



Philately and Public Awareness

At the June meeting of the OSSC, John Cortan suggested that the Owen Sound Stamp Club host a “Public Awareness Day” to remind the general population that stamp collecting can be interesting at many different levels. John went on to say that preliminary inquiries at the Heritage Mall in Owen Sound indicated that they would be willing to provide space for such an activity and he hoped other local stamp clubs would also participate.

This idea was well received and several members agreed to help out. It was generally felt that the event should be, at least initially, a one day affair and to go for a Saturday in August.

The Vision

The overall idea of the event is to make the public aware that stamp collecting is an interesting hobby with many valid approaches. As such, the primary purposes of the day would include:

- ♦ having something of a “mini-exhibition” to demonstrate how different collectors have put together their collections — eg. postal history, country/region, topical, thematic, etc.
- ♦ indicating that membership of a stamp club can help get the most out of the hobby.
- ♦ advising/discussing with the public specific philatelic matters. Whilst this could include anything, the most common questions would probably be on the lines of “I have an album with lots of old stamps in it. How much is it worth?”

In fact, just about the only philatelic activity that would probably *not* be considered appropriate in the Heritage Mall would be buying/selling/trading.

The Practicalities

Getting an event such as this off the ground requires a certain amount of organisation and several OSSC members at the June meeting did agree to help out.

Probably the most important things that will be required to make this event work will be:

- ☑ People interested in talking to the general public about stamps and stamp collecting.
- ☑ Sample album pages to put on display to indicate the different ways of collecting stamps.
- ☑ Catalogues, stamp finder guides, etc. to help identify unusual stamps.

If you have anything you would be prepared to contribute to this event, please come to the July meeting where this subject is bound to be discussed much further!

PUBLIC AWARENESS

Contrary to what seems like a popular belief Stamp Clubs are not secret societies that meet clandestinely with strange passwords etc.

I think stamp clubs should provide a public forum— for visitors as well as collectors — to meet and exchange ideas, trade stamps and especially learn something new from others more knowledgeable than we are. I usually come away from a meeting with at least a small bit of new information.

At the last OS Stamp Club meeting we discussed having a public awareness day at the Heritage Mall. This I think is very important as most clubs have functions that benefit the members but do not do anything to make the public aware that they exist.

There are many ways to publicize clubs such as free columns in the local papers to advertise the meetings as well as contacting the school board and offering to give talks on collecting such as topical botanical theme for a science class etc.

Last year, the Kincardine Stamp Club held a “meet the public” day at the local mall. We issued a press release to the local papers (published at no charge) and offered to advise people who may have collections on how and where to dispose of them and also offered information on how to start collecting.

We also had free stamps for the kids as well as a display of stamps that might catch peoples eye and arouse their interest.

This to me is very important as it may make collectors who are unaware that there is a club into potential new members and hopefully, also encourage some of the younger generation to collect as they are the future of the hobby and I would be very unhappy to see the hobby die.

John Cortan

Buying and Selling Stamps

In the next few issues of this Newsletter, we will be looking at several aspects of the process of buying, selling, and trading stamps. I very much hope that some of our members will contribute their thoughts and experiences on various aspects of this subject. If anyone reading this has thoughts, opinions, or even knowledge(!) on any aspect of the general subject of “Buying and Selling Stamps”, please write/email the editor.

Time was when many stamp collectors would never think of actually buying a used stamp and even less of selling one. You could fill an album simply by saving the stamps you retrieved from the letters in your mail. If you happened to have an aunt living in Germany, you might swap some of the stamps you got on her letters with those of a friend or colleague who had cousins in South Africa or Morocco.

Sad to say, that method of collecting doesn't work too well these days. It is much easier (and often cheaper) to phone that overseas relative rather than write – and mail from businesses and government offices seldom carries a stamp anymore.

What this means is that nowadays just about every stamp collector at some time or other will buy stamps to add to his/her collection.

