

Book Reports

SPRING 2018 Volume 15, Issue 1



STAMPS DELIVER KNOWLEDGE

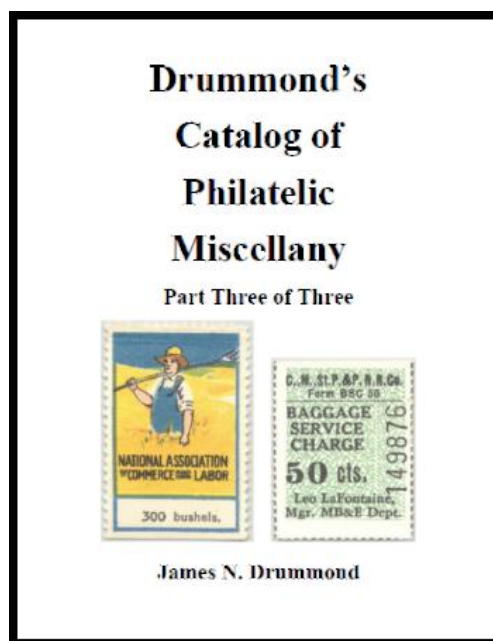
How to Build a Catalog: An Interview with James Drummond

Greg Alexander

Jim Drummond is a regular contributor on a philatelic online forum that I frequent, often making knowledgeable posts on some of the most esoteric topics. It wasn't until fairly recently that I realized he was the author of a lengthy work that the NPL put on our shelves last year. I asked if he would be willing to talk about the process of compiling and editing his catalog and he graciously agreed.

How did you get started in stamp collecting?

I started out collecting worldwide postage stamps when I was a teenager. I soon found certain countries to be of more interest than others. For whatever reason, the crude and complicated designs of Indian Feudatory State postage stamps were almost so indecipherable that I was attracted to them, rather than frustrated by them. This soon led to collecting their even-weirder revenue stamps. Simultaneously, I moved away from most foreign stamps and collected mint U.S. stamps. Back before there was the Internet or eBay, I bid on hundreds of lots from various auction houses. Once most of the spaces in my album had been filled by decent-quality stamps that I could afford at the time, I moved into the dark corners of the back of the book stamps: revenues, telegraph stamps, envelope cut squares, post office seals, and so on. The end result is that I haven't bought a "regular" postage stamp in decades; everything that I collect now is back of the book, or beyond.



Also in this issue –

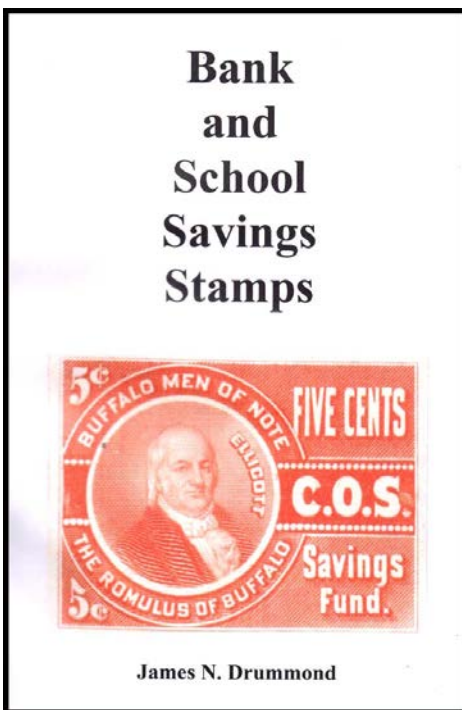
Free Periodicals.....	7
Stumper Answer.....	8
Machine Cancellor.....	10
New on our Shelves	11
Library Notes	13

And when did you delve into writing catalogs?

Back in 2006 or so, I thought that I had enough material to put out a booklet on "College and School Stamps." This was intended to basically be an update to Sherwood Springer's entry for

these same stamps in one of his catalogs ["Springer's Handbook of North American Cinderella Stamps, Including Taxpaid Revenues"]. I had most of what he showed, plus many others. Just as I was about to print the booklet, I asked around with some dealers and other collectors if they might have any additional varieties that I could include. One contact led to another, and then I met Mike McBride. He emailed me some scans of what he had, and as I looked over his images I was both excited and dismayed. He had so many "new" varieties that it was clear that my skimpy booklet was horribly incomplete. I wound up borrowing his collection and I scanned and measured everything that he had. I also met Jim Kesterson, who had even more varieties that neither Mike or I had. In the end, the booklet became a 236-page book entirely about a group of stamps that few collectors had even heard of, let alone collected.

