

Book Reports

FALL 2015 Volume 12, Issue 3



STAMPS DELIVER KNOWLEDGE

Book Review: Madame Joseph Revisited

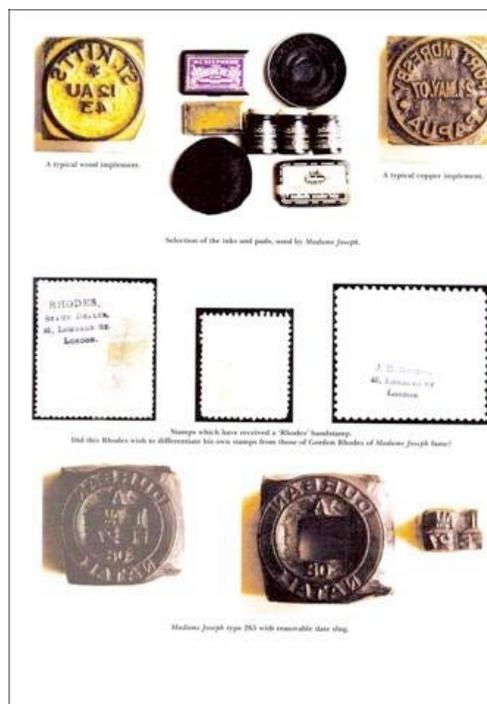
Don Overstreet

Madame Joseph Revisited, 2005, Brian M. Cartwright,
The Royal Philatelic Society of London

In popular culture we have many types of stories, from romance to thriller, horror to warm and fuzzy dog novels – but always at the top of many of our lists of favorites are tales involving a mystery: whodunnits.

Another familiar story is the fake. Counterfeiters and forgers have a long and infamous history of deceit that both beguiles and victimizes. Operating in secret, the cheaters who would take our money for something that isn't real are sometimes individuals and sometimes major industries. (Think of the roadside tables offering “discounted” designer watches and handbags)

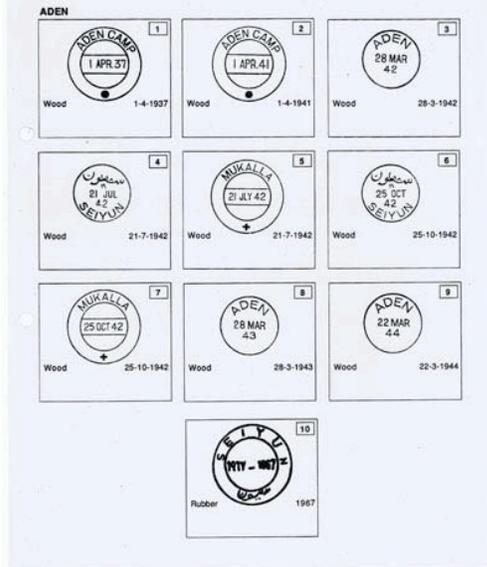
In the world of philately the fascination with forgery turns into whole collections, award-winning exhibits, and in some cases legal proceedings that ruin careers. The idea that a really good question doesn't have a ready answer is at the heart of the Madame Joseph story, a story that has produced this very fine book which serves as an introduction to the work of a particularly skillful operation that continued, by some accounts, well into the 1960s.



Unless some new information comes to light to positively identify Madame Joseph she will go down as an enigma. We are told that she may have been French or Belgian, that she may have been married to a really mysterious Monsieur Joseph, that she may have aided Resistance forces in World War II, that she operated more or less openly in London. That just about covers what we know about the person.

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THE CANCELLERS



What we don't know is the identity of the person or persons who produced the tools of the criminal trade that successfully forged the cancellations on hundreds, if not thousands of predominantly British Colonial stamps over a period of several decades. It is likely that many will never be detected, and it should be with a certain element of anxiety that collectors of British colonies go through this book.

Being a woodworker myself, it is with a sense of awe and admiration when I see so many of the devices described in Cartwright's book were painstakingly cut out of wood. Whoever made these cancelers was a truly obsessive craftsman with really sharp knives and chisels!

It would be interesting to know where they got their original material to copy. It is one of the most basic characteristics of the forger of any item that they

have intimate knowledge of originals, and to combine the philatelic material they copied with the practical use of tools is really amazing.

