

Philatelic Society of Lancaster County

An Affiliate of the American Philatelic Society: James Buchanan Chapter, # 173



Club Meeting: Wednesday, 9 September 2009

Bourse opens at 6:30 PM and Meeting starts at 7:00 PM

BlueBird Commons / Woodcrest Villa. **Tonight's host:** Lou Leidig

Message from the President

Wm. P. Snyder

Thirty-six members and their spouses attended a very pleasant annual LCPS picnic on August 12th. The Boro Park in Millersville provided comfortable facilities, the weather cooperated, and there was plenty of good food. Many thanks to those who helped with the Event: Marilyn reserved the picnic site, and she and Charles Shriley did much of the shopping. Mike Shirley and Paul Petersen handled the grilling, and Jim Boyles provided the beverages. With convenient parking and a covered pavilion, the site would seem to be an ideal location for future picnics.

Google, Twitter, on-line bill paying, UPS, and

FedEx are chipping away at USPS's core businesses. How much longer can the Postal Service as we know it survive? Indeed, *Linn's* reports that USPS is considering closing 677 post offices, and that is certainly only the beginning. What does this mean for stamp collecting? Will collecting go the way of the carrier pigeon? Or does this make philately an even more attractive hobby for us all?

This is an interesting question to ponder. If you think that stamp collecting will continue as an attractive hobby while postal services lose ground, then what kinds of stamps will prove most attractive to collectors? Will commemoratives

give way to strictly functional stamps? Or are older stamps the best focus? What about postal history? Will stamps of the private mailing services emerge in major metropolitan areas? And, if the stamps of private mailing services emerge in major metropolitan areas, will they be a collecting alternative?

The club has an auction in October. Round up those items you think will have little value as the Postal Services sinks into oblivion. They can be passed on to a club member who sees a strong future for stamp collecting! Club auctions are the best. See you there.

Bill

9 Sept. Program: Washington-Franklins The 3rd Bureau Issue: Presented by Lou DiFelice

Come hear about one of the most interesting yet complicated series of postage stamps by club member Lou DiFelice. Running from 1908 through 1922 the varied printing methods and unplanned stamp varieties have challenged philatelists to the present day.



Like many stamp collectors, Lou began early on, waning as he entered his teens. He revisited the hobby when he responded to a national philatelic dealership ad for "25 mint US for \$3.95. All over 50 years old." He remarked that he wishes he had joined PSLC before hand, as it would have saved him some good money.

His eyes were opened at Lancaster State College in 2003 when he began his education on the how-to's

of stamp collecting. Shortly thereafter he joined the club.

Today Lou collects pre-1960 US, early US advertising covers, and German stamps of the Third Reich. His interest in US history and his uncontrollable desire to put things neatly into their place fits in nicely with stamp collecting.

Lou is a graduate of Millersville State College, and taught at the high school level. Then
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September 2009

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Wm. P. Snyder

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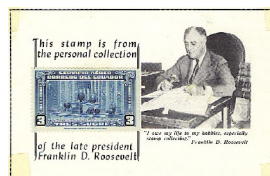
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PSLC Meets the second Wednesday of the month (except August) at BlueBird Commons/Wood crest Villa at 7:00 PM

President:

William P. Snyder

Vice President:

John Ahlfeld

Secretary:

Joy Bouchard

Treasurer:

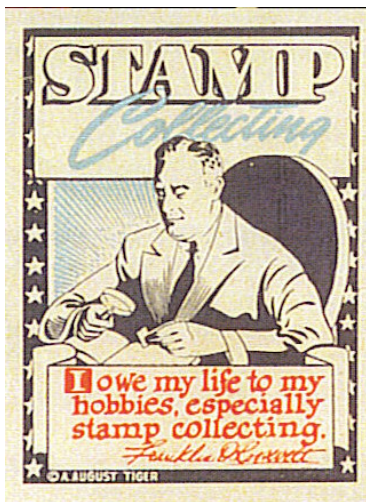
Clair Smith

Newsletter Editor:



22nd October USPM Trip

For trip information, call Roy Baardsen at (610) 927-3435.