While I was putting together that book, I became friends with Jim Kotanchik. He was a gold medal-winning exhibitor of U.S. post office seals. Through almost daily emails, we discussed all types of seals and labels, and I began to pursue the publication of a worldwide catalog of these seals. "Official Seals of the World" came out at about the same time as the college stamps book. Just before the seal catalog was released, I put out almost 20 newsletters entirely about worldwide post office seals, to about 50 subscribers.



I then innocently asked Mike McBride if he had any other collections that might be the basis of another catalog, and "Bank and School Savings Stamps" was the eventual result, in 2010.

Then I thought, well I seem to have acquired quite a few verified reception stamps, and I put together a 635-page catalog just about these short-lived stamps. [These were promotional items, also called EKKO stamps, first printed in the 1930s for radio stations to distribute to listeners who reported hearing the station from distant locations.]

In 2016, you published "Drummond's Catalog of Philatelic Miscellany," a three-volume, 1,500+ page, alphabetized encyclopedia of all manner of stamps that aren't for postal or revenue use. Can you describe the sorts of things contained in the catalog?

I thought that the Sherwood Springer line of catalogs were a great introduction to what exists other than the typical postage and revenue stamps that are listed in the Scott Specialized catalog. But as I collected what was included in the Springer booklets, I found so much more material that I realized that, well, I could do better. So, much as

how I took the short entries of college and school stamps out of the Springer catalogs and made a whole book on them, I took much of what Springer included and made a three-part catalog. The basic idea was to not only update the Springer listings, but to also include various areas that might have been included in centuries-old references, as well as other areas that had not previously ever been cataloged. I thought it would be helpful for collectors to have all of this information together, in one place, instead of in a large number of old books, articles, magazines, and so on.

For example, Mike McBride also collected royalty and license stamps, an area whose stamps are rarely seen, and which had been cataloged in the past, but way back in 1935 by Henry Holcombe. So I again borrowed Mike's collection and this became the basis of about half of the first volume of the Philatelic Miscellany books. It made more sense to me to lump a group of various types of stamps together into a series of books, than to issue a large number of smaller, individualized books.



What's the appeal of collecting this kind of material?

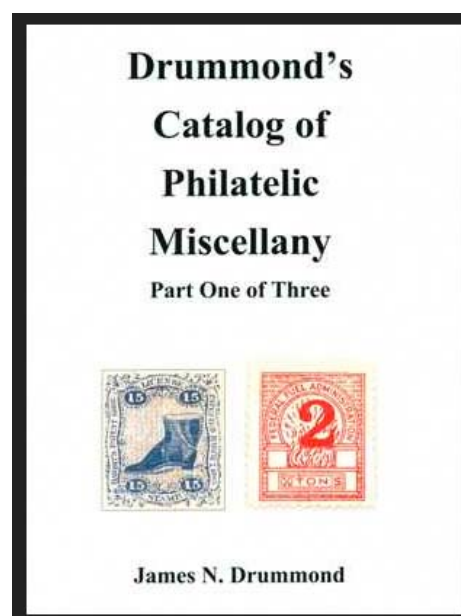
Collecting things that few other collectors are interested in is more rewarding to me than trying to compete with ever-increasing bids for regular postage stamps that have a tiny bit better centering than another, or that have more of their original gum than another copy. When you get into collecting the unusual stamps and labels, you no longer have to worry about regummed or reperforated stamps. In many cases, you are also collecting something that exists in very tiny quantities. There are few collectors that can claim that they own the only known copy of something. But from decades of searching for example, I know of several college and school stamps that appear to be unique.

How long did it take to write this opus? Did you have any idea when you took it on that it would be so large?

I worked on all three volumes simultaneously for about five years. The project kept growing and growing, but it eventually reached a point where I considered each volume to be "done."

How did you stay organized?

