

AMERICAN PHILATELIST

April 2008



The Civil War



Learn More, Do More, Enjoy More Through the APS!

Thank You!

There is a special insert in this month's *AP* thanking you for your contributions to our Campaign for Philately and to our membership recruitment. My personal thanks to all of you — however you were able to participate. From my point of view, the \$10 contribution and the \$10,000 dollar contribution are equally important. What matters is that you participate. For that you have my most sincere thanks.

Letters

As President I get lots of letters and e-mails from you, on a wide variety of subjects. I want to share with you some of the more frequent themes and my thoughts and responses.

One fairly frequent topic is “unsoakable” stamps. This is something that will take some time to be resolved. For the USPS it is a matter of cost — while their postage rates are increasing at the rate of inflation (about two percent is the most recent number), their stamp sales volume has been falling at twice that rate, so that their revenues are decreasing. Thus the need to contain costs — which, by one account, includes the cost of adding water-soluble layer of our stamps. We can expect more stamps that may be difficult or impossible to soak.

So what can we, as collectors, do? First, we are finding that while we want quick removal in water, some stamps (if left overnight) do in fact lift off. Thus patience is one recommendation, although there are some stamps that will continue to prove difficult to remove. Second, I suspect that among our many members there are a few brilliant inventors who will one day surprise us with an effective removal fluid. I invite your thoughts now in this direction. Third, there seems to be a trend, especially among youth, to clip around the stamp and so mount it in an album or stock book. Like cut squares of days gone by, this may end up being the norm in the years to come.

While we in the United States as consumers have adopted the self-stick with great enthusiasm (95 percent, according to one recent estimate), other countries continue mostly to use water-activated stamps. This suggests lots of new collecting possibilities for those who prefer stamps that have been used.

Other letters ask for more understanding of how the APS works. In the member survey you asked us to use channels other than the magazine to communicate with our members. We are working on this, particularly on our website.

You have written to me about the dues increase and your desire to understand better our finances. Our financial statements can be found on our web site: www.stamps.org/almanac/alm_FinancialInformation.htm.

There was a letter about our Boy Scout Stamp Collecting merit badge sessions — particularly interesting to me, given my long association with the Scouts. There have been letters about StampStore, about increasing membership, about this magazine, and about expertizing. Did you know that we have a service called “Quick I.D.,” where our experts will identify a stamp for you, and that our Expertizing Service can furnish you with a certificate on the specifics, condition and genuineness of a stamp or cover? Learn more at www.stamps.org/services.

I also urge you to download and read the minutes of the Board at www.stamps.org/almanac/alm_meetminutes.htm. They provide a good insight into what is happening and the issues involved.

I will continue to answer your letters (e-mails are faster) — my goal is a much greater understanding among our more than forty thousand members. To the best of my ability I will answer your questions and, when necessary, will forward your letter to the staff at the APS for further assistance and clarification. So keep the letters coming.

Headsville

The Headsville Post Office in the Gordon and Mary Morison pavilion in the American Philatelic Center opened for business on March 3. Our mail will now be postmarked in Bellefonte, PA. We will have a celebration of the Post Office on June 21, the day before Summer Seminar.



Rate Changes and the ‘Cycle of New Issues’

Now that the USPS has more control over setting its postal rates, we appear to be settling into a predictable cycle. The inflation for the previous year is known in January and, given the time required to print new stamps, we can predict approximately when the new rates will begin to appear on stamps (this year on May 12th). This means that there will be only a very few new (i.e., old rate) stamps issued in the beginning of each year — Chinese New Year, Black History, and a stamp for the New York, ASDA/APS “Mega” show.

In terms of the new rate stamps, this year appears typical, with the new letter rate, postcard rate, two international rate stamps, and the “Forever” stamp all appearing this Spring. What is of great interest, however, is that these many of these particular stamps are being issued in conjunction with national stamp shows — Westpex (San Francisco), Ropex (Rochester), Napex (Washington DC) and AmeriCover (this year in Washington) — and that in each instance, the ceremonies are being organized and presented by the show committee, not the USPS. Remember the Beautiful Blooms last summer in Portland? It was organized and presented by the Plate Number Coil Collector’s Club in association with the APS. Having been involved in both types of ceremonies, I find the “local” ceremonies to be professionally executed, interesting, and enjoyable. I encourage you to attend the shows that produce these events.

Revised Election Policy

Last fall, in view of the concerns of the 2007 election, I commissioned a commit-

tee to recommend the best way for us to conduct our elections in the future. This committee, after considering our existing election guidelines and looking in great depth at our varied experiences, has now produced a draft “APS Election Policy,” which will be considered by our Board at its meeting on May 9. In order to ensure the widest participation by members, the draft policy has been posted on our website (<http://www.stamps.org/election/draftpolicy.pdf>). If you would let us know your views and concerns by April 25, we will be able to incorporate them into the draft that the Board will consider.

April — Spring Is Here!

This is the month when flowers and new green growth are all around us. Boy and Girl Scouts are out camping. It is also the month when we remember the beginnings of the American Revolution — the 19th of April 233 years ago in Lexington and Concord. Yes, it has been a long winter — the longest in memory in the upper Midwest.

It is also a month of many stamp shows. Time to get out and go to a stamp show with that want list you made in the dark of winter.

Finally, check out a new feature on our website: reprints of popular articles from *The American Philatelist* (www.stamps.org/Services/ser_Archive-dArticles.htm). This month’s featured article is “Revenue Stamps: Financing the Civil War” by Gary Giroux.

And, above everything else, ENJOY our hobby, tell others about it, and share the joy of philately.



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