Timelines: Two pickups-

- 1.) Leave Reading: 7:00 AM
 - 2.) Leave AC Moore: 7:30 AM
- Return: Leave DC at 6:00 PM

Mike Matus and Roy B. are planning an entertaining bus ride to and from Washington, DC.

We have heard this before...

Billy Adams of Belfast, Northern Ireland wrote in a letter to the August *Stamp Magazine* (pg. 29) that he had collected as a teen with stamp packets and cover soaking for several years only to return to this great hobby at 42 with rekindled interest.

He reads the philatelic literature and surfs the net to gain knowledge. Given that he has five children and lives in a challenging recessionary environment, he does not spend a lot on his hobby. But he enjoys the hunt, hoping to find something special at a great price at a stamp show.

His wife simplifies this all, calling his hobby a *mid-life crisis*!

Miscellaneous Club Notes: Programs/Hosts, Membership, & Shows

2009 Programs & Snacks:

9th September: *US Washington Franklins* (The 3rd Bureau Issue): Lou DiFelice. Lou Liedig, Host

14th October: Club Auction. Lucy Eyster, Host

11th November: Show & Tell for all club members: John Ahlfeld. Diane Meek, Host

9th December: Christmas Party. No Host

2010 Programs 13th January: Club Auction. John Ahlfeld, Host

10th February: *King George V and the Royal Collection:* Paul Petersen

Secretary's and Treasurer's Reports: There was no business meeting in August due to the club picnic, so these reports will resume in the October newsletter.

Articles for the newsletter are needed. Please send to the Ed.

Upcoming show reminders: *Some 1st Sunday Stamp Shows*, Farm & Home Center: 4 Oct • 6 Dec (Dates are subject to change, so please verify.)

Donations needed: Clubmember Dennis Shumaker belongs to the Lion's Club and is seeking donations of used prescription eyeglasses for that organization. These can be brought to him or Paul Petersen at any club meeting. For information, please call him at 426-3870. Brooms made by the blind are also available.

DiFelice Cont. from Pg. 1

he entered industry with two major corporations, one US and one foreign. He currently is self-employed.

With the club, Lou served as president in 2006 and as VP the year before. He filled in as interim treasurer, and he is a regular at Lancopex from set-up to tear-down at show's end.

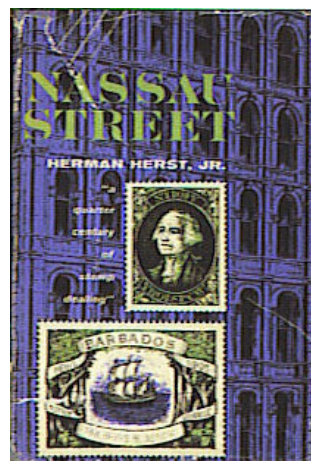
He laments that most philatelists who still work never seem to have enough time to satisfy themselves with their collecting, but he adds that hopefully his time will soon come.

Lou finds that he has learned many things regarding stamp collecting from the club meetings and individual members, but most importantly the club has enabled him to foster new friendships which have gone beyond the hobby. He is looking forward to more time for additional research for his collection and continued association with the club and its friendly members.

Lou and his wife, MaryLou, live in the Hempfield area of Lancaster with one son who is a senior in high school, and a daughter who is midway through college.

Along NYC's Nassau Street

Herman Herst, Jr. went by the name of Pat because he was born on St. Patrick's Day. That should say it all. This is



a book which has been recommended to me over the years, and I am finally getting to it. It is Herst's story as a stamp dealer from the mid-1930s through 1960. The book has been reprinted several times through 1988, and these printings contain some updated notes on the characters or stories involved.

Nassau Street is a cornucopia

of vignettes about collectors, dealers, and the hobby during the golden years in NYC and beyond. In fact, this book is claimed to be the only philatelic work to make the *New York Times* best-seller list.

In my reading I learned about the Fox Club, Hot Stove League, and the Visiting Fireman's Club. Further, Herst shares how much he can tell about a person's life and character just by looking at their collection and its condition.