Compartmentalization. Each book was a separate Word document. Each section was worked on individually but simultaneously. Once a section was completed, another section was addressed. Then



the whole book was read over and over again, looking for minor corrections or fixes. No one else proofread the books. I'm somewhat proud to say that there aren't more than four typographical errors in all three books. I tried to present the information in a professional, objective manner, especially considering that the books are somewhat expensive. [Vol. 1: \$75, Vol. 2: \$79, Vol. 3: \$99]

Some of these stamps, if not most, can be quite obscure. How does one research these things?

In short, none of the books that I've written would have been possible without the Internet, specifically Google, Wikipedia, eBay, and so on. What I did with the verified reception stamps, for example, was to exhaustively research every single call sign and visit thousands of websites to acquire whatever information I could. Then all of this data was edited down to concise, interesting highlights of what was basically a pretty boring story of early radio broadcasting. I found some radio stations that were run by the Ku Klux Klan, for example.



What's the difference between Cinderella material and the type of stamps in your catalog? Where do you draw the line on what to include?

I am more interested in stamps that were designed with a specific purpose in mind, rather than those that were simply advertising vehicles. For example, coal company stamps were used on actual invoices to indicate that the coal was guaranteed to be of a certain quality. These are different than those poster stamps that just advertised a certain brand of coal.

Assigning a value to the stamps listed in these catalogs must be a bit tricky. Is it possible to determine relative scarcity?

The only book that I wrote that doesn't have values is "Bank and School Savings Stamps." This is because almost all of the stamps that are shown are known as probably unique copies, and also because very few collectors collect these stamps. How can you assign a value for something that isn't for sale? All of the other books have what I consider to be a realistic retail value for an undamaged, nicely centered example. The verified reception stamps catalog has a scale of A to C, with A being common stamps and C being rare stamps. B is somewhere in between.



I have found that in almost all cases, when I see a stamp that I don't have and that I want, I don't care so much about the asking price. As long as I can afford it at the time, I just buy it. However, should I encounter a second example of the same stamp, I

almost certainly won't buy it, unless it's very inexpensive. Since all I do is collect oddball stamps, I have a fairly experienced opinion as to what is rare, what is common, and what is in between. This is irrespective of whatever a seller is asking for the stamp(s).

One of the most frustrating experiences is to come across a stamp that I want, but the dealer has never seen one before and therefore is asking a truly ridiculous price.



On the other hand, I recently bought a large lot of very rare U.S. test stamps from a seller who had no idea of what they were. The lot included three new, previously unknown test stamp varieties, as well as numerous quantities of stamps that were either listed in the hundreds of dollars each in the Scott Specialized catalog, or were listed with just a dash. I paid \$20 for the lot.

You just put out your first update to the catalog – is this going to be an ongoing project? How often do you find new stamps to include?

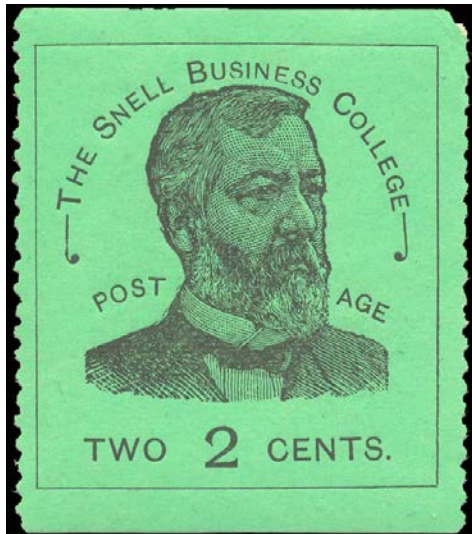
Yes, I'm already working on the second update kit. The pages in the kit are meant to replace or add to the existing pages in the catalogs. Some collectors have generously scanned their collections of certain areas and I then re-do that section, while I also pick up new varieties of what is already shown in other sections. Sometimes months go by without anything new surfacing, and then quite a few new items will be picked up in a matter of days. I thought that making the books in a three-hole punched format would allow for ongoing updating, rather than coming up with second or third editions, much as how Springer did his catalogs. That wasn't much of an issue with a small, five-dollar booklet of course, but the Philatelic Miscellany books are pretty expensive.



Are you able to make any profit from these books?

