



# Book Reports

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## STAMPS DELIVER KNOWLEDGE

### America's First Self-Contained Letter Sheet

Greg Alexander

Stamp collectors can be smug at times in their understanding of the term “philately.” But how many philatelists are familiar with the term “scripophily”? Scripophily is the hobby of collecting obsolete stocks, bonds and related securities. It tends to be most often associated with paper money collecting, but on rare occasions there are junctures between philately and scripophily. An intriguing item arrived in my mailbox recently that illustrates just such an intersection.

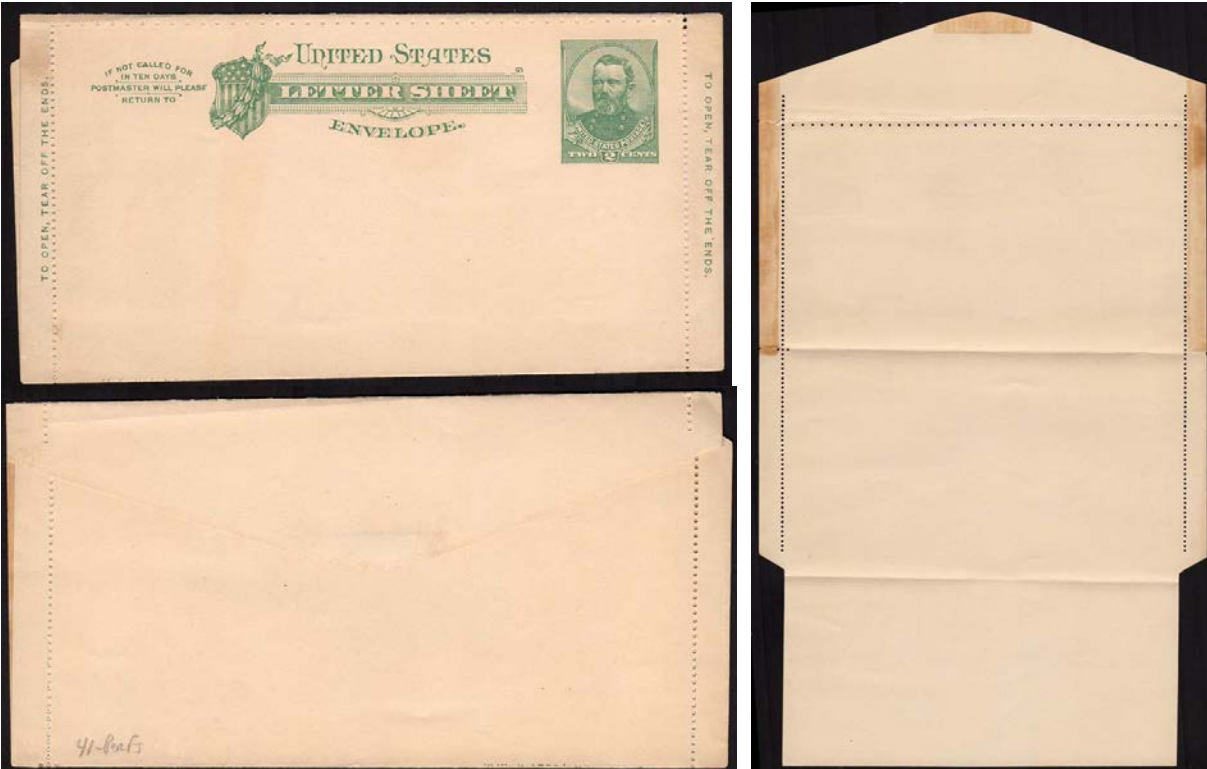
Shown here is an unissued stock certificate of the United States Sealed Postal Card Company, circa 1885. I've seen only one issued certificate of this stock – serial #4, issued Jan. 27, 1894. I've also seen another unissued certificate with serial #30 (mine is #96) so very few issued examples likely exist.



The USSPCC is best known for the first and only standard rate letter sheet issued by the U.S. Post Office: Scott #U293. This product was offered for less than a decade, from 1886 to 1894.

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Letter sheets – or letter-cards as they were known elsewhere – were popular around the world during this period; I have examples in my collection from Monaco, Brazil, and French Colonies (not produced by USSPCC). They required no envelope; the sender would simply lick and seal the gummed selvage after writing their message in the blank space inside.



The recipient would open the letter by tearing off the margins at the perforations. Although this effectively turned a letter into a postcard, the Post Office still charged the full two-cent letter rate.