On a more serious note, Herst describes how collecting helped ease the lives of many fleeing Nazi Germany in the mid to late 1930s.

Those who were allowed to emigrate were prohibited from taking any assets or valuables with them. It was the same for others just fleeing for their lives. Many were able to smuggle valuable stamps with them to help them get started in their new lands. Some of them used the stamp collections to open stamp stores, many of them on Nassau Street. Ed. □



Previewing the Auction Lots

A visit the Dutch Country Auctions in Wilmington

I remember the movie about Ebenezer Scrooge as he traveled with the Ghost of Christmas Future. He was appalled by the way the folks in Gin Lane squabbled over his earthly goods after he had died. I certainly do not want this to happen to my stuff - stamps included!

Fast forward to this past July. Al Schaub invited me to accompany him to the Dutch Country Auctions at the Stamp Center in Wilmington, DE. He wanted to preview some lots before bidding on them.

I had never done this before, so it was a worthwhile experience. Al said that the preview process at Country Auctions is no different from the larger firms, only that it is smaller, less intimidating, and in most cases, more manageable.

Dutch Country has six auctions a year, and the lots can be viewed for the five weeks prior to the auction.

Lots are arranged in albums, large and small envelopes, and large and small boxes. Some of the delicate materials were labeled as "Handle with Care." They were contained in a separate section and were just as accessible.

The area was well - lit, and the tables were spacious. Once I understood the system, it was quite easy to obtain a lot and view it at my leisure in comfort.

This was a chance to view

some wonderful material that I might never be able to own, but it also adds the temptation to submit a bid or two on some nice lots.

What I remember was a box of Zeppelin covers and another of WWI letters and covers. I found a collection of pristine and unusual German WWII postcards which I shared with Al who added this to his bid list.

A lot of philatelic material went through my hands that day. I felt like I was picking through Mr. Scrooge's earthly effects. My mind started to wonder about the personal history and provenance of these stamps.

Stamps and covers have three histories: 1.) Production history; 2.) Postal history; and 3.) Provenance: a personal or ownership history of the specific item.

A good example of known provenance is the Ice House Cover, a philatelic item with perhaps one of the most documented and checkered histories in the hobby

Whenever I hold an item, either one from my own holdings or those in a lot, many questions come to mind. Who first purchased the stamp and when? To where did they mail it? Was it an important letter or did it pay a bill? How did the receiver react to what to what was in the letter? Did she keep the letter? Does the stamp contain a postmark and date? There are so

many questions and daydreams. If only the stamp or cover could talk!

Once in a collection, a collector with an inquiring mind would like to know the ownership history. Who acquired it? Why did they pass it on or sell it? And how did it end up in the boxed lots at the auction? There are always many more questions than there are answers.

If you like to sort through collections close up, the Stamp Center is the place to go. Besides the auction lots, there are sales of stamps that were not won through the auction, and the selling price is the reserve price plus a small commission. There are also small lots on the walls, and the collector can add written bids to these. Finally, there are sales of assorted philatelic items and stamp collecting supplies. www.thestampcenter.com

Tel: (302) 478-8740 Ed.□

September Bio:

Ben Heller

Ben always loved US Plate blocks, and collected from the age of eight. As a young collector he would go to the bank where his father worked and get all the used US off the Lancaster Trust Co. correspondence. When WWII broke out, he sold his collection to buy war bonds.

After graduating from F&M in 1943, he was commissioned through the navy midshipman program. He saw duty on an LST, but upon arrival in the UK, they found out about his finance background and moved him to the division that kept the ships well stocked in petrol, oil, and other lubricants.

Ben had a short stint after the war with the oil industry in TX, but he moved back east for a position with GE, becoming the head finance officer for evaluation of utility sales. He and his family lived in several eastern states until he retired in 1986 and returned to Lancaster. It was then that he joined PSLC.

After WWII Ben resumed his collecting of plate blocks, and he began his country collections of Spain and Vatican. Vatican is now complete and up to date, and Spain is about 85-90% complete. He plans to keep working on these collections.

