

OWEN SOUND STAMP CLUB

Chapter 191
Royal Philatelic Society of Canada

Next meeting; Wed. August 20th 2008 @ 7:00

From the Editor...

Wow! We're well into August now, another summer whizzing by! I know, it gets too hot but it just goes by too fast. The Kincardine show has come and gone already on the 9th. It poured most of the day, but I had fun there. I found a magnifier that I'm just thrilled with. It is amazing what I can see with this. I'll bring it to the meeting so you can check it out. It was good to see our fellow Club members Alan Charlesworth, John Cortan and Rick Lokos whom all had tables at the show.

I was also the lucky winner of...no not the penny black but a copy of Michael Smith's book 'The Canadian Patriotic Postcard Checklist 1898 - 1928'. As titled, it is a list of a variety of postcard publishers of the era. It is easy to read and has many clear color reproductions of the cards. You may have read some of Mr. Smith articles about postcards in 'Canadian Stamp News'. Thanks Michael Smith!



Win this stamp!

Jon Arnett was the lucky winner of the penny black. Although he hails from London, Jon was there to receive the antique stamp. Jon is a member of the Saugeen Stamp Club in Hanover. But do not distress yourself, you'll have another chance of winning a penny black if you purchase Owen Sound Club raffle tickets. Tickets are \$2.00 each or 5 for \$5.00 (a bargain!) and are on sale now. Tickets will be available at the meeting on Wednesday and at the show on September 14th. If you cannot attend either event send me some money and I'll get tickets to you. (minimum 5 tickets) My address & phone number along with those of the other members of the executive are always on the last page of this newsletter.

At our July meeting we decided to go with the theme of automobiles for our show to coincide with the release of the Sam McLaughlin stamp honouring Sam and 100 years since the founding of General Motors Canada. It is our hope that everybody will participate by making some 'one page challenge' sheets. We have two possible topics, **automobiles and entrepreneurs or inventors**. The stamps can be from anywhere. Enter more than one page. In fact, do a whole display if you wish. (I hope that some people are putting

together some exhibits!) We will be judging the single pages on Wednesday however we would like all entries to be displayed at the show. Further entries will be accepted early at the show. John Cortan will have a prize for the winner as usual. **October's topic is 'flight'.**

I guess that I'm doing the kitchen again this year. I hope that Forrest will come and help again but I haven't heard from him yet. I go to a lot of trouble to prepare everything and bring everything. The kitchen comes with a stove, fridges, sinks and a garbage. That means that I have to remember to bring everything from salt and pepper, tea towels, utensils, sugar, mustard etc. etc. It is amazing that I do well as I do. **Take note: You do not have to be a woman to work in the kitchen.** So please, I hope that a few of you will volunteer to take care of the kitchen for an hour, if not, next year no food and no coffee!

Dr. Phil is resting on his laurels. Get him back to work! Get your questions to me so I can get the whip out! (Any excuse will do!) Alan is taking a break too and I don't know what stamp is going on the cover today. I do have Ralph Wyndham's latest article for you though. It's about the stamps of the Åland Islands. I hope that you enjoy it. See you on Wednesday.

your editor...Marion Ace

Coming Events...

AUG. 23, Bracebridge, ON. MUSPEX 2008

Riverside Inn. Hours: 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., free admission and free parking, display, dealers. Sponsor/Affiliate: Muskoka Stamp Club. For more information, contact Larry Matthews, (705) 645-9747, muskokapost@sympatico.ca.

AUG. 29 - 31, Halifax, NS. BNAPEX 2008

The Lord Nelson Hotel & Suites, 1515 South Park St. Exhibition, bourse, study group meetings, seminars, partners program, awards banquet. Sponsor/Affiliate: BNAPEX Atlantic Regional Group, Nova Scotia Stamp Club. For more information, contact Michael Peach, michael.peach@ns.sympatico.ca or Jack Forbes, JAFRBS@aol.com.

SEPT. 13, Merrickville, ON. Eastern Ontario Postcard Show

Merrickville Community Centre. Hours: 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Sponsor/Affiliate: Eastern Ontario Postcard Club. For more information, contact Jim Skelding, telephone: (613) 269-2085, email: jim.skelding2@sympatico.ca

SEPT. 14, Ottawa, ON. Stamp and Coin Show,

Nepean Sportsplex, 1701 Woodroffe Ave. Hours: 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Free parking and admission. Seventeen dealers. For more information, contact Brian Wolfenden, (613) 226-2045.

SEPT. 14, Owen Sound, ON. Owen Sound Stamp Show and Bourse, Bayshore Community Center, Sound Room, 1900 3rd Ave E. Show hours are 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Admission and parking are free. Features are: dealers, silent auction, exhibits, club table, kid's korner, kitchen. For more information, contact Alan Charlesworth (519) 371-0581, a.charlesworth@sympatico.ca or Bob Ford (519) 316-4788, robford@log.on.ca .

Åland Islands

By Ralph Wyndham

I've noticed at club meetings that the stamps of the Åland Islands always seem popular. I can understand this, as all the stamps that I have seen from this place have been quite attractive. But, where are these islands? What about the people and their history?



Shipping is very important to Åland. The barque *Parmir*, the last wheat-carrying sailing ship retired in 1949.

The Åland Islands (roughly pronounced 'aw'land) are an island archipelago found at the southern tip of Finland extending westward across the mouth of the Baltic Sea's Bay of Bothnia towards the east coast of Sweden. Åland is a Swedish-speaking autonomous province of Finland. Preservation of the Swedish language and culture here is guaranteed in the Finnish constitution.