Oh, heck no. I do “make” a little each time a copy of one of my books sells. When I was marketing them myself, after the eBay or Paypal fees, shipping and printing costs and so on, I made less per hour than a poverty wage for a factory worker in, say, Viet Nam. Whatever money did come in just went back into buying more stamps.

Unless you're Herman Herst or something, a decent philatelic book today sells around 200 copies or less, from my experience. I'd like to say that I wrote the books for the money, but it was actually entirely for the purpose of helping other collectors and dealers with their stamps. Or things that look like stamps.



Where would a collector find these oddball items?

Mostly on eBay. [Revenue dealer] Eric Jackson stocks many of the areas that I cataloged, and other revenue dealers might have some items as well. I have been fortunate to have an occupation where I am in front of a computer all day long, and I similarly am on a laptop when I am at home. Which means that I can't remember a day that I didn't spend hours and hours looking on eBay. I have come to find where the best materials are listed, and what to search for. And I guess that I've gotten lucky from time to time as well.

Is there a favorite miscellaneous category or a particular stamp you find most intriguing?

I like all of the stamps that I have written about. But there is one that I guess I would consider my favorite stamp. It is from the Snell Business College, a place literally almost no one has ever heard of. It is a practice postage stamp, in a coil format, a format which really makes no sense. None of the collectors that I described previously had a copy, Eric Jackson has never had one, and I have never seen another copy other than this one. There's just something about the old-timey letterpress printing that you don't see on modern Star Wars-themed postage stamps.



James Drummond makes his home in Southern California. His next book – “Narcotic Tax Stamps” – is expected to be published this summer. All his catalogs are available for purchase at www.ericjackson.com. “Drummond's Catalog of Philatelic Miscellany” can be found in the library's Cinderella section.

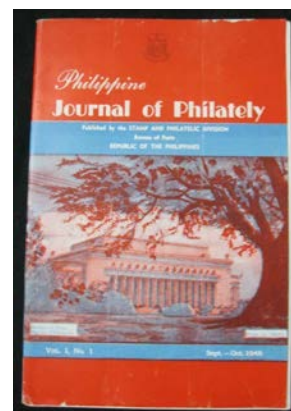
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Clearing out Some Periodicals

In order to free up much needed shelf space, the Library is thinning out our periodicals. Many have not been touched for years, others are now archived on DVDs and we no longer need to retain physical copies. The following titles are being de-acquisitioned and are available at no cost to interested members:

Atalaya	Italia Philatelist
Australia Collector's Club	Japanese American Philatelic Society
Australia Philatelist	London Postal History Group Notebook
Australia Post Age	Luren
Australia Post	Mail Coach
Australia P.O. - Newspaper Format	Museum Stamp Rider
Australia Stamp Journal	New South Wales Philatelist
Australia Stamp News	Nicaragua (Nicaragua)
Bay Philately	Philippine Journal of Philately
British Philatelic Bulletin	Record of Philately
Canadian Philatelist	Revealer
Central American Newsletter	South Atlantic Chronicles
Compex	Stamp Lover
Cover Country	Stamp Mail
Crown Agents Stamp Bulletin	Stamp Talk (Australia)
Czechoslovakia Specialist	State Revenue Newsletter
Europa News	Tell
Fine Arts Philately	Tin Canner
Great Britain Revenue Journal	UPU Collector
Hearst Outburst	West End Philatelic
Israel-Palestine Philatelist	

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Stumper Answer

In last issue's stumper we pictured a number of stamp designs, printed in intaglio, often in ink colors different than the issued stamps, but all in their original size. The stamps were all on card stock with blank backs. We asked who could identify what they were and offered one hint: they are **not die proofs**. There were no guesses on this one, but the answer could be useful in helping collectors avoid being hoodwinked.

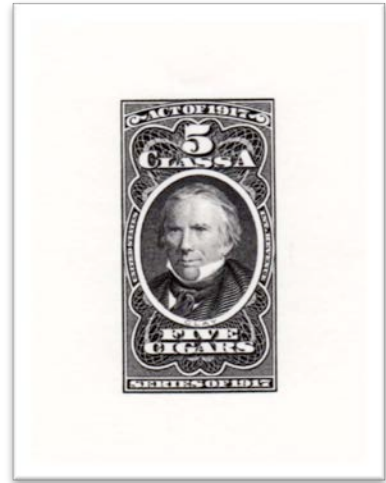
All the stamps were originally printed on either souvenir cards, by the Bureau of Engraving & Printing and American Bank Note Co., or on vignette panels from the American Bank Note Archive Series. From 1987-1992 ABNC produced a series of six annual portfolios using a different ink color every year. The panels typically featured 6 to 10 engravings on a particular theme (such as steam locomotives, below),

including many stamp designs. The stamps on both the panels and souvenir cards were printed from the original plates.

