

THE SRSC NEWSLETTER

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



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Editor's Note

Dennis Buss

We begin this issue with a short piece by George Land. Along with the late Bob Kirk, George was one of the two founding members of the Santa Rosa Stamp Club back in 2011-12. George now resides in Battle Ground, Washington. He continues to maintain his membership in the club. I am sure you will enjoy his reminisces of when the Harmer-Schau Auction started business in Petaluma in the 1980s. Paul von Gottfried provides an interesting account of the American attempt to use bogus German Hitler head stamps as a way to demoralize the German civilian population during World War II. The Ask Phil feature once again makes an appearance. And we conclude with three contributions to our new *My Favorite Stamps* feature that I hope will inspire others to submit their entries in the future.

From Beginning to End

Recently there were rumors that Chris Harmer of Harmer-Schau Auctions was planning to follow Kurt Schau into retirement. Then the word was that the Petaluma, CA sale this past January would be their last auction. Now I see that the current edition of Portland's Oregon Stamp Society newsletter no longer contains a Harmer-Schau advertisement. This is the first time in years that they have not carried the advertisement. I think it all adds up to one thing: Harmer-Schau is no longer in the stamp business.

This makes me feel as old as I look. History has flashed by in front of my eyes! I was there at the beginning and I am still here at the end. I do not know what year H-S entered the stamp auction business. It must have been some time in the 1980's. I was living near San Francisco Bay in Pleasanton, California. I was regularly attending different stamp auction houses in San Francisco, San Jose and Santa Cruz. Suddenly, a new one came on the scene with headquarters in Petaluma.

I went to their first sale at a stamp show in San Jose. I bid on several different lots and was there afterward to pay for them. Soon, one lady and then another lady began having problems with the computers they were working with. The line grew longer as we waited for Kurt and then Chris to try and untangle the computer problems. We had a moment of mirth when one of the ladies was trying to contact another man in the room. She called out, "It's that old guy on the other side of the room!" Every man there looked over, because we were all "old guys." (If you every have been to a stamp auction—there is no one there but "old guys.") Everyone laughed and finally, the computers were working again and the line was moving. Turns out, the two ladies were Mrs. Harmer and Mrs. Schau.

I never saw them again at an auction. Apparently other ladies were hired for future auctions.

Other stamp auction firms have come and gone in the Bay Area. In 2002 I moved to the Santa Rosa area, just 20 minutes from the H-S office in Petaluma. I conveniently inspected their lots and nearly all of my subsequent stamp purchases were from H-S auctions. A few years ago Kurt retired but the business continued to carry his name. He joined the Santa Rosa Stamp Club and is an active member. Chris, we know, has a well-known name in the stamp auction business. I believe H. R. Harmer was his grandfather. George Land

Operation Cornflakes

In World War II both the Allies and the Axis powers engaged in propaganda to undermine the morale of their enemy. This article will examine the efforts of the United States in applying propaganda to the philatelic arena.

Operation Cornflakes was a morale operation undertaken by the OSS - the Office of Strategic Services of the United States - during WWII. Its purpose was to trick the Deutschland Reichpost into inadvertently delivering through the mails anti-Nazi propaganda to German citizens.

Many other countries, notably Great Britain for the Allies and Nazi Germans for the Axis, issued propaganda stamps, posters and other media to weaken morale and advance their cause. This article will focus on the postage stamp forgery propaganda efforts of the United States to undermine German morale called "Operation Cornflakes."

The OSS was formed from the OCOI - the Office of the Coordinator of Information and the division of the FIS - Foreign Information Service - a division that President Roosevelt enacted by Executive Order 9128 on June 13, 1942. The remainder of the OCOI was renamed the Office of Strategic Services. The OSS was under the jurisdiction of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, giving the OSS the capability and status of a military branch.

The goal of the operation was to disrupt the morale of the German people by using large-scale psychological warfare that the British MI6 had been advocating with the use of the RAF - Royal Air Force. Using the same pattern as a previous OSS operation in Hungary, the OSS created the more intricate Operation Cornflakes. It was believed it would help undermine support for Adolf Hitler especially within Germany.