The number of collectors who sell stamps is doubtless much smaller – most people find it difficult to take one of their specimens, check it over to make sure it is not some important variety, note its catalogue number and value, and then find someone who wants the thing – often, just for a few cents. However, the sad fact is that just about every collection ever compiled either has or will be put on the market at some time or other. Perhaps the owner has lost interest and there is just no room in the new apartment for the accumulated albums, boxes, envelopes, etc.; maybe the field of interest has narrowed from “Commonwealth” to “Antiguan pictorials”; or possibly the lovingly compiled collection ends up as part of an estate to be disposed of along with the furniture and hockey gear.

Catalogue Values

Every collector knows that the “catalogue value” of a stamp should be taken as no more than a very rough guide as to the actual cost of buying a stamp. Every collector also knows that when it comes to selling a stamp, “catalogue value” is an even rougher guide.

In spite of this, almost all collectors “value” their collection at the figures given in their favourite catalogue.

So, just as a reminder, the following extracts from the three most widely used catalogues in Canada make it clear that the prices in their catalogues attempt to reflect the typical **retail prices from a dealer** for stamps of the specified grade and condition.

Scott Standard Postage Stamp Catalogue (1992)

“The Scott Catalogue value is a retail price, what you could expect to pay for the stamp in a grade of Fine–Very Fine. The value listed is a reference which reflects recent actual dealer selling prices.

Dealer retail price lists, public auction results, published prices in advertising, and individual solicitation of retail prices from dealers, collectors, and speciality organizations have been used in establishing the values found in this catalogue.

Use this catalogue as a guide in your own buying and selling. The actual price you pay for a stamp may be higher or lower than the catalogue value because of one or more of the following: the amount of personal service a dealer offers, increased interest in the country or topic represented by the stamp or set, whether an item is a “loss leader,” part of a special sale, or otherwise is being sold for a short period of time at a lower price, or if at a public auction you are able to obtain an item inexpensively because of little interest in the item at that time.

A stamp's grade and condition are crucial to its value. Values quoted in this catalogue are for stamps graded at Fine–Very Fine and with no faults.”

Stanley Gibbons Stamp Catalogue (1991)

“The prices quoted in this catalogue are the estimated selling prices of Stanley Gibbons Ltd. at the time of publication. They are, unless it is specifically stated otherwise, for examples in fine condition for the issue concerned. Superb examples are worth

more; those of a lower quality considerably less.

All prices are subject to change without prior notice and Stanley Gibbons Ltd. may from time to time offer stamps below catalogue price in consequence of special purchases or particular promotions.

No guarantee is given to supply all stamps priced, since it is not possible to keep every catalogued item in stock. Commemorative issues may, at times, only be available in complete sets and not as individual values.”

Unitrade Specialized Catalogue of Canadian Stamps (2000)

“The prices in this catalogue are based on a number of factors including input from collectors, dealers, and auction results. Although no catalogue can be 100% accurate as so many conditions affect the buying and selling of stamps, our pricing committee has endeavoured to put together the most accurate retail prices possible. However, as all users of the catalogue should be aware, the prices contained herein are meant to serve as a guide only.”

Making the whole business of valuing stamps even more complicated is:

- ◆ Each of the above gives its prices in a different currency and, even allowing for current rates of exchange, the prices for the same stamp may vary significantly between catalogues.
- ◆ Of the above, only Stanley Gibbons (as far as I know) actually sells stamps and so should be most aware of market trends and movements.
- ◆ When it comes to covers, you're on your own!

On a positive note, the increasing popularity of internet auctions could bring a real measure of stability to stamp valuations. Because of the transparency of the process, it is relatively easy to monitor both the amount paid by a buyer and the amount received by a seller for a given stamp. Over the next few years, as more stamps are traded in this way, and as more data is collected, perhaps someone will come up with a catalogue listing both buying and selling prices.

What I think ...

If you have an opinion on anything relating to philately or if you wish to comment on or respond to something in this newsletter, please write/email the editor!

What is a stamp worth?

What is a stamp worth? If you are talking current postage rates you will get three different answers.

