



THE SMOKY MOUNTAIN PHILATELIST

JOURNAL OF THE ASHEVILLE STAMP CLUB

SPECIAL EDITION: A CENTURY OF COLLECTING WITH FRIENDS

May 20, 2023

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Welcome to the first installment of our anniversary edition Smoky Mountain Philatelist as we celebrate 100 years of organized philately in Asheville!

We will look forward to part two which will follow later this month. Isn't it amazing that a hobby could have the strength and vitality to survive for a full century in the constantly changing times we live in? It speaks to how great the hobby of stamp collecting is and also to our ongoing enthusiasm in the Asheville area. As we look forward to our second century of philatelic fun and the meaningful pursuit of philatelic knowledge we take a moment and a banquet to celebrate and pat ourselves on the back along with all the previous generations of enthusiasts for having led us to this moment. I sincerely wish everyone a continuing and ever renewing fascination with and enjoyment of stamp collecting as we continue to get together in the spirit of fellowship in the Asheville Stamp Club!

What follows for your enjoyment is the article which will appear in the October issue of The American Philatelist, the world class monthly magazine of the American Philatelic Society. While I spearheaded the writing of the article I feel more like the ghost writer for our club as so many members contributed thoughts and ideas. Thank you club members for your participation in the writing of this article which aspires to make a modest contribution to national philately. This upcoming issue highlights 'social philately', that aspect of our hobby highlighting all the pleasurable and productive interactions which happen between collectors in so many ways. Also included here is the congratulatory letter from Scott English, Executive Director of the APS marking our milestone. So keep your tongues at hand and your magnifying glass within reach and above all else HAVE FUN! Frank



AMERICAN PHILATELIC SOCIETY

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20 May 2023

Asheville Stamp Club
Asheville, NC
Attn: Frank Wheeler, President

Dear Frank,

Congratulations to the Asheville Stamp Club for reaching a fantastic milestone. A century ago, local stamp collectors joined to form the ASC. Since then, the club has served collectors in Asheville and far beyond.

Scottish author William Barclay once said, "Endurance is not just the ability to bear a hard thing, but to turn it into glory." We sometimes wonder about the future of philately, but when we recognize events like this, I have faith we will endure a brighter future.

The greatest assets in our hobby are the people in it and the sense of community they inspire. In my time with the APS, I've been welcomed into many communities, large and small, among the hobby's grassroots. I fondly remember my visit to Asheville and the continuing fellowship you have shared with me since then. I hope to spend another day with you very soon. In the meantime, please continue to shine brightly for all those in our hobby to see.

On behalf of the American Philatelic Society and our community of collectors, we celebrate your commitment to our shared passion and gratitude for all the club has contributed to the greater good. While today is a day to celebrate, I wish you continued endurance for the road ahead as we continue the work. Here's to the next hundred years!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Scott D. English".

Scott D. English
Executive Director

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A CENTURY OF COLLECTING WITH FRIENDS PART I

Frank Wheeler

It was a dark and stormy night. Well, actually it was more likely a warm autumn evening when in 1920 a group of dedicated and motivated stamp collectors gathered to usher in a century of organized philately in Asheville North Carolina, the city where the culture of the 1960s came to reside in an atmosphere of arts, color, freedom and exhilaration. A city in which on any warm day musicians entertain on street corners for the inhabitants of the wonderful restaurants, galleries and colorful destinations of all kinds.

It has been a fascinating parade of decades ever since as the Asheville Stamp Club has navigated through its many iterations, ebbs and flows and ups and downs, a familiar course for an American stamp club and quite likely for a stamp club anywhere in the world. The journey began, according to a post in Mekeel's stamp magazine in Jan. 1920:

“The Asheville Stamp Club of Asheville, N.C., has been recently organized with eleven members. Prospects are most promising and indications point to a club of not fewer than twenty members, all live wires.”

The early days of the club evolved along with organized philately in the United States. Two organizations ruled the waves at this time. In the north the American Philatelic Society was the most popular and in the southern states the Society of Philatelic Americans prevailed. As America became more homogenous in the 1980s the southern organization dissolved and from then on the APS took control of the administration of organized philately in America, a role which it encompasses to this day with admirable success as one of the leading philatelic organizations in the world.