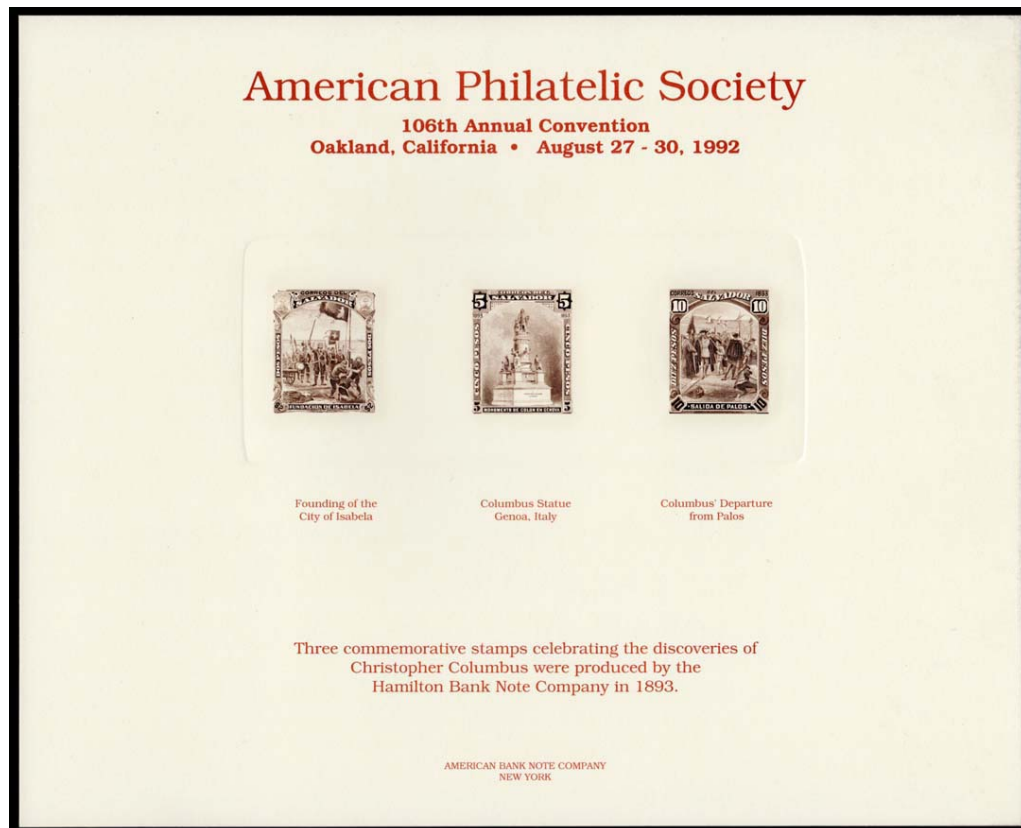
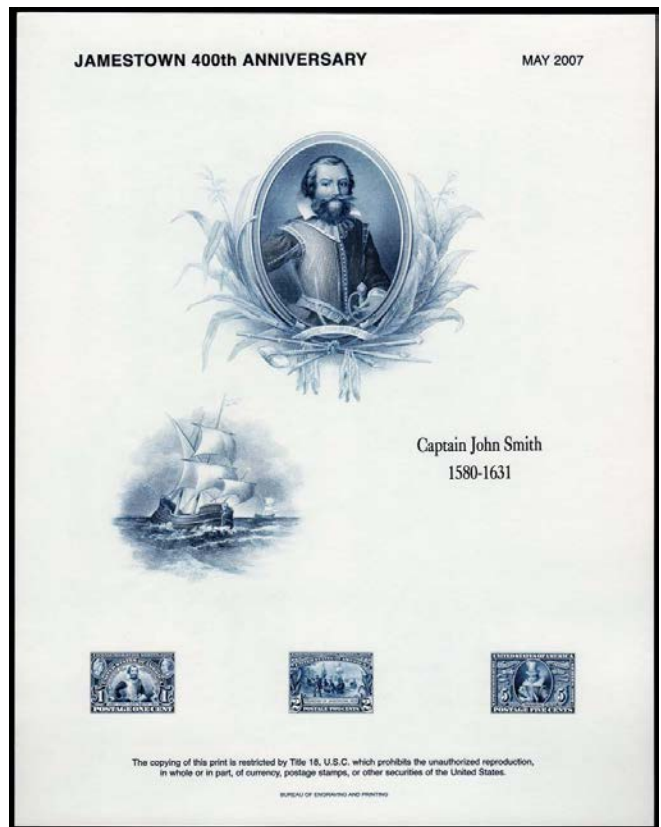
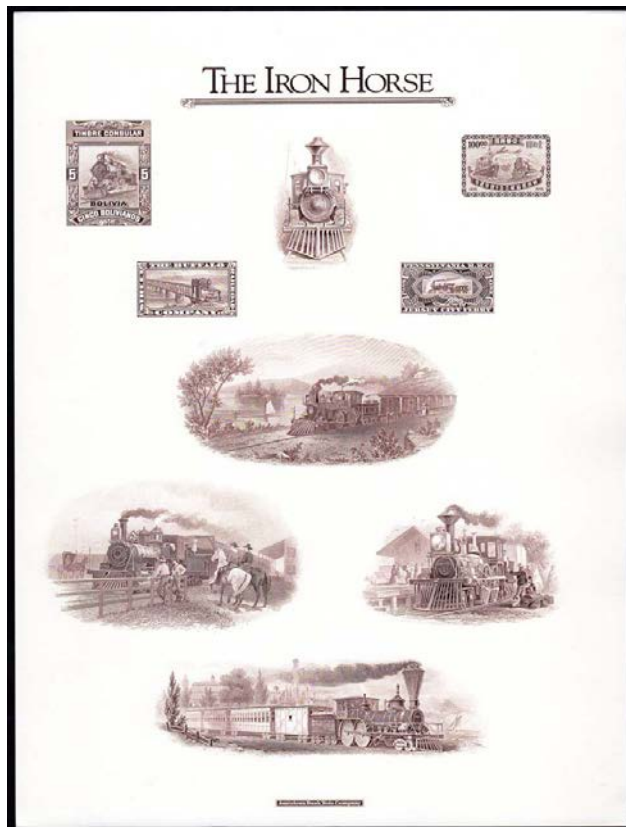
So what's the point to all this? Well, it didn't take too long for a few unscrupulous dealers to begin carefully cutting up these cards and panels and selling the individual engravings online as "proofs." Many of the stamps provide ample margins so that, when judiciously cropped, they do resemble a die proof. These cropped stamps often sell on eBay for \$10 to \$30 apiece or more, which makes the panels especially tempting to cut apart. I've seen two China "proofs" sell for more than \$200 each, and on one occasion more than \$300. You can often purchase an entire ABN portfolio (12 panels) for that price.

