities Bldg., 1400 Roosevelt Ave., Redwood City