Through many locations in Asheville and with the participation of countless collectors over the years the club has evolved to alternatively feature presentations and auctions from month to month. Show and tells, a member's bourse, 50/50 draws, door prizes and most important of all the opportunity to enjoy the company of fellow collectors. The meetings are shared with the world



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through the modern miracle of Zoom. It is within this context that we think about the benefits of 'social philately' that we exemplify so well.

The true nature and reason for being of philately cannot truly be pinpointed, anymore than art itself can be defined. (Just try drawing unanimity from any 10 artists) But in philately the range of inclinations begins with the extreme of the solitary collector, alone in his castle, stamps, tongs and magnifying glass in hand, lost in solitude and immersed in his or her stamps.

At the other end of the spectrum the socially involved and community minded collector explores the fascinating, never ending mysteries and wonders of stamp collecting in the company of his friends. Advocates of deep research delve into every nook and cranny of stamps and postal history. Others seek a simpler pleasure in filling those reluctant spaces in their albums with all the stamps

pictured. Pursuers of topical collecting, plate blocks, perfins, precancels, postal history and a myriad of other specialties join together in a bond which mirrors the most desirable instincts of human beings, that of coming together in peace, harmony and common interests. From there flows the beauty of social philately. An association of friends and accomplices (in the nicest possible way) helping each other to build their collections and their lives.

Stamp collecting has been and continues to be a great social force in the world. It draws people together in a world of fun, substance and pleasurable entertainment far away from the unpredictable vagaries of everyday life. It reveals itself as a tremendous stress relieving activity and meditation helping to calm the turbulence of the day. The image of Franklin Delano Roosevelt relaxing in bed at the end of the day with his stamp albums having just spent another day dealing with the second world war is an enduring one and an apt metaphor for our daily experience of relaxing with our stamps. Marshall McLuhan, the great Canadian media visionary said that you don't read a newspaper, you settle into it like a warm bath. And so it is with our stamps. But kids, don't try this at home. Stamps prefer to be kept dry!

A question arises as to what more can be done to amplify the cohesiveness and social benefits of the stamp collecting community. Sometimes too much organization can be anathema to natural evolution and growth. Yet, at the same time, especially with the revolutionary results of our technological breakthroughs new opportunities arise. They must be capitalized on wisely and with prudent forethought.. Our new ability to meet remotely yet in person on our computers is a welcome phenomenon already enriching our ability to keep in touch, make new connections and learn.

To absorb all the knowledge within philately would take several hundred lifetimes and innumerable PhDs to accomplish. And as soon as you felt that you had reached your goal another new question or curiosity would clamor for your attention. In light of all this, certain enhancements of our natural ability to communicate might bear fruit. For example an association of stamp organization presidents representatives, and philatelic activists to share best practices, encourage access to shared presentations on philatelic subjects and to provide a fertile ground for brainstorming the best ideas to help philately sustain, endure and flourish.

While the heady days of the boom of decades past may be over, what continues is a journey of refinement and maturation with innumerable new adherents on the world stage of the internet. Goodwill and optimism are

paramount and the encouragement of young minds to discover that this is still a very worthwhile arena of endeavor is essential. It is critical to understand that today's world presents its face on the internet and to be seen as a cutting edge and viable pursuit our hobby depends on the quality, functionality and excellence of its online presence.

There is an ocean of new ideas to be explored and the impetus has to burst forth from our enthusiasm together as a community in the ever vital landscape of social philately.



Postscript

Our oldest member Lewis Blodgett Jr will celebrate his 100th birthday on May 27, 2023. Lewis has served as club president and secretary and has been a constant presence at our club meetings for decades. We thank him for being such a valuable participant in our club's history. This history can be viewed in an excellent video prepared by Don Denman (founder and administrator of Stampsmarter and invaluable club member). Visit our website at ashevillestampclub.org and Don's creation stampsmarter.org, one of the best stamp websites on the internet.

The next time you're in Asheville we hope you'll come visit. And in the meantime don't hesitate to contact us to share your ideas and philatelic passions. We love to be social!