

# THE SRSC NEWSLETTER

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

*APS Chapter 1584*



Vol. 5, No. 1

April 2016

## **Editor's Note**

Dennis Buss

I am very happy to present to our members a special issue of the club Newsletter. We have a short piece from our immediate past president, Paul Von Gottfried, and a much more extensive contribution from our current president, Stephen Brett. Paul reminds us that even though we may have grumbled at times, the performance of the USPS, on the whole, has been exemplary. Steve's article is a reflection on a topic that has been an ongoing concern to our membership. How do we attract and sustain interest in stamp collecting especially among youth? In his vivid recollections of his boyhood years, he reminds us of what attracted us to stamp collecting in the first place. By tapping into the enjoyment experienced by most of us in our early years, perhaps we will find the motivation and means to bring a new generation into the pleasures of our rewarding hobby.

I am also pleased to report that I now have several articles for future issues of our newsletter. I hope to publish at least two more issues before the end of 2016. In saying this, I do not wish to give the impression that I have no further need for your contributions! Indeed, feel free to submit short pieces as Paul has done below as well as more extensive articles such as Steve's including anything in between. I am particularly interested in "show and tell" type articles that answer such questions as: why I bought this stamp or why I bought this cover, or why I collect this country, or why I specialize in this theme or topic. To pick up on Steve's point, the more we share our interests, the more we rekindle the excitement and pleasures of stamp collecting.

## **The Santa Rosa Stamp Club**

Membership is open to anyone interested in stamp collecting and who agrees to abide by the club By-Laws. Dues are \$12.00 per year, pro-rated on the month of joining. Meetings are held on the first Wednesday of the month at 7:00 pm at the Brookdale Lodge at Paulin Creek, 2375 Range Avenue, Main Entrance, Santa Rosa.

For information about club membership call Dennis Buss at 707-774-6296 or send an email to [srsc2012@yahoo.com](mailto:srsc2012@yahoo.com). Visit our website at: <http://www.santarosastampclub.org/home.html>

## Postal Rate Changes

Paul Von Gottfried

Effective April 10, 2016 the postage rate for U.S. first class mail has declined from \$.49 to \$.47. This is only the third time in the history of the USPS that rates have declined. The other two occasions were in 1883 and 1919. Postal rates for other types of domestic mail have also decreased. However, rates for international mail have increased. For a complete list of changes, visit the USPS website at:

[https://stamps.custhelp.com/app/answers/detail/a\\_id/1685/~/april-2016-usps-rate-changes](https://stamps.custhelp.com/app/answers/detail/a_id/1685/~/april-2016-usps-rate-changes)

The United States already has one of the lowest rates for postage in the world. The USPS consistently rates as one of the fastest and most reliable mail delivery services. Considering the geographical challenges, with Hawaii and Alaska not part of the contiguous United States, this is a remarkable achievement.

The next time someone comments on the inefficiency and inadequacy of our government, please cite the tremendous achievements of the United States Postal Service. It is indeed a service, in every sense of the word. We, as Americans, should all be proud.

## Kids, Stamps and the Ageless Enjoyment of Collecting

Stephen Brett

I've been enjoying *Stamp Magazine* for some months now. I discovered this British publication in the ample periodical racks of Barnes & Nobles on 4th Street, Santa Rosa. Its cover boasts, "The World's Best Philatelic Magazine." I can't dispute this as I only receive the *American Philatelist* and *Linn's*. However, of the three, *Stamp Magazine* is by far the most impressive in presentation and content. I think my New York upbringing drives me promptly (like an Exocet missile) to the monthly column entitled "Soapbox." New Yorkers crave criticisms and critiques. In the March 2016 magazine issue "Soapbox" highlights The Stamps in Schools Project which has been running 18 years under Erene Grieve, its coordinator. Ms. Grieve states "the idea came about when, at a meeting of my local