USSPCC, which held a patent on the design, found a loophole to circumvent a specific prohibition by the Post Office Department on paying royalties to patent holders. Instead of the Post Office contracting the printing, USSPCC contracted directly with American Bank Note Co. (which, probably not coincidentally, also printed the company's stock certificate). USSPCC then sold the finished product to the Post Office under an agreement beginning June 30, 1886. USSPCC was paid \$2.85 per thousand sold, which retailed at \$23 per thousand. Letter sheets sold individually for 3 cents each, but the Post Office offered bulk discounts: 2 for 5 cents, 5 for 12 cents, 50 for \$1.15, etc., on up. They were also offered in pads of 25, 50 or 100.

The first "letter-sheet envelopes," as they were officially called, were released at some of the major post offices in August 1886, then at first- and second-class post offices the next month, and nationwide near the end of that year. Initially, letter sheets proved very popular. Around 30,000 were said to be sold the first day and in less than five months, by the end of 1886, some 2.5 million had been purchased.

In 1887 some of the novelty had worn off and sales for the full year were about 2.2 million. After that sales drifted further downward. In fiscal year 1889-90 only 1.18 million were sold, compared to 430 million postcards. Perhaps the public began to recognize that postcards or other postal stationery was a better value. In 1892, the Post Office issued the first paid reply postal cards, which offered businesses a better way to correspond and advertise with their clients. By fiscal year 1894 the number of letter sheets sold had fallen to 755,000 and penny

postcard sales had risen to 530 million. It's understandable that on June 30, 1894, letter sheets were officially withdrawn from sale by the Post Office, presumably at the end of their "contract" with USSPCC.



While only one design for the letter cards was produced, bearing a portrait of President Grant, variations exist, including the number of perforations. The most obvious, though, are the series numbers. The first printing had no series noted. Following this, the Post Office, probably in an effort to better track annual sales, added series numbers in the upper left corner. Collectors can find Series 1 through 7; working backwards from 6/30/94 in 12-month periods, Series 1 would have been released in mid-1887.

In 1895, the United States Sealed Postal Card Company was dissolved. They still appeared on the New York State tax rolls for that year, but paid only \$82.50 in taxes, giving some idea how the company's fortunes had fallen since the loss of their government contract.

But as most philatelists are aware, the legacy of letter sheets lives on in the field of postal stationery. In 1958, the Post Office put out their first lightweight letter sheet, intended for foreign airmail (UC32a). Minus the perforations, the aerogramme concept is much the same as the 1886 letter sheet. (UC54 shown here.)

###



**References:**

**Catalog of the 19th Century Stamped Envelopes, Lettersheets and Wrappers of the United States** / Undersander, Dan, ed.: United Postal Stationery Society, 2012

**The Congress Book - 1997** / American Philatelic Congress, Inc, 1997

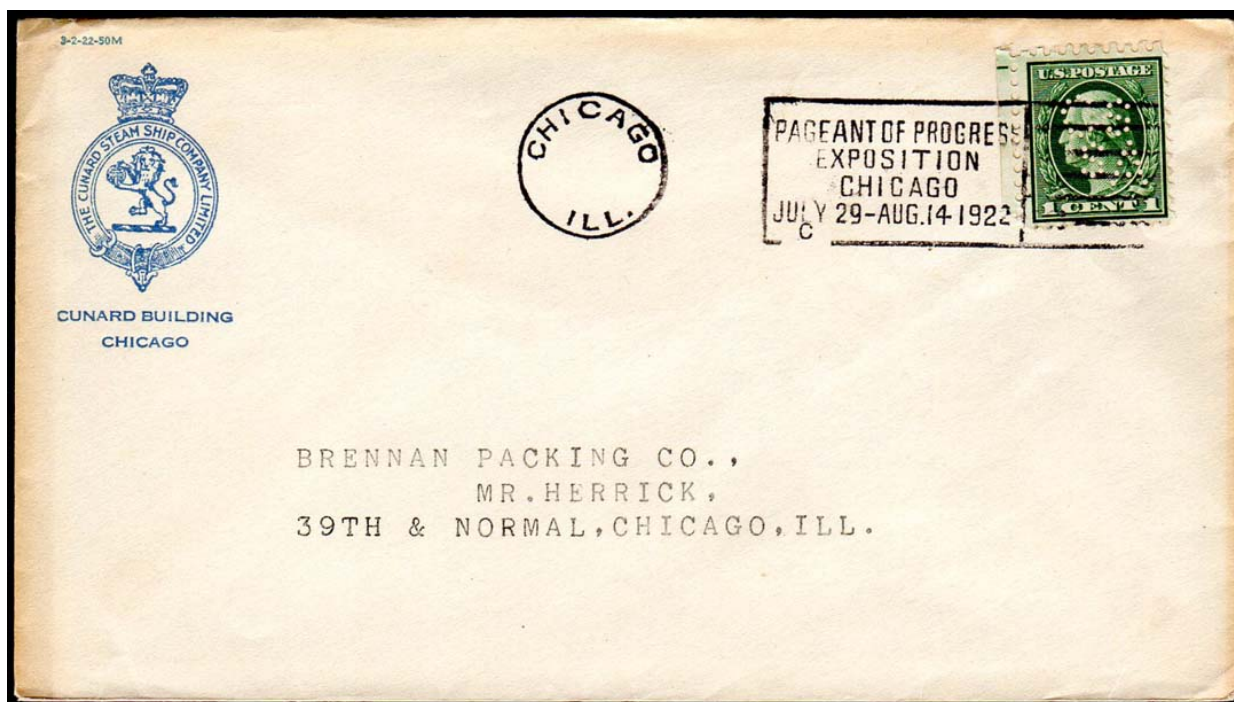
**“U.S. Sealed Postal Card Company and the Grant Letter Sheet”** / Ness, Howard: "Postal Stationery," issue 299, 1998

