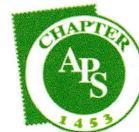




Strait Stamp Talk



Mar-Apr 2018

Your Stamp Collecting Newsletter

Volume 20 Issue

Strait Stamp Society meets the first Thursday of the month at the Sequim Library 630 N. Ave., Sequim, Washington at 6:00-8:00 pm. No dues - Donations only. Strait Stamp Talk is a bi-monthly newsletter for the Strait Stamp Society. Send Philatelic news and articles to the editor Dick McCammon, 76 Roberson Rd., Sequim, WA 98382-7335.

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Presidents Message

Mar. 1st MEETING

Welcome to our March-April Newsletter



Wes Falor

Photo by Karen Mckee

Hope everyone had a wonderful Valentines Day, too bad it was not as sunny as Monday. I will have to say that we had a few lots on our silent auction that generated a number of multiple bids, which is a first. Hope this continues. For March, the letter of interest is "K", like in Karelia, K-U-K-Feldpost, Kuwait, Korea, Klaipedia, Kaiuchau and so on. Looking forward to what you share with us. I know this seems early, but please remember our show is now only 5 months away, so start to begin preparation for your displays, as that is an important part of our show that a lot of people really enjoy.

After the general meeting, there will be a show and tell that begins with the letter "K." Bring any questions you have about stamps or stamp collecting.

Apr. 5th MEETING

After the general meeting, there will be a show and tell that begins with the letter "L." This will be followed by a Silent Auction. Forms can be downloaded from our website straitstamps.org

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Collecting Railway Mail Postmarks

Rick Kunz

Transportation of mail by railroad goes back to the very early period of railway development. While railroads in the USA began as early as 1828, it was a few years later that mail began to be carried by railroad.

The earliest known documented instance of a letter being carried by railroad was owned by a fellow I know from Massachusetts. The contract to transport the mail was held by the stage contractor in South Carolina, who used the railway cars instead of the more tedious stage route. The letter was datelined Charleston, July 12, 1835, addressed to Augusta, Ga, postmarked in Hamburg and marked "Railroad" and "Way 12 1/2." There was no route agent service yet on the route, and no one is sure exactly where the Railroad marking was applied, but it is in a different script than the Way marking.

Fast forward to 1837, when the first Route Agent (the Postmaster General's nephew!) was appointed to work on the route from Albany to Utica, New York. It was 1838 when the Post Office Department finally realized that it had a responsibility to move the mail in the fastest way possible everywhere. (We could use some of that foresight today!) This is when the duties and responsibilities of the Route Agents were codified.

There were 974 miles of railway in the USA in 1837. By 1857 there were 22,530 miles and by 1882 a total of 100,563 miles! Railroads had all been designated as "Post Roads" many years earlier, and the vast majority of these lines carried mail, whether by closed pouch or with services of Route Agents.

During the ensuing years, postmarks were applied by Stationmasters at places where there was no Post Office (or a co-located Post Office.) Examples of the Station Agent marking are shown below:



189-S-1



340-S-2



273-S-1



273-S-3b

Route Agents also either purchased or were furnished postmarking devices which usually showed the abbreviation, "AGT" in the CDS as shown below:



893-A-1



11-E-1



9-C-1



9-E-2

Railway Mail Postmarks (continued from Page 6)

In this period, Agents were put aboard waterway vessels (Steamboats) and they also used the "AGT" postmarkers. The examples below are RPO postmarks of local interest:



The first true Railway Post Office was created in 1862 on the Hannibal & St Joseph Railroad, to expedite mail to and from soldiers in the Union Armies. After that time, we begin to see postmarks showing the designation "R.P.O." but the employees were still designated as "Route Agent" and the "AGT" markings continued.

Finally, in 1882, the Post Office Department reorganized the Railway Mail Service, and henceforth, all employees were to be known as "Railway Post Office Clerks." The AGT markings continued to be used for a number of years by many clerks; however, some even into the 20th Century.

The last RPO in the USA, which I happened to be in Washington DC to see the last run of, The New York & Washington RPO in 1977 ended a long period of "Manifest Destiny" in the USA, and the use of Railway Mail Service employees (all male, by the way) on trains, streetcars, boats, Highway Post Offices and even some airplanes ceased, and while closed mails continued to be moved by rail, even until the end of the 20th century, there are no longer dedicated clerks working in rocking, swaying, Postal cars on passenger trains.

Now as to valuation of RPO and Railroad covers: The most commonly-seen markings are from major railroads between larger cities. Also, by the 1930's, philatelists began seeking out postmarks from the even then evanescent RPO lines. Many of the most common markings can be found in dealers' "dollar boxes." The prices run the gamut - the most expensive Streetcar RPO cover ever sold brought over \$10,000! However, many good collections can be put together without spending a fortune on rare or unique items.

Numerous dealers and auctions specialize in RPO markings, but the best source of information is the Mobile Post Office Society (of which I have been a member since the early 1970's, and now happen to be its Vice-President.) MPOS has published the major reference work on Railroad, AGT and RPO markings. A good place to start is at the MPOS web site, <http://www.eskimo.com/~rkunz/mposhome.html> or on the MPOS Facebook Page.

Continued on Page 8



"To you Herbert, your uncle leaves, as a hedge against inflation, a stash of U.S. Forever postage stamps."

Railway Mail Postmarks (continued from Page 7)

The society has auctions in its award-winning quarterly journal, "TRANSIT POSTMARK COLLECTOR." Comparative valuations can be found through the Rarity Factor rating system pioneered by MPOS in its reference works, "US Route and Station Agent Postmarks" and "The United States Railway Post Office Postmark Catalogue." Both are available from MPOS in hardcopy and computer-readable formats. Information in these catalogs was used extensively in the preparation of this article.



Pres. Message (continued from Page 5)

For the month of April, the letter of interest is "L", as in Levant, Lietuva, Lourenco Marques, Latvia and so on. We will be having a silent auction so come prepared to bid on many neat items. Hopefully Spring will be in the air by the April meeting along with much later daylight hours. Remember if you need to borrow a Scott Cat., stop by Cathie's to borrow one. Do not forget that we also have the Washington State album still available.

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Secretary Cathie Osborne Notes

January 4th Meeting

Eighteen happy stampers attended the first meeting of 2018. The club has officially chosen to commemorate the Sequim Rotary Salmon Bake 50th anniversary. Cathie brought news of a new collector in Port Townsend who, though house bound, might have stories and info our club could use. She was inspired to contact us because of the "Living on the Peninsula" insert in the local papers. Dick M. showed a FDC of the Indianapolis 500 mile race. Roger brought Swiss/Italy cover for his letter "I". Rick had a bunch of covers for us to guess the "I". Jim Kloetzel had some fascinating modern imperfs. Cathie had bell stamps from countries starting with "I". The Victoria Stamp show is March 10 and 11; and the Moses Lake Symposium is April 7. Ask us if you need more information, or you can go on-line for details.

February 1st Meeting

Our dealers have made table deposits for the show. The artist has still not responded, but we hope we'll have her on board by our next meeting. The Scott Catalog set, donated by Angela, will be at my house. Come by if you need one of the volumes. The letter "J" had Don, Bruce H., Roger, Dick M., Jim K., and Cathie with their show and tells. Rick K. had a wonderful power-point about the 'Jupiter' train, that made an 83-hour transcontinental trip, back in the 1800s. The silent auction was a success all around. Jim K. couldn't believe it! Members went home with treasures.