The book now in the collection of the Northwest Philatelic Library is actually two separate books – one is the 95 page history and overview of the Madame Joseph material with many excellent photographs of the actual canceling tools and side-by-side comparisons of genuine and forged items, while the second part is a loose leaf binder illustrating the hundreds of cataloged known types. This was only possible due to the purchase, several years ago, of an enormous horde of the tools from a London stamp dealer. The work of making the catalog alone is nothing short of a miracle, while the comparison of the forgeries with the genuine material is an ongoing process that could take more years to build upon. These two books are enclosed in a fitted slipcase and are available for viewing and use at NPL. (The book is a reference that does not circulate.)

The special emphasis on Great Britain at NPL is a result of the dedication of one of our founders, Tom Current, and as part of our commitment in this area we have recently added a number of very fine references of which the Madame Joseph book is one of the most impressive.

Even if Great Britain collectors are understandably wary of comparing their holdings with the illustrations in this book, it is a fascinating look at an area of our hobby that will interest everyone.

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Stumper Answer

Our Summer Stumper was to identify the imperforate stamp depicted here, including the face featured on the stamp and the unusual method used to cancel these stamps. NPL member Paul Tremaine of the Liechtenstein Study Group stepped outside his primary domain of expertise to provide the correct answer:



“Your stumper is an early Afghanistan stamp. The head on it is the Caspian tiger, a larger version of the Bengal tiger but not as large as the Siberian tiger. They are now extinct.

I have two used examples; one was mounted on the extreme upper right corner of a folder lettersheet so about ¼” of the stamp extended beyond the sheet and the corner is torn off. The other is mounted in the lower left corner and only half the stamp is glued on, leaving half the stamp to be torn, but not removed completely. They were printed on all sorts of different papers, colored, laid, wove, batonné, card stock (manila), pelure and even onion skin. My copy has a catalog value of \$5.50 for the 1877 value and \$4.00 for the 1878 value. They both look terrible!

I bought a substantial collection around 20 years ago, put them into a binder and didn't even try to catalog them until about five years ago. The vast majority of them up until around the late 1950s are badly off center, raggedly perforated and at times poorly printed. Collecting this country is a labor of love without knowing Arabic!”

What Paul didn't mention is that the standard method of cancelling these stamps was, in fact, to tear them! Not very philatelic-friendly, but highly effective at preventing re-use.

#

Fall Stumper



This portrait of Henry Clay appears on the longest single stamp ever issued by the U.S. government – almost 18 inches in length! It was produced by the Bureau of Engraving and Printing and shares the same portrait that appeared on U.S. currency in 1869. What type of stamp was it and why was it so long? Hint: You won't find it in the Scott catalog, but you might find it in a Springer catalog.

Send your response to the *Book Reports* editor at gsalexan@hotmail.com or by mail to NPL Book Reports, P.O. Box 6375, Portland, OR 97228. We will reveal the answer in our next issue.

Digital Library News

The latest word from the Librarians' Roundtable is that the Philatelic Union Catalog (which the NPL uses as its online catalog) now includes the holdings of 13 philatelic libraries. Members use the catalog daily to request books, scans, photocopies, and information from the American Philatelic Research Library and others. Over the past year, records from several new philatelic libraries have been added, along with records from the National Postal Museum library collection at the Smithsonian.

The Philatelic Union Catalog has also increased article listings by about 13,000 during the last year, and now contains more than 197,000 article records. This should be a big help in making periodicals more accessible. Most new article records were contributed by volunteers and loaded from files acquired from journal editors (*Philatelic Communicator*, *Meter Stamp Society Bulletin*, *Posthorn*, *Western Express*). By year's end, the APS Philatelic Research Library expects to have finding aids for the papers of stamp designer Richard Sheaff.



We encourage members to widen their searches to include all libraries when they are looking into a specific topic. If, in the process, you find books or literature you think the NPL should acquire, let us know and we will give it serious consideration.

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NPL still in search of new Book Reports editor

For the moment, we have an interim editor of "Book Reports," however we need some editorial assistance. Are you good with words? Do you have any experience with page layout? We could use your help!

Presently, the newsletter is created using Word, but could be done in any page layout or word processing program. Articles are usually contributed by OSS members. This is a great way to get to know the interests and areas of expertise of your fellow collectors and assist them in learning more about their specialties. The length and content of each issue is entirely up to the editor and duties might be divided between two or more volunteers.

If you have a little free time and a willingness to help keep the library's acquisitions and activities visible to our membership, please contact Orlie Trier at nwpl@qwestoffice.net or 503-867-4764.