## Spring Stumper

The stumper this issue is a cover with a lot going on. It bears a slogan cancellation from Chicago's 1922 Pageant of Progress Exposition and has an added bonus of a "CSSA" perfin, used by the Cunard Steam Ship Co., which mailed the cover. But the most obvious thing about it is the lack of date and time inside the cancellation ring. Three questions for our intrepid stumper solvers:

- Is the missing date/time intentional or some type of error?
- What does the A in the perfin stand for?
- What was the Pageant of Progress?

*Hint: The cover is unsealed.* Submit your answers by email to the *Book Reports* editor at [nwpl@qwestoffice.net](mailto:nwpl@qwestoffice.net) or by mail to NPL Book Reports, P.O. Box 6375, Portland, OR 97228. We will reveal the answers in our next issue.



## New on our Shelves

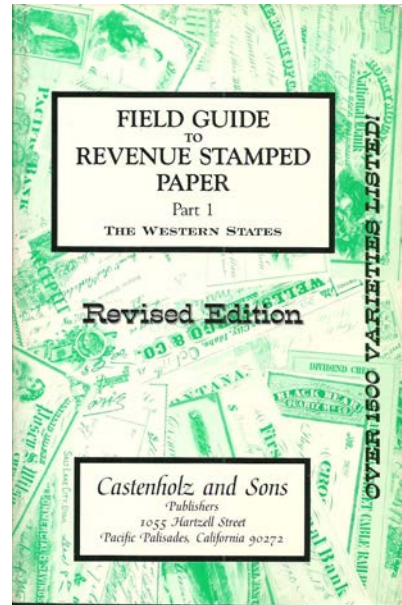
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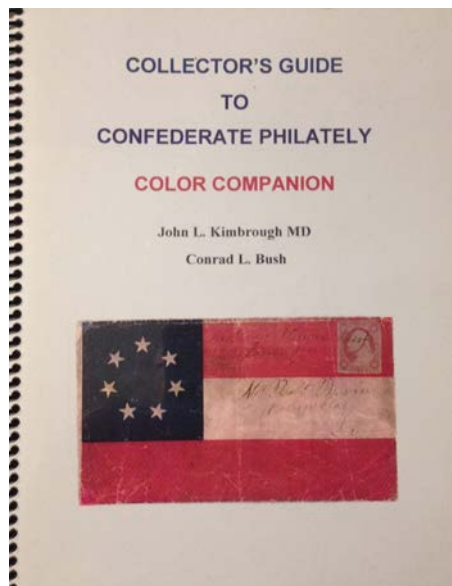
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Galloway, Thomas A., and Robert Derrick, co-editors, **Penalty Overprinted Stamped Envelopes, Wrappers, and Postal Cards of the United States and Possessions**, United Postal Stationery Society, Chester, PA, 2016