Ben enjoys his association with the club over these 20 years and more, making many friends.

Ben's wife passed away a few years ago, and his children and grandchildren are all grown and living out of state. "And, do you know what?" he related, "They are all red-heads just like my wife and me."

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Musings from the editor

Stamp Value and Condition Part-II

Before getting to the details of "condition," I want to revisit grading and the great range of prices for a given stamp. Again, price is based on centering with the assumption that there are no structural or gum defects.

Let's digress a moment with a well-known stamp, Scott 245, the black \$5 Columbian issue. The Professional Stamp Experts (PSA) grade stamps from 10 to 100 in 9 increments. A grade of 98-100 is a superb stamp, while a 10 stamp has perfs or an edge that cut into the stamp's frame.

In the 2009 *US Scott Specialized*, a very fine (VF) stamp is equivalent to a PSE grade of 80, and a VF 245 is priced at \$10,500 for NH, \$3,000 for hinged, and \$1,500 for used. The spring 2009 PSE values for this stamp at a grade of 80 (very fine) are only a few percent higher than Scotts. And this is probably reflected in the 1-2 year difference in time.

Looking at PSE graded valuations, # 245 at grade-10, (a very poorly centered stamp) is valued at \$205 for used and \$445 for never hinged. You can see that this is well below the Scott catalogue for VF in both categories.

At grade-95 the used version is \$6,850, and the never hinged

version is \$87,900. A lightly hinged stamp at 95 is valued at \$7,850. Let's just call this the \$80,000 hinge!

PSE lists no value for NH or used for 245 in the grade of 98-100. Perhaps there aren't any. In this superb grade, a lightly hinged version is \$15,700, almost double that of an unhinged 245 in the grade of 95 (\$7,850).

I provide these details for Scott 245, to illustrate why prices vary so much for a given stamp. All graded stamps fall somewhere on the continuum (10-100), and they are valued from fractions of to multiples of the Scott Catalogue value.

So if you know a dealer who seems to have higher prices than others, take a closer look at the condition of his/her material. Then shop comparatively. Are you willing to pay the premium for their better quality stamps? Many believe that this is the way to go if one's philatelic goal is for investment purposes.

Everything written on valuation to this point has been on centering of the stamp. And the Scott and PSE values as-

sume no faults with the stamp. Take a stamp centered at very fine/80, and it values at \$150. Will it necessarily sell for \$150? Maybe, maybe not. Several factors of "condition" must be looked at. This is where the magnifier and watermark tray and fluid are needed.

If you are examining a used stamp with a hinge remnant, remove the hinge carefully. It may be hiding a "thin" either purposefully or inadvertently. Most expertizers will not certify a stamp with a hinge remnant on it or will assume it covers a thin.

Using a magnifier, look at both sides of a stamp under different lighting conditions and at different angles. Examine it with back lighting. Sometimes a UV light may uncover some defects. Look for soundness. Are there any creases, tears, thins, scuffs, or any repairs? Has a thin been "filled in?" Has the stamp been rebacked? Placing the stamp in watermark fluid will help find problems not apparent with just magnification. Most dealers will have no problem if you examine a stamp and "dip" it

in watermark fluid. But always ask beforehand.

Are there any perforation faults? Look for shortened perfs, missing perfs, and ragged perfs. In blocks, pairs, and/or sheets, are there any perforation separations? Has the stamp been reperfed? (This was covered in the February Newsletter, Pg.2) Stamps are reperfed or perfs are removed to increase a stamp's value.

Are there scratches on the stamp? Any dirt? Are there any stains or color changes such as fading or toning?

What is the condition of the gum? Examine it for soundness. Are there thins, evidence of a hinge, cracks, stains, or gum loss? Has the stamp been regummed? This can be a sophisticated procedure, but a magnifier may show beads of new gum on the torn perfs where it should not be. How does the gum compare to a reference stamp of that type? Is the gum too good to be true?

Avoid purchasing a regummed used stamp with a removed cancel that is sold as mint, never hinged. Ed □



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