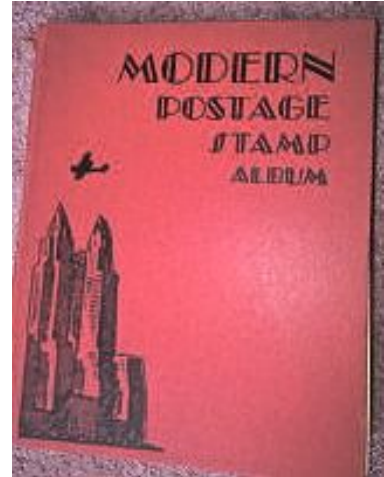


philatelic society, I heard people saying that children weren't interested in stamps any more, only in computers. That was said 20 years ago! "I didn't think lack of interest was the main problem. To me, it was that children weren't being introduced to the hobby any

more." She goes on to say that, "The children's initial reaction that stamps would be boring has been consistent throughout." "Fortunately," she continues, "so has their change of attitude following the workshop." Following said workshop, children say: "I can't wait to start a collection."

This edition of the Soapbox column touches on a theme discussed at our April SRSC meeting. I made the comment that stamp collecting is losing ground because of the perception that it is not exciting while the variety of electronic hand-held (and screen)

communications and entertainment media devices are far more exciting. This perception is prevalent despite the fact that so much of stamp collecting activity and research is computer/internet based. My contention during our last meeting was this: The electronic age may enhance our hobby but it doesn't make it exciting; it is already exciting, not to mention enjoyable, relaxing, fascinating, educational and, sometimes, even profitable. Unless I'm missing something, computers can never approach the sociability and companionship of good old in-person collecting, trading, buying and the associated live events such as stamp shows and club meetings.



Unless there has been a huge evolutionary shift in the human species in the last 50 years, stamp collecting is and should be just as exciting today as it was in its so-called golden age of 50 or more years ago. With an intelligent and appealing approach, youngsters today should take to stamp collecting the same as we did. And, with so much taking place in our hobby on line, it should be even more appealing and accessible. Computers are a tool, after all, not a substitute for human activity. As Erene Grieve of the U.K. said, "if you went into schools with an exhibition of stamps, you would soon have them interested." As I offered at our last meeting, if we fully explored, understood and turned into tools the exciting elements of our hobby what only will remain to be done is its introduction to uninitiated youth. Inversely, if we try to enlist new hobby members from the youth without knowing how to best excite them, we will not be terribly effective. We have an exciting hobby. Let's explore and surface what makes it so darn exciting so that we can effectively convey and share the excitement to our youth and assure ourselves that other Golden Era's for Stamp Collecting lie ahead.

How many examples do we need of adults returning to stamp collecting after putting the album away twenty, thirty, forty or more years ago and finding it as enjoyable and exciting as in their youth? It is not difficult to conclude that the appeal of stamp collecting is ageless.

Many of us have moved to new homes in new cities and towns in our lives. Every move involved the hard work of sorting through belongings and making choices: What to toss? What to pack? Somehow, when it came to the stamp collection of our youth the album made the cut and along it came. Why? I think we all had a sense that it was something we enjoyed and valued, was something associated with good times in the past and, darn it, we were going to get back into the hobby some day. And then, there was always that secret hope that perhaps some of the stamps we collected may be worth a lot of money after all these years. A primal instinct that told us that if we enjoyed collecting that much as a kid we would enjoy it as much or more as adult – especially when we had money in our pockets to indulge ourselves and had time to work on our collection. Yes, we tossed out a lot of things (and so did our parents when we weren't looking) but they and we kept that album. There was something special about it and that's what we will explore.

An extensive study of American hobbies recently revealed, again, that gardening followed by stamp collecting are the number one and two American hobbies. You and I are not imagining things. Stamp collecting is a great hobby and a very popular pastime. But, if we need collateral proof that it is as great as all that, we merely need to compare its chief

attractions with the number one placeholder – gardening. Stamp collecting and gardening share deep commonalities.

Both pastimes can be enjoyed on a small scale or a vast scale, for little money or major money, on a solitary basis or club and group basis, can be squeezed into an enjoyable few spare minutes or hours upon hours, and can be thoroughly enjoyed all through a lifetime. Both hobbies can be practiced by feel, intuition, or simply for the fun of it and both hobbies can lead to deep, deep study, and the personal development of expertise and mastery leading to a serious passion for the subject. Stamp collectors and gardeners may be generalists or they may narrow their fields of interest to one very specific area. The gardening generalist may become enchanted with roses, for example, to the exception of all other plants. The worldwide collector may narrow his or her interest to revenue stamps, and nothing else.