Operation Cornflakes started with OSS officials collecting information about the German Postal system from German POW's, with incentives like better meals in exchange for specifics about the sorting, canceling and delivery of German mail. The OSS was focusing their efforts on the liberation of France in 1944 that prevented them from infiltrating Germany directly. After the Normandy Invasion, OSS intelligence agents were sneaking in and collected information from nearby outposts in neutral countries. With this information the OSS and German exiles scoured the telephone directories and pulled over two million randomly selected names registered within Germany to send forged letters to the addresses. One OSS unit in Rome claimed to have forged over 15,000 letters a week. The letters contained writings about family events and gossip, the idea being that domestic mail would not be censored like business mail. The envelopes were addressed and sealed in Siena, then sent to Rome where they were placed into counterfeit mail bags where the mail was finally sent to Bari to be routed and cancelled.

The next step involved master forgers in an effort similar to that used by MI6.



Instead of an image of Heinrich Himmler, the OSS used a stamp that depicted Hitler, Scott #512, the 12 pfennig carmine, but with modifications. These modifications included an overlay of a skull that resembled a portion of Hitler's jaw having been eaten away. The German subscript at the bottom of the stamp was altered from 'Deutsches Reich' - German Empire - to 'Futsches Reich' - Ruined Empire. These were known as the 'Death Head' stamps and were placed in the envelope with other subversive material. The letters

were arranged in Reichpost bags forged by the OSS. They were indistinguishable from the original bags. The bags were then loaded aboard bombs specially designed to deploy the bags near a destroyed train, preferably one carrying mail. The forgeries were mixed in with the regular German mail in hopes they would be put into circulation with the rest of the mail. However, all the previous planning was almost for naught because in August of 1944, the Reichpost altered their franking machines on domestic mail making thousands of letters undeliverable.

The OSS obtained a copy of the new franking design and went to work quickly to again draft letters that were appropriately canceled. In September, the OSS received information that no domestic mail would be delivered due to wartime internal power struggles within Germany. Some domestic mail continued to be delivered. With this resumption, the 15th Air Force and fighter group detachment was tasked with the destruction of the mail train and the planting of the propaganda - Cornflakes - amongst the debris. The first mission of Operation Cornflakes took place on 5 January 1945, when a mail train to Linz was bombed and bags containing 3800 propaganda letters were dropped at the site of the wreck. These letters were picked up and delivered to Germans by their postal service. Twenty missions were completed with a success rate of 50%, with over 320 mailbags of propaganda delivered by the 15th Air Force.



A major oversight by the OSS was that due to the ravages of war, critical services in many cities was disrupted, including in some cases, the postal service. Another oversight was that most people receiving mail from an unknown source would simply destroy it, especially if the letters contained propaganda, either out of fear of punishment or out of loyalty.

The British were the first to forge the Hitler head stamp with the 3, 4, 6 and 8 pfennig stamps from 1941 until the end of the war. These stamps were of better quality than the American 12 pfennig stamps (a 6 pfennig stamp was later added) because the British used actual stamp production facilities whereas the Americans did not have access to quality materials, such as ink, paper and engravers.

The psychological effects of this propaganda may have been more successful with the Allies than with the Axis powers, especially Germany. The participants were buoyed by their efforts to disrupt essential services, like the delivery of domestic mails within Germany. While their efforts were largely disappointing, they provide interesting philatelic material.

I have included an attachment that contains both Allied and Axis philatelic propaganda utilized during World War II.

Paul von Gottfried

Ask Phil

Paul von Gottfried

Dear Phil,

I recently bought a binder of U.S. at our recent club auction. It was a great deal, well worth the money. The lot included some beautiful labels from a philatelic exhibit from the 1930's. I looked in my Scott U.S. Specialized. Nothing. Where can I find them?