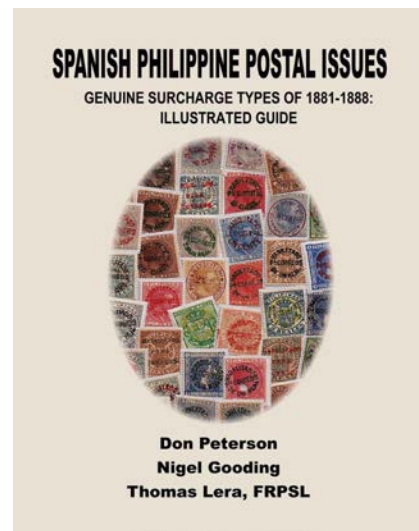


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Peterson, Don, Gooding, Nigel, and Lera, Thomas, FRPSL, **Spanish Philippine Postal Issues, Genuine Surcharge Types of 1881-1888: Illustrated Guide**, published by the authors, Brunswick, MD, 2015



### AUCTION CATALOGS

Brigham Auctions, Ltd., **The Brigham Collection of Canada**, in association with Auktionshaus Christoph Gartner GmbH & Co., 2016

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**HAPPY BIRTHDAY!**  
*FROM THE*  
NORTHWEST PHILATELIC LIBRARY  
*TO THE*  
**OREGON STAMP  
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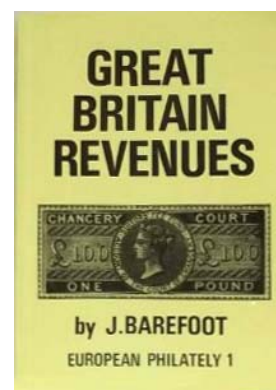
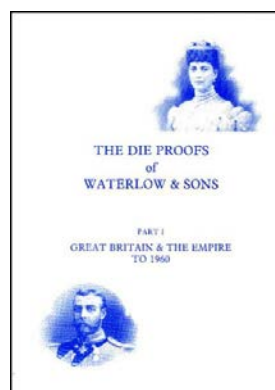
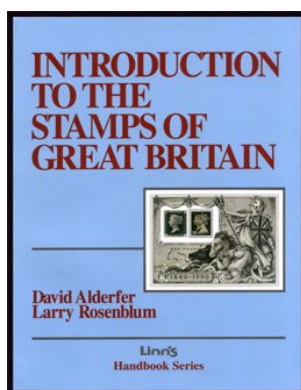
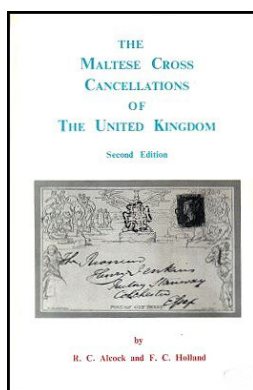
***THANKS FOR A CENTURY  
OF SERVICE TO OREGON'S  
PHILATELIC COMMUNITY***

## Surplus Books for Sale

The Library regularly receives literature donations that include books and catalogs already in our collection. These duplicate items are offered to the public at discount rates, with the proceeds going to support library programs and acquisitions. Below is a sampling of surplus books in the Great Britain/British Commonwealth specialty. More than 300 titles are currently available; to see a complete list, visit the library's website ([www.nwpl.org](http://www.nwpl.org)) and click on "Books for Sale." We will be adding more books in the next couple of months, so please check back.

<b>Author/Pub</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Ed.</b>	<b>Price</b>
Alcock & Holland	Maltese Cross Cancellations of the U.K.	1960	\$20.00
Alcock & Holland	Maltese Cross Cancellations of the U.K.	1970	\$40.00
Alderfer	Introduction to the Stamps of Great Britain The 1913-14 Recess-Printed Series/King George V	2004	\$40.00
Australian P.O.	Sideface, etc.		\$5.00
Australian P.O.	Specimen Stamps and Stationery of Great Britain		\$15.00
Australian P.O.	Australian Postage Stamps - set of 7 booklets		\$5.00
Barefoot Beaumont & Adams	Great Britain Revenues Second Edition  Postage Stamps of Great Britain, Part 3 The Stamps of Elizabeth, Regina & the Royal Family	1983  1954	\$15.00  \$30.00
Bruns	Cancellations of the Cook Islands and Niue	1953	\$18.00
Burge	Adhesive Fiscal & Telegraph Stamps of British India	1971	\$17.50
Crofton/Corfield	Concordance & I.D. Tips	1905	\$60.00
Current	Overprints on British Stamps for Use Abroad	1984	\$7.50
Current	Great Britain Philatelic Literature, 2nd [5 copies]	2002	\$20.00
Current	Handbook of British Philately for the Intermediate Collector	1990	\$5.00
Current	Handbook of British Philately for the Intermediate Collector - Booklets	1997	\$125
Current	Handbook of British Philately for the Intermediate Collector - Q Vic	1997	\$5.00
De La Rue	Postage Stamp Printing		\$15.00
Franklin	Franklin's Guide to Stamps of Papua and New Guinea [2 copies]	1970	\$47.50
Fraser/Lowe	Die Proofs of Waterlow & Sons: GB & Empire to 1960, Part 1	1985	\$20.00
Haverbeck	Commemorative Stamps of the British Commonwealth	1955	\$10.00
Houseman	The House That Thomas Built	1968	\$15.00
Huggins	British Postal Stationery	1970	\$40.00
Johnson	British Postage Stamps	1944	\$10.00
Kellow	Kangaroos	1985	\$15.00
Legge	Australia, Line Engraved Issue of 1914		\$12.00
Lowe	British Postage Stamps of the Nineteenth Century	1968	\$5.00