- 1) 46 cents plus GST or
- 2) 55 cents plus GST or
- 3) 95 cents plus GST, after all we are Canadian.

Now comes the tough answers. Is a common stamp worth more than the price listed in the catalogue. What catalogue? A stamp with a face value of \$1.00 may be catalogued at \$2.00 but because you need it to complete your set may be worth double that again. Are you ready to pay the price?

A stamp listed at auction for \$500 does not realize that amount very often. It may sell for only 20 to 25 percent of this listed value. On the other side of the coin, two collectors may want the piece and end up in a bidding war over one stamp. If the stamp is rare like the inverted seaway the price will vary depending on who is bidding on the item. Is that 5 cent stamp worth \$12,500? Not to me it isn't, but it might be to you. Are you ready to pay the price?

Is that used souvenir sheet worth double face? Is that ten-tenant pair with the CDS cancel a super buy at half catalogue? Is that rare imperf pair of coils, mint never hinged, that the dealer is selling for 90 percent of catalogue, worth the price? Maybe...

I may buy a stamp that you would not even consider. The stamps we buy must meet our unique criteria. We all differ in this respect.

Are you and I collectors or are we want-a-be dealers? I am a collector and may pay more for a stamp I wish to have. As a dealer I would want to make some money.

It is with this I say that a stamp is worth what you are willing to pay for it. It may or may not be of great value, but you may think you must have it, and thus the price will probably increase.

Are you ready to pay the ultimate price and buy a stamp you desire at a price you don't?

Maybe...

Bob Ford



Collecting Mint or Collecting Used?

The fact is that every adult (and many children) in countries all over the world, sooner or later are buyers of stamps. When a person decides to mail a message anywhere in the world and pays the money for the service, he or she is issued a receipt for the transaction. The receipt is a stamp – and because most stamps are approximately one square inch, that receipt is likely to be the smallest of all documents marking a business transaction.

The sale of a stamp guarantees a service, and the price of the stamp depends upon how much service is promised. In Canada, a forty six cent stamp, which sells for 50¢ when the Goods and Services Tax is added, is a promise to deliver a letter weighing no more than 30 grams anywhere in Canada. If the purchaser is a collector, and adds that stamp to a collection, and never uses it for postage, Canada Post, has successfully sold a receipt for services it promised, but will never be required to provide.

That is why I collect used stamps. A used stamp is a cancellation of the offer for service because the service has already been provided. In other words, Canada Post has been required to provide the service it promised by delivering a letter to the addressee. It is an offence to attempt to re-use such a stamp as a demand for more service, and rightly so.

A used stamp makes me feel good, because Canada Post has sold it somewhere in Canada, and delivered it somewhere else on a cover. And if the stamp is decently canceled it tells a story of where it was mailed. If it is allowed to remain on cover, the story is complete with marks by post offices that handled the letter while it was in transit.. Surely, that is more interesting than collecting unused stamps that have been nowhere, and represent a promise for service which likely will never be demanded. To my way of thinking, collectors of mint stamps, are responsible for the dramatic increase in the number of stamps Canada Post issues each year. If collectors will buy stamps, put them away and never demand postal service in exchange for their money, then the government is selling printed paper at 50 cents a square inch or, in the case of higher values, \$8 for 2 square inches of paper bearing a picture of a bear.

My biggest objection to collecting mint stamps is based on advertisements by dealers, appearing in stamp magazines, like Canadian Stamp News, which offer to buy unused stamps at a fraction of their face value.

How sad that collectors have speculated on Canadian stamps, or mint stamps from others countries, only to discover that they did not appreciate in value as expected, and are handed over to dealers for little more than half what they originally cost the unfortunate collector.

...and mint stamps are difficult to store. In an album you must not hinge them, but display them in expensive glassine strips.

...and conditions must be correct or gum may deteriorate and the stamp is greatly reduced in value.

To my way of thinking, a used stamp with an identifiable cancellation, is a bargain, that is easy to store and display, and a joy to own.