Corrie Leisen

Dear Corrie,

My first reaction was that there isn't a reference work on the subject. Then I got to thinking, of course there is. The definitive work seems to be *Philatelic Exhibition Labels* by James Drummond in 2 volumes, loose-leafed, 3 hole punched. Volume 1 is 894 pages accompanied by color photos with a cost of \$129. Volume 2 is 770 pages with a cost of \$115. This could be the basis for a possible PowerPoint presentation Corrie. I have some labels from a show or two, including WESTPEX, which issues labels in sheets related to the theme of the exhibit and show for the year. I have a bunch of those. I'm happy to lend them to you. These labels are beautiful and an important part of philately. I think it would make an attractive and thoughtful exhibit.

Phil

Dear Phil,

I've become interested in collecting stamps that feature ancient buildings and civilizations. It seems to be a far ranging topical. There doesn't seem to be a lot of stamps issued from Africa, and the Middle East, the cradles of civilization. Any suggestions? Is this a topical area?

Petra Jordan (that's my real name)

Dear Ancient, Crumbling One,

Yes it is a topic. I suggest you start small, say with stamps that feature ancient buildings and civilizations from China, Greece, Rome, Egypt and yes, Jordan. There's a plethora of examples that do that. There are a few examples featuring ancient Africa but they're not as well known or as common. This is a topic that could be expanded. The American Topical Association (ATA) should be able to help. Happy Hunting.

Phil

P.S. There is a woman in Santa Rosa named Petra Jordan. She claims her mom didn't understand the significance, she just liked the name. Consider the former Governor of Texas Jim Hogg who named his daughter Ima. Grounds for patricide.

Phil

My Favorite Stamps

Editor's Note: I received three responses to my call to submit what members regard as their favorite stamps (singles or sets). I would like to make this a regular feature in the newsletter so I hope other members join in. Remember, you do not have to scan or create a photo of your stamp(s). Just send me the country name and catalogue number and I will take care of the images. Make sure you include a brief statement telling us why you like the stamps.

Stephen Brett

My favorite stamp set is the Austrian airmails released between 1950 and 1953. The photogravure set consists of seven stamps that depict birds in flight. So far I have Scott numbers C54 (Rooks), C56 (Blackheaded Gulls) and C57 (Great Cormorants). Someday I'll

fill out the set, but in the meantime I love the stamps as they capture the sense of flight through the starkness of the figures highlighted against a very simple background. The artist who designed these stamps really had a feeling for birds in flight. Hans Strohofer appears to have done the artwork. He was a painter and engraver, born in Vienna in 1885 and died there in 1961. His works have been exhibited in the Kuntschau Wien. One can see other works by this artist under his name in Wikipedia. The complete set has a mint, no hinged catalogue value of \$332.60. A used set is listed at \$273.10. Number C60 also exists as an imperforate. No catalog value given.



Doug Iams

Some of my favorite stamps are United States Scott numbers 1448-54, 1464-7, 1479-9 and 1480-3. They were issued in 1972 and 1973, around the time I started collecting. What they have in common are that they were all printed by a combination of offset and intaglio (engraved). To me they look so much better than the gravure issues of the same period like #1484-7 and #1489-98 that I found to be unattractive and were printed on cheap paper (they have since improved on that for gravure printing). Besides the eye appeal of my favorites, the subjects also appealed to me (unlike the frozen treats issue of 2018 or the repeated modern "art" issues.)



Paul von Gottfried

You may recall my PowerPoint presentation on the “Ancient Treasures of Ireland” which seems like ages ago. That’s a little ancient humor for you. OK, very little.

The stamps comprised the new Ireland regular postage stamp issues released between 1990 and 1995. Twenty-three lithographed stamps ranged in values from 1p to £5. One stamp was issued as a self-adhesive. The stamps in this set are beautiful, with brilliant colors and images. Moreover, they depict interesting historical objects. One can

easily acquire more information about each by doing a little research. Some of the objects depicted are thousands of years old. For example, I discovered that Ireland and Great Britain were once connected to mainland Europe in the not too distant past.

This stamp set is part of my favorite stamp collection, which has grown to 4 albums, mint and used through 2000, missing only 5 used stamps. There are 110 different booklets, revenues including a dog license stamp, ephemera and finally covers in 6 bulging albums dating back to the late 17th Century. The covers, not the albums.



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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