Perhaps the greatest attributes of the two top hobbies are these: with every minute, hour or day applied to these hobbies there's a tangible and discernable incremental improvement guaranteed in the garden or the stamp collection as a result of one's efforts. The satisfaction for the effort expended is practically immediate. How many things do we do in life where the results are tangible, positive and satisfying? Nearly none. Too often our professional lives lack these rewards. That is why hobbies like stamp collecting offer an important outlet (or dare I say, escape?). An hour of trimming, weeding, pruning, watering, landscaping, and planting provides immediate satisfying results. A similar hour spent on sorting, arranging, mounting, organizing, cataloging, researching and documenting one's stamps brings our understanding and collection to a higher level. The satisfaction of constant upgrading and enhancing the value of one's collection is a principal source of enjoyment to the collector. Critical to the universal success and popularity of both hobbies over many years is the following common factor: the individual effort is paramount and may be recognized as such by friends, family and fellow practitioners. The results are reflective of one's creativity, resourcefulness, intellect, artistic eye, and sometimes (and this may be unique to stamp collecting) his or her business acumen. A highly developed garden or stamp collection also speaks one's energy, persistence and dedication to an ideal and vision. The results of both hobbies, interestingly, can be shared or enjoyed privately. Both hobbies can be pursued strictly for personal satisfaction. As an aside, many stamp collectors barely if ever feel compelled to show their collections. It is an immensely satisfying hobby, shared or not shared with others. Kids, on the other hand will want to show their collections and enjoy the admiration of what they're achieving and how much they are learning.

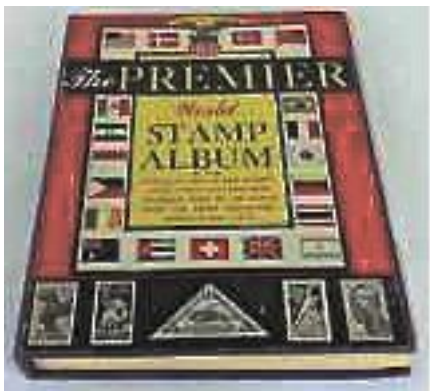
Let's now try to remember our first encounter with stamps. What did we think about it? What feelings did we have about the starter set we first received and inspected or that bag or envelope of stamps with a basic album to mount them in? Some of us had a

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dime or a quarter and were attracted to a rack in Woolworths or the local candy store and were drawn in by something. Perhaps it was the appeal of possessing stamps of some exotic far away country. Or, perhaps we were drawn to that glassine envelope that depicted the striking images of a camel, flower, pyramid, airplane or ship on the stamps. Whatever it was, we wanted it and we could bring it home, to really look at it and hold it, and own it. And, we could go back to Woolworths or the candy store and buy more stamps from other remote countries that depicted those lions, African warriors, army tanks and Presidents. We wanted some of these, too. The subjects, the strange places, the odd currency and the idea of building our own collection drew us in.

For most of us, we are going back to when we were 8, 9 or 10 years of age. Until that moment, if we had a hobby at all, it involved playing. Kids who played with trains or collected baseball cards experienced the beginnings of a full-fledged hobby which often led to stamps as a next natural next step.



When we sat down the first couple of times with our stamps it was immediately clear to us that this was something we could do by ourselves. We needed no special help to do it. To a youngster that's a wonderful feeling. The sense of independent action – the creation of something that belongs strictly to me – held great appeal. I can do it the way I want to. I can pick it up when I want to and stop when I want to. No one's telling me what to do or how to do it. It's my little world. For the first time, there was something I knew more about than my parents. I had something I could explain to them, and not vice versa.

In school, stamp collectors like me knew and heard of things that non-collectors knew nothing of. We knew that a country mentioned by our teacher was in Africa or that Belgium, Norway and France were overrun by the Nazi's. We recognized a number of world leaders and historic figures by face. We associated many flags with their nations. We were the only kids who knew about coats of arms. We had a very good idea of what was grown in other countries and what animals inhabited these countries. We also knew where people came from by their clothing. We knew that there were other sports than baseball and football and where these sports were played. We knew where the Olympic games were held. We were familiar with famous artists, musicians, scientists, historic and famous buildings and where they were located. Kids who collected stamps knew about the United Nations and even what functions it performed. We also heard of all the U.S. Presidents and roughly who followed whom in order of election.