The BEP initially began "cancelling" the stamps on their souvenir cards with a small black line in one corner to identify them as reprints, or they would leave off the denomination. But occasionally stamps were reprinted without any indicators, leaving them open to being cut down and misrepresented as "proofs" as well.

If you collect proofs and specimens, be alert, especially for items like these listed as "Mint, Never Hinged" with no other details. It pays to stay informed.



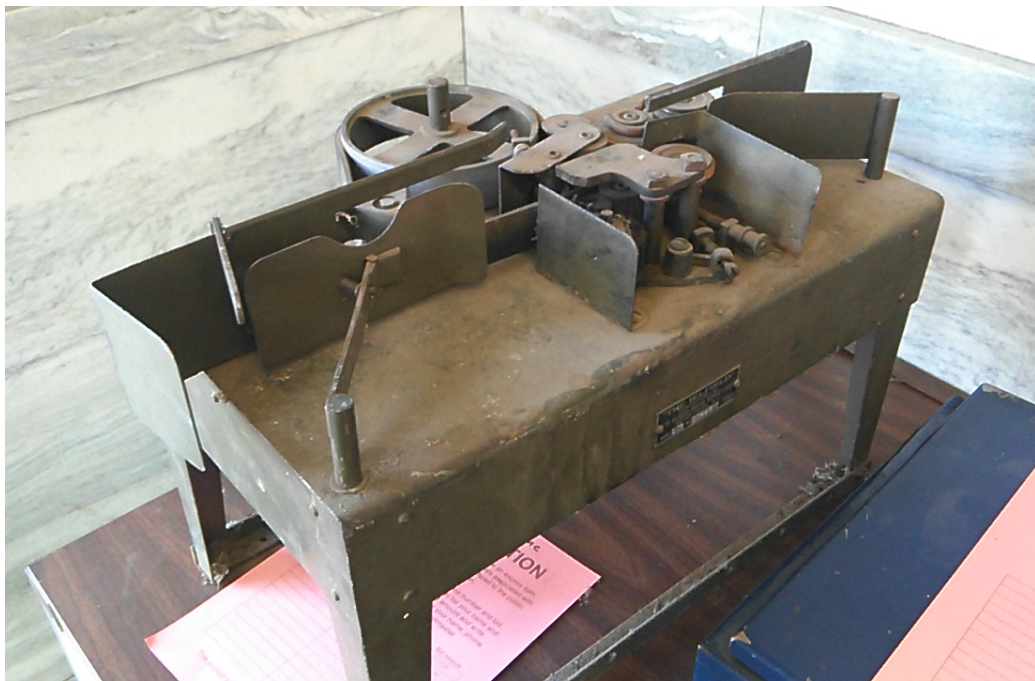
Examples of souvenir cards and an ABN panel with stamp designs susceptible to cropping.



Library Acquires Decommissioned Cancelling Machine

Our Eastern Oregon “agent” Greg Alexander recently procured an interesting piece of surplus postal machinery for the library. The Pendleton Post Office holds regular silent auctions for things like postal scales and sorting tables. This time an old machine canceller was on the block and was purchased for the grand sum of \$20. The mechanism is non-functional, with a broken belt and no motor, but could probably be nursed back to life if a member were so inclined. Most interesting is the circular date stamp, showing that the machine was originally from the Halfway, Oregon post office and was last used on Dec. 31, 1963.

Next time you are at OSS, come downstairs and take a look!



New on our Shelves

CATALOGS

Amtliches Gemeindeverzeichnis der Schweiz

Gibbons, **Channel Islands and Isle of Man**, Stanley Gibbons, London 1998

Gibbons, **Collect Autographs**, Gibbons, London, 2008

Gibbons, **India**, Gibbons, London, 2013

Sakura, **Catalogue of Japanese Stamps**, 2013

Zumstein, **Die Soldatenmarken der Schweiz, Vol. 1 and Vol. 2**



BOOKS



Australia Post Office, **The 1913-1914 Recess-Printed Series and King George V Sideface and Pictorial Definitive Stamps**, Crown, Australia

Brocket, Joe, **Basic Knowledge for the Stamp Collector**, Amos Press, Sidney, OH, 1978

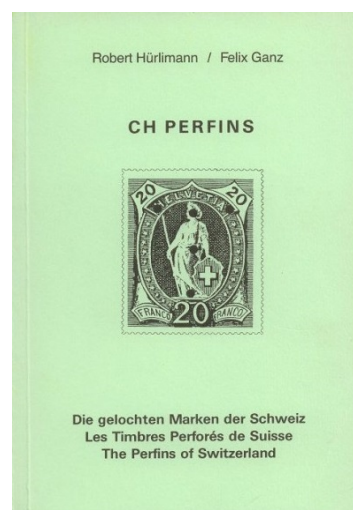
Emmenegger, Hans, **Grosses Handbuch der Abstemplung auf Schweizer Marken 1843-1882**, Druck von C.J. Luzern, Switzerland