There are about 6500 islands scattered across 1426 km² but most are small rocky outcrops; only 65 are inhabited. By far the largest in the chain, Fasta Åland (Main Island of Åland), makes up 70% of the land area and is home to 90% of Åland's 26,000 residents. Mariehamn is the largest town and capital of Åland with a population of about 12,000. Shipping, trade and tourism are the mainstays of the economy here.

The earliest evidence of habitation on the islands is pottery dating from about 4000 BC. Åland saw Viking settlement in their heyday, 800-1000 AD. Many farmstead cemeteries and house foundations from this era can still be found. It was about this time that Christianity took hold as well. The earliest churches were built in the 1100s.

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Their location in the Baltic Sea has also given the islands considerable strategic military importance. A base here could control access to Sweden's most important harbour, Stockholm as well as shipping throughout the Baltic including St. Petersburg in Russia. Trade here was also very important to Great Britain. During the 13th century, King Olav of Sweden brought Åland and Finland under Swedish control. Kastelholm Castle was built in the 14th century and became a major administrative centre for the next couple of centuries. Its importance made Åland a point of conflict during this time. In 1599 Kastelholm was damaged by cannon fire. It was repaired by 1631 but just three years later Åland was made part of the Finnish province of Abo-Björneborg ending Kastelholm's importance. The castle was converted to a prison in the 1600s then abandoned in the 1770's. Part of it was even used as a granary in the 1930s. Recently, the historic castle has been partially renovated and is now a tourist attraction.

After more than 500 years of control, Sweden lost Åland and Finland to



Russia in 1809. Russia promptly annexed Åland to Finland and, over Swedish protests, built Bomarsund fortress on the east side of Fasta Åland in the 1830s. The fortress only lasted 20 years as a joint British/French force destroyed it during the Crimean War leaving Russia's capital, St. Petersburg, vulnerable to attack via the Gulf of Finland. This compelled the Czar to keep troops home to defend the capital rather than send them to the Crimea. As part of the 1856 Paris Treaty that brought an end to the Crimean War, Åland was made neutral territory and demilitarized.

During the Russian Revolution in 1917, Finland declared its independence from Russia. There was a brief civil war in Finland between Bolshevik-supporting 'Red' Finns and Czar-supporting 'White' Finns. At this time Ålanders petitioned for annexation to Sweden. The issue was taken to the League of Nations where it was decided that Åland should remain Finland's territory but Finland had to guarantee self-government and Swedish language and cultural rights for Åland's population. Åland Autonomy Day is celebrated annually on June 9, the anniversary of the region's first session of parliament that opened on this day in 1922.

Swedish language and local cultural rights were reaffirmed in the 'Autonomy Act' between Finland and Sweden that also guaranteed Åland's non-military status. All Finnish men are liable to be called for military service. Åland men,

The destruction of the Russian fortress, Bomarsund, during the Crimean War 150 years ago was something of a tourist attraction at the time. This stamp depicts two gentlemen watching the 'show' from a safe distance.

however, due to the island's status may be required to perform civic duty such as lighthouse service.



The sea has always been a big part of Åland culture and this of course leads to a great deal of folklore. The Letesgubbe is one example of this. The Letesgubbar (the plural form) are mythical beings that lived on the island archipelago. They were small but ordinary-looking old men who would attempt to make people aware of approaching storms by making noises and throwing

things.

Walpurgis Night, April 30 every year, is kind of a hybrid of Viking and Christian tradition. Every spring, the Vikings would hold a festival around this time in hopes of hurrying spring's arrival and to ensure good crops and healthy livestock. In an attempt to scare away evil spirits, giant bonfires were lit. In this aspect it is similar to our Halloween.

Walpurgis, however, for whom the night was named, was a Roman Catholic Sainte. She established Heidenheim Convent in Württemberg, Germany. Ironically, she spoke out against witchcraft and sorcery. The celebration of

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her sainthood and the Viking festival, both taking place around the same time of year, eventually merged. This was possibly aided by the church's desire to put Christian themes into pagan celebrations.

Postage stamps for Åland first appeared in 1984 and were issued by Finnish Post in cooperation with Åland authorities. Stamps from both entities were valid for postage throughout Åland and Finland. Starting January 1, 1993, a new autonomy act came into force for the islands that included the transfer of all postal responsibilities to the local government. This ended the interchangeability of Finnish and Åland stamps.

Walpurgis Night is celebrated April 30 every year. This family event has a mix of pagan and Christian elements. The large fire depicted here was a Viking tradition to scare away evil spirits.

The Letesgubbar are beings from Åland folklore. Looking like little old men, they would make noise or throw things let people know a storm was on its way.

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The Owen Sound Stamp Club meets at 7:00 pm on the third Wednesday of each month in the basement of St. George's Anglican Church (corner of 10th St. E. and 4th Ave. E.). The main business of the evening is typically to trade, buy and sell stamps and philatelic material. An Auction is often held at 8:00 pm. There are presently about 20 active members whose interests cover just about everything at all levels, from beginner to expert.

Guests or new members are always most welcome.

Annual membership fees: Full-\$10; Family-\$15; Junior- Free

Members and guests contribute \$1 at each meeting which is passed directly to St. George's Church in appreciation for use of their room.

The OSSC Newsletter is distributed to all members. Opinions expressed in the newsletter are expressly those of the individual author.

Contributions to the newsletter are most welcome. Please submit any news, information, opinions or announcements to the editor.

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