Ken Knight

At the last meeting:

There was a unanimous vote of support for the Saugeen Stamp Club hosting the Royal Philatelic Society's Exhibition in 2003. Hopefully, the OSSC will be able to contribute something more than simple words of encouragement, but exactly what will have to be seen.

The treasurer (Bob Ford) presented a financial synopsis of the 5th OSSC Show indicating that revenues exceeded expenditures. It was proposed that a major part of this surplus should be earmarked for acquiring more display frames so that the exhibition part of the show could be expanded.. Before any definite decisions are made, further enquiries will be made regarding specifications and sources of good exhibition frames.

John Cortan proposed that the OSSC host a "Public Awareness Day" at the Heritage Mall in August [see Page 1 for more on this].

Next Meeting: 19th July

The next meeting of the Owen Sound Stamp Club will take place at 7:00 p.m. on Wednesday, 19th July, in St. George's Church, Owen Sound (as usual).

The agenda for the business part of the meeting will include:

- More about the "Public Awareness Day" idea;
- Choosing a theme for next years OSSC Show.

Further ahead

Don't forget the Auction to be held at the October 18th meeting. Details of how to submit lots for inclusion in this will be included in the next issue.

Would any members be interested in putting (free) advertisements here?
Perhaps something along the lines of:

I am looking for used/unused National Parks series (#934 to #937). If you should have surplus examples of these, let me know at the August meeting. Pete Elgar

Or:

I'm selling my collection of MNH Penny Blacks. If anyone is interested, I'll be bringing them to the August meeting. Eric Floss.

If so, please write/email the editor at least two weeks before the next meeting (dealers welcome).

OWEN SOUND STAMP CLUB

Chapter 191

Royal Philatelic Society of Canada

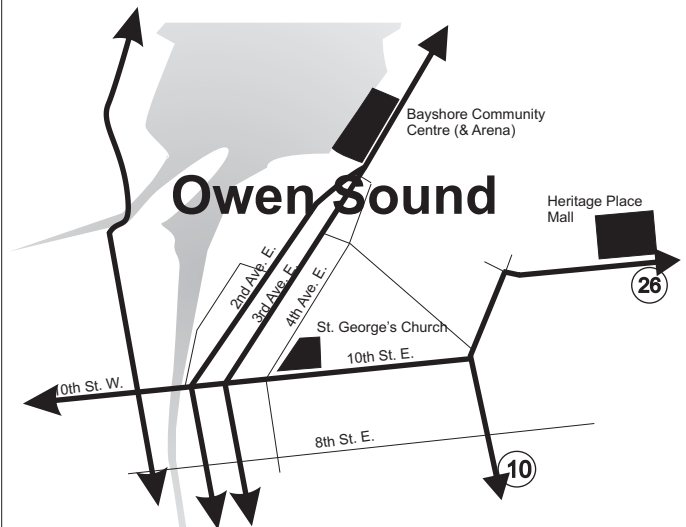
www3.sympatico.ca/rhwatson/stampclub

The Owen Sound Stamp Club meets at 7:00pm on the third Wednesday of each month in the basement of St. George's Anglican Church (on the corner of 10th St. E. and 4th Ave. E.). The main business of the evening is typically to check out the stamps in circuit books from the North Bay Philatelic Society, the Royal Philatelic Society and/or the Peninsula Philatelic Circuit. Members also trade stamps and covers between themselves.

There are presently about 40 members whose interests cover just about everything at all levels from beginner to expert. New members are always most welcome.

For further information, see us on the Web or contact any of the following Club officers:

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|--------------|---|----------------|
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The OSSC Newsletter

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The OSSC Newsletter is distributed to members of the Owen Sound Stamp Club on an irregular basis (but hopefully several times a year).

Opinions expressed by contributors to this newsletter are those of the named author and do not necessarily represent the official views of the Owen Sound Stamp Club (nor of the editor).

Contributions are always most welcome. If any reader has news, information, opinions, or announcements that might be of interest to the OSSC membership, please contact the editor.