New on our Shelves

The following resources have been added to our collection:

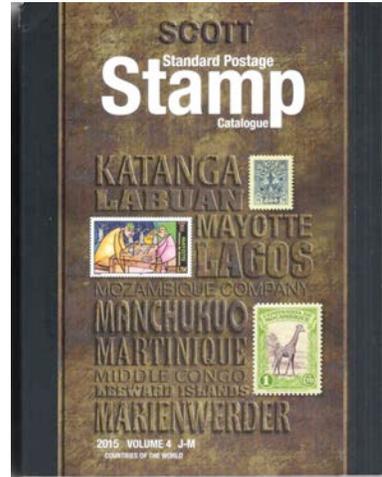
Catalogs

Snee, Charles, **Scott 2015 Postage Stamp Catalog, Vol. 3**, Amos Press, Sidney, Ohio, 2015

Snee, Charles, **Scott 2015 Postage Stamp Catalog, Vol. 4**, Amos Press, Sidney, Ohio, 2015

Books

Ganz, Felix, **Postal cancellations and markings in Switzerland**, American Helvetia Philatelic Society, 1994



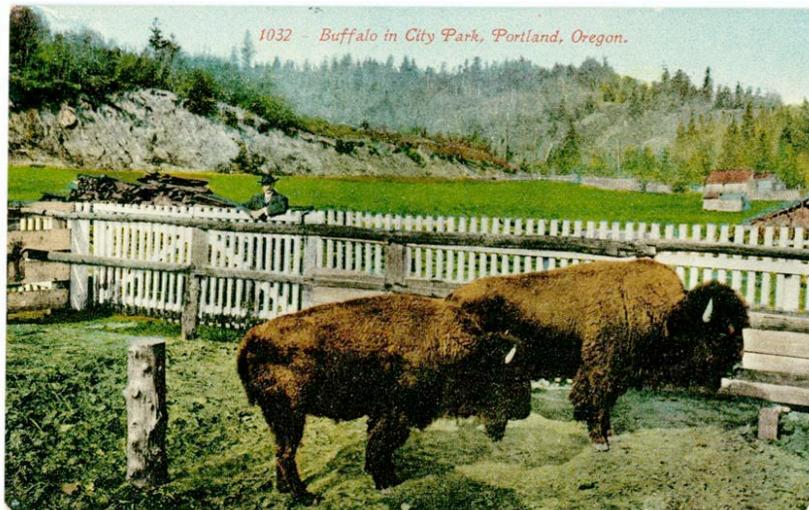
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In Appreciation

To the individuals listed below who have made recent donations of literature and other considerations to NPL, we thank you for your generosity. We want to assure you that we will make good use of these resources for our fellow philatelist and collectors.

Michael Dixon Charles Neyhart
Brian Bihovde Louis June Roy Marshall

THANK YOU all for your support!



Library Notes

Orlie Trier, NPL President

Update on *Book Reports*

As you may be aware, it has been awhile since an issue of *Book Reports* has been sent. We are still in the process of determining the transition to a new editor. Also, the Board has decided to issue *Book Reports* four times a year. Our goal is to publish issues in January, April, July and October. **DEADLINE for submitting articles, book reviews, or other items would be the 10th of the previous month.** Normally, it will be a newsletter format of three to five pages. When an article is submitted we will expand the issue to include it. Anybody can submit items for publication. You can send them to me, Orlie Trier, at nwpl@qwestoffice.net.

National Topical Stamp Show

From the comments I received the show was a success. I want to thank all the volunteers who helped out in some way. And a very special thanks to my fellow Board members who spent hours assisting me in a variety of ways. The NPL has a great board and together we work to serve our stamp community.

Donations and surplus books

Just a quick reminder, as we near the end of the tax year, that we are a 501c(3) non-profit and your donations are tax-deductible. Donated literature that we don't have is added to our shelves (we are more selective regarding periodicals due to shelf space). Surplus books are sold to raise needed revenue – see our duplicate list on the NPL website. Stamps we are unable to sell we donate to our children's program. Nothing is wasted. Thanks for considering donating.

Northwest Philatelic Library, Inc.

President – *Orlie Trier*; Secretary – *Don Overstreet*; Treasurer – *Jim Correy*; Directors: *Brian Riley, Darlene Lengacher, Isaac Oelgart and Wayne Weatherl*; Director of Sales: *Larry Spray*; Webmaster / Interim Editor: *Greg Alexander*

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www.nwpl.org

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