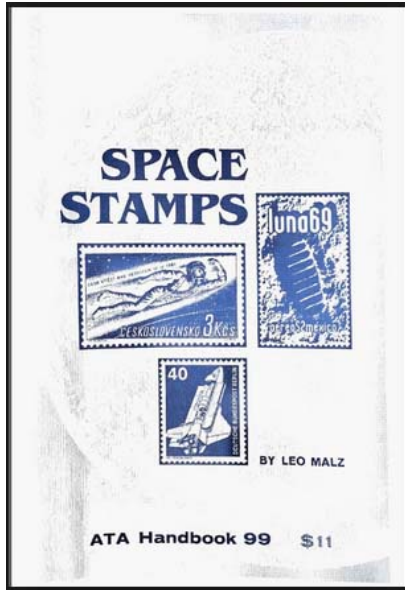
Gees, Rene, **Schweiz UPU 1900**, Nachdruck von Kottelat, Bern, Switzerland, 1976

Hooper, Max, **The First Postage Stamps of the Commonwealth of Australia 1901-1912**, Australian States Study Circle of the Royal Sydney Philatelic Club, Sydney, 2001

Hurlimann, Robert, **CH Perfins, The Perfins of Switzerland**, Chicago, IL, 1985

Jaita, D. N., **From the Diary of Stephen Smith**, The Philatelic Congress of India, New Delhi, 1980





Johnston, J.J., **Canadian “Hidden Date” Stamps**, Made-in-A Minute Printers, Canada, 1988

Lealman, H., **Australian Special & Commemorative Handstamps**, Lealman, York, UK,

Malz, Leo, **Space Stamps**, ATA Handbook #99, ATA, Jamestown, PA 1985

Melville, Fred J., **Stamp Collecting**, English Universities Press, London, UK, 1956

Miller, Michael, **Absolute Beginner’s Guide to eBay**, Que Publishing, US 2004

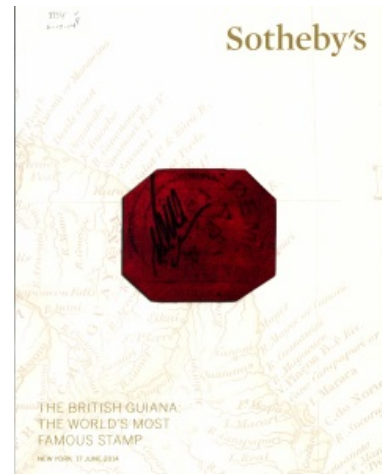
Morris Margaret, **Thematic Stamp Collecting**, Stanley Gibbons, London, UK, 1977

Pollack, Eugene, **Famous Stamps and Their Stories: Catalogue of “Americans,”** Globus Stamps Co.

Schaaff, William, **Mathematics and Science**, National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, Reston, Virginia, 1978

Sotheby’s, **The British Guiana: The World’s Most Famous Stamp**, Sotheby’s, NY, 2014

Truman, R. W., **Science Stamps**, ATA Handbook #87, ATA, Milwaukee, WI, 1975



Watson, James, **How to Identify Stamps**, Stanley, Gibbons, London 1988

Zumstein, Ernst, **Handbook of the Postage Stamps of Switzerland**, Philatelic Record, London, 1910

DVDs

Philately of Switzerland: an Introductory Handbook, 2nd Ed., American Helvetia Philatelic Society, 2015

A Digital Library for Tell, Swiss Philatelist, Helvetia Bulletin, The Helvetia Herald, and Helvetia Philatelic Society Newsletter

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Library Notes

Orlie Trier, NPL President

Book Reports needs writers

We continue to encourage you to write an article for our newsletter. Besides a research article, one may write an article on one of your collecting interests. A book review can inform others of what is appearing in the literature department, especially new acquisitions. The length of the story you submit is your choice. You may send the article to Greg Alexander, our editor, or myself at nwpl@qwestoffice.net. Any contributions are greatly appreciated!

Donations

During the last calendar year, we received approximately 60 donations, almost three times our normal amount. In the area of literature, the donations range from a single volume to four boxes of material. Many of our donations of stamps and supplies come from those who have inherited a collection from an older family member. We sell what we can and pass along the rest of the material to our youth collectors program. Funds raised help support library programs and purchases of new publications. Donations are tax-deductible.

PIPEX is almost here

At PIPEX, May 11-13 the Library plans to have a table with duplicate books for sale, as well as a couple of boxes of bargain literature for one dollar apiece. We will also be available to receive donations. If you are in the Portland area, come down to Red Lion Hotel on the River, Jantzen Beach and say hello. Admission is free.



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