It was fun, and, looking back, good for our self-esteem to know so many things about such a wide-range of subjects. We were often asked: "How did you know that?" Our answer: "I collect stamps and saw it on a stamp I own." Sometimes this led to the ultimate affirmation: "Show me your stamps." The inquisitive party would then see your collection and more times than not would come away with a greater respect and different perspective of who you are. This felt awfully good.

Soon our parents realized we were beginning to have an interest in stamp collecting. They typically encouraged us by snipping stamps off mail coming to the house or bringing stamps home from the office. Soon we were hunting for stamps everywhere we could. The fun was in the treasure hunt for stamps. It was exciting and cost nothing at a time when it was

a big deal to have a quarter in your pocket. And there was always the possibility of finding something really special or valuable to add to your collection. Sometimes that led us to stacks of old correspondence in boxes in the attic, closets, and other storage areas. We branched out to relative's attics and closets and often came up with some goodies. Knowing that we were stamp collectors led to friends and family looking for stamps for us and showing up with envelopes with stamp clippings. This relationship of people caring about our interests and making the effort to support and nurture it created good feelings and fondness for their generosity and caring. Is it not amazing that 50 and 60 years later we can recall those who cared enough to clip stamps and bring them to us? We never lose these feelings that made us feel special.

The jackpot, of course, was the cousin, uncle or aunt who stopped collecting and just said, "Hey, I used to collect. Would you like my old album?" In my case, my cousin was older than I and her abandoned stamp album added many stamps to my collection. The album was bound, was more advanced than my own and it contained stamps from countries I had never imagined to possess. This was exciting!

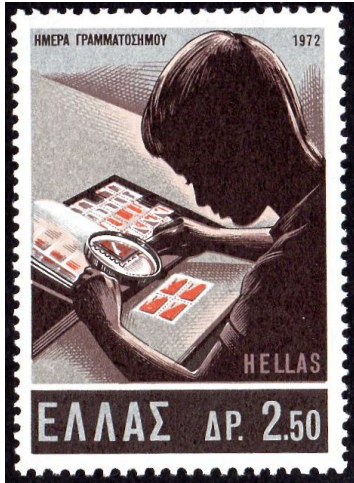
About this time (age roughly 10) I started noticing enticing ads inside the covers of Superman and Batman comics from such stamp companies as Garcelon Stamps, Kenmore Stamps, and Capitol Stamps. For only 10 cents I could receive 100 Free Stamps! One Hundred Stamps for Free!! That might double my collection. (At that time I had no idea of what the phrase "accompanied by approvals" meant). In went the dime and now began the waiting/anticipation game. Then, one day, a fat envelope addressed to me from Garcelon came through the brass mail flap on our front door. In a greyish cellophane envelope was the *Free Gift! 100 Worldwide Stamps*. "Wow, this is great." But, what are these other stamps? And, do I owe Garcelon \$ 5.80? I don't have \$ 5.80. I was a little panicky and waited for my dad to come home from work. He'd know what to do. But, would he be mad? (It was a foregone conclusion that my mother would be!). Well, dad wasn't mad and he even let me select \$ 2.00 worth of approvals. You know where that led. A dime was on its way to Kenmore!

For a kid, this was very exciting stuff. I was doing business with companies 1,000 miles or more away. I was waiting to see an array of stamps I never thought I could get my hands on. And, there were all these beautiful FREE stamps coming every few weeks to my home. My collection was growing and I became increasingly proud of it. I was dealing with companies and people in other states and I was just a kid. It made me feel rather adult. Stamp collecting provided experiences and personal growth I would never have experienced if I only played schoolyard ball.

Most stamp collecting friends were eager to earn some money besides allowance so they could buy stamps for their collection. That was a side value that most people don't think about. The idea of saving and earning for things you wanted when you were very young. Stamp collecting buddies were driven; they had specific stamps and sets they targeted and dreamed of and they were organized in their approach to obtaining them. There was the eventual excitement in my neighborhood for kids biking, walking or being driven to Gimbel's, stepping up to the Stamp Department counter with the slip of paper with the catalogue number and country and the joy of being handed the glassine envelope with the



stamp or set we had saved for and dreamt of adding to our collection. For me, my earliest recollection was falling for a set of Ifni sharks (mint) for 20 cents. They were spectacular. Funny, isn't it, that decades later we know when and where we got most of our stamps and the ones we may cherish most are the ones we bought at counters like Gimbels when we had a whopping dollar bill to spend.