Low	Waterlows of Australia		\$5.00
Low	The De La Rue Key Plates Sale (Auction Catalogue)	1979	\$7.50
Low	De La Rue Punch Book	1987	\$5.00
Ludington	Bermuda: The Handstruck Stamps and Cancellations	1956	\$15.00
Marcus	Specimen Stamps and Stationery of Great Britain	1980	\$10.00
Pompet	Post Offices of Papua and New Guinea 1885-1967	1967	\$15.00
Powell	The Postal History of the Territory of New Guinea	1964	\$12.00
Robertson	Post Roads, Post Towns and Postal Rates	1961	\$20.00
Sanford	Postal Markings of England, London and Wales, 1661-1900	1986	\$6.00
Sefi	King Edward VII Land	1912	\$20.00
Thorton	Catalogue of Official Perfins: Great Britain	1967	\$5.00
Ward	King George V, 1/2D, Die 2, Australia		\$15.00
Whitfield	The De La Rue Key Plates	1979	\$7.50
Whitney	Collect British Postmarks	1979	\$15.00



## 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.

Julie Sackett	Steven Frumkin
William Beckett	Margaret Hecht
Kurt Engelstad	Charles Herren
Larry Weinstock	William Nix
James Stultz	Roman Gudish
John Blakemore	Lewis Bussey
Columbia River Girl Scout Council	

*THANK YOU all for your support!*



# Library Notes

Orlie Trier, NPL President

## Centennial of the Oregon Stamp Society

This year we celebrate the 100th anniversary of our Stamp Society. We congratulate them on this accomplishment. The club is planning a celebration mid-July. Be looking for more information on the OSS website. The NPL will have an open house at the same time, so drop down and say hello.

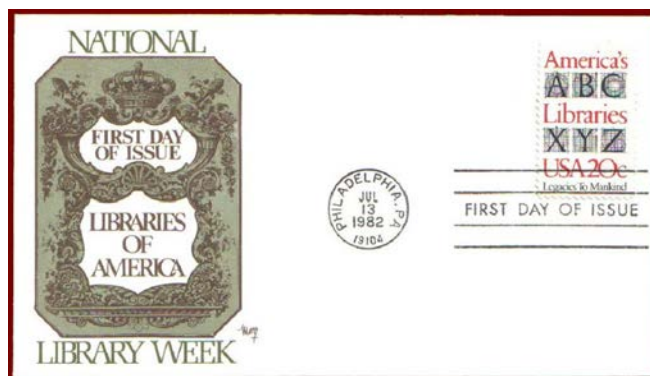
## Book Reports Update

Just as a reminder, *Book Reports* is now being published quarterly. Our goal is to send an issue out in January, April, August, and October. DEADLINE for submitting articles, book reviews, or other items would be the 10th of the previous month. We can always use material and anyone can submit. Please email your submissions to me, Orlie Trier, at [nwpl@qwestoffice.net](mailto:nwpl@qwestoffice.net).

Normally, *Book Reports* is distributed electronically to anyone who provides us with a current email address. It can also be downloaded from the NPL website. This issue we will be doing a special mailing to all OSS members, as a “thank you” and to let everyone know we are still putting out a newsletter. **If you’d like to be added to our distribution list, please contact me at the email address above.**

## Tax Deductible Donations

And another quick reminder that we are a 501(c)(3) and accept donations of literature, stamps and supplies. Stamps and supplies that we are unable to sell we donate to our children’s program. Nothing is wasted. Thanks for thinking of us when you have a contribution.



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