Lastly, there existed the informal neighborhood fraternity of kids who were fellow stamp collectors. These weren't necessarily our best friends. It was enough that they collected stamps and would trade with us or bike with us to the Post Office or Gimbels or the stamp store and, most importantly, appreciate why we enjoyed collecting. That affirmation made us feel good. In our pre-teens we worked on the Scouts stamp collector merit patch together and we all wanted to be the first to earn it. When we did, we shared a "good going" pat on the back and we wore the patch proudly. These were the friends who would gather with us at the classroom back table on Hobby Day to trade and show off their stamps. Funny, I can picture this as if it were yesterday and name the friends and what they collected. Can you? Don't we carry this pleasure forward every

month when our club meets in Santa Rosa? Nothing much is different; not in this enduring hobby. We are just a little older.

It seems as clear as this: Stamp collecting has so many enjoyable features that it can sell itself to the youth if we just make them aware of it. Depending on the youngster, sometime between the ages of eight and ten a seasoned stamp collector can spread some attractive stamps on a table for a child and say: "These are for you. They are yours now and they are worth some money! Here's an album and here's how you mount these stamps and if you like doing this I have many more for you and you can start your own collection. We can be stamp buddies and trade with each other." If we know of the child's interests, all the better. If they are into dinosaurs, we can make sure they are in the selection. Whatever the interest area – cars, pets, even computers – it's easy to find representative stamps. Once they get started (assuming the interest is there) then we take the role of reinforcing and helping. We should always take the time to say: "Let me see your collection." Children love to show their work and accomplishments to adults.

Slowly augment but do not smother the new collector with more stamps. Let's not take away from the fun of hunting for stamps by swamping the budding collector. On the other hand, there's plenty of fun to be had in joining in the hunt. Kids have an inherent sense of cost and value so highlighting the growing value of the new collection can be motivating. There's a keen satisfaction with filling a page or empty space. Completing a puzzle, a model, an assignment, or task brings about a sense of satisfaction. So does filling a page of an album or a set on a page. Kids will be drawn in by the fun and fulfillment of completeness.

For today's youngsters, anything that isn't on the internet isn't cool. Here's the good news! Stamp collecting has entered into the era of the internet in a big way. Stamps are bought, sold, and auctioned over the internet. There are virtual stamp clubs as well as a huge array of stamp clubs like the Santa Rosa Stamp Club with websites containing all sorts of information and the means of exchanging ideas. Stamp events and shows are publicized

over the internet. Catalogues and a wide variety of search engines are at the collectors fingertips. And this is all global and very exciting for new and seasoned collectors. Collectors can opt to be linked in with other collectors for on-line chats from practically anywhere in the world.

We would all be handicapping the hobby's potential for young recruits if we don't quickly establish in their minds that stamp collecting is as totally modern and current, flexible, and immediately accessible as any other hobby, subject or pursuit. Any collector of any age can plunge in and participate with millions of other collectors worldwide. How exciting is that?

But, let's always remember the first critical things about collecting that made us lifelong collectors. It was fun and it was fulfilling. It was something we could do by ourselves. It was something we could do with friends and family. It was something that gave us membership in a worldwide group of people who loved what we loved to do. It was something we soon knew more about than most people around us (even adults!). It was something that was ours. It was something we were proud of because we created it. It was even something we knew was growing in value. And, there was always the possibility that somehow, someday we too would stumble into something worth a fortune! That was and still is the possibility that we dream of every time we sort through a pile of stamps. Kids will be bitten by that bug early on, sure as shootin.' Collecting was our Treasure Island adventure.

For those of us who haven't yet found that \$50,000 or \$100,000 stamp in a \$ 5.00 assortment, I don't think we'd trade the lifetime of pleasure and excitement that stamp collecting has provided for a million dollars. Let's let some youngsters in on our little secret.



## 2016